



# OLD TOWN NORTH



# SMALL AREA PLAN



# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

# 1

November 7th, 2016  
Working Draft\_R

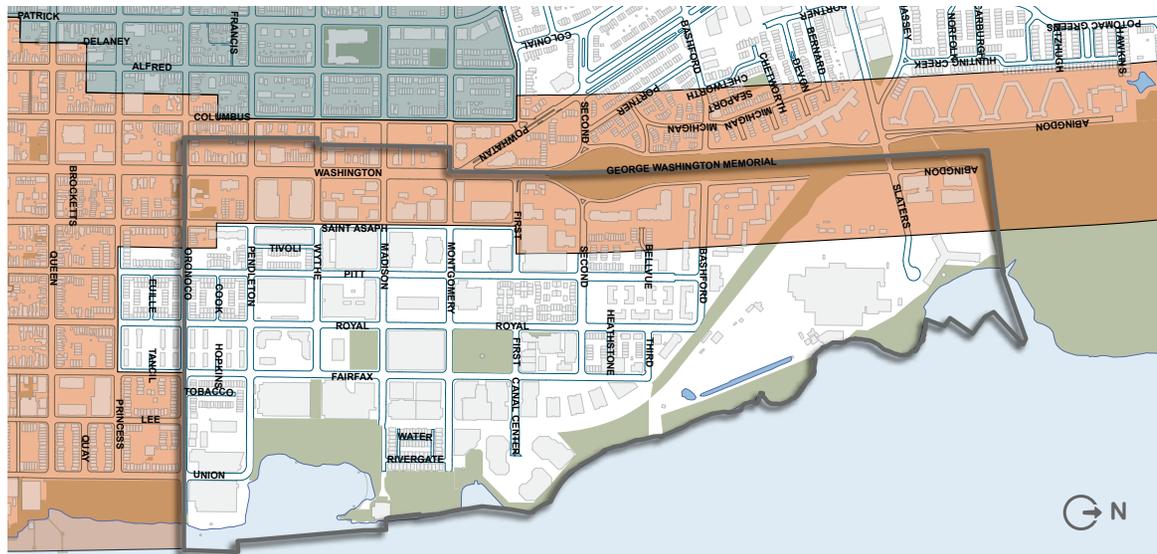
# 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Old Town North is a growing mixed-use urban neighborhood prominently located on the west bank of the Potomac River (River) in Alexandria, Virginia. It is connected visually and physically to the lights and activity of Old Town and to several other adjacent Alexandria communities. Moreover, it has sweeping views to the north of the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol building, views to the south of the well-engineered multi-modal Woodrow Wilson Bridge which spans the Maryland and Virginia boundary lines, and views of National Harbor which sits on the east banks of the River in Maryland and which is a residential community as well as a major tourist destination.

Old Town North is approximately 145 acres, exclusive of right-of-way. Its eastern boundary is the River; its western boundary is generally along Washington Street; its southern boundary is Oronoco Street; and its northern boundary is the base of Daingerfield Island. While, the City's Old and Historic Alexandria District (OHAD) designation covers all of Old Town, part of the OHAD designation extends along Washington Street in Old Town North as shown in Figure 1.02, Local Alexandria Historic Districts Map.



**Figure 1.01 : Old Town North Context within the City of Alexandria**



**LEGEND**

- Old and Historic Alexandria District
- Parker-Gray District
- Old Town North Plan Boundary

**Figure 1.02 : Local Alexandria Historic Districts Map**

# 1.2 BACKGROUND

## OLD TOWN NORTH'S EVOLUTION

Old Town North's economy evolved from an early Native American trade system in the 1600's to an agricultural and international port system in the 1700's. In 1732, a tobacco trading port was established at West's Point, the foot of Oronoco Street, just south of Old Town North. The town of Alexandria was established in 1749 along a cove stretching from West's Point south to Point Lumley at the foot of Duke Street. The transformation of Old Town North into an industrial hub occurred in the late 1800's to the 1900's with a cotton factory, bottling factory, kilns, oil refineries, and ice houses. As technology began to supersede the industrial processes of the time, the economy of Old Town North shifted in the 1970's and 1980's with a growing focus on commercial uses, particularly given the close proximity of this neighborhood to the nation's capital and to the Pentagon.

