June 12, 2026

Chair Matt de Ferranti
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

On behalf of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, I ask that the County Board reject the proposed local historic district designation for the Melwood property at 750 23rd Street S. The proposed designation, if adopted, would go against County precedent, determinations by your professional Historic Preservation Program staff, and negatively impact the future of Melwood's already-approved redevelopment project.

A local historic district designation should not be sought without the agreement of a property owner, and Melwood has not consented to imposition of such a designation. We strongly urge the County Board to honor this long-standing precedent.

In addition, the property has undergone substantial modification over four decades of private use, and staff previously determined that it does not meet the requisite level of architectural integrity typically required for a local historic district designation. The Chamber believes that the County Board should give significant weight to this professional determination.

As you know, in February 2025, the County Board approved Melwood's redevelopment of this property into a new space for their workforce development programs as well as 105 committed affordable housing units, with a number of units designated as priority preference for people with disabilities.

Enacting a local historic district designation at this stage – more than a year after initial zoning approval – and without owner consent or consideration of the impact on redevelopment, would risk compromising a project that the County Board has already approved. Furthermore, such an action would set a negative precedent for future projects on sites that could be subject to historic designation. It would also create uncertainty in the development approval process, potentially discouraging future investment and undermining confidence in the finality and predictability of County land use decisions.

The County Board has already recognized both the considerable value of Melwood's redevelopment plan and Melwood's valuable service to Arlington residents. This is exactly the type of project that we need in our community. We request that the County Board adhere to both long-standing County precedent as well as staff recommendations and vote against the local historic designation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Bates

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Vice-Chair Maureen Coffey; County Board Members Susan Cunningham, Takis Karantonis, and Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr.; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Supervisor, Arlington County.