

**REVISED AS OF 1/29/09**


*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 23, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION OF CITY COMMENTS TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION CONCERNING THE WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICE BRAC-133 PROJECT AT THE MARK WINKLER CENTER SITE, AND RESOLUTION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**ISSUE:** Providing comments concerning the Washington Headquarters Service BRAC-133 planned development to the National Capital Planning Commission for its February 5 public hearing, and the creation of a formal citizen advisory group for the project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Ratify the revised comments and recommendations to the National Capital Planning Commission concerning the Washington Headquarters Service BRAC-133 office building complex at the Mark Center (Attachment 1); and
- (2) At the request of the West End Task Force on BRAC-133, defer establishing a BRAC-133 Advisory Committee to serve as the formal advisory group between the surrounding neighborhoods, and the City, the Army and Duke Realty, until the February 10 Council meeting.

**BACKGROUND:** On Monday, January 26 City staff held a meeting with the multiple civic associations created and comprised "West End Task Force on BRAC-133"(Task Force). During this meeting City staff, Task Force members, as well as representatives from the Army and Duke Realty had an extensive discussion and dialogue concerning the planned new Washington Headquarters Service (WHS) BRAC-133 Office building planned for the Mark Center site. Topics discussed included building and site design, transportation, the environmental impact, public safety, as well as the structure of future community input. As a result the initial January

docket item on this subject (including the letter to the National Capital Planning Commission) has been modified to reflect those discussions. The changes are noted using overstrikes or are underlined.

As part of the federal 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, significant shifts of Department of Defense (DoD) offices from leased space in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax County into more secure space on military installations in the Washington, D.C. region and throughout the country were approved by the BRAC Commission, and then allowed to become law by the President and Congress. The moves from leased to more secure, federally-owned locations were proposed by DoD to meet the stringent post 9-11 federal anti-terrorism standards. By federal statute all of these BRAC moves across the nation are required to be completed by September 15, 2011. In those BRAC recommendations, the City lost some 7,200 direct DoD jobs, as well as stands to lose many related defense contractor and private sector jobs, as that DoD workforce leaves the City.

As part of the 2005 BRAC moves some 18,000 jobs in the region (many from Arlington and some from Fairfax County) were slated to be moved onto the Ft. Belvoir post where substantial new construction would be required to house these new personnel. In the implementation planning for the more than 18,000 new employees on Ft Belvoir, the determination was made that the road system that fed Ft. Belvoir could not handle the volume of jobs that the BRAC Commission decided should go to Ft. Belvoir. Negotiations among the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fairfax County and DoD did produce some road improvements, but not sufficient road and transit improvements to handle the volume of traffic that 18,000 DoD employees would generate. As a result, an agreement was struck to limit the number of new employees to be added to Ft. Belvoir to about 12,000.

That decision then resulted in DoD needing to find an alternative location for about 6,400 DoD employees who work for DoD offices such as the Washington Headquarters Service (WHS), the Office of Policy of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, other Secretary of Defense offices, offices of the DoD Inspector General, as well as a number of other DoD agencies. While this move has often been labeled a "WHS activity," the array of DoD functions is actually very diverse. In DoD terms this is titled a "BRAC-133" office building project, which originates from the decision numbering system used by the 2005 BRAC Commission.

In order to find sufficient office space that met the federal anti-terrorism standards for the 6,400 BRAC 133 office relocation, the DoD, through the Army Corps of Engineers, conducted a site search in Northern Virginia by using a competitive selection process, as well as considered redeveloping the massive federal GSA warehouse space area in the Springfield area of Fairfax County. Specifications were issued and the private sector responded with many sites in Northern Virginia. The Army then winnowed down the sites to two sites in Alexandria (the Victory Center site on Eisenhower Avenue, and the Mark Center site off of Seminary Road) as the best two private sector sites that could meet the Army's specifications. The two site owners were then asked to submit best and final proposals to the Army which then compared those proposals to the option of redeveloping the Springfield warehouse site.

The City supported both of the private sector Alexandria sites in large part, as the owners of those sites proffered to the City that their proposals for the sites were within the zoning envelope previously approved by the City for those two sites, meaning that the number of square feet of development and the traffic impact would be within the parameters of prior City approvals for those sites. In effect, through submitting development proposals the owners of those the two site owners were exercising the development rights previously approved by the City (2005 for the Victory Center, and 2004 for the Mark Center). The City also supported the relocation of those 6,400 DoD jobs to Alexandria to offset a large portion of the estimated 7,200 DoD jobs that Alexandria will be losing by 2011 due to the 2005 BRAC decisions.

On September 29, 2008, the Army announced it had selected the Mark Center site for the BRAC-133 office building, as the site which best met its specifications, and in December purchased the Mark Center land from Duke Realty. The total cost of the land and building when completed at the Mark Center is estimated at over \$1 billion. As is the norm with public procurement processes, the contents of the two proposals were not shared with the public including the City during the competitive selection process. Then after the release of the award information, the open award protest process was not also made public. It was not until the end of October until the many details of the project were able to begin to be provided. On December 4, the Army and Duke Realty held a community meeting at the Ramsay Elementary School.

**National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC):** Federal government projects (including military projects, such as the BRAC-133 office building at the Mark Center site) in the Washington, D.C. area, are subject to NCPC review. NCPC according to its web site ([ncpc.gov](http://ncpc.gov)) is “the central planning agency for federal land and buildings in the National Capital region ...NCPC’s core work revolves around the review of federal development in the region.... Through its review NCPC also ensures that federal development meets the highest design standards and complies with Commission policy”

NCPC is holding its first public hearing on the Mark Center BRAC-133 project on February 5 to consider and approve NCPC staff comments on the project’s concept design, and final foundation plans. Since all BRAC projects are on a fast-track to meet their September 15, 2011, completion deadline, NCPC has been asked to approve the foundation plans, but the approval of final building design plans will not occur for several more months, as well as will be subject to another NCPC public hearing. NCPC staff had requested that the City provide its comments and recommendations to NCPC by January 21, so that the NCPC had the benefit of those comments when they were writing their report to the NCPC Commission members. This request put the City in an awkward position of providing comments before either the community, or Council, had the opportunity to review the comments. As a result, when the City staff wrote their comments to NCPC (Attachment I) it was stated:

*“Given the required NCPC deadline....this letter contains preliminary comments and recommendations from the City of Alexandria and are subject to amendments based upon a planned community meeting on January 26 and a City Council meeting on January 27.”*

Immediately after sending this letter to NCPC staff, this initial letter was also sent to Council, to the chair of the West End Task Force on BRAC-133, the Army, and Duke Realty.

It is recommended that Council endorse the comments and recommendations contained in the revised January 21 letter (Attachment I) (~~or if a potentially revised letter as~~ which reflects the results of staff's meeting with the West End Task Force on BRAC-133 on January 26).

It is staff's understanding that there will be another NCPC public hearing in a number of months where ~~approval~~ endorsement of the site plan for the Mark Center building by NCPC will be considered. Further City comments and testimony can be provided for that hearing.

The following summarizes the major issues outlined in the attached letter to NCPC:

**Master Plan and Zoning:** Because the property is now owned by the federal government, the development proposal for this DoD building is not subject to City zoning regulations or control. The DoD has indicated that while it is not required to comply with the City's existing zoning, it is its intent to substantially conform with the City's existing zoning which was approved in 2004. This is important for the City, as substantially conforming to the zoning envelope, also means that the transportation impact of this project also should also likely be within the parameters of the transportation demand projected in 2004. The proposed building and adjacent parking garages are substantially different in design from that approved by the City in 2004. These substantial design changes are driven primarily by DoD antiterrorism standards which in effect require a substantial secure perimeter and greater setbacks from the property lines for security protection. This then caused the approved density to be consolidated into a single, taller building.

The highlights of the proposed building parameters are

- The building would be approximately 1,380,000 square feet. This compares with the approved zoning of 1,400,000 square feet.
- Previously this portion of the Mark Center site was approved for three buildings, which have now been melded into one building of two towers.
- The building would be 272 feet tall which is 22 feet higher than the maximum 250 height permitted by the zoning ordinance.
- The mechanical penthouses are 5 to 7 feet taller than permitted by the City's zoning.
- The parking garages will have a capacity of approximately 3,900 cars, which is approximately 1,000 cars fewer than that previously approved by the City in 2004.
- The proposed parking garage has been placed on about 20,000 square feet of the previously approved open space.

**Building and Site Design:**

Once the details of this project were allowed to be shared with the City, City staff started meeting with Duke Realty, its architects, and the Army to understand and to react to the proposed building design. The initial building design that had been submitted as part of the

Army's selection process had small windows, a large use of plain concrete, and a building top that was relatively plain.

In applying the *Alexandria Design Principles*, which the City requires all new buildings to conform to, a revised project design is being developed as a result of a collaboration between City staff, Duke Realty, and its architects. The key *City Design Principles* are:

- Provide a base/middle/top building hierarchy
- Incorporate multiple rhythms in the building façade
- Provide a solid-void ratio appropriate to Alexandria
- Create a skyline and articulated building tops

It appears that many of the City staff concepts and recommendations (more use of glass, more articulation of the building top, larger windows, greater use of color) and design ideas will be incorporated into the building's design. The attached NCPC letter (page 2 and 3) shows a proposed building redesign, which is still in process to discussion and refinement.

In addition to the buildings, the appearance of parking structures needs to be compatible with the material and design of the proposed office buildings, as well as the remainder of the Mark Center campus and open space.

