

VIRGINIA SQUARE COMMUNITY'S SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR APPROVING
DEVIATIONS FROM THE SECTOR PLAN

Since July 2, 2013, when the Planning Commission voted to recommend that the County Board defer approving the Fifth Penrose Investing Company's request to build the Latitude Apartments on the north side of Fairfax Drive between Monroe and Nelson Streets, members of the Virginia Square community have met several times to discuss how the Planning Commission and the Board can best respond to Planning Commission Director Robert Duffy's call for a set of criteria to guide the County's decision to approve deviations from a sector plan. As a result of those meetings, we offer the following four factors for consideration as criteria for decisions by the Commission (and the Board) to approve or disapprove a proposed deviation.

1. The Commission should assess the long-term financial impact of approving the deviation, not the short-term impact.

As Mr. Duffy stated at the July 2 meeting, any building approved for construction is likely to stand for 40-50 years. In order to assess the long-term benefits of a building to Arlington County and its residents, its economic impact should be gauged over the building's expected life, not on the basis of short-term ups and downs in the residential or commercial building market.

2. The Commission should assess a building's impact on Metro, traffic, and parking in the context of other buildings and development in a neighborhood, not just the isolated impact of the building in question.

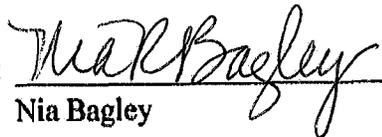
The Commission's decision to approve or disapprove a deviation should take into consideration all of the buildings, ongoing and approved construction, traffic patterns, and Metro usage in the entire neighborhood, not just the impact of the building under consideration. In the Virginia Square neighborhood, for example, this would mean assessing the Latitude's impact on the community in the context of the impact of the occupancy of Virginia Square Towers, under construction at Fairfax Drive and Lincoln Street, as well as the opening of the Silver line on Virginia Square's split platform Metro station.

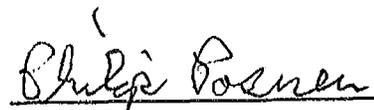
3. The Commission should assess a building's impact on neighboring buildings.

The General Land Use Plan already calls for the Commission to weigh this factor, e.g., to protect medium-density buildings (like The Monroe) from high-density buildings (like the Latitude) on adjacent sites. Elements the Commission should consider in this regard include the intended land use for the site, building density, the proximity of each building's balconies to each other, the need for a reasonable buffer zone between the buildings, the design and intended use of public spaces between buildings, and the impact of a high-density rental building on available street parking for residents, guests and deliveries.

4. In weighing the factors affecting whether or not it should approve a deviation, the Commission should give strong consideration to meeting the needs of the affected local community.

There is no question that the primary responsibility of the Planning Commission is to advance and protect the quality of life and financial interests of all Arlington County. In those instances when a building's impact on a community is substantial and uncertain, however, the Commission should seek to serve the local community's needs to the maximum extent possible. The Virginia Square sector plan, for example, calls on the proposed Latitude site to include "everyday services and retail establishments". The Commission should implement provisions of this nature by soliciting and strongly considering the affected community's opinion about the services and types of establishments that should be available in a building being considered for approval.

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