



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of May 20, 2017

DATE: May 10, 2017

SUBJECT: Request to authorize advertisement of Public Hearings to Consider the adoption of the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan and approval of a parklet prototype installation.

C.M. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Authorize the advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission on June 5, 2017 and the County Board on June 17, 2017, to consider the adoption of the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan.
2. Authorize the advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission on June 5, 2017 and the County Board on June 17, 2017, to consider approval of a parklet prototype installation as detailed in the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan.

ISSUES:

Installation and Maintenance of Streetscape Elements: Since 1960, nearly all private development within the RBID has been achieved through the County's Special Exception Site Plan process. Several of these older site plans within the RBID were approved without similar condition language that explicitly addresses this sidewalk maintenance responsibility. Therefore, to establish a consistent approach whereby all property owners are responsible for Rosslyn Streetscape Elements within site plan properties, amendments to certain site plans addressing pertinent condition language may be necessary to avoid an undue burden to the County for the future maintenance of such elements.

SUMMARY: The Streetscape Elements Plan (Plan) for Rosslyn provides a collection of coordinated street furnishings along with a parklet prototype installation for the public sidewalks and public right-of-way within the Rosslyn Business Improvement Service District (RBID). The

County Manager:

County Attorney:

Staff: Brett H. Wallace, DCPHD, Planning
Kelly Cornell, DES
Karen Vasquez, AED

PLA-7564

Plan was prepared by the Rosslyn Business Improvement Corporation (RBIC) in partnership and coordination with an interdepartmental County staff team. The Plan applies the principles and vision outlined in the 2015 Rosslyn Sector Plan to create a distinct identity and attractive public realm in Rosslyn. The Plan will be used in parallel with the Rosslyn- Ballston Corridor Streetscape Standards providing guidance for future installations of streetscape furnishings within the RBID. Leading up to the request to advertise, the draft Plan is continuing to undergo community and staff review. Staff will work to address all stakeholder comments and will recommend proposed revisions where warranted prior to the County Board's consideration to adopt the Plan.

BACKGROUND:

In connection to the Realize Rosslyn sector planning initiative, RBIC began studying the character of streetscapes within the Rosslyn BID in 2013 with the goal of creating a new vocabulary of streetscape elements to encourage more pedestrian use and vibrancy in the core of Rosslyn. RBIC, along with its consultant, conducted a thorough inventory of all existing elements on the sidewalks which is included in the Appendix of the plan. The inventory was analyzed to identify elements that adversely affected the visual integrity of the sidewalks, as well as missing elements that would otherwise create a unified and active streetscape. From this analysis and thorough review from staff and RBIC stakeholders, the draft "Streetscape Elements Master Plan" was created which was used to inform streetscape guidance in the 2015 Rosslyn Sector Plan. The streetscape section of the sector plan (pp.184-185) goes into greater detail on the intent and guidelines for the streetscape and includes potential methods for implementation. The sector plan embraces the overall aesthetic of the elements and supports the future installation. The sector plan recommends further refinement of the streetscape in Chapter 4 Implementation.

Implementation Action Item #46 states:

"Coordinate with the Rosslyn Business Improvement District to finalize streetscape elements and establish a process for implementation and installation." (Timing: short term)

Staff has been working with RBIC over the past year to finalize those elements and develop the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan that includes more detailed standards and outlines a process for implementation.

Implementation initially began in April 2016 when RBIC installed a demonstration project consisting of several of the proposed elements ("prototype") at the northwest corner of North Oak Street and Wilson Boulevard in Rosslyn. Prior to installation of the prototype, RBIC presented the elements to and received support from the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) and the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC). Staff was directly involved in the design development of the elements and prototype installation as well. The prototype has been in place for one year and the elements have been well received by the public. The second installation of the elements was done in late 2016 at JBG's Central Place development project just east of the Rosslyn Metro. Both installations were reviewed and approved by staff via the administrative change process to the landscape plans for the respective site plans

RBIC provided various opportunities for public input throughout the development of the streetscape elements plan. In addition, RBIC continued to gather feedback about the prototype installation over the past year. All of this input help inform additional revisions and refinements that are reflected in the draft Plan.

