



Site Plan Review Committee

Community Engagement Comments and Responses

1501 Arlington Blvd. – Red Lion Hotel (SPLN22-00044) (SP #233)

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Site Plan Project Information

Project Name: 1501 Arlington Blvd – Red Lion Hotel

Items Requested: Rezoning & Site Plan Amendment

Online Engagement Opportunity: July 31 – Aug. 9, 2023

Review Focus Topics: Land Use & Density, Building Form, Architecture, Transportation, Landscaping, Community Benefits & Other



About this Document

This document contains comments received as a part of the Site Plan Review Committee's (SPRC) Online Engagement Opportunity for the [Red Lion Hotel project](#). A total of 76 respondents provided comments during the Online Engagement Opportunity period between July 31 – Aug. 9. The feedback results and responses to common topics can be found below. All comments beyond the review focus topics are categorized as "Other".

Feedback Results

- [Feedback Form](#)
- [All Participants](#)
- [SPRC Members](#)
- [Other Board, Commission, or Committee Members](#)
- [Community Members](#)

Responses to Common Topics

Below are common topics or themes received through the online engagement session that were identified by County staff. The list includes a summary of the topics and responses from County staff and the applicant. Please note that the topics have been summarized to provide an overview of the common themes and may not fully capture the concerns expressed by each individual respondent.

- **Density and Building Height:** The building height (and density) was one of the most frequently mentioned topics. Respondents were generally split between those who favor increasing the building height (above the proposed 8 stories) and density, and those who find it too high already. Respondents identifying themselves as nearby residents typically favored less density and height. Those expressing a desire for greater density and height typically cited a need for increased housing production.

Staff Response: The proposed building height is consistent with Zoning Ordinance requirements and less than the maximum height of 136 ft. The proposed density (4.59 FAR) is above the base density of the “RA4.8” district (3.24 FAR); however, the County Board may approve additional density for the provision of affordable housing and/or sustainable building design, which the applicant is proposing.

Applicant Response: The proposed development includes significantly less building height than the prior approval, which included a 111-foot-tall (10 story) residential tower with up to 48 dwelling units, and a 125-foot-tall (12 story) hotel tower with 160 rooms. The Applicant believes that its proposal, a 74-foot-tall (8 story) multifamily residential building with up to 446 dwelling units, is appropriate for the site and will provide a significant amount of much needed housing to Arlington County.

- **Building Form/Layout:** Some participants felt that the building footprint/coverage was too great and called for additional landscaped area or trees on-site.

Staff Response: Staff will continue to evaluate the building form and layout through the public review period; however, there are no maximum lot coverage requirements in the “RA4.8” district or in the Rosslyn Station Area Plan Addendum, and the Applicant’s proposal is generally consistent with Zoning and policy recommendations. Sidewalk widths and streetscape treatment/planting will continue to be evaluated, but generally meet corridor streetscape standards.

Applicant Response: The proposed development is designed to create an attractive and continuous urban street wall along the Fairfax Drive & Arlington Boulevard frontage. The building’s footprint was maximized in part to allow for a building height that minimizes impacts to neighboring buildings including the Belvedere and Parc Rosslyn, each of which currently enjoy views that would be blocked by a taller building. The Application also proposes a number of above grade private outdoor spaces for its residents, which will include some plantings and has otherwise worked to maximize the number of preserved and planted trees on site.

- **Architecture:** Several participants stated that building appeared too “boxy” or “blocky” and suggested various measures for making the building appear “softer” and/or less monolithic, given the length of the building.

Staff Response: Staff appreciates this feedback and will continue to work with the Applicant on refining the building architecture. For instance, staff is working with the Applicant on improving the treatment of the transformer vaults and incorporating higher quality façade materials in certain locations.

Applicant Response: The proposed building design incorporates a series of façade articulations, the use of recessed areas for private balconies, changes in building materials and color, and a third floor rooftop terrace which opens out towards the road frontage creating a large break in the building mass. The Applicant will continue to work with County staff and the community to further refine the building’s architecture.

- **Traffic Circulation and Parking:** Many respondents were concerned that the project would create too much traffic on Fairfax Drive and expressed concern about future residents using the Belvedere Condominium driveway (north of the site). Respondents were split on whether enough off-street parking is proposed.

Staff Response: The applicant has submitted a [multimodal traffic impact study](#) that staff will be evaluating; however, staff notes that the locations of the proposed garage and loading entrances are appropriate. There is no vehicular access proposed to/from the Belvedere driveway, and pedestrian access along the north side of the building would be for emergency/fire egress only. Staff is continuing to evaluate the proposed parking ratio; however, the proposed residential parking ratio (0.57 spaces per unit) is consistent with the [Off-street Parking Guidelines](#).

Applicant Response: The Applicant does not propose to provide any vehicular access from the Property to 16th Road North (the private Belvedere Condominium drive north of the site), and continues to explore options to improve pedestrian circulation around the Property. The Applicant is utilizing the existing parking garage on the Property, is located within a walking distance to various transit modes, and meets the County’s off-street parking guidelines for multifamily residential projects in the County’s Metrorail corridors.

- **Special Affordable Housing Protection District (SAHPD) and Tenant Relocation:** Many respondents called for on-site affordable housing. Several participants also commented on the proposed redevelopment of the existing Williamsburg apartments and requested more information about the plan for tenant relocation.

Staff Response: Staff supports having on-site affordable dwelling units and is working with the Applicant to finalize a proposal for the [SAHPD](#) that will be discussed at the second SPRC meeting. With regard to tenant relocation: prior to any demolition or land disturbance activity, the Applicant must ([per Condition #11 of the Site Plan Ordinance](#)) submit a residential relocation plan that provides for relocation payments and relocation services to eligible tenants displaced by the construction of the Site Plan project. The Applicant is working with staff to develop a relocation plan. Comprehensive information on the [County's Relocation Program](#) is also available on this webpage.

Applicant Response: The Applicant will comply with the SAHPD policy and replace the existing market-rate affordable housing on-site. The exact number of units and unit types will be negotiated with County Staff. The prior approval included a tenant relocation plan for the Ellis Arms apartment building and that building has since been vacated. The Applicant is currently working to develop a tenant relocation plan for the Williamsburg Apartment building and is committed to helping existing residents transition during construction.

- **Community Benefits & Other:** As part of the community benefits package, several respondents commented about adding on-site affordable housing. Many respondents also asked if the applicant would be installing solar panels through its fulfillment of the Green Building Incentive Policy.

Staff Response: Staff appreciates the interest in affordable dwelling units (ADUs) on-site and will be working with the applicant on its community benefits package during the public review process. Staff anticipates that this project will deliver ADUs in three tranches: via the "base" ADU zoning requirement for site plans, the SAHPD (mentioned above), and the zoning regulations for additional density above the zoning district regulations and the General Land Use Plan (aka "bonus density").

In addition, the applicant is voluntarily committing to the [Green Building Incentive Policy](#) at the LEED Gold (0.35 FAR-level), which includes requirements for features such as bird-friendly materials, EV parking, and energy efficiency. On-site solar generation is one option for fulfilling the baseline renewable energy requirement.

Applicant Response: The Applicant will continue to work with County Staff to develop an appropriate affordable housing program for the Property. The Applicant will be providing green building elements consistent with the Green Building Incentive policy and will discuss those further at the second SPRC meeting.