

Donaldson Run Civic Association

February 4, 2025

Ms. Krissy Walentisch
Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development
Suite 700
2100 N. Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Walgreens Site Plan Review
3130 Langston Boulevard

Dear Ms. Walentisch:

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA), please accept these comments on the foregoing proposed site plan. Although DRCA lies adjacent to Area 3 as set forth in Plan Langston Boulevard (PLB), and the Walgreens site lies in Area 5, many DRCA members shop in and travel through the Lyon Village Shopping Center area in which this project would be located.

We urge the Site Plan Review Committee to guide its review by reference to two overall principles.

First, the extraordinary increase in height and density proposed here would include a 12-story structure with 296 residential units. Because this proposed structure would fundamentally transform this neighborhood, it should receive careful scrutiny – particularly as one of the very first PLB projects to come to site plan review -- to ensure compliance with all PLB guidelines designed to ensure a gradual step down to the surrounding lower density residential communities.

Second, the committee should accord substantial deference to the views of each of the four civic associations surrounding this intersection, all of which are represented on the site plan review committee. In this regard, those civic associations should be actively involved in the negotiation of the “community benefits” appropriate necessary to justify such amendments to the GLUP and existing zoning restrictions. They, after all, constitute the relevant “community” that would be directly affected by this significant departure from existing land use requirements. Thus, for example, they should participate in the determination of what specific financial contributions, onsite committed affordable units, and other community benefits (including but not limited to

those referred to in the applicant's slide presentation) are appropriate here. Transparency principles demand no less than their full participation in this determination.

We also identify the following specific issues that we urge be addressed in the site plan review process:

1. PLB recommendations for a project at this height call for 35% tree canopy coverage. The proposal does not appear to demonstrate compliance with this recommendation, which reflects a sorely needed effort to increase tree canopy along this largely treeless corridor.
2. The staff report notes that most of the frontage along Langston Boulevard proposed for this site provides for a setback of only two feet on level 3 between the podium and the tower. This, too, appears not to demonstrate compliance with PLB guidelines. Adequate setbacks and stepbacks are particularly important for ensuring that this project (and future PLB proposals) adequately address the foregoing PLB goal of providing for an appropriate transition to long established lower density neighborhoods along Langston Boulevard.
3. The proposal includes replacing an existing underground pipe leading under Langston Boulevard to connect with pipes on the Lyon Village Shopping Center site. However, the new pipe is not straight. It has a large angle that will induce turbulence effects in stormwater flow, which could back up stormwater upstream or simply overflow onto this site.
4. The site is partially located within the Resource Protection Area governed by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and the associated County ordinance implementing that Act. Land disturbance associated with more intense development on the site, including any impact on existing mature trees in or adjacent to the area, should comply with those statutory and ordinance requirements. Such compliance is particularly important in light of the increased severity and frequency of storms affecting runoff into the Potomac River in this area in recent years.
5. The proposal includes 353 parking spaces for residents in 296 units. As the staff report recognizes, it thus raises certain traffic management issues about access to the site. These issues would be particularly acute during rush hours. The review process should ensure that these issues, which will directly affect DRCA residents as well as those in the four immediately surrounding civic associations, are addressed appropriately.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments. We would appreciate your circulating these comments to the members of the Site Plan Review Committee.

Sincerely yours,



Bill Richardson
President
Donaldson Run Civic Association