

**Comments on Melwood Special GLUP Study Received Between 11/28/23-12/6/23**

11/28/23

**Comment Submitted for LRPC**

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Agenda Item or Topic	Melwood Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study Tier II Review
Please share your comment with the LRPC.	NOTE: Kellie Brown told me (in chat) to use form—I lack microphone to speak remotely during public comment on 11-28-2023. Applicant/staff's presentations show bldg. height of 5 stories, but suggested RA8-18 zoning enables bonus density to increase bldg. height to 12 stories— incompatible w/2 existing sector plans & neighborhood's historic designation (school is 100). Listen to the neighborhood & reject proposal. At SPRC, we will be told we can't oppose height/density preapproved by GLUP study.

11/29/23

Nicholas Giacobbe

Aurora Highlands

**Comments Prepared for Delivery at Melwood LRPC on November 28, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Lantelme. I am Nicholas Giacobbe, a resident of Aurora Highlands and officer of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association. I want to begin by pointing out that I am not objecting to the merits of the application, but rather to its legality and lack of faithfulness to decades of Arlington County planning principles.

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The applicant is seeking to spot zone a parcel since it does not support the intended use in the GLUP. However, it is properly zoned for the purposes for which it was deeded by the County. The applicant should have researched the GLUP and zoning status as a part of its acquisition of Linden. If Melwood does not want to comply with the current GLUP and zoning designations, then it should consider returning the property to the County so that another public benefit organization can take its place.

I want to observe that if successful, this project will likely be the start of a parcel-by-parcel rezoning of 23rd Street, rather than an orderly and planned process. With this proposal as a precedent, other property owners can easily make similar heartfelt pleas for illegal spot zoning, in direct opposition to decades of planning for this main street in the center of our diverse historic district of single and multiple family dwellings. We need a collaboratively developed plan for 23rd Street that will serve the neighborhood for the long term, rather than a series of one-off individual applications for special treatment.

I would also like to set the record straight as it pertains to Livability22202, the coalition of Aurora Highlands, Arlington Ridge, and Crystal City Civic Associations. Livability22202 does not have a position on the Melwood application. Let me repeat that clearly for the record — Livability22202 does not have a position on the Melwood application. Any assertions or implications that Livability22202 has taken a position on this application are misrepresentations of this simple fact.

In closing, I urge this committee to pay attention to the letter from the Aurora Highlands Civic Association to the County Board dated November 21, 2023, and to stay true to decades of careful and collaborative urban planning in our neighborhood.

12/5/23

Melwood – Additional comments 2023-12-05 pvh

**Voting precincts:** Currently 22202 has 8 precincts, and five of them, including Melwood, are in private buildings. Yet several residents have expressed concerns that their long-time polling place in Melwood will disappear if Melwood facilities are renovated and expanded. Can Melwood explicitly state that it will continue to offer space for Pct 103 Aurora Hills? If the Melwood project moves forward through SPRC, can we ensure that continuing to provide space for this precinct will be a listed requirement in any final approved plan?

### **Sidewalk conditions:**

- *23<sup>rd</sup> Street:* The existing sidewalk in front of Melwood along 23<sup>rd</sup> is a scant 5' wide, and some corner chunks of the sidewalk slabs have dislodged, creating tripping hazards. The narrow landscaping zone has no current street trees unfortunately. With an increase in pedestrian traffic, a new 6-minimum width clear zone sidewalk and enlarged

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landscaping zone with trees should be installed. The [Pedestrian Element](#) recommends a 6' minimum clear zone sidewalk in commercial/higher volume pedestrian traffic areas.

- **Grant Street:** The existing sidewalk on the west side is only 4' wide, not 5'. It is in poor condition, with major damage caused by tree root heaves. These damaged areas of the sidewalk collect debris and storm water and mud, and pedestrians are then forced to walk in the street. The landscaping zone does include street trees, and their condition should be evaluated.

**Potential length of a new Melwood building on 23<sup>rd</sup>:** What is the maximum total potential length of a new Melwood building along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Please note that the Pedestrian Element recommends creating a pedestrian passage between buildings if the total length exceeds 600'.

**Bus shelters:** The bus shelter on 23<sup>rd</sup> in front of Melwood is in good shape and serves eastbound buses well. However, the stop for westbound buses, on the NE corner of Grant & 23<sup>rd</sup>, is just a sign. Adding a shelter, if possible, would be great. Minimally a bench is needed here.

**Grant Street garage access:** Grant street is relatively narrow, with limited parking on the east side. However, on Sundays, parking is allowed on both sides because of the church, making driving on Grant on this block challenging. Melwood garage access on Grant would be challenging, especially on Sundays.

Thank you - and I remain strongly in favor of the project!

Pamela Van Hine

Aurora Highlands

12/3/23

**EXTERNAL EMAIL**

Dear Mr. Weir,

I am writing to follow up on your question at the Melwood LRPC meeting November 28, 2023, regarding the survey the Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) conducted about Melwood, as I am not sure I answered it fully. We advertised the survey to AHCA. The association voted with over 100 members present with over 86% against the Special GLUP Study in March 2022. The online survey had similar results, 158 respondents, 75% opposing the Study, and we also we got a breakdown of specific concerns. The precedent the change sets, and the size/density and the associated increase in traffic and parking are the top concerns of survey respondents.

We did not take down each respondent's or voter's address. If you are inquiring if the people that live closest to Melwood are more or less against the Study than others, it is not a secret people who live nearest to the project will be the most negatively impacted by the increases in density, certainly including traffic, loading & trash removal noise, parking, lights, etc. As noted in the LRPC meeting, Grant, and also Hayes & 24th Street are narrow. If there is not enough parking for the new residents (and their guests)

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existing residents are concerned people will park on residential side streets which already take overflow parking from the current businesses / churches on 23rd Street, and are used by those driving to Nina Park and Nellie Custis Park,

I hope this helps to answer the question. Please let me know if you have further questions,

Sincerely yours,

Stacy Meyer  
LRPC Rep, Melwood GLUP Study  
Aurora Highlands Civic Association

11/28/23

As I resident of Arlington, I urge you to strongly support the redevelopment of Melwood in Crystal City. Melwood is a longstanding nonprofit in Arlington that provides jobs, employment training services and community support for adults with disabilities. I support the redevelopment to include roughly 100 units of committed affordable housing with a 25% set aside for residents with disabilities. Training operations would remain in the new building. **In addition, without the allowed building height, this project would not be financially feasible.**

I worked in the Federal Office of Management and Budget for many years and we had Melwood as our cleaning service. These employees did a great job and were lovely although I suspect they didn't make very much making affordable housing a critical need for their financial independence.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Pat Vinkenes

5721 27th Rd N

Arlington, VA 22207

11/28/23

I spoke in the public comment period during the November 28, 2023 LRPC meeting. Because of the number of speakers, I had to limit my comment to one minute. I would like to provide my full written remarks below for the record.

My name is Jeffrey Williams and I have resided in Arlington for 60 years, the last 30 in the Riverhouse. While I am not an immediate neighbor, I am familiar with this location as I frequently walk by this site on my neighborhood walks. I strongly support amending the GLUP to permit the current uses and the addition of proposed future residential use.

This project can provide affordable housing and supportive services for people with disabilities and aligns with Arlington's goals for people with disabilities to obtain and maintain their

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housing. I want to see projects like this succeed as I believe that it will help make our community more inclusive.

Located on an arterial with bus transit and less than a mile from the metro, this site is well situated for a multi-unit residential building. Below grade parking can result in a smaller building footprint than would otherwise be possible.

Three sides of the proposed site are churches or commercial use buildings which should largely be compatible with the proposed multiunit residential. The back side abuts Nellie Custis Park that provides some separation from the single-family homes on 24<sup>th</sup> street. I support massing Scenario 3 that shifts building height to the front of site which provides more tapering options to the single-family homes.

I have attended Civic Association meetings and the prior Tier 1 LRPC review for this GLUP. I heard many nearby neighbors voice strong objections to the proposal citing building height and mass that are incompatible with the neighborhood. I understand that the immediate neighbors do not want to see a larger building at this location, but that means that we will forgo an opportunity to provide affordable housing for an underserved community.

I do not think a five-story building at this location is incompatible with the nearby single-family residences. As a point of reference, for many years my family resided at the Shawnee Apartments at 700 South Courthouse Road in the Penrose neighborhood. This is a five-story multifamily apartment building adjacent to and bordered by single family homes and a park. My family was able to find housing in this community because this type of building was permitted and available when we moved here in 1962.

The plans that the county adopts always reflect a balance of objectives which inevitably requires that we will have to engage in tradeoffs. Every choice (and doing nothing is a choice) represents an opportunity cost.

I believe that this is a unique opportunity to welcome new neighbors into our community who otherwise would not be able to live among us.

Jeffrey Townsend Williams