

Sent: Wednesday, June 07, 2017 1:39 PM
To: JFAC <JFAC@arlingtonva.us>
Cc: Jennifer Fioretti <jfioretti@arlingtonva.us>
Subject: VOICE comments in response to JFAC feedback request

Dear Chair Brown, Vice Chair Greeley, and members of the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission,

We write on behalf of Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE), whose Arlington faith and educational institutions represent more than 3,000 households in the County, to comment on prospective uses for the Virginia Hospital Center and Buck properties.

We have elected this form of feedback, rather than using the online form, because our recommendations pertain less to the specific scenarios outlined and more to general use principles that we hope will be applied in consideration of these potential County-owned properties.

We were heartened to learn at the May 24th public engagement session that the JFAC has discussed the potential for co-location, not only of County facilities, but also of affordable housing with County facilities on County land. We urge you in every decision you take to consider seriously how affordable housing might be incorporated now or in the future on these properties and other current and potential County properties.

While the JFAC charter makes specific mention of capital facilities needs and capital improvement, it also encourages "big-picture, visionary thinking," which we believe must include consideration of co-locating affordable housing with County facilities on County property. Land is too scarce and expensive in our small county to address uses of County land only in the context of County facilities.

Affordable housing is a core value of the County, as reflected in the unanimously adopted Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP). Likewise, diversity and inclusion are core values of the County, as reflected in the County's vision. Yet, scarce land and rising property costs have combined to push out low- and moderate-income households and make affordable-housing development prohibitively expensive. Co-locating affordable housing on County land can help to significantly reduce costs.

Arlington and other localities have successful track records of co-locating affordable housing with public facilities. Among the examples: Arlington Mill and the fire station-affordable housing complex at Potomac Yard in Alexandria.

Arlington has a true housing affordability crisis. The stock of affordable housing continues to decline. The AHMP calls for 17.7 % of the housing stock to be affordable by 2040. In the early 2000's, approximately a quarter of the housing stock was affordable (to those making 60% and below of Area Median Income). By the time of the AHMP's approval, Arlington's affordable stock was down to 9%, and it has declined further to 8.4%.

For these reasons, the County must be innovative and creative and proactively seize any opportunities to develop affordable housing less expensively. VOICE sees the Virginia Hospital Center/Arlington County land exchange as such an opportunity. In addition, the AHMP calls for affordable housing to be geographically distributed throughout the County, with 2,500 units along Lee Highway. Acquisition of some or all of the VHC parcels there and co-location of affordable housing with a County facility could help to meet that need.

We recognize that the County Board ultimately is responsible for making the acquisition decision and that County staff have a concern about current leases on the Lee Highway properties. The JFAC could, however, posit scenarios for both the Lee Highway and Carlin Springs properties that could include co-location with affordable housing to enable the County Board to make a fully informed decision. Given the affordability crisis, the County must be willing to entertain arrangements that heretofore have not been considerations.

We note reports about concerns over whether there is sufficient land with the right configuration to accommodate co-location of affordable housing on the Carlin Springs property. We urge the JFAC not to rule it out but instead to recognize the potential that creative non-profit developers could partner with the County to make at least a mid-size project work.

Given the housing affordability crisis, we would be deeply concerned by an outcome in which none of these potential County-owned properties would accommodate affordable housing now or in the future. In your recommendations, please adapt the scenarios model to give County Board members a sense of how affordable housing could be accommodated so that they have a complete picture of how County land can be used to meet both County needs and values.

Thank you,

The VOICE Arlington Strategy Team:

Robert Buckman

Jacomina de Regt

Paul Douthit

Patricia Findikoglu

Marjorie Green

Norma Kacen

Karen Menichelli

Chuck Moran

Kathie Panfil

Nicole Spence-Goon

Nancy and John Veldhuis

Laura Weil