

September 13, 2024

VIA PERMIT ARLINGTON

Arlova Vonhm
Zoning Administrator
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

**RE: SP #187 – Major Amendment – Ballston One Apartments
4601 North Fairfax Drive (RPC No. 14-013-022)
STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION**

Dear Ms. Vonhm,

Please accept this letter as a statement of justification related to that certain application for a Major Amendment (the “Application”) to Site Plan #187 (“SP #187”) file by PDCREF2 Ballston LLC (the “Applicant”). With this Application, the Applicant will redevelop the aging Ballston One office building, located at 4601 North Fairfax Drive (the “Property”), with a new multifamily residential building.

(A) Background

The Property is located at the intersection of North Fairfax Drive and North Wakefield Street and contains approximately 2.28 acres. It is presently developed with the Ballston One office building and an underground parking garage. The Property is immediately bounded on the north by a service drive and the 1100 North Glebe Road office building, on the east by North Wakefield Street and Marymount’s Blue Goose development, on the south by North Fairfax Drive, and on the west by the Ballston Beaver Pond and I-66 entrance ramp.

The Property is currently zoned to the C-O-2.5, Mixed Use District (the “C-O-2.5 District”). SP #187, as approved in November 1981 and amended in May 1984, controls the site’s development. As approved, SP #187 permits the Property to be developed with an office building up to 2.5 FAR and 12-stories tall.

The Property is subject to the planning guidance of the Ballston Sector Plan (1980) (the “Sector Plan”). Specifically, the Property is located within Section 3 of the North Ballston subarea. The Sector Plan’s Section 3 guidance states that future residential use in the block “is also desirable” and that “mixed use alternative[s]” should be considered. Although the Sector Plan provides limited design guidance, general design recommendations are available. First, the Section 3 guidance recognizes that density should

taper away from the Metro. Second, the Sector Plan provides for a “Boulevard Concept” along Fairfax Drive to create a “gateway” entrance from Interstate 66 into Ballston. The Sector Plan does not specifically define the streetscape features in Section 3. The County’s R-B Corridor Streetscape Standards (2007) indicate that Fairfax Drive should provide a minimum sidewalk of 16’-8” and North Wakefield Street should provide a minimum sidewalk of 13’-0”. Finally, the Arlington County Retail Plan (“ACRP”) designates the Property’s North Wakefield Street frontage as a “green” street, which permits optional retail or retail equivalent uses. The ACRP does not provide a designation for the Property’s North Fairfax Drive frontage.

(B) Proposed Development

As more fully described on the attached plans prepared by BKV Group and VIKI Virginia, LLC (the “4.1 Plans”), the Applicant intends to develop the Property with a new, multifamily residential building. In line with the Sector Plan’s call to consider additional residential uses within Section 3, the Applicant proposes to develop up to 328 new residential units at the Property (approximately 144 units per acre). This will serve to perpetuate a mixed-use concept within the block, complementing existing office, retail, residential, and student housing uses. Ground floor units are proposed along the Property’s North Wakefield Street frontage, with outdoor balconies against the streetscape. These units will activate the streetscape, while also providing a safety component by adding “eyes” on the street. The building lobby located along this frontage will further the street level activation with retail equivalent space, per the ACRP. Although the ACRP does not envision retail activity on North Fairfax Drive, the Applicant proposes to wrap the lobby space onto this frontage along with an interior amenity space for residents. Similarly, an outdoor amenity area for residents is proposed along North Fairfax Drive. An interior courtyard and rooftop deck will provide additional private amenities for the building.

The Applicant will substantially reduce the building height at the Property from twelve (12) to seven (7) stories (approximately 85 feet). The proposed building height is within the limits permitted for residential buildings in the C-O-2.5 District (up to 16 stories), while remaining sensitive to the Sector Plan’s guidance and surrounding building heights. Distinctive architecture and building materials will help create a unique corner and complete the “gateway” into the neighborhood.

Primary access to the Property will occur from the site entrance on North Wakefield Street. Vehicles will circulate to the existing service drive to access the building’s underground parking garage. To facilitate loading activities, loading is proposed at the ground level off of the service drive.

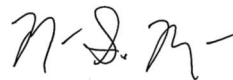
The Applicant proposes to park residential uses at a ratio of 0.68 spaces per dwelling unit. On-site vehicle parking will occur within the existing two-level, below-grade garage. To avoid the unnecessary environmental impacts caused by demolishing and removing the concrete garage structure, the Applicant instead proposes to retain the garage and build the new building above it. Excess parking spaces will provide additional flexibility in the event the building is converted for condominium use or in the event the Applicant further repurposes the space for additional amenity or other useable space for residents.

As further described on the 4.1 Plans, the Applicant will transform the Property's streetscape along the North Fairfax Drive and North Wakefield Street frontages. North Fairfax Drive will be redeveloped with a 16-foot wide streetscape, containing a minimum 12-foot wide shared use path. Behind the shared use path, a portion of the existing garage wall is located above grade, providing an opportunity for the Applicant to transform the building zone with new plantings and an outdoor resident amenity area. On North Wakefield Street, a 13.5-foot wide streetscape is envisioned, with a minimum 8-foot wide sidewalk. Street tree plantings will serve to separate pedestrians and bicyclists from vehicles operating in the right of way. Given a portion of the Property is located within a public street easement for North Wakefield Street, the Applicant intends to dedicate portions of the existing North Wakefield Street right of way (including the vehicular travel lanes and sidewalk to the east of the road) to the County.

To implement this proposed development, the Applicant requests approval of a Major Amendment to SP #187. The Applicant has also filed vacation applications necessary to implement the proposed development scheme. As part of the 4.1 Site Plan review process, the Applicant will work with staff, the Site Plan Review Committee, and the community to develop appropriate community benefits with this project. Among others, the Applicant envisions the following may be appropriate for the project: (i) affordable housing and/or a monetary contribution to the County's Affordable Housing Investment Fund; (ii) LEED green building certification; (iii) a contribution to public art; (iv) utility undergrounding; (v) public right of way improvements; and (vi) contributions towards other County priorities.

We look forward to working with the County on this Application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M.G. Roberts".

Matthew G. Roberts, Esq.
Counsel for Applicant