When the prototype was unveiled to the public in 2016 it included trashcans, benches, bike racks, planter pots, a historical tableau, tree fence labels, an information cart, and a news box corral. One element not installed as part of the prototype is the parklet, due to the then incomplete design for the parklet prototype. Over the past year, staff from the Department of Environmental Services (DES) and Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (DCPHD) have been working with RBIC to finalize a design for a parklet prototype that is included in the draft Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan under consideration for adoption. Staff researched parklet programs and design criteria used in other U.S. cities to develop a set of draft design guidelines for RBIC and its consultant to adhere to throughout design development. As of April 2017, staff has completed review of the parklet design and RBIC is waiting on adoption of the Plan and approval of the parklet prototype to proceed. At the time of adoption, the County Board will need to approve a Memorandum of Agreement, now being drafted, to identify responsibility for the maintenance and long term care of the elements. RBIC will then move forward with fabrication of the parklet which may take three to four months.

Staff has worked with RBIC to complete a Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan with detailed recommendations, guidelines, and specific implementation actions. Leading up to the Request to Advertise, staff is reviewing the draft Plan and considering potential additional revisions in response to community input. Once adopted, this Plan will be used in parallel with the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Streetscape Standards, an administrative document prepared by DCPHD in 2003 (updated in 2007), which largely serves as a compendium of streetscape guidance from previously adopted sector plans in the corridor. The Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan will also be a useful tool for RBIC, staff, design professionals, and the private development community in helping to realize the vision set forth in the Rosslyn Sector Plan.

DISCUSSION:

The Plan

The Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan for the Rosslyn BID area will establish a cohesive set of streetscape furnishings to strengthen the district's character and enhance the pedestrian experience. As such, it will be a useful tool to guide future investment in the public realm. The Plan sets forth goals, key elements, recommendations, phasing, and design guidelines that have emerged from the planning process. These elements culminate in Implementation Guidance with recommended future actions to achieve the full vision of the Plan. Further, the recommendations of the Plan support several goals set forth in the Rosslyn Sector Plan.

Streetscape Elements

The streetscape elements in the plan include benches, trash and recycling cans, planter pots, bike racks, tables, chairs, an information cart, a solar charging station, a news box corral, a newspaper vending machine, tree fence labels, sign poles, tableau informational markers, and a parklet- a publicly accessible deck platform that serves as an extension of the sidewalk, usually located in

the parking lane adjacent to the curb. The plan also includes minor enhancements that can be done relatively easily and at low cost, such as repainting light poles and planter pots to match furnishings nearby to reduce visual clutter and give them a fresh look. The plan does not recommend any dimensional changes or changes to sidewalk paving materials, curbs, utilities, or other infrastructure that is also part of the streetscape environment.



The Rosslyn Streetscape Elements

Phasing

The phasing and implementation of the streetscape elements is intended to be generally in accordance with the Rosslyn Sector Plan. A phasing proposal is included as a guide to implementation, with priority given to areas with the greatest need and highest levels of pedestrian activity. This phasing guide is intended to be flexible in order to be responsive to the dynamic nature of development in Rosslyn.

- Phase 1 (Primary Pedestrian Areas)- includes the prototype installation
- Phase 2 (Secondary Pedestrian Areas)
- Phase 3 (Tertiary Pedestrian Areas)

(refer to Phasing Map in the Plan, Page 27)

The phasing depicted on the map may overlap and should be understood as a baseline that will be dynamically modified as necessary to allow flexibility to take advantage of ongoing development or to avoid unforeseen conflicts. RBIC will provide updates on phasing and implementation annually as part of its County Board presentation of its work plan and budget.

