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June 21, 2021

VIA E-MAIL

James Schroll, Chair
Long Range Planning Committee
c/o Tim Murphy, Planner
tmurphy@arlingtonva.us

Re: Crystal City Building Heights Study (“Study”)

Dear Commissioner Schroll:

I am writing on behalf of the B.F. Saul Company, owner of the Holiday Inn at National Airport located at 2646 Richmond Highway (“Property”). We are requesting that the Long Range Planning Committee (“LRPC”) consider additional height for the Property as part of the Study.

The existing hotel was built in 1973. It contains approximately 280 hotel units and is zoned RA-H-3.2. As constructed, the hotel stands 148 feet tall. The Property is also located within the boundaries of the Crystal City Sector Plan (“Plan”). The Plan currently provides the Property could be developed under the C-O Crystal City district at a base of 3.8 FAR (commercial/hotel) or 4.8 FAR (residential). However, the Plan recommends building heights below those of the current hotel, providing for up to 75 feet along Richmond Highway and tapering to 35 feet towards South Eads Street.

We are requesting that the LRPC study and support greater building height at the Property up to 175 feet. As others have noted, additional building height within Crystal City will permit opportunities for greater community benefits, world-class architecture, and much needed housing and revitalized commercial services. For the Property specifically, additional building height within the Plan would provide the owner with a viable path for site redevelopment as this asset reaches the end of its useful life. As it currently stands, the recommended building heights provide little incentive to pursue a redevelopment, and such a redevelopment could not yield the kinds of community benefits that are encouraged in the County. Further, additional building height would make a smoother transition from the east side of Richmond Highway, where heights up to 250 feet are possible, to the west side of the street. This ultimately creates a better urban space.

Finally, a recommendation for additional building height at the Property would be consistent with Section 7.16.5.D.1.a of the Zoning Ordinance, which provides that the County Board may approve additional building height for lots, such as the Property, where existing buildings exceed the heights adopted in the Building Heights Map. The Plan should reflect this reality for the Property, so that the planning guidance does not conflict with the law as part of a future redevelopment of this site.

In summary, we respectfully request that the LRPC study and support greater building height at the Property up to 175 feet. We further support efforts to increase building heights throughout Crystal City, such that opportunities for additional community benefits, iconic architecture, and needed housing can be realized in this neighborhood.



Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.G. Roberts'.

Matthew G. Roberts, Esq.

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