In the late part of the 20th century, nearly one million square feet of space was added in just two complexes alone, namely Canal Center and Transpotomac Plaza. Additionally other commercial spaces were developed for institutions which included United Way, the Health Department and the

Red Cross along with four hotels with 190 rooms. Industrial uses in Old Town North at the time included the power plant, Robinson Terminal North and the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) Bus Garage. By the 1990's, commercial and office use occupied nearly 45 percent of the total acreage in the neighborhood, with little retail included; and, industrial space occupied approximately 20 percent of the land area in Old Town North. On the other hand, residential uses occupied only 23 percent. Garden units and public housing units had been constructed in the first half of the 20th century, with high rises and townhomes following in the 1970's and more townhomes and the Annie B. Rose senior housing high rise following in the 1980's.

Recognizing the trend toward office uses, the City's 1974 Master Plan included the goal of transforming Old Town North into a mixed use community with the appropriate balance of land uses. This goal was reinforced in the 1992 Old Town North Small Area Plan, with zoning and urban design objectives to further achieve it.



Figure 1.03: 1929 Aerial Map

**Figure 1.04: 1850 Aerial Map**

**Map to be inserted**

## PLANNING HISTORY

### The City's 1974 Master Plan included three major recommendations for Old Town North:

- Protect the appearance of Washington Street as the gateway to the planning area;
- Encourage the relocation of industrial uses from the planning area to more appropriate locations; and
- Redevelopment of the Alexandria Waterfront.

### The 1992 Old Town North Small Area Plan includes the following primary goal and objectives:

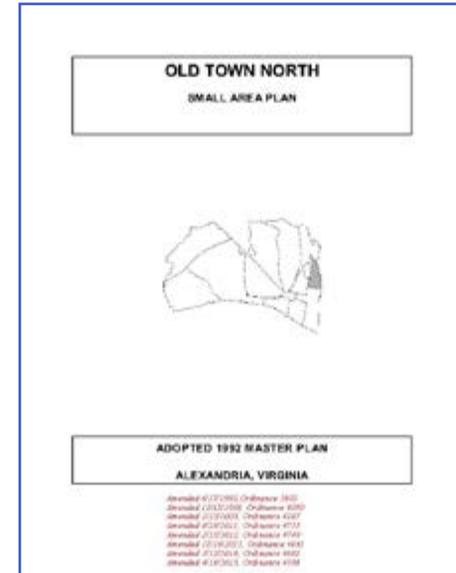
Goal – Old Town North is a viable, attractive neighborhood – with strong residential and commercial components – a compatible neighbor to Old Town's Old and Historic Alexandria District. It is primed to become a more lively area with retail stores, more cultural activities so critical to Alexandria's identity. Coordinated planning can further enhance the quality of Alexandria's identity, Coordinated planning can further enhance the quality of life for people who live, work, shop and recreate in Old Town North.

### Objectives

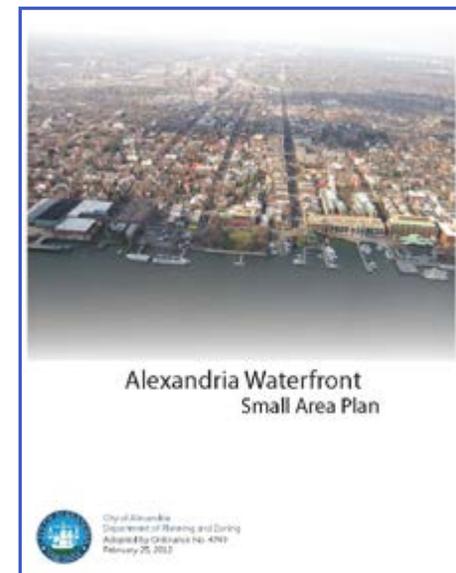
- Attainment of a mix of land uses that establishes a healthy neighborhood-serving retail component to complement the residential and commercial uses;
- Establishment of height limits that preserve and protect the low-rise residential scale in most of the area, accommodate appropriate designs for higher scale development in designated retail and commercial areas and establish transitions between higher and lower height areas;
- Utilization of an urban design review process that reinforces the desired urban character;
- Promotion of uses and activities which make Old Town North a more lively area including evening hours;
- Creation and reinforcement of a strong and inviting streetscape;
- Protection of sightlines; and
- Better use of open space available for Old Town North so that it is attractive and active.

