



September 29, 2023

Natasha Alfonso-Ahmed, Principal Planner and Plan Langston Boulevard Project Manager
Community Planning, Housing & Development
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Affordable Homes and Legacy Businesses in the Langston Boulevard Corridor

Dear Ms. Alfonso-Ahmed,

NAACP Arlington Branch (the “NAACP”) supports the vision of Plan Langston Boulevard: to transform the corridor into a place of opportunity, where locally owned businesses can thrive, residents enjoy better access to green space, transit connections, and other urban amenities, and housing is more abundant, equitable, and affordable. We applaud Arlington County staff for recognizing that a “new development paradigm” can “increase opportunities for all households, including households of color, to live on this corridor,” that “legacy and historic Black or African American businesses” serve as “anchors” for communities of color, and that “placemaking and programming” should be used to “promote the corridor’s small, legacy, and minority-owned and operated businesses.” That is why we are disappointed that the draft plan released on June 23 fails to meet the County’s own affordable housing goals, while the updated plan released on September 28 removes all estimates of affordable housing production. We join the calls of other community stakeholders in urging the staff to modify the plan so that it produces significantly more affordable homes.

The Langston Boulevard corridor desperately needs more affordable homes. The planning area is already whiter and more affluent than the county as a whole, and many of the adjacent neighborhoods are even more so. The corridor is projected to lose market-rate affordable homes (or “MARKs”) at an alarming rate, as market pressures continue to drive up rents and price out more households. Few committed-affordable homes (or “CAFs”) have been built along the corridor, with *zero* CAFs built in East Falls Church since its own area plan was passed over a decade ago.

The current plan for Langston Boulevard would enable the creation of more affordable homes—but not nearly enough to meet the County’s affordable housing targets. The Affordable Housing Master Plan, passed unanimously by the County Board in 2015, calls for the Langston Boulevard corridor to achieve 2,500 affordable homes by 2040. Yet the staff estimate that, by that time, the June 23 draft of the plan would enable only about 1,890 affordable homes. This deficit of over

600 affordable homes is unacceptable, as is the failure to address the need for deeply affordable homes for households earning less than 60% of the area median income. Even the September 28 draft of the plan acknowledges that it “does not include new policies or programs to provide housing for households earning less than 50 percent or, more critically, 30 percent of the Area Median Income.”

Plan Langston Boulevard presents us with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create homes for families who have long been denied the opportunity to live in some of our county’s most exclusive neighborhoods, and to expand the base of customers that can enable legacy businesses to thrive. It is not enough to hope that the staff’s projections are conservative, or that the shortfall in affordable homes can be addressed with other area plans that could take years to revise, or that legacy businesses will find a way to survive on their own.

The NAACP urges you and your colleagues to refine this plan, before the County Board votes to advertise it, so that the plan can realistically achieve the 2,500 affordable homes—including deeply affordable homes—that the Affordable Housing Master Plan calls for. Whether it requires adjusting maximum heights in select places, including certain residential edges in the planning area, or other modifications, we ask that you do whatever needs to be done to ensure that the plan makes good on the County’s existing affordable housing goals, produces homes for our lowest-income households, and better preserves legacy businesses.

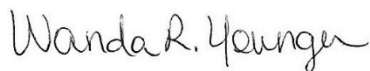
Sincerely,



Michael Hemminger
President, NAACP Arlington Branch



J. Wells Harrell
Chair, Housing Committee



Wanda Younger
Branch Secretary

cc: Members of the County Board
Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Samia Byrd, Chief Race and Equity Officer, Deputy County Manager
Claude Williamson, Director, CPHD
Anthony Fusarelli, Jr., CPHD Planning Director
Anne Venezia, CPHD Housing Director
Kellie Brown, Comprehensive Planning Section Supervisor
Jennifer Smith, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Devanshi P. Patel, Chair, Planning Commission
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