



September 30, 2022

Daniel Weir
Commission Chair
Arlington County Planning Commission
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Weir,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the proposed amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, permitting the construction of micro-fulfillment centers in a host of commercial and mixed-use districts. We also support the Requests to Advertise (RTAs) for the next phases of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative. We commend the County for moving forward with this much-needed change that will enable Arlington to attract more businesses that are uncertain about their ability to operate.

The proposed amendment, assisting the micro-fulfillment sector, is just the first phase of a larger effort. Micro-fulfillment of deliveries is an issue that has created challenges for existing businesses in that sector. We applaud the County Manager and Staff for recognizing the challenges of new economic sectors like micro-fulfillment along with other sectors such as dog boarding and edge data centers, and using zoning adaptability as one tool of many to combat the commercial vacancy rate.

The Chamber believes that the Zoning Ordinance is in need of reform, and the unnecessary restrictions on retail use should be removed to help the economy of the County grow. The current office vacancy rate is 20.8%, the highest in history, demonstrating the timely need for change. It is imperative the County figures out long-term solutions for new business models, both by increased adaptability for new uses and by expedited timeframes in these new uses.

We have worked directly with businesses that are inhibited by the outdated Zoning Ordinance, which did not envision the types of uses we see today. We encourage the Planning Commission to support this proposed change, as well as the additional changes that will come forward as part of the broader Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative. And we also encourage the Planning Commission to look into a less prescriptive zoning text, which can be adaptable enough to accommodate new uses such as these.

In order to draw new and innovative businesses into Arlington, it is important that we account for new models and uses not explicitly mentioned in our zoning regulations. We are glad to see this straightforward policy moving forward in the process. We are pleased that this is being considered by the Planning Commission, and we anticipate this to be the first phase of the adoption of the larger plan for giving innovative use applicants the certainty and structure they need in a timelier manner.

Sincerely,

Kate Bates

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Arlington County Board Chair Katie Cristol, Vice-Chair Christian Dorsey, and members Matt de Ferranti, Libby Garvey, and Takis Karantonis; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli