

**The McEntires
2504 Fairview Drive
Alexandria, VA 22306
vrclay@hotmail.com
202-841-2324**

May 25, 2021

Dear Representative of Neighborhood Associations:

I am writing today to express my strong support for the Emergency Shelter planned to be part of the multiuse complex planned for the site of the Hybla Valley Nursery. Our family has lived in the Spring Bank neighborhood adjacent to the property of the proposed site for 17 years. I have three school age children, 13, 11 & 4.

Our neighborhood is one of the most welcoming I've known. There is a concerted effort to create community among neighbors. Until the pandemic, there were monthly social gatherings that were hosted by a different family every month. During snowstorms, people help older neighbors clear driveways and sidewalks, during the pandemic there were offers to grocery shop, share toilet paper and help schedule vaccines, and of course there is the Farmers Christmas Extravaganza, where they invite the community to tour their display of inflatables and other decorations. We look forward to it every year.

As a person of faith, I strongly ascribe to the commandment to Love Thy Neighbor as yourself. I consider the unhoused people who live among us on the Route 1 corridor my neighbors. I make a point to learn their names and sometimes their stories if they are willing to share them with me. My children know them as well. We were heartbroken to learn of Mr. Jerry's death (the older white haired man who wore a yellow construction hat). My children would always be sure when we saw him that we would stop and ask him if there was anything he needed. There are a few other unhoused neighbors that I know by name and I'm sure many would recognize by site.

The Hybla Valley Nursery site meets many criteria for a modern Emergency Kennedy Shelter. It's close to transit, entry level retail jobs and the Federally supported Neighborhood Health Community Health Center which provides medical care regardless of ability to pay. Further, the Kennedy shelter, currently housed in a 100 year old building has been waiting for a new shelter for about 5 years. The people who are served by the shelter deserve a new facility in the quickest time possible and the Hybla Valley Nursery site accomplishes that. The longer it is put off, the longer people suffer unnecessarily.

Our community is larger than the boundary of the Spring Bank neighborhood. We have a duty to include everyone, including those who are unhoused in our community. While homelessness won't be solved by one new shelter, this facility will go a long way towards supporting of the most marginalized in our community.

**Submitted with the hope that the Mount Vernon area continues to support the most vulnerable in our community,
Vanessa, Brian, Jameson, Declan & Rory**