While the site's two parking structures are not an item NCPC is scheduled to consider on February 5, the West End Task Force would like to see the parking garages be as "green as possible." This would mean not only using greenscape to clad the exterior of the garages but also green roofs added above the top deck of both the parking garages. These green roofs would mitigate to some degree the loss of Mark Center green wooded areas, as well as would create a more visually appealing vista for workers in the adjacent office towers, as well as the adjacent hotel tower guests.

All of the above design issues and recommendations are detailed in the attached letter to NCPC, which the City is requesting NCPC to use as its framework for responding to the DoD office building proposal. The West End Task Force reacted favorably to the revised design drawings and wanted the building roofline that faces Beauregard Street to have an enhanced building top articulated design, as now does the side of the building that faces I-395. City staff agrees that the building's side facing Beauregard (and seen from residences located north of I-395) be given the same quality of architecture as the other sides of the building.

**Green Buildings and Sustainable Building Practices:** While the proposed office building is planned to be a LEEDS Silver building. It is recommended by the City in the letter to NCPC, that as part of the LEEDS planning process, that the building architects and engineers focus on water use and reuse alternatives such as ultra-low flow fixtures, as well as creative elements such as consideration of wind-powered electricity generation elements on the building's rooftop. As a result of the meeting with the West End Task Force, it is recommended that NCPC recommend that the building plans and design be set to achieve a Gold level LEEDs rating. The Task Force thought that while Silver LEEDs was a positive step, that Silver was "average," and that if the

building was to be a “world class be all you can be building,” it should be designed as a Gold level LEEDs certified building.

**Site Security:** In order to meet the mandated federal anti-terrorism standards (which for a DoD building such as this are very stringent and specific), City staff are recommending to NCPC that the site security features be better integrated into the landscape design and overall site design of the Mark Center campus. While this DoD office building is now considered part of Ft. Belvoir, there are proven design elements which can be used to soften the appearance of the physical elements of security features so as to improve the appearance of the proposed Mark Center DoD office building and parking garages.

**Transportation:** One of the most important elements of this DoD BRAC-133 office building proposal is how the 6,400 employees and some visitors to the site will access the site using I-395, regional and City streets, as well as public and private transit systems. As stated in the City’s letter to NCPC, the proposed development will significantly impact the transportation systems surrounding the site. While the impact is projected to be less than what was projected for this site at the time the Mark Center CDD was approved in 2004, this lessened impact is based on the achievement of an aggressive 40 percent non-SOV (single occupant vehicle) mode share for travel to and from the site. While the 40% share is a level of non-SOV use that can be met, it will take a very robust transit plan to achieve that level on non-SOV usage. As part of the procurement process, the Army did not require that a detailed transportation demand management program (TDM) accompany the developers’ proposals. As a result a TDM plan is at an early stage of development with many details needing to be addressed.

Soon after the award was announced City, Duke Realty, WMATA, DASH and Army staff and their traffic consultants began to meet to discuss putting together a TDM that can achieve the 40% non-SOV requirement with traffic impact a major West End Task Force concern, the Task Force recommended that the TDM plan be set at a 50% non-SOV requirement. Work by Duke, Army and DoD staff and consultants are underway to prepare a TDM plan. One element that will likely be part of that plan will be the provision of the federal government of free federal government paid shuttle service between Metro stations (such as the Pentagon) and the Mark Center site. In recent years, federal law has changed and now allows federal agencies to provide commuter type federally-paid shuttle service to and from work sites. A Transit Center to provide transit vehicle access directly to the site is also proposed to be part of one of the new DoD parking garage structures on the Mark Center site.

Another important element of the transportation plan is the provision of local road capacity improvements adjacent to the Mark Center site on Beauregard and Seminary, including the intersection of those two streets. Duke Realty will be constructing and the federal government paying for those improvements which were all contemplated and approved as part of the 2004 City approvals of the Mark Center CDD development plans. It is the intent of Duke and the Army to have these local road improvements completed well before the September 15, 2011 opening date of this facility.

One new road improvement idea that City staff raised is the creation of a right-in and right-out access point from the southbound I-395 and Seminary Road slip ramp directly into one of the

proposed new DoD parking garages. Such an access may result in the diversion of some 25% of the traffic directly into and out of the DoD garages and thereby avoiding having to use the Seminary Road Beauregard interchange to access the DoD Mark Center site. The Army and Duke Realty are supportive of obtaining such access and plan to design their garage adjacent to the slip ramp to be able to handle such ingress and egress. This is one of the most important improvements for the surrounding neighborhoods, and NCPC should recommend to the Army that this design element to the parking garage be implemented as a priority initiative. In order to access an interstate highway from a non-public site, approval of VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is required. Such approval is usually difficult to obtain, but since this is access to a federally-owned site, there is some hope that FHWA would allow such access. City staff have met with VDOT, and VDOT has reacted positively and agreed to pay for the study that FHWA requires to accompany such a request. The Army has asked that this improvement be prequalified for Defense Access Road program funding if this access modification is approved. If such access is approved, the City and the Army would actively seek Defense Access Roads program funding to pay for such an improvement.

