



March 13, 2024

Director Samia Byrd  
Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development  
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 700  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Ms. Byrd,

On behalf of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, I wish to express our support for the proposed Minor Site Plan Amendment concerning the sidewalk clearance at 1051 North Highland Street in Clarendon.

The Chamber was a strong proponent of the adoption of the new outdoor dining standards adopted last summer. We were pleased by the inclusion of allowing outdoor dining by right, if restaurants allowed for at least six feet of sidewalk space and other conditions.

The applicant at 1051 North Highland Street is requesting that their outdoor dining spaces be in line with the county-wide standard. The restaurant, like many in Arlington, relied heavily on revenue from outdoor dining over the past three and a half years. As restaurants continue to navigate the post-pandemic challenges in increased food costs and labor shortages, it is crucial that Arlington allow its restaurants to continue their outdoor dining operations in a standardized manner.

Many of our restaurants in Arlington are in buildings with site plans, and this issue is unlikely to be isolated to 1051 North Highland Street. The Chamber encourages the County to streamline the processing of minor site plan amendments of this kind, and even change this process to one that requires an administrative site plan amendment instead, to ensure that the new County-wide outdoor dining rules have their intended effect. It is important for restaurants, which have developed such a positive use of outdoor space since the beginning of the pandemic, for this process to be streamlined in some fashion going forward.

We ask that the County please approve the Minor Site Plan Amendment. 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 Director Anthony Fusarelli; Principal Planner Aaron Shriber; Principal Planner Gabriella Green