

PUBLIC COMMENT

Submitted by Joshua Booth, Feb. 26, 2019 Lincolnia Task Force Meeting

The Lincolnia Community Business Center is a great place to live because it has great bus access to DC, and great food is just a short walk away. This is the kind of urban living that is much more expensive in DC and other urban centers. The proposed plans encourage more of that kind of urbanism, but risk losing the great local businesses that have been able to thrive on the lower costs in the area. The Task Force should consider ways to partner with community development organizations so that small and local businesses are not pushed out by redevelopment and gentrification.

The main thing that Lincolnia lacks is a sense of place. It has most of the things that make a town center project successful: it's got access to job centers, good public transit, it's being planned for mixed-use, and for walkability over drivability. However, we simply don't have the charm of Old Town or the funkiness of U-Street to build Lincolnia up as a destination.

Lincolnia needs to distinguish itself from other development in the area, and encouraging small and local businesses builds on our existing diversity. Eighty years ago this area was simply farmland. Now we are one of the most diverse localities in Fairfax County, and the restaurants and businesses reflect that. Valentino's Pizza is wonderful, of course. But Time Cafe has the best coffee, not Starbucks. Royal Palace has the best biryani, according to my Pakistani friend. Yamazato has the most generous portions of sushi in the area. We need to ensure these business survive and thrive in the transition that we are planning.

The Task Force should encourage developers to partner with existing community development organizations to finance small and local businesses to stay in our community. The Latino Economic Development Center and at least five other organizations already finance projects in and around Lincolnia. Developers should be strongly encouraged to work with community development organizations to provide space and financing for small and local businesses, in exchange for additional development rights. Additionally, Fairfax County should partner with these community development organizations so that business don't simply move to less expensive places like Prince William County.

The Lincolnia CBC has everything for being a great town center except that sense of place. The Urban Land Institute identified our large number of small and local businesses as an asset. As other areas gentrify, let's make Lincolnia into the place where office workers at the Mark Center go for great food from local restaurants, and where local businesses meet the needs of the community.