

City of Alexandria's Analysis of the 2004 approval and the WHS Headquarters proposal
Note: The City does not have regulatory authority over the Federal Government.

Mark Center DSUP 2002-00398 Approved January 2004		WHS Headquarters July 2008	
Building Heights			
	Approved		Proposed
Building 2A	210 ft	Tower 1	275 ft
Building 2B	240 ft	Glass Hyphen	163 ft
Building 3	150 ft	Tower 2	247 ft
Building 6	150 ft		
Floor Area – Net Square Footage			
	Approved		Proposed
Building 2A	369,249 sq. ft.	Tower 1	
Building 2B	416,448 sq. ft.	Glass Hyphen	
Building 3	222,417 sq. ft.	Tower 2	
Building 6	374,616 sq. ft.		
Total	1,382,730 sq. ft.		1,386,438 sq. ft.
Parking			
	Approved		Proposed
Building 2A	1,292 spaces	North Garage	2,044 spaces
Building 2B	1,457 spaces	South Garage	1,854 spaces
Building 3	778 spaces		
Building 6	1,312 spaces		
Total	4,839 spaces		3,898 spaces
Parking Required by the Zoning Ordinance			3,648 spaces
	Approved		Proposed
	6.5 acres		*Yet to be determined

* Final site design is still being worked out – City will request monetary contribution for loss of open space

Staff responses to the public's inquires:

Comment:

I write you in your role as community representatives with respect to the BRAC project and as the ones who will hopefully ask our City Council and Administration the "tough questions" as to what they are doing to protect our best interests.

DSUP/Parking:

Comment:

Can we get answers about what the Mark Center SUP does and does not require of developers? Is the Army treated differently; are they entitled to waivers that others can't get? Apparently not charging "market rates" for parking (which the SUP called for) is one.

Comment:

The four buildings were to have 4,839 parking spaces and I believe the latest figure is that the Army is intending to provide 3,840;

Response:

*The City of Alexandria **does not** have any regulatory review authority over the Federal Government - none. Having said that, while there are some differences with the original approval and the Army's proposal (please refer to the table above), the Army's plan is in general conformance with the underlying zoning and previous approvals – read the City's memo to NCPC posted on the P&Z web page and the text at the lower portion of the P&Z web page for additional information. <http://alexandriava.gov/BRAC>*

The developer is responsible for road improvements on Seminary Road, Beauregard Street and Mark Center Drive.

Not charging for parking is a Federal law and was reviewed by the courts in the 1970's under the Carter administration - if you want additional information staff can request the Army's attorney discuss this law at a future meeting.

Parking in the previous approval was in an excess of what the zoning ordinance requires - that additional parking was for visitors. This site will be a "secure site" and will not have as many visitors as a private sector facility. All visitors coming to this site will be screened prior to entering the site and escorted to and from the building. The Army is providing the number of spaces required by the zoning ordinance. The Army will provide a traffic management plan that will reduce single occupancy vehicles by at least 40%.

Building:

Comment:

The maximum height of any of the four buildings was to be 240 feet; I believe the BRAC building is now planned to be considerably taller (as well as, obviously, much "wider");

Comment:

The one BRAC monolith is apparently in lieu of what the SUP intended to be four separate buildings (2A, 2B, 3 and 6) and the SUP made many references to the (implicitly required?) appeal of varying building heights, an interesting skyline, spacing the buildings to provide views through the complex, etc.

Comment:

Those four buildings were to have a floor area of 1,382,729 sq. ft. whereas the Army is apparently building 1,800,000;

Response:

CDD Zoning - Building height - (2) - 250' tall buildings permitted - the previous approval proposed (1) 240', (1) 210' and (3) 150' tall buildings. The Army's building has three distinct elements that break up the mass of the building, two towers of varying heights and a glass hyphen separating the two towers. The first tower is 275' in height, the glass hyphen 163' tall and the second tower is 247' tall. The two towers are separated by the 45' wide glass hyphen. The western tower is a total of 15 stories and is 120' by 260', with the narrower side facing the I-395 corridor. The second tower is 400' by 120', with the wider section facing the I-395 corridor. The Army has worked with staff to greatly improve the appearance of the building and in an effort to reduce the mass and scale of the towers, the building design now incorporates a central glass element running vertically along the full façade of the second tower on the I-395 side and has additional glazing on the top two levels on all four sides of both towers. Please visit the power point presentation to the Advisory Group date 6-15 and on the P&Z web page to see the revised building elevations.

