

## SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

### SP #90 Crystal Square Retail

### SPRC Meeting #1, October 26, 2017

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Elizabeth Gearin (Chair), Nancy Iacomini, James Lantelme, Megan Shelby, Jane Siegel (Co-Chair).

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### MEETING AGENDA

This was the first Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting for a proposed site plan amendment to add a three-story theater building and a one-story grocery store at the Crystal Square development (SP #90), located in Crystal City along Crystal Drive between 15<sup>th</sup> Street South and 18<sup>th</sup> Street South.

The meeting was preceded by a walking tour of the site, led by the development team. The tour walked along Crystal Drive and 18<sup>th</sup> Street south.

The meeting began with introductions and a refresher on SPRC ground rules and procedure. Staff then made a presentation on the planning history of the site and a review of the sections of the Crystal City Sector Plan pertaining to the specific site. The applicant then made an introductory presentation. Staff and the applicant announced that the proposed plaza and the standalone two-story retail building fronting on 18<sup>th</sup> Street are *not* a part of the current site plan amendment application and will be a part of a future Phase II of the redevelopment of Crystal Square. This Phase II will also include a conversion of an existing vacant office building to residential use.

### SPRC DISCUSSION

#### Clarifying Questions

- Nancy Iacomini asked which green spaces were above grade and which were pedestrian level. Also, asked if the proposed green roofs were accessible.
  - The applicant stated they would bring clearer exhibits distinguishing what was roof-level green space. Roof level green space will not be accessible except at the second level of the theater.
- Jane Siegel asked for greater clarity next time in exhibits showing public spaces vs. private, and clearer exhibits on what part of the property was in each phase of development.
- Christer Ahl stated he understood the grocery would need a loading dock, but was concerned about impact of the loading on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and asked for more information.

- Joanne Gabor of DES stated that staff was still working with the applicant on the cross-section and impact of truck turns on 15<sup>th</sup> Street and the future park in the median.
- Nancy Iacomini asked if the applicant was making off-site improvements to the residential building owned by others. If so, is it possible to coordinate that entrance with the loading dock so that the loading dock does not affect 15<sup>th</sup> Street?
  - The applicant stated yes, they are realigning the driveway access to the apartment building. Regarding combining the residential entrance with a loading dock entrance, there may be difficulties combining the uses.
- Commissioner Iacomini stated does the difficulty combining a residential entrance and loading dock outweigh the difficulties caused to 15<sup>th</sup> Street?
- Arthur Fox and others stated they wanted detailed building elevations.
- Bill Ross was concerned about the impact of the grocery loading dock on the projected park and 15<sup>th</sup> street in general.
- Megan Shelby asked if the loading dock would serve other retail tenants.
  - Yes, it would.
- Nancy asked about the proposed modifications for density exclusions.
  - Staff explained that the arcades in the Underground had apparently been excluded from density in the original approval in the 70s, but it is not the sort of exclusion that is supported by the Zoning Administrator's memo on the issue, the Zoning Ordinance, or the County Attorney. Arcades that the developer did not touch, could continue to be excluded, but the developer's proposal includes some alteration and relocation of existing arcades to accommodate the new uses on site. Staff could not support the relocated or new arcades. Below-grade building storage may be supportable by staff if it meets the criteria of the Zoning Administrator's memo.
  - The applicant state that they felt the request was merely continuing the County Board's actions in the original approval. Or could achieve that density through bonuses.
- Pamela Van Hine asked of the north-south mid-block path through the site to 15th Street was accessible?
  - There is a set of stairs at the 15<sup>th</sup> Street side, so not accessible. This walkway is not dedicated to the public.
- Arthur fox asked when the Block Plan would come in.
  - A preliminary filing of a Block Plan and site plan have been submitted to staff for Phase II, and would be reviewed soon after this site plan amendment for Phase I concludes.
- Jane Siegel asked if there was something in this Phase I plan that would jeopardize a block plan that could fulfill Sector Plan goals.
  - Staff stated that Comprehensive and Current Planning staff believe nothing in this Phase I plan would prevent redevelopment of the block per the Sector Plan.
- Arthur Fox stated that everything should have been reviewed together, with the Block Plan first.

- Staff stated that it was exceptional time constraints due to the applicant having a deadline to have entitlements approved for Alamo that resulted in the split process.
- Nancy Iacomini asked for clarity on the apartment property line.
- Jane Siegel requested vistas through the site showing how one navigates through the block.
- James Lantelme asked to see details of the surface and underground circulation through the block.
- Natasha Atkins noted that the apartment swimming pool is about 16 feet below the grade of the plaza.
- Arthur Fox asked the height of the theater building?
  - The applicant replied that the building height of the theater was 60 feet at Crystal Drive and 90 feet at the rear, where the swimming pool is.
- The SPRC asked for elevations and especially wanted to judge the impact on Crystal Drive, and to the apartments.
- The SPRC members also suggested the applicant bring material samples with the chosen colors for the next meeting, as well as information about site lighting.
- Natasha Atkins recommended bird-friendly design as the property is on the Potomac flyway.
- Pamela Van Hine asked why the applicant was not considering LEED certification.
  - The applicant stated that it was difficult to do for the additions, but they were going to require the tenants use LEED.
- Judy Freshman wanted more information on any renovations for building to remain, such as the office building to which the grocery store will be attached.
- Christer Ahl stated that the grocer should stand out and be a highlight of the block.
- Megan Shelby state that the applicant should reexamine LEED, would like to see landscape design at pedestrian level.
- The Chair asked for comments from Urban Design and Parks staff.
  - Kris Krider and Kara Smith stated that they were interested in the internal circulation pattern, and that roof plantings would be visible from the street.
    - The applicant stated that the roof plantings would be visible from the street.
- The Chair then started wrap-up by and summarized the comments and requests for more information.
- The Chair then called for public comment.
  - Would the grocery be connected to the Underground?
    - The developer replied it would.
  - Sheldon Johnson asked what would replace trees that will be removed, and if the street changes the County was planning to 15<sup>th</sup> Street would influence Crystal Drive and 18<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Rob Mandle stated that open space should be quality, not quantity, and that the future 18<sup>th</sup> street park would be a great amenity.

- Others were concerned about that the grocery loading dock not interfere with apartment building, and that the applicant enhance the pedestrian experience of the mid-block north-south crossing.