

13
4-15-23

April 15, 2023

Mayor, City Council, and City Clerk
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

Subject: Montgomery Center Proposed Development, North Old Town, Alexandria, VA
– Follow-up Comments, Concerns, and Questions from the April 15 Hearing

Docket Item #13
Montgomery Center
300, 312 & 320 Montgomery St.
805, 807 & 809 N. Royal St.
806 & 816 N. Fairfax St.
MC Property LLC c/o Carr
City Centers Master Plan Amendment #2023-00001
Development Special Use Permit #2022-10021
Transportation Management Plan SUP#2023-00008

I am writing regarding the subject proposed development to provide supplemental information to my April 11, 2023, letter to the Mayor and City Council, and in response to what I heard during the City Council meeting on April 15. First, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak via Zoom to share my views.

Although the attorney for the developer and others asserted that that parking will not be an issue I continue to disagree. Their parking study was done during COVID and on a weekday, not post-COVID and at various days and times to get a true picture of the parking situation. Regardless of what the flawed study concluded, my personal experience is that I frequently must search for street parking near my Venue Condo and I often have to park some distance away. Have you polled the residents or Venue and other developments to find out what their actual experiences might be? Information about actual parking experiences would be better basis for evaluating the parking issue than models and opinions.

Also, the claim that there is no street parking around the Montgomery Center block now is blatantly false. The entire block lined with parked cars every day --- finding a spot to park to visit one of the existing businesses is very challenging, nearly impossible. I suggest that our elected officials drive or walk by this block during the week and observe that there are a dozen parking spaces on each of the 4 streets that surround the lot. Furthermore, the developer and some Council members that have read that people do not have 2 cars are wrong. I have 2 cars and other residents of the various condominium buildings do as well. People in the Venue development, also by Carr, are scrambling for parking and offering to buy spaces from neighbors. The "market" indicates that there is not enough parking now. As Councilman John Chapman put it, the City should not force other residents and developments to be the solution for the

parking problems that will be caused by nearly 400 new condominiums, many new businesses, and the many hundreds of cars that may show up for culture and arts center events. All of new and burdensome parking problems must be solved by accommodating the added cars on the Montgomery Center lot even if it means that the developer must build underground parking, and/or find dedicated parking spaces in existing garages.

I continue to question the need for the cultural and arts center. This is one of those ideas which may sound good to some people, but to residents it will be a nightmare in terms of crowding, noise, pollution, parking problems, trash, and vandalism. There are already hundreds of culture-and-arts venues and opportunities available to Old Town North residents. We do not need another such center. Furthermore, all the Council is doing here is transferring patrons and any economic benefits from one place to another within Alexandria. There will be no or minimal economic or social gain, and certainly not enough to offset the adverse effects of the Montgomery Center development and the loss of revenues that will be experienced by existing Old Town venues and businesses. The Vice Mayor seemed very excited about bringing crowds to North Old Town. Those of us that live here are vehemently opposed to this view. Most of us came here because of the quiet, low traffic, calm, clean, low-key, historic environment. We are invested in this location now and must suffer the adverse effects of poor development decisions should this project be approved and constructed.

The Developer spoke about trying to attract businesses and how Carr intends to try to meet standards and criteria in terms of the number and type of businesses. Our neighborhood already has all of the key businesses we want and need, including long term, family, and woman-owned businesses. Why dislocate these businesses and HOPE to provide new ones? I have spoken to the owners of these businesses as a new and loyal customer. They are not happy that they are being driven out. It really isn't about making a business decision as the developer's attorney so smugly stated during the hearing. These small business cannot afford to be homeless for the 2+ year construction period, and even if they could, they won't be able to afford to buy back in. Why not provide support, technical and in grants, to the existing businesses to upgrade their structures and mechanical systems to make them more efficient? As a resident of Venue, I will be without these or replacement businesses for over 2 years. This will be a hardship as I will have to travel farther, and by car, and cause me to add to traffic and CO2 emissions problems.

One Councilwoman stated that the existing buildings are old and not up to today's environmental standards. She is right. However, the extent to which these small businesses harm our environment is negligible. She did not cite any data or information pertaining to her opinion on this point. Even if the existing structures somehow are harmful (which they are not), any environmental benefit from a more environmentally-friendly building, the Montgomery Center, will be dwarfed by the adverse impacts caused by adding hundreds of residents and business employees, hundreds of cars and CO2 emission problems, and the stress on existing transportation, water, sewer,

electrical, and gas distribution systems. By its sheer size Montgomery Center will cause exponentially more environmental harm.

I continue to believe that the Montgomery Center will be significantly out of character with the historic Fabric of Old Town. The Vice Mayor mis-heard or mis-understood my comment on this point when I raised it on the Zoom audio connection. I never said that I thought that the existing buildings were listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Perhaps they could be, not for architectural reasons, but as an historic economic structural unit important to the community. That said, my point was that when one considers the entire Old Town area bounded by North Old Town, the Masonic Temple, the Potomac River and the interstate system (to the south), and all of the brick and timber historic buildings, the Montgomery Center is out of character, massive, unsightly, and a visual adverse effect. No amount of "softening" with trees, shrubs, and rounded curbs can mitigate the adverse effects of this development from an aesthetic or architectural perspective.

The last key issue I would like to bring to your attention is difficult for me to write. I have extensive experience (over 40 years) with government, development projects, and public involvement work. I have been, and still am, on the dias so to speak, and I try to remain neutral, considered, and factual when serving in a government or expert capacity. The Vice Mayor and Councilwoman Bagley were not only jubilant regarding this proposal, but had they not been on the dias as members of the Council I could easily have taken them for being employees of the developer. They recited the developer's views and talking points, casually dismissed public comments and concerns, and exhibited body language that indicated to me that they have decided to support this proposal regardless of the lack of data, information, and studies required to have a full understanding of its tremendous adverse effects. I appreciate the other Council members being circumspect, open to suggestions, and thoughtful.

I encourage the City Council and the Mayor to take step back and take a harder look at the developer's proposal, its questionable purpose and need, and likely adverse impacts. Poll or meet with Venue Condo residents in the top floor meeting area and ask for their thoughts on the Montgomery Center and about their issues and concerns. You also should ask those of us in Carr developments how we feel about having another Carr development in the area.

/S/

Chip Smith
925 N. Fairfax St., #304
Alexandria, VA 22314

From: Asif Faiz <afaiz29@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 15, 2023 10:00 AM
To: Justin Wilson; CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Cc: Mark McHugh
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL]23-00008713 - Open - COU-Contact Mayor, Vice Mayor and/or City Council -

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Justin. After reviewing the transportation report , I have the following additional comments:

1. The consultant study is based on standard proforma procedures for estimating trip generation and conducting the rest of the 4 step transport planning process. However, the results of any transport demand modeling exercise needs to be tempered with a ground reality check and evidence from similar redevelopments in North Arlington area, such as the Gables Apartment complex on 525 Montgomery St, with similar residential units and retail development.
2. The main results of the transport study , despite the conformity with transport planning practice , appear counterintuitive: a significant reduction (by almost half) of average daily traffic, an insignificant increase in peak hour trips (based on a 12 hr count on a Wednesday at the peak of Covid epidemic) , virtually no queueing at intersection legs, no perceptible impact on demand for on -street parking (which will be retained on all four streets), no potential conflicts from vehicle- bike- pedestrian interaction (especially at intersections), and no apparent road safety risks. These results defy credibility and common sense observations based on experience elsewhere, given that the redevelopment entails the provision of about 350 housing units, a 600 seat entertainment center, and ground floor retail space with about 50% of current coverage.
Clearly, the following study assumptions are neither tenable nor technically defensible:
 - a. that 30-40 percent of trips generated by the redevelopment will be by non-automobile modes- this is based on the existing bus transit availability and location of bus stops. (I use the free public bus service- and I am often the only rider on the bus and the bus is more than half empty even during peak hours).
 - b. The same trip generation factor is used for retail space (with or without redevelopment)and for the 600-seat entertainment center. The estimated trips related to the entertainment center could easily generate a secondary traffic peak preceding and/or after the entertainment events. It is not clear how these traffic peaks will interact with pedestrian flows and the estimated queue lengths at the stop signs.
 - c. The retail space after redevelopment will have the same characteristics as the current use.
 - d. The left -turning vehicles exiting the garage on to Royal St will have little conflict with the through traffic headed north between the stop signs.
 - e. That a parking garage with 350 spaces will be sufficient for the parking needs of the residents of 350 housing units and the 600-seat entertainment center.
 - f. That the delivery and other commercial vehicles will use the same exit/entrance as the private cars.
 - g. That the current width of pedestrian walkways and crosswalks (which should be raised) is sufficient to cater to the increased pedestrian traffic.

These observations are submitted for consideration at the Council Meeting today.

