



Honorable Libby Garvey
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

March 3, 2020

RE: 1401 Lee Highway Project (Key Bridge Marriott), Site Plan # 53

Dear Chair Garvey:

A member of the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) participated in the Site Plan Review Committee for the 1401 Lee Highway (Key Bridge Marriott) project and has kept the UFC apprised of developments regarding that project. The UFC heard a presentation from the applicant at the UFC's February 27, 2020 meeting. The UFC offers the following comments regarding this project:

The UFC appreciates the applicant's stated intent to redevelop the site consistent with biophilic design principles. This is particularly important given the strategic location of this project at the Key Bridge entrance to Arlington as well as the site sitting adjacent to National Park Service (NPS) wooded property along the George Washington Parkway and the wooded and deep ravine areas of the Colonial Village Branch stream valley. During the SPRC process, the applicant was responsive to suggestions for better integration of the proposed buildings' lower levels to the surrounding park area. For example, the final plan includes the use of wooden soffits on the ceiling of a lower floor of one of the proposed buildings that faces out toward Key Bridge and increased use of local stone throughout the site (including large stones from the relatively nearby Carderock quarry.)

The esplanade area to the north of the site (facing the river) has nicely designed walk and bike paths, and the UFC appreciates that additional trees are included in this area in the final plan. The commission also approvingly notes the applicant's intent to use bird-friendly glass in all of the buildings proposed for the site as well as stormwater retention design elements.

The UFC appreciates the overtures that the applicant has made to the NPS about the removal of invasive plant species from adjacent parkland, and urges continued discussion between the applicant and NPS and follow-on action to address the heavily overgrown areas adjacent to the site (especially along the George Washington Parkway). The UFC requests a follow-up report on the action taken on invasive species removal after the project is underway. The UFC also commends the applicant for exceeding the tree replacement requirements on site (79 trees are required to be

replaced and the applicant is proposing that 84 trees be planted) as well as exceeding the required tree canopy coverage under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance by 2500 square feet.

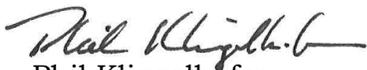
We were disappointed at the last SPRC meeting that we did not see a listing of planned trees and other flora, which we assume, given the biophilically intensive plan, would incorporate mostly, if not all, native species. Given that plant selection can be as important as landscape design in terms of beneficial biophilic effects, a tree and plant list, even if subject to modification as the project proceeds, is crucial in evaluating the landscape design. At the time this letter was prepared, we had not seen any such list and look forward to viewing a more complete landscape plan, and reviewing and commenting the final planting decisions from a biophilic perspective.

Also, the current depiction of the landscape plan shows that turf grass will be utilized for areas that are not specifically designed as gardens. We recommend that turf grass be utilized only where necessary due to anticipated function of the space, and there should be more ground cover, rocks, native grasses, small plants, and shrubs in those "open" areas that are not designed for active or passive occupancy.

The commission appreciates the responsiveness of the applicant to community interests and commitment to biophilic design principles. The UFC believes that both the resulting project and the community will benefit from incorporating a design approach based on biophilic principles.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Sincerely,



Phil Klingelhofer
Chair, Urban Forestry Commission

Cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Arlington County Planning Commission
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Claude Williamson, Director, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation