



March 17, 2026

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

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce acknowledges that the Fiscal Year 2027 budget process requires difficult choices. As the County navigates economic uncertainty, it is crucial that the final adopted budget reflects a commitment to fostering the investment and development activity on which Arlington depends. We thank the County Board, County Manager, and Staff for not proposing tax increases that specifically target businesses, including not increasing the meals tax, business tangible personal property tax, or the BPOL tax.

We ask the County Board to build on this positive work by removing any proposed increases to Community Planning and Housing Development (CPHD) and Department of Environmental Services fees (in particular, the Adaptive Reuse Amendment and GLUP study fee increases) and restoring the CPHD Principal Planner position.

With respect to fees, doubling the cost of a GLUP Study fee, after it tripled the previous year, will have a substantial impact upon the cost of development and make Arlington a less competitive location for investment. Given that most GLUP amendments in Arlington convert land from commercial use to mixed-use or residential use, this would have the contradictory effect of increasing the cost of projects that increase the County's housing supply.

Such increases would not solely affect major developments. For example, if a developer goes through a GLUP study, the new fee would be \$165,469, regardless of the size of the site or project. This increase of more than 500 percent over the fee amount two years ago is dramatic and will affect projects by big and small developers/nonprofit organizations alike.

In addition, nearly tripling the cost of Adaptive Reuse Amendments, as proposed in this fee schedule, would make Arlington less competitive for those projects, just as the County's Adaptive Reuse Policy is beginning to result in tangible benefits to the County's commercial vacancy rate.

Lastly, as Staff continues to implement the policies from the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative, it is crucial for CPHD to have adequate resources and staff. Retaining the Principal Planner position would ensure that CPHD has the capacity to enact key County planning initiatives, particularly with respect to major projects. Appropriating the \$167,131 needed to retain this position would generate a positive return on County investment. Furthermore, we urge the County Board to approach reductions in positions or funding in both CPHD and Arlington Economic Development with a mindset of promoting positions or funds that generate returns on investment.

The Chamber recognizes that this year's budget presents tough decisions, and we thank the County for avoiding tax increases that target businesses. We urge the County Board to remove

the proposed fee increases and restore the Principal Planner position. 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 Maureen Coffey; County Board Members Susan Cunningham, Takis Karantonis, and Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr.; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Director of Management and Finance Maria Meredith; Budget Director Richard Stephenson.