<http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/BRAC%20Presentation%2061709.pdf>

*The building's **net square footage** is in conformance with the previous approval. The Army's proposal is approximately 1,380,000 **net sq ft±**. The previous approval is approximately 1,386,000 **net sq ft±**. The **gross square footage** of the building is approximately 1,732,000 **gross sq ft±**. (Non-habitable portions of the building such as mechanical rooms and stair wells, etc. are deducted from the **gross square footage** to get the **net square footage**)*

Open Space:

Comment:

The SUP called for 6.5 acres of open space in the subject area whereas reference to comparative site plans (SUP vs. BRAC) would indicate that has been dramatically reduced.

Response:

Open space - the proposal has encroached into the central open space and onto the south east corner with the proposed remote inspection facility. The City is requesting monetary contribution for this encroachment to purchase open space somewhere in the neighborhood.

Traffic:

Comment:

Is it the nature of SUPs that evolving circumstances (such as traffic evolution over 6 years) need not be taken into account when the time for actual development arrives? In addition, I would appreciate clarification on the items below:

Traffic Studies: Just a few weeks ago VDOT had a study that clearly anticipates I-395 off-ramp traffic backing up onto traffic lanes of that highway. Then Duke's June 1st letter states that "to the extent queuing occurs, it does not reach public roads, much less I-395." I would note that the same letter states "conditions upon which the 2004 approval was based have not changed." Does the City agree with that?

Response:

The City has requested that an additional traffic analysis be performed to review the additional studies that are being carried out by VDOT. The VDOT studies are evaluating the addition of HOT lanes on I-395, the potential for bus transit lines, interchange improvements to the Seminary Road and I-395 interchange and direct access into the Mark Center site from I-395. The analysis of these studies will give guidance with respect to improvements on Seminary Road and Beauregard Street.

Future Expansion:

Comment:

With respect to the future, allow me to point out another concern. The public was told by Duke that BRAC represents the final phase of development in Mark Center; no more development after September 2011 (bar, presumably the already-approved IDA expansion); Duke will be done. Yet, when I asked the Army about any future desire they might have to expand and related waivers they might seek at that time, I was told "It is beyond our ability to speculate on this at the present time". That hardly sounds like "not going to happen". Does the SUP allow for any future expansion? Is the nature preserve in jeopardy should the Army choose to make it so?

Response:

Staff has not been informed of any future expansion of the site. With the completion of both phases of the IDA project, the Mark Center will be finished; the nature preserve will not be impacted by the construction of these buildings.

Advisory Group:

Comment:

Advisory Group Structure, Membership, Responsibilities:

Has the City, in fact, followed through on its February 10 Resolution forming your Group? Has the Group been formally appointed? Are the names freely available to the public? What became of the people/entities the Mayor was to "request"? Request to do what? I would also note that the P&Z web site link which purports to take one to a "membership roster" gets one no further than the February Council Resolution - no names, no contact information.

Response:

The Advisory Group has been formed and meets monthly - they are an advisory group to City Council and are reviewing the impacts that this development will have on the community, such as traffic, site circulation, architecture, security, etc. The group submitted a letter to Council with their recommendations requesting additional traffic analysis and the coordination of the various entities involved. (The City, VDOT and FHWA) The Council drafted a letter to re-enforce the group's position requesting additional analysis of all the VDOT studies that are underway and supporting a direct access ramp into the Mark Center from I-395. Complete information can be found on the City's Council's docket web page.

<http://dockets.alexandriava.gov/fy09/062309m/di34.pdf>

The web page has been updated to include the group's member's names, if you would like additional contact information - please contact Pat Escher with the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Comment:

It would be interesting to know if "non-community-representatives" of the Advisory Group are likewise constrained by the "sunshine" laws. My sense is that Duke, the Army and our City Administration can talk to one another at will while no more than two community representatives at a time can do the same without public notice.

Response:

Non community representatives may contact the group members simultaneously, but not more than two members can respond in a conversation or by email at the same time. City staff are not a members of the Advisory Group, they are meeting facilitators and negotiators on behalf of the citizens of Alexandria and do meet with the Army and Duke Realty to ensure the City's concerns are being addressed.

Minutes:

Comment:

And finally, who prepares the minutes of the meetings?

Response:

Minutes are prepared by Pat Escher with the Department of Planning and Zoning