



December 2, 2021

Stephen T Hughes, SPRC Chair
Potomac Yard Landbay C-East
Arlington County

Adam Watson, Planning Division
Arlington County

RE: Potomac Yard Landbay C- East - North Park Plaza

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on draft revised landscaping plans for Potomac Yard Landbay C- East - North Park Plaza. We are official representatives of the impacted civic associations, the Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA), the Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA), and the Arlington Ridge Civic Association (ARCA). We are providing comments on both the draft plan and the planning process.

Draft Revised Landscaping Plan:

Removing the cascading water feature and substitution with a splash pad: We are perplexed by the Applicant's assertion that the "community and the County requested the design team to reconsider this water feature, which is not a year-round attraction." At the SPRC meeting the CCCA and AHCA representatives *supported* the water feature as approved. Water features are all too rare in landscaping for new buildings in our area, and overall we found the proposed cascading pools quite delightful. Some of us expressed concerns about how it would function during the winter, but the applicant offered several creative decorative solutions that seemed fine. Also, the cascade seemed to be a good solution to a challenging location above the underground parking, where mature trees would not be able to thrive.

A question was raised in June about whether the proposed cascading pools would include a play area for children. We did *not* request that the design be replaced. Moreover, how is a splash pad used for 3 months of the year any more of a year-round feature? We would like an explanation for why the originally proposed water feature "cannot be implemented and why the splash pad makes a better year-round feature.

A major concern was that the passage contained too much hardscape. In removing a feature that aesthetically enhances the space year-round, the new design has substituted one with little aesthetic value. For the 9 months of the year when it will *not* be operational, it is merely an increase in the area of hardscape underfoot. We are also concerned about the problematic location of this splash pad for pedestrians passing through from any direction. The fountain

will be an obstacle and, if it is windy, the area might be quite wet and unpleasant. Children playing in it may also block pedestrians passing through the area.

Replacement garden in the east-west passage: The revised plan for the east-west passage garden does not seem to significantly reduce overall hardscape. Instead, it creates new hardscape with an additional path. The “trees” shown seem quite small and would not provide much shade. The proposed plantings are a poor substitute, aesthetically and ecologically, for a water feature. The extensive use of planters gives the area a rather “corporate campus” feel. We are concerned about the durability of plantings in planters and hope the intent is to focus on the use of native species, to give the area year-round interest, and to make the passage feel like a natural respite.

Suggestions for east-west landscaping: Minimize the hardscaping in the passages as possible. Use a variety of healthy, sustainable native plants attractive to birds and pollinators as well as to people. Please design a water element with moving water to prevent freezing. This would make the water feature usable also by wildlife such as birds throughout the winter, and by dragonflies, etc. throughout the summer. It should be possible to enhance the biophilic nature of the space with a year-round water feature that also is interactive much of the year. An example of such is found at <https://www.bostoncentral.com/free-spray-parks-fountains-wading-pools-boston>.



North-south passage changes: The side-by-side comparisons on the Engagement page appear to show a significant reduction in the green lawn space. If so, where can children and dogs play in the area? Where can people just soak up the sun or play catch safely? Again, the proposed play fountain seems to be in a problematic location. And it seems that you have added another path, creating more hardscape rather than removing it.

Planning Process: Community Engagement:

If this virtual presentation was the only opportunity for us to get information on the revision and to offer comments, it was insufficient. The process was not interactive – we did not have the opportunity to raise questions, ask for clarifications, and offer comments during the presentation, not even in chat. No slides were provided, and no details were provided on the

types of plants being considered and where they would be planted, so it was difficult to really study what was being proposed. The site with the revised plan was not linked to the main page for the original plan and vice versa, so comparisons were difficult. Because the revision was not widely promoted and is difficult to find online, many people are not aware of it. We hope to have additional opportunity to review the submitted landscaping plans before their final approval.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kateri Garcia
Arlington Ridge CA



Scott Miles, President
Aurora Highlands CA



Eric Cassel, President
Crystal City CA

cc: Walter Gonzalez, DPR Parks planner
William Ross, PRC Chair
Matt Mattauszek, Planning Division