

Crystal City Civic Association  
Summary of Open Space Workshop  
Tuesday July 29, 2014, 7-9 pm

CCCA Background: Two maps were presented, showing the public open (“green”) space currently in Crystal City and the more limited space that is proposed under the Crystal City Sector Plan of 2010-2050. Discussion focused on three park areas, with some background on historical efforts to protect green space in Crystal City. All parks in Crystal City are owned by the developers, but site plans to develop them (e.g., construct buildings or tennis courts) must be approved by Arlington County. Under the Crystal City Sector Plan, modification of the parks by the developers may result in Arlington County acquiring the parks and assuming management control.

CCCA Background and Participant Comments

1. 15<sup>th</sup> Street: The Crystal City Sector Plan calls for “a reconfiguration of 15<sup>th</sup> Street” to provide “a passive picturesque park” in the middle of the street between Clark-Bell and Crystal Drive “as a place for respite, while increasing the amount of usable open space and opportunities for tree canopy in the immediate area.” The timeframe for these plans may be in the next 4 years, and it may be difficult to convince the County to make changes. Sometime in the next few weeks, the CCCA may organize a meeting with the Parks Department to discuss our concerns.
2. “Gateway Park” on Crystal Drive facing Waterford House and Crystal Gateway: The Crystal City Sector Plan calls for this to be changed from a passive park to “provide active and passive recreational opportunities.” Active could mean asphalt tennis or volleyball courts. Why does Arlington County want Gateway Park to be active with courts? They want to “provide an improved entrance park for and direct pedestrian connection to” Long Bridge Park. Concerns focused on the possible loss of green space and an increase in noise. The timeframe for this may be 8-10 years, but the time to organize and work against this change is now. Once the plan is submitted to Engineering for design work, it will become much harder. Again, a visit with the Parks Department should take place soon. Arguments could be:
  - a. This is the wrong mixture for this park which is surrounded by residential buildings, primarily condos owned by an older, stable population versus the apartment buildings further down Crystal Drive where a younger, more transient population tends to live. An active park is not appropriate here.
  - b. Why create a quiet, passive park on 15<sup>th</sup> Street where no residents live (other than occupants of the Crowne Plaza Hotel) and an active park likely to be quite noisy, which is surrounded by residents? (Unfortunately, it may be too late to get the County to switch the active portion to 15<sup>th</sup> Street and courts are unlikely to be installed in the middle of a road way.)
  - c. Currently, people play soccer and Frisbee in this park, and families come with their children to run around, play, and picnic. Where would they be able to do this if the park is turned into asphalted courts? Not likely to happen on 15<sup>th</sup> Street in the middle of the road way.
  - d. Ball parks with fences create a visual and psychological wall that would run counter to an inviting entryway to Long Bridge Park if that’s what is wanted.
  - e. Long Bridge Park provides now, and will provide even more in the future, active recreational space to the north of Crystal City. Virginia Highlands Park, scheduled to be renewed in the near future, provides active recreational space to the west. This was the basis of the

argument against active space in the recently approved PenPlace open space and should be the same argument for Gateway Park. We don't need an active park there.

3. Small parks in the southern part of Crystal City: The Crystal City Sector Plan calls for several small parks to disappear where buildings will be constructed and for new smaller parks to be eventually constructed. Some participants noted that these small parks are well used during the week, with a constituency of daytime workers, not residents, who may be unaware of these plans. Some participants pondered the idea of an online petition to "save the parks" though this would not be a CCCA function.
4. Long Bridge Park: Although it is a great advantage to Crystal City, LBP belongs fully to Arlington County and is not part of Crystal City. The controversial Phase 2 Aquatic Center is on hold, but some parts have been funded and are going ahead. Under Phase 3a, the new play area elements at the South 6th Street entry area adjacent to fields #3 and #4 are to be constructed by the summer of 2015. Phase 3b will include construction of a fourth playing field and an observation tower with panoramic views of the Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary. Phase 4, clearly way in the future, proposes a large Multiple Activity Center (MAC) with indoor soccer, futsal, basketball, volleyball, tennis, and community events among other activities.

Of major consideration is the conceptual engineering report for the Long Bridge Study which is expected to be completed this summer. The 1905 railroad bridge is nearing the end of its lifespan, and requires upgrading. Four different transportation options across Long Bridge to Arlington have been proposed, including pedestrian and bike trails, as well as additional train tracks, streetcar, and vehicle lanes. This study is being managed by the District of Columbia, with CSX input. However, there is a long timeframe of probably 10 years for any construction to start even after a study is approved. There is potential for major impact on Long Bridge Park and Crystal City—traffic, noise, etc.--if all of these changes were to occur, and we need to follow these issues carefully.