

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

November 25, 2025

Honorable Takis P. Karantonis, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Riverhouse Neighborhood Project

Dear Chair Karantonis,

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2 or Commission) has reviewed available information for the proposed Riverhouse project. The full Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) proposes the development of six (6) new multifamily buildings and 127 townhomes in addition to the three (3) existing multifamily buildings (1,676 units) for a total of 4,461 dwelling units and 14,793 sq. ft. of retail. The PDSP consists of four (4) Final Site Plans (“Land Bays”) that would be approved and amended over time. The PDSP and Site Planning Review Committee (SPRC) of three (3) developments are currently before the County Board for approval with four (4) future building site plans yet to undergo the SPRC process.

Based on our review, C2E2 assesses that these three developments do not sufficiently advance Arlington’s Community Energy Plan (CEP) goals for carbon neutrality. Our standard scorecard for each of the three developments is attached. Note that because these SPRCs have been ongoing, they were grandfathered into use of our original scorecard, not the updated version of which we notified you in May 2025. Based on these scorecards and the best available information, N1 received a score of 66%, and both C1 and the Townhomes received scores of 57%.¹

Phased Development Site Planning

C2E2 commends the Applicant for the significant time and resources that were dedicated to engaging the public and the county in discussions on the PDSP. Further, the Applicant often listened to feedback and amended the site plans to accommodate differing opinions from stakeholders. We are encouraged by the plan’s commitment to 45% tree canopy and vegetation coverage which exceeds the Sector Plan’s target of at least 30%. While the Applicant was committed to ensuring Green Ribbon segments were incorporated throughout the site plan, C2E2

¹ The projects were scored on the best available information at the time of publication. C2E2 requested additional information from the Applicant and, based upon their response, scores are subject to change.

recommends that more work is dedicated to ensuring mature trees and existing foliage are preserved.

The Applicant responded to calls from the Commission and other stakeholders to increase density of the proposed plans but **the Commission recommends the Applicant meet the minimum PDSP density allowed under the Pentagon City Sector Plan (PCSP) and** assess the feasibility of meeting the maximum density, as applicable. While the Applicant's new proposal in January 2025 included increased density for future designs, N1 and C1 stayed consistent with a design proposal of seven (7) stories. This despite the PCSP calling for building designs of 12-20+ stories and 16 stories for N1 and C1, respectively. High density in key urban areas is key to increasing resource efficiency and decreasing emissions which will allow the County to meet its carbon neutrality goal. Pentagon City is an important urban hub in Arlington and the demand for housing will only increase with time. A project of this size and magnitude will have long-term effects on the County and thus should lead by example for all sustainability aspects.

Site Planning Review Committee (SPRC)

The Applicant is proposing plans for three building developments, N1, C1, and Townhomes, in Land Bay N, C, and S, respectively. N1 will be participating in Arlington's Green Building Incentive Policy (GBIP) and Bonus Density (.25 FAR). All three developments are currently on track to score 60 LEED credits, the minimum required for LEED v4.1 Gold. While the site plans for each development indicate the potential for additional LEED credits, C2E2 encourages the Applicant to commit to more ambitious sustainability features.

Embodied Carbon

The Applicant is committed to meeting LEED v4.1 Gold for all three developments (N1, C1, and Townhomes). We encourage the Applicant to go beyond the minimum requirements for materials and resources and hit more ambitious targets (e.g., 75% waste diversion). Furthermore, the Applicant should target use of low-carbon materials (FSC-certified wood, low-carbon concrete, recycled steel) which can further enhance the project's sustainability.

Energy Efficiency and Electrification

To align with the Community Energy Plan (CEP), new projects should be designed to be zero-carbon-ready: highly efficient, fully electric, supplied by clean energy, and built with low-carbon materials. While the three developments meet minimum requirements for energy efficiency under LEED v4.1 Gold, they do not commit to 100% electrification. **C2E2 recommends the applicant commit to 100% electrification for all three developments.** The Applicant should replace gas furnaces with heat pumps and target higher efficiency scores to meet the County's carbon neutrality goal.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The Applicant commits to the minimum requirement of 4% EV charging parking spots and 15% EV-ready for N1 *only*. While the Applicant stated that C1 and the Townhomes will have EV-ready infrastructure, they did not commit to a specific target for readiness or to EV chargers. **We highly**

urge the Applicant to increase the number of EV charging/EV-ready spots for N1 and incorporate EV charging infrastructure in the site plans for C1 and the Townhomes. C2E2 recommends that 10% of parking spots be equipped with EV charging and 50% are EV-ready. The rapid uptake in electric vehicles in Virginia and Arlington makes EV charging accessibility a necessity for housing development. As what is sure to be Arlington's largest multifamily development, it is critical for Riverhouse to incorporate EV chargers during the planning phase.

Renewable Energy and Biophilia

As N1 is participating in the GBIP, the development will meet the 2W/ft² requirement for onsite or equivalent renewable energy. We encourage the Applicant to explore on-site renewable generation for N1 in lieu of or in addition to renewable energy credits or power purchase agreements. The Applicant has not committed to renewable energy usage/purchasing for C1 or the Townhomes. We highly encourage the Applicant to incorporate renewable energy into the site plans for these two developments. The County must decrease its dependence on fossil fuels in order to align with the CEP and meet the carbon neutrality goal. As stated previously, C2E2 is encouraged by the Applicant's commitment to green features such as the Green Ribbon, but the Applicant should commit to integration of more biophilic features, such as green roofs, natural water retention mechanisms, and preservation of mature and native plants.

Conclusion

C2E2 appreciates the opportunity to provide input and stand ready to work with staff and the Applicant to address these issues and continually improve the site plans for this significant development. As future SPRCs are conducted for the remaining buildings, we urge the Applicant to commit to sustainability fundamentals when proposing said plans. The world is facing a catastrophic climate crisis which requires immediate action by individuals, governments, and businesses to avoid the worst consequences, and all future development needs to align to these goals. We urge the County to ask the Applicant to lead by example with this community-defining project.

Sincerely,



Cindy Lewin
Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

Attachments:

- N1 Riverhouse SPRC Checklist
- C1 Riverhouse SPRC Checklist
- Townhomes Riverhouse SPRC Checklist

CC: Tenley Peterson, Chair, Planning Commission
Daniel Weir, Chair, SPRC
Anthony Fusarelli, Planning Director, CPHD
Kevin Lam, Principal Planner, CPHD