

July 26, 2021

Mr. Matt De Ferranti Chair, Arlington County Board mdeferranti@arlingtonva.us

These are comments from Ashton Heights regarding the LRPC Clarendon West Sector Plan staff presentations of June 15 and June 30, 2021.

1. **Fire station.** We understand that the county needs a larger fire station in order to service Clarendon and the surrounding area. And we understand that efforts to relocate the fire station on the ground floor of one of the surrounding developments has been unsuccessful to date. Staff has therefore proposed development of a park along a section of Fairfax Drive in order to substitute for the planned 10th street park. This linear park is currently proposed to be a passive park, with sitting areas and landscaping. This will indeed augment Clarendon. However, it does not substitute for an active urban park.

2. **10th Street Park.** The 2006 Sector Plan planned for the block including the fire station and the verizon building to (eventually) be a large 50,000 square foot park, which could facilitate active recreation. It was envisioned to be an urban park defined as:

"serving the needs of both surrounding neighborhoods and the core area's residential and work population...these parks should be planned and designed to provide an array of public space activities and programs. Open, landscaped areas, as well as multiuse, basketball courts, handball courts, community fields, community canine areas, tennis courts, circuit courses and climbing walls should be considered for these urban parks to promote activity, exercise and foster a sense of safety."

Arlington's Public Spaces Master Plan (adopted by the County Board 4/25/2019) (<http://arlingtonparks.us/psmp/main/mobile/index.html>) includes the 10th Street Park. And, within that, the Public Spaces Master Plan Priority Action 2 (p 55): bringing to fruition the public spaces envisioned by plans adopted by the County Board. This includes the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan and our 10th Street Park.

The Public Spaces Master Plan suggests a **moderate** access **need** in Clarendon based on their measure of Level Of Service (LOS) for these specific facilities: basketball courts, community gardens, multiuse trails, playgrounds, diamond fields, tennis court, picnic area, rectangular fields and volleyball courts. The best success of our urban village would have all of those amenities within walking distance. Some of them can be accommodated within the passive linear park on Fairfax Drive. For the rest, we need a significant active park within the Sector.

Clarendon is planned to be an urban village. As such, it should be walkable, including parks and recreation. This means that parks and recreation need to be included **inside the sector**.

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Further support for having a large urban park at our site on 10th Street: according to the above-mentioned County Board approved Public Spaces Master Plan (p 54), in 2017, the County adopted the nationwide campaign by the National Recreation and Park Association, the Trust for Public Land, and the Urban Land Institute that a great park be within a 10 minute walk of every person.

There are 5 different standards which quantify open space needs for urban cities. Park space is often measured as a function of the number of residents. (Arlington does not use this standard, but it is useful to examine this regardless.) The most livable city is one that provides extensive green space for its residents. The WHO (World Health Organization) recommends that every city provide a range from a minimum of 9 sq meters per person (2.2 acres /1000 residents) of urban green space for each person to 50 sq meters per person (11 acres/1000 residents). Just for comparison, how many thousands of people do we have in Clarendon?

We believe that it is more important now to have a large active park in Clarendon. As we increase the number of residents in Clarendon, the need for parks increases. As noted above, Arlington's Park document lists the Clarendon area specifically as having a reduced level of service for facilities. Also, we note that the Fittest City in the country award that Arlington recently received (#1) shows that one of the variables measured (facilities), Arlington ranks lower than other cities in the top 50 cities. Let's make Clarendon a successful urban village!

3. FAR

Ashton Heights has been asking for FAR numbers to be provided for many months. They were finally provided at the June 30, 2021 meeting of the LRPC. They were not provided ahead of the meeting, which would have facilitated a more meaningful discussion. Also, FAR were provided very late in the planning process, further limiting meaningful discussion of them.

FAR by definition is the square footage of buildable space by a developer. This is an essential part of the decision process. FAR increases density, parking needs, number of vehicles on the street, and services including trash, water, sewer, fire protection and parks.

FAR is controlled by height, setbacks and tapers. The 2006 Sector Plan set these, among other reasons, to control density. We do not see any reason for the increase in FAR, other than developers have asked for it. This is not a compelling reason to change the FAR. We therefore believe the FAR should stand as it is in the existing 2006 Sector Plan.

If extraordinary benefits are provided, we would be open to increasing the FAR. Without knowing what extraordinary benefits are to be provided, it is inappropriate for us, or the county in our opinion, to sign off on additional height and density.

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4. More time to find workable solutions. We believe that these above items require more study in order to reconcile. We are anxious to be part of that exploration. Therefore, we recommend that:

(1) More study to find workable solutions. Part of this effort would be coordination with the surrounding civic associations;

(2) Add at least one more LRPC meeting to the existing schedule, subsequent to July 27 meeting, and prior to the currently scheduled Sept/Oct Draft Recommendations/Report, in order to incorporate information from this further study;

(3) Postpone the following 3 events, also in order to incorporate information from this further study:

(a) the Draft Recommendations/Report currently scheduled for Sept/Oct,

(b) Commissions review #1 and county board Request to Advertise, currently scheduled for Oct/Nov and

(c) Commission Review #2 and County Board Action, currently scheduled for Nov/Dec.

We commend the staff for their efforts in bringing all this info together, and staff's impressive and significant presentations. We have, though, had difficulty absorbing all of the information. It's been more challenging in this Covid time. We would like to be positive partners in this planning effort, but are in need of more time to coordinate with our members.

These comments augment those made previously by Ashton Heights: (1) 1/8/2021 letter following Dec 14, 2020 staff presentation; (2) letter following up on the Feb 9, 2021 presentation; and (3) letter dated June 24, 2021, following the June 15, 2021 staff presentation. We note that the 1/8/2021 and 6/24/2021 letters are not posted on the LRPC website. We await answers to our questions sent June 24.

Thank you for your serious review and support.

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