

ROSSLYN
PLAZA
SUPPORT



1911 N. Ft. Myer Dr. Suite LL-10
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209
703-522-6628

ROSSLYNVA.ORG
twitter.com/rosslynva
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February 26, 2016

Libby Garvey, Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chairman Garvey:

We are writing in support of the Vornado/Charles E. Smith – Gould Property Company Rosslyn Plaza project scheduled to be heard by the County Board in March 2016. The Rosslyn Business Improvement Corporation (RBIC) has been involved throughout the Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) process. The RBIC Urban Design Committee (UDC) has reviewed the project on several occasions, and voted to recommend approval of the project at its January 2016 meeting.

Rosslyn Plaza Reinforces the Realize Rosslyn Vision

RBIC supports the Rosslyn Plaza proposal, as presented by the developer, for the positive contributions to Rosslyn’s public realm, its range of uses, pedestrian activity, recreation, retail support, and connectivity.

While we recognize the conceptual nature of the plan and appreciate the challenges of the site, we are satisfied that this PDSP supports and fulfills the key recommendations and vision of the Realize Rosslyn Plan. We appreciate that the site provides a wide variety of interconnected pedestrian open spaces, an active esplanade and an 18th street anchor, while preserving critical view corridors outlined in the sector plan.

Rosslyn Plaza Park Should Be Located on Kent Street

The UDC discussed the merits of the location of the proposed park at length, weighing concerns regarding sunlight, noise, relation to retail and connections to the street, Freedom Park, and Rosslyn’s core. In the end, the Committee overwhelmingly recognized that the park will be best used at the western portion of the site, where it is adjacent to an improved Kent Street, connected to Freedom Park, visible from Wilson Blvd. and 19th Street, and best suited to attract pedestrians into the site. We strongly prefer this location as it will support the surrounding retail and will better connect to Rosslyn’s core. RBIC’s concern of another hidden open space if the park were instead located on Arlington Ridge Road cannot be understated, as Rosslyn is full of examples of unused open space not connected to pedestrian flow and accessible from the street.

Conclusion

This critical site will be the face of Rosslyn from all points east of the Potomac and will become an anchor site integral to Rosslyn’s core. In working with this project over the years, we have seen continuous improvement to the site plan and believe that once realized, Rosslyn Plaza will be a key destination.

We commend staff’s efforts in guiding the final phase of the project through the review process, and look forward to the County Board’s approval of this PDSP and the site plan proposals to follow.

Sincerely,

Mary-Claire Burick
President, Rosslyn Business Improvement Corporation



ARLINGTON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 900, Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703-228-3689 FAX 703-228-7548 www.arlingtonva.us

March 5, 2015

Ms. Libby Garvey, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Rosslyn Plaza PDSP (Rezoning and SP #422)

Dear Chair Garvey,

I am writing to express the view of the Transportation Commission regarding the application for rezoning and site plan #422, Rosslyn Plaza Phased Development Site Plan

The Transportation Commission, by a vote of 9-0 recommends approval of the rezoning and Phased Development Site Plan #422 for the Rosslyn Plaza Project.

The Commission heard this item at its meeting on Thursday, February 25th. The Commission heard a presentation from the applicant and from staff. There were two public speakers. Mr. Quirk represented the North Rosslyn Civic Association and spoke in opposition of the proposed building height and density, with concerns over the congestion in the area. Mr. Hunt requested that TC consider the big picture impact of the proposed development on congestion and walking conditions.

Present and voting at the meeting were Commissioners Hubbard, Schroll, Gearheart, Dickson, Perez, Perkins, Price, Weir and McGuire. Commissioner Warren was present, but abstained. Some commissioners expressed a concern regarding parking and travel lane widths on Wilson Blvd adjacent to the property. It was understood that the lane widths presented by the applicant met the county's minimum requirements and that actual lane widths would be determined during the site plan review process for the applicable development phase.

I am happy to answer any questions at mperkins@engineer.com.

Regards,

Michael Perkins
Commissioner



**ARLINGTON COUNTY
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**
2100 CLARENDON BOULEVARD, SUITE 414
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201



March 8, 2016

Honorable Libby Garvey, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Support of Planning Commission Actions on Rosslyn Plaza Phased Development Site Plan

Dear Chair Garvey:

The Park and Recreation Commission strongly supports the actions taken on March 3, 2016 by the Planning Commission for the Rosslyn Plaza Phased Development Site Plan and urges the Board to support these recommendations.

Size of the Open Space

We concur with the Planning Commission and note that .81 acres is **not** “about an acre”, and therefore does not comport with the Rosslyn Sector Plan Guidelines for Rosslyn Plaza Park. We support the recommendation of a minimum size of .95 acres.

We continue to object to the fact that other parameters, such as building height limits and street cross sections are defined quite specifically to the foot, but when an already small open space is reduced by 1/5th that is somehow considered acceptable. We believe that metrics and specificity are important in all aspects of planning and should not be disregarded when it comes to parks and open spaces.

Likewise, we note that the applicant frequently refers to Bryant Park in New York City as a model for Rosslyn Plaza Park. Bryant Park, at 9.6 acres is over 10 times the size of the proposed Rosslyn Park and therefore, is able to accommodate a wide range of amenities and programming. A larger Rosslyn Plaza Park would serve more uses.

