

# PUBLIC ART PROJECT PLAN

## PROJECT PLAN FOR WEST END TRANSITWAY

Approved:

September 19, 2023

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## I. Introduction

The City of Alexandria’s Public Art Implementation Plan outlined a vision and goals for the public art program and established three Creative Directions: Time and Place, Neighborhoods & Gathering Spaces, and Natural and Urban Systems. Within the Natural and Urban Systems portion of the Plan, public art is encouraged to be integrated into transportation infrastructure projects as the City plans for its growth.

The City of Alexandria is implementing a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along the Van Dorn/Beauregard corridor (West End Transitway) that will provide robust high-capacity transit operations between the Van Dorn Metrorail station, the former Landmark Mall site, Shirlington Transit Center, Beauregard residential area, and the Pentagon using a combination of dedicated and shared bus lanes. The approved 2023-2025 Public Art Annual Work Plan recommends that public art be incorporated into this high-capacity transit corridor.

The Public Art Implementation Plan sets out a process for the commissioning of new public art. For each project approved in Public Art Annual Work Plan, the Commission for the Arts appoints a Public Art Project Task Force to advise on the entire project development process. The staff and the Project Task Force develop a Project Plan that sets out the project goals, artist selection process, budget, timeline, and communications strategy. The Project Task Force then selects an artist, through a process set out in the Project Plan. The artist develops a concept, which is then approved by the Project Task Force and the Commission for the Arts.

This document is the Project Plan for public art in the West End Transitway.

## II. Site and Context

### About the City of Alexandria

Alexandria, Virginia is a small historic seaport city of about 158,000 residents located on the Potomac River, minutes from Washington, D.C. It is best known for its historic Old Town but is also home to federal agencies such as the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office, the Defense Department and the headquarters of the National Science Foundation.

### About the West End

The West End generally identifies a group of neighborhoods in the central and western portion of the City of Alexandria. Portions of the West End are characterized by their proximity to Interstate I-395, and border Fairfax and Arlington counties. More broadly, the West End characterizes a land area annexed by the City of Alexandria in 1952, due to which, the land area of the City of Alexandria nearly doubled in size. The West End has experienced major development and population growth since these largely rural and agricultural areas were incorporated into the City over 70 years ago.

The West End Transitway will connect distinct and unique neighborhoods within the West End of Alexandria. The transitway connects multiple planning areas including Alexandria West, Beauregard, Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill, Landmark/Van Dorn, and Eisenhower West. Additionally, a new planning effort is currently underway to update the Small Area Plans for Alexandria West and Beauregard, and create a combined plan that reflects a current community vision. *For more information about this Alex West planning effort, please visit:* <https://www.alexandriava.gov/AlexandriaWest>.

Today the West End has a population of approximately 81,000 people and has a median age of 36.4 years, which is slightly younger than the City average. While the City of Alexandria as a whole is diverse, the West End is particularly diverse. Forty-seven (47) percent of West End residents identify as White; 31 percent identify as Black or African American; 10 percent identify as Asian or Pacific Islander; 6 percent identify as Native or Other; and 6

percent identify as two or more races. Approximately 18 percent of West End residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. Of those West End residents who are foreign born, the mostly highly represented countries are Ethiopia (18 percent), El Salvador (7 percent), Afganastan (6 percent), and Honduras (3 percent).

## Cultural and Historic Resources

Due to the large land area, the West End has a rich and varied history, beginning from Native American inhabitants approximately 13,000 years ago to modern times. Below are some links to resources for more information about the history and cultural resources in the City of Alexandria and the West End.

- **Brief History of Alexandria, Virginia:** The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) maintains and administers City-owned historic sites and properties. OHA has prepared a brief history on the City of Alexandria that is available online. *For more information please visit <https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/the-history-of-alexandria-virginia-an-introduction-and-resources>*
- **Fort Ward:** Fort Ward, located in the West End, protected the nation’s capital during the Civil War (1861–1865), and the vital seaport of Alexandria. After the war, a group of formerly enslaved African Americans bought land here and established a community known as “The Fort.” Despite facing social and legal inequalities, the residents of “The Fort” built homes, churches and a school, and created a strong community that survived for nearly a century. Their legacy reflects enduring ideas of freedom. *For more information please visit <https://www.alexandriava.gov/FortWard>*
- **Winkler Botanical Preserve:** The Winkler Botanical Preserve was created by the Winkler family and the Winkler Foundation in 1979 to protect this unique and special area during the development of Mark Center. Multiple trails, streams, a lake, and a waterfall, surrounded by woods and native plants, create an urban oasis in Alexandria's West End. *For more information please visit <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/winkler-botanical-preserve>*
- **Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) Alexandria Campus:** The NOVA Alexandria Campus, located in the West End, is one of 5 campuses in the NOVA system and has the second-highest enrollment—serving approximately 14,000 students. The campus boasts five buildings, including the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, which opened in the fall of 2001. The campus’ latest addition, the Center for Design, Media and the Arts is a state-of-the-art facility that houses programs in music, arts, photography, communications studies, cinema, theater, graphic design, early childhood education and physical education. The campus offers more than 70 programs and degrees, including multiple foreign languages and an English as a second language (ESL) program. *For more information please visit <https://www.nvcc.edu/alexandria>*
- **Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future:** This City initiative examines the history of immigration from the mid-nineteenth century to today in Alexandria. Valuing and recognizing Alexandria’s diversity is one of the major goals of the City Council’s Strategic Plan. *For more information please visit: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/immigrant-alexandria-past-present-and-future>*

## Alexandria’s Transit Vision

The City of Alexandria and DASH (the City’s transit agency) are committed to create a more useful and equitable bus network that encourages more people to get to more places using transit. On September 5, 2021, DASH unveiled its largest and most comprehensive single-day service change since the agency's inception. In addition to all day, frequent service throughout the city, the new network is totally free to ride, operating without any passenger fares.

DASH is also committed to supporting the City of Alexandria's Eco-City initiative. In 2020, DASH made the first milestone in achieving this goal as well as the core values laid out in the City's Environmental Action Plan with the public unveiling of the agency's first battery-electric buses. DASH is working towards implementing a 100% zero-emissions fleet.

## About the West End Transitway

The West End Transitway is a planned 5.3-mile bus rapid transit line (BRT) that will connect major transit facilities - Van Dorn Metrorail Station, a new transit hub at the former Landmark Mall site, Mark Center Transit Center, a new Southern Towers transit hub, Shirlington Transit Center, and the Pentagon Transit Center - and several neighborhoods along the corridor - Van Dorn/Landmark, the former Landmark Mall site, and Beauregard. This is one of three BRT corridors planned for the City of Alexandria.

The City will be implementing the West End Transitway in phases, and anticipates beginning initial operation of a first phase of the transitway by 2026. The implementation phases for the West End Transitway include:

- Ongoing implementation of the 2022/2030 Alexandria Transit Vision Plan service recommendations, including along the West End Transitway corridor.
- Design and construction of a first phase of the West End Transitway is focused on Transportation Systems Management (TSM) improvements including new stations with amenities, transit signal priority, bus queue jump lanes (short stretches of bus lanes around intersections, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, public art, and new buses to operate in shared lanes.
  - Design Phase: Late 2022 to Mid 2024
  - Construction Phase: 2025-2026
  - Planned Operation: Late 2026

A final phase would include dedicated transit lanes and new stations along portions of Van Dorn Street and Beauregard Street. This phase is not yet funded.

## Planned BRT Station Locations in the West End Transitway

The West End Transitway Study Area Map (attached) contains the planned alignment of the West End Transitway with the complete station network. The City of Alexandria is currently in the planning process to implement the following station locations:

- Beauregard Street and King Street
- Beauregard Street and W. Braddock Road (NVCC Alexandria)
- Beauregard Street and Fillmore Avenue
- Beauregard Street and Rayburn Avenue
- Beauregard Street and Sanger
- Van Dorn Street and Richenbacher (*northbound station only*)
- Van Dorn Street and Holmes Run Parkway
- Van Dorn Street and Stevenson Avenue (Van Dorn Plaza)
- Van Dorn Street and Pickett Street

Except as noted above, each station location will include two shelters (one for northbound and one for southbound). The shelters are planned to be 36 feet long. Additional amenities at the stations may include leaning rails, benches, trash cans, and landscaping, and may vary based on the final site design and site constraints. As indicated on the attached West End Transitway Study Area Map, additional station locations are planned; however, those station designs will be completed as a part of a separate process.

For more information about the West End Transitway please visit: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/transportation-planning/west-end-transitway>.

## Integration of Public Art within the West End Transitway

The FY23-25 Public Art Annual Workplan recommends that public art be incorporated within the West End Corridor as high-capacity transit corridor that the City has identified for priority and enhanced bus service. Public art in these stations may address elements including, but not limited to:

- Windowpanes in shelters
- Railings
- Seating Benches
- Sidewalks
- Retaining Walls
- Freestanding (where space is available outside of the immediate shelter)

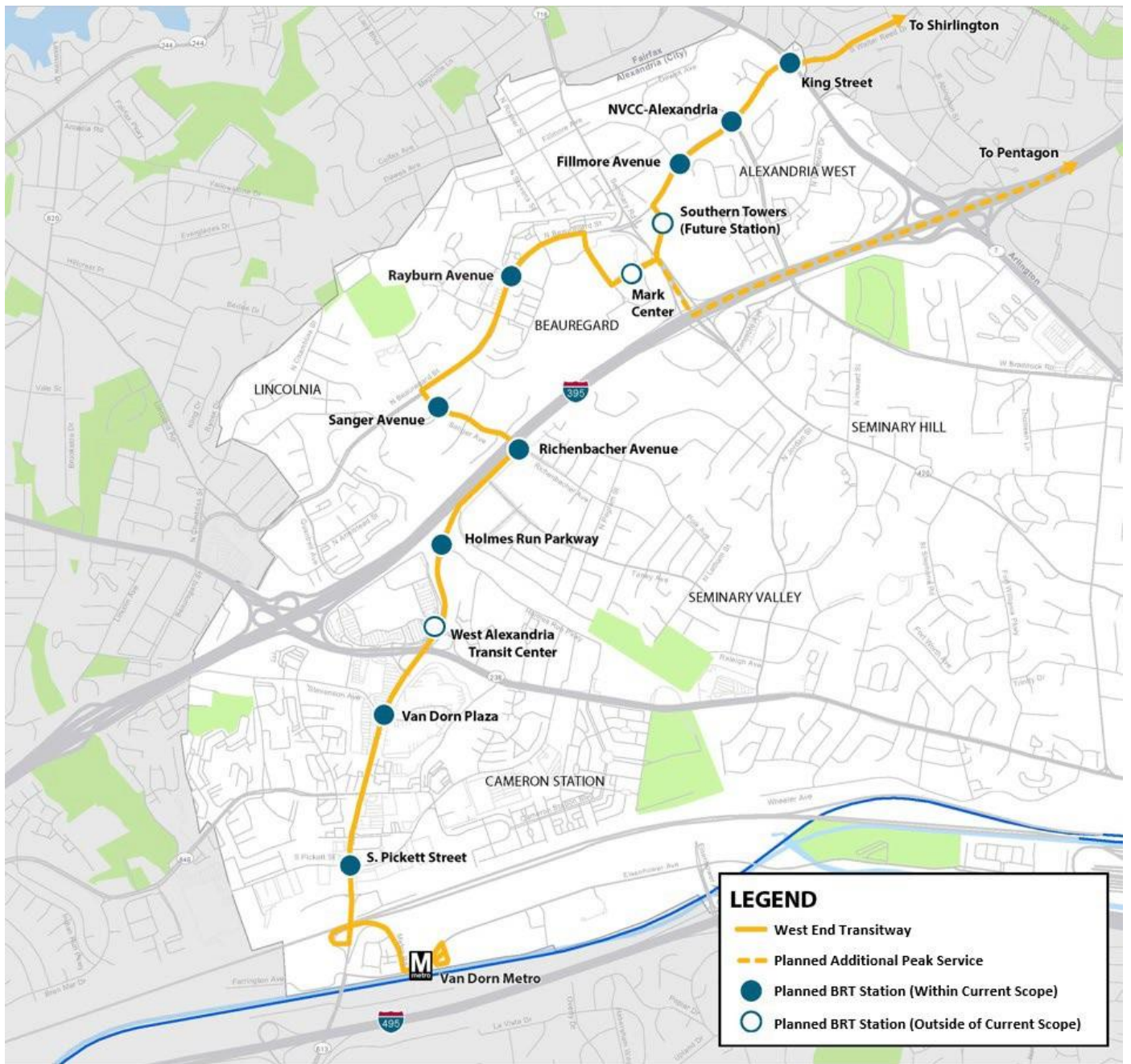
Please note that the shelters themselves will be standardized, and artists are not requested to design custom shelters in their entirety. Elements of the shelter may be modified with public art.

The West End Transitway corridor includes stations or stops that are currently outside of the scope of the first phase of the construction project currently managed by the City of Alexandria. These include the Van Dorn Metro Station, the West Alexandria Transit Center at the former Landmark Mall property, the Mark Center, and a potential future Southern Towers station. Nevertheless, public art is encouraged at these additional stations.

As future development comes online, developers may be required by the City to construct permanent stations to replace interim stations. Where future West End Transitway stations are planned or constructed by others, public art may be incorporated in the station design by private development in coordination with the Office of the Arts and consistent with the goals and intent of this Project Plan for Public Art in the West End Transitway. The City of Alexandria Public Art Program may identify additional funding sources to supplement funds provided by private development for the public art at West End Transitway Stations.

### III. Maps, Photos, and Exhibits

#### West End Transitway Study Area Map



## IV. Goals

The Alexandria Public Art Program is interested in commissioning artists to create site-specific, permanent works of art to be integrated within the West End Transitway. The program goals of the West End Transitway public art projects are to:

- Make taking transit a better experience for existing riders and generate new ridership.
- Bring new artwork to Alexandria that is informed by the context of the site(s) and reflect the character and aspirations of the surrounding neighborhood(s).
- Add delight to the user experience of the stations, while adding value to passersby and travelers on the corridor that would view the artwork from a distance.
- Add character and identity to the individual stations and elevate the West End Transitway as a network.
- Connect nearby residents and neighborhoods to quality art experiences in everyday places.

## V. Selection Process

For the West End Transitway project, the Office of the Arts will issue a national call for artists. Finalists will be selected and given the opportunity to come to Alexandria and visit the transitway, meet with staff, and interview with the Task Force.

### West End Transitway Task Force

The West End Transitway Task Force helps shape the Project Plan for the project and recommends selection of artist(s) and approval of concept(s).

The two Commission for the Arts representatives on the Task Force are:

- Allison Heck
- Brian Kelley

The Community Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Gus Ardura
- Donna Fossum

Project Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Reginald M. Arno, The Department of Project Implementation
- Jennifer Monaco, The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

### Artist Selection Process and Concept Approval

An open call process will be used to select artists for the project.

In accordance with the Public Art Implementation Plan and Policy, the Office of the Arts, will draft a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) based on the information provided in the Project Plan. This call will be issued via an online application system (Café – callforentry.org). Interested artists/artist teams will be welcome to submit a letter of interest, qualifications, and work samples.

The Task Force will review the application and qualifications and recommend an artist for the project. The selected artist/artist team will be approved by the Commission for the Arts.

The selected artist/artist team will develop a Concept Proposal/s in collaboration with the Office of the Arts staff, consultants, and other partners. The Concept Proposal/s will include a rendering, narrative description, fabrication methods, budget, and timeline. The Concept Proposal will be reviewed for feedback by the Task Force and be recommended for approval by Commission for the Arts prior to execution.



## VI. Timeline

September 2023	Task Force reviews and approves Project Plan*
September/October	Project Plan submitted to Commission for the Arts for approval*
November	Staff develops call to artists for review by Task Force*
November	Issue Call for Artists via Café (callforentry.org)
January 2024	Review qualifications and select artist/artist team*
Jan/Feb	Artist Interviews (optional)*
February	Task Force Recommends Artist(s)*
March	Arts Commission Approval of Artist(s)
March	Artist contract
April	Artist(s) site visit
April/May	Community Engagement
August	Artist presents concept for Task Force approval*
September	Concept approved by Commission for the Arts
November	Artist submits final design for technical review
TBD	Fabrication
TBD	Installation (to be coordinated with West End Transitway construction 2025-2026)
TBD	Completion (to be coordinated with West End Transitway –late 2026)

\*Steps with which the task force has a role.

## VII. Budget

The project plan recommends a phased approach to budgeting to incorporate public art at each station. The current available budgeted amounts are follows:

<b>From Public Art Fund (Phase 1)</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>
Artist design, fabrication & installation	\$142,500
Artist Contingency	\$7,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>

## VIII. Community Engagement, Marketing and Communications

Community engagement, marketing and communications should be geared toward engaging with existing stakeholders as well as bringing new audiences to experience the artwork.

### Stakeholders

Community engagement, marketing, and communications should build upon the existing stakeholder base for art and tourism in Alexandria and include additional stakeholders in the West End and those associated with the transit project. These will include, but are not limited to, representatives from:

- DASH Board
- Dash Rider Advisory Committee
- WMATA
- Transportation Commission
- West End Residents
- West End Business Association
- Beaugard Design Advisory Committee
- West End Coalition
- Seminary West Civic Association
- Seminary Heights Condominium Association
- Seminary Park Home Owners Association

## Marketing and Communications

The Office of the Arts staff will develop a marketing and communications strategy for the public art. Information/materials should be provided in languages relevant to the nearby communities. The marketing plan will include:

- Web-based information about the project.
- Social media.
- Print materials to be distributed at local events.
- Media releases to local and national publications and blogs.
- Print and/or online advertising in local and regional publications.

## Community Engagement and Activations

The project plan anticipates that over the course of the multiyear implementation project there may be additional opportunities to engage artists in the West End Transitway, including with branding, promotion, community outreach, safety, and education initiatives. Temporary public art and activations are supported in successful implementation of the transitway. These opportunities may include:

- Public Art Activations and Events: Opportunities for visual, performing, movement, or musical artist to engage the public at special events centered around the transitway.
- Temporary Public Art Opportunities During Construction Activities
- Temporary Safety Initiatives
- Branding Initiatives