



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

April 22, 2022

Honorable Katie Cristol
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Clarendon Sector Plan Update – 10th Street Park

Dear Chair Cristol,

Members of the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) have participated in discussions regarding the Clarendon Sector Plan update and associated considerations for changes in land use and zoning. On Tuesday, April 19th, we received a presentation from County staff on the most recent updates to the plan. We have previously provided comments regarding the 10th Street/Fire Station 4 issues, and would like to provide further comment as the Sector Plan becomes finalized.

As previously indicated, the PRC supports the need to be flexible about future opportunities that may arise involving the 10th Street North site and Fire Station 4, including the potential for relocation of the fire station. However, the four options provided for the 10th Street North site, and additional proposed public space options in the 2022 Clarendon Sector Plan are wholly inadequate for meeting the park and recreation needs for the future residents of Clarendon and the identified need for acquiring park space in the County's Public Spaces Master Plan. The PRC strongly believes the entire site should be designated for park space, and should not be developed for housing.

Public Open Space vs. Committed Affordable Housing

The options that propose housing development unnecessarily pit the need for open space against the importance of increasing the number of committed affordable housing units in Clarendon. We do not believe that one has to come at the expense of the other. The four adjoining proposed residential development projects are all applying for significantly greater FAR (floor area ratio) than in the 2006 Plan. To achieve this, these projects would need to provide "extraordinary

public benefits.” Why shouldn’t those include a significant number of committed affordable housing units? Additional future projects contemplated in the sector plan offer more affordable housing opportunities. Why would we give up existing public space to private development when all of these opportunities for affordable housing exist? Arlington has goals of building attractive residential and commercial areas within a sustainable and equitable community. A new park on this site does more to achieve those goals on this site which is already surrounded by high density development with very little green space.

Equity

The PRC strongly supports the County’s affordable housing policy and goals, as well as the inclusion of the need to address equity and housing diversity in the Clarendon Sector Plan. We believe that ensuring access to open space and recreational park amenities is an environmental equity issue. Committing a significant existing County site for use as a contiguous park and recreation space would better support equity in housing and serve the future needs of a more diverse population than concentrating affordable housing on a single site next to the largest fire station in Arlington.

Proposed Public Open Space for Clarendon Inadequate for Increased Density

An increase in housing density in Clarendon will only exacerbate the need for more park and recreational spaces. County Staff and the Planning Commission have been creative in their effort to expand the plan’s provisions for public open spaces, including the proposed linear park on Fairfax Drive. While specific plans for these spaces are yet to be decided, we do not think these proposed spaces can offer the same level of amenities that a larger, contiguous park would provide.

In addition, the 2022 Clarendon Sector Plan is dependent on the acquisition of space, which is currently privately owned, to achieve even the same amount of square feet of public space (not necessarily park space) that was included in the 2006 sector plan. If that acquisition does not occur, then we will be farther away from, not closer to achieving the level of service targets for active park and recreational amenities adopted in the Public Spaces Master Plan. With the increased density proposed for Clarendon, there is a greater necessity to have more land dedicated to park and recreation amenities in the new plan. That can only be achieved if we maximize the amount of park and recreation space on the 10th Street North site.

Maximizing Park and Recreation Space on 10th Street North Site

We would like to reiterate that relocation of the Fire Station 4 should be pursued as the highest priority alternative. That being said, to achieve the parks and recreation amenities level of service the residents of Clarendon require and the county has committed to achieving through the PSMP, all proposed options need to maximize the use of the 10th Street site for park and recreation use

based on the only appropriate constraint; whether or not the fire station needs to be located on the site.

This means that there should be only two land use options: one with the fire station and one without. If there is no fire station, then the entire site should be dedicated to park and recreation space (figure 2.19 from the plan). If there is a firehouse, we support making use of the space above the fire station for additional park and recreation amenities. Rooftop and elevated parks have precedents in Arlington (APS Heights Building) and many other communities around the country.

We appreciate and agree with the county's pursuit of affordable housing, but do not concur that this site is an acceptable location for such a project for the many reasons outlined in this advisory letter. We urge the County Board to adopt the well reasoned and thoughtfully considered position of the Planning Commission to eliminate the option to build both a fire station and affordable housing on the same site. We ask that you prioritize the 10th Street site as envisioned in the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan and approve an updated plan that maximizes potential park and recreational space on the 10th Street site.

Sincerely,



Shruti Kuppaa
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