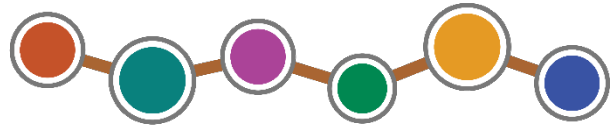


# DUKE STREET LAND USE PLAN



## Duke Street Land Use Plan Summary Report on Phase 3 Pop-up Events

### Introduction

This report summarizes the more than 200 (230 total) comments received from ten pop-ups held by the Duke Street Land Use Plan staff during May and June.

The events were held along the corridor:

- Beasley Central Library (2 separate events)
- Ben Brennan Farmer's Market
- Bent Place Community Cookout
- Mason at Van Dorn Cookout
- Aldi's
- Starbucks
- Port City Brewery Pride event
- Port City Summer Music event
- West End Business Association's Best of the West event

### Six overall themes emerged:

1. **Traffic remains the most common topic** in the comments, and often a primary concern, whether about congestion, the timing of traffic lights, or the potential reduction of auto lanes.
2. A genuine **concern that rapid residential development** and increased building heights may cause unintended consequences that will be hard to manage.
3. A major **tension exists between** the push for green, multimodal transit and the pragmatic reality of a community that remains fundamentally car-dependent.
4. A significant desire to **begin transitioning** toward a more integrated, pedestrian-centric urban design where living, working, and leisure blend effectively.
5. **A protective stance** by some in the community around **insulating established neighborhoods** and local small businesses from generic or uncontrolled development and displacement.

6. **Public parks, the tree canopy, and environmental mitigation** are vital municipal “infrastructure” directly linked to health, safety, and quality of life.

## Mobility Themes (113 comments)

### 1. Traffic Mitigation, Light Timing, and Road Lanes

Residents registered the following concerns:

- **The timing of the street lights** across the network that specifically create bottlenecks at N. Quaker and Taylor, Bishop Ireton, and the "nightmare" at Duke and S. Quaker.
- **Poorly designed intersections**, such as the "S-curve" white striping alignment at Duke and Jordan that needs to be straightened, and a request for a two-lane expansion on the Telegraph Road on-ramp.
- **The narrowing of or reducing regular vehicle lanes** to accommodate alternative transit, with warnings that doing so will trigger severe, compounding congestion.
- The current and potential future **traffic impacts of new apartment buildings**.

### 2. Traffic Congestion and Chokepoints

Residents expressed concerns about:

- How new **housing additions could transform the character** of Duke Street into a congested urban highway, as you see in Arlington.
- **The lack of routine maintenance, including fixing potholes, repairing broken trail lights,** and completely repaving Wythe Street from Henry to West.
- The **existing townhouse congestion** at Knob Hill Court impacting Duke Street, and questions about how new residents will safely exit localized areas like Whittier.
- The **logistical challenges that families face trying to transport children** to soccer at Whittier Field and Brennan, prompting calls for dedicated access roads near Bishop Ireton to bypass the gridlock.
- The new **traffic patterns that will be generated by the Landmark development** and its impacts on the surrounding community.
- The congestion at **Telegraph Road with only one lane to access I-395** from Duke Street ... while calling for a **road connecting Colvin to Wheeler Ave**

### 3. How to Ensure Biking is Safe in the Corridor

- Residents expressed significant **support from families and young people for dedicated, continuous bike lanes** directly on or near Duke Street to access stores, parks, and local amenities safely.

- One resident **requested data-driven planning for biking**, questioning whether current bicycle usage numbers are accurate, and whether cyclists should contribute to the infrastructure through bike-specific taxes.

Concerns about:

- **Duke Street being too dangerous for bikes.** Some residents suggest routing bicycle infrastructure through quieter residential corridors or utilizing Colvin Street instead.
- **Painted bike lanes, which feel unsafe** to some cyclists and also create friction with drivers. Some residents expressed a clear preference for completely separated, protected off-road multi-use paths.

#### 4. Pedestrian Connectivity and Safety

Recommendations for:

- **Sidewalks on all sides of the street** that are unbroken, along with specific inquiries about who will fund new pedestrian paths on Taney Avenue.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle bridges to cross major transportation divides**, specifically from Telegraph Road to the Hoffman Center and from Cameron Station to the Van Dorn Metro.

Concerns about:

- **The need for speed limits on trails** (like Holmes Run) and reckless riding habits, prompting calls for age requirements for e-bikes and scooters and separate lanes to shield traditional pedestrians.
- The **perilous crosswalk on the 395 exit ramp** near the Landmark development, as well as general safety issues on S. Reynolds Street.
- The **blocking of Quaker Lane**, noting that current traffic light cycles are far too fast for pedestrians—especially seniors—to cross safely.

#### 5. Transit Feedback

- There was **mixed feedback on bus lanes**, with some supporting rapid transit and others warning that buses are currently underutilized. Also, one resident suggested converting lanes to bus express-only options during peak rush hours.
- There was also a **request for structural support at transit gateways**, such as introducing secure bike storage at the King Street Metro.

#### 6. Car Dependence and Demands for Parking

There was:

- Some **concern over whether new high-density developments**—particularly at the Fox Chase/Alexandria Crossing area and the Landmark site—will impact existing parking capacities.
- A request to **preserve street parking on Van Dorn Street**, balanced against calls to ban parking on “thin” service roads like Jordan Street where parked cars impede flow and create hazards.
- **A reminder** that even as transit options are expanded, **U.S. society remains car-dependent**, and thus parking minimums must not be shortchanged in new apartment complexes.
- A desire to **maintain adequate parking considerations** for both single-family homes and local businesses, especially as density increases at Fox Chase and Alexandria Crossing.
- **Concerns expressed that more housing will mean more traffic and congestion**, while also being concerned about where those cars will park and whether developers will be held accountable for providing sufficient spaces. A few residents expressed unhappiness with paying separate monthly fees for parking spaces.

## Building Heights Themes (40 comments)

### 1. How to Achieve More Housing Effectively

- Some residents **hope to maximize housing units** and build high-rises aggressively to stabilize prices (e.g., like Austin and Minneapolis)
- Some residents remain **skeptical about whether building more housing** will actually bring down prices.
- Some residents expressed a desire to have **affordable housing units available with any new housing developments**.

### 2. Density, Height Limits, and Architectural Character

- **Tension:** While some residents are comfortable with taller buildings and **greater density**, others want to ensure height caps (ranging from 50’ to 85’) or **do not want to see any additional density** or tall buildings.
- Others **don’t like the aesthetics of the newer multi-story housing** and would like to see developments that align better with Alexandria’s architectural heritage.

### 3. Impact on Utilities and Tree Canopy

- Some residents worried about **too many mature trees being removed** or obscured by new construction.

- Another suggested that the **city relocate overhead electrical lines underground** in new developments and within existing residential neighborhoods.

#### 4. Neighborhood Protection and Potential Small Business Displacement

Some residents:

- Want to **ensure the plan keeps single-family neighborhoods strictly isolated** from developers seeking height variances.
- Expressed concern that so much new development **may result in independent and local small businesses being unable to afford rents.**
- One resident proposed that **new mixed-use developments designate free or affordable space** for 501(c)(3) community organizations.

### Land Use Themes (36 comments)

#### 1. Increasing Neighborhood & Commercial Vitality

Residents requested:

- **More restaurants, bars, and commercial spaces** to activate the neighborhood.
- **A blending of residential zones with low-traffic businesses**, alongside a push for more mixed-use zoning between Quaker Lane and French Street.
- **Affordable, highly walkable apartments** designed specifically for seniors looking to age in place.

#### 2. Clear Rules for Developers, Residents, and Neighborhoods

- Requests for **clear setbacks on new mixed-use developments** to ensure buildings don't overwhelm the street.
- A question regarding **whether single-family homeowners can easily expand their footprints**, such as enclosing outdoor spaces into functional rooms.
- A recommendation to **dictate what developers build** to ensure it aligns with local needs.
- Concern over the **potential removal of medians** in front of homes along Duke Street.

#### 3. Housing Affordability

- Residents posed direct questions about **what structural measures can be taken to lower rents**, pointing out high vacancies in buildings where current rents are prohibitive. Explicit mentions of affordability struggles in specific areas, such as S. Picket Street, and general support for affordable housing initiatives.

#### 4. Environmental Health

Some residents:

- Expressed clear **opposition to the Virginia Paving plant** due to air pollution in residential zones, with explicit requests to deny Special Use Permit (SUP) extensions and close the paving facility by January 1, 2027.
- **Expressed opposition to local data centers** through utility taxing or incentives to curb heavy water and power usage
- The need for advocacy to **fight light pollution** that disrupts both local wildlife and astronomy.
- The need for advocacy for the **integration of more low-carbon, renewable energy systems** within the city's broader infrastructure plans.

#### Parks and Open Space Themes (33 comments)

##### 1. More Recreation and Aquatic Amenities

Some residents would like to see:

- **A West End pool or splash pad.** The current options are considered insufficient.
- **A new recreation center, plus dedicated spaces and activities for teenagers** to give them a constructive place to gather.
- **Other amenities recommended include:**
  - Sand **volleyball** courts
  - Revamped or relocated **skate parks**
  - **Pickleball** courts at Jordan and Duke Park
  - **Amenities at Duke Park** (near Harris Teeter) with a pickleball court, a BBQ area, and outdoor games
  - More **outdoor exercise stations** along existing trails
  - More **traditional playgrounds** to accommodate neighborhood population growth.
- A few residents also recognized and, in some cases, **praised spaces that are currently kept safe and clean.**
- A couple of residents expressed a **desire for more civic spaces like the MLK center** for classes and events

##### 2. Walkability and a Pedestrian Plaza?

- Several residents expressed a push to **make Duke Street significantly more walkable**, establishing safe running and cycling routes throughout the area

- Several residents want the city to **address current connectivity gaps**, such as reopening the path near William Ramsey.
- One resident suggested **creating a pedestrian street(s) that is akin to an European piazza** with central park green spaces surrounded by outdoor restaurant dining.

### 3. Expansion of Open Spaces & Pocket Parks

- A couple of residents **appreciated some of the more “intimate” spaces like the pocket park** off N. Paxton Street, while also desiring more open spaces city-wide.
- One requested **additional green space** surrounding Armistead Boothe Park.
- Another recommended to **extend the Park P-1 initiative into the neighborhood near the rec center** and condos by introducing a community garden or active park zone.

### 4. Care for the Environment

Residents registered concerns regarding:

- **Trees being “over-mulched”** on Duke Street near Aldi, suffocating their root systems.
- The loss of baby turtles in 2024 and **the need to help the local population of turtles recover**.
- The **heavy accumulation of trash** from the Brenneman Park Pond’s water.

### 5. Prepare for Growth

- A few residents reminded the city that as the population grows, **the development of parks, roads, and schools must keep pace**