



Southampton Citizens Association

May 5, 2017

Rodney Poole, J.D.  
Chairman  
Planning Commission  
City of Richmond  
900 E. Broad Street, Room 511  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Chairman Poole:

**Executive Summary:** The Southampton Citizens Association opposes the proposed Community Unit Plan (CUP) amendments relevant to new construction at the Shops at Stratford Hills. Opposition regards 1) a failure to commit to landscaping evidenced in its worst form by the removal of all of the trees 2) tenant mix and 3) existing vacancies in the shopping center.

Please consider this note a formal communication of the Southampton Citizens Association (SCA) position relative to the **zoning request of Harper Associates on Forest Hill Avenue at the Shops at Stratford Hills.** Said request regards amendments to the Community Unit Plan (CUP) that governs the aforementioned Shops at Stratford Hills.

Comprised of 2,500 homes in the City of Richmond, the Southampton Citizens Association represents the community that immediately adjoins the Shops at Stratford Hills. Our members both reside in the area and shop at the center. For over a half a century SCA has been an active participant in the City of Richmond and region and has been a leader in all relevant deliberations and discussions pertinent to the neighborhood.

The Southampton Citizens Association wishes to apprise you of the organization's decision as it relates to Harper Associates and their proposed CUP amendments. First, it is important to note that SCA has engaged in recurring and meaningful discussions with Harper since the shopping center was first proposed for redevelopment and that SCA supported the center then and continues to support the center now. SCA approved the redevelopment and our members support the tenants with their patronage. Second, SCA has been engaged in dialogue with Harper Associates for well over a year in an effort to address vacancies at the center. The conversations became more urgent with the announcement that Martin's would depart leaving a major tenant vacant. In the context of the vacancy conversations, SCA and Harper Associates have discussed varying options including the proposals included in the Harper Associates proposed CUP amendments. These discussions included directly with SCA leadership as well during public meetings.

The most relevant community, i.e., the Southampton Citizens Association, representing 2,500 homes wishes to apprise you that the neighborhood **supports the following proposed CUP amendments;**

1) Allow the construction of one freestanding monument sign facing Chippenham Parkway (Route 150) in the location shown and labeled as item (1) on the Amendment Exhibit. Given the traffic volume on Chippenham Parkway, the lack of tenant identification signage at this location has been a principal concern raised in lease renewal discussions with anchor tenants.

2) Allow a break in the median at the main center entrance from Forest Hill Avenue (Route

683) in the location shown and labeled as item (2) on the Amendment Exhibit. This would allow increased traffic circulation to tenants of Lot 3.

3) Allow a break in the median at the secondary east entrance from Forest Hill Avenue (Route 638) in the location shown and labeled as item (3) on the Amendment Exhibit. This would allow increased traffic circulation to tenants of Lot 2.

4) Confirm the existing buffer requirements set forth in the CUP Ordinance, which will continue to screen Phase II from the property zoned R-2 located to the east of the project, as shown and labeled as item (5) on the Amendment Exhibit.

In contrary, the Southampton Citizens Association is **NOT in support of the following proposed CUP amendments;**

5) Allow a curb cut with right-in/right-out access from the Phase II Outparcel to Forest Hill Avenue (Route 638) in the location shown and labeled as item (4) on the Amendment Exhibit. This would allow increased traffic circulation to the Phase II Outparcel, and is a condition of development for the proposed retailers on the Phase II Outparcel.

6) Annex the Additional Property to the CUP, as shown and labeled as item (6) on the Amendment Exhibit. Given the inclusion of the Additional Property, the Applicant further proposes to (a) allow the construction of buildings and parking areas on the Phase II Outparcel in the shaded/bubbled locations shown on the exhibit, and (b) increase the cap on commercial development from 420,000 sq. ft. to 428,000 sq. ft.

It should be noted that the Southampton Citizens Association in the fall of 2016 voted to disapprove of development in Phase II. It should also be noted that despite the vote to disapprove, Harper Associates decided to clear-cut the property removing all trees. It should be further noted that Harper Associates identified a reason for the clear-cutting that fails to pass the plain-sense standard. It should be lastly noted that Harper Associates as recently as at the Southampton Citizens Association meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 advised that Harper Associates only intended to construct new buildings on the area that is adjacent to Forest Hill Avenue yet the proposed amendments would allow for future amendments providing for construction of other buildings in Phase II.

The Southampton Citizens Association wishes success for the Shops at Stratford Hills and we will continue to show our patronage but what we cannot and will not support is the deliberate removal of scores if not hundreds of trees for the construction of new retail space after the neighborhood already voted in opposition. It should be noted that reasons for opposition regarded 1) a failure to commit to landscaping evidenced in its worst form by the removal of all of the trees 2) tenant mix and 3) existing vacancies in the shopping center.

What was a beautiful oasis or buffer in between commercial properties has been replaced with an eyesore. SCA wishes the planting of new trees and vegetation to remediate the area.

Thank you for your review and attention to the neighborhood's wishes and please advise should you have any questions and/or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Jonathan Young*

Jonathan Young

President

Southampton Citizens Association

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