

Arlington County Civic Federation Public Services Committee

DRAFT Resolution to Improve Public Input for Planning, GLUP and Zoning Change Processes

14 JUNE 2022

RE: GLUP/Zoning Amendment & Sector Plan Community Engagement

WHEREAS Arlington County has an established a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) that allows for existing single-family residences and high-density, mixed-use development along the high-density, mixed-use corridors;[1]

WHEREAS Arlington County Planning states, "Planning decisions are informed by extensive research, professional expertise and community input." And the planning process "relies on extensive community input. Individual residents can have a say on the decisions that affect their neighborhoods and the County as a whole";[2]

WHEREAS the Covid-19 pandemic spurred changes in technology, increasing remote telework options and altering historic commuting patterns with populations migrating from urban counties to suburban and exurban counties;[3]

WHEREAS there are numerous ongoing GLUP studies and amendments, including but not limited to the Crystal City Building Heights Study,[4] Melwood GLUP amendment,[5] the Eads Street Residential GLUP Amendment;[6]

WHEREAS in at least two recent sector-plan-update processes, residents and commissions have raised concerns about community priorities that were not addressed;[7]

WHEREAS the impact of these GLUP studies and amendments and their subsequent upzonings will affect not only housing density but also parking, public school enrollment, stormwater management and tree canopy preservation in residential neighborhoods countywide;

WHEREAS up-zoning frequently entails encroachment into lower density residential neighborhoods (sometimes referred to as "edge" development),[8] where residents have no approval rights and little leverage for negotiation when proposed up-zonings will affect the use of their own properties;

[1] Arlington County Planning web page (accessed 5-5-2022): <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Planning>

[2] Arlington County Planning web page (accessed 5-5-2022): <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Planning>

[3] "Americans are moving out of urban counties like never before," 4-28-2022: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/americans-moving-urban-counties-141924038.html>

[4] Crystal City Building Heights Study web page (accessed 5-5-2022): <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Plans-Studies/Land-Use/Crystal-City-Building-Heights-Study>. See also APA Airports in the Region Case Study, "Crystal City Plan Feasibility Study Arlington, Virginia – Planning for Redevelopment near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport" (2010): <https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2016-04/2016-04d%20APA%20Airport%20Case%20Study%20for%20Crystal%20City%20Development%20Plan%20Feasibility%202010-11.pdf> and "Arlington County Staff Response to Arlington County Civic Federation Draft Resolution on FAA Navigation Hazard Evaluation Rulemaking Change for Consideration at October 7, 2014 Meeting": <http://www.civfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/10072014-Staff-Response-to-Civ-Fed-Resolution-OEI-Policy.pdf>

[5] 750 23rd St. S. (Melwood) GLUP amendment initial review web page (accessed 5-5-2022): <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Plans-Studies/General-Land-Use-Plan/Studies/Melwood>

[6] Special Land Use Study – South Eads Street Residential/GLUP Amendment Change web page (accessed 5-5-2022): <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Plans-Studies/General-Land-Use-Plan/Studies/South-Eads-Residential>

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Arlington County Civic Federation (ACCF) asks the Arlington County Board to request the County Manager and staff to seek agreement from adjacent-neighbors and the applicable civic association(s) when reviewing proposed GLUP amendments and up-zoning requests, (similar to the Board of Zoning Appeals [BZA] process, which considers adjacent neighbors' input before deciding residential requests for an exception to a rule in the Zoning Ordinance.)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ACCF asks the Arlington County Board to authorize a more robust process that provides for more meaningful and active public participation in formative land-use planning and zoning processes, including GLUP amendments and studies, Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) reviews of proposed GLUP and zoning studies and amendments, sector plan updates and amendments and similar planning efforts. Such active public participation should:

- a) Give members of affected civic associations and HOAs (if not represented by a civic association) a formal, voting seat at the table for all significant GLUP, sector, and other planning and zoning processes that will amend or change planning and density parameters.
- b) Schedule feedback timelines to avoid conflicts with major holidays and the summer break, when staff, board members and the public are likely to be traveling.
- c) Recognize that community members are volunteers with limited time to devote to planning activities—make technical information clearly understandable in layman's terms and readily available online in a timely manner.
- d) Include basic impact analysis of the proposed changes to give the public clear and accurate projections of the proposed changes' impacts on school enrollment, capacity and staffing; public safety response times and staffing; natural resources/infrastructure (parks, pervious green space, existing tree canopy); impervious surfaces, stormwater management and flood risk; infrastructure (road capacity, additional transit needs, land acquisition to expand public services in relation to population changes, etc.) as well as human capital/FTE needs; and fiscal impacts (revenues and expenditures, especially when resulting in an increase in the tax burden).
- e) Ensure mechanisms for two-way communication between members of the public and decision makers as plans are prepared, assuring that responses to public inquiries and input are timely and meaningful.

[7] Pentagon City Sector Plan update: AHCA Representative on the Pentagon City Study Focus Group memo dated 1/22/2022 (see Outstanding Concerns section): <https://livability22202.org/wpcontent/uploads/Summary-of-Pentagon-City-Plan-and-AHCA-comments.pdf> and "The Pentagon City Planning Study Reduces Open Public Green Space" analysis: <https://www.arlingtonanalytics.com/papers/OPS22202.pdf>. See also Public Spaces Master Plan, Priority Action 1: "Add at least 30 acres of new public space over the next ten years": <http://arlingtonparks.us/psmp/main/mobile/index.html>

Clarendon Sector Plan update: Park & Recreation Commission letter dated 12-22-2021: https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/content/public/government/commissions-and-advisory-groups/parksrecreation-commission/clarendon_10th-st-letter_final_122221.pdf and Ashton Heights Civic Association letter to Long-Range Planning Commission Chair James Schroll dated 10-27-2021: https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=4070&meta_id=209825

<https://livability22202.org/wp-content/uploads/Summary-of-Pentagon-City-Plan-and-AHCAcomments.pdf>. See also CivFed 2021 white paper, "Equity in Arlington County Open Public Spaces": <http://www.civfed.org/newContent/2021-02/2021-02%20ParksRec%20Open%20Space%20Equity%20Resolution%20White%20Paper.pdf>.

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[8] "Neighborhood Edge Re-Development Interim Report from the Planning & Zoning Committee" (5-1-2012): <http://www.civfed.org/presedgerelevel1103.pdf> and remarks from then-County Board Chair Mary Hynes regarding "edge development" at 2:34:46 / 3:58:21 on the time counter for the October 17, 2015, County Board Meeting: "We cannot lose sight of the fact that that is our goal every time we approve redevelopment — to create a great place for people; people who live here now and people who might come to live or work in this place."