### January 2012 Waterfront Plan and June 2014 Waterfront Schematic Design

Because Old Town North and Old Town are adjacent riverfront neighborhoods, they along with the City as a whole will experience the revitalization of the Waterfront soon, under Alexandria's Waterfront Plan, approved in January 2012, and the Waterfront Schematic design, by The OLIN Studio, approved in June 2014. The Schematic Design reflects the community's vision under the Waterfront Plan for enhanced and expanded public spaces, a fully accessible and connected path along the Waterfront, and outdoor year-round activity for residents and visitors of all age groups. Additionally redevelopment of four privately owned development sites is contemplated under the Waterfront Plan and Schematic Design with construction underway on three of the four.



1992 Old Town North Small Area Plan



2012 Alexandria Waterfront Small Area Plan

# 1.3 OLD TOWN NORTH SMALL AREA PLAN UPDATE



## PURPOSE

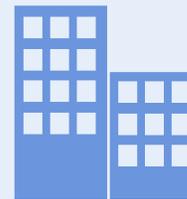
The intent of both the 1974 and 1992 planning efforts is still relevant today, however, given an increase in recent development activity, the community and the City began working together in 2015 on an Old Town North Small Area Plan Update (OTN SAP Update). The 1992 Old Town North Small Area Plan identified 14 potential Major Development/Redevelopment Sites. In summer 2015, the OTN SAP Update planning process identified 18 sites in varying stages of redevelopment. See Figure 1.05: 2015 Major Development/Redevelopment Sites.

To facilitate the OTN SAP Update planning process, in June 2015, the City Council approved Resolution 2682 establishing the composition of a 21 member Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group. With that, the new planning process began to ensure current and future redevelopment is occurring in an updated holistic manner.



**50%** of post-1992 development occurred in the past 4 years\*

*\* Includes projects that have been approved and/or were under construction during this planning process*



## OTN SAP UPDATE PHASES

Altogether, the planning process for the OTN SAP Update included five phases beginning with the appointment of the Advisory Group members in September 2015 and extending to the Plan public review and approval processes in winter 2017.

- Phase I – Plan Framework Phase (Visioning, Principles/Objectives and Concept Phase) in the fall 2015
- Phase II – Study Phase (Study Concepts from Phase I) in winter/spring of 2016
- Phase III – Testing Phase (Test Concepts from Phase I) in winter/spring of 2016
- Phase IV – Recommendations Phase (Develop Plan Recommendations) in summer/fall 2016
- Phase V – Plan Development/Public Review and Approval Phase in fall 2016/early winter 2017

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Appendix\_\_ will describe all elements of the community participation process.

**Figure 1.05: 2015 Major Development/Redevelopment Sites**

**FUTURE POTENTIAL SITES**

- 1. PEPCO/Power Plant Site
- 2. Crowne Plaza Hotel
- 3. Craddock Site

**REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS**

- 4. WMATA Bus Barn
- 5. ARHA Properties

**PENDING APPLICATIONS/APPROVAL**

- 6. 801 N. Fairfax (Residential Conversion)

