



July 8, 2024

Chair Sara Steinberger
Planning Commission
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Steinberger,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports Item 1 on the July 11 agenda, the ordinance permitting additional density above a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 10.0 for existing and unbuilt site plan developments in the Rosslyn zoning district. As Rosslyn continues to evolve with the arrival of major companies such as CoStar, it is important to re-evaluate the 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 community benefit contributions. We urge the Planning Commission to recommend adoption of this ordinance to the County Board.

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 for existing assets allows for the repurposing of these assets, and thus greater flexibility for use of these assets, which can then contribute additional, valuable community benefits to Arlington. Enabling increased density above 10.0 FAR can also provide an avenue to 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 ability to collect tax revenue. Arlington Economic Development estimated that a typical 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 provide public services.

It is crucial for the County to implement policies to sustain occupancy, activate Arlington's office market, and reposition nonperforming commercial buildings where necessary. We urge the adoption of this ordinance. In addition, we encourage the County to consider a future ordinance removing the 10.0 FAR cap on future Rosslyn developments not currently under site plans, which we noted in a September 2016 letter to the County Board is an unnecessary restriction on development and does not serve to benefit the Rosslyn neighborhood.

We look forward to continuing our engagement as the conversation surrounding these Zoning Ordinances continues before the County Board. 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: Planning Commission Members; CPHD Director Samia Byrd; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli Jr.; Arlington Economic Development Director Ryan Touhill.