



July 5, 2020

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

**SCA Response to the 6-24-2020 Draft  
Village at Shirlington Special General Land Use Plan Study Plus and Concept Plan**

To the Members of the Arlington County Board:

We have waited patiently to see if the Applicant, various stakeholders and the County Planning staff could work out their last disagreements on this Study. There has been movement and we believe it is possible to get to a Report we can fully support. There are, however, still serious differences regarding the proposed height limits for two key parcels and a few aspects of streetscape design. We ask for the Planning Commission's help to resolve the remaining issues. That's the only way we can support this Report.

With regard to the properties located within the area subject to Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) #106, SCA confidently supports a GLUP amendment from "Low" Office-Apartment-Hotel (OAH) to "Medium" OAH with an associated rezoning from C-0-1.5 to C-0-2.5.

**Community Engagement & Support**

Shirlington Civic Association has been sharing the ideas reflected in the Special GLUP Plus report, with slide presentations, in seven meetings between November 2017 and March 2020. In addition, there have been short updates, emails, informal conversations or presentations to HOA board meetings. If there were a problem, believe us, we would know – nothing in our village stays secret!

The Principal Planner of this report said, when she presented to the SCA in July 2019, she had "never seen so many people at a civic association meeting." We have made it abundantly clear to our fellow residents that there could be 1-2 new buildings of comparable height to the existing ones along S. Arlington Mill Drive that would replace the surface parking lot. There have been no protests, petitions, angry letters or comments at these meetings. In general, people want to safeguard the character of the Village, improve parking garage access, and preserve Campbell Avenue while agreeing that we need more residents, reinvestment and renewal to maintain the economic viability of our businesses.

You and Staff are well aware that the previous two phases of development of the "smart growth" urban village concept were opposed by the two traditional, suburban neighborhoods on either side of us. In 2003, Fairlington ran a campaign to "Save the Village of Shirlington." These same people cheerfully admit that they were wrong then and are now loyal customers for Shirlington businesses – even while they express concern about more building and traffic. Their real estate ads proclaim, "Walk to Shirlington!" Had they prevailed before, we would have no Public Library, Signature Theatre, Hilton Garden Inn, Delancey or Shirlington Village Condominiums.

**Special GLUP Staff Report**

The 30-year-old Village at Shirlington needs immediate reinvestment to remain competitive. Even before the current economic crisis, the SCA and other stakeholders recognized that to be viable in a changing retail market and without Metro, the Village needs more residents and office workers – while maintaining the charm and

small town feel of our core business and civic area along Campbell Avenue. We need more people to eat lunch in our restaurants and walk to our amenities. We are delighted that WETA is moving the PBS Newshour studios to the Village.

In our view, Staff has done a good job in the Vision and Principles section describing and protecting the authentic character the Village at Shirlington. They have protected it for the foreseeable future, and we thank them sincerely for the care they have taken.

With regard to Building Heights, the SCA finds the staff recommendations on several parcels too limiting. The SCA fully supports the views expressed by the Applicant, the longtime property owner of the Village, in its July 2 letter to the County Board about this Special GLUP report.

The SCA's ability to support this Special GLUP Plus report depends on these changes:

- a. That the heights of the two new residential buildings along South Arlington Mill Drive (SAMD) to be proposed by the Applicant be allowed to be comparable to nearby existing buildings on SAMD, with appropriate good design to be fully reviewed by the community in a future Site Plan. Setbacks will be needed to enhance a new interior plaza across from retail stores there.
- b. That the height of the AMC cinema parcel not be limited to 6 stories for the next 20 years. This could become a new arts or entertainment venue but to be commercially viable, it would need more office or residential on top.
- c. That the improved access to parking garages described on p. 87 be taken seriously and implemented with full County cooperation. This is the biggest complaint of our visitors, theatres, businesses and residents.
- d. That a variety of sidewalk treatments be permitted, to meet ADA needs, an aging population, and cleanliness, as well as to reduce maintenance costs.

### **Conclusion**

After two years of LRPC deliberation, we support the consideration of this Report without further delay. There is, however, a considerable amount of information to absorb in the document. We reserve the right to bring forward, as soon as possible, some areas where there may be mistakes, disagreements, or typos.

Thank you to all the LRPC members, Special GLUP study participants, and County staff for all their hard work, dedication, and creativity. We are infinitely grateful.

Respectfully submitted,



Edith R. Wilson  
President  
Shirlington Civic Association

Cc: Planning Commission Chair Elizabeth Gearin; Planning Commission Vice-Chair James Lanteleme; County Manager Mark Schwartz; Planning Director Bob Duffy; Jennifer Smith and Margaret Tulloch Rhodes and other CPHD Comprehensive Planning Staff