



March 29, 2024

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

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce requests that Arlington County restore positions and funds in the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget for key departments that accomplish vital economic policy goals and generate tax revenue. Specifically, the Chamber requests the restoration funding for the Arlington Economic Development (AED) Business Investment Group Trade and Promotion budget, and the restoration of two Associate Planner positions in Community, Planning, and Housing Development (CPHD). The AED budget and the CPHD positions are part of greater investments in the ability of the County government to accomplish shared economic policy goals, and preserving and generating tax revenue.

We request that AED's Business Investment Group Trade and Promotion budget be restored to FY2024 levels. The Trade and promotion budget is an important resource for engagement with prospective companies and with existing businesses. The reduction of nearly \$50,000 would reduce the Trade and Promotion budget by 21% and result in fewer prospective leads to occupy Arlington commercial space, and ultimately less tax revenue from businesses. At a time of historically high commercial vacancy rates, it is vital to adequately fund resources and activities that can directly lead to businesses moving to Arlington and remaining in Arlington. Trade and promotional activities are a key part of those resources that the County will need to navigate this economic reality.

In addition, the Chamber requests that the County restore two Associate Planner positions proposed to be cut. As CPHD moves ahead with significant projects such as the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative, as well as important Special General Land Use Plan Studies and site plan amendments, it is crucial for the Department to have adequate resources and staff. Previous major plans like the Langston Boulevard Area Plan were subject to delays, and the site plan amendment process is already a lengthy one for businesses seeking such amendments. The County loses out on future tax revenue if projects are delayed or even unbuilt due to the lengthy processes. The Chamber strongly supports efforts to ensure that planning processes are completed in a timely manner for applicants as a policy goal, and a fully staffed department is a component of that goal.

We commend the County Staff for their efforts so far in the budget process. We understand that the County is facing tough budgetary decisions, but we strongly urge the County not to lose sight of the necessity of providing key departments with the requisite resources to generate new County tax revenue and to promote Arlington as an attractive place to work, live and do business. 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: 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; Budget Director Richard Stephenson; Deputy Budget Director Emily Hughes.