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June 12, 2015



Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201



Dear Chairman Hynes:



We are writing to you on behalf of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce regarding the recently released draft Realize Rosslyn Sector Plan (the "Plan"). Our members have been actively following the development of the Plan since its beginning, and have been participants in the public portion of the process. The Chamber appreciates the significant time and effort expended by staff and the community in creating this Plan.



As you are aware, the Plan envisions and puts forth many significant goals which will help revitalize Rosslyn. The Chamber endorses the Realize Rosslyn Framework and guiding principles adopted in April 2014 that delineate these goals. However, the Plan contains some fundamental flaws that if not corrected will prevent the vision and goals from becoming reality. Specifically, the section of Chapter 3, Urban Design and Building Heights and Form, in the Chamber's opinion does not reflect the Realize Rosslyn Framework and guiding principles as adopted. Nor does it properly address the economic viability and sustainability of businesses as a core component of implementation.



The Plan seeks more from private industry than ever before, while reducing development potential significantly throughout Rosslyn. In order to achieve any of the significant community goals and visions set forth in the draft plan, significant capital intensive projects must be undertaken. Somewhere during this process it was forgotten that safe, existing assets would have to be encouraged to be removed at extensive risk to owners. Correspondingly, the fact that Arlington is currently in the midst of particularly difficult economic times and face significantly increasing economic competitiveness throughout the region cannot be ignored.





As you recall, the 1992 Addendum to the Rosslyn Plan, which included none of these significant concessions in the form of improvements to the public realm, concluded that densities of up to 10.0 FAR and heights of up to 300 feet were necessary to encourage redevelopment of existing assets. Conversely, and inexplicably, with all of this being asked of the business community, the Plan actually proposes an overall reduction of density and building heights in Rosslyn. This disconnect should be self-evident.



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In addition to asking owners to abandon a safer, existing asset, owners are now being asked to undertake these significant risks and liabilities for less density and economic returns than existed prior to the Plan. And to do so as the County additionally requires extensively increased infrastructure improvements and other community benefit costs. Given the significant risk, reduction in potential returns, and increase in costs to redevelop, many property owners will decide that it is safer to wait to take these risks. The fundamental problem with this draft plan is that it very well may have the opposite effect than is desired by unintentionally de-incentivizing redevelopment.

The Chamber's concerns and proposed solutions are as follows:

Economic Impact:

The Chamber believes that density maximums should not be imposed in a sector plan on a site by site basis as the current Plan contemplates. The maximum density caps serve to limit the tools and creativity that can be brought to bear to achieve all those things the community is seeking. Additional density above the 10 FAR limit currently allowed could be utilized to incentivize redevelopment. Other incentive solutions should also be identified and evaluated in conjunction with property owners. This Plan currently does not provide the incentive required to encourage redevelopment.

Additionally, an analysis of the potential diminution of tax revenue and community benefit dollars should be undertaken before any proposed policy with potential negative consequences is adopted. The Chamber concurs with the Rosslyn BID that Arlington Economic Development (AED) should lead that effort. The Rosslyn commercial core brings in \$44 Million in real estate tax revenue to the county, comprising 23% of the County's Commercial real estate tax revenue. Any dis-incentive to redevelopment will negatively impact this critical facet of the County's economy. As currently worded, this is the first Sector Plan in Arlington history that would effectively remove planned density. Thus, an economic analysis of the implications of this Plan on the County's future revenue is imperative.

Building Height

The Chamber is greatly concerned about the hyper-specific height recommendations contained in the Plan. We believe the best way to achieve the vision and goals in the Plan are to encourage and allow architects to design buildings that will create world class architecture and a varied skyline. Allow the SPRC process to work together with property

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owners to achieve the Plan's goals. Maximum heights should be determined by plan goals and FAA regulations.

Additionally, the Plan's vision for protecting view corridors can be achieved without the necessity of maximum height restrictions. A skilled architect that understands the goals of preserving view corridors can create designs that respect those views while also creating significant architecture that adds to the an attractive, varied, and distinctive skyline. Both world class architecture and view corridors are goals of the plan. The SPRC process is the correct forum for ensuring architects to deliver on both by giving them the flexibility to do so.

Building Form

We further believe that achieving the Plan's vision is best accomplished by crafting a framework where creative and innovative design is encouraged. As currently drafted, the Plan's Building Height and Form Guidelines are overly prescriptive in determining building form. These overly specific guidelines will stifle creative design solutions and do not recognize or account for site specific constraints within the various Rosslyn locations. Additionally, the Plan's Building Height and Form Guidelines will have the practical effect of reducing the maximum achievable FAR. Instead of form based prescriptive guidelines, the Plan should focus on the extent to which a proposal achieves the goals and vision of the Plan.

It is our firm belief that the Plan as currently crafted will lead to stagnation rather than implementation. The concerns raised by not only the Chamber, but also the Rosslyn BID and the Economic Development Commission should be weighed and solutions found. We believe the planning staff is committed to continuing to work with the business community to address concerns about the economic impact of the plan on Rosslyn. The Chamber applauds this continued collaboration and recognizes it will be critical to successful implementation of the plan. Therefore, on behalf of Arlington's business community, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests that the County Board postpone the advertisement of the Rosslyn Sector Plan.

Sincerely,



Kevin Shooshan
Chair



Kate Roche
President & CEO

CC: Arlington County Board members Jay Fisette, Libby Garvey, Walter Tejada, John Vihstadt