

July 2, 2020

Libby Garvey, Chair
Christian Dorsey
Katie Cristol
Matt de Ferranti
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Response to the proposed Village at Shirlington Special General Land Use Plan Study Plus and Concept Plan July 2020

Dear Members of the Arlington County Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the first draft of the Village at Shirlington Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study Plus and Concept Plan (the “Plan”) for land-use changes proposed by staff. We recognize and thank county staff for their hard work and diligence in producing this draft plan specific to Shirlington.

We have previously identified our shared mission to promote civic, cultural, and general welfare, giving special attention to improvements beneficial to the Shirlington area in a manner consistent with the planning policies of Arlington County as a whole. We have reviewed the draft document and generally support most of its contents, however, there are a few items we believe contradict our initial purpose for pursuing this GLUP amendment — which was to ensure the long-term economic vitality of Shirlington. As community members, our support for this Plan is dependent upon a plan that will further this objective in a manner consistent with the guiding principles developed over the past year. To that end, we have identified the following areas of primary concern that need to be addressed:

1. The potential heights shown on page 95 of the concept plan are limiting and prevent the variety and viability of potential reinvestment in key areas of Shirlington. We are not proposing specific heights, but instead a range of heights to be evaluated at the PDSP and 4.1 Site Plan stage of public review. We believe the Plan should provide future applicants with an opportunity to submit project proposals that adhere to the Plan’s guiding principles, that are consistent with existing building heights, and adhere to C-O-2.5 Zoning District regulations. This desire has been consistently articulated by the community and the applicants throughout the process but has been ignored in this initial draft of the Plan. Staff’s proposal to arbitrarily limit future building heights well below the height of existing surrounding buildings defeats the purpose of a long-term GLUP study. Additionally, the Existing Building Heights graphic shown in the Plan provides building heights in terms of stories instead of actual height, which is misleading and suggests a building form that is less than what exists in Shirlington. The proposed building height standards should reflect the actual height of the structure, which can be clearly defined and measured and more appropriately applied to new building plans. Finally, there is no clear connection between the

building height restrictions proposed by staff and the twenty-two guiding principles detailed within the Plan. The purpose of the Plan should be to establish the guidelines and expectations for the review of future development submissions, not to arbitrarily prescribe exactly how future development must occur in Shirlington.

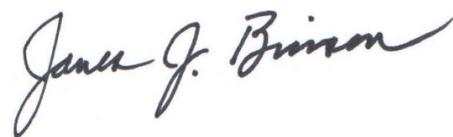
2. On page 65 the Plan references the Green Valley neighborhood in Guiding Principle #7. While we value the Green Valley Civic Association's perspective and those thoughts should be included in the Plan, the document sparsely references the values or priorities of the Shirlington Civic Association, the most affected civic association by the Plan. We request that staff clarify the views of the most affected civic association included in this planning process with the reference to the Green Valley neighborhood in this Guiding Principle.

3. On page 35, the Plan contemplates "retaining the village scale by preserving the building frontages." We request that the Plan provides clarity that the goal is to preserve the façade, or equivalent character, and that each site will be evaluated on a case by case basis, and not a recommendation of full building preservation.

As drafted, we support most of the language and recommendations staff has proposed for the Village at Shirlington. It provides clear principles, visioning, and a framework for the evaluation of any new development proposal. However, our concerns reflect a need for more sensible, long-term flexibility and reasonable building height standards to allow the best path forward for Shirlington and its residents. As drafted, we cannot support the proposed Plan. The Village at Shirlington needs immediate reinvestment, and we need to find a way to resolve these issues without substantially belaboring a process that has already gone on for over two years.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you and other stakeholders and look forward to productive discussions and updates. Thank you again to everyone involved in this process for all the time and work that went into this first draft of the Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



Jay Brinson
Vice President, Development
Federal Realty Investment Trust

CC: Planning Commission Chair Elizabeth Gearin
Planning Commission Vice-Chair James Lantelme
County Manager Mark Schwartz
Planning Director Bob Duffy
Margret Tulloch-Rhodes, Principle Planner, Comprehensive Planning