



April 12, 2021

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

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports the proposed amendments to Arlington County Zoning Ordinance §§12.3.7 and 15.5.9 to give the County Board more flexibility to grant bonus height for certain site plan projects delivering affordable housing. The proposed amendments will support the creation of affordable housing and will promote designs to help such new housing fit well with surrounding neighborhoods.

As we noted when the County Board last amended §15.5 in November 2019, allowing both bonus height and density gives flexibility for cases where the height is necessary for bonus density to be built or for the structure to fit its site better. However, the 2019 amendments prevent the County Board from considering some proposals that it may deem to be suitable. The Zoning Ordinance gives the County Board discretion to prevent undesired outcomes by denying proposals that are out of step with neighboring sites or planning guidance, so the blanket height restriction is not necessary.

The proposed amendments balance the community's priorities. The bonus height must go to a project that delivers 100% low- or moderate-income housing, or for mixed income projects that meet the goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan. Moreover, the proposed amendments specifically require that "site layout and proposed building heights have been designed in a manner to establish effective transitions" so they will not stick out from neighboring development. This tool will be particularly useful in cases along the edges of zoning districts, where the bonus density can be massed on the side of the building facing taller development, and taper down to lower density neighbors.

We believe these amendments fulfill the goal of the November 2019 action and improve upon the language adopted then. We encourage you to adopt the amendments and thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Arlington County Board Vice Chair Katie Cristol and members Christian Dorsey, Libby Garvey, and Takis Karantonis; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Nick Rogers, Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development