



May 13, 2021

Arlington Cultural Affairs
3700 S Four Mile Run Drive
Arlington, VA 22206

Dear Ms. Isabelle-Stark,

Public art contributes to Arlington's vibrancy, and so the Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports the broad goals of the Public Art Master Plan update. However, we are concerned that the update favors County-curated art over privately-curated art, and that public art requirements add costs without accounting for the aggregate burden placed on developers, thus raising the cost of living and doing business in Arlington.

The draft update discourages private creativity, and centralizes curation of public art with Arlington County. The update favors contributions to Arlington County's public art fund and limits recognition of on-site public art, even as it lays out "flexibility in how developers can meet milestones" as a plan goal. The update "reaffirms the County's commitment to encouraging developers to create permanent artworks," but it then goes on to say that "other creative projects outside the public art process will be supported... but not as a substitute for the County's public art requirements." It also disregards the creative potential of short-term installations, signage, and placemaking.

As with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, the Public Art Master Plan does not account for the costs of delivering other public benefits tied to site plan projects, such as affordable housing and environmental sustainability. Each of these conditions increases the cost of developing in Arlington, and ultimately leads to an increase in the rent paid by residents and business tenants. Involving Public Art Program staff in the site plan review process is a stated goal of the Public Art Master Plan update. The Chamber encourages the Planning Division and Public Art Program staff to use their collaboration to alleviate the costs of delivering public art, promoting investment in our community.

We believe that the Public Art Master Plan will be even stronger by granting flexibility to include privately-curated public art, short-term installations, and placemaking. Moreover, Arlington County should work to minimize the cost burden of public art contributions and other public benefit requirements in standard site plan conditions to encourage investment in Arlington. We 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; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Arlington Economic Development Director Telly Tucker, Public Art Director Angela Adams, and Public Art Project Manager Elizabeth Carriger