



**ARLINGTON COUNTY  
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414  
Arlington, Virginia 22201



October 28, 2016

Mr. Mark Schwartz  
Arlington County Manager  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 302  
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Community Facilities Study and Proposed Advisory Commission

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

The Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the draft responses to the Community Facilities Study (CFS) and the draft charge for the Joint Community Facilities Advisory Commission. Our primary concern relates to what has been omitted from the summary and charge, most notably specific reference to the needs for parks and recreation facilities.

Community Facility Study Findings

The CFS notes on page 79: "The heart of the Community Facilities Study is to identify strategic challenges that could, if left unaddressed, threaten Arlington's overall sustainability as a community." The Community Facilities Study report listed five primary challenges facing the county; the first of which is the scarcity of land.

A recurring topic during the CFS process was the need to proactively address the tremendous increase in demand and looming shortages in parks and recreation facilities. We believe that the charge should specifically include addressing the anticipated needs of park and recreation facilities. The failure to include this at the outset threatens to relegate park and recreation amenities to the bits and pieces of land remaining, rather than working to creatively integrate these facilities into our larger planning objectives. We believe that the staff comments and charge do not adequately acknowledge that park and recreation amenities are fundamental to the quality of life for residents and workers, and as such, underpin the sustainability of our community.

Exacerbating this concern comes from the listing of several parcels of land in the draft charter of the Joint Commission with no mention of potential use for park and recreation amenities. Several of these, including the Buck property, the Carlin Springs property, and the 26<sup>th</sup> and Old Dominion parcel have been proposed by community members as candidates for expanded parks or park facilities. Also, the Madison Center, the Reed School, and the Kenmore campus locations contain important open space that would be impacted by the development of other county facility uses.

Likewise, we are concerned about staff comments on recommendation #12 objecting to an impact analysis for specific projects. Recommendation #12 of the Final Report proposes that the county:

"Add an economic and fiscal impact section to private development (special exception/site plan and Form Based Code) project staff reports to provide information on the costs (e.g. the projected service demands and other costs to the community) and benefits (e.g. the taxes and other economic benefits) likely to be generated by a proposed project."

We support the recommendation for an impact analysis, and more specifically, believe that new developments should include both a park and recreation demand analysis as well as what elements are included in a proposed project that will address the increased park and recreation needs.

### Plan for Our Places and Spaces (POPS) Process and Recommendations

We are especially concerned that neither the charge nor the staff comments anticipate the recommendations that will be coming out of the POPS process. As we continue to work on POPS, one issue is crystal clear: demand will continue to exceed supply in almost every area of parks and recreation needs.

Failure to incorporate long-term planning for parks and recreation amenities now will only exacerbate the failure of the first round of "smart growth" that planned for increased density but neglected to include adequate parks and recreation facilities. Retrofitting parks and recreation facilities into our increasingly dense community will require a great deal of creativity and flexibility and it should not be relegated to an afterthought or "other" category.

### Coordination with County and APS

Since completion of the CFS, we commend staff for progress in moving forward on some of the recommendations. However, we note that at Wilson School, a primary objective of coordinating county and APS facilities early in the design process to ensure flexible use has been relegated once again as an afterthought, despite promises to the contrary during the initial planning process. We continue to be frustrated that actions do not conform to promises made and expectations set during the planning process.

### Recommendations

The PRC has three primary recommendations:

- 1) The following be added to the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission charge:  
**Section 4. a. ix. Parks and recreation facilities, including needs and initiatives, identified through the POPS process**
- 2) Develop a transparent planning process ensuring that cooperation and partnership opportunities identified in Section 2 of the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission will indeed maximize public benefits.

3) Include a project impact analysis as per CFS Recommendation #12 that specifically includes a park and recreation demand analysis and an analysis of amenities provided to address increased needs.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline Haynes".

Caroline Haynes  
Chair, Park and Recreation Commission

cc: County Board Members  
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation