



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD

Courthouse Plaza One 2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700 Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703.228.3830 FAX 703.228.3834 www.arlingtonva.us

November 9, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chairman and
Members of the County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Historic Resources Inventory Buildings in Clarendon

Dear Chairman de Ferranti and Members of the County Board:

The Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) has been a strong advocate for preserving, in place, Arlington's historically-valuable commercial buildings in our downtown Courthouse and Clarendon neighborhoods. Per HALRB's responsibility under ACZO Section 11.3.2D.1(b) to advise the County Board on historic preservation and historic affairs, HALRB has significant historic preservation concerns about recent developments with respect to three commercial buildings in Clarendon which are listed on the County's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI).

The HALRB's concerns are raised by the in-process Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC), now meeting to update the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan. The proposals being considered by the LRPC contemplate no preservation for these three HRI-listed historic buildings, one of which is the HRI-Essential Joyce Motors structure located at 3201 10th Street North. The other two are HRI-Notable buildings located at 3240 and 3260 Wilson Boulevard.

While the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan did not specifically call out these three buildings for preservation, that Sector Plan was adopted prior to the County's adoption of the Historic Resources Inventory in 2011. Given their inclusion in the HRI, we believe these historic buildings merit preservation and should be protected in some fashion in the Clarendon Sector Plan Update. We are especially concerned by the treatment proposed for the Essential Joyce Motors structure, the last HRI-Essential historic resource remaining in Clarendon.

You may be aware that the County has under consideration several private site plan development proposals which would adversely impact these three HRI buildings. The two Notable buildings would be demolished, and the proposed treatment of the Essential Joyce Motors building would demolish a significant portion of it. These facts frankly call into question the sequencing of the Clarendon Sector Plan update, which clearly has the planning process working backward. The Sector Plan is being amended, whether purposeful or not, to leave these HRI properties unprotected in the face of proposed and virtually certain redevelopment.

This is not the first time HALRB has raised concerns about the treatment of HRI-listed buildings. We were opposed to moving the Investment building during consideration of the Courthouse Landmark project. You may recall the discussion during the March 20, 2021,

County Board meeting in which some of you expressed concern about creating a precedent to allow relocation of historic buildings. Some of you rightfully suggested there needed to be further clarification of policy around preserving and/or relocating historic buildings.

The conversation seemed to lack context, however, given the expression of the County Board previously when the HRI was created in 2011. This was the sentiment stated in the document adopting the HRI then:

“The County will showcase and preserve historic buildings to help define neighborhood character and identity and increase public understanding of our architecture and development history...will strive to protect all Essential properties and will use all available tools to ensure their continued stewardship and protection” and “will strive to protect and promote the reuse of those properties listed as Important” and “as Notable.”

Now it seems that HRI-listed buildings are subject to an ad-hoc staff and Board possible-precedent-setting exercise for each development project de jour.

We believe new development can be accomplished without the complete loss of historically valuable buildings that have been designated critical Arlington historic resources. Essential buildings should be saved and preserved in place, and efforts should be made “to protect and promote the reuse” of Important and Notable properties. That is what the County Board decided to do in 2011, and absent official policy change to the contrary, it is wrong to decide the inevitable conflict between preservation and development in the ad hoc, project-by-project way that, unfortunately, appears to be the current approach. Absent consistent and coherent guidance, most developers will come to the table expecting to knock down or move the historic buildings.

We ask that you (1) take steps now to better protect the HRI-listed Essential and Notable buildings in Clarendon discussed above, and (2) put in place well-considered and consistent guidance for staff, developers and the public about what is expected in the proposed redevelopment that directly impacts or affects HRI-listed properties.

HALRB is a voluntary and diverse body of Arlington citizens devoted to historic protection in the County. We are pleased to offer any assistance we can in moving these two requests forward.

Sincerely yours,
Dick Woodruff
Chairman, Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

Cc: County Board Members
Mark Schwartz
Brett Wallace
Cynthia Liccesse-Torres