

THE PENTAGON CITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE (PCCC)
AND
THE CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION (CUE)

By

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Arlington, Virginia, one of the smallest counties in the United States, has undergone substantial development pressure during the twentieth century because of its prime location across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., and at the center of the Washington metropolitan area. From the 1960s to the present, the area of South Arlington has borne an increasingly greater share of this pressure with growing development concentration around National Airport and the Pentagon and with the provision of fast and efficient public transportation through the Metrorail blue and yellow lines.

During this period, Arlington had developed a process to encourage maximum citizen participation in decision processes concerning land use and development issues. A network of neighborhood civic associations provided the backbone of this community participation, supplemented by "ad hoc" groups established to address specific issues.

In the 1970s, development pressures and community opposition to development collided in the Pentagon City and Crystal City sections of South Arlington. The resulting conflict was so intense that it reached the U.S. Supreme Court.

This author feels safe in writing that in the modern period of Arlington County history, some three to four decades, no group of citizens has worked more diligently and energetically, over a longer period, at greater self sacrifice, on a civic cause, than those who consulted with private developers and county officials, and others, on the development of a tract of land now known as Pentagon City.

By the early 1970s the tract of just under 120 acres was by far the largest piece of undeveloped land in the county. It was, and is, located in the southernmost part of the county between the Pentagon and the area along the Jefferson Davis Highway (U.S. Route 1), then rapidly being developed. The site was, and is, bounded by South Joyce and South Eads streets on the north and south; and 18th Street South and Army Navy Drive on the east and west; less the Western Electric Company block in the center between South Hayes, South Fern, South 12th and South 15th streets. Most of the area was zoned for high-density uses but was open and undeveloped.

Developmental Plans

When it became known about 1971 that the owners of the land, the Cafritz-Tompkins interests, were negotiating for the sale and development of the tract, certain residents in the adjacent or nearby surrounding neighborhoods became intensely concerned. Mainly, they were members of the Arlington Ridge Civic Association and, in due course, organized themselves as a committee of the association.

It was generally recognized by these individuals that the land was already zoned for dense or high-rise uses, but the citizens were interested in just how high or dense the development would become and what other characteristics it would have.

The citizens living near the proposed Pentagon City development were especially worried about the adverse impacts the development could have on the quality of life in their residential neighborhoods, as by increasing noise, creating traffic congestion, aggravating parking problems, and worsening pollution.

The worried citizens included residents of the Aurora Hills Civic Association area as well as the area of Arlington Ridge; both are located north of South Glebe Road and east of the Shirley Highway (I-395) roadway. The leadership consisted mostly of citizen activists who had long been heavily involved in civic association and other community causes. ¹

1975 — Rumbles of Perils

By 1975, the citizens group had requested and was granted permission to meet with representatives of the developers and the members of the county planning and zoning staffs. As the months passed, there were repeated, lengthy and complex negotiations at which citizens requested many modifications in design and proposed uses. In addition to developer-staff-citizens meetings during this period, the concerned citizens also met continually in homes, at civic association meetings, and on other occasions for planning, briefing, and study. The number of man-hours expended by the citizen activists for this cause can never be known with certainty but would surely be enormous.

Over the months of citizen-developer-staff meetings, the developers adopted many of the recommendations for changes in their plans made by the citizens or the staff. However, as the time grew nearer for consideration of the matter by the County Board, it became apparent that there were many remaining gaps between the positions of the citizens and the owner-developers and the county staff, which seemed more often than not to side with the developers. It became increasingly clear that full agreement was not possible and that a confrontation before the County Planning Commission and the County Board

at the required rezoning hearing was inevitable. Battle lines were forming.

By the end of 1975, events were unfolding in rapid-fire order. The citizen activists had designated themselves as the Pentagon City Coordinating Committee, or "PCCC." On November 13, the Planning Commission considered the plan for Pentagon City development and on November 24 voted 9-1 to recommend rezoning of the Pentagon City tract except one parcel. In December there were numerous meetings with the staff, and the County Board held a "work session." At all of these formal and informal meetings, spokespersons for PCCC conveyed their opposition to, or positions on, the development as proposed.

1976 — Year of Setbacks

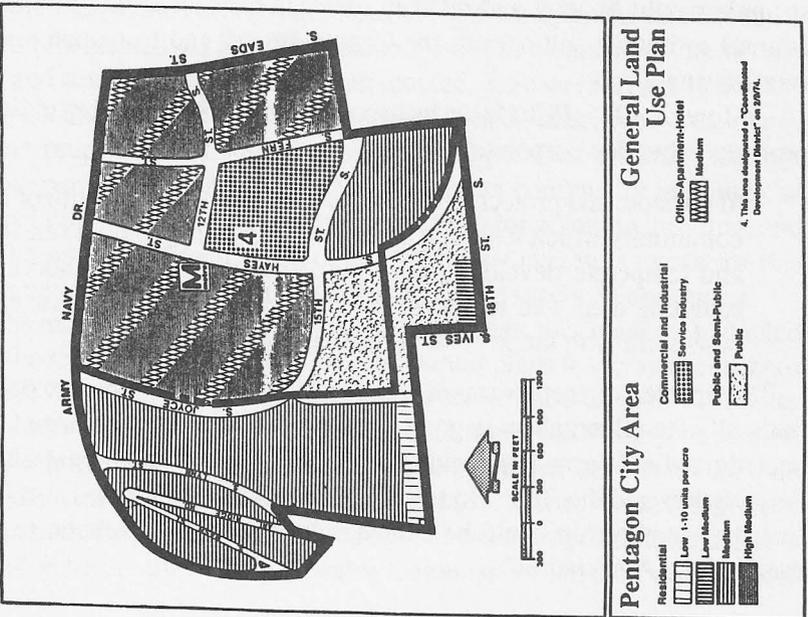
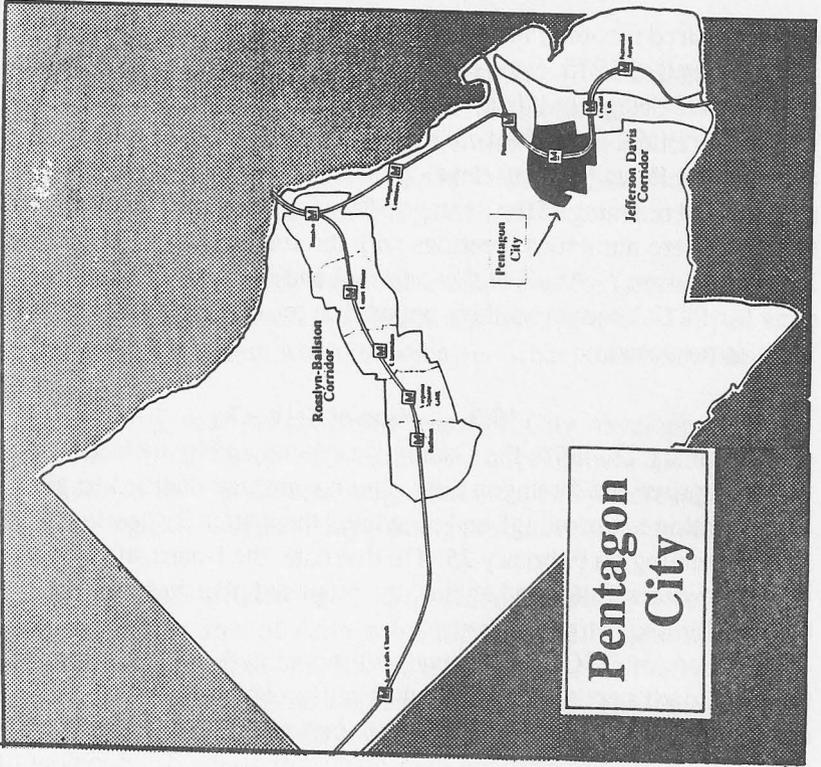
On January 28, 1976, the County Board met and by a close vote (3-2) did not disapprove the Pentagon City plan but instead decided to give "further consideration to upzoning" and scheduled the matter for hearing at its regular zoning meeting on February 25. On that date, the Board, after hours of testimony by witnesses for and against the proposed plan, voted 4-1 to rezone the Cafritz-Tompkins tract as requested.

