Planning Policies

City of Alexandria Master Plan

City of Alexandria Master Plan

The City of Alexandria's comprehensive Master Plan is constructed from individual Small Area Plans developed for neighborhoods throughout the City. This larger Plan also includes chapters on topics of citywide relevancy including, Transportation and Open Space.

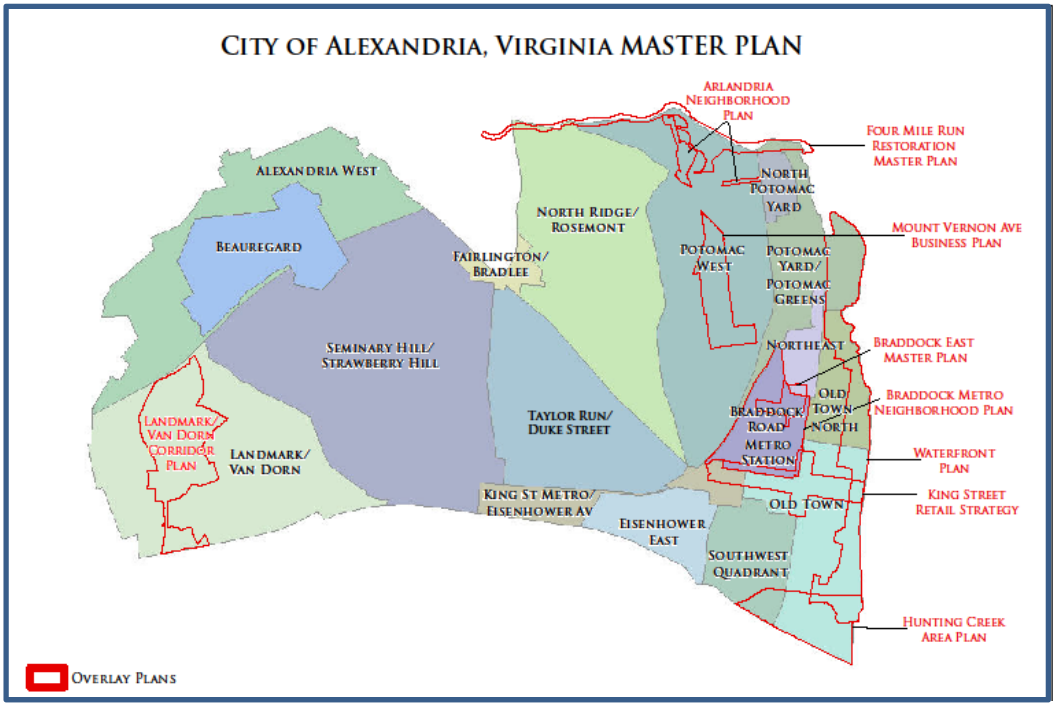
The Alexandria Master Plan was first adopted by the City Council on June 13, 1992. Chapters within the document are updated on a regular basis with new chapters added as needed through Master Plan Amendments. Many Small Area Plans, such as Taylor Run/Duke Street, Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill and North Ridge/Rosemont (see Figure X), are still based largely on the 1992 Plan with few amendments. Since 1992, a few areas have been divided with new plans prepared, including Beauregard and Eisenhower East. In addition, many overlay plans, which are supplemental plans and amendments to existing Small Area Plans, have been adopted over the years. Examples of overlay plans include the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan, the Arlandria Neighborhood Plan, and the Hunting Creek Area Plan.

While the 1992 Small Area Plans clearly documented locations of both public and private schools, they contained little guidance on the subject of future school needs and facilities.

Recently prepared Small Area Plans have more carefully evaluated educational needs and facilities:

- The **Beauregard Small Area Plan** includes an analysis of existing schools in that area and projections of future students based on redevelopment. Redevelopment within the Beauregard area is expected to reduce the number of public school students. Housing units that are newer with higher density, and/or are more expensive, generate fewer students than older housing units that are less dense and/or are more affordable. While it did not propose a new school in the area, the Beauregard Plan did propose active recreation improvements at William Ramsay Elementary School and recommended open space improvements to the adjoining schools and parks. Additionally, the Plan recommended that the open space within the Adams neighborhood be designed to potentially accommodate school use.

- The **Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan** estimated that total development potential over the 20 year Plan build-out could generate the need for elementary school



space by eight to twelve classrooms—about four elementary school students for every 100 units. The Plan did not identify a school site, but recommended that as the City reviews development applications for major parcels in the area, the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) be involved in evaluating the potential for that project to include a school site or contribute to school facilities. While projects in the catalyst phase of the Plan implementation will have limited ability to contribute to school facilities, for later phases the City will request a pro-rata share of capacity costs as developer contributions and will allocate those funds for school facilities.

- The **North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan** includes a thorough analysis of potential future students and educational needs in North Potomac Yard. The Plan reserves Block 4 for a possible school site in an urban form (see Section X). It also contemplates construction, expansion or reconstruction of a new school at an off-site location. For example, Cora Kelly STEM School could be expanded to accommodate additional students.

For new Small Area Plans, the City of Alexandria's Department of Planning and Zoning is committed to including information and guidance on existing and future schools. The Long Range Educational Facilities Plan will form the basis for this analysis. The public will be actively engaged in all aspects of the planning process including the exploration of new and expanded school sites. Planning and Zoning staff will work closely with ACPS staff on planning for schools in Small Area Plans. New Small Area Plans will analyze the overall city-wide demand for schools, the existing demand for schools in the area, and the demand for schools as a result of new development proposed in the plan. Potential sites for school in the Small Area will be evaluated and the Small Area Plans will include a strategy for funding school acquisitions and construction, potentially through developer contributions as described below.

As part of their implementation measures, recent Small Area Plans include a funding strategy for public benefits necessary to make the area more livable. These public benefits typically include street and pedestrian improvements, enhanced landscaping, parks, and affordable housing. Developers, who benefit from the added value associated with the redevelopment proposed in the plan, are asked to make contributions towards these public benefits. Developer contributions can be financial contributions or contributions of land. One successful example of this approach was the establishment of the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan Open Space Fund and the Community Amenities Fund. Developer contributions in the Braddock area are used to fund the acquisition and construction of a new park, and for streetscape improvements on plan-identified walking streets. In the Beauregard Plan, developer contributions are targeted toward a variety of public benefits including construction of a new Fire and EMS Station at North Beauregard and Sanger and construction of the Ellipse to replace the Seminary and North Beauregard Intersection. New Small Area Plans will include schools among the public benefits to be evaluated. Each plan will identify the public infrastructure needs in the plan area and prioritize them through the planning process. Identified needs and projects will then become the focus of developer contributions. In future Small Area Plans, where there is an identified need for a new school, a school addition, or a school improvement, the plan would direct developer contributions toward these public improvements.

At this time, the City of Alexandria is actively preparing a plan for the Eisenhower West Area. This will be a new plan for a portion of the Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan (see Figure X). As the greatest need for elementary school seats is in the west end of the City (see Section X), this Small Area Plan process represents a unique opportunity for the City to secure a school site where it is most needed. As described above, City staff will work closely with ACPS staff to analyze current school needs in the area and future needs due to development proposed in the plan. The Plan will provide criteria for identifying potential school sites in Eisenhower West and will include the school as a public benefit to be funded by developer contributions.

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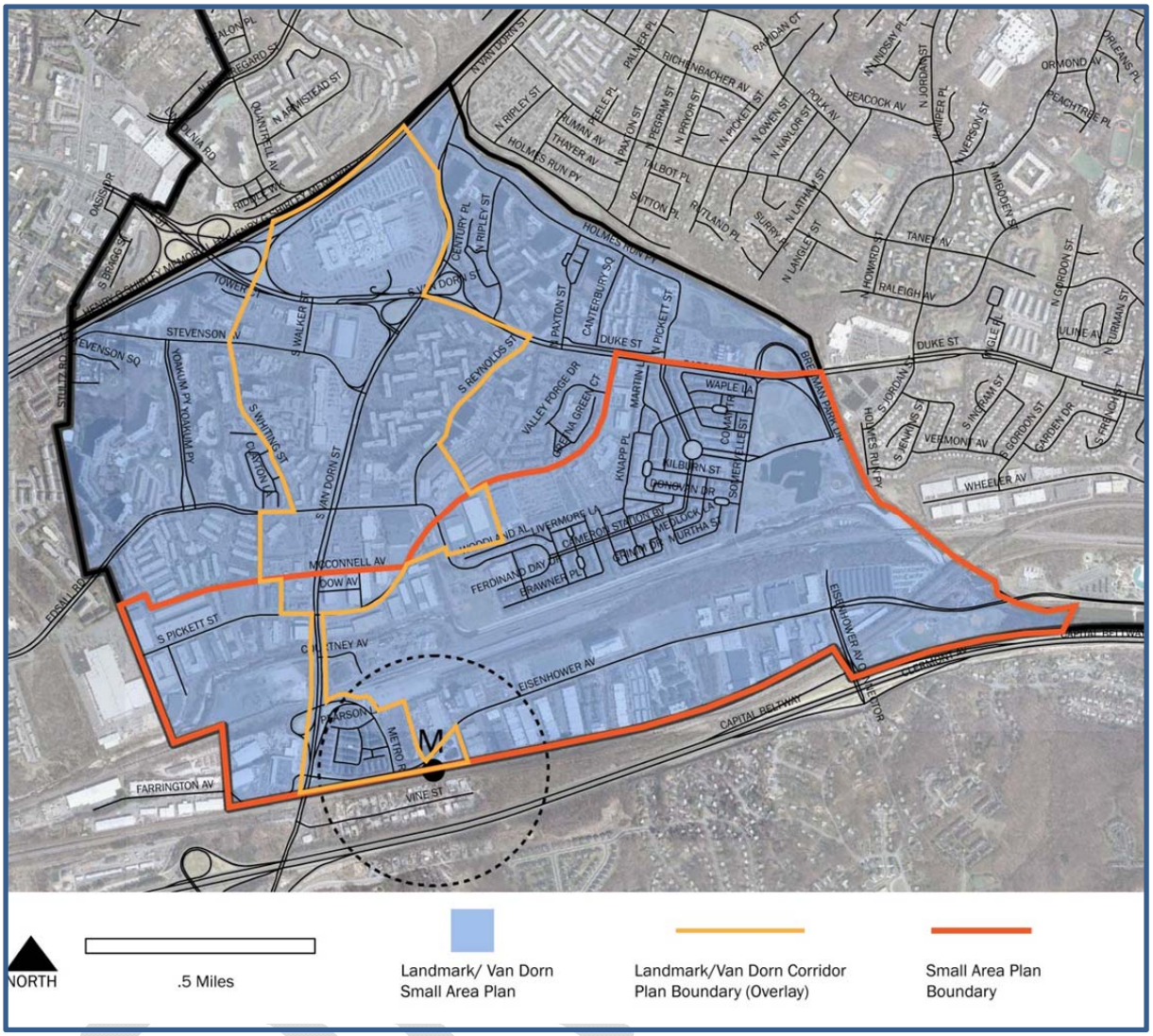

