

Crystal City Sector Plan FAQ

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In September 2010, the Arlington County Board adopted a Crystal City Sector Plan after a four year community long-range planning process. For information and background on this process, please [visit the project website](#) and view our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), below.

What is the purpose of developing a Crystal City Sector Plan?

Decisions made by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission will lead to the relocation of 13,000± Department of Defense (DoD) jobs out of Crystal City. These moves will lead to the estimated vacancy of 3.2 million square feet of office space in Crystal City, and will likely reduce the demand for office space, hotel rooms, and retail goods and services in the area. In response, the County initiated a planning process to advocate a future vision for Crystal City and create a plan to help expand upon Crystal City's role in supporting the County's overall economic health.

What are some of the key goals and objectives outlined in the Sector Plan?

Building from the area's current strengths, the future vision outlined in the Crystal City Sector Plan depicts a neighborhood that is more vibrant, attractive, and livable than it is today. Physically, future redevelopment in Crystal City will be organized with buildings that better define the public realm (i.e. streets, sidewalks, and public open space) and that are formed around a better, more urban street grid. In terms of use mix, the Plan establishes parallel goals of maintaining Crystal City's strength as a central business district, while also expanding the residential aspect of the neighborhood. Planning for additional density in Crystal City is the primary tool to help achieve the Plan's vision, which is consistent with the County's historic record of concentrating development and growth around its major transit nodes and corridors. The full list of goals and objectives outlined in the Plan is extensive, and supports the overall future vision of Crystal City as a "Complete, Urban Community".

What areas were included in the Sector Plan study?

The Sector Plan efforts focused on the Crystal City Metro Station Area, except for the areas known as North Tract and South Tract. When the Sector Planning process began, the County had just completed a planning study for the North Tract area (the area bounded by 10th Street S., Old Jefferson Davis Highway, the Twin Bridges site at the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and the CSX Railroad corridor) which recommended the creation of a major County recreation facility (Long Bridge Park) across much of this area. Likewise, in 2000, a Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) was approved for the South Tract, which is currently in the process of being developed as a mixed-use neighborhood in Arlington's portion of Potomac Yard.

Won't taller buildings and increased density bring more traffic and harm adjacent neighborhoods?

Arlington's experience with transit oriented development around Metro has demonstrated that significant amounts of mixed-use development can be managed with only modest increases in traffic. The plan for Crystal City intends to continue this pattern, which will be supported by an array of transportation and traffic improvements, including conversion to two-way streets, creation of new streets, and a new streetcar system. Furthermore, through the special exception site plan process, all future projects in Crystal City will include effective transportation demand management components to further limit traffic impacts – this is in stark contrast to many of the existing buildings in Crystal City today that were approved prior to the County's adoption of a TDM policy in the 1990s and therefore often don't include such components.

How will vehicular traffic be reduced through transit and transportation improvements?

The Sector Plan calls for the conversion of a bus surface transitway (under development) to a streetcar system serving Arlington's Route 1 Corridor including Crystal City, Pentagon City, and Potomac Yard. The streetcar system will provide high capacity high frequency surface transit to supplement the existing Metrorail Blue and Yellow lines and Metrobus routes currently serving the area. Long-range planning is being undertaken to study potential connections to the Columbia Pike streetcar, as well as potential for linkages to surface transit services in the City of Alexandria. Access to the Crystal City Metro Station will also be improved through the creation of a future second entrance to the station, in the vicinity of 18th Street S. and Crystal Drive.

The Sector Plan calls for major new transportation infrastructure, including a streetcar system. How will this be financed?

The adopted Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Years 2011-2016 lays out a framework for funding the first phase of transportation and transit improvements recommended in the Crystal City Sector Plan and supporting Crystal City Multimodal Transportation Study. The CIP identifies a total of \$91 million through FY 2016 for street improvement, streetcar, and parks and open space projects in Crystal City. During this initial phase, identified program funding sources include state and federal funds, County transportation investment funds (from the commercial real estate tax), a bond issue, and other local tax sources. A newly created tax source likely to have an increasing role in funding these improvements over time includes a Tax Increment fund and district established in October 2010 for Arlington's Route 1 Corridor, including Pentagon City, Crystal City, and Potomac Yard. Based on the current policy, one-third of future property tax increment in this district will be directed towards infrastructure projects in the district area.

What happens if traffic actually increases in Crystal City and adjacent neighborhoods?

