

planning for a changing future



DEPARTMENT OF
**PLANNING &
ZONING**



Planning Commission Retreat

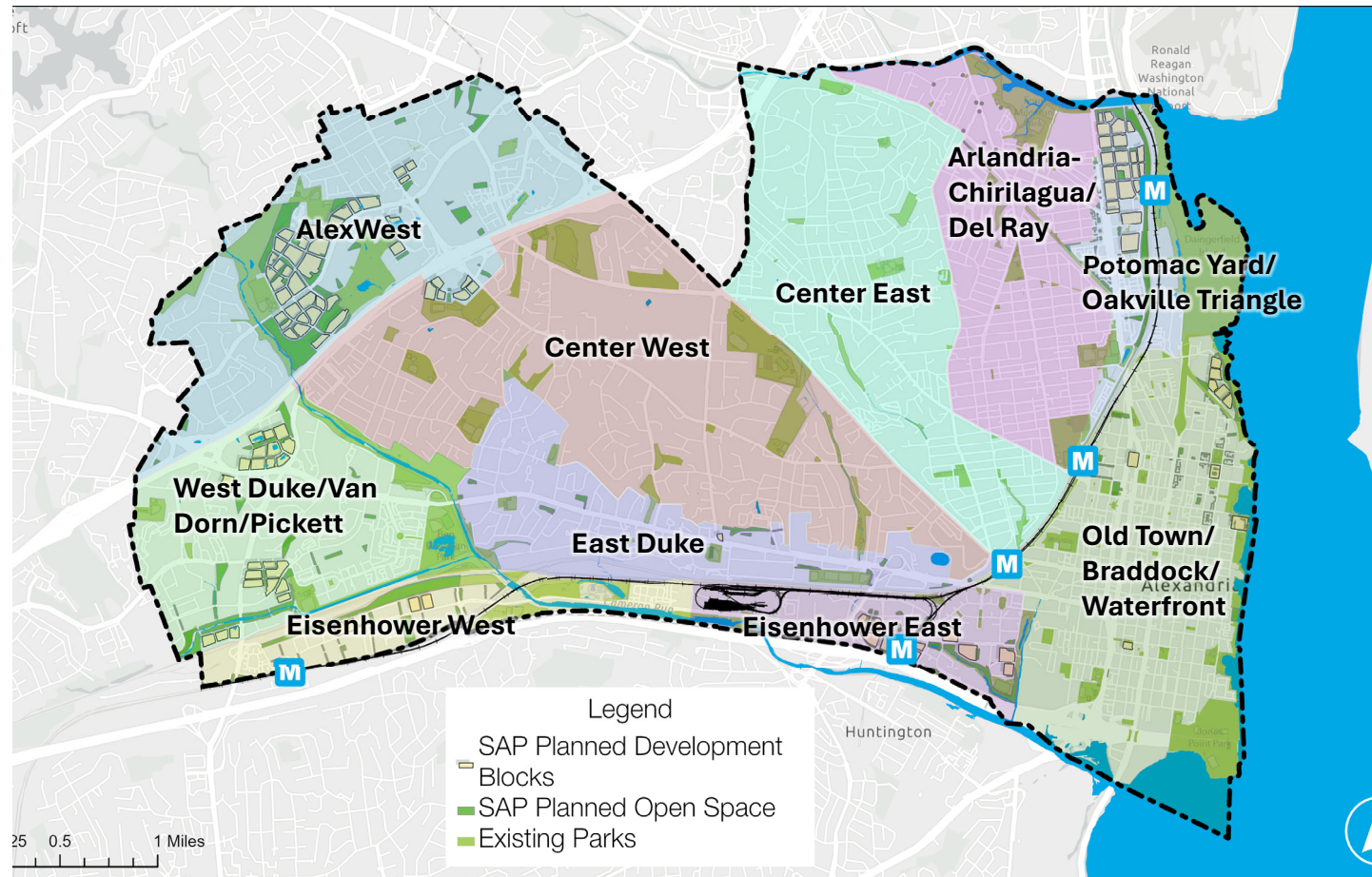
Agenda

1. Current Overall Growth Strategy
2. Is Change Different Now ?
3. Planning with Uncertainty
4. Questions + Discussion

Overall Growth + Land Use Strategy

Grow with Purpose: Managing change + delivering community benefits

- 90 % of growth in planned areas
- 75 % near high-capacity transit
- Housing Supply + Affordability



Grow With Purpose

Manage Change + Deliver Lasting Community Benefits

01

Growth Management

Focus large scale growth around commercial centers, corridors, redevelopment and infill sites.

02

Transform underutilized and infill sites

Convert parking lots, commercial centers, and infill properties into more connected neighborhoods.

03

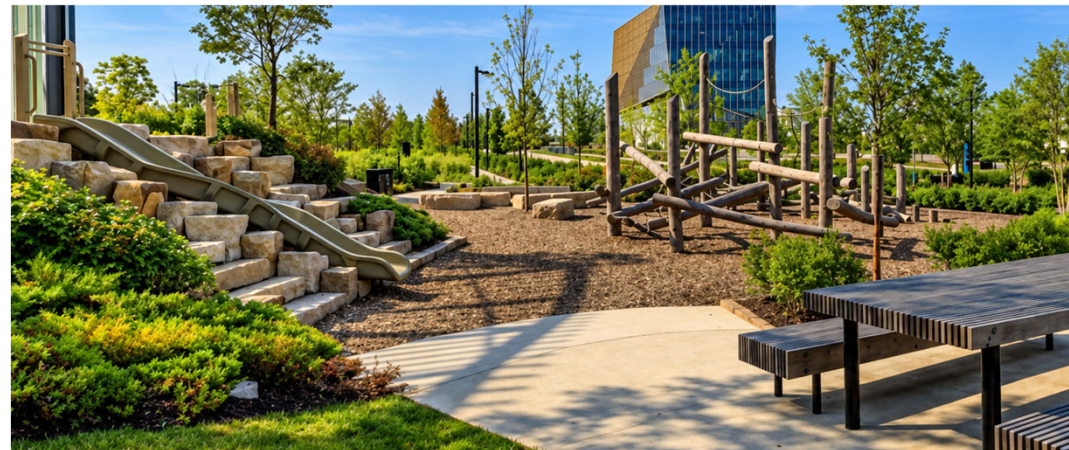
Build on Alexandria's DNA

Create human-scaled blocks, walkable streets, varied architecture and memorable public spaces.

04

Coordinate growth + mobility

Connect development with Metro, BRT, DASH, safer streets, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian routes.



What Growth Should Deliver

A connected set of Outcomes – Not a Menu of Tradeoffs

01

Create more complete neighborhoods

Integrate homes, jobs, businesses, parks, schools, civic facilities, and daily services.

02

Deliver public benefits

Use growth to help fund housing, infrastructure, parks, transportation, schools, and civic facilities.

03

Support economic diversity

Strengthen local businesses, preserve employment areas, and expand Alexandria's tax base.

04

Advance sustainability, health + resilience

Reduce emissions, improve health, manage heat and flooding, and strengthen long-term resilience.



Alexandria Has Always Evolved

Change has continually reshaped how the city connects, grows, and functions.

1749–1890



THE CONNECTED CITY



- 1840s Canal
- 1851 Railroad
- 1880s Utilities
- 1890 Streetcars

1900s–1980s



CAR + METRO GROWTH

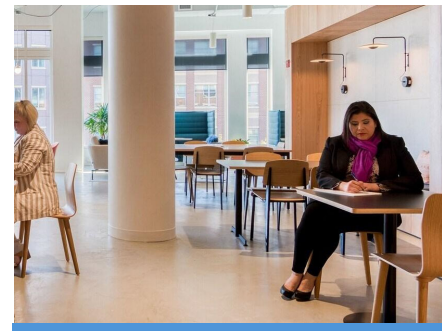


- 1900s–30s Impact of Cars
- 1932 Memorial Parkway
- 1950s–70s Highways + Suburban Growth
- 1983 Metrorail

1990s–2010s



DIGITAL CITY

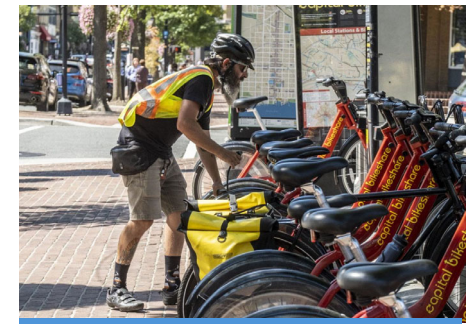


- 1990s Computers, GIS + internet
- 2000s GPS + Smartphones
- 2010s E-commerce

2010s–TODAY



THE ADAPTIVE CITY



- 2010s–20s Micromobility + electrification
- 2020s Hybrid and remote work
- 2022–present Generative AI

Trend or disruptor?

TREND

A sustained direction of change that can generally be anticipated.

Examples

- Population Aging
- Smaller households
- Rising Housing Costs
- Climate Change.

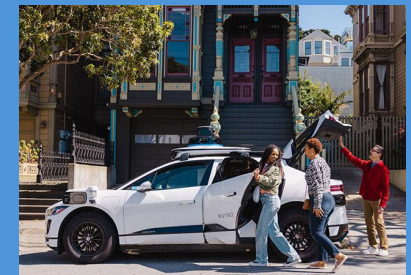


DISRUPTOR

An event or shift that changes the trajectory or invalidates assumptions.

Examples

- Artificial Intelligence Population
- Federal Restructuring
- Autonomous Mobility
- Extreme Weather



What Should Endure as Alexandria Evolves?

Enduring Commitments

- 01 Design DNA
- 02 Inclusive neighborhoods
- 03 Housing Affordability
- 04 Walkability + Transit
- 05 Environmental Resilience
- 06 High-quality public spaces
- 07 Fiscal responsibility



Elements that may need to Adapt

- 01 Land Uses
- 02 Parking
- 03 Density + Timing
- 04 Interim Uses
- 05 Implementation



Planning Commission Discussion

1. What is one planning assumption Alexandria relies on today that may no longer be valid by 2045?
2. What should Alexandria do in the next 5 years to prepare for 2045 ?

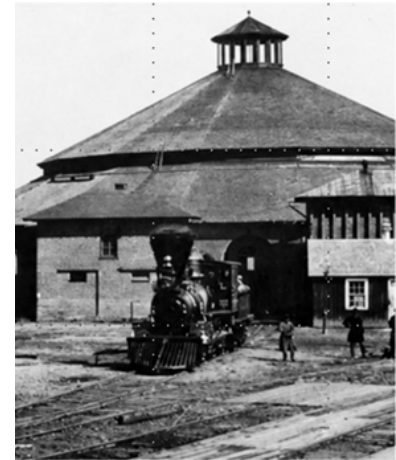
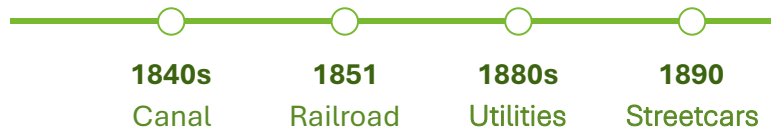
Questions + Discussion

A City Shaped by Connection

1749–1890 | THE CONNECTED CITY

PORT • CANAL • RAIL • STREETCAR

Each new technology reshaped how we moved, grew, and connected to the region.



Infrastructure Shapes City Form

Technology impacts on land use



QUESTION # 1

Which of our current land-use assumptions are most susceptible to technological, economic or demographic change ?

QUESTION # 2

Which land-use assumptions are most vulnerable to disruption—and how should Alexandria plan for that uncertainty?

Planning with Uncertainty

The goal is not to predict 2045 perfectly. It is to make decisions today that remain useful across several possible futures.

Alexandria can prepare by:

01

**Planning for
multiple futures**

02

**Identifying
actions that work
under most
conditions**

03

**Monitoring
leading indicators,
trends and
disruptors**

04

**Building flexibility
into implementation,
while retaining clear
public objectives.**

PLANNING PRINCIPLE

Be firm about outcomes – flexible about pathways

Planning for Different Scenarios

Each scenario creates a different planning challenge.

Managed Change

Steady growth and continued investment

- Development remains financially feasible
- Population and employment grow incrementally
- Housing demand remains strong
- Infrastructure needs are generally predictable

PLANNING CHALLENGE

Accommodate growth while maintaining affordability, character, services, and quality of life.

Uneven Transition

High costs, slower development, and widening disparities

- Financing and construction costs remain elevated
- Approved projects are delayed or redesigned
- Housing affordability pressures intensify
- Some districts attract investment while others lag

PLANNING CHALLENGE

Advance public objectives when fewer projects are financially feasible and the benefits of growth are unevenly distributed.

Accelerated Disruption

Rapid technological, governmental, economic, or climate-related change

- AI and automation reshape employment
- Federal restructuring affects the regional economy
- Mobility technology alters streets and parking
- Climate impacts accelerate infrastructure needs
- Traditional land-use categories become less relevant

PLANNING CHALLENGE

Adapt quickly without abandoning Alexandria's long-term values and vision.

Planning with Uncertainty

The goal is not to predict 2045 perfectly. It is to make decisions today that remain useful across several possible futures.

Alexandria can prepare by:

1. Planning for multiple futures
2. Identifying actions that work under most conditions
3. Monitoring leading indicators, trends and disruptors
4. Building flexibility into implementation, while retaining clear public objectives.
Be firm about outcomes – flexible about pathways

Planning for Different Scenarios

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Planning challenge:

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High costs, slower development, and widening disparities

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Planning challenge: Advance public objectives when fewer projects are financially feasible and the benefits of growth are unevenly distributed.

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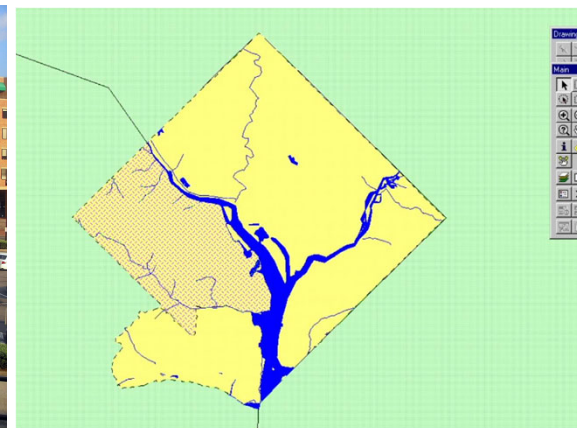
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Planning challenge: Adapt quickly without abandoning Alexandria's long-term values and vision.

Is Change Different Now?

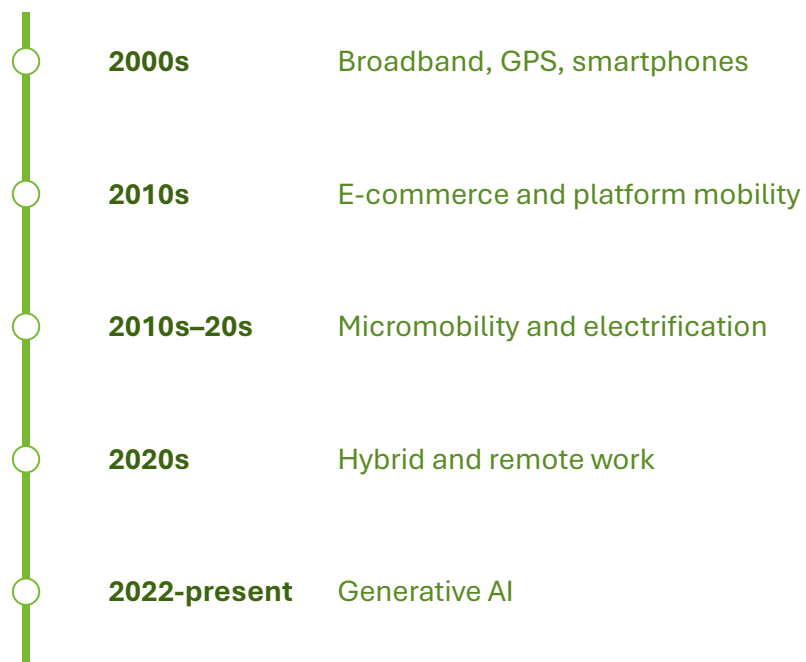
Automobile, Metro and Computer City

	1900s–30s	Cars transform streets
	1932	Memorial Parkway opens
	1950s–70s	Highways and suburban growth
	1983	Metrorail arrives
	1990s	Computers, GIS and the internet

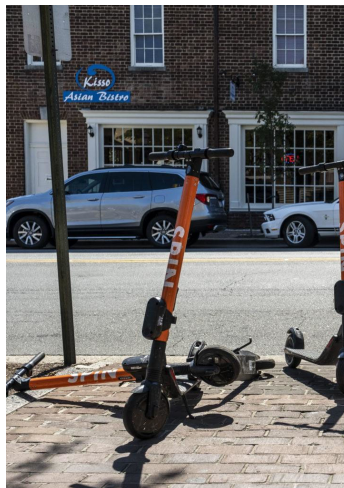
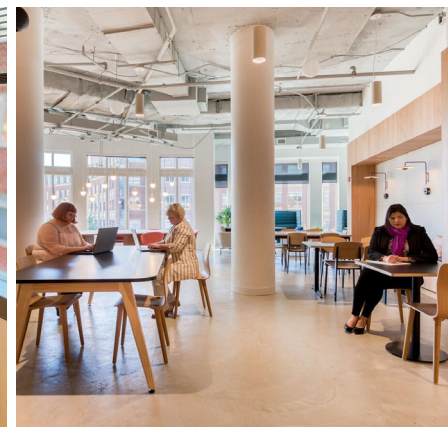
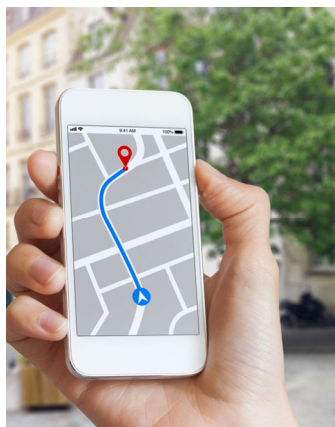


Is Change Different Now?

Digital, Automated, and Adaptive City



American Planning Association's [2026 Trend Report for Planners](#)



What are timeless elements of cities?

Enduring commitments:

1. Alexandria's historic and cultural identity
2. Inclusive neighborhoods
3. Housing opportunity + affordability
4. Walkability and access to transit
5. Environmental resilience
6. High-quality public spaces
7. Fiscal responsibility

Elements that may need to adapt:

1. Land use categories
2. Parking requirements
3. Development phasing
4. Transportation Investments
5. Implementation schedules

Trend or Disruptor

Trend:

A sustained direction of change that can generally be anticipated.

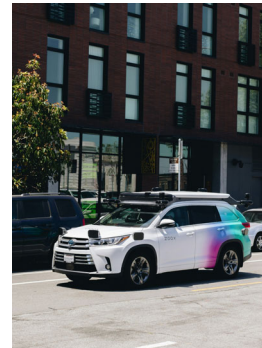
Examples: population aging, smaller households, increasing housing costs and climate change.



Disruptor:

An event or shift that changes the trajectory or invalidates existing assumptions.

Examples: AI, major federal restructuring, autonomous mobility, or extreme weather.



Influence of Technology

Potential influences:

- AI and automation changing occupations
- Hybrid work changing office demand
- E-commerce and delivery changing retail and curb use
- Electric and autonomous vehicles changing parking needs
- Digital services changing how residents interact with government

Technology will not eliminate the importance of place, but it may change how buildings, streets, commercial districts, and public spaces are used.

Question # 2:

Which land-use assumptions are most vulnerable to technological change?

Alexandria's changing households require more flexible housing and services

Demographic Changes

- 01 Older adults and more one-person households
- 02 Smaller, more varied households
- 03 Greater cultural and linguistic diversity
- 04 More mobility in where people live and work



QUESTION # 1

Are Alexandria's housing and services ready for its future households?

Structure with Flexibility

Plans need sufficient structure to:

- Establish a clear community vision
- Protect public interest
- Coordinate infrastructure
- Provide predictability
- Advance equity and affordability



Plans also need sufficient flexibility to:

- Respond to changing markets
- Accommodate new uses and technologies
- Support phased redevelopment
- Adjust implementation tools
- Avoid locking in outdated assumptions



Question # 3:

What should remain fixed—and what should be allowed to evolve?