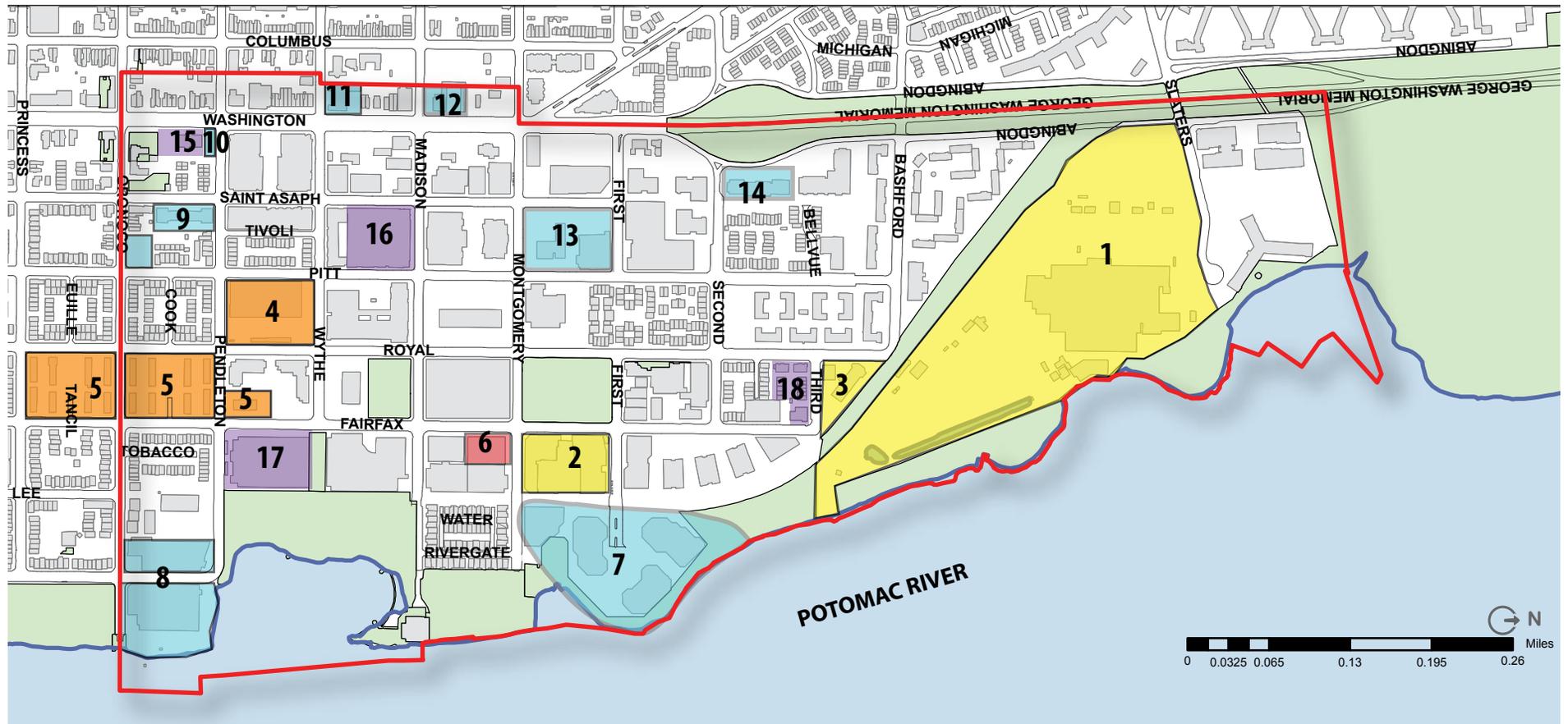
**APPROVED AND/OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

- 7. Canal Center - Public Improvements/ Garage Enhancements
- 8. Robinson Terminal North
- 9. Health Department
- 10. The Mill - Annex Building
- 11. 700 N. Washington (Former Travelodge)
- 12. 800-802 N Washington (Towne Motel)
- 13. ABC/Giant Site
- 14. Old Colony Inn

**RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED**

- 15. The Mill - Renovation/Conversion
- 16. Harris Teeter/ The Kingsley
- 17. The Oronoco Conversion
- 18. Printers Row

\* These are sites as they were identified at the start of the planning process.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following chart shows the demographic changes between 1992 and 2015 in population, households, and household sizes for Old Town North.

Old Town North Demographics				
	1970 (1)	1990 (2)	2010 (3)	2015 (4)
Population	2,010	2,087	2,764	3,118
Housing Units	1,180	1,413	2,045	2,280
Households	1,069	1,349	1,880	2,101
Population in Household (5)	2,010	2,081	2,755	3,109
Average Household Size (5)	1.88	1.54	1.47	1.48

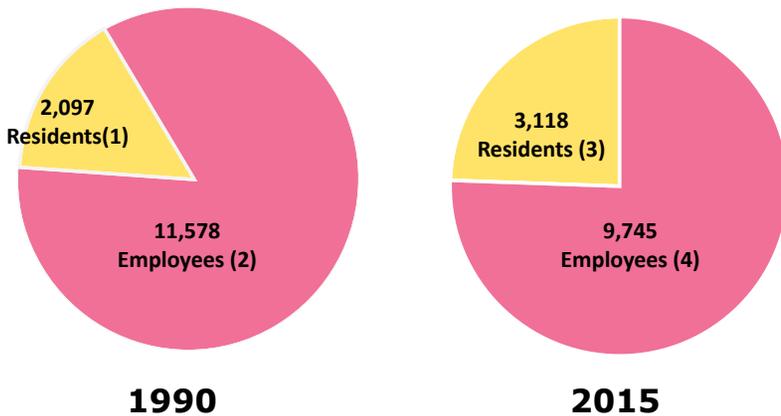
1. 1970 from Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning, 1992 OTN SAP
2. 1990 from Decennial Census
3. 2010 from Decennial Census
4. 2015 data based on development projects occupied since 2010, with 1.6 persons per household assumed for new development.
5. Population in Household and Average Household Size does not include population in group quarters

