



DEPARTMENT OF
**PLANNING &
ZONING**

Resources and Planning Glossary

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Planning Glossary

A

Area median income (AMI)

Income levels, by geographic and/or urban areas, that are annually established by HUD for households of various sizes, where half of the households in the area earn more and half earn less. Percentage of AMI is used as an index in identifying level of affordability.

B

Best Management Practice for Storm Water Management (Storm Water Management BMP)

Storm water management BMPs are control measures taken to mitigate changes to both quantity and quality of urban runoff. Generally these BMPs focus on water quality problems caused by increased impervious surfaces. These BMPs are designed to reduce

storm water volume, peak flows, and/or non-point source pollution through evapotranspiration, infiltration, detention, and filtration or biological and chemical actions. These BMPs also can improve receiving-water quality by extending the duration of outflows in comparison to inflow duration in order to dilute the storm water discharged into a larger volume of upstream flow.

Bicycle Facility

A general term denoting infrastructure improvements and provisions that accommodate and/or encourage bicycling. Some examples include bicycle racks, bicycle lanes, trails and shared lane markings (“sharrows”).

Bonus Height or Density

Section 7-700 of the City’s Zoning Ordinance, which requires provision of some on-site affordable units when bonus density or height is granted through the special use permit process. Bonus density under Section 7-700 consists of increases above what is allowed with a Development Special Use Permit in a given zone of up to 20 percent in additional density or up to 25 feet in additional height.

C

Capital Improvement Program

A ten-year plan of approved capital expenditures for long term improvements to the City’s public facilities and public works, as well as to Alexandria City Public School capital projects.

Community Engagement

The process through which people who live, work, invest or spend time in an area are actively involved in the development of plans and recommendations for the future of that area.

Combined Sewer Outfall (CSO)

There are two types of storm sewer systems in the COA, a Separate Sanitary Sewer System (SSSS), and a Combined Sewer System (CSS). An SSSS consists of two pipes: one pipe conveys storm water runoff (rain water) from storm drains to local waterways with little or no treatment to remove pollutants. The other pipe conveys sanitary sewage to the local wastewater treatment plant operated by Alexandria Renew Enterprises. A CSS has only one pipe which conveys both sanitary sewage and storm water to a local wastewater treatment plant. During dry weather, all raw sewage flows to the treatment plant. When

significant rainfall occurs, the pipe can become overloaded with polluted storm water. This mixture of storm water (about 90%) and sewage may overflow into local streams through the end of the pipe, or the CSO.

Committed Affordable Units (CAUs)

Housing units that are available to income-eligible households through rent and/or occupancy restrictions imposed as a condition of assistance under federal, state or local programs. Targeted income levels vary by program.

Coordinated Development District (CDD)

The CDD is established for those areas which are of such size or are so situated as to have significant development related impacts on the city as a whole or a major portion thereof and in order to promote development consistent with the master plan. A site zoned CDD is intended for a mixture of uses to include office, residential, retail, hotel and other uses with appropriate open space and recreational amenities to serve the project users and residents of the city. A CDD zone is intended to encourage land assemblage and/or cooperation and joint planning where there are multiple owners in the CDD zoned area. A review process is established to ensure that such developments exhibit a proper integration of uses, the highest quality of urban and architectural design and harmony with the surrounding areas of the city.

D

Development Site Plan (DSP)

A DSP is required in all zones for any development that: contains three or more dwelling units; is a building or addition that is 3,000 square feet or larger; provides a parking lot with five or more parking spaces; is a building addition that is 1/3 or more of the existing gross square feet of the building; and falls under other criteria listed in the COA Zoning Ordinance.

Development Special Use Permit with Site Plan (DSUP)

A DSUP is required in all zones for any development that requires a site plan and is requesting approval of a special use permit for the following: a modification of the parking ratios; a modification to the yard, landscape or open space requirements; increased building height; increased Floor Area Ratio; affordable housing bonus density; and other special requirements listed in the applicable zone in the COA Zoning Ordinance.

F

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The floor area ratio of the building or buildings on any lot or tract or tract of land is the total aggregate floor area of such building or buildings divided by the area of that lot or tract or tract of land.

G

Green Building

Structures that incorporate the principles of sustainable design—design in which the impact of a building on the environment will be minimal over the lifetime of that building. Green buildings incorporate principles of energy and resource efficiency, practical applications of waste reduction and pollution prevention, good indoor air quality and natural light to promote occupant health and productivity, and transportation efficiency in design and construction, during use and reuse.

Green Infrastructure

A term used to describe an array of products, technologies and practices that use natural or engineered systems to enhance overall environmental quality and provide utility services. Examples include green roofs, porous pavement, rain gardens, and vegetated swales. In addition to effectively retaining and infiltrating rainfall, these technologies can simultaneously help filter air pollutants, reduce energy demands, mitigate urban heat islands, and sequester carbon while also providing communities with aesthetic and natural resource benefits.

H

Housing Affordability

Housing is considered affordable when the occupying household is paying no more than 30% of its gross income on housing-related expenses (rent or mortgage, plus utilities). A household is “cost burdened” when they pay more than 30% of their income.

I

Impervious Surface

Any hard-surfaced (e.g. asphalt, concrete, roofing material, brick, paving block, plastic), man-made area that does not readily absorb or retain water, including but not limited to

building roofs, parking and driveway areas, graveled areas, sidewalks, and paved recreation areas.

Infrastructure

Facilities and services needed to sustain industry, residential, commercial, and all other land-use activities, including water, sewer lines, and other utilities, streets and roads, communications, transmission lines, and public facilities such as fire stations, parks, schools, etc.

L

Liner Building Uses

Buildings specifically designed to mask parking lots or garages from street frontage.

Linear Path or Park

A park or parkway that is long rather than wide. Linear parks are often created from strips of public land next to rivers, creeks, canals, easements for electrical lines, former rail corridors, scenic highways, and shorelines.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC)

The federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) program was established under the Tax Reform Act of 1986 to encourage private investment in affordable housing. LIHTC is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in tax liability to the owner of qualified low-income housing development for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of low-income rental housing units. While the LIHTC is a federal credit, the LIHTC program is administered by state housing finance agencies in each state. In Virginia, the Virginia Housing Development Authority is responsible for administering the LIHTC program.

M

Market Affordable Housing

Rental housing that is affordable to households earning 60% or more of Area Median Income (AMI) without any restrictions or subsidies. Usually the housing is affordable due to its age, location, amenities, and/or design.

Market-Rate Housing

Housing that is produced or provided in response to market demand. It is without federal, state, or local subsidies or income restrictions.

Master Plan

The COA's Master Plan is made up of Small Area Plans (SAPs) covering Alexandria's neighborhoods, plus chapters on key topics, such as Transportation, Housing, and Open Space. The Master Plan is updated on an ongoing basis through Master Plan Amendments to add or update Small Area Plans.

Mixed-Use

Mixed-use development is development of a tract of land or building or structure with two or more differing uses such as residential, office, retail, service, public, or entertainment, in a compact urban form. These types of developments can result in measurable reductions in traffic impacts.

P

Park Typology

Park typology categorizes the City's open spaces into groups based on their sizes and uses, allowing for development plans for parks that share similar characteristics and improvement needs.

- **Citywide Parks:** Contains multiple uses within a park boundary; attracts visitors from all over the City.
- **Neighborhood Parks:** May include multiple uses within park boundary; attracts nearby residents.
- **Pocket Parks:** Small open space; mainly single use attracting nearby residents.
- **Natural Resource Areas:** Includes open spaces that are primarily passive-use or preservation areas.
- **Shared Use:** Includes parks that share facilities with schools and recreation centers
- **Destination/Historical:** Attracts users from beyond the region because of unique features.
- **Regional:** Includes lands or facilities administered by other regional entities.
- **Corridors/Linear Parks/Trailways:** Includes trailways, corridors and linear parks that serve primarily as linear bikeway corridors; may include right-of-ways.

Placemaking

Creating squares, plazas, parks, streets, and waterfronts that attract people because they are pleasurable or interesting and include a variety of opportunities to enjoy the space actively and passively, with landscaping and nearby amenities.

Public Access Easement

Privately owned property that is available for public use, all or some parts of the day.

Public Housing

Income-restricted housing units that are targeted to extremely low- to low- income families. Residents pay 30% of their adjusted income as rent, and HUD provides the local housing authority (Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority – ARHA) with subsidies to maintain the units and the developments in which they are located.

Public Open Space

The City's Zoning Ordinance includes a Public Open Space (POS) zone which is restrictive to recreational and/or natural resource uses. Along with the Zoning Ordinance definition, the term public open space is synonymous with any park, plaza, recreation area, etc. that is open to the public, either publicly or privately owned.

R

Remediation

Remediation is the action or measure taken, or to be taken, to lessen, clean-up, remove, or mitigate the existence of hazardous materials existing on the property to such standards, specifications, or requirements as may be established or required by federal, state, county, or city statute, rule, or regulation.

S

Small Area Plans

COA's Master Plan consists of Small Area Plans (SAP), each setting a vision and goals for its community's future over a designated period of time. With strong citizen participation, an SAP typically addresses the economic, physical (all land uses and infrastructure), social and environmental elements of a community, taking into account anticipated growth in population, employment and overall development over the designated timespan of the SAP, generally 15-20 years. The SAP includes graphics and maps and includes objectives, strategies and recommendations to accomplish the vision and goals.

Special Use Permit

Typically, a Special Use Permit (SUP) is required for businesses such as restaurants, beauty salons, fitness studios, dry cleaners, or other businesses that need special review because they have the potential to create noise, odors, fumes, pollution or significant

parking impacts. The process is designed to ensure that potentially affected neighbors are both informed of and are provided an opportunity to comment on the proposed business. The City Zoning Ordinance regulates the location of various uses.

Stakeholder

Any person or group with a vested interest in the outcome of a project or plan.

Streetscape

The treatment of space between buildings and street that defines the public realm.

Streetscape elements may include building frontage/facade, public art, outdoor cafes, transit stops or shelters, landscaping (trees, planters, fountains, etc.), sidewalk pavers, special embedded street paving, street furniture (benches, kiosks, etc.), signs, awnings, and street lighting.

Streetwall

The wall or part of the building nearest to the street or property line.

Subdivision

The division of a lot, parcel or tract of land into two or more lots, plots, sites, parcels or other divisions for the purpose, whether immediate or future, of sale or building development. This includes the resubdivision of existing lots, parcels, tracts or other divisions of existing and duly recorded subdivisions. Any tract of land upon which a street, alley or public right-of-way is dedicated shall be considered a subdivision.

U

Urban Design

The attempt to impose a rational order or to give form, in terms of both beauty and function, to selected urban areas or to whole cities. Urban design is an effort to make an urban area or whole city comprehensive, functional, and aesthetic through the articulation of its parts.

Z

Zoning Ordinance (City of Alexandria)

COA's Zoning Ordinance contains regulatory controls for the City covering use (residential, commercial, mixed use), density, height, historic preservation, development approvals,

parking, non-complying and non-conforming uses, environmental management, signs, and zoning map amendments.