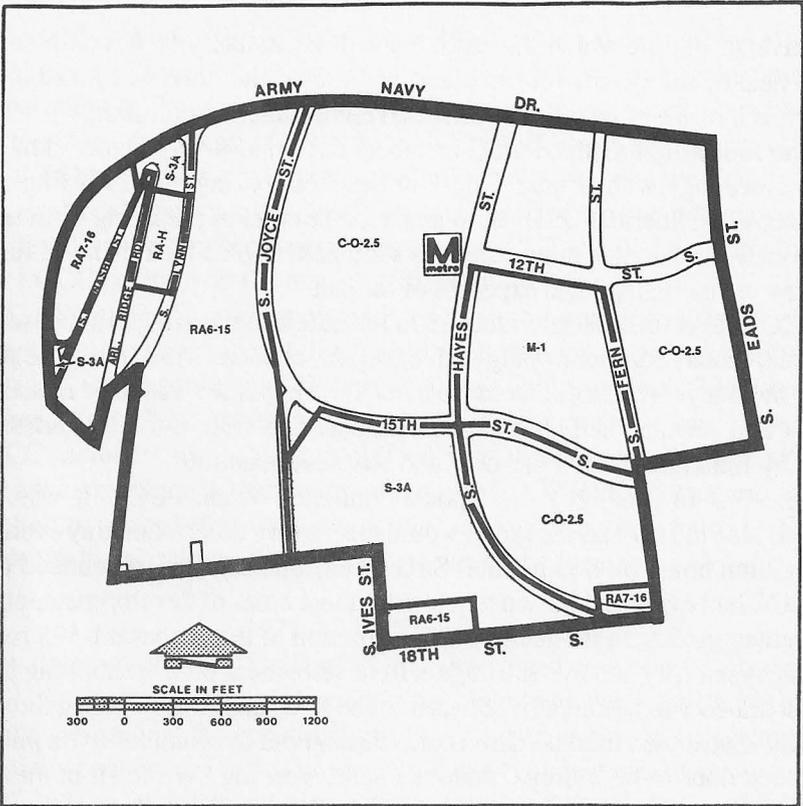
Members of PCCC were keenly disappointed, if not infuriated, by the County Board's action in disregarding citizen opposition and granting the requested rezoning. The PCCC members met promptly in further planning sessions and decided to continue their opposition to the development of Pentagon City as planned and now approved. The group, recognizing that the struggle would be long and difficult, decided to incorporate, to retain legal counsel to initiate suit against the County Board, and to launch a vigorous fund-raising effort.

On June 2, 1976, PCCC was incorporated in the State of Virginia as a non-profit membership corporation. Its stated purpose was:

to promote and protect the health, welfare and quality of life of the community which it serves, and, in particular, to promote sensible and temperate development of the Pentagon City tract and surrounding area, and to coordinate community efforts to that end, consistent with the general purpose of the Association.

The articles of incorporation provided that membership was open automatically "to all members in good standing of the Arlington Ridge Civic Association, the Aurora Highlands Civic Association, the Crystal City Civic Association and the River House Tenants Association." It was also provided that the membership could be extended to others "sympathetic to the purposes of the Association."





Pentagon City Area

Zoning

The articles and by-laws also stipulated that the committee “shall not... devote a substantial part of its assets or activities to influencing legislation” or “participate in any political campaign or support any candidate for public office.”

On June 3, the day after incorporation, PCCC, Inc., and several of its members, through attorneys retained by the committee, filed suit in the Arlington County Circuit Court aiming to overturn the County Board’s action in rezoning the Pentagon City tract to permit development as proposed. The suit claimed that the Board action was “arbitrary and capricious” and therefore unlawful, and asked the court to invalidate the rezoning.² The PCCC suit alleged in particular that the Board failed to consider and pay proper heed to

the "adverse impact which the rezoning will or is likely to have upon the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of the citizens of Arlington County as a result of increased traffic and environmental pollution."

In the following months, PCCC members were intensively involved in numerous meetings with counsel, the law firms of Covington & Burling and Siciliano, Ellis, Sheridan & Dyer, to assist the lawyers in preparing for a trial. Additionally, time-consuming meetings were held to plan the raising of funds to defray the mounting legal expenses of the suit.

PCCC budget records dated July 1976 indicate that the group's expenses at that time, mostly for fact finding and legal fees, exceeded \$58,000. The proposed, but not yet realized, income to meet these expenses was to be raised by coffees and picnics, neighborhood canvasses, and walk-a-thons, and from grants by foundations, and personal and business donations.

In the first of a number of "Update" bulletins of the PCCC, it was announced also in July that the group would meet every other Thursday evening at the Quinn home on South Knoll Street. The bulletin also announced that the PCCC had expanded its concern to additional areas of development, other than Pentagon City, in particular the construction of the proposal I-595 roadway in Crystal City and the Shirlington Redevelopment plan, a shopping center west of I-395 and, generally, between Glebe Road and Route 7 (King Street).

PCCC distributed fund donation cards throughout the community in public places and door-to-door drops, under its name, reading "We're all in this together." The cards asked for donations by pledge or otherwise in the amounts of \$50 to \$1000, or "other," and asked that donations be payable to the committee's treasurers Mr. and Mrs. Walter Baumann. Additionally, in this period, PCCC began in earnest a series of neighborhood spaghetti dinners, picnics, "coffees" and similar events for fund raising purposes. The group also operated a speakers bureau for county-wide seminars and civic association meetings.

In its September 1976 "Update" bulletin, PCCC announced that a trial date of November 15, had been set and there would be a preliminary hearing on September 23 on the motion of the land owners (who had intervened as defendants) to remove PCCC, Inc., as a plaintiff (leaving the PCCC members who had sued as individuals). Efforts were also under way to eliminate the individual County Board members as defendants (leaving the Arlington County Board as a governmental entity as a defendant). Following that hearing, the Circuit Court on October 12 dismissed PCCC as a named plaintiff (leaving the individual members to pursue the case in their names) and removed the individual County Board members as defendants.

The September bulletin also announced to the membership that PCCC had

joined the Arlington Ridge and Aurora Hills Civic associations, the Hospitality House and Stouffer's Motor Inn in Crystal City in a suit against the U. S. Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Transportation to stop the construction of I-595 through Crystal City. Additionally, concerning the Shirlington shopping area, the bulletin reported that the County Board had approved a new zoning classification to be used "in the redevelopment of the deteriorating neighborhood shopping areas." The bulletin did not indicate any PCCC position on the new classification.

The Pentagon City suit remained PCCC's most pressing business. Circuit Judge Paul D. Brown heard three weeks of testimony, even conducting night sessions, in November and December 1976. On December 23 he issued his ruling, in which he upheld the County Board's February rezoning decision. PCCC members were far from pleased with that "Christmas present" from the judiciary. Shortly thereafter, on January 6, 1977, PCCC met and decided to attempt to appeal the decision to the Virginia Supreme Court. A petition for leave to appeal was filed in the first week of February.

1977 — A Victory — A Loss

In its January 1977 "Update" PCCC announced with obvious delight that the U.S. District Court in Alexandria had, in November, issued a permanent injunction against the construction of the "expensive, useless, and environmentally dangerous I-595, a proposed elevated connector roadway between I-95 (I-395) and the National Airport." Thus, said PCCC, the Association "ended 1976 with one tremendous success and one 'temporary' setback." It needed money if it was to overcome the setback. It said:

With your help we can set another precedent which will help make land developers accountable to the local citizens. We can preserve the integrity of our region and prevent its over-development into a suburban wasteland. Our opponents have millions of dollars — WE DO NOT. We need your support ... [F]ill in the form below and mail it in with your contribution.

