

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

**c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201**

June 8, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Potomac Yard Land Bay C-East

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) has reviewed the application for the Potomac Yard Land Bay C-East Project. Based on our review, the Commission assesses that the project furthers Arlington's Community Energy Plan (CEP) and other sustainability goals in some important ways, for example by making most of the buildings' domestic systems electric and giving attention to *biophilia* concerns, but also has room for improvement through enhancements in energy efficiency and acquisition of renewable energy, as detailed below. The success of Arlington's CEP depends, in large measure, on the County's resolve in ensuring that all buildings are at least zero carbon ready. In practical terms that means three things for every new and renovated building: Make it highly efficient; make it electric; and make the electricity renewable. In this case, ZMA Development LP's application both helps to further, but also falls short in one--and substantially short in two--of these essential categories:

Energy Efficiency:

Making a building highly energy efficient is the first step toward reducing the buildings' energy use and therefore its carbon emissions. The LEED scorecard for this project indicates a commitment to improve energy efficiency by only 15 percent. Since the time the LEED scorecard was submitted, however, the Applicant announced the project would meet the LEED Gold standard, up from LEED Silver. However, it has not yet provided an updated LEED scorecard to indicate where the additional points were earned to qualify for Gold. The Applicant, at the March 1 SPRC, was also unable to articulate whether the additional points were earned in the energy optimization or some other category. We would therefore strongly urge the County to convey to the Applicant that we expect them to be very ambitious on energy efficiency in this project, achieving at least 20 percent performance improvement over the industry baseline (LEED v. 4 , or 10 percent over v. 4.1), and ideally 25 percent over baseline (or 12.5 percent over v. 4.1) or higher. This is what Arlington will need to achieve our carbon neutrality goals.

The Project's Energy Modeling & Analysis also identifies additional energy savings through improved window glazing and reduced dwelling unit lighting power density. A full zero carbon analysis would likely identify additional energy efficiency gains through building envelope improvement, reduce window area, and upgrade windows. Installing heat pump hot water boilers rather than the standard electric resistant hot water boilers would also reduce energy usage as well as save residents on their utility bills.

Electrification of Systems:

We commend the Applicant for planning to make most of the buildings' domestic systems electric, with the exception of first floor retail, which will use gas, and emergency generation. We recommend that the County ask the Applicant to continue exploring the potential for making the first floor electric or, at a minimum, building in the infrastructure to facilitate a future transition to electric. In fact, we urge the Board to ask the Applicant to submit a narrative describing the steps it needs to take to make the first floor electric-ready, and to conduct a carbon assessment to help identify other ways to reduce the buildings' carbon emissions.

Renewable Electricity (Energy):

The Green Building Incentive Policy update requires onsite and offsite solar or the option to contribute to the Green Building Fund. The Applicant--who submitted the project before the Policy update went into effect--has said it has no plans in this regard. The County should nevertheless urge the Applicant to consider installing solar (and potentially storage) onsite or purchasing renewable energy offsite.

Zero Carbon Transportation:

While we commend the Applicant for the proposed low (.88) parking ratio and possibly reducing the ration to 0.7. We are concerned, however, about the minimal attention given to installing EV charging stations. We note that only 6 parking spaces (1.5%) are planned to be equipped with EV charging across the 399 spaces available in both buildings, and only another 6 (1.5%) are planned to be EV-ready (conduit in place). We ask the County to urge the Applicant to make at least 50 percent of all spaces EV-ready as this is where the world and the region are rapidly heading. This will help meet future demand for a full transition to electric vehicles and avoid the need for much more expensive retrofitting later. The Applicant should consider 'smart charging' technology to maximize the number of vehicles that can be charged while reducing demands on the electrical capacity available at site.

Other Sustainability Issues

We commend the Project's incorporation of *biophilic* design concepts in the project's outdoor spaces, but believe the functionality and environmental soundness of the North Park Plaza could be enhanced by reducing the amount of hardscape and incorporating more native plantings in its stead. This modification would better help to capture and retain storm water runoff as well as improve the *biophilic* qualities of this site. C2E2 has relayed specific suggestions in this regard to the Applicant.

The world is facing a catastrophic climate crisis which requires immediate action by individuals, governments, and businesses to avoid the worst consequences, and all future development needs to align to these goals. We urge the County to ask the Applicant to move into the forefront by offering a climate-friendly building with this project.

Sincerely,



Joan McIntyre

Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission