



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



December 23, 2021

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

RE: Clarendon Sector Plan Update – 10th Street Park

Dear Chair de Ferranti --

Members of the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) have participated in the update of the Clarendon Sector Plan discussions and the associated considerations for changes in land use and zoning. We will have more detailed comments on other proposed public space aspects of the revisions, but at this point would like to offer some comments on the 10th Street/Fire Station 4 issues.

The PRC is associating itself strongly with the views of the involved civic associations and the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission concerning the potential elimination or diminution of over one acre of public park space. The 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan identifies 50 thousand square feet for potential public space along 10th Street North. Assuming 50 thousand square feet of public space was sufficient for what was planned in 2006, this area needs even more recreational space now. While the contemplated Fairfax Drive public space is crucial for the plan, it does not substitute for the 10th Street Park: (1) It was already included as public space in the 2006 Sector Plan; (2) Its linear shape, which will work well to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle traffic between Clarendon and Virginia Square, provides challenges for designing a useful, active county park.

The 2019 Public Spaces Master Plan calls for the acquisition of 30 acres of park land over a 10-year period and lists as one of its top priorities the securing and/or expansion of public spaces envisioned by sector plans such as in Clarendon, which have been adopted by the County Board. Unfortunately, the recent rate of park land acquisition of less than 2 acres per year will not come close to achieving this goal. Opportunities for park expansion are by their nature intermittent and so it is crucial, particularly in an urban sector with a rapidly expanding population, to take advantage of or defend such opportunities.

Several members of the PRC have participated in commissions and discussions that have dealt with the wide range of public facility needs and fully appreciate the crucial nature of fire services

and affordable housing in this section of the county. We have heard staff testimony on the challenges of finding alternative, appropriate locations for Fire Station 4 and the apparent reality that the Verizon building will remain with its current footprint. However, we believe that relocation of Fire Station 4 should be further explored and considered in the sector plan as a possibility for the 10th Street parcel. Even though there is no current interest in a co-location arrangement from a private developer, we believe that the updated sector plan should contain language that supports such a possibility.

The PRC supports the need to be flexible about future opportunities that may arise involving Fire Station 4 and the 10th Street parcel. Given the planning and fiscal uncertainties about future possibilities, we do not support the inclusion of overly-specific solutions in the sector plan. However, we do have a strong concern about zoning changes that would impact the possibilities for a public park. Given the choice of the various options presented at the December 8 LRPC meeting, we prefer Scenario 4 (43 thousand square feet of park space), with a lesser level of support for Scenario 3 (15-17 thousand square feet of park space). The remaining scenarios that would retain the fire station are not acceptable from a public space perspective. Additionally, we support the consensus view from the LRPC meeting that if the fire station were to remain at that site, any future fire station design should consider publicly-accessible rooftop recreation amenities.

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