City of Alexandria Development Review Process

All major development projects in the City of Alexandria go through a rigorous review process led by the Department of Planning and Zoning. This process incorporates a high degree of public outreach with active participation from residents and civic groups. Planning and Zoning staff ensure that development proposals are consistent with the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance, consist of the highest quality building design, urban design and site planning, and provide an overall public benefit.

Developments which require a Rezoning or a Development Special Use Permit with Site Plan

(DSUP), receive the highest level of scrutiny, which includes discretionary review standards. The Planning Commission hears requests for Rezoning and DSUPs during public hearings before forwarding its recommendation to the City Council. The City Council holds an additional public hearing on these applications prior to taking final action.

Much of the new development proposed in the City is supported by Small Area Plans (SAP). See section X The more recent SAPs include an evaluation of educational needs. When a relevant SAP directly addresses educational needs, it becomes part of the evaluation of future development application. For example, in the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan, and more specifically, projects in later phases, the City will be requesting a pro-rata share of school capacity costs as developer contributions and allocating these funds for school facilities where appropriate.

In cases where major development project are proposed in areas where the SAP does not include a review of educational needs, Planning and Zoning staff will first quantify the effects of any proposed residential development on school facilities, examining the number of students generated and the capital costs per student for school facilities. City Staff will work with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) staff to review the recommendations of the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (LREFP), specifically any improvements proposed in the area of the proposed development. The City may seek a proportional share of the costs associated with planned educational facility improvements, balancing this against other community benefits sought in the area.

In limited situations, development applications have directly provided educational facilities as in the case of the Coordinated Development District (CDD) for Potomac Yards/Greens CDD #10. In this CDD, a portion of the Potomac Yard Park, not to exceed three acres, was reserved and made available for the construction of a new public school. Depending on future needs, up to two acres of adjacent land will be made available for this new school. Although this Long Range Educational Facilities Plan does not call for a school on this site (Simpson Stadium Park) at present, it may be needed in the future. This Plan supports the continued use of the site as open space utilized for active recreation purposes. CDD#10 also provided improvements to Braddock Fields, which includes land that is part of George Washington Middle School.

Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a set of low cost policies, strategies, or programs that promote the more efficient use of existing transportation systems (i.e. roadways, bridges) and have an ultimate goal of reducing drive alone travel. Alexandria has a long-range city-wide TDM Plan with a broad set of strategies to reduce the number of cars on the City's roads.

<u>Establishing TDM Plans within Alexandria Schools</u>

ACPS and the City share the same vision of creating a transportation system that encourage use of alternative modes of transportation, thus reducing dependence on the private automobile. This system will lead to the establishment of transit-oriented, pedestrian friendly village centers, focused on neighborhood preservation and increased community cohesion, forming a more urban, vibrant and sustainable Alexandria. The City promotes a balance between travel efficiency and quality of life, providing Alexandrians with transportation choice, continued economic growth and a healthy environment. TDM programs are an important tool for implementing this vision, and ACPS facilities would benefit greatly from reducing single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel in terms of parking capacity and congestion. As such, TDM initiatives are an integral component of this long-range facility planning effort, and ACPS seeks to collaborate with the City's Local Motion initiative to advance these programs in Alexandria's schools. This partnership between ACPS and Local Motion aims to promote existing TDM programs offered in the City and the Region, and expand their presence throughout the school system.

The establishment of TDM programs in Alexandria school facilities will occur on a rolling basis, and ACPS will create a process to identify which schools are in need of these programs. Items that may warrant the creation of a TDM program include, but are not limited to:

- An increase in staff or student enrollment
- Identified parking or circulation issues
- Changes in parking capacity

Once a school has been identified as needing a TDM program, ACPS will work with the City's Transportation & Environmental Services Department (T&ES) to tailor program options specific to that particular school. A wide-range of TDM program options exist, some examples that could be implemented at Alexandria schools include, but are not limited to:

- Safe Routes to School initiatives
- Incentives and prizes for walking, biking, or using transit
- Marketing local or regional commuting programs
- Transit fare subsidies
- Walk/bike to work subsidy program
- Information Dissemination
- TDM/Environmental integration into curriculum

A TDM program coordinator will be assigned to each school by ACPS. The coordinator will be responsible for administration and execution of the TDM programs at the school, and will serve as the point of contact for students, employees, and parents on questions related to those programs. The coordinator will produce annual reports and transportation surveys in collaboration with T&ES to track progress and collect information on which programs are in demand. The transportation surveys are an important tool that

can provide valuable information relating to the commuting behaviors of employees, parents, and students. These surveys will help inform the TDM program selection and also facilitate ride-matching and car-pooling opportunities. T&ES will provide the survey questions, access to the platform (software), and analyze the results. ACPS will be responsible for distribution of the surveys within the schools.

Zoning

The City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance divides the City into zoning districts and regulates the use, density, height, setbacks, floor area ratio (FAR)[1] and other building and site characteristics of all properties in the City. As part of the process of creating the Mini-Master Plans, the ACPS school sites were analyzed for conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. A number of zoning issues were revealed and these are highlighted below:

- The following schools exceed their allowable FAR per their existing zoning district and site. Any additions or significant renovations will require either an exception to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance or a rezoning to a different zoning district:
    - Mount Vernon
    - John Adams
    - Samuel Tucker
- The following schools would likely exceed their allowable FAR should an expansion or addition be considered:
    - Douglas MacArthur – the size of the proposed new/renovated school shown in the Mini-Master Plan would significantly exceed the allowable FAR.
    - William Ramsay
    - Matthew Maury – exceeding the allowable FAR may be offset by consolidating lots owned by ACPS. Further study would be required.
- The following school buildings currently overlap an adjacent property that is in the Public Open Space (POS) zone:
    - Cora Kelly
    - Douglas MacArthur
- George Washington – a portion of the existing eastern recreational field is within the Coordinated Development District (CDD) #10 for Potomac Yard - an upcoming dedication and rezoning action may be required.

Further information is needed for several school sites as additional non-school buildings are located on the same site and have not been accounted for in the Mini-Master Plan FAR calculations. These include Mount Vernon, Cora Kelly, and William Ramsay.

The individual school solutions in the Mini-Master Plans have been provided at a very conceptual level. As planning and design work continues, addition or renovation projects may exceed the allowable FAR at a later stage in the process. Evaluating the projects for compliance with the zoning requirements will be necessary.

Options for addressing these zoning issues include: individual zoning district map amendments for each school site to be considered at the same time as the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) for that school improvement, one or more zoning ordinance text amendments to make existing zones more accommodating to school expansions, or the creation of a new zone in the zoning ordinance specifically for public schools. A new zone specifically for public schools would provide for appropriate attention to neighborhood issues while also providing flexibility not available in the various zoning districts in which the schools are currently located.

LREFP Annual Implementation Process

September – January	COA creates long-term, population and housing forecasts which input into new development projections. Demographic data also informs long-range forecast.
October	ACPS enrollment numbers received
October - January	ACPS develops short – and mid-term projections (informed by City of Alexandria data on development). City of Alexandria/ACPS staff works on long-term enrollment forecast based on city's population changes and new development data
December	New birth data received
December - January	City of Alexandria/ACPS staff meet to review/analyze as data relates to enrollment
February	Work group (and/or City of Alexandria/ACPS Subcommittee) meets with staff to determine any adjustments, at which time ACPS can report on other issues with facilities that relate to LREFP. Recommendations can inform ACPS and City of Alexandria CIP process.
March	ACPS March enrollment figures are released. Staff and work groups can monitor as they may be a precursor to upcoming fall enrollment.

[1] Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The floor area ratio of the building(s) on any lot is the total aggregate floor of the building(s) divided by the area of that lot. For example, a one story 10,000 square foot building on a 20,000 square foot lot would have an FAR of 0.5.

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