



April 9, 2024

Chair Sara Steinberger
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Steinberger,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports Item 1 on the April 10 Planning Commission Agenda, the amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance as part of the second phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI). The Chamber is a proponent of CMRI as a tool to meet our commercial vacancy challenges creatively and with flexibility. We ask that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board adopt these amendments, and recommend the other CMRI Zoning Ordinance amendments that will be before the Planning Commission in May.

The Chamber was an enthusiastic proponent of the amendments for permitted uses that were the first focus of CMRI, valuing the steps to modernize Arlington County's Zoning Ordinance to better attract and retain businesses. The Chamber appreciates the focus on process evaluation and improvement in the second phase of CMRI, which will remove barriers and serve as a tool to ensure that Arlington is addressing the historically high commercial vacancy rate, which greatly impacts the County's budget.

The specific amendments, concerning health club and fitness center parking minimums, are positive steps in the direction of greater flexibility for Arlington retail businesses. Broadening the ability of fitness centers, health clubs, and related businesses to have parking minimums that reflect their situations will help contribute to a healthier retail market. Additionally, the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance concerning shared and offsite parking requirements and large media screens, both to be considered next month, are also steps in the right direction towards providing businesses and property owners greater flexibility.

The Chamber looks forward to the opportunities proposed for the remainder of the second phase, including revisions to major, minor, and administrative Site Plan amendments and greater flexibility on the sign ordinance. We hope to continue engagement with the County to ensure Arlington's regulations and processes fit the modern economic landscape, and hope that the County moves expeditiously ahead on this important work. We commend County Staff for their work on these ongoing efforts, and we hope to continue the conversation on the second phase of CMRI as they continue to come before the Planning Commission and County Board.

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; County Manager Mark Schwartz; CPHD Director Samia Byrd; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli; Marc McCauley, Arlington Economic Development; Jill Hunger, Arlington County Planning Division.