

Corttney and David Roan
17th St S
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Arlington County Long Range Planning and Zoning Committees,

As residents of the Pentagon City area, we are writing to express our concerns with the Pentagon City Planning Study's proposed upzoning of the River House property. Among other things, the study effectively calls for upzoning the River House property from its longstanding, community-based ceiling to over 5,000 units through considerable new construction. The study bases these recommendations on a specious assessment that fails to account for the significant public costs of such upzoning, including strains to already limited community resources, infrastructure, stormwater management, and green space.

Despite having considerable community impacts, the Pentagon City Planning Study's proposal to support the River House upzoning and expansion lacks any meaningful cost-benefit analysis or consideration of alternative development options suggested by current residents. Instead, it was created through a focus group with representatives from a county staff pushing an agenda seemingly lacking in even standard cost-benefit analysis alongside developers entirely motivated by upzoning properties to maximize their return on investment. The study fails to include economic and environmental impact studies of the status quo as well as alternative, community-focused development options for the property, such as a school or parks. The study also fails to use existing case studies of upzoning in Arlington and the surrounding region to measure the likely impacts of the proposed River House expansion.

Moreover, it is deeply concerning that the county is considering all of these changes without any sound economic impact analysis of alternatives to development as suggested by current community residents. When the River House property was first developed, the Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA), its fellow community groups, and the county at large received several notable concessions from the developer to maximize net benefits for Arlingtonians and taxpayers beyond those just for developers. Yet, this most recent discussion of developing River House has no such considerations. For instance, South Arlington—and "National Landing" in particular—desperately needs more schools. Yet, there is seemingly no land in the local area for the county to use for new construction. It is negligence, and frankly malfeasance, for this county staff process to neglect the possible option of acquiring River House's current parking lot land (at the cost of a parking lot that is zoned to its current capacity) to build a school to service the existing residents in the area in addition to the countless other residential proposed for Pentagon City/National Landing. Building a school on River House property already zoned to capacity is just one of many obvious alternatives that county staff should have considered, and must still consider, as potentially offering more net benefits to the community than the proposed high-density River House upzoning. Instead, the county has administered a farce, scientifically lacking study process to support a conclusion seemingly decided from the onset.

Additionally, JBG Smith's proposal to upzone their River House property to remove any caps on development and density fails to account for and provide the necessary infrastructure to support such development. Specifically, the proposal does not account for adequate parking for tenants, roadway thoroughfares that do not overflow already strained Aurora Highlands streets with excessive and speeding cars, stormwater mitigation plans, public school availability, green space for

the general public (rather than courtyards that exclude the general public), and myriad other considerations. The planned expansion of River House also offers no solution for the regional impacts on affordable housing (and will actually increase the costs of living in this area and property values), nor does it consider strains on already limited local infrastructure, such as local schools that are already well-beyond capacity. The county must account for these costs when pursuing any proposal to upzone the River House property and drastically change the landscape of the Pentagon City area.

For just some of the reasons outlined above, we strongly oppose the current proposed upzoning changes to the River House property. The dramatic proposed changes are not based on objective cost-benefit analysis, failing to account for the plan's extensive public costs and alternative uses of the River House property that provide more public benefits to Arlingtonians. As such, we kindly request that the county, at a minimum, conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the proposed River House expansion that includes an analysis of community-focused property development alternatives. Following these suggestions would result in an analytically robust and thoughtful Pentagon City development plan. We appreciate your consideration of these suggestions.

Best regards,
Corttney and David Roan
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