

ARLINGTON COUNTY
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201

June 1, 2021

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

RE: Land Bay C–East Project

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

This letter from the Park and Recreation Commission is in regard to the Land Bay-C project in Crystal City. PRC received a presentation on this project at our May 25th meeting—primarily focused on the open spaces and landscape plan—and has participated in the SPRC process as well as in general public engagement.

Overall, commissioners have a positive impression of this project on Potomac Avenue. The siting and footprint arrangements are innovative and the overall surface arrangements provide a variety of spaces for circulation and a variety of outdoor use. The architecture and materials selection provide aesthetic interest as well as avoiding an oppressive presence of a monolithic facade design. This creates a lighter feel for the structures, and in combination with the arcade and ground-level treatments, help connect the buildings with the natural areas across the street and the west facade park area. Rooftop use and energy efficiency features are also welcome.

During the engagement process, the applicant has made a number of modifications to the plaza and park hardscape, adding more substantial vegetation and enhancing the biophilic experience of the ground level. This includes seating and tree numbers and selections. The applicant has offered to engage in an additional meeting with staff and stakeholders regarding the fountain/water feature should the current plan prove to be unfeasible. This is also a welcome situation. Currently, there is a potential for lack of harmony between a water feature that is tightly held to the rectangular design motif of the architecture and a water feature that is consistent with the more organic motif of the natural spaces that are intended to provide biophilic experience. Additional conversation is welcome.

As this project proceeds to the final engagement and hearing stages, PRC has only one primary concern about the Land Bay - C plan. This is the location and proportions of glass and the need for bird-safe materials in some circumstances. As indicated by the applicant at the PRC

presentation, there is currently nothing in the plan to provide any mitigation of potential bird strikes.

Given the location of this building—across a small street from a natural area—and given that the metro area is in the top ten areas nationally for migratory bird pathways, we believe that a close look at vulnerabilities should be taken, rather than a hearing from the applicant, a blanket “not needed” viewpoint.

Three particular areas are of concern:

- The larger windows of the end portions of each building. The smaller windows, with vertical banding to meet design guidelines, are probably low risk. The wider windows, especially at the south end, are large enough to be of concern.
- The ground level arcade fenestration and the floors immediately above that set back. Elevations and renderings in the final presentation include street trees and plaza trees. The landscape plan provides a wide range of species, including some canopy trees. The illustrations consistently show trees about 25 feet in height. It may be the case that tree boxes will not allow growth much over that height, but in any case the first 30 feet will have trees in close proximity to windows, one of the most common situations for fatal window crashes.
- The views of Building 1 show an open frame structure above the center section of the building. If this frame is decorative and is truly open, there is no problem. If the frame includes glass to create a wind-block enclosure, this will present a fly-through danger for many birds. That is an unanswered question.

In general, this project has potential to be a positive addition to the southern part of National Landing—aesthetically and as habitat for residents—and it has many likable features. PRC would appreciate further consideration of the water feature in the plaza landscape plan, and particularly, the window glass treatments.

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