



**DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

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PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

May 25, 2017

TO: City of Alexandria Planning Commission

Re: North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan

Dear Commissioners:

I write on behalf of the Park and Recreation Commission in support of the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan.

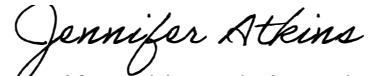
The Commission is pleased that this updated plan provides for nine acres of open space and appreciates the work of the staff, the developer, and the advisory commission in paying attention to the value that open space provides in creating great quality of life for all. The Commission wishes to highlight the following points as you consider the plan:

- **Connectivity is Key.** The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan provides both internal connectivity of open space within the development and external connectivity of open space with the existing Alexandria open space network and the existing Arlington County open space network. Connected networks of open space are key to creating and maintaining walkable, sustainable communities. Apparently, there were some comments from the dais at a City Council hearing indicating a desire for less connectivity. The Park and Recreation Commission emphatically opposes such a change and has heard no public comment in support of such a change. We must continue to strive for a true citywide network of connected open spaces.
- **Active Open Space Is Good.** The Commission reiterates that activating open spaces where people can come together is critical to a thriving and strong community. As development comes to fruition under this plan, we will continue to encourage uses such as ping pong tables, chess/checkers tables, bocce courts and other similar things that draw people to open spaces. Such uses compliment surrounding retail uses by activating the entire area.
- **Open Space Should Remain Open Space.** The Commission understands that comments from the dais at City Council suggested removing open space from the plan in order to add more affordable housing. The Commission adamantly opposes such a course of action. Dense urban environments such as North Potomac Yard require significant open space to serve the needs of residents (and workers). Adding more residents would arguably require more, not less, open

space. There are other ways to encourage the addition of affordable housing that are outlined in the plan.

- **The Pump Station Should Be A Useful Feature.** The Commission strongly urges that the pump station included in the plan be constructed in a way that it becomes a usable park feature. Too often the city and developers lack creativity in creating these needed structures and the result is a waste of potentially usable (or at least more attractive) space. We encourage forward and creative thinking – like that shown with the athletic field above the Alexandria Renew plant or that shown in illustrative drawings presented by staff. We think the same applies to BMP “ponds” like the one just to the south of the North Potomac Yard area which are often simply large holes full of water when they could be designed better to add to park features.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Atkins".

Jennifer Atkins, Chair, on behalf of
the Park and Recreation Commission