

November 3, 2023

Honorable Christian Dorsey
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: PRC – Langston Boulevard Area Plan Letter

Dear Chair Dorsey,

The Arlington County Parks and Recreation Commission ("PRC") is concerned that the Langston Boulevard Area Plan ("Plan") is not sufficiently cognizant of the increased park and recreation facilities that will be needed to accommodate the large number of new residents envisioned by the Plan. The PRC provides the following comments on the Plan.

Prioritize green space that is not commercial. Although the Plan discusses using developer incentives to obtain more Privately Owned Public Spaces ("POPs"), it is our experience that POPs tend to be ancillary and a second thought meant to enhance a commercial purpose, diminishing its value as public open space. Obtaining new public greenspace in this corridor should not create irreconcilable tradeoffs between housing, parks/recreation, tree canopy, and other environmental concerns. PRC is fighting for every inch of green space, but the developers often present plazas and commercial-type areas as POPs. County Staff explained that there is not a minimum percentage of commercial space designated for POPs. The Plan would be enhanced if it included a restriction that a finite percentage of POP space, perhaps no more than 20%, should be for commercial uses.

Define "green space". Similarly, the Plan would be enhanced if it included a clear definition of what constitutes green space that is valuable to the County, rather than waiting for the developers to make POPs proposals. Such a definition should include parameters for native plant species; percentage of native tree canopy; and/or recreational facilities such as tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts.

Public right of way – "green space" definition. PRC agrees with the plan for the public right of way to be converted to "green space" but, as above, PRC prefers that a definition of green space be included in the plan. At a minimum, green space should be truly environmentally sustainable and promote biodiversity. There should be limits on how many "other" uses of the space are allowed, as discussed in the first comment.

Tree Canopy Cover. All development in this Plan should aim for at least 40% tree canopy cover just as required by the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan. Although this is not achievable on each and every site, the area in general should have a 40% target and goal.

Acquisition of New Park Land. The Public Spaces Master Plan requires the County to acquire thirty acres of new parkland. While POPs are a gap-filler, they should not be the only new park space accompanying Langston Blvd. redevelopment. With so many new people expected to reside along this corridor, the County should increase its effort and intention to acquire new land. This will require setting aside funds specifically for this purpose. The existing parks and recreation facilities are very much overused now. It is not

Commission Members

Shruti Kuppa
Jill Barker
Sarah Baryluk
Nelson Dimpter
Dean Foster
Colt Gregory
Gretchen Hickey
Neal Hunter
Mark Lincoln
Claire Pascocello
Adam Rasmussen
Melissa Riggio
Alex Sanders

reasonable or desirable to attract lots of new residents and not provide County parks and recreation facilities sufficient to accommodate them.

Keep any parkland and recreational facilities that exist now. It is good that the County Board voted to remove the draft Plan's proposal to consolidate recreational spaces where possible. The Lee Center, for example, has many important recreational and natural amenities that should be preserved as much as possible. We support the call for a 2024 process to begin envisioning redevelopment of the Lee Center.

Strengthen language in the Plan regarding stormwater goals. Increased density must be paired with increased stormwater regulation. In addition, stormwater management can be paired with recreation and green space development in many cases. These types of opportunities should be prized and encouraged.

Emphasize safety at intersections because walking and cycling activity is to be increased.

Emphasize the increased frequency of buses because car traffic is to be reduced.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Plan. It represents a great deal of effort and thoughtful reflection. The County Staff that worked on the plan put forth a great deal of effort and expertise. We appreciate them.

Sincerely,

Shruti Kuppa



Chair – Park and Recreation Commission

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