



June 10, 2021

Arlington County Planning Division
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Fusarelli,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce encourages Arlington County to allow the broadest possible range of ground story uses in the Columbia Pike Form Based Code by permitting all uses by default, unless specifically identified as adverse. Such an update will allow uses not envisioned when the Form Based Code was adopted and also uses we cannot envision today, supporting continued development along Columbia Pike.

Columbia Pike is South Arlington's central main street, but it has struggled to attract and to retain ground story uses. Most residents in the 22204 ZIP Code can walk to Columbia Pike, or access it via a short transit or car ride, and are thus ready customers not only for retail, but also for personal services located there. Moreover, the lower cost of locating on Columbia Pike than in other commercial areas gives Columbia Pike the potential to attract a diverse range of businesses. However, the continuing lack of success for ground story uses in this Revitalization District suggests that a change to how Arlington regulates uses along Columbia Pike is necessary.

The Form Based Code is designed to control buildings' form, rather than focusing on the uses within those forms. The goal of the Form Based Code is to provide a thriving, main-street feeling, which requires considerable foot traffic throughout the day and evening, seven days a week. The Ground Story Use Table diverges from this concept by limiting activity within permissible structures, and the regulation proscribes many businesses that could drive foot traffic to Columbia Pike. Lifting these restrictions will help create an environment that benefits not only the new businesses that open as a result, but also other businesses who will benefit from the activity they generate.

In keeping with the notion of regulating forms and not uses, and recognizing that we cannot foresee all future uses, Arlington County should abandon its approved list of uses. If the Ground Story Use Table is updated to include uses desired in 2021, it will become outdated again. We may be able to apply foresight to permit some future uses, but it will not be possible to future-proof a list of approved uses. We appreciate that there will be certain noxious uses that Arlington County wishes to preclude. But, we encourage Arlington County to identify those specific prohibited uses, and to permit any use that is not on that list, ideally by right, or by a streamlined use permit process.

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; Ebony Dumas and Nick Rogers, Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development; Telly Tucker, Marc McCauley, and Kate Paine, Arlington Economic Development