

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 9, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MARK CENTER OFFICE BUILDING BRAC-133 PROJECT

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The following provides an update on the status of the Department of Defense (DoD) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) project currently under construction at Mark Center (the DoD shorthand for this project is "BRAC-133"). The topic areas listed below have nearly all been, and will continue to be, discussed with the Council appointed BRAC-133 Advisory Group at their monthly meetings.

- A. Office Buildings: The 1.75 million gross (or 1.4 million net) square foot towers (one 15 story tower and one 17 story tower) are in the skeletal steel frame construction phase, and are on schedule to meet the September 15, 2011, BRAC law mandated-date for project completion. While some BRAC projects authorized in 2005 are not likely to meet the BRAC law deadline, the Army Corps of Engineers, who is the lead agency on this project, has made meeting the September 2011 deadline a priority. As a result, this project has design-build elements (where not all building elements are finalized even though the building is under construction), and the time to consider options and decisions is less than other more typical design-bid-build projects.

When the BRAC-133 project was initially designed for a competitive selection competition, its design was plain with less attention paid to aesthetics and more to anti-blast, anti-terrorism standards to meet the Army's specifications. As a result, soon after the City Planning and Zoning (P&Z) staff saw these initial designs, they started working on new exterior design ideas for the office buildings. Duke Realty, the Army Corps of Engineers, and their architects cooperated with this effort. The result is a much improved building exterior that will include more than \$10 million in design improvements (substantially more use of glass, more use of contrasting color, addition of building top architecture). While these two buildings' architecture was much improved, there was no willingness/ability of the Department of Defense to alter the 15 and 17 story height of the two office towers. As a result, while the revised architecture is a great improvement, the overall building height and mass are not ones that would otherwise meet the City's expected architectural quality standards for new office building construction. However,

the more than \$10 million that the Department of Defense (DoD) is spending on improved building architecture was a very positive decision that DoD did not have to proffer.

- B. Garages: The two large site garages (containing 3,898 spaces) have also been undergoing a collaborative City staff, Duke Realty and DoD review with the aim of improving the architecture of these two garages. The building and garage architecture will be reviewed by the federal National Capital Area Planning Commission (NCPC) later this year or early next year, but it is unlikely that NCPC will significantly alter the revised architecture.
- C. Road Site Circulation: As part of the site review process, City staff from P&Z and Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES) proposed significant internal site roadway changes in order to improve site circulation, as well as to not make the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) building as isolated as it was in the DoD plan. DoD also decided during this review process to take the 2,044 space north garage fronting on Mark Center Drive out of the security perimeter. This was done in part to improve ease of access into their garage (which avoids the queuing of cars while being inspected for security reasons). It also will allow better circulation around the site of mass transit vehicles, such as planned DoD shuttles.
- D. Transportation Management Plan (TMP): The development of a solid, aggressive TMP is vitally important if DoD is going to achieve a 40% non-single occupancy vehicle (non-SOV) target, which DoD has to meet due to the number of parking spaces onsite being capped by DoD at 3,898. City Council had requested that DoD make the non-SOV TMP plan 50%, but DoD has not agreed to do so. At this time, DoD is just starting its TMP planning, as a contractor to develop that plan has recently been hired. DoD reports that it will have this plan completed in six months. Development of a TMP will include collaboration with DASH, WMATA and other transit providers in the region. DoD staff has pledged to the City that it will plan to make extensive use of DoD funded, free shuttles to transport many of its employees from various transit nodes in Northern Virginia to the Mark Center site. While the nodes have not been selected, they will include the Pentagon, and possibly other sites such as the King Street Metro Station. The TMP also needs to be reviewed and approved by NCPC. City staff will work closely with DoD and its contractor in the development of the TMP, and will continue to press for a 50% non-SOV goal.
- E. Remote Inspection Facility (RIF): The DoD Mark Center facility includes a RIF to inspect incoming trucks for explosives or other terrorism items. While DoD considers this a key feature of having a safe DoD facility for its employees at Mark Center, the City sought (as did CNA, Congressman Moran, and Senators Warner and Webb) to have the RIF facility removed from the Mark Center site, and for Mark Center inbound trucks to be inspected at the Pentagon RIF. Even after the City's Congressional delegation wrote senior DoD officials a joint letter supporting the City's position, DoD did not change its position. At the same time, the RIF debate was occurring, City staff, CNA (through a lawsuit it filed), AEDP's BRAC Coordinator, Duke and Army staff worked on a City

staff option of putting the RIF under a specially designed cement bunker covered with landscaping. These major RIF design changes will better protect the adjacent CNA (which settled its lawsuit when this new RIF design was agreed to), as well as will make the RIF less visually obtrusive from Seminary Road and I-395. However, the location of the RIF will preclude one of the I-395 slip ramp site access options from being considered for constructability reasons, as the RIF is not depressed enough in the ground for an access road from being constructed over it. DoD also raised site security concerns about a slip ramp access at the RIF location. Other slip ramp access options remain under study by VDOT (See "G" below).

- F. Seminary and Beauregard Roadway Changes: In the 2004 Council approval of the Mark Center office development plan (which contained about the same number of square feet of office space as is now under construction by DoD or planned by the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), but now contains 941 fewer parking spaces) a series of public road changes were required by the City to accommodate the additional traffic that the approved Mark Center development would generate. Widening of Seminary between I-395 and Beauregard, the creation of triple-left turn lanes from Seminary to southbound Beauregard, and the widening of Beauregard between Seminary and the Mark Center Drive entrance on Beauregard were required by the City as part of 2004 plan approvals. These roadway changes were to be paid by the developer (which remains the case).

