



July 19, 2024

Chair Libby Garvey
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports Items 53A through 53D on the July 22 agenda: the ordinance permitting additional density above a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 10.0 for existing and unbuilt site plan developments in Rosslyn; the minor site plan amendment; the vacation of easement for the observation deck at Central Place Rosslyn; and the acceptance of the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund grant. As the CoStar Group seeks to locate to Rosslyn, the neighborhood continues to evolve, and it is important to re-evaluate regulations governing Rosslyn and determine areas for improvement. Providing flexibility for greater density for assets in Rosslyn will not only fill office space, but also generate new and valuable benefits to the Rosslyn community, in addition to the \$14 million community benefit contribution from the CoStar Group for the renovation of Gateway Park in this proposal. We urge the County Board to please adopt these four items.

Currently, the maximum FAR in the Rosslyn zoning district is set at 10.0, and there are very limited circumstances by which the County Board may permit a greater FAR for a certain project. Enabling increased FAR in instances where density was either excluded from approved site plans' final calculations, or included as gross parking area, would allow for greater flexibility in repurposing existing assets. Greater flexibility in the use of these assets can then contribute additional, valuable community benefits to Arlington. Enabling increased density above 10.0 FAR would also incentivize the construction of more unbuilt site plan projects in ways that better serve the needs of Rosslyn businesses and those wishing to locate to Rosslyn.

Arlington is contending with a historically high commercial vacancy rate of 22.8% that is already creating constraints on the County's tax base. Arlington Economic Development estimated that a typical office building with a 50% occupancy rate generates 58% of the total local tax revenue of a 100% occupied building. Losing this revenue limits Arlington County's capacity to fund important public services such as education, parks, public safety, and human services.

The Chamber further supports the vacation of public easement for the Central Place Tower observation deck. CoStar Group's acquisition of Central Place Tower in Rosslyn is a sign of their confidence in Arlington as a great place to do business. By adopting this easement vacation Arlington County stands to gain from trading the observation deck, which attracts only an estimated 12 Arlington residents per day, for significant updates to the more utilized Gateway Park. The \$14 million contribution would allow for the County to realize its plans to transform the park into a more vibrant community space for Rosslyn and for Arlington far sooner than expected.

In order to continue to fund our community's priorities, it is crucial for the County to implement policies to sustain commercial occupancy, activate Arlington's office market, and reposition nonperforming commercial buildings where necessary. We urge the adoption of this ordinance.

Furthermore, we encourage the County to consider a future ordinance removing the 10.0 FAR cap, as well as the building height cap, on future Rosslyn developments not currently under site plans. The cap is an unnecessary restriction on development and does not benefit the Rosslyn neighborhood. The ordinance is a positive step, but one with a limited impact. As we noted in a September 2016 letter to the County Board, discarding the FAR cap altogether in Rosslyn would provide a positive incentive for both existing and future property owners to build the amount of

density that the market desires. This is particularly true following the adoption of these agenda items, as the transfer of the observation deck removes the impetus to protect the view corridors of Rosslyn and the neighboring areas for the sake of public observation. Beyond the height limits imposed by the Federal Aviation Administration, there is no need for further limitation on the height of buildings in Rosslyn.

We look forward to continuing our engagement as the conversation surrounding zoning in Rosslyn continues after the adoption of this ordinance. We thank you for your consideration of our 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: County Board Vice-Chair Takis Karantonis; County Board Members Maureen Coffey, Susan Cunningham, and Matt de Ferranti; County Manager Mark Schwartz; CPHD Director Samia Byrd; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli Jr.; Principal Planner Nick Rogers, CPHD; Arlington Economic Development Director Ryan Touhill.