



October 7th, 2023

Mr. Mark Schwartz
Arlington County Manager
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: (SPLA23-00039, SP #451) Crystal House 6 and related issues.

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

Crystal House 6 proposal has generated serious concerns about the process of minor site plan amendments. We **STRONGLY** agree with the October 2nd letter from Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) about this project. We also agree that even this shortened process has improved the building. In addition, we would like to make two points:

1) Low income housing residents deserve the same attention to detail as market rate residents. The Arlington County permit process does not exist to delay or inhibit new development but to improve the quality, design, and functionality of new buildings and to ensure that these buildings meet current County guidelines. As shown with the Amazon Met Park Project, the community process **IMPROVES** the building (Statement by Amazon at the County Board Meeting). The entire point of the process is to make better buildings for the residents.

Non-profit organizations may have the best intentions, but that does not mean they execute perfectly. Even the best designs have mistakes and non-profits may also forget or miss important elements that the community can correct. Just because a project is designed by a non-profit does not make it immune to errors.

To repeat: Low-income housing residents deserve the same attention to detail as market rate residents.

2) The site plan amendment process has issues that need to be addressed. The amount of change a “minor site plan amendment” can cover is breathtaking. It might be as small as a parking space for mechanical equipment or as large as a completely different building that is more than 25% bigger. As a result, the entire process needs attention. Perhaps the county can make 3 categories: minor site plan amendment, site plan amendment and major site plan amendment? When we get a minor site plan amendment, we often do not have sufficient time or the necessary expertise to understand the potential impacts of the changed design. By having each category with a different level of community engagement and process for approval would help us prioritize our resources.

In addition, although the plans and justification are posted, we find understanding the application challenging. We have experienced times when the amendment has elements that allow

developments to proceed in ways we could never imagined. We do not appreciate important changes being buried in legalese. Thus, we recommend an update to the categories of site plan amendments and the information in the amendments.

In conclusion, we strongly support AHCA's letter and are very worried about the process for future buildings, especially for the Crystal House Site. In addition, we are concerned that low-income residents get the same attention to detail as market rate residents. Lastly, we request an update to the site plan amendment categories to ensure that all site plans have a more appropriate level of community and Commission engagement.

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Cassel".

Eric Cassel
President of the CCCA

CC: Emma Martin, CPHD
Matt Mattauszek, CPHD
Arlington Ridge Civic Association
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
County Board

Attached: AHCA letter, 2 Oct 2023 RE: Crystal House 6