



Eisenhower West Industrial Land Use Study

City of Alexandria, Department of Planning and Zoning and
Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
<http://alexandriava.gov/industrialstudy>

COMMUNITY MEETING #3 SUMMARY NOTES

September 15, 2009

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Patrick Henry Elementary School

Small Area Plan

1. What does a small area plan entail?

Small area plans are amendments to the City's Master Plan that focus on a particular area of the City. Small area plans generally include recommendations to address zoning, land uses, design, public facilities, transportation network, and infrastructure (sewer, water).

2. What is the connection between this study and the small area plan?

This study accomplishes some of the work that we do as background work for the small area plan. For example, the planning process for the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan included analysis of the ability of planned redevelopment to contribute to the public facilities needed to support it. This study provides information on the barriers to redevelopment and the consequences of eliminating the industrial uses. The information will help the City come to a decision on the land use policy questions that are central to the small area plan and, if redevelopment of the sites is pursued, will help determine how to overcome the challenges to redevelopment.

3. In the small area plan, the City should not create a plan that allows other heavy industrial uses to locate on these parcels as these current businesses cease operations.

Acknowledged.¹

4. Does the study provide specific recommendations to change the zoning?

No. The study does not provide a specific recommendation to change the zoning. The study recommends exploring whether rezoning is appropriate through the small area planning process.

¹ A response of "Acknowledged" signals that staff believes the comment speaks for itself and does not require a detailed response, but does need to be included in the public record.

5. What will happen if one of these businesses leaves before there is a small area plan? Will the land use stay industrial? Do we have something in the pipeline to change it to something else?

The small area plan will provide a long-range vision. The Eisenhower West Small Area Plan is on the work program for the next year and will take about a year to eighteen months to complete. It is unlikely that the heavy industrial businesses will cease operations before the plan is adopted.

6. The City may want to consider putting the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan on hold, since the businesses are not going anywhere in the short term.

Acknowledged.

7. The Eisenhower West Small Area Plan should not be put off. Otherwise, we will end up in a situation like Beauregard, where the City is doing a small area plan as a result of immediate development pressure in the area. In the past, developers have been interested in redeveloping parcels in the Eisenhower West area, but were told to wait until City completes a small area plan. This City has impacted developers' ability to pursue redevelopment.

Acknowledged.

Business Relocation/Cessation

8. Are the relocation sites inside or outside of the City? How were the relocation costs determined?

The Consultant Team analyzed potential sites based on the business operations needs of each of the industrial users. For example, two of the businesses are dependent on the rail line. Within the region, the only sites that could meet the relocation criteria were in an industrial area located along Interstate 95 in Fairfax County. The report goes into more detail about how these sites were selected.

Some of the cost figures were provided by the industrial businesses. Others were estimated based similar businesses. Virginia Paving noted that the cost estimates for relocations were not provided by them and the company believes the study underestimates their costs to relocate.

9. The West End Business Association (WEBA) wants to emphasize their position. WEBA does not think that law abiding, tax-paying businesses should be forced to relocate. It is not fair to look at these four businesses alone. The City should look at an overall master plan for the city.

Acknowledged.

Analysis and Findings

10. Does the study analyze how much development it would take to pay for the relocation of the uses?

No. The City asked the Consultant Team to develop scenarios that are realistic for the neighborhood and the City, and could be supported by the market.

11. What did the City learn from this study? Was the City surprised by anything in the study?

The City did not have preconceived conclusions prior to the start of the study. It was surprising that there are few areas for the businesses to relocate in the region, and the lack of market support for higher density redevelopment was surprising to many. The City also learned about the challenges related to site constraints, such as the resource protection area, floodplains, and site accessibility that are challenges to future reuse or redevelopment of the sites.

12. Did the City not anticipate that moving Covanta would be difficult given the \$300 million facility on 4 useable acres?

As part of the Study, the Consultant Team conducted the valuation of the Covanta plant, which is \$300 million. The City did know it would be difficult to find a redevelopment scenario for the Covanta site, but learned a great deal about the plant and its operations that will be used during the small area plan process.

13. The way the study was done was the easiest way to do it. In the real world things happen more organically.

We could have pursued other analysis methods that were more detailed, but they also would have been more speculative. Further study can take place as part of the small area planning process.

14. There need to be caveats that are very clearly stated in the introduction of the study.

The report does acknowledge that this is a technical study and is not intended to be a specific plan for redevelopment of the four uses. The report pays considerable attention to ensuring that the inputs, the analysis, and the conclusions are well documented so that the context for each conclusion is very clear.

15. I hope this study confirms that this area is going to stay industrial and the businesses are not leaving. This is a tough neighborhood for development due to light industrial and heavy industrial. Other parts of the City are more desirable. The City should work with business to make them better.

Acknowledged.

Study and Consultants

16. One of the problems with report is the scenarios sound like redevelopment plans for neighborhood. This study was about Eisenhower West. The Staff memo to the Planning Commission and City Council should clearly state that the scenarios in the report are not redevelopment plans for the neighborhood.

Acknowledged.

17. The money and staff resources on this study could have been better spent on moving Eisenhower West Small Area Plan forward. This study was started to placate the people that want the businesses gone. For many of us it was a forgone conclusion that these businesses will not relocate until they are ready to relocate. This study should have focused on the surrounding areas.

Acknowledged.

18. The City created this conflict of uses by allowing residential uses such as Cameron Station to be built next to heavy industrial uses. This study was important to explore these issues rather than having the acrimony.

Acknowledged.

Alternatives

19. It seems that in the study that there has been a big assumption that relocation means finding an alternate location for the industrial uses to continue operations as they have been. There are other, more likely scenarios.

The relocation scenarios are valid basis for analysis because they provide a measure of what it would take for the business to relocate. It is important for the study to reflect the fact that they want to continue to operate.

20. It is inappropriate to designate the Virginia Paving property as a public park. The City needs to be clear that moving forward that is not going to be a park so there is not an expectation of there being a park. This is not the starting point of a small area plan.

Good point. Each aspect of the scenarios are not precursors to recommendations.

The Virginia Paving parcel was analyzed as open space in one of the scenarios because it most fit the park criteria identified in Open Space Plan, such as adjacent to other parks and near streams. In addition, as part of the analysis supporting the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan, City staff noted that a possible location for a regional stormwater best management practice would be in the vicinity of the Virginia Paving site due to topography and location adjacent to the stream. The City's urban stream quality is challenged because of issues such as stormwater run-off and erosion.

21. These alternatives seem to be very subjective. Making land use decisions and recommendations instead analytical. The study should have determined the market conditions and level of development that would have been needed to make redevelopment happen. What are the true market forces to make it happen? Highest and best use. The redevelopment scenarios in the study should not be the starting point for the SAP.

The scenarios will not be basis for the small area plan. Some of the challenges to redevelopment identified in the study could be addressed in the small area plan to achieve different redevelopment densities. Land use policies are also appropriately addressed in the small area plan.

Next Steps

22. Once the study is given to City Council, what will they do with it?

The report itself does not contain recommendation other than next steps the City might take: improving visual compatibility and beginning the small area plan. Once a study is read and understood, it can be used as input into the small area plan.