

July 23, 2018

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

Dear Chair Cristol:

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce encourages you to approve the Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) Site Plan as submitted. Moving forward with this important project will facilitate important additional health care services for the Arlington community.

VHC serves about 116,000 Arlington residents annually, and is clearly the hospital of choice for Arlingtonians. VHC is proud to be Arlington's only hospital, and is committed to serving the evolving needs of our community. 75% of Arlingtonians who needed inpatient care in 2017 received their care at VHC. Moreover, 80% of Arlingtonians who deliver babies deliver at VHC.

As you know, VHC is an active partner in supporting Arlington's safety net, contributing between \$40M and \$50M per year in community benefit. This includes serving patients referred from Arlington's Community Services Board (CSB) and ongoing support to children in need through the Arlington Pediatric Center. VHC also supports Arlington Free Clinic and provides specialty care, laboratory services, pharmaceutical support, surgeries and in-patient services to clients from the Arlington Free Clinic network.

The County Board has delayed its hearing on the VHC Edison Street project until September. This news was very disappointing, resulting in project delays and additional costs to VHC. The most pressing capacity needs are:

1. Expanding inpatient medical/surgical space (capacity for inpatient beds, mental health and emergency care expansion)
2. Providing additional parking for patients and visitors
3. Creating easily accessible outpatient services

Delays in the approval process subject the project to increased construction costs. At this time, industry experts predict a 4% escalation cost of \$1M per two months of delay in construction due to the expected increase in the cost of steel and other building materials. A delay in approving the VHC project continues to restrict the Hospital's ability to address the growing demand for VHC services and the current capacity constraints. Looking at the projected population growth of Arlington County, VHC will need a minimum of 85 additional beds in five years and a minimum of 130 additional beds over the next 15 years to meet the projected 30% population growth.

Virginia Hospital Center prides itself on being a strong community partner, and has worked through an extensive community process on this project. Since the initial VHC project application, the Hospital has made more than 100 modifications to the design in an effort to address issues raised by County staff and community stakeholders. These modifications were discussed by participants in six Site Plan Review Committee meetings. Moreover, in an effort to further listen to neighbors and respond to concerns, VHC provided a walking tour of the site and participated in two community meetings with the Langston Brown community.

VHC has offered the best design option for the site, given factors that are important to the Hospital's mission, minimizing potential impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, improving the efficiency and conveniences of patient-centered care, and maximizing the community benefits associated with a comprehensive community hospital. The physical impacts of the project on surrounding neighbors were mitigated as much as possible and every effort has been made to improve the site over what is there today. VHC has offered quality materials, extensive landscaping and other aesthetic amenities to enhance the Edison Street site, not just to minimize the impact of the project.

The Hospital is doing everything it can to accommodate the requests of neighbors and to honor good planning principles. At this point, however, the cumulative effect of additional changes needs to be evaluated within the broader context of providing convenient, high-quality, patient-centered healthcare in a fiscally prudent way, for the next 50 years.

Patients and visitors are frequently frustrated and unnecessarily delayed by current parking constraints. To address neighborhood concerns, additional parking has been placed underground and another level has been completely removed from the top of the garage. The current garage design is 67 feet tall (which is equivalent to the 1715 Building) and the parking count is well below the Zoning Ordinance of 3,892. VHC modified the garage and Pavilion design to further emphasize breaking up of the façade and enhanced the landscaping buffer along 19th and Edison Street. 1.3 acres of the 5.5 acre Edison Street site are either landscaped or open space to bring visual relief and more greenery on the site. VHC demonstrates a commitment to enhance the appearance and livability of the surrounding neighborhood.

In line with Arlington's vision, VHC is committed to enhancing the environmental condition of the entire Hospital campus. VHC incorporated significant changes to address the concerns of County staff and the surrounding communities. VHC participated in a comprehensive and inclusive process, and responded to many suggestions for project improvements. This effort, coupled with the pressing need to address the Hospital's capacity demands, and the changing world of healthcare, should be rewarded by giving the project an expeditious approval.

The Chamber respectfully requests that the Board prioritizes this effort and approves the VHC site plan application so this important project can move forward.

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 members Christian Dorsey, Libby Garvey, John Vihstadt, Erik Gutshall, and County Manager Mark Schwartz