



May 27, 2026

Chair Nia Bagley
Arlington County Planning Commission
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Bagley,

On behalf of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, I ask that the Planning Commission recommend the rejection of the proposed local historic district designation for the Melwood property at 750 23rd Street South. The proposed designation, if adopted, would go against County precedent and determinations by County Staff and negatively impact the future of Melwood's already approved redevelopment project at this site.

A local historic district designation should not be sought without the agreement of a property owner, and Melwood has not consented to a local historic district designation. We strongly urge the Planning Commission and 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 Planning Commission should give significant weight to this professional determination.

As you know, in February 2025, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended 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 post zoning approval, without owner consent and without consideration of the impact on redevelopment, would risk compromising a project that the Planning Commission has already recommended. Furthermore, such an action would set a negative precedent for future projects on sites that could be subject to historic designation.

The Planning Commission 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 Planning Commission 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,

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 Commissioners; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Lorin Farris, Historic Preservation Supervisor, Arlington County.