

**From:** Emily Rosenberg <[emilyrosedds@gmail.com](mailto:emilyrosedds@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 15, 2021 9:00 PM  
**To:** Kellie Brown <[Kebrown@arlingtonva.us](mailto:Kebrown@arlingtonva.us)>  
**Subject:** Initiate GLUP Study for Courthouse West

**EXTERNAL EMAIL: This email originated from outside Arlington County.**

Context: <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2019/11/2019-11-13-LRPC-Meeting-Applicant-Slides.pdf>; <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/general-land-use-plan/special-study-courthouse-west/>; <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2019/11/Final-Initial-Review-Memo-Plus-Graphics-for-Courthouse-West-1.25.19.pdf>; <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2019/11/LRPC-Presentation-Courthouse-West-November-2019.pdf>

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Dear LRPC,

Thank you for all that you do for our community.

I am writing in support of the Courthouse West project and to urge you to prioritize a planning study.

There is a housing shortage in our area and the Courthouse West project could provide valuable housing and retail in our community. It is close to two metro stations and many businesses. Both the metro system and businesses could benefit from such an investment. In addition, housing in this area encourages walking and public transportation which provides environmental benefits. As someone who lives in a high rise apartment in Clarendon, I know that these living options provide a large tax base relative to the services that they use in our community.

I think that the Courthouse West project could greatly benefit our community.

Please let me know if you have any questions and thank you for the work you do.

Emily

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**Emily Rosenberg, DDS**  
Board Certified Pediatric Dentist  
Growing Smiles of Northern Virginia

Dear LRPC members,

Thank you for taking time to consider the improvement of my neighborhood. I live at the corner of Clarendon and Barton, just a few blocks from the site, and am a member of the Clarendon-Courthouse Civic Association, though not representing them here.

I hope you'll support the applicant's request for a special GLUP study and a re-GLUPing to the OAH-High designation. A development at Courthouse West could vastly enrich the character of my neighborhood by adding homes, residents, and retail to a block that currently serves an inhospitable urban vacuum, detracting from the walkability and vibrancy of the surrounding area and serving as a border, rather than a link, between the two neighborhoods that constitute the Clarendon-Courthouse civic association. By enabling the redevelopment of these drab surface parking lots into vibrant retail and housing, a re-GLUPing of this site could both enhance neighborhood character and strengthen neighborhood cohesion and identity.

Arlington County has a housing shortage and needs more housing units to help alleviate the market pressures that lead to increasing housing costs and unaffordability. I think this housing shortage and its pernicious effects should be kept top of mind when thinking about planning the future of the county. Beyond the general need for the county to GLUP and zone for more housing, this specific site is a great fit for additional housing. First, the site's proximity to not just one but two metro stations (less than ¼ mile from Courthouse Metro and ½ mile from Clarendon Metro) means housing here would allow more people to live car-free in Arlington. Additionally, the county hasn't undergone a sector planning process that includes this site within my lifetime making it somewhat of a blank slate, but the most recent document does plan for growth here, designating it as "higher density commercial/residential/mixed use." The county has already planned for growth here, the infrastructure already exists, and the neighborhood is already characterized by a walkable mixed-use retail residential character that this block could contribute to.

The bottom line for me is this: the current use of this block is a drain on neighborhood character and quality but the potential is there for so much more before we even consider the sorts of explicit "community benefits" packages that would come from a site plan development process. If this site isn't appropriate for high density housing construction, where is? We need to allow housing to be built in large quantities on sites like this one if we have any hope of alleviating our housing shortage without radically altering the character of other neighborhoods in a way not consistent with current county planning. As such, I hope you'll support the enablement of neighborhood improvement through a re-GLUPing to OAH-High and an accordant rezoning to C-O.

Thanks,  
Benjamin Nichols  
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Planning Commission & Long Range Planning Committee:

Elizabeth Gearin, Co-chair; James Schroll, Co-chair; Nia Bagley; Stephen Hughes; James Lantelme; Elizabeth Morton; Devanshi P. Patel; Tenley Peterson; Leo Sarli; Jane C. Siegel; Sara Steinberger; Daniel Weir

cc: Arlington County Board; Bob Duffy; Margaret Rhodes; Jenn Smith

Dear LRPC members,

First, thank you all for your hard work and service to Arlington. I live in Clarendon and am an active member of my civic association (not speaking for them, to be clear).

I urge you to prioritize the lot next to Whole Foods for a planning study, ideally one with potential scope substantially beyond what the applicant is requesting. To be clear, Courthouse West, as proposed, looks like it would be a valuable addition to our neighborhood, likely to come at a time when the need for more housing will be especially urgent, especially compared to either the ugly surface parking lot and standalone bank on the site today or to the maximum that could be built by-right, and I would love to see it get built near me. But I think more density -- a FAR of 8 to 12, and a few hundred extra homes -- would be even more appropriate for the site and most of the area nearby.

This surface parking lot is right next to *two* metro stations, less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a mile (eight minute walk! Lots of my coworkers walk double that from Dupont or Logan to get on Silver to Tysons during Normal Times) from Clarendon and even closer than that to Courthouse. The only value it adds to the neighborhood in its current state is encouraging people to drive, contributing more than its fair share to the heat island effect and to stormwater runoff, and standing in the way of people walking to the grocery store or anywhere else in the neighborhood.

Big picture: our neighborhood - and really, our entire region - has a longstanding and serious shortage of housing. That shortage has led to rising rents (both here and throughout the region), accelerating displacement, and environmentally unsustainable suburban sprawl. Region-wide, we should be allowing more people to live where there's already ample infrastructure (in this case: lots of jobs nearby, pre-existing utility service, existing fire/EMS coverage, high-quality transit, a grocery store across the street and several more a few blocks away) instead of continuing to push hundreds of thousands more people to greenfield sites in Loudoun, Fauquier, Prince William, Montgomery, and Prince George, which will need to set up all that infrastructure (in a much more car-intensive way) from scratch. We can, and should, slow the sprawl by legalizing and encouraging more housing on sites like this one.

Smaller picture, building a lot of housing here would carry a lot of benefits for myself and other residents of our neighborhood and Arlington more broadly, even before taking any "community benefits" package into account:

- Most residents of our neighborhood rent our homes, and more housing nearby means lower market-rate rents, and housing affordability is good.
- More housing walkable to the local businesses in Clarendon and Courthouse means more customers for those businesses, which would help our local business ecosystem bounce back from the pandemic more quickly than it would otherwise.
- WMATA is facing severe budget cuts due in large part to low metro ridership. The stimulus funding Congress approved will prevent some of the more catastrophic cuts anticipated without it, but there's still a large gap expected. More people living an easy walk to two metro stations means a faster recovery for Metro ridership, more fiscal resilience for WMATA, and fewer service cuts that affect all transit riders

- Ground floor retail, if included, would provide space for potential new restaurants or shops walkable to lots of existing residents
- The large increase in tax base and low student generation rates of high-rises would mean more breathing room (or, fewer cuts) in Arlington County's own budget, which means a better fiscal picture for our schools and other County services.
- At just a very basic level, more neighbors means more potential friends, teammates, co-volunteers for local causes I care about, etc.

Bottom line: I want a residential high-rise to be built next to the Whole Foods, because I think it will lower my rent, make my neighborhood more liveable, contribute to the fiscal health of the County, and help protect the environment by reducing sprawl. And, maybe more simply, I want my neighborhood to be more accessible to a broader set of people, and I want more neighbors.

Housing is a community benefit; adding more housing of any kind is a community benefit all its own. But beyond the inherent benefits from more residential high-rises at and near Courthouse West, an appropriate planning process could encourage significant additional "community benefits" through a site plan agreement, potentially including some combination of:

- On-site committed affordable housing
- Money for improving the Courthouse metro station
- Financial contributions for affordable housing off-site
- On-site trees, greenspace, plaza space
- Streetscape improvements on-site
- Financial contributions for greenspace off-site
- On-site office or classroom space for APS
- Financial contributions earmarked for APS capital projects and land acquisition to increase capacity serving either the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor or south Arlington
- Financial contributions to purchase or subsidize transit passes for either the building's residents, or low-income Arlingtonians elsewhere, or a mix of both

Even relatively modest amounts of any one of these could be very well worth the community engagement effort for a planning study. I would really like to see community members presented with a three-way choice between

- a proposal for a by-right building on this site,
- something close to the owner's current proposal with one package of community benefits, and
- a denser project than what's proposed (thus, more appropriate to the local context), with commensurately enhanced community benefits

If it turns out that going from ~12 stories to ~25 stories on this site could fund half a new park or a chunk of a new school, it would seem silly to me, and I believe to most other neighbors, not to prefer the third option.

With all that in mind, I urge you to vote to initiate a GLUP study for this parcel.

Thanks,

Josiah Stevenson  
 Member, Clarendon-Courthouse Civic Association  
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