



July 9, 2026

Matt de Ferranti, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair de Ferranti and Members of the Arlington County Board:

Thank you for your response to our message of June 12, 2026, outlining Arlington County Civic Federation concerns about the on-going revisions to the Arlington County Comprehensive Plan. Unfortunately, the process that you have outlined for moving to a draft Request to Advertise (RTA) this Fall fails to address the central issue we raised in our message to you: *The community wants to have a deeper conversation about Arlington's future and how to meaningfully update our plans and policies to meet that future.* Our main request to you is to have true community engagement on the specific policy changes to the current Comprehensive Plan principles in the new draft introductory chapter, and on the purpose, meaning, and intended outcome of any new Guiding Principles. The County Board and staff owe the public direct and meaningful engagement on the intended policy changes prior to any RTA and certainly prior to their adoption. Anything else does not meet requirements for genuine policy transparency.

While originally promising that the new draft introductory chapter to the Comprehensive Plan would be made public along with the Draft Guiding Principles this Spring, the County only produced new guiding principles, leaving the community without understanding the fundamentals of the possible modifications to Arlington's Comprehensive Plan. Moving to an RTA prior to the release of the full draft introductory chapter – or only in quick succession after publishing what we have heard runs 40 pages -- cuts short the discussion on the actual proposal before adoption. As you know, RTA language is difficult to craft in a way that provides both clarity and latitude for change. This was abundantly clear in the very unfortunate RTA for Arlington's EHO zoning, which included multiple options that were difficult to decipher and created unnecessary confusion about the proposed zoning changes.

In the Civic Federation's Resolution to Improve Planning and Zoning Policy and Processes<sup>1</sup> and Resolution to Restore the Public's Confidence in Arlington County Governance<sup>2</sup>, we emphasized the desire of the community that there be transparency in Arlington's planning and zoning processes. Full transparency of the proposed new draft introductory chapter to Arlington

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution to Improve Planning and Zoning Policy and Processes [10 June 2025] <https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2025-06/2025-06%20ACCF%20P%26ZComm%20Res%20Improve%20PZ%20Planning%20and%20Processes%20APPROVED%2020250610.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Resolution to Restore the Public's Confidence in Arlington County Governance [14 Mar 2023]

<https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2023-03/2023-02-28%20CivFed%20Res%20Restore%20Public%20Confidence%20in%20Arlington%20County%20Governance%20APPROVED.pdf>

County's Comprehensive Plan should allow for a minimum six-month period for public review and comment prior to any RTA. What is the reason for the rush? We would like to reiterate our June 12 request:

“The many concerns about the Guiding Principles expressed by our members and members of the community over the past year have not been allayed by the county's publication of the Draft Guiding Principles. Additionally, the promised draft of the Comprehensive Plan's Introduction has not yet been shared with the public. Instead, the draft Guiding Principles were restated and elaborated upon with further ‘supporting statements,’ which do not answer the fundamental questions the community has been asking, nor do they address the community's concerns. While the county's engagement process continues, the important conversation about Arlington's future as a whole remains unexplored.”

Before the Arlington County Board adopts new Guiding Principles -- whose meaning remains unknown and whose ramifications upon implementation remain unclear -- we urge the Board to ensure that County staff revise the Comprehensive Plan update process for drafting the Guiding Principles and Introductory chapter. The updated process should be required to include a direct conversation about the current adopted principles, why they need modification, and how the proposed new principles will change the current policy direction.

We also ask the County Board to mandate adjustments to the public engagement to ensure that the many questions and concerns raised by the community are fully answered/resolved before proceeding to the next step of an RTA. In order to stand the test of time, we need to get it right rather than rush to a hasty decision. The process should be structured to bring about community consensus rather than disaffection.

Moving to an RTA this Fall on a newly-released Comp Plan introduction does not address our request for an adjustment to the public engagement process and is in fact the opposite. We would appreciate it if the County made a commitment to truly adjusting the Comprehensive Plan update process, and in the current schedule, committed to a minimum six-month review period for any new Introductory chapter and Draft Guiding Principles, prior to issuing an RTA.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

*NJ Giacobbe, Jr.*

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.  
President

cc.

Mason Kushnir, Arlington County Board Clerk  
Mark Schwartz, County Manager  
Erika Moore, Assistant County Manager, Communications and Public Engagement  
David Smith, ACCF Board Chair