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EISENHOWER PARTNERSHIP

April 15, 2023

Alexandria City Council

Need for Pedestrian Safety Improvements on the West End of Eisenhower Avenue

The Eisenhower Partnership advocates for a future focused community built with economically vibrant, high-density, walkable neighborhoods that offer a strong sense of place.

Dear Members of Alexandria City Council,

We ask for your immediate action to implement a crosswalk and additional traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian safety on the West End of Eisenhower Avenue.

The 5000 – 5400 blocks of Eisenhower are now home to several thriving small businesses with a rapidly growing number of customers. Building Momentum, Scramble, SportRock, The Worx, and several more businesses enjoy the support of more than 1,000 visitors each day, often Alexandria residents and their families. However, customers and employees of these businesses are at serious risk of being hit by a car, due to the following dangerous factors:

- 1. Excessive speed:** Just before a driver headed East on Eisenhower reaches these businesses, the road has five lanes and a downhill incline. Despite a 35 mile per hour speed limit, any driver can easily reach beyond 45 miles per hour without realizing their speed. Multiple lanes encourage traffic to pass slower drivers. There are few signs, traffic signals, or police patrols.
- 2. Low Visibility:** Drivers in this area must also navigate a downhill curve with minimal street lighting. The headlights of oncoming uphill traffic blind eastbound drivers. The entrances to the businesses in question are hidden at the bottom of the curve.
- 3. Limited Parking:** These businesses share approximately 150 parking spaces for a growing customer base. This leads their customers, often with small children, to attempt to park across the street at the Victory Center (5001 Eisenhower Avenue), and the Van Dorn Metro.
- 4. Dangerous Conditions for Bicycles:** Last Fall, a cyclist was hit by a car in front of 5001 Eisenhower. They required hospitalization, but fortunately survived. As there is no bike trail West of the animal shelter and the sidewalks here are jagged and unlit, bicyclists in this area must ride in the street. Without intervention, more of them will be struck by cars.

Unfortunately, any additional residential and retail use of our area will augment these dangers. However, with your help we can continue to grow *while improving safety*.

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The Eisenhower Partnership asks City leadership to immediately undertake the following actions to mitigate these safety concerns:

- 1. Crosswalk:** Install a full movement crosswalk with flashing lights between 5310 Eisenhower Avenue and the City's Fire Station 210;
- 2. Bike Lane:** Create a protected bike lane by removing the dedicated turn lane in this section of Eisenhower;
- 3. Boost Existing Crossings:** Improve the pedestrian crossing between the townhouse community currently under construction at the Victory Center and the retail and multifamily buildings; and
- 4. Less Driving Space:** Reduce the number of lanes on the West End of Eisenhower by incorporating on-street parking, similar to Wheeler Avenue.

On Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria recently took similar successful measures to improve safety in an area transitioning from industrial to mixed-use commercial and residential. The City added on-street parking and bike lanes on both sides of the street. The dedicated pedestrian space has improved safety and reduced driving room has improved adherence to the speed limit. Similar steps are vital for Eisenhower Avenue to prevent a tragedy.

The Eisenhower West Small Area Plan calls for a similar transition from industrial to residential, retail, and event space uses. New residential units are already under construction within walking and biking distance of the Van Dorn Metro Station. Future rapid bus transit and the development of WestEnd Alexandria are certain to increase pedestrian activity.

With these developments, **our City's Complete Streets and Vision Zero initiatives** are about to be put to a far more difficult test. The West End of Eisenhower must become a more walkable space. A crosswalk and traffic calming are critical to ensuring safety for all users, especially bicyclists and pedestrians.

Finally, our city will also benefit greatly from a more walkable West end of Eisenhower. Improved pedestrian connectivity on the West end of Eisenhower will foster connections between communities, boost Metro ridership, and create opportunities for additional growth along the entirety of Eisenhower Avenue. Traffic calming here may also reduce cut-through traffic on a street that is feeding jams throughout Alexandria.

As you can see from our signatories, this idea is supported by civic organizations, businesses, and community advocates. We ask that you move expeditiously to help us protect every pedestrian and drive on the West end of Eisenhower Avenue.

EISENHOWER **PARTNERSHIP**

Sincerely,

The Board of the Eisenhower Partnership

Paul Friedman

Government Relations Chair and Representative of the West End Business Association

Laurence Smallman

Owner, Scramble

Reza Sanjideh

Owner, Advanced 2000

Allen Brooks

Chief Storytelling Officer, Building Momentum

Lillian Chao-Quinlan

Owner/Founder, SportRock Climbing Centers

John Skaggs

Owner, Primetime Baseball

Ryan Fowler

Owner, Boundary 5380 Eisenhower LLC

