

## Task 3

### Open Space Alternatives

The City of Alexandria's Zoning Ordinance outlines the open space requirements for each zone. The alternatives to providing the required open space per the zoning ordinance is intended to mitigate the impact of the development on the City's open space system. When an applicant is unable to meet its open space requirement and the Small Area Plan does not already guide an alternative, the following options are to be used to satisfy the requirement:

**Option 1:** Land is dedicated as publicly accessible open space by deeding land to the City or a public open space easement. Maintenance plans are required for all land with public open space easements and land dedicated to the City, including environmental assessment, study, and estimated maintenance plan. Prior to the deeding of land, environmental mitigation may be required depending on the findings from the environmental assessments and studies.

**Option 2:** Open space is purchased off-site and either deeded to the City, or a public open space easement is placed on it. As with Option 1, a maintenance plan is required for all land with public open space easements and land dedicated to the City including environmental assessment and study and estimated maintenance plan. Prior to the deeding of land, environmental mitigation may be required depending on the findings from the environmental assessments and studies.

Options 1 and 2 directly contribute to the City's publicly accessible open space, and therefore should be the first option applied. However, when it is not possible to gain more land, the land that is being provided is undesirable, or it is determined by RPCA staff, the applicant may pursue Option 3.

**Option 3:** Monetary or in-kind contribution for park improvements and maintenance. Provide a monetary or in-kind contribution to a nearby park for improvements and maintenance to the open space. Contributions for park improvements will be guided by the Park Improvement Plans, gap analysis maps, and staff. The contribution will be comparable to the amount of open space not being provided by the development and the increased use to existing publicly accessible open space. The monetary and in-kind open space contributions for the missing open space is valued by the City's Real Estate Office.

**Option 4:** When the above options cannot be satisfied, a development provides a monetary contribution to the Open Space Fund. The monetary open space contribution for the missing open space is valued by the City's Real Estate Office. At a high level, the Real Estate Office provides an estimate for land within the development site using the site's proposed development plan/development potential. The estimate is divided by the square footage of the development site. The missing open space square footage is then multiplied by the cost/square foot estimate. Other factors such as easements, land configuration, utilities, location, and land quality are also considered during the evaluation process.

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### Monetary Open Space Contributions

Monetary open space contributions will be determined by City staff and will be used to fulfill the recommendations of the City's Park Improvement Plans, Public Open Space Assessments (Walkability, Condition, Design, and Equity Assessments), and/or meet amenity needs within the City (amenities include, but are not limited to, playgrounds, sports courts, athletic fields, dog parks, and fitness equipment).

### Open Space Contribution Policy

This Plan recommends the creation of a development contribution task force to assist the City in the creation of a comprehensive development contribution policy for new development. The development contribution task force would evaluate other departments contributions and establish a policy that balances the City's needs. The contribution policy would include the review of open space contributions with the intent of providing relief on development's increasing impact on existing open space by requiring development to provide funds towards the Open Space Fund. The contributions would be used towards open space acquisition, maintenance, and improvements to the open space system.

The City has XXX (dollar amount or a number of projects) identified in its Park Improvement Plans. With an increasing population, the City's parks continue to increase in their use. This increase in use reduces the park and park facilities' maintenance and lifecycle replacement. The contribution policy would be intended to implement the improvements identified in the Park Improvement Plans, Public Open Space Assessments (Walkability, Condition, Design, and Equity Assessments), and/or meet amenity needs within the City (amenities include but are not limited to, playgrounds, sports courts, athletic fields, dog parks, and fitness equipment). This Plan identifies a need to focus on the quality of the open space being provided, and these contributions could directly improve the City's open spaces and its amenities.

Further, this Plan recommends that the contribution policy distinguishes between residential and non-residential development, like Fairfax County's contribution policy. Fairfax County uses the Fair Share Residential Contribution, a standard contribution for each estimated new resident that the development will add to Fairfax County. There is also a Fair Share of Nonresidential Contribution that commercial development pays, which is based off the square footage of the gross floor area being added. Having a contribution policy that distinguishes between residential and non-residential development reflects the expected uses of the users of these development sites and their impact on the open space system. For example, a plaza and sitting area would be sufficient for an office building's open space, but for a residential building, residents' needs would include amenities such as playspaces, dog runs, and more active uses.

### Land Use Conversion and Open Space Needs

As with many cities around the country, Alexandria is experiencing an increase in conversions from office buildings/commercial to residential uses. Most of these conversions are carried out administratively without the review for open space needs within the development. As mentioned above, residential development open space needs are greater than with other uses.

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Because of this, this Plan recommends a review of the way building and development conversions occur at the City level.

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