



March 18, 2021

RE: Site Plan Amendment for Site Plan #105-8, 1201 South Joyce St.; March 20, 2021 Consent Item #1

Dear County Board Members:

Before final approval of this item, we, the presidents of the three civic associations in 22202 — Arlington Ridge (ARCA), Aurora Highlands (AHCA), Crystal City (CCCA) — strongly encourage you to modify the proposed language in condition #52 allowing “a provision for retail uses within the development offering items for sale that are traditionally found in a grocery store and drug store, with the size and location to be determined by the developer.”

We understand the applicant’s concern about potential leasing challenges for large grocers in the future and the county’s attempt to work out a compromise on that requirement. However, the changes do not provide enough specificity to disincentivize the applicant from choosing retail options that will significantly degrade grocery services for residents.

We continue to support the provision of a full-service grocery store in Pentagon Row/Westpost for all the reasons delineated in the AHCA email to county staff on February 12 (attached), which was subsequently echoed by the CCCA. As partners in the Livability 22202 coalition, we are working to make our community as car-free or car-light as possible, through creation of an environment that encourages walking and biking for commuting, for recreation, and for shopping and other errand-running. Essential facilities must be within a reasonable walkable and bikeable distance. The loss of a full-service grocery store discriminates against those who are car-free – from new parents to senior citizens – forcing them to pay for transportation to fetch essential items or to have them delivered. It will certainly mean more pollution and traffic in our area.

Although some current shoppers depend upon the convenience of getting their prescriptions while they shop, we may be willing to consider this compromise – dropping the requirement that the full-service grocery store include a pharmacy – because we currently have two free-standing pharmacies in Pentagon City and two in Crystal City.

To reiterate – we need a large, 40k+ sq. ft., full-service grocery store in Pentagon Row; providing “retail uses...offering items for sale that are traditionally found in a grocery store” is not an adequate substitute. We fully understand market conditions change and may make fulfilling the existing requirement more challenging. However, the applicant should not be allowed simply to make “commercially reasonable efforts” to fulfill a site plan condition; it is, after all, a requirement they agreed to.

Sincerely,

Mike Pickford, President
Arlington Ridge CA

Scott Miles, President
Aurora Highlands CA

Carol Fuller, President
Crystal City CA

Attachment

From: Scott Miles, AHCA President
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2021 4:37 PM
To: Olivia Sontag
Cc: Carol Fuller; Michael Pickford; Christer Ahl; Robert Mandle
Subject: Re: PLEASE RESPOND: 1201 S Joyce Street Site Plan Amendment

Olivia,

Thank you for the change to speak last week. The following provides more detail on The Aurora Highlands Civic Association's general support for the proposed site plan changes, with the exception of the grocery modifications. I expect to send similar comments to the County Board next month, pending any changes before then.

I would like to express the concerns of Aurora Highlands residents about a potential loss of a full-service grocery store in the Westpost (formerly Pentagon Row) retail development and the unspecified streetscape details along Army-Navy Drive, as proposed in the Minor Site Plan Amendment to Site Plan #105-8.

The Applicant states the following in their Statement of Support:

- Specifically, regarding the existing grocery store, it is the Applicant's intent to maintain a grocery store element on the Property to serve community needs, but the Applicant is requesting flexibility in format, size, and location. (p.2)

Among the changes, the Applicant proposes revised text for retail conditions (p.3), striking specific requirements for a "full service grocery store" of 40-70k sf and "full service drug store" of 8-20k sf in favor of much softer and smaller requirements (new words in bold):

- 52. The developer agrees to provide a grocery store or similar retail use on the Property. The size and location of the grocery store or similar use shall be reviewed by the Zoning Administrator through the Administrative Change process.
- 53. The developer agrees to commercial reasonable efforts to maintain the grocery store on the Property. However, in lieu thereof, the owner agrees to include a grocery component in the retail tenants.
- 56. The developer agrees to construct architectural facade treatments to enhance its pedestrian appeal and street orientation along South Army Navy Drive through provision of wall articulation and/or store front window treatments as shown in the revised drawings dated December 11, 1997, or as approved as part of the final site development and landscape plan.

Our residents understand and support the Applicant's desire to have more flexible retail conditions that would support a greater variety of local retails, as described under 53. Specifically, we would welcome the office uses and day care options mentioned under #53, as well as a variety of spaces that could provide more support for locally owned small businesses.

However, we strongly recommend retaining the conditions requiring a full-service 40-70k sf grocery store somewhere in the development, rather than a smaller "grocery component." The Harris Teeter in

Westpost currently provides this much needed one-stop service for our community, and it is conveniently located within a reasonable walk shed for the majority of 22202 residents, who live in the northeast quadrant. Even with other current and planned grocery options in the area, a large full-service grocer at this site remains an essential service.

The Livability22202 Framework vision encourages “Urban planning that balances working, living, and socializing in close proximity – creating a “City of Short Distances” – reduces unnecessary travel and forges community connections. The Framework further states that “...access to goods and services becomes more livable for children, the elderly, and the less affluent. Public health and the environment both benefit from an emphasis on public transit and active modes of transportation, such as walking and biking.” Providing essential services, such as a full-service grocery store, that are within a reasonable walking and/or biking distance helps create a truly livable community that promotes healthier people, healthier trees, and a healthier environment.

If the full-service grocery store is replaced by “grocery elements”, shoppers may need to make multiple stops to purchase what they need, with some items no longer available. Residents may need to drive to full-service grocery stores outside of the community to meet their shopping needs. And those of us who are “car-free”, for whatever reason, will no longer be able to purchase needed items in our locality.

Please also note that having a full-service grocery store in Westpost encourages local residents to walk to Westpost where we will see the new and exciting retail openings being developed, encouraging us to try out these new establishments.

A final note, please ensure any revision to #56 includes a requirement for a minimum 10’ wide clear zone and 6’ wide tree planting zone as the plans are developed. The AHCA would like to participate in this planning and review of the final details.

Scott Miles

President

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

www.aurorahighlands.org

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