



TO: Anthony Fusarelli, Jr. AICP, Principal Planner, Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing & Development, Planning Division

FROM: Mike Gazdo, President, Board of Directors, The Representative Condominium

DATE: June 3, 2015

SUBJECT: Concerns about the Development of the River House Properties

On Wednesday, May 27th, Toby Millman, Senior Vice President of Vornado, gave a slide presentation to our condominium residents on his firm's plans for further development of the River House property. At the conclusion of his presentation, our residents were given an opportunity to ask questions and raise issues and concerns – and they had many.

Our condominium sits on the ridge directly above, and adjacent to the River House property which, like our property, lies within the uniquely residential Arlington Ridge Civic Association which is comprised mostly of single family homes. Given our proximity to the River House, we would be directly impacted by its further development not only visually and environmentally, but as importantly by traffic and road congestion, and by the additional, exceedingly high rental apartment density in an already crowded area.

The River House property is zoned RA6-15 that allows for 6-story multiple-family housing. It already contains 1,643 units and could, by right, add another 109 units. However, Mr. Millman indicated that Vornado will be seeking to build an additional 1,084 units of which 934 would be market value units and 150 affordable housing units. This is not only excessive but would be completely out of character with our neighborhood, and contrary to Recommendation #3 in the Land Use section of **The Arlington Ridge Neighborhood Conservation Plan**, (NCP at p. 47), accepted by the County Board on October 17, 2013. The NCP calls for no “up-zoning” of the River House property and no further development beyond that allowed By Right.

Already, both planned and residential units under construction in Pentagon City include Met Park 3,200 units (this includes totals authorized for Vornado and Kettler), the Costco site 744 units, and 400 Army-Navy Drive 453 units. This amounts to a total of approximately 4,400 units, most of which would be in 800 sq. ft. range. The Vornado proposed 1,084 units would increase this density to a staggering 5,484 units, all within a 1-2 block radius.

Vornado is interested in developing a retail face for new buildings along Joyce Street to complement the Pentagon Row retail units across Joyce Street. We believe this is reasonable and could be accommodated on the ground floor as part of its “By Right” development of an additional 109 multi-family units above the retail. However, my understanding is that Vornado

will soon formally submit its plans to the County seeking an amendment to the existing General Land Use Plan (GLUP) to allow for commercial use, and in doing so ask for a zoning change for its property from the current RA6-15 zoning to CO-1.5.

Requesting this type of up-zoning of the entire River House property amounts to extraordinary overreach. It flies in the face of maintaining a peaceful and healthy Arlington Ridge community. Allowing CO-1.5 zoning in what is now an RA6-15 area would surround existing low-rise multifamily and single-family housing with an incompatible land use.

Pentagon City was intended to serve as a mixed-use, largely residential buffer between Crystal City and the low density, largely single-family residential Arlington Ridge Civic Association. Joyce Street constitutes the boundary between Pentagon City and Arlington Ridge and it should remain so.

Moreover, CO-1.5 zoning "By Right" only allows for a maximum building height of 35 feet. Therefore Vornado would most likely seek "Special Exception" on its site of more than 20 acres. This Exception would allow multi-family buildings from 12 to 18 stories. Although Vornado's current plans seek a maximum of 6 floors, under the Special Exception clause they, or any other possible future developer for the site, could claim much higher heights and densities on the River House Properties. In addition, under the Special Exception clause, besides allowing for excessively high structures and multi-family use, this clause also allows for office buildings, hotels and commercial uses, completely out of character with this side of Joyce Street. Other less intrusive alternatives are surely available and need to be considered.

Thank you for your kind consideration.



Mike Gazdo
President, Board of Directors
The Representative Condominium