



May 6, 2024

Chair Sara Steinberger
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Chair Steinberger,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce strongly supports Items 4 and 5 on the May 8 Planning Commission Agenda, the two amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance as part of the second phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI). The Chamber strongly supports CMRI as a tool to meet our commercial vacancy challenges creatively and with flexibility. We ask that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board adopt these amendments on May 18.

The Chamber was an enthusiastic proponent of the amendments for permitted uses that were the first focus of CMRI, as the Chamber viewed the amendments as modernizing Arlington County's Zoning Ordinance to better attract and retain businesses. The Chamber appreciates of the focus on process evaluation and improvement in the second phase of CMRI, which will remove barriers and serve as a tool to ensure that Arlington is addressing the historically high commercial vacancy rate, which greatly impacts the County's budget.

The specific amendments, concerning shared and off-site parking and large media screens, are positive steps in the direction of greater flexibility for Arlington retail businesses. Broadening the ability of property owners and small businesses to meet parking requirements through shared parking and off-site parking addresses situations where businesses have insufficient parking and will help contribute to a healthier retail market. And greater permission for large media screens in certain retail zones provides a positive asset for placemaking.

The Chamber looks forward to the opportunities proposed for the remainder of the second phase, including revisions to major, minor and administrative Site Plan. We hope to continue engagement with the County to ensure Arlington's regulations and processes fit the modern economic landscape, and we commend County Staff for their work on these ongoing efforts. We hope to continue the conversation on the second phase of CMRI as they are considered before the County Board later this month.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates
President & CEO

CC: Planning Commissioners; County Manager Mark Schwartz; CPHD Director Samia Byrd; Planning Director Anthony Fusarelli; Marc McCauley, Arlington Economic Development; Jill Hunger, Arlington County Planning Division.