As Council is already aware, VDOT has been working with Fluor/Transurban on the I-95/395 HOT Lanes project, which includes a proposed new access point for the HOT lanes at the I-395 interchange at Seminary Road. Although the City has not supported similar proposals in the past, staff has proposed that this be re-evaluated and asked VDOT and Fluor/Transurban to expand their project studies to include a more detailed analysis of the potential benefits and neighborhood impacts of this new access point in light of the BRAC-133 site selection. The area traffic benefits and impacts of this proposed new access have been evaluated to a limited extent in the project's Interchange Justification Report studies and environmental impact documentation; however, the more detailed analysis needed for Alexandria to reconsider supporting this change have not yet been provided.

In regard to all of the above transportation issues, the City is requesting that NCPC support the City's position and assist in advocating to the various state and federal agencies who will be making the final decisions on these transportation matters. In particular the City is asking NCPC to require that the Army prepare a robust TDM plan that can clearly support the 40% non-SOV target, and in fact seek to meet a 50% non-SOV level.

**Environmental and Open Space Mitigation:** The footprint of the proposed BRAC 133 office building at the Mark Center site encroaches on a Resource Protection Area (RPA). In order to mitigate that encroachment, City staff has previously indicated to Duke Realty and to the Army that some mitigation should occur. Duke Realty and the Army agreed, and the Transportation and Environmental Services staff using customary measurements of mitigation (given the nature and size of the encroachment) have negotiated a \$0.4 million mitigation payment and agreement with Duke and the Army. The funds from that payment are proposed to be used to make stream bed improvements in the Holmes Run watershed area north of Beauregard Street. T&ES staff will work with the proposed BRAC-133 Advisory Group on where and how to apply that \$0.4 million. The West End Task Force reacted favorably to this solution and looks forward to working with City staff on plans to improve Holmes Run using these funds. The Task Force would also like to see the BRAC-133 site heavily landscaped (along the I-395 and Seminary Road perimeters in particular), as well as a one-for-one tree replacement program developed.

In the 2004 approved site plan there was a major open space area proposed and approved on the Mark Winkler site on which the various office buildings would be sited. One of the proposed parking garages encroaches on that planned open space by about 20,000 square feet. Duke Realty and the Army have not been agreeable to changing the floorplate of the proposed parking garage to avoid encroachment onto the previously planned open space. In the NCPC letter, the City is requesting that NCPC concur with the City's request, and that they should support the Army providing funding to purchase an equivalent amount of open space to replace the lost 20,000 square feet of open space.

**Neighborhood Advisory Group:** Through the fall, as the City learned more about the project and the process the Army had planned for implementation, City staff recommended that Duke Realty and/or the Army establish a community liaison group comprised primarily of representatives of neighboring civic associations. This model has worked well in the City and for many local governments in dealing with projects such as this. It was not until after the community meeting held by the Army Corps of Engineers on December 4, did the Army Corps and Duke Realty come to the conclusion that such a community liaison group idea had clear merit. After that meeting, Duke Realty and the Army began to prepare for such a group. However, just before invitation letters were to be issued, the Ft. Belvoir communications staff intervened, as the Mark Center site purchased by the Army in December was now officially a part of Ft. Belvoir. As a result, internal discussions within the Army about this liaison group request by the City delayed the creation of such a group.

While this internal Army discussion continued, the leadership of the civic associations in the neighborhoods impacted by the BRAC-133 office building reasonably decided not to wait for the Army to establish such a liaison group, and created the "West End Task Force on BRAC-133" and subsequently has held a number of meetings and has issued two memoranda (Attachment II and III). When City staff heard in December that such a group was being created, staff call the group's organizer and offered to meet with the group when the group wished. City staff were told that the Task Force preferred to meet several times without City staff and then would be ready to meet with City staff.

The first meeting between City staff and the Task Force members is scheduled for January 26. This will be a working meeting, where Task Force members, City staff, Duke Realty and the Army Corps can discuss various issues with the focus on getting Task Force input to the preliminary City letter to NCPC which is due in final form to NCPC on January 28.

City staff were notified today that the Army has now agreed to set up the formal liaison group with the neighboring civic associations, but will hold off issuing invitations pending discussions with the neighborhood on January 26 and the Council meeting on January 27.

Given the delay in setting up this community liaison group on a project that is on a BRAC law driven fast track for construction and completion, the Mayor has requested that Council consider setting up a neighborhood advisory group. Such a group would provide advice and comments to the City, Duke Realty and to the Army in regard to the BRAC-133 office building planning and construction process, including off-site transportation issues and proposals. Such a group would



also serve as a communication vehicle to inform and to discuss issues, ideas and concerns among all parties.

