The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society

Mayor Tarter and Members of the City Council
Chairman Stevens and Members of the Planning Commission
City Manager Shields and Planning Department staff

June 16, 2023

Subject: Continuing VPIS Concerns About Proposed Amendments to Transitional Zones

In its May, September, and November 2022 letters to City Council and the Planning Commission, the Board of the Village Preservation and Improvement Society expressed our deep concerns about the process and substance of the proposed zoning changes to transitional properties within the City. We appreciate the recommendations submitted by the Planning Commission to modify the original Council proposal. The public community has also spoken strongly in favor of maintaining reasonable protections for adjoining residential properties, with particular concern about the proposed height, coverage and setbacks that might be allowed.

The latest staff paper makes little effort to meet these concerns, and indeed changes direction entirely -- proposing a maximum average square foot density for dwelling units in any new construction, and ignoring the duplexes, triplexes, quads, and townhouses acceptable to neighbors and many others within the broader community. In order to encourage affordable housing, a "density bonus" would permit an increase in maximum average dwelling unit sizes linked to a given percentage of guaranteed "affordable" units. Based on the staff's examples, a 0.7 acre lot could accommodate 14 units, of which 2 or 3 would be "affordable" and just 1/3 the size of much larger luxury units. However, a developer could also build by-right with no density bonus and **no** affordable units. The Council should ensure there are real affordable housing units in any T-zone construction – and not accept cash in lieu of units.

As City staff revisit their new proposal, we encourage the City Council, Planning Commission and city staff to be mindful of broader concerns regarding stormwater, minimum tree coverage, the "heat island" effect of excessive height and coverage on Park Avenue as a

proposed Great Street, and the future maintenance of historic properties. We encourage you to give serious consideration to the City Arborist's recommendations that addressed several of these issues.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Gross
President, on behalf of the VPIS Board of Directors