Phase 1 was initiated with the prototype installation at the corner of North Oak Street and Wilson Boulevard in April 2016. Construction of the parklet prototype, pending adoption of this plan, will complete the prototype installation. Where approved through the review process, Phase 1 implementation will continue using previously approved funds.

Implementation Guidance

The implementation of the streetscape elements will focus on sidewalks within the RBID boundary and is expected to be a joint effort with RBIC, property owners and the County.

As proposed, at the time of requesting a permit to install streetscape elements, RBIC must demonstrate the consent of pertinent property owners with respect to the installation as well as maintenance of such elements. In cases where the property owner does not consent to installation or maintenance, no permit shall be issued. In cases where RBIC is requesting permission to install within areas not covered by an existing site plan RBIC must also commit to maintenance.

The section below outlines the different scenarios in which the streetscape elements, excluding the parklet, would most likely be implemented:

Scenario 1- Funding request from RBIC through approval of annual work plan and budget

In this scenario, RBIC could use approved funds towards implementation. For example, RBIC could use funds to replace existing elements that they already own and maintain, or add new elements to the streetscape where the County owns the property or ROW. This might include replacing trashcans or recycling cans at a corner, or adding planters in areas lacking greenery.

Scenario 2- Special Exception, 4.1 Site Plan Process, or Use Permit

In this scenario, staff would refer to the Rosslyn Sector Plan and the adopted Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan to ensure that the streetscape design and elements are installed in accordance with the plans and any other relevant policy documents. Consistent with standard condition language, the site plan conditions would also specifically reference and call for consistency with and adherence to these plans. Following approval by the County Board, the Plan would be used by staff during the final landscape plan submission associated with the approved site plan to check for compliance.

Scenario 3- Administrative Changes to Site Plans

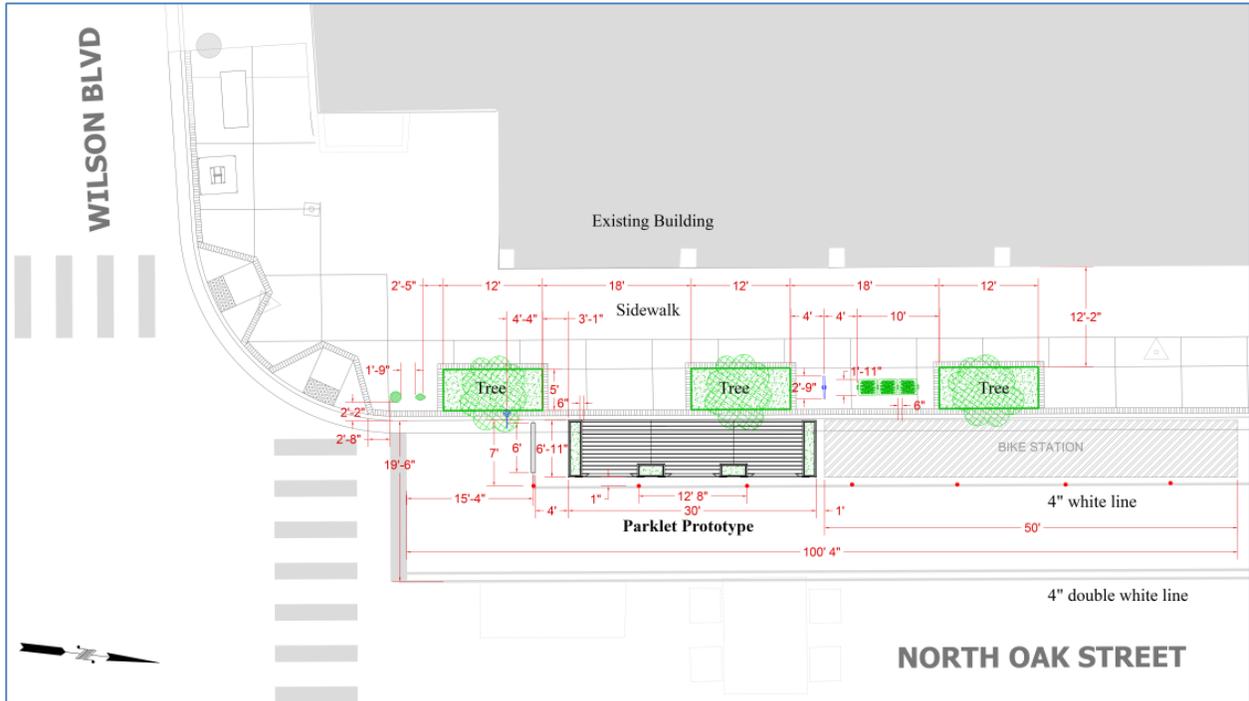
In this scenario, a property owner for an approved site plan may implement the elements by making improvements to the streetscape, either through their own initiative or as part of efforts by RBIC. For example, the street furnishings could be upgraded or new elements added by using the plan and submitting an application to the Zoning Office for an administrative change to the landscape plan. Staff would refer to the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan during review of the application to check for compliance. The application would include a letter of support and consent from the property owner as required currently with a submission.