The proposed resolution (Attachment IV), if adopted by Council would establish this advisory group proposed to be titled "BRAC-133 Advisory Group". The specifics of this proposal include a 9 to 11-member Advisory Group comprised of representatives of the 7 civic associations that comprised or participated in the West End Task Force on BRAC-133, the West End Business Association, as well as one to three at-large members. The makeup of this group will be discussed with the West End Task Force on BRAC-133 on January 26. The staffing for the advisory group would be provided by the City, but would need the active participation by Duke Realty and the Army in order to be successful. The Advisory Group would advise on the building design, site design, TDM plan, local road improvements, I-395 issues such as the slip ramp and the HOT lanes access option, as well as construction impact issues such as truck traffic routes. It is proposed that this group be established and continue in force for one year (the City Code initial limit for ad hoc groups). If it seems needed to continue this Advisory Group beyond then (such as to the September, 2011 facility completion date), Council next January could decide on extending the Advisory Group's life.

The West End Task Force reaction to the idea of a City created advisory group was positive, and preferred a City-created group over an Army created group. However, the West End Task Force wanted some time to review and discuss the membership makeup and asked that Council defer the creation of the BRAC-133 Advisory Group. After receiving the Task Force feedback, staff will bring to Council a revised resolution creating the Advisory Group, hopefully by February 10.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- I. ~~January 24~~ Proposed Revised letter to NCPC from the ~~City Manager~~ Mayor
- II. West End Task Force on BRAC-133, January 9, 2009, Memorandum (see original docket item)
- III. West End Task Force on BRAC-133 January 20, 2009, Memorandum (see original docket item)
- IV. Proposed Resolution Establishing the BRAC 133 Advisory Group (see original docket item)

**STAFF:**

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning  
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning  
Patricia Escher, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning  
Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services  
Tom Culpepper, Deputy Director, Transportation and Environmental Services

**REVISED**

February 3, 2009

Mr. John V. Cogbill, III, Chairman  
National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)  
401 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington D.C. 20004

Re: NCPC Submission  
BRAC 133 Office Complex  
Mark Center  
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Mr. Cogbill:

We have reviewed the referenced applications and materials submitted to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPC) for the BRAC 133 office building within the Mark Center of Alexandria and submit the following comments based on the conceptual approval and foundation permit requested. ~~Given the required NCPC deadline of January 21 for the submission of comments by the City. This letter contains preliminary final comments and recommendations from the City of Alexandria, and are subject to amendments based upon a planned community meeting on January 26 and a City Council meeting on January 27 supersedes the City's initial comment letter of January 21.~~ The City understands that the applicant will be required to submit a subsequent application for final design approval incorporating additional detail regarding materials, colors and design refinements for the building and site plan. We will provide additional comments at the final review process which we anticipate to be within the next three to four months.

As discussed later in this letter, we have concerns related to the details of the proposed Transportation Management Plan in that the Plan has not been worked out in detail, and is absolutely key to the achievement of the projects stated minimum of 40% non-single occupancy vehicle goal. At the January 26th, community meeting, the neighborhood group strongly recommended that the applicant strive for 50% non-single occupancy vehicle trips. The City believes that a 50% trip goal is "warranted."

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While the proposal is not subject to regulatory approval by the Alexandria Planning Commission and City Council, the City appreciates that the Department of Defense has indicated that it is their intent to substantially conform to the existing zoning. In addition to zoning conformance, due to the project's size, height and visibility, it is the City's strong opinion that the design and materials of the project be refined to ensure that the quality of design and construction is commensurate with its size and scale. The City recommends that if NCPC approves the concept design and foundation permit as requested by the applicant, it should be with the understanding that the applicant will address the design comments outlined in this letter and continue to work with the City regarding the final design, materials and colors and refinement to the site plan prior to the submission of the final NCPC review. Because of the BRAC-driven accelerated review schedule, the comments below are preliminary, and we feel it is important to obtain additional comments from the adjoining residents, communities and businesses to be reflected in the City's comments and testimony at the February NCPC hearing. It is also crucial that the applicant communicate and work with the adjoining communities throughout the review and construction process to minimize impacts to nearby property owners and residents.

**A. Master Plan and Zoning**

The City's Master Plan, composed of a series of Small Area Plans, and zoning districts are used to review development proposals in the City to ensure that they conform with the City's long range plan. The Mark Center property is a portion of land within the larger tract known as the Winkler Coordinated Development District (CDD) in the western portion of the City governed by the *Alexandria West Small Area Plan (SAP)*. The SAP envisioned this parcel to be a low density/high-rise office use due to its close proximity to Seminary Road and access to I-395. The previously City approved CDD acknowledges that higher density office use at this location is appropriate.