In its annual report of February 24, 1977, PCCC announced through its chairman, John Quinn, that during 1976 it had revenues of just over \$9,000 and expenditures of just under \$8,000. It reported that it owed: \$18,500 thus far for legal fees on the Pentagon City litigation but had not received a bill from one of the two law firms; and \$16,500 for legal fees for the I-595 litigation. The report indicated that fund raising efforts were to continue with a goal of raising \$200,000 over the next couple of years.

Soon after the annual report, on March 31 and in May, Quinn outlined a

fund-raising plan to the Board of Directors. He estimated that known or expected indebtedness of PCCC was approximately \$124,000 but that pursuit of the Pentagon City appeal and further proceedings in the I-595 suit would enlarge that debt. To liquidate the indebtedness \$50,000 was needed immediately, and an additional \$150,000 had to be raised over a three-year period, ending December 31, 1979. Quinn listed numerous methods by which the money could be raised, including kick-off dinners, contacts with business groups, recruitment and training of workers, preparation of "white papers," personal contacts with 2,000 to 5,000 people, the organization of implementation teams, and various other means.

The Virginia Supreme Court denied the PCCC plaintiffs' petition for leave to appeal on July 28, 1977, finding "no reversible error" in Judge Brown's order in the Pentagon City suit; it denied a petition for rehearing on September 8. On September 13, Chairman Quinn advised the PCCC leadership that the question of whether to seek further review in the U. S. Supreme Court would be discussed at the next board meeting. He also reported that "no progress in raising the substantial funds required to pay the bills totaling approximately \$48,250 ... or for the unbilled charges Our current bank balance is \$1,306.89."

On December 3, Chairman Quinn submitted his final report to the PCCC leadership advising them that he would not be available for reelection when his term expired at the end of the year. He informed the group that Covington & Burling had filed a petition for a writ of certiorari in the U. S. Supreme Court seeking review of the Virginia Supreme Court's decision, and that there had been no changes of any consequence in the PCCC's financial situation.

1978 — Changes in Leadership

On January 24, 1978, outgoing PCCC Chairman Quinn submitted his final report, and also a memorandum for the leadership. He indicated that the candidates for election at the membership meeting at the Calvary Methodist Church on 23rd Street, South, on that date would be:

- Chairman Derk Swain
- Vice Chairman-Finance John Quinn
- Vice Chairman-Community Relations Barbara Naquin
- Secretary Margaret Gaffen
- Treasurers Walter and Pat Baumann

In his final and comprehensive report, Quinn described the PCCC activities during the past year as centering around further developments in the Pentagon City and I-595 matters. He stated that the Pentagon City construction was beginning but that the developers continued to file applications for modi-

fication of their building permits and site plans that required constant monitoring by PCCC to insure that the adverse effects of the project were not made worse. His report indicated again that no significant success had been realized in fund raising to meet outstanding obligations, mainly legal costs, but that \$8,000 had been borrowed from the National Bank of Washington (\$2,000 of which was repaid), which had been used to retire a part of the bills owed for legal services.

With his final report, Quinn introduced a memorandum for future and continuing fundraising under his direction as the new vice chairman for finance. In the memorandum, he said, in part:

No significant progress has been made in curtailing [our] indebtedness ... [O]ur credibility is impaired with the very experts we need to consult in order to carry on ... [T]hese debts were incurred after full discussion There was virtually no dissent to our undertaking either the Pentagon City [or] I-595 litigation ... [W]e as a Board and as a community of respectable citizens must renew and strengthen our efforts to raise the money to pay the debts.

On January 23, too late for inclusion in Quinn's report, the U.S. Supreme Court denied PCCC's petition for certiorari, thus bringing the Pentagon City litigation to a definitive close.

1979-85 — A Change of Names and Mission

In the following year or so, PCCC filed an application with the State Corporation Commission to change its name from the Pentagon City Coordinating Committee, Inc., to the Center for Urban Education, Inc.

