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May 18, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Fisetto:

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce expresses our support for the sentiments behind the proposed amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance regarding retail signage. However, we encourage you, as other stakeholders have, to broaden the Request to Advertise to allow for discussion of possible improvements.

We appreciated the opportunity for our Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee to work through the proposed amendments in April with County staff, and to provide feedback.

The key concerns raised by our members include:

- 1. The direct street access requirement for second floor retail in order to gain additional signage credit.** Many of our members noted that second floor retail is challenging to lease, with premium tenants demonstrating no interest. Additional signage credit could help fill these hard-to-fill locations and help facilitate success of tenants, both of which help create a vibrant retail landscape. As written, we do not believe the current amendments would even add signage for places like the small second floor of Market Commons where Zaika and Aqua Nails are tenants.
- 2. The requirement that the plaza/park not be roofed or enclosed.** It is unclear to the Arlington Chamber what problem or issue this restriction is trying to solve.
- 3. The requirement that site include a public access easement to qualify.** This proposal produces a significant additional burden on the property owner to achieve what the County apparently agrees is appropriate signage. There are a number of properties with parks and plazas that do not have public access easements that would benefit from additional signage. With retail, it is in everybody's best interest to allow the most foot traffic tenable. The average Arlingtonian cannot tell the difference between the properties with and without easements.

Rather than requiring that a park or plaza be subject to a public easement in order to be eligible for additional signage, the additional allocation should be available in instances when either a building façade is approved for retail in a site plan or shown as an area recommended for retail in the Retail Action Plan.



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These three requirements in particular have the potential to hinder implementation, inhibiting the intent of the amendments from being realized. Going back to the vision and intent of the Retail Action Plan, for areas that the County has identified as appropriate locations for retail, we as a community should be doing everything feasible to help retail thrive as it faces growing challenges and online competition.

The Chamber is appreciative the County recognizes, and is working towards, utilizing additional signage as a tool that could help these businesses prosper. The Chamber believes more can be done by fixing these specific concerns. We hope that you will broaden the Request to Advertise to allow us the chance to continue an open dialogue in hopes of reaching an efficacious solution.

Sincerely,

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Arlington County Board members Libby Garvey, John Vihstadt, Katie Cristol, Christian Dorsey and County Manager Mark Schwartz