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Mr. Mayor, Mr. Vice-Mayor, *may it please the Council:*

I am Pete Benavage. I live on Fairbanks Avenue, and am representing the residents and landowners of the Shirley Gardens subdivision, many of whom are here today.

We strongly support the Small Area Plan, and have expressed our views in two letters to the Council dated 30 April 2012, as well as in other communications and e-mails.

The plan is a masterful document, and we cannot praise highly enough the remarkable collaboration between private citizens, diverse developers, and City officials that produced it. It is a balanced, high level blueprint for managing the changes occurring in the Beauregard Corridor now, and in the foreseeable future. It embraces citizens' concerns, while concomitantly protecting property rights and providing a clear vision for growth, in accordance with the best practices of modern urban planning. It is also long overdue.

Since our annexation from Fairfax County in 1952, the true West End – the area west of Shirley Highway – has received the following public amenities:

- Public water;
- Public sewers;
- Two schools (William Ramsay and John Adams); and
- Beauregard Street, itself.

That's about it. We have had an *explosion* in residential development over the past five decades, but a *paucity* of retail and commercial development. We have no fire station west of 395. Though we have never complained, the time has come to rectify the benign neglect we have endured since annexation. This plan will do that.

We want our City to progress, and we want our part of it to be fully integrated into Alexandria. I want to continue to live in my native town, and to see my 18 month old grandson – who is the *fourth generation* of my family to live in Shirley Gardens – living here proudly twenty years from now.

You have and will continue to hear loud objections from a coterie of nay-sayers. What you will **not** hear from them is a *single rational, comprehensive alternative*.

These are the facts:

- *Private funds* will build a new **Fire Station**;
- The increase of density over existing zoning makes significant developer proffers *economically feasible*;
- The 20 year phased development will provide incremental funding for the plan *without touching* the City's general revenues;

- *After 35 years of studies*, the traffic ellipse at Beauregard and Seminary is the most cost effective solution to that intersection's traffic issues, and will enhance Transportation Corridor C.

The opposition states that the plan destroys affordable housing. Wrong. It *protects it* to an unprecedented degree. If this plan is deferred or rejected, as Planning Commissioner Wagner pointed out on May 3rd, affordable housing may well disappear altogether within six months, as rents are rapidly rising.

The opposition states that the plan was "developer dominated." Wrong. *Every significant citizen input* made during public meetings is listed for your consideration. I **know**; *I was at every meeting*.

The opposition states that the funding is unworkable, that forecasted revenue increases may not happen. Wrong. When have *improvements ever* resulted in *lower* assessments?

The opposition states that the current residents need to be surveyed before plan approval. Wrong again. There is a **40% annual turnover rate** of renters in the JBG properties. When redevelopment commences in five years, less than **8%** of the *current* residents will still be there. So *who* would we be surveying today, and *what* would the validity be?

The opposition states that a new fire station is not necessary, that we can continue to rely on Bailey's Crossroads Fire Department. I believe our Fire Chief holds a *different* opinion.

The BRAC complex has changed everything, and that is fact. The Transportation Commission voted for the plan's transportation chapter *unanimously*. The Planning Commission voted *unanimously* for this plan. My neighbors and I urge you to do the same, *now*, before change becomes unmanageable, and we again hear "those terrible, chilling words: **TOO LATE.**"