

February 17, 2024

Dear Chair Garvey and County Board Members:

Thank you for meeting with representatives of a number of civic associations over the past few months to discuss the need finally to initiate a study looking at reform of the lot coverage provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. We also appreciate your taking the time to drive by to see a handful of the egregious examples of the problem that has long warranted review. We ask that the Board specifically direct CPHD to prioritize this study, to make that direction very clear at the March 14 budget work session with CPHD, and to fund the study adequately in preparing the FY 2025 budget over the course of the next two months.

As you know, staff recognized the need to revisit the lot coverage issue ten years ago. We and others have repeatedly raised this issue with Board Members over the years, and in several letters to you, including a January 2020 letter to Chair Garvey. We have been very disappointed in the continuing failure of the County to address this serious issue, at the same time that more and more mature trees are continually destroyed in increasing numbers of teardowns. These teardowns now also pose much more extensive stormwater management challenges, with the increasing frequency and severity of storms. Equally important, many of our members have expressed shock at the sheer size and scope of these teardowns, which have led to construction of huge structures that dwarf the homes of their neighbors, in a way that undermines the very purpose of zoning regulation.

Two years ago, a majority of the Board Members provided guidance to CPHD that it should initiate a study of potential lot coverage reform. CPHD has still not done so, and has not even put such a study in its work plan. Last December, the Board approved the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, which specifically pointed to the need for this study, following public comment emphasizing the need to address this issue. In supporting that Plan, the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission also emphasized the need to prioritize this study.

We believe the time is long past due to take action on this issue. For reasons set forth in our prior presentations to you, we believe your direction at the March 14 budget work session should also include review of the height and height calculation and setback provisions of the Zoning Ordinance as well. As we have noted, in last reviewing lot coverage in 2005 the staff noted that it had been unable to review the height provisions, which are thus even more in need of review.

Finally, as we have discussed with Board members in prior meetings, the Board has determined that (with one minor exception relating to the handling of the 5% credit for detached rear garages) the Zoning Ordinance's lot coverage limits should apply to EHO as well as single-family residences. It has also emphasized this correlation in its argument to the circuit court defending the EHO ordinance in the currently pending litigation. We agree that the goals of tree preservation, stormwater management, mitigation of climate change, and avoidance of oversized structures next to smaller neighboring homes apply with equal force to EHO as well as single-

family residences. Thus, we would expect any revisions to the lot coverage provisions of the Zoning Ordinance should continue to apply to EHO. Please let us know if you believe otherwise.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please let us know if you have any further questions as you prepare for the March 14 work session.

Sincerely yours,

Esther Bowring, President
Arlington Forest Civic Association

Scott Sklar, President
Ken Matzkin
Barbara Taylor
Ashton Heights Civic Association

Henry McFarland, President
Bluemont Civic Association

Paul Elgin, President
Chain Bridge Forest Association

Bill Richardson, President
Donaldson Run Civic Association

Julie Lee, President
Glencarlyn Civic Association

Howard Solodky, President
Old Glebe Civic Association

Mona Steffen, Former President
Rivercrest Civic Association

Michael Bruce, President
Waycroft-Woodlawn Civic Association