



To: Wayne Scott, Arlington County Auditor

From: Eric Cassel, President, Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA)

Date: September 29, 2025

Subject: Feedback on Community Benefits for Three Site Plan Projects

Dear Mr. Scott,

The Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the community benefits associated with three site plan projects: Altaire (SP #2), Hazel National Landing (SP #346), and Metropolitan Park Phases 6 & 7/8 (SP #105-9). Below, we address the specific questions posed for each project and offer general observations about the community benefits process.

General Observations

The process for identifying and tracking community benefits in Arlington County lacks transparency. Community benefits are often outlined in the County Board Report, which is typically released shortly before project approval and can be challenging to interpret without legal expertise. Furthermore, there is no clear mechanism for residents to verify whether promised benefits have been delivered, particularly for benefits such as LEED or Energy Star certifications, affordable housing commitments, or financial contributions to public spaces. This opacity hinders effective community engagement and accountability.

Project-Specific Feedback

Altaire (SP #2)

1. Quality and Timeliness of Information Prior to Approval

The site plan features were clearly communicated prior to approval. However, the community benefits were not well understood, and post-approval clarity remains limited. For instance, it is unclear whether the \$1,179,794 allocated for open space benefits is being applied to Arlington Junction Park or remains available for other park projects.

2. Advance Information on Site Plan Implementation

The CCCA had no issues with the information provided regarding site plan implementation.

3. Satisfaction with Implementation and Community Benefits

The CCCA cannot confirm whether the promised community benefits have been implemented. While we assume financial contributions have supported street and intersection improvements, there is no clear information on the application of open space funds or the status of affordable housing commitments.

4. Continued Availability of Community Benefits

Due to the lack of transparency regarding the implementation of benefits, the CCCA is unable to evaluate any deficiencies.

5. Reporting of Deficiencies

Not applicable, as no deficiencies have been formally reported due to the lack of clear information.

6. Additional Expected Community Benefits

No additional benefits were expected beyond those identified in the Office of Community Affairs (OCA) site plan summaries.

Hazel National Landing (SP #346)

1. Quality and Timeliness of Information Prior to Approval

The CCCA received some information about site plan features and community benefits, but the limited scope of the benefits minimized their significance.

2. Advance Information on Site Plan Implementation

The information provided about site plan implementation was satisfactory.

3. Satisfaction with Implementation and Community Benefits

While energy-related benefits (e.g., LEED certification) are difficult to verify, other promised benefits appear to have been implemented based on our observations.

4. Continued Availability of Community Benefits

To our knowledge, the implemented benefits remain available.

5. Reporting of Deficiencies

Not applicable, as no deficiencies have been reported.

6. Additional Expected Community Benefits

No additional benefits were expected beyond those identified in the OCA site plan summaries.

Metropolitan Park Phases 6 & 7/8 (SP #105-9)

1. Quality and Timeliness of Information Prior to Approval

The site plan features were thoroughly explained, and the community benefits were adequately communicated.

2. Advance Information on Site Plan Implementation

The information provided was clear and comprehensive, meeting our expectations.

3. Satisfaction with Implementation and Community Benefits

Most community benefits have been clearly implemented. However, the process for accessing promised meeting space remains unclear, despite informal access facilitated through personal contacts with Amazon employees.

4. Continued Availability of Community Benefits

Most benefits remain available, except for the unclear process for accessing meeting spaces and parking.

5. Reporting of Deficiencies

The CCCA has not formally reported deficiencies, as meeting space access has been secured through personal contacts.

6. Additional Expected Community Benefits

No additional benefits were expected beyond those identified in the OCA site plan summaries.

Additional Comments

While outside the scope of this review, we note significant issues with other projects, such as 1900 Crystal Drive, where a promised library has not been delivered, and future implementation appears unlikely. This underscores broader concerns about the reliability of community benefit commitments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The community benefits process in Arlington County requires greater transparency and accountability. Key issues include:

- **Late Disclosure:** Community benefits are often only detailed in the County Board Report, released shortly before approval, limiting community input.
- **Lack of Clarity:** The technical nature of Board Reports makes them difficult for residents to understand without specialized expertise.
- **Verification Challenges:** There is no accessible mechanism to track or confirm the implementation of community benefits, particularly for non-physical benefits like LEED certifications or affordable housing.
- **Opaque Access Processes:** Even for tangible benefits, such as meeting spaces, the process for access is often unclear, and tracking of usage is not transparent.

We recommend establishing a clear, accessible framework for communicating, tracking, and verifying community benefits to enhance public trust and engagement.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback. The CCCA looks forward to reviewing your final report and is available to discuss these matters further. Please contact me at [Insert Contact Information] with any questions.

Sincerely,

Eric Cassel

President, Crystal City Civic Association