

1111 South Oakcrest Road
Arlington, Virginia 22202
February 23, 2010

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201
Subject: Crystal City Redevelopment

Dear Chairman Fiset and Members of the Board:

The Book Club consists of book lovers whose members reside or have resided within the 22202 zip code. The Club has existed nearly 45 years and the members have deep ties to local schools and churches, the Aurora Hills Library and Community Center, Hume School, and local parks. Because of the extraordinary nature of the Crystal City proposal, members have discussed this redevelopment plan during several meetings. We believe the existing plan to be disastrous to the viability of our 22202 community and therefore oppose the proposed redevelopment in its present form.

Extraordinary changes in the existing General Land Use Plan would be required in order to implement the proposed Crystal City redevelopment. Zoning regulations designed to protect existing property owners and the health, safety, and welfare of the area would be radically changed solely to enable significantly increased density and without consideration of the impacts of such "upzonings" upon the affected neighborhoods. These up-zonings are coupled with variances and density bonuses that, in toto, nearly double the density of the office, residential, and retail space currently available in Crystal City. Crystal City is not an island existing apart from its surroundings and planning of such a space cannot be done in a vacuum.

We are surprised and dismayed that the County proposes to negate its widely stated policy of confining the densest development to within a quarter-mile radius of a Metro station. A significant part of the projected density increase lies outside of this "bullseye" radius, raising questions of access and safety for the more vulnerable members of our community as well as problems of pollution and congestion.

The approximately 30-story buildings planned for 23rd Street between Route 1 and Crystal Drive, besides radically changing the aerial landscape of the area, funnels traffic through neighboring residential communities with concomitant air and noise pollution problems, increasing stress and negatively impacting our quality of life. The increased traffic congestion on neighborhood streets creates additional safety and health issues. The proposal projects the elimination of Cheerios Park as the first step in the redevelopment process. Is this because its existence, when Federal funds are desired for road construction within Crystal City, might jeopardize such funding since the Government considers the impacts of roads upon parks? As it did for EPA workers, Cheerios Park provides relief and a breath of fresh air to present visitors and workers in Crystal City. It has been and remains one of the most enjoyed amenities. Its elimination in a community already lacking park space is demonstrably undesirable. The Park provides visual relief from the concrete mass that is Crystal City both within the existing development and to

the surrounding neighborhoods. The buildings proposed to replace the Park, excessively tall in design, will create a massive wall approximately 500 feet from existing single family homes, closeting such homes, destroying their breathing room, and changing air and wind patterns in the area.

Quality of life issues are intangible. Because they have no price tags attached, County planners and developers can create visions of immediate, super-charged economic returns from massive development projects without consideration of impacts on the health, safety, and welfare of existing communities. Noise, air, water, sewage, traffic congestion, irreversible environmental degradation issues are abstract problems to be dealt with after the fact if at all, but the inhabitants of the impacted area must deal with such issues on a daily basis over many years. Threats to the livability, integrity, and stability of existing single-family neighborhoods, other residential complexes, and local businesses are ignored.

The protections afforded residents by zoning ordinances and former widely acknowledged County policies are to be changed or eliminated by the proposed Crystal City redevelopment project. The present economic climate demonstrates that existing safeguards are essential to the overall economic health and viability of this community and of the County as a whole. The Book Club deplors the destructive nature of the proposed Crystal City redevelopment. It supports the redevelopment of the area under the existing zoning and believes such redevelopment to be a viable alternative for the County, the developers, and the community.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Yankoupe
President, The Book Club