The following chart shows the land use comparison in acres between 1992 and 2015. This comparison shows that the land use mix in Old Town North has achieved a greater balance since 1992 with residential and commercial/office uses making up about 50 acres each. While the table shows a decrease in the Recreation and Parks acreage from 1992, that 0.8 decrease in land use area equates to the Dee Campbell Rowing Center which is now owned and maintained by the Alexandria City Public Schools. Additionally, while the boundary of the planning area has remained the same as 1992, the discrepancy in the total land area shown may be due to advanced technology where the City now uses GIS data for computing land use parcels.

2015 and 1992 Old Town North Land Use Data Comparison				
Land Use	2015 Land Use Acreage (1)	1992 Land Use (2)	Difference Acreage	% Difference
Residential (includes mixed residential with retail)	50.3	31.9	+18.2	+58.9
Office/Office Warehouse	30.30	41.8	-11.5	-27.5%
Other Commercial	18.35	19.2	-1.15	+5.9%
Utility/Transportation	27.40	27.9	-0.5	-1.8%
Recreation and Parks (3)	6.4	7.2	-0.8	-11.1%
Common Area (4)	11.2	7.2	+4	+55.5%
Vacant Land	0	3.4	-3.4	-100
Grand Total (5)	143.95	138.6	-	-

1. Land Use information is based on City of Alexandria Real Estate Data Parcel Land Use Code
2. Land Use information from the 1992 Old Town North Small Area Plan
3. 0.8 decrease in land use area equates to the Dee Campbell Rowing Center which is now owned and maintained by the Alexandria City Public Schools
4. As defined by the City of Alexandria Office of Real Estate Assessments: the Common Area is designated residential properties that share a common area which could be parking, ingress egress points or for condos the entire parcel is noted as common area and the building is bifurcated into individual ownerships. Common Area would also apply to waterfront properties if privately owned such as Rivergate Park and Tidelock Park.
5. Total land use is exclusive of right-of-way. While the current OTN SAP boundary has not changed from the 1992 boundary, the minor discrepancy in the total land use acreage may be due to changes in technology, and the City's use of GIS data to calculate land use parcels.

## Population and Employment Growth in Old Town North



1. 1990 Decennial Census
2. 1990 Decennial Census
3. 2010 Decennial Census and assumed 1.6 per household for new development
4. Employment based on building area with standard employment density factors for use, controlled to citywide total employment.

## PLANNING CATEGORIES

The following planning categories were agreed upon by the City, Advisory Group, and the community to address as part of the OTN SAP Update:

- Planning, Land Use and Design
- Housing
- Transportation
- Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability
- Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities
- Historic Preservation
- Economic Development
- Implementation

Key Old Town North demographic, land use and related planning and policy information was gathered for each planning category. Charrettes were utilized in November 2015 and June 2016 as a visioning and design tool for the planning process. Documentation of the Charrettes are included in an [Old Town North Charrette Report](#).

## ORGANIZATION OF THE OLD TOWN NORTH SMALL AREA PLAN UPDATE

### PLAN CHAPTERS

The chapters of this document are organized by planning category. Each chapter includes background information relative to that planning category; a goal and objectives for the planning category; a description of related analysis pertaining to the viability of any proposed concepts under the planning category; and related recommendations. Examples of key recommendations for each of the planning categories are shown in the side bar.

### ILLUSTRATIVE DESIGNS

Within this document are illustrative designs. The final design of buildings and open spaces will be subject to all applicable City regulations and approvals.

### Example of the OTN SAP Update Key Recommendations by Planning Category:

#### Planning, Land Use and Design

Re-zone potential re-development sites as part of the implementation stage to facilitate the desire for retail, art and cultural uses, and enhanced parking management.

#### Housing

Increase the density bonus provision from 20% to 30% to encourage mixed-income housing and to maximize affordability opportunities throughout the planning area.

#### Transportation

The City will actively work to pursue use of the rail corridor owned by Norfolk Southern Railway for future use as a linear trail park.

#