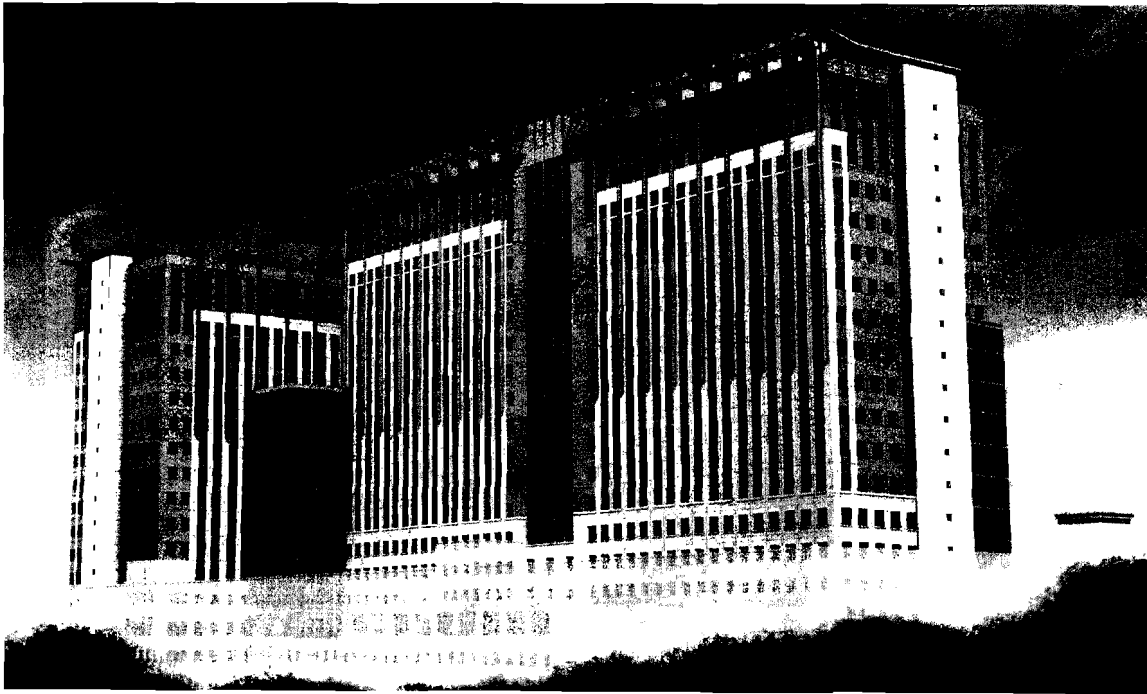
Because the property is owned by the Federal Government, the proposal is not subject to regulatory approval by the City's Planning Commission and City Council. The Department of Defense has indicated that while it is not required to comply with the City's existing zoning, it is their intent to substantially conform to the existing zoning.

The Coordinated Development District (CDD) zoning for the site permits a relatively high density and heights up to 250 feet. In 2004, this portion of the Mark Center development went through a development review process and received approval for a total of five buildings on the property with an approximate total floor area of 1,700,000 square feet of development and building heights up to 240 feet.

The applicant is proposing to develop two of the remaining three development blocks within Mark Center with approximately 1,400,000 square feet of office and associated uses. The applicant is proposing approximately 1,380,000 square feet within one building rather than the

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three previously approved. The current proposed building height of approximately 272 feet exceeds the previously approved building height (240 feet) and the maximum height (250 feet) permitted by the zoning ordinance. The mechanical penthouses are taller than permitted by the City's zoning.



Additional aspects of the proposal, such as the site layout and floor area ratio, vary from the original 2004 proposal. For example, a portion of the proposed seven-level parking structure encroaches into the previously planned and approved central open space. Another variation from the original proposal is the incorporation of an 8,700 square foot transit center in the proposed parking structure.

**B. Building and Site Design Comments**

The City requires that all new buildings conform to a set of design principles as outlined in *Alexandria Design Principles*. A project of this size and type would be subject to the following applicable principles:

- Provide a base/middle/top building hierarchy.
- Incorporate multiple rhythms in the building façade.
- Provide a solid-void ratio appropriate to Alexandria.
- Create a skyline and articulated building tops.

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The two building drawings in this letter reflect new drawings by the applicant's architect after receiving City comments, and as a result, have begun to reflect City staff design comments and concerns.

The following comments are based on achieving compliance with these design principles and maintaining the high level of quality of buildings within the City.

***Provide a Base/Middle/Top Building Hierarchy – Multiple Rhythms***

We recommend the use of additional glass (some of which will not be vision glass because of the blast protection requirements) to reduce the perceived size of the building, provide additional visual variety and provide a more clearly defined base, middle and top to the building. We also recommend the use of contrasting darker and lighter colors of architectural precast panels to enhance vertical expression and multiple rhythms.



The principle of multiple rhythms in the City design standards is especially important in a large scale building such as this one to reduce the perceived height, length and to introduce human scale elements as part of the building.