At the time of consideration of these changes in 2004, there was concern expressed by many City residents living in the Mark Center area about traffic including the triple-left. These concerns were also expressed by the BRAC-133 Advisory Group earlier this year. As authorized by Council this past June, an independent study by the transportation consulting firm VHB was commissioned by the City this summer. While DoD agreed to pay for the \$80,000 cost of this study, the study was overseen by T&ES staff. The draft study report was completed and released in September (it is posted on the P&Z BRAC website). In brief summary, the report indicates that given traffic projections the proposed changes to Seminary and Beauregard are warranted (including the triple left), as well as some other modifications should be made to make the traffic flow better. At its first legislative meeting in November, Council will be requested to consider authorizing local roadway changes.

- G. Access to I-395: One of the options being discussed to reduce the traffic impact on Seminary and Beauregard is to create direct access to the site from I-395. Access options from the southbound I-395 slip ramp, as well as other direct site access options, are under study by VDOT. This VDOT study (entitled "Intersection Justification Report" or "IJR") is projected to be completed and issued by the end of December. VDOT staff has discussed its study with the BRAC-133 Advisory Group, and will be requested to continue to do so as the IJR study progresses. After the IJR study is completed, a preferred option will need to be selected and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for approval. If approved, various further studies and a refined design would need to occur. Federal funding would also need to be sought. DoD has a program called "Defense Access Road Funding" to fund military base related road improvements. DoD has already begun its internal steps to request funds under this

program, and the City's Congressional delegation has already been put on alert as to this future funding need. While a path in selecting an option is clear, the outcome and timing are not. In the best of cases, due to the study processes, FHWA consideration, and subsequent necessary design and environmental studies, it would likely be at least five years (i.e., 2014) until such an access from I-395 would be able to be opened. Finally, in case direct access to the south DoD garage from the southbound I-395 slip ramp is the selected option, DoD is designing its south garage which will hold 1,854 cars to accept such an access.

- H. Public Safety: In order to protect the DoD employees who will be working at the Mark Center site, and to protect the public, a coordinated set of public safety policies and protocols will need to be jointly crafted by DoD and the City and implemented. To date, progress in this area has been slow, caused in part because of the DoD decision to initially structure the Mark Center site as a military base annex to Ft. Belvoir, although the site is not near Ft. Belvoir and the personnel to be housed at Mark Center are largely civilian employees. This has created an internal DoD discussion between the Army, which operates Ft. Belvoir, and the civilian side of DoD. Until these discussions and resolution of ongoing roles of the Army and the civilian side of DoD are settled, DoD would not engage in public safety discussions about the BRAC-133 site. Those discussions, which should begin soon, will need to primarily focus on fire, emergency medical services, and other incidents (such as hazardous materials) that may occur. Protocols will need to be established across all the City public safety agencies in relation to the Mark Center DoD site.
- I. Open Space: In comparing the original 2004 Mark Center development plans with the current DoD plans, it is clear that about a net 2.4 acres of ground level open space approved in the original 2004 plan will now be utilized for DoD buildings, structures or internal roadways. City staff and the BRAC-133 Advisory Group have both articulated to DoD the need for DoD to compensate the City for the lost open space. DoD has conceptually agreed, so the next step is negotiating the appropriate compensation amount. DoD has indicated that it will consider the payment for lost open space as a mitigation payment. Open space purchase options are being explored.
- J. Resource Protection Area (RPA): The footprint of the DoD Mark Center development is eliminating an identified resource protection area (RPA) adjacent to the I-395 southbound slip ramp. While the DoD stormwater management plans will address the loss of the RPA's beneficial onsite features, DoD did agree to a \$0.4 million mitigation payment to the City for this RPA loss. City T&ES staff have been working with residents living adjacent to the upper reaches of Holmes Run (north of Beauregard towards the Fairfax County line) to apply these funds towards streambed improvements in that area in order to address embankment erosion which has occurred. This project will be undertaken as part of a VDOT and City funded pedestrian-bicycle connection between the City and Fairfax County.
- K. Sanitary Sewers: Because of capacity issues at the Alexandria Sanitation Authority (ASA) treatment plant, and because of ASA concerns about peak wet weather flows and

resultant surcharging in the Holmes Run Trunk Sewer, discussions with City, DoD and ASA were initiated to seek a solution to this added sanitary sewer flow. The solution is for DoD's Mark Center sanitary sewer flow to be pumped into an area of the City adjacent to the Mark Center site which flows into the Arlington County wastewater treatment facility. ASA has had a long-term contract with Arlington for a portion of the City's sanitary sewage to flow into the Arlington facility, and the amount of capacity previously purchased by ASA is more than what a full build-out of that area which flows into Arlington needs. As a result, the City requested, and Arlington agreed to expand the boundaries of the City that could flow into the Arlington facility to include the DoD facility (as well as the IDA facility, the Hilton Hotel and a few other buildings in the Mark Center area). DoD will pay 100% of the costs to build a pump station and sanitary sewer lines to get their sewage from Mark Center to Beauregard so that it then can gravity flow into the Arlington facility. ASA will maintain the DoD pump and will be fully reimbursed by the federal government. This solution not only diverted future volume from ASA's plant, but creates the future opportunity to divert additional volume from the ASA plant, thereby freeing up capacity for future development in other parts of the City.

If you have any questions about the various items and issues detailed in this report, please contact Mark Jinks.

cc: Chair and Members, BRAC-133 Advisory Committee  
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