Kind regards,

Asif Faiz, Ph.D, PE, F.ASCE, F.IEP
Faiz and Associates, LLC
Arlington VA, USA
EMail: afaiz29@gmail.com,
Phone: 1-703-965-2545

On Wed, Apr 5, 2023 at 12:18 PM Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov> wrote:
Dr. Faiz,

Thanks for the note and your thoughts on this project. I'm sorry you cannot join us at our public hearing. We do welcome testimony virtually, if you are interested in that option.

I have attached the staff report for this project from the Planning Commission hearing, which includes the full detail on the transportation study, traffic, parking, etc.

Let me know if you have any follow-up questions.

Have a good week.

Justin M. Wilson, Mayor
Alexandria City Council
Office: 703.746.4500
Home: 703.299.1576
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov

From: noreply@salesforce.com <noreply@salesforce.com> on behalf of Alex311 <alex311@alexandriava.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 11:31 AM

To: Angeline Farri <angeline.farri@alexandriava.gov>; Kimberly Welch <Kimberly.Welch@alexandriava.gov>; Amy Jackson <Amy.Jackson@alexandriava.gov>; John Chapman <john.taylor.chapman@alexandriava.gov>; Kirk McPike <kirk.mcpike@alexandriava.gov>; harold.alexander@alexandriava.gov <harold.alexander@alexandriava.gov>; Melissa Douglas <melissa.douglas@alexandriava.gov>; Karl Bach <karl.bach@alexandriava.gov>; Sabrina Encarnacion <sabrina.encarnacion@alexandriava.gov>; Jamye Young <jamye.young@alexandriava.gov>; Mark McHugh <mark.mchugh@alexandriava.gov>; Suzanne Derr <suzanne.derr@alexandriava.gov>; CRM Administrator <CRM.Administrator@alexandriava.gov>; Jahaira Patterson <jahaira.patterson@alexandriava.gov>; Emerita C. Valentin <Emerita.Valentin@alexandriava.gov>; Tracy Thompson <tracy.thompson@alexandriava.gov>; Tenesia Wells <Tenesia.Wells@alexandriava.gov>; Rocio Delgado <Rocio.Delgado@alexandriava.gov>; Kay Mendenhall <Kay.Mendenhall@alexandriava.gov>; Stephanie Cruz <Stephanie.Cruz2@alexandriava.gov>; brittany.williams@alexandriava.gov <brittany.williams@alexandriava.gov>; Regina Benavides <regina.benavides@alexandriava.gov>; Sarah Bagley <sarah.bagley@alexandriava.gov>; Sharon Pitts <sharon.pitts@alexandriava.gov>; Alyia Gaskins <alyia.gaskins@alexandriava.gov>; Canek Aguirre <Canek.Aguirre@alexandriava.gov>; Cindy Jenkins <Cindy.Jenkins@alexandriava.gov>; lashawn.timmons@alexandriava.gov <lashawn.timmons@alexandriava.gov>; Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>; Tiffany Fuller <tiffany.fuller@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]23-00008713 - Open - COU-Contact Mayor, Vice Mayor and/or City Council -

COU-Contact Mayor, Vice Mayor and/or City Council (23-00008713) service request has been created, updated, and/or requires your attention.

Service Request Type:	COU-Contact Mayor, Vice Mayor and/or City Council	Status:	Open
Service Request Number:	23-00008713	Created By:	Customer Site Guest User
Priority:	Standard	SLA Detail:	5 Business Days
Method Received:	Mobile	Submitted On:	4/5/2023 11:29 AM
Location:		Overdue On:	4/12/2023 11:29 AM
Description:	<p>Dear Alexandria City Council members. Re: Montgomery Center Redevelopment - Concerns/Questions for City Council Hearing 15 April 2023 I am currently overseas and may not be able to attend the hearing on April 15. The proposed Montgomery Center Redevelopment is likely to give rise to significant environmental and livability concerns, as discussed below. Increased Traffic Flow and Congestion. The proposed multiuse redevelopment (with a live entertainment center with a 600-seat capacity) could easily add 1500-2000 vehicles per hour during morning/evening peaks to the traffic flow on the adjacent streets . Has a new traffic circulation plan been developed (for both the construction and post-construction periods) for the four directly impacted streets and the wider North Arlington area? Environmental Impact What will be the environmental impact (noise, air pollution, traffic congestion, community disruption) of the proposed redevelopment and has an environmental impact assessment been conducted with community participation? Is this EIA available for public review? Noise is a major concern already in North Alexandria on account of National Airport operations. What will be the incremental noise impact during and after the construction period? Have any traffic calming /noise mitigation measures been considered? Parking Demand Has a parking demand study been carried out? And how will the additional parking demand be accomodated? All the incremental parking requirements, especially for the entertainment center must be met through off-street garage parking preferably provided within the redevelopment area. Pedestrian and Micromobility Needs How will pedestrian and other mobility modes (bikes, scooters etc) be accomodated? The existing sidewalks are much too narrow. Will there be dedicated bike lanes. Thank you in advance for your consideration, Sincerely, Dr. Asif Faiz, Ph.D, P.E., F. ASCE. Transport Planner/Engineer Resident/Owner Venue Condominium #905 N. Fairfax St. Alexandria VA , 22314. Ph: 703 965 2545</p>		

Contact Information:

Name:	Asif Faiz	Primary Phone:	+1 (703) 965-2545
Email:	afaiz29@gmail.com	Social Persona:	

Service Questions:

Question	Answer
Which Council Member would you like to contact?	All Members
What is the nature of your request?	Meeting or Event Invites
Is your request related to the upcoming public hearing or Council meeting?	Yes

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CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Guidelines for Honest Civic Discourse for those Participating in Meetings in the Council Chamber

Members of the Alexandria community, its elected officials and City staff place a high value on constructive and thoughtful debate on public issues. To this end, all who participate in meetings in the Chamber, including public officials, staff and members of the community, are expected to observe the following guidelines.

1. Treat Everyone with Respect and Courtesy
2. Do Your Homework – Be Prepared and Be Familiar with the Docket
3. Express Your Ideas and Opinions in an Open and Helpful Manner
4. Be Respectful of Others' Time by Being Clear and Concise in Your Comments and/or Questions
5. Demonstrate Honesty and Integrity in Your Comments and Actions
6. Focus on the Issues Before the Decision Making Body – Avoid Personalizing Issues
7. Listen and Let Others Express their Ideas and Opinions
8. If a Decision is Made with which You Do Not Concur, Agree to Disagree and/or Use Appropriate Means of Civil and Civic Recourse, and Move On

Adopted by the Alexandria City Council on October 12, 2004.



William D. Euille, Mayor

SPEAKER'S FORM

DOCKET ITEM NO. 13

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND GIVE IT TO THE CITY CLERK
BEFORE YOU SPEAK ON A DOCKET ITEM

PLEASE ANNOUNCE THE INFORMATION SPECIFIED BELOW PRIOR TO SPEAKING.

1. NAME: Kenneth Ware
2. ADDRESS: 700 N. Fairway Street, Suite 600, Alex VA
- TELEPHONE NO. 203 477 3129 E-MAIL ADDRESS: KWare@Waregill.com
3. WHOM DO YOU REPRESENT, IF OTHER THAN YOURSELF? Applicant
4. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE ITEM?
FOR: X AGAINST: _____ OTHER: _____
5. NATURE OF YOUR INTEREST IN ITEM (PROPERTY OWNER, ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST, CIVIC INTEREST, ETC.):
Attorney
6. ARE YOU RECEIVING COMPENSATION FOR THIS APPEARANCE BEFORE COUNCIL?
YES X NO _____

This form shall be kept as a part of the permanent record in those instances where financial interest or compensation is indicated by the speaker.

A maximum of three minutes will be allowed for your presentation, except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard on a docket item shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation. If you have a prepared statement, please leave a copy with the Clerk.

Additional time not to exceed 15 minutes may be obtained with the consent of the majority of the council present; provided notice requesting additional time with reasons stated is filed with the City Clerk in writing before 5:00 p.m. of the day preceding the meeting.

The public normally may speak on docket items only at public hearing meetings, and not at regular legislative meetings. Public hearing meetings are usually held on the Saturday following the second Tuesday in each month; regular legislative meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays in each month. The rule with respect to when a person may speak to a docket item at a legislative meeting can be waived by a majority vote of council members present but such a waiver is not normal practice. When a speaker is recognized, the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply. If an item is docketed *for public hearing* at a regular legislative meeting, the public may speak to that item, and the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply.

In addition, the public may speak on matters which are not on the docket during the Public Discussion Period at public hearing meetings. The mayor may grant permission to a person, who is unable to participate in public discussion at a public hearing meeting for medical, religious, family emergency or other similarly substantial reasons, to speak at a regular legislative meeting. When such permission is granted, the rules of procedures for public discussion at public hearing meetings shall apply.

Guidelines for the Public Discussion Period

(a) All speaker request forms for the public discussion period must be submitted by the time the item is called by the city clerk.

(b) No speaker will be allowed more than three minutes; except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard during the public discussion period shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association.