



May 17, 2024

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

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports Items 13 and 14, the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance concerning shared and offsite parking, and large media screens; and Item 32, advertising additional amendments to the Zoning Ordinance permitting both live/work units and self-service storage as an allowable use in residential, commercial, and mixed-use spaces; on the May 18 County Board agenda. These amendments are all part of the second phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI), which the Chamber strongly supports as a tool to meet our commercial vacancy challenges creatively and with flexibility. We are pleased to see all three items on the Consent Agenda, and we hope to see the County Board pass them without controversy.

The Chamber was an enthusiastic proponent of 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 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.

Agenda Items 13 and 14, concerning shared and off-site parking and large media screens, are positive steps in the direction of greater flexibility for Arlington retail businesses. Broadening the ability of property owners and small businesses to meet parking requirements through shared parking and off-site parking addresses situations where businesses have insufficient parking, and will help contribute to a healthier retail market. And greater permission for large media screens in certain retail zones provides a positive asset for placemaking.

Agenda Item 32, concerning amendments permitting live/work uses and self-service storage uses, provide greater flexibility for use of commercial space. Live/work units allow for the conversion of a space between residential and commercial use and can be further modified over time based on market demand. This would provide long-term flexibility, particularly for owners of small businesses who are most likely to take advantage of such spaces. The self-service storage amendment also expands the possible locations for these spaces beyond the industrial areas where they are currently limited.

The Chamber looks forward to the opportunities proposed in the second phase of CMRI, 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 ongoing efforts. We plan to continue the conversation and further engage with the County on the second phase of CMRI as more components of the phase come before the County Board.

Sincerely,

Kate Bates

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: County Board 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; Val Weiner, Arlington Economic Development; Jill Hunger, Arlington County Planning Division.