



## AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

January 30, 2024

Mr. James Lantelme, Planning Commission  
Members of the Arlington County Board  
Arlington County, Ellen M. Bozman Government Center  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Melwood Special GLUP Study

Dear Mr. Lantelme and Members of the County Board,

During the Arlington County Board annual meeting with the Arlington Civic Federation (CivFed) on January 2, 2024, at the twenty minute mark of the meeting<sup>1</sup>, Brian Harner, co-chair of the CivFed Planning and Zoning Committee and a previous Arlington County planning commissioner noted there is widespread concern in the community about the Special GLUP Study process and its frequency of use, and asked the County Board members if they would support a review of the process.

Libby Garvey, Chair, noted that the Board had prepared for the question, and asked Takis Karantonis to respond. Mr. Karantonis stated that the Special GLUP Amendment process is not desirable, but it can be a useful tool given the complexities of urban development. Mr. Karantonis said that the Board is committed in 2024 to review the Comprehensive Plan and associated processes to improve them (efficiency, engagement, etc.) He added that he does not think the tiered structure of the Special GLUP Study process is optimal, and that it needs review. By reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and processes, he hopes the County will come to a place where the planning process will become “a more predictable and appropriate procedure”.

Chair Garvey agreed with Mr. Karantonis’ statements. Susan Cunningham added that the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative 2.0 calls for a review of the planning process, and that she is especially interested in learning about what the cost of executing the Special GLUP Amendment is to the community and to the County. Mrs. Cunningham ended by noting that “there are just a few too many specials [Special GLUP Studies] to call them special, and that is always a sign we need to look at it”.

In summary, the community and the Board have concerns about the Special GLUP Amendment process including cost, appropriate levels of community engagement, efficiency, predictability, and appropriateness of the frequency of application.

The Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) noted its continued opposition to and numerous concerns regarding the Melwood Special GLUP Application in its letter to the County dated January 3, 2024.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the concerns expressed by the community and County Board regarding the Special GLUP Amendment process, and the concerns about the process raised by AHCA regarding the Melwood Special

<sup>1</sup>The recording can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/live/EX8PSNIJ6Z8?feature=shared>

<sup>2</sup>Available at: <https://aurorahighlands.org/wp-content/uploads/AHCA-Melwood-LRPC-Follow-Up-240103-sig-1.pdf>

GLUP Application and Study, there is a consensus that the Special GLUP Amendment process must be reviewed. Given this consensus, and the County Board's commitment to do such a review this year as referenced by Mr. Karantonis, AHCA requests the County to advise how this review will impact the Melwood Special GLUP Study currently in process.

As stated by Mr. Karantonis, "a city is a non-linear equation". With such realities ever present in the rapidly developing Aurora Highlands neighborhood, AHCA expects that whatever review the County does will impact the Melwood Special GLUP Study. As discussed in our numerous unanswered letters from the past three years, the Melwood Special GLUP Amendment application does not meet the requirements for a Special GLUP Study and is a prime example of why the process needs to be reviewed. Accordingly, due to the widespread community and Board's concerns about the process, in addition to AHCA's own concerns about the Melwood Special GLUP Application, AHCA requests that the County stop the Melwood GLUP Study.

We look forward to the County keeping its commitment to do a review this year and hope that it will remedy the harm that this process has already had on the neighborhood. We would appreciate a response to this letter advising the status of the Melwood GLUP Study prior to the next Melwood LRPC meeting. If the study continues, please explain why it is not stopped given these overarching issues and concerns. Thank you,

Sincerely,



Stacy L. Meyer  
Melwood LRPC Representative, AHCA  
Vice President, AHCA

CC: Mark Schwartz, County Manager  
Sara Steinberger, Chair, Planning Commission  
Samia Byrd, Director, CPHD  
Matt Mattauszek, Planner, CPHD  
John Ford, President, Arlington County Civic Federation  
AHCA Board