***Provide a solid-void ratio appropriate to Alexandria***

One of the design challenges inherent in the proposal is the required blast resistant facade. This initially resulted in a predominantly solid faced expression with square windows, making the building appear larger and the windows smaller than required by the City's design guidelines. The smaller windows were atypical of most office buildings and made the building appear more

monolithic. In response to the City's comments the windows in the revised design were enlarged for the entire building and darker spandrel panels were added, resulting in an overall less monolithic expression.

As a way to better define the top of the building and to balance the solid to void ratio, the applicant has agreed to introduce a three story glass expression around the top of the building. The added glass feature creates a clearly defined frieze band and top expression and reduces the perceived mass of the building.

***Skyline – Clearly articulated building top.***

This building will be one of the most visible buildings in Alexandria and one of the most visible government office buildings in Northern Virginia. Therefore, it is essential that the building have a well-defined building top to provide a visually interesting addition to the skyline. The applicant has revised the top of the building to provide a more distinctive top expression as well as vertical brackets to integrate the top as an integral element of the building. The applicant has worked with the City to accentuate the top expression by increasing the spacing between the building and the roof-top wing. The applicant has added additional detail to the top to express the vertical construction of the wing and increased its "lightness." As this project moves forward, it is essential that the applicant continue to work with the City to ensure that the final design, materials and lighting are appropriately designed for this visually prominent building. The concern for quality design and materials was reiterated by the community and they requested that the north and western elevations of the building provide an enhanced and more distinctive building top in a manner more equivalent to the eastern and southern (I-395) building elevations. The City agrees with this request.

**C. Parking Structures**

The proposal consists of two parking structures, one adjacent to I-395 and the other adjacent to Mark Center Drive. While the design of these parking structures is not part of the current application to NCPC, we recommend that the applicant work with the City to integrate the design of these parking structures to be compatible in material and design with the proposed building and the remainder of the Mark Center campus and open space. The community and the City recommend that the buffer between I-395 and the building be revegetated with trees and/or incorporate a green screen for the parking structure to help screen the visibility of the parking structure from I-395. For the overall site a one-for-one tree replacement mitigation plan should also be developed. As discussed latter in the transportation section of this letter, the community felt strongly that the layout of this parking structure should be designed in such as way that it would be able to accommodate the potential slip ramp from I-395. Design consideration should also be given to the upper level of the parking structures to accommodate a green roof to screen the parked cars, and to help mitigate the environmental impacts of the parking garage.

**D. Green and Sustainable Building Practices**

Ensuring that the building and new developments minimize impacts to resources, energy and are environmentally sustainable is an integral component of many City policies. This policy becomes even more essential for this proposal given its size and scale and potential impacts to city services and infrastructure. It is our understanding that the proposal will achieve silver LEED certification. While achieving silver LEED certification is consistent with the requirement for City facilities and the goals for private development, we are recommending that to the extent possible the elements as part of LEED certification focus on water use/reuse such as ultra low fixtures, stormwater and elements that will minimize impacts to climate and the resource protection area. While we have had some preliminary discussions with the applicant regarding the green and sustainable techniques to be used for the site and building, these are elements that need to be clearly defined and consistent with the City's objectives and policies prior to final approval by NCPC. The community and the City recommend that due to the signature nature of this facility, as well as the size and potential environmental impacts of the proposed buildings, that the buildings should attain LEED Gold certification.

**E. Site Security**

The applicant is proposing an anti-ram/anti-climb perimeter for the site. We recommend where possible that the required perimeter security (anti-ram/anti-climb) be better integrated with the landscape design and the remainder of the Mark Center campus through the use of elements such as berms, landscaping, decorative stone walls, planters, post and cable systems and water features.

Further, we recommend that the applicant relocate the remote inspection of trucks to support the WHS site at the Pentagon or another Remote Inspection Facility (RIF). Moving the RIF off-site would provide several advantages:

- The potential for an event (CBRNE) to occur at the Mark Center is significantly reduced; trucks would be pre-screened and cleared to the site and could enter the Remote Receiving Facility directly.
- The land area of the RIF could be used for a direct access road to the site for WHS personnel and mitigate traffic volumes on the Seminary/Beauregard arterials.
- Trucks could be scheduled to service the WHS site on off-peak traffic hours.

In addition, relocating the RIF would enable the retention of a wooded landscape buffer on Seminary Road, which would enable a more compatible use adjacent to the existing residential and office uses while providing a more secure campus by eliminating a wrap around security perimeter.

**F. Transportation**

The proposed BRAC 133 development will significantly impact the transportation systems surrounding and serving the development site. While the scope of the BRAC 133 proposal is generally consistent with prior City development approvals for this site in 2004, there are a number of related issues that need to be addressed.

