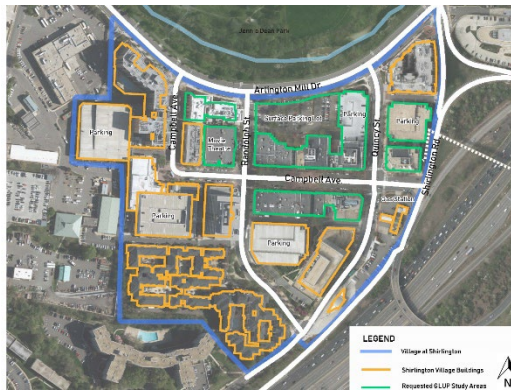


SCA comments on the Special Land Use Study for Shirlington

Ellie McCann | July 18, 2020



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SCA presentation to County Board on Shirlington Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study Plus, July 18, 2020:

“Madam Chair, Board members, I'm Ellie McCann. I have a degree in city and regional planning, and have worked as an environmental planner in the federal government for 40 years. Today I am representing the Shirlington Civic Association on the Shirlington Special GLUP Study. I have participated in the LRPC process, and also served as Alternate for the SCA in the recent 4 Mile Run Valley Initiative planning process.

We want to thank everyone who has contributed to this effort to shape the future of Shirlington. The Village at Shirlington is about 70 years old. The last refreshing of the historic section along Campbell Avenue was about 30 years ago. The expansion of Shirlington that created the newer section was about 15 years ago. Shirlington now needs immediate upgrading and reinvestment to remain a competitive and attractive commercial area. This is critical to what we are discussing today. What matters most to us is to be able to revitalize the Village while also maintaining the small-town character of Campbell Avenue, with its small shops, entertainment venues, extensive tree canopy and open spaces. We would also welcome plans to restore the limestone facades along Campbell Avenue. These beneficial aspects should be maintained and are reflected in the 22 principles provided in the report. We thank staff for their careful effort in this regard.

We strongly support the proposed change in zoning for the Village from Low to Medium Office-Apartment-Hotel. We have waited for 15 years without an increase in density. We do not, however, want to add new density on the historic portion of Campbell Avenue.

We are thrilled to learn that Federal Realty wants to build on its parking lot to provide senior independent living. It would be a win-win-win for the Village - low

traffic impact, more lunch customers in restaurants, and a steady stream of visitors and family. Senior independent living also would NOT put any pressure on local schools. We are greatly concerned that the proposed height limit for the FRIT parking lot parcel will unnecessarily preclude that near-term project from going forward.

We also have concerns about height limits on other parcels. They are in some cases too restrictive, in others illogical. We do not understand why extra heights are proposed for all the parking garages, since to tear down those garages would be cost prohibitive. Only limited height is being allowed for the county building that houses Signature Theater, when we already know that Signature wants to expand its space. The LRPC never got a chance to review the staff's preferred option for parcel-by-parcel heights throughout Shirlington.

The GLUP plan recommends the development of a uniform parking management plan and an electronic real-time parking system to maximize usage of the existing parking garages. The SCA strongly supports this specific recommendation, and the need for the county to address this issue in the short term. Better access to existing garage parking spaces continues to be THE top complaint of our residents and visitors.

Some have said that a new building on the parking lot will create an uninviting visual "wall." This is a truly RIDICULOUS assertion! The view of Shirlington from Jennie Dean Park, or from the more distant residential neighborhood on the north side of the park, will NOT change substantially by the addition of a new building on the parking lot (which currently is not especially attractive). We have provided you with photographs to document this fact. I live on S Arlington Mill Drive. If the FRIT proposal is implemented, it will become an even more beautiful, walkable residential boulevard, along a gorgeous park with a new, inviting gateway welcoming everyone in to experience the Village.

To conclude, the Special GLUP Plus is actually two plans in one document. First, it provides a long-range vision. Buried inside it, however, is a consequential short-term plan. What the Board decides today will determine if and when Shirlington gets the reinvestment it needs to stay competitive and attractive. We urge you to proceed carefully and allow some flexibility in building heights for a more thorough discussion of immediate needs and specific proposals during the PDSP amendment and Site Plan process.

Thank you."