



September 29, 2026

Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Arlington County
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mark,

I am writing on behalf of the Arlington County Civic Federation (CivFed) regarding a continuing concern about the way civic associations are notified of minor site plan amendments and administrative changes.

Too often, a civic association receives a notice informing it that an amendment has been filed and providing a link to the folder of complex application materials, but without a simple, plain-language explanation of what is actually being changed, why the change is being requested, and what practical impact it could have on the surrounding community.

This puts an unreasonable burden on volunteer civic association leaders to wade through technical site plan documents simply to determine whether a proposed change is significant to their community. It can also mean that the significance of an amendment is not understood until relatively late in the review process.

This is not a new issue for the Civic Federation or our member civic associations. On June 10, 2025, the CivFed membership overwhelmingly approved its Resolution to Improve Planning and Zoning Policy and Processes ([link](#)). The resolution specifically recognized the need for earlier community engagement and improved public access to plain-English documents throughout the planning process.

Most relevant is Recommendation 12, which calls upon the County to establish a system for tracking post-approval site plan amendments and administrative changes and their impact on previously approved site plan conditions. It further recommends that affected civic associations receive “a plain-language written notice of proposed changes at least ten (10) days prior to consideration” and that amendments and administrative changes be posted on the County website.

We believe this could be accomplished without creating a burdensome new process. When notifying a civic association of a proposed site plan amendment or administrative change, staff should provide a short summary answering several basic questions:

- What is being changed from the approved site plan?
- Why is the applicant requesting the change?

- Does the proposal modify an existing site plan condition?
- What physical or operational impacts could result?
- Does it affect such matters as use, height, parking, loading, traffic, signage, rooftop equipment, landscaping, community benefits or other features that could affect nearby residents?
- Are there particular issues staff believes the community should be aware of?

The recent notice to the North Rosslyn Civic Association concerning a minor amendment to Minor Site Plan Amendment SP #241, 1001 19th Street North illustrates the problem. The notice itself did not explain that the applicant was seeking both to remove parking spaces and to amend a longstanding site plan parking requirement. Those facts only became apparent after reviewing the applicant's more detailed submission.

We are not suggesting that every minor amendment requires a lengthy transmittal. Quite the opposite. A short, understandable explanation at the beginning of the process would allow civic associations to quickly distinguish truly routine changes from those that warrant questions or additional community attention.

This seems to us to be a relatively simple improvement that would increase transparency, reduce misunderstandings, and make the process more efficient for residents, applicants and County staff alike.

Could you please ask CPHD to review this issue and let us know whether a standard plain-language summary can be incorporated into future notices of site plan amendments and administrative changes? We would be pleased to work with staff on a simple format.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nick

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
President

cc.

County Board

Mason Kushnir, Arlington County Board Clerk

Erika Moore, Assistant County Manager, Communications and Public Engagement

David Smith, ACCF Board Chair