



November 26, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chairman  
Arlington County Board  
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center  
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Clarendon Sector Plan Update

Dear Chairman de Ferranti:

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) has participated in the update to the Clarendon Sector Plan and continues to oppose the loss of the proposed 10<sup>th</sup> Street park space, as currently envisioned in the update. We offer the following points for consideration.

While we understand the desire of the Fire Department to retain the existing location, we question whether adequate effort and attention was given to either, a) exploring a suitable alternate location for Fire Station #4, or b) finding an alternative location for the proposed 50,000 square feet of envisioned public space.

The update is at odds with the recently adopted Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP). The PSMP identifies the 10<sup>th</sup> Street park as one of the primary opportunities for public space in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. PSMP Priority Action #2 specifically calls out the existing Clarendon Sector Plan: *“Secure or expand the public spaces envisioned by sector, corridor and other plans adopted by the County Board – including the Clarendon Sector Plan...”* (PSMP, p. XI and p. 56) Likewise, acquisition of this space would also help address PSMP Recommendation #1: *“Add at least 30 acres of new public space over the next ten years.”* (PSMP, p. XI and p. 54)

To summarily reject this location without finding suitable alternatives for additional public space, undermines the clear objectives stated in the existing sector plan as well as the PSMP. We should not be in the business of undermining key parts of previous long-range planning simply because it is inconvenient.

While Arlington is lauded for its smart growth planning around transportation, Arlington has similarly been criticized for not planning for adequate public spaces in the densely populated Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. The proposed elimination of the planned park will further contribute to that deficit. The FNRC recommends that the plan update reaffirm, rather than eliminate, the objective of creating a sizable park in the sector plan, or at the very least, somewhere nearby.

While the FNRC welcomes the efforts to improve the public space available on Fairfax Drive, the overall reduction in public space in the Sector Plan is an enormous problem.

The proposed update features a loss of 30,000 square feet of public open space (not counting the likely infrequent shutdown of Fairfax Drive for public events). The numbers are stark: the update represents a loss of .7 acres or almost a 30% reduction in public open space. FNRC sincerely doubts that the size and multiple transportation and parking uses of the Fairfax Drive linear park will address the fundamental need for quality public spaces in this area.

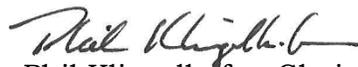
We note that tree canopy in this area is estimated to be about 5%, far below the target of 15% for central business districts in urban areas. The addition of a park with trees and other vegetation, even with recreational elements, will contribute to the increase of tree canopy, thereby helping to absorb storm water runoff and reduce the heat island effect in this densely populated area.

Additionally, with respect to privately owned spaces, please consider the planning framework. The fresh thinking of the Pentagon City Planning Study, whereby each development is intended to contribute to the overall biophilic design by intentionally including nature into the built environment, is the direction of the future. The concept of minimum vegetated areas in each development project is an important step in this direction and the Clarendon Sector Plan Update would be strengthened by including similar guidelines.

The FNRC urges that the updated sector plan retain the objective of creating a similarly sized park, and if not at the same location, then looking beyond the borders of the sector plan for either relocation of the fire station or acquiring additional public space for a park. To plan for significant increase in density without the concomitant increase in both the quantity and quality of public spaces, is a lost opportunity and a disservice to the notion of planning for a sustainable, healthy, and livable environment for residents and workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.

Sincerely,



Phil Klingelhofer, Chair  
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

Cc: Members, Arlington County Board  
Members, Arlington County Planning Commission  
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager  
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation