

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COUNCIL

CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

November 2, 2015

Mayor David Tarter  
City Council of Falls Church  
Falls Church, Virginia

Re: ESC Comments on Proposed Mason Row Development

Dear Mayor Tarter and Council Members:

We believe that the City has the opportunity and the responsibility to demonstrate that we can both pursue economic growth and minimize the climate and other environmental impacts of proposed mixed-used developments. The ESC welcomes the developer's inclusion of some new environmental features in the latest voluntary concessions document (dated 5 October 2015), including a \$150,000 contribution for city parks and recreation. However, we continue to urge the Council to press the developer to expand the green dimensions of the project, including:

- **Going Beyond Silver** – We believe that the proposal's target of National Green Building Council (NGBC) "Silver" rating for the residential component is a good start for developing energy efficient and high-performing buildings. However, the lower standard LEED certification for the hotel and absence of any stated plan to certify the cinema and retail portions of the development are not acceptable, and may not be attainable, since the LEED certifying body (USGBC) typically requires that the entire site/building is treated as one project. Moreover, similar projects in the region are routinely securing LEED "Gold" or "Platinum" (Emerald for the new NGBC rating system). There is increasing evidence that sustainable buildings are higher performing buildings, with higher values and lower default risk. The City should aim for a high building standard that protects the environment and appeals to prospective tenants and investors.
- **Installing More Vehicle Charging Stations** – The one proposed electric vehicle charging station is insufficient. As electric vehicles become cheaper and increasingly ubiquitous, we believe a project of this size requires at least 5 charging stations.
- **Making It Solar Ready** – We urge the City to make the project ready for future installation of solar panels as photovoltaic technology continues to drop in price. Roof appurtenances and superstructures should be aggregated and located to maximize free areas oriented towards southern sky in areas sized for standard commercial panel solar arrays. Power and control conduits should be installed and capped from roof locations to central electrical rooms. Electrical rooms

should be sized with clear wall space to accommodate future inverters, controllers and meters.

- **Promoting Bicycle Transportation** – We urge the City to mandate that a bicycle sharing station is required. We also believe the developer should continue to financially support the sharing station beyond the proposed five year limit.
  
- **Minimizing Light Pollution** – We urge the City to ensure that the project limits the spillover of lighting on residential neighbors and take steps—such as through downward directed light fixtures—to minimize light pollution more generally. We recommend high-efficiency bulbs to limit power usage.

Sincerely,

Ray Arnaudo

Chair

CC: Chris McGough, Staff Liaison