



April 18, 2024

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

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce supports the Requests to Advertise (RTAs) amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, Items 28 and 29 on the April 20 County Board agenda, as part of the second phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI). The Chamber strongly supports CMRI as a tool to meet our commercial vacancy challenges creatively and with flexibility.

The Chamber enthusiastically supported the amendments for permitted uses that were the first focus of CMRI, as the Chamber viewed the amendments as modernizing Arlington County's Zoning Ordinance to better attract and retain businesses. The Chamber is appreciative of 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 RTAs, including the development of a specific planning process for adaptive reuse of buildings, and amendments to the Arlington County sign ordinances, are positive steps in addressing the challenge of the historically high commercial vacancy rate. Encouraging and streamlining processes for adaptive reuse has been a policy that the Chamber has previously supported, as did the Economic Development Commission's Commercial Vacancy working group. Additionally, signage continues to be a sticking point in economic development activities of all sizes and a pain point for many small businesses. We are eager to work with County staff and the community on these subjects.

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. We hope to continue engagement with the County to ensure Arlington's regulations and processes fit the modern economic landscape, and we commend County Staff for their work on these ongoing efforts. We hope to continue the conversation on the second phase of CMRI, including these Zoning Ordinance amendments as they are considered before the County Board in the fall.

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; Marc McCauley, Arlington Economic Development; Jill Hunger, Arlington County Planning Division.