Parklet Prototype

Adoption of the plan under consideration includes the entirety of the streetscape elements in the plan, including the parklet prototype. The parklet prototype is site specific and will be located on

the northwest corner of North Oak Street and Wilson Boulevard as depicted on the following page. Further detail of the parklet prototype is included in the Appendix of the Plan.

Additionally, staff from DES is considering locating a Capital Bikeshare station adjacent to the parklet which would provide both a visual and physical barrier for protection. The final design and location of the bikeshare station will be subsequent to adoption of this Plan, and is not part of the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan.



Plan View of Parklet Prototype



Rendering of Parklet Prototype

The prototype will remain installed for a period of two years and evaluated by RBIC and County staff to inform any design changes or identify issues for future parklet installations. While the Plan supports it, future parklet installations will require a separate process and future action by the County Board. The implementation matrix in the plan includes a short-term action item to fulfill this staff recommendation.

Maintenance of Parklet Prototype

As envisioned, the parklet would be installed the right-of-way owned by the County Board. Therefore, the County Board can take action on the parklet by adopting the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan and authorizing the County Manager to execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with RBIC prior to installation (see implementation matrix in plan). Finally, once the MOA is signed, RBIC can proceed with permit applications to install the prototype.

Maintenance of Streetscape Elements

Future implementation of the streetscape elements within the Rosslyn Business Improvement District (RBID) will be achieved through the County's Special Exception Site Plan process. At the time of County Board approval of future site plans, staff will recommend language in the site plan conditions requiring the maintenance of streetscape and sidewalk improvements (inclusive of paving, street trees, furnishings, etc.) for the life of the project. In addition, staff will recommend compliance with the Rosslyn Sector Plan, the Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan, as well as other relevant County policy documents. Older site plans may require future amendments to site plan conditions to include maintenance of the elements. Finally, as part of an administrative change to the landscape plan, a maintenance agreement could be included as part of the application and request that ultimately gets approved by the Zoning Administrator.

CONCLUSION: The Rosslyn Sector Plan sets forth a vision and framework for the neighborhood, blocks, buildings, streets, and open spaces. It is within those spaces- the public realm- where the details matter most. As a major part of the public realm, the streetscape environment is comprised of many attributes that either detract from or reinforce an interesting and memorable pedestrian experience. The draft Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan under consideration for adoption includes a dynamic and cohesive family of street furnishings that, once installed, will strengthen the district's character and enhance the pedestrian experience in Rosslyn. Therefore, it is recommended that the County Board authorize the advertisement of public hearings on the draft Rosslyn Streetscape Elements Plan and approval of the parklet prototype installation by the Planning Commission on June 5, 2017 and the County Board on June 17, 2017.

NO PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS: