



H. Stewart Dunn, Jr. Acting Planning Commission Chair  
Planning Commission  
301 King Street #2100  
Alexandria, VA 22305

Via email

Dear Mr. Dunn,

Concerning the proposed extension of the various permits for the redevelopment of the Mt. Vernon Village Center, Tenants and Workers United is deeply troubled by the recommended three year extension of the approved plans for the redevelopment of the Arlandria Shopping Center / Mt. Vernon Village Center. An extension of three years offers the potential of a continuation of the past four years which has turned the heretofore neighborhood hub into a half vacant eyesore. This plan was originally approved over 4 years ago. At the time our organization and many others from the surrounding community requested a delay of consideration in order to more fully engage the surrounding areas Latino tenants. We were told at the time that development was imminent and sufficient outreach had been made to area residents. Four years later, our organization received formal notice in late April. As far as I know there has not been a general Spanish language summary widely shared with area residents. Lessons were not learned from the deeply flawed process 4 years ago. Democracy and inclusion have been sacrificed for the expediency of the developer. This has resulted in a deeply flawed project. Four years ago we criticized many of the project details including the high density, parking and traffic concerns and even the difficulty of fire vehicle access to the site. We stand by that critique. For the purpose of this extension there are three areas of concern:

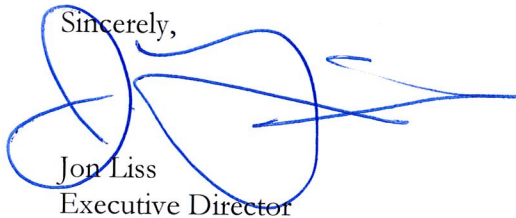
- 1) The current soccer / basketball court in Four Mile Park may be utilized by the private developer as a 'staging' area for project construction. Currently the court is heavily used year-round. Please clarify or confirm that the current mini-soccer park will not be utilized as a staging area for the construction project until after an alternative court is built nearby. Additionally, in exchange for the use of the public land the developer should pay market rental rates for the land. Given the area's high population density and the relative absence of public space it is important that the largely Latino park-users are not denied access to public recreation.
- 2) The public art should be built in a location where the public (not just the properties tenants) can benefit. Locating this art project in the middle of the apartments – especially if there is no general public access- is an inappropriate use of 'public' funds. It creates an automatic division between the majority of Arlandria residents and the residents of the property. The street / sidewalks in the middle of the project should permit public access to the park is open. This development should not further limit Latino and low-income tenants' access to the park.
- 3) Twenty-eight units of housing for families earning 60% of the Area's Median Income (AMI) is woefully inadequate for community need and a small concession for development plans that have (over two steps) doubled the size of permissible development. We urge that 10% of the units should be affordable to families earning between 40% and 60% of the AMI. All 48 of these proposed units should have either two or three-bedrooms. Matching community needs for affordability and larger-sized apartments should be taken into consideration as this extension is

considered. What unit mix is designated for affordable is too central of a detail to live to post-vote discussion.

TWU strongly urges that the Planning Commission and the City Council not rush to rubber stamp this renewal. In addition to addressing the concerns noted above we strongly urge that only a one year extension be considered. For four years we have suffered as the developer has kept the property half vacant and as a public eyesore. Giving a full three-year extension is an invitation to ongoing delays as the developers wait for the right conditions to maximize their profit. In whatever plan is approved please limit approval to a one -year period. This will actively force the developers to keep community concerns in account and move aggressively to complete the redevelopment.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Liss", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Liss  
Executive Director

Cc: Mayor and Council