Design Guidelines, Performance Criteria and Integrated Open Space Planning

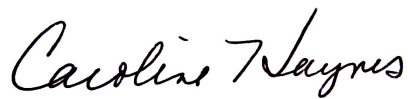
This project provides a once in a generation opportunity to transform a highly underserved area with respect to park and recreation amenities and to diversify the variety of public spaces and recreation amenities. Adherence to the design guidelines and performance criteria is critical to ensuring success of these spaces. We support a robust, integrated park planning process as recommended by the Planning Commission that includes all of the planned open spaces. We look forward to ensuring that the form and design of the surrounding buildings support a mix of passive and active recreation, that sunlight is maximized in Rosslyn Plaza Park, and that visual and physical connectivity to the other open spaces is provided, all of which are called for in the Rosslyn Sector Plan and the Rosslyn Plaza Park Guidelines.

Temporary Parks

We support the recommendation for temporary parks, especially given the anticipated extended time frame for the full development of this project. The temporary uses of Central Place and Plaza on 19th Street exemplify the success of “pop up parks.” As envisioned in the Rosslyn Sector Plan, we need to take full advantage and make creative uses of these interim spaces. Temporary parks will benefit the economic viability of the various phases of the PDSP, and warrant support accordingly.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline Haynes".

Caroline Haynes, Chair
Park and Recreation Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Arlington County Planning Commission
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Steven Cover, Director, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development



ARLINGTON COUNTY URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION



2700 South Taylor Street
Arlington, VA 22206

January 8, 2016

The Honorable Libby Garvey, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Subject: Rosslyn Plaza Phased Development Site Plan

Dear Chair Garvey:

The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) has reviewed the proposed Rosslyn Plaza Phased Development Site Plan for its treatment of tree canopy and we are pleased to see the large number of trees proposed along the streets and within urban open spaces of this plan. The plan clearly recognizes the important environmental, human scale and economic benefits of trees. The character of Rosslyn would benefit greatly from this development. However, there are aspects of the plan that raise concerns.

The plaza in the proposed plan is only 0.8 acres in size, smaller than the 1 acre plaza that was called for in the recently adopted Rosslyn Sector Plan. This reduced size and the placement of the plaza in the sun shadow of surrounding buildings for most of the year raise questions about the ability of trees to thrive in the plaza. The County Board should explore options for increasing the size of the plaza to the acre called for in the sector plan and require sun studies to determine which species would be appropriate for the plaza.

The plan calls for some buildings to be cantilevered over the sidewalk and street trees. The UFC has commented on cantilevered buildings in at least two recent site plans and warned against this practice, because it restricts the tree's height and blocks sunlight. There is only one case along Wilson Blvd. near the Courthouse where the Commission did not oppose the use of a cantilevered building; in that case the site was very narrow and would only achieve a useable office layout with the cantilever.

The street network around and within the Rosslyn Plaza plan does not pose the physical constraints of the Courthouse site, so there is no reason to allow buildings that are cantilevered over public space. If the Board allows any such overhangs, the UFC strongly urges that the cantilevering begin a minimum of 60 feet above ground level. This would allow trees to grow to a height at which they would provide some canopy to shade sidewalks and streets, though it would still impinge on trees' ability to absorb water and sunlight.

The Rosslyn Sector Plan calls for tree canopy in the area to meet or exceed overall coverage of 15 percent, and the Rosslyn Plaza plan would contribute towards this goal.

However, the plan is accompanied by a set of design guidelines that embody some details that are problematic; these guidelines would be approved with the plan and would guide development over the many years of this multi-phased development. These design guidelines call for trees planted over structures or adjacent to sidewalks to use a structural-soil mix to support the sidewalk while also serving as a planting medium.

The UFC has concerns over the extensive use of structural soils for trees in this project. Structural soils are primarily gravel- or sand-based media with very little real soil (and its nutrients and micro-organisms) to sustain tree growth. Recent, preliminary research by the Bartlett Tree Research Lab shows that test trees are not growing as well in structural gravel- and sand-based soils as in a basic sandy loam. In fact, trees in the structural-soil test plots look undersized and lack vigor. Structural soils currently are a County approved soil medium for trees, but this recent tree research suggests that the County should reconsider approval of this soil mix for trees or should limit its use.

Although structural soil might be useful in limited locations, the Rosslyn Plaza plan proposes this type of soil medium for virtually the entire three-block area covered, because the majority of trees are planted over structures or adjacent to sidewalks. This creates a concern that the majority of street and plaza trees will not have more sustainable soil for long-term vitality and health. It is not in public interest to have trees stalling out after 20 or 25 years due to lack of nutrients and microbiology from structural soils.

The UFC requests that the Rosslyn plan's design guidelines be revised to provide sandy loam soils for all canopy trees. This would require using suspended-sidewalk treatments, such as Silva Cells or Strata Cells to hold up the sidewalks. These treatments provide an uncompacted and more sustainable soil mix for tree root systems.

As with all urban tree planting conditions, the UFC continues to request that trees receive a minimum of 1,000 cubic feet of amended soil in order for the trees to achieve mature canopies over time. Also, if tree pits are to be used for storm-water management, we encourage the County to allow storm-water to be infiltrated in a manner that does not result in sunken tree pits. Sunken tree pits in downtown areas – where pedestrian volumes are high and many sidewalk clear zones are not very wide – would be a pedestrian hazard, a maintenance problem and would restrict tree species diversity.

The three-block area of Rosslyn Plaza is significant in size and location. Its parks, plazas and streetscapes will provide the eastern anchor for Rosslyn's open-space network and will attract many users for recreation, employment and housing. Therefore, it is important that the proposed tree canopy lives up to everyone's design expectations.

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Nora E Palmatier

Nora Palmatier, Chair

Urban Forestry Commission