



CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HOUSING

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Holly Bray,
Chairman

September 8, 2011

Hon. Christopher Zimmerman, Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Virginia Square Towers Site Plan
Item #58 on the County Board agenda for September 17, 2011

Dear Mr. Zimmerman:

At its September 1, 2011 public hearing, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing considered the affordable housing program for the Virginia Square Towers Site Plan.

The Commission advises the County Board to accept the site plan with the condition of providing six on-site committed affordable units for a term of 30 years as part of the bonus density for affordable housing.

The Commission did not have a quorum at the time of its deliberation. The Commission vote on the motion was 5-0. Members in favor are Ms. Bray, Ms. Falvey, Ms. Hogan, Mr. Loyer and Mr. Withers.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Holly Bray".

Holly Bray
Chairman



ARLINGTON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 900, Arlington, VA 22201
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September 13, 2011

Mr. Christopher Zimmerman, Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Site Plan No. 416, Virginia Square Towers, and related ordinance to vacate a 10 foot alley within the site covered by the site plan

Dear Chairman Zimmerman:

I am writing to express the views of the Transportation Commission with regard to the County Manager's recommendation to (1) approve Site Plan No. 416 relating to Virginia Square Towers, and (2) enact an ordinance providing for the vacation of a 10-foot alley running through the site from Wilson Boulevard to Fairfax Drive.

The Transportation Commission, by a vote of 6-0, approved a motion to recommend that the County Board (1) approve Site Plan No. 416 subject to the following changes, and (2) enact an ordinance providing for the vacation of the 10-foot alley running through the site from Wilson Boulevard to Fairfax Drive:

(1) that the applicant agrees to unbundle the cost of parking from apartment rent (the applicant states that it plans to do this but does not want to be required to do it);

(2) that the applicant agrees to pay for the multiuse parking meters (as recommended by the Manager);

(3) that the site plan conditions be revised to clearly define the ownership and operation of the water features (the concern is that the County may be required to pick up part of the cost or the developer will not make necessary repairs and they will become inoperable);

(4) that provision be made for future reexamination of the nubs at the corner of N. Lincoln Street and Fairfax Drive for the purpose of considering whether to modify the nub size should the nubs be found to impede traffic flow to an unacceptable degree.

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(5) that the language of the following site plan conditions be modified:

(a) condition #6, paragraph 3, to clarify that the lighting plan should be for the period that is 60 days from approval of the site plan conditions to completion of the project, and that the lighting be in accordance with a plan approved by the County Manager. The modified wording would be in the first sentence of the paragraph. The sentence beginning "The developer may do this", and the sentence that follows would be deleted. The rest of the paragraph would stay the same. (The purpose of the change is to expand the period of coverage to include the period during which the site is being vacated before construction, and also to encourage the applicant and staff to work out a plan tailored to the specific site.)

(b) condition #11, paragraph 1, second line after "community", add the following: ", including the Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association, the Ashton Heights Civic Association, the Virginia Square Condominiums, George Mason University, and the FDIC," .

(c) condition #66, outdoor cafes, to clarify that the condition cover cafe seating both in the public right of way and behind the public right of way.

The Commission heard this item at its meeting on September 1, 2011. The Commission received a presentation from the applicant and from staff. There was one public speaker, Carl Saperstein, a resident of the Virginia Square Condominium, who expressed concern about the impact that placement of the parking garage entrance and loading dock would have on the intersection of North Lincoln Street and Fairfax Drive, a non-signalized intersection, particularly if nubs are placed at the crosswalk to facilitate pedestrian crossings. Present at the meeting and voting were Commissioners Gearhart, Armbruster, Everline, Hubbard, Serie, and Torma.

In discussion, Commissioners focused on the street and sidewalk conditions around the site. It was noted that the Virginia Square Sector Plan calls for placement of the garage entrances and loading docks on North Lincoln Street, apparently because Kansas is at a higher elevation than Lincoln, and signalized intersections at Fairfax and Kansas and Wilson and Kansas, apparently to avoid signals at three consecutive intersections (signals already exist at Monroe and Nelson to the west). It was also noted that the new North 9th Street would facilitate access to the new signals on Kansas for drivers who need to make left turns at the Kansas intersections at Fairfax and Wilson. The applicant provided assurances that the pavers to be used on the new block of 9th Street would be sufficiently smooth to comfortably accommodate pedestrians, baby strollers, and bicycles. There was some discussion of the proposed flex space on the Wilson frontage of the south building; several Commissioners expressed the view that the applicant's willingness to market the space for retail and service commercial for up to 18 months before using it for residential was a reasonable compromise.

With regard to the proposed modification of the construction phase lighting requirement in site plan condition #6, it was noted that existing buildings often furnish much of the lighting for a sidewalk and street, and that as a site is gradually readied for construction, much of this lighting is disconnected, resulting in dark streets and unsafe sidewalks. The Commission viewed it as important for safety reasons, for both pedestrians and drivers, that adequate street and sidewalk illumination be required throughout the pre-construction and construction phases and until final lighting is in place. The Commission viewed a plan worked out between the applicant and staff and tailored to the needs of the site as the best way to address the problem.

With regard to condition #61, outdoor cafes, the Commission viewed what happens behind the right-of-way in the case of an outdoor café as often just as important as what happens in the right-of-way, in that noise and other impact can affect neighboring residents and businesses.

I would be glad to answer any questions (703-522-2276).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Gearhart". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Bill Gearhart
Chairman

14 September 2011

Re: Virginia Square Towers Proposal

Dear Board Members

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on applications SP#416 and Z-2552-11-1, the construction of Virginia Square Towers, which you are to consider at your meeting on 17 September 2011.

As a resident of the Virginia Square neighborhood, I am dismayed by the current development plans. I believe that the project as now proposed by Dittmar is larger than the area can and should accommodate. It would impact the neighborhood negatively in several ways. **Contrary to the Planning Commission report issued to the Board (page 2, last paragraph), the current development proposal will be harmful or detrimental to the property or improvements of the neighborhood. As the report cites continued opposition to and concern about the project by neighborhood residents, I urge the Board to heed our voices as we know the neighborhood more intimately than any Planning Commission member.**

Primary among my concerns is the ability of North Lincoln Street to serve as the service access for what would be, if the current Dittmar proposal is realized, more than 800 residential units. Any neighborhood resident can tell you that, despite the studies put forward by Dittmar, North Lincoln Street would be overburdened by the daily traffic engendered by the high-density occupancy that would result from the construction of Virginia Square Towers as now envisioned. I foresee safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists (I do not own a car and am acutely aware of the advantages generally afforded drivers already), especially when no traffic light is planned for the intersections of North Lincoln with Fairfax Drive or Wilson Boulevard. Perversely, a traffic light, I am told, is planned for at least one intersection with North Kansas Street, although that street is not now envisioned as the service street. It is correct to put the traffic light at Kansas Street, but the traffic light needs to be located where there will be additional traffic. Kansas Street should, therefore, serve as the service street for Virginia Square Towers.

A second, more general concern about this project is its visual impact on my neighborhood. Living between Clarendon and Ballston, I see almost daily the attraction of the former over the latter. Clarendon has become a hub of activity, even alluring my friends from DC and Maryland for an evening out. Given the general bias of those north of the Potomac against coming south, this is an achievement in itself. Ballston, on the other hand, features several blocks of high-rise, cement-block eyesores. So much of the area bounded by Fairfax, Wilson, Pollard and Stuart Streets is just ugly. It more resembles the urban jungles in many US cities that repulse people looking to combine city life with pleasant surroundings. That combination is possible; it exists in Clarendon, a generally low-rise neighborhood in which walking, shopping and dining are enjoyable experiences. None of that describes Ballston.

Please do not turn Virginia Square into another Ballston when it could be an extension of Clarendon.

In that vein, let me also express my support for the continuation of the pedestrian alley that exists between Monroe and Lincoln Streets. That alley offers added safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and, if extended, would be a pleasant thoroughfare in an urban environment.

I do not oppose development of Virginia Square. On the contrary, I believe that thoughtful development could enhance the area significantly. As a resident, I urge the Planning Commission to alter Dittmar's plans in three ways:

- 1.) Move the service entrances for Virginia Square Towers to North Kansas Street, which can more easily handle increased traffic.
- 2.) Reduce the size of Virginia Square Towers. The original plan had 500 units. The current plan has 534 units. Both numbers are too high. A nine-story height would reduce the number of units to a manageable size and allow the new structures to conform with the existing buildings on the northeast corners of Wilson and North Monroe, and Wilson and North Kansas.
- 3.) Hold to plans to extend eastward the pedestrian alley that now exists between Monroe and Lincoln Streets.

I believe these steps would permit the Virginia Square neighborhood to develop further without creating an anonymous, sterile environment that would be a detriment to me, my neighbors and, ultimately, Arlington County.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Andrew S Cohen
901 North Monroe Street, Apt 1303
Arlington, VA 22201
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andysindc@hotmail.com

FA

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September 9, 2011

VIA: USPS and Email: czimmerman@arlingtonva.us

Chairman Chris Zimmerman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Virginia Square Towers, Rezoning and Site Plan # 416

Dear Chairman Zimmerman:

As we have worked through the rezoning and site plan approval process, it has come to our attention that certain members of our community are strong advocates for "zero threshold showers" in multifamily residential units which are defined in federal regulations as "Roll-In Showers". There is no federal or local governing legislation or local governing policies to require Roll-In Showers but we have considered installing some.

In an effort to meet the perceived need of this type of shower design, we are willing to develop three (3) Roll-In Showers in three (3) units in Virginia Square Towers but are not willing to submit this offer as a site plan condition. We are not aware of the efficacy of the request and do not desire this offer to become an expectation in other residential developments. There are also maintenance issues related to this type of shower but we are willing to install them in an effort to meet the perceived need.

We offer to construct the Roll-In Showers in three (3), two-bedroom/two-bathroom units, each unit having one (1) Roll-In Shower. It is our recommendation that two (2) of the units be Affordable Dwelling Units and the other unit a market rate unit. We understand this is the unit type and price point desired by those in the community who are advocating this type of shower design.

We will strive to make known the availability of Roll-In Showers to those in our community who are advocating the design. That will include availability after original occupants vacate the premises. We will also strive to communicate availability within our portfolio of apartment communities, to include Randolph Towers which also has three (3) Roll-In Shower apartments.

We hope this is well received as we strive to meet the needs of our community.

Sincerely,


C. A. Brigham
DITTMAR COMPANY

cc: Nan Terpak Walsh
Peter Schulz via email: pschulz@arlingtonva.us
Rosemary Ciotti via email: rosemary.ciotti@gmail.com

managed/VA SQ TOWERS/Development/Site Plan/Letter Zimmerman Roll-In Showers 9-9-11

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 489, Dunn Loring, VA 22027-0489

HAR/CB

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