



SCA Background Comments
Pertinent to
Shirlington Special GLUP Plus Vision & Principles
February 3, 2020

These comments clarify Shirlington Community Association (SCA) views on key issues that have been discussed at the LRPC. Most of the specifics will be taken up during the Site Plan review and are intended here primarily as background guidance for the Special GLUP Plus vision and principles. They reflect important local community experience. We hope that our input will help achieve the best possible, most livable, cost-effective design outcomes.

A. Consistency of Design Implementation Across the Entire Village Area

The Principles refer to the entire area chosen for the Special GLUP, not just to the part of it owned by Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT). Please state this clearly in the Principles and any amendments to the Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) #106 for the Village at Shirlington; it has implications for who pays for what.

There needs to be consistency of design implementation throughout the entire Village area. While much of the Village at Shirlington belongs to a single commercial property owner, other properties in the Village are owned by other entities and the County. If, for example, an electronic parking wayfinding system, new streetlights, trash receptacles, etc., are desired for design and technical reasons, costs may need to be shared. Additionally, certain improvements such as transit are the responsibility of the County and other agencies, not the property owners.

B. Increased Density Means Different Things to Different People

Many nearby residents and visitors, when asked, equate the idea of increased density with more difficult parking and more traffic in the Village, and therefore increased threats to pedestrian (and bicycle) safety. We must address these concerns from our neighbors head-on.

C. Accessible, Convenient Parking Improvements are Essential to Community Acceptance

This Special GLUP plan will face considerable community resistance from outside and inside the Shirlington neighborhood area if the County does not guarantee, from the start, the provision of a state-of-the-art parking wayfinding system with consistent garage signage integrating all five garages that offer public parking. The County must also commit to amend the PDSP conditions for shared use of all these garages. Since the Village doesn't have a Metro station, we will always need to support and accommodate automobiles including for our workforce.

We are fortunate to have existing parking structures and parking spaces, but the public cannot easily access these shared spaces. Our merchants, Signature Theatre and the SCA have complained for years that it's outrageous and damaging to our reputation that visitors' cars are towed when there are so many unused parking spaces. This problem has persisted for years, and is a key lesson learned from Shirlington Phase II planning.

D. Safety

Increased traffic calming and pedestrian safety, with the best possible safety technology and design, is important if density increases. In particular, the Village needs safer pedestrian crossings on South Arlington Mill Drive (SAMD), Shirlington Road, Randolph Street, and S. Quincy Street.

Another safety issue is that some large trucks and County vehicles come through the village and have a difficult time navigating the narrow streets. They are dangerous and damage the median landscaping and curbs. Delivery trucks to retail are generally medium to small size. Harris Teeter deliveries come to their loading bay in the UDR building at the edge of the Village and have a dedicated exit. Randolph and S Quincy Streets can accommodate large trucks; Campbell was specifically designed as a village street.

E. “Connectivity” to “other neighborhoods” = 4MRV

The GLUP Principles need only to refer to implementation of the comprehensive, increased neighborhood connectivity to Green Valley and Douglas Park already approved in the Four Mile Run Valley Plan and other plans. S. Walter Reed Bridge project is completed; Shirlington Road Bridge including a new pedestrian-bike footbridge is in planning. New Jennie Dean Park paths and lighting, and S. Nelson Street sidewalk and lighting are all planned or underway. These are just examples. The Park Shirlington site process will address South 31st Street up to Fairlington. There is no need for any other statement in the Shirlington GLUP Principles.

F. Footbridge into Park Areas

The ONLY additional connectivity that the SCA has raised is an additional pedestrian bridge into the new park areas, most likely midway between Shirlington Road bridge and the Nelson Street footbridge. This is permissible under the 4MRV plan and can be accommodated/added when Shirlington Park is improved. This has been discussed all through the 4MRV process and we are glad to explain our thinking at the appropriate time, when we know more about the proposed design of the site along SAMD and the new gateway to the Village.

G. Increased Density & S. Arlington Mill Drive (SAMD) Traffic Flow

SAMD is a busy minor arterial road with an estimated 30,000 vehicles a day, including public buses, County school buses and heavy trucks from the Trades Center, as well as cars and trucks passing by the Village to enter and exit I-395. This means that pedestrian and vehicle access to new buildings for Amazon delivery, postal vehicles, rideshares, moving vans, etc., needs to be from other streets, not from SAMD. Let’s remember that these are practical and safety reasons why the IO Piazza apartments and the Shirlington Village Condominium were not allowed to have main entrances facing SAMD.

H. “Views”

- **From Shirlington Village across SAMD to the park:** There is no view of the park from the center of the Village due to topography and existing buildings. There is only a limited view of the park from the surface parking lot on SAMD. Glad to walk the site and show anyone this.
- **From residences in 4MRV across the valley to the Village at Shirlington:** Outside of the Village, the closest residences in this direction are 0.5 miles away, separated by Shirlington Park, the stream, Jennie Dean Park, the W&OD Bike Trail, and two major, multi-lane roads.

The existing Village skyline is already high as seen from residences on the north side of 4MR Valley, due to the existing 13- and 11-story buildings along SAMD as well as The Citizen (7-story) apartments on a hill at the rear of the Village as well as existing 10-story officed buildings. Shirlington House, another high-rise residential building located on a hill behind The Citizen, also adds to the skyline of the Village as seen from the park and across the valley. Increased density in the Village, including on SAMD, will not materially change the existing view of the skyline. We are glad to supply photographs or visit the site.

I. Plaza and Existing Retail Facing the Proposed Site (Surface Parking Lot)

Service businesses are increasingly important to attract visitors to the Village as well as being essential to local residents. Let's ensure the continued vitality of businesses such as UPS, Dogma, and Shirlington Animal Hospital, with enhanced signage/visibility, short-term parking and/or drop-off, and a small, appropriate pet relief area – not to mention seating and landscaping. This is why we feel an interior plaza is a priority for the design of this lower level of the Village but we are open to the developer's proposals that could meet these needs.

J. "Active Night Life" Areas

Our merchants depend on active night-time activities in the Village. It is essential for the economic base of the Village. Any use allowable under the zoning should be considered and we have no *prima facie* objection to music and dancing. The FRIT property manager is best suited to manage the overall feel of the Village. Permits can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

From a design point of view, the current Village buildings and location (highway, park) provides an "acoustic shell" that for the most part contains noise from festivals, etc., in the center. If there is more noise coming from an open area in the center of the valley, we would call your attention to the Jennie Dean Park plan. It includes a large picnic pavilion near the Village that is designed to accommodate occasional gatherings including amplified music. We did not object, and we have given no-objections to permits for live music for two Green Valley establishments.

K. Public Art

We are fully supportive of additional public art in the Village! We will be vigilant, however, regarding art that is not only engaging but practical and, if necessary, usable. There is limited street space available for art installations, given outdoor seating and festivals.

- The light sculpture above the Shirlington Branch Library is a wonderful landmark.
- Our experience with the fountain in front of the Library is mixed. It is hard to maintain; it gets clogged and overflows; the mosaics have already required repair by the artist; and most importantly the water rapidly becomes unhygienic. Very young children are attracted to play and even swim in it (!), which was predictable and the consequences of which can be unfortunate. Once burned, twice shy. Speaking of which...

L. Kid-Friendly

We need some features designed for children to play on while family members watch.