The change in name no doubt reflected the feeling of many in the group that with the controversy over the nature of the Pentagon City development rapidly passing into history, and its construction all but a "fait accompli," it was no longer realistic, nor was there a continuing need for the PCCC group to be identified by a name linking it to only that project. Additionally, the other two issues that had preoccupied PCCC, the I-595 construction and the Shirlington Shopping area redevelopment, were also resolved. It appeared clear that the group should either fold its tents and wind up its affairs or move into new areas of concern.

In a flyer dated April 4, 1981, the new Center for Urban Education, Incorporated, or "CUE" described itself in much the same way as had the old PCCC, to wit:

The Center for Urban Education is a non profit corporation, organized in 1976 to promote the development of an environmentally sound community and thus to help avoid community deterioration.

It collects and analyzes information concerning air pollution, noise pollution, transportation problems and related matters, particularly as such problems relate to land use decisions.

The description made no reference to past Pentagon City, I-595 or Shirlington issues, nor did it limit its future interest to only those areas or to any other limited or particular part of Arlington County.

The flyer listed John Quinn as the president, John Marr as vice president, William Massa, Jr., as secretary and Clyde Heasley, Jr., as treasurer. The 27 directors included, in addition to the officers, several well known civic activists.³

In 1984, in a follow-up flyer, CUE urged citizens to join the organization at an annual membership dues of \$3.00. It listed its current areas of activity as (1) transportation in Arlington, (2) reduced use of National Airport, (3) compatibility of high density development and residential neighborhoods, (4) air pollution, (5) neighborhood conservation, and (6) education in Arlington.

The flyer asserted that CUE's focus was to:

- (1) promote citizen involvement,
- (2) develop and evaluate all issues in terms of people (services, age, economics, housing, children, public education, healthy environment),
- (3) promote sound planning to review impacts on neighborhoods,
- (4) provide planning leadership, and
- (5) support a regional approach to planning.

That flyer listed some changes among the officers:

President — Mary Kathryn Hughes
Vice President (Planning) — Nancy Swain
Vice President (Fund Raising) — John Marr
Treasurer — Clyde Heasley, Jr.
Executive Secretary — Sally Boss

In its early years, CUE met regularly and, taking advantage of the artistic talent of its president, published highly professional periodic news bulletins generously sprinkled with eye-catching and communicative art work.

The bulletins were mailed with regularly to the membership and distributed throughout the county to libraries, county government agencies and other regional entities that were thought to have an interest in conservation and in environmental threats to the quality of life in Northern Virginia.

1981-86 — Years of Financial Challenge — And Victory

Soon after PCCC became CUE, a remarkable and dramatic development took place that enabled the organization to retire its indebtedness, mainly, as

we have seen, incurred in the Pentagon City and I-595 litigation. With the demise of those controversies, PCCC\CUE found itself saddled with almost a quarter of a million dollars of debt, a staggering amount for a group of private citizen activists without outside support or assistance.

With its fund-raising efforts to that time, consisting of neighborhood coffees, dinners, and miscellaneous solicitations, the leadership had raised mere pocket change. For example, in 1977, perhaps a typical year, the Treasurer reported that an I-595 workshop had netted only \$66. The same year, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency water quality workshop realized only \$400, a Stouffer's hotel fund-raising dinner \$560, and a Herbst fund-raising effort \$408. The total of all other donations amounted to only \$2,980 for an overall total of only about \$6,000. At that rate, it seemed a \$250,000 debt could not be finally and completely paid off for another 40 years (or until about the year 2022).

Faced with this discouraging dilemma, several of the stalwart leaders in the PCCC\CUE movement met one evening in early January of 1980 in the home of Dick Herbst on South Knoll Street for a collective effort to find ways to solve the group's crushing financial predicament and by paying off its staggering debts. The assembled CUE members included loyal supporters and workers such as John Marr, Dick Herbst, John Quinn, Derk Swain. After a period of relative silence, head-scratching, hand-wringing and soul-searching, slowly and almost inaudibly one of the assembled members spoke.