The County will perform periodic monitoring of vehicular traffic volumes, speeds, and accidents in Crystal City and adjacent neighborhoods on a continual basis. The maximum allowable threshold for the Crystal City area will be a five percent increase in average daily vehicle trips through 2030, and trip growth on no local street shall exceed five percent growth as a result of development in Crystal City before 2030. Where traffic pattern changes significantly reduce safety, mitigation will be considered, based upon the standards and criteria of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program. If mitigation is needed, funding will be ensured to implement improvements in a timely fashion. Examples of potential mitigation include increased transportation demand management resources in Crystal City to reduce single occupancy vehicles, additional bus service to make transit more attractive and working with regional partners on other efforts.

Does the Sector Plan eliminate the “Underground”?

No. In its current condition, the Underground serves a multitude of different functions and is highly valued by many in the Crystal City community. Functions of the Underground that should be continued into the future, regardless of changes that may occur in some places due to redevelopment, include: extending the reach of transit by providing convenient and protected pathway to Metro; providing an additional dimension to the walkability of Crystal City; providing spaces for appropriate retail to be retained in the Underground to complement street-level store fronts, and offering opportunities for community and County services, arts and entertainment facilities and general gathering space.

How will open space be improved or increased under the Plan?

The Sector Plan identifies a vision for parks and plazas that will be designed, programmed and managed to achieve lively and vibrant public open spaces for all of Crystal City's populations. While many Crystal City's existing open spaces are on top of building plinths one level above the street, the focus of future spaces will be to create spaces that are highly visible and easily accessible from public streets and sidewalks. While the County owns almost no open space in Crystal City today, the expectation is that, through future redevelopment, new open spaces will either have permanent public access easements, or may even be dedicated in fee to the County in some instances. Finally, as the phasing of open space was a very important topic of conversation during the planning process, the Sector Plan includes a policy whereby the removal of any existing public open space (even if privately owned) resulting from a redevelopment project be offset by the creation of new open space by that project or by physical improvements to other existing spaces that are expected to be retained well into the future. Also, as a near-term improvement nearby, Phase 1 of Long Bridge Park is currently under construction, and includes a direct pedestrian connection to the northern areas of Crystal City by way of the park's esplanade.

How will the transition between Crystal City and adjacent neighborhoods work, and what will it look like?

The Sector Plan includes certain recommendations regarding the character of this transition, and identifies the need for additional future study to further refine the vision for this transitional edge. Along much of Crystal City's western edge, maximum planned building heights have been significantly reduced as a result of this planning effort in order to provide a more appropriate transition between the high-density mixed-use development in the core of Crystal City and the lower density residential neighborhoods to the west. As a future follow-up effort, the County will work with the community on a planning effort that better defines the preferred vision for the transition between these areas, inclusive of design guidelines to help communicate and achieve that vision.

Now that the Sector Plan is approved, will developers have the right to develop without neighborhood input?

No. The Sector Plan is not an entitled development plan, but rather a community plan to help guide future decisions regarding planning and development in Crystal City. It is intended to be used by the County Board, staff, developers, citizens and other stakeholders when considering development proposals or other infrastructure projects within the Metro Station area. Today, almost all development in Crystal City is approved under special exception site plan, which means that proposed changes to those projects will also undergo thorough community review and discussion. As a result, it's expected that most, if not all, future development proposals in Crystal City will be shaped in part by community input that is built into the review process, before being acted upon by the County Board.

How will the plan progress/achievements and potential impacts be monitored and mitigated if needed?

The diverse aspects and measures of plan progress will be continually monitored by staff in a number of ways on an ongoing basis. In addition to regular monitoring that is already done in some areas, the County Board appointed an advisory group, the Crystal City Citizen Review Council (or 3CRC), following adoption of the Sector Plan in fall 2010. The overall mission of the 3CRC is to provide, with staff support, periodic monitoring, evaluation, and identification of emerging issues and potential solutions on all dimensions of the Sector Plan to assure achievement of the Plan's goals and objectives over the life of the Plan. For more information, please see the [Crystal City Citizen Review Council webpage](#).

Where can I find more information?

The [Crystal City Sector Plan webpage](#) has both the final Crystal City Sector Plan document as well as supporting information used in the development of the Plan. For any questions or more information, please contact Anthony Fusarelli, Jr., Arlington County Senior Planner, at 703-228-3548 or afusarelli@arlingtonva.us