The BRAC 133 development proposal contemplates an aggressive 40 percent non-SOV (single-occupant vehicle) mode share for travel to and from the site. The community stated that while 40% is admirable, they believed that the bar should be set higher for the Federal Government and they should attain 50% non-SOV mode share for it employees. The City agrees with setting a 50% non-SOV goal. While believed to be an achievable goal, we feel strongly that it must be supported by an equally aggressive and well-managed transportation demand management (TDM) program. A detailed TDM program based on the following principles must be developed and adopted within the next six months:

1. The TDM program should be performance based. In consideration of the 40 percent non-SOV mode share assumed for the project transportation analysis, the City believes this is an appropriate performance standard for the TDM program. Specific program elements should be implemented and managed as necessary to meet this performance standard.
2. The TDM program should be adequately and continuously funded by the federal government as necessary to meet the facilities performance standard.
3. Program performance audits should be the basis for program management and its associated funding level. Such audits should be regularly conducted and the results publicly available.

While this development has committed to implementing all of the street improvements that were contemplated in previous 2004 site approvals, there remains opportunity for direct site access and egress from the I-395 interchange at Seminary Road. Such a direct connection to the I-395 corridor could materially reduce the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding street network. Working with the Virginia DOT, the Army, Duke Realty and the City have initiated efforts to secure the necessary approvals of this interchange access modification (i.e., creating a right-in and a right-out from the Winkler site on the I-395 southbound slip ramp) and



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the required traffic studies of this proposal by VDOT are underway. The applicant should be required by NCPC to continue to diligently pursue approval of this additional improvement and, if approved by FHWA, provide Defense Access Roads Program funding or other federal funding for construction. The incorporation of this direct access into the design of the parking garage façade facing I-395 was discussed at length and the community felt very strongly that it should be required to be constructed, even if it was not completed by 2011.

Anticipating a significant level of transit service at the site, the proposed development includes construction of a transit center that will serve both the site and the surrounding community. Working cooperatively with the City and area transit providers, WMATA and DASH, the applicant has begun development of a comprehensive transit service plan for the site. Completion of this plan, including the integration of the public and agency-provided transit services (such as extensive WHS shuttles) and a funding plan to offset any increase in the cost of providing public transit service to the site, should be required by NCPC of the applicant within the next six months.

Also, as NCPC is probably aware, VDOT has been working with Fluor/Transurban to establish HOT lanes on I-395. They have indicated that they wish to have HOT access at Seminary Road. The City has not supported similar access in the past due to its potential negative impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods. However, with the HOT proposal, City staff are willing to analyze the situation again, and have asked VDOT and Fluor/Transurban to initiate a study of the impact of such a HOT Seminary Road interchange connection on adjacent residential neighborhoods. To date, VDOT and Fluor/Transurban have not agreed to undertake such a study. The City requests that NCPC endorse the City's study request.

#### **G. Environmental Mitigation**

The footprint of the proposed office building encompasses a recognized Resource Protection Area (RPA), and as a result, mitigation of this encroachment action needs to occur. The City, Duke Realty and the Army have been discussing and negotiating an appropriate dollar amount to be paid by the federal government to improve the Holmes Run Stream area in a to-be-determined location. NCPC should endorse the concept of appropriate RPA mitigation.

#### **H. Open Space**

The proposed office building's footprint eliminates approximately 20,000 square feet of open space from the previously approved Winkler CDD. In order to mitigate this change in plans, the federal government should provide funding to purchase an equivalent amount of open space in the immediate area. NCPC should endorse the concept of appropriate open space mitigation.

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**I. Conclusion**

This proposal is proceeding at a very aggressive schedule for review by the City, residents and remainder of the community. We feel it is essential that the comments of the City, and the neighboring communities be incorporated as part of any recommendations made by NCPC regarding this proposal. ~~involved as part of the review process and, therefore, have assisted in the coordination of a January 26th community meeting.~~ It also is essential that the applicant participate and facilitate community meetings as part of this review by NCPC as well as part of the ongoing construction of the proposal. Our comments are based on the conceptual review and foundation permit requested by the applicant with the understanding that the City's and communities' comments regarding traffic, the building, the site plan, security elements and green building elements will be adequately addressed prior to NCPC's review of the final proposal.

Please contact Patricia Escher in the City's Department of Planning and Zoning, if you have any additional questions or comments regarding this matter, and she will coordinate a response back to NCPC.

Sincerely,

William D. Euille  
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Mark Warner  
The Honorable Jim Webb  
The Honorable James P. Moran  
The Honorable ~~Mayor~~ and Members of City Council  
West End Task Force on BRAC-133  
The Chairman and Members of Planning Commission  
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning & Zoning  
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning  
Tom Culpepper, Deputy Director, Transportation and Environmental Services  
David Levy, Director, Urban Design and Plan Review, NCPC  
Marcel Acosta, Executive Director, NCPC  
Eugene Keller, Community Planner, NCPC