"Why don't we run a bingo game?" asked CUE leader John Marr, hesitantly.

"A bingo game?" someone responded in surprise as the members of the group looked at one another searchingly.

"Where on earth did you get that idea?" someone asked Marr.

"Well," explained Marr, "I ran into an ole buddy the other day in the grocery store and he mentioned his recent experience with bingo games in the school his children attend. Seems there was some hanky-panky and misdirection of funds and the games had to be closed down. But he said they had been most profitable."

"Could bingo by our group also be sufficiently profitable?"

"Would it be permissible?"

"Who would operate the games?"

"Where would they be held?"

"Would anyone come?"

The questions came thick and fast.

"Wouldn't we be required to get a permit? Would we be qualified for a permit?" Quinn asked.

"Yes," Marr answered. "I understand permits are required, and few activities can get them. I believe we would qualify as a nonprofit organization

operating for community or educational purposes. Our local tax assessor would be the source for the permit. There is a nominal fee for an annual license. I think it is \$25.”⁴

Before the meeting adjourned the group had decided to pursue the suggestion of raising money by conducting bingo games. In the following weeks, an application for a permit was filed on which, among other things, CUE leaders had to establish that their organization had been in existence for at least two years as required by the Virginia Code; they had to familiarize themselves with other statutory requirements for conducting bingo games. In due course, a permit was obtained, game crews were organized, and on July 11, 1980, the first of the weekly scheduled bingo games was held in the cafeteria of the Gunston community center on South Lang Street.

The idea of undertaking the bingo operation proved to be little less than a stroke of genius. Gradually, with energetic promotion within the community and considerable efforts by dedicated CUE members who donated endless hours of their time to organizing and operating the enterprise, attendance increased, and profits quickly reached an average of about \$1,000 a week.

By 1985, almost a quarter of a million dollars in profits had been realized, enough to pay all the organization’s legal and other indebtedness. In 1985, the games were suspended for several months to give those who were operating the games a breather, and to recruit replacements. After the 1985 break, the games were resumed for another two or three years to finance additional projects undertaken by the organization. They were then permanently discontinued.

* * *

The major developmental and urban growth controversies on which the group centered its attention have long since been resolved. In 1992-93, the group had focused its attention on the proposal by Redskins football team owner Jack Kent Cooke to build a stadium on the railroad property just south of Crystal City. That issue evaporated, however, when the proposal withered and died after intense local citizen opposition both in the City of Alexandria and in Arlington County. In 1993, CUE representatives attended various metropolitan and county meetings, wrote letters, and made contacts on issues ranging from noise abatement at National Airport to reducing the number of Arlington County employees, limiting the length of the “English as a Second Language” program in schools, and measures to retain U. S. Navy offices in the Crystal City office buildings.

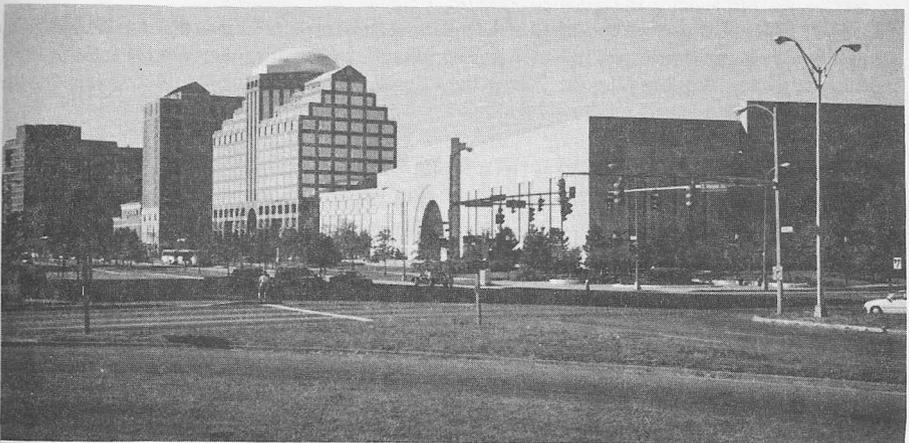
At its January 7, 1994, annual meeting, the specified agenda was to consist of several administrative items including the approval of minutes of the 1993

annual meeting, financial reports, and the nomination and election of officers. Although some members had expected that the question of taking a position on easing or continuing the restrictions on commercial aircraft sizes and hours of operation at the National Airport might be discussed, there was no mention of the item on the notice of annual meeting.

As of August 1994, CUE continues to exist and function, although, it seems, with considerably less steam and fire. No doubt some members will feel it has passed its peak performance. Denis O'Sullivan, a South 22nd Street resident serves as the group's president, John Marr as vice president, Bette Keiger as secretary, and Larry Straus as treasurer. The Board of Directors has nine vacancies.⁵

The future of CUE is shrouded in some uncertainty. Member Louise Chesnut had suggested as early as 1992 that perhaps the organization should be disbanded since the purposes for which it was initially activated have been accomplished or were no longer pertinent. Other members felt that such action might be premature and that the group should remain functional or in standby status, ready to cope with any future challenges to "an environmentally sound community."

No matter what the future of CUE may be, its record of past performance in terms of time and effort contributed unselfishly by dedicated citizens volunteers to preserve the quality of their community as a desirable place to live and work seems unmatched to date. Nor does it seem that the efforts and



The Pentagon City complex in South Arlington between I-395 and Crystal City. The development was completed in the early 1980s on open space and has become one of the most popular shopping centers in the Washington Metropolitan area with its own Metro rail station underground. From the foreground are the Macy Department Store, the MCI Office Building (and main entrance to the Fashion Center Shopping Mall), the Ritz Carlton Hotel, the Nordstrom Department Store and the Park Vista Apartments.

accomplishments of CUE will be exceeded anytime soon since there are no longer any large areas of undeveloped land in the County around which controversy is likely to swirl and that would need a CUE to cope with them. Many CUE members doubtless will agree.

Notes and References

Sherman Pratt has resided in Arlington County since his retirement from the Army in the early 1960s and has been active in community civic affairs. He is past president of the County Civic Federation. He is the author of "Decisive Battles of the Korean War" and "Autobahn to Berchtesgaden," his view of World War II as a participant.

¹Included in the early activists were well known South Arlington civic leaders: John and Joan Quinn, John and Willa Marr, Derk and Nancy Swain, Anita Treadway, Walter and Pat Bauman, Richard and Deborah Herbst, Francis and Mary Hewitt, Robert Harrington, Bud and Maryanne Annon, Robert and Sunny Cook, Henry and Polly Franklin, and several others from North Arlington, including widely known activist Louise Chesnut.

²Arlington Journal, June 10, 1976, p. C10

³Doris Bangs, Louise Chesnut, Betty Constantz, Robert Gazzola, Jean Harrett, Charles Henck, Richard Herbst, Lloyd Herman, Kathryn Hughes, Herman Jensen, Leonard Kojm, John and Willa Marr, Carol Noggle, Joan Quinn, Susan Schruth, Marie Schum-Brady, Robert Shefner, Robert Steadman, Derk and Nancy Swain, William Wallace, Susan Wilder and Fred Wood.

⁴Section 18.2-340 of the Code of Virginia provides, in pertinent part, that an "organization operated exclusively for religious, charitable, community or educational" purposes may be granted a license to operate bingo games. Additional sections require that a license be obtained from the local governing body with an application fee of \$25, that profits be used only for the purpose for which the organization is formed, and that auditing and specified operating requirements be followed.

⁵In January 1994, the Board was comprised of the following individuals, other than the officers, only three of whom reside in the Arlington Ridge Civic Association area where the group was originated in 1976: Suzanne Bolton, Don Brady, Louise Chesnut Betty Constantz, Sylvia Courembis, Bob Dreher, Phyllis Furnari, Bob Gazzola, Jim Landrum, John Quinn, Ted Saks, John Wettroth and Susan Wilder.