

**Park and Recreation Commission**  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

December 8, 2021

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

RE: Pentagon City Planning Study

Dear Chair de Ferranti --

Members of the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) have participated in the Pentagon City Planning Study public engagement sessions, received presentations from staff, and have offered numerous detailed comments on various aspects of the proposed versions of the study. Below are some summary comments concerning the Request for Advertisement proposal.

We strongly support the incorporation of language that emphasizes the importance of public spaces when considering future development. We believe that the experience of current and future residents, employees, and visitors in terms of recreation, enjoyment of natural amenities, and living in an environmentally friendly community should be a driving paradigm for any county development policy documents. A broader public realm framework should take precedence over the design of private-space buildings. Parks and other public spaces should not be relegated to the "left-over spaces" after buildings are designed.

We believe that the study reflects the sentiments of the 22202 study and provides a framework for planning to improve the public realm. The Green Ribbon concept, if fulfilled, will provide enormous benefit in an area that does not have a large number of possibilities for expanded park and other public space. The revised illustrations and descriptions of the hypothetical ribbon that show more extensive tree and other plantings are welcome. We appreciate the stated intent to maximize tree canopy with a goal of exceeding 20%. This is a good start, but is still far from ideal. Thus, we strongly urge staff to emphasize these intentions during future Site Plan Review processes and to make further deliberate efforts whenever possible to incrementally increase tree canopy cover to sustainable levels.

The study represents progress from other planning documents on several fronts, including the centrality of biophilia as a planning principle, and the importance of nature for occupants of all urban spaces, regardless of how dense the development is. This initiative reflects recognition of the value of nature to residents, and the prioritization of nature in both publicly- and privately-owned spaces, including "green ribbons" for business and pleasure.

The proposed study is very thorough, with extensive background and research. We would have preferred a more detailed vision of what the reconfigured Joyce and Grace Murray Park would be in relation to an expanded Virginia Highlands Park. The same interest holds for the possible public space above River House. For the future, we strongly endorse a thorough master planning process for Virginia Highlands Park that will consider all possible uses, once other considerations, such as county school needs in this area, have been resolved.

Another addition that would reflect community preferences would be language that more specifically anticipates private sector support for the design and development of the area's public spaces, whether private or publicly owned. With the large anticipated increases in population, and the benefits that new residents will receive from area parks and other public spaces, these benefits should be supported by significant private development resources.

The illustrated expanded pedestrian plaza on Hayes is an important concept. The replacement of a poorly accessible, underutilized central median strip will provide greater benefits to residents, particularly on a thoroughfare that will continue as Pentagon City's "main street".

The commission would urge that any acreage numbers in the document on potential expanded open space acres to be stated clearly in terms of added privately owned, vs. publicly-owned space. Also, public space additions such as Green ribbons that involve relatively narrow public spaces, should be identified, specifically.

Sincerely,



William Ross  
Chair – Park and Recreation Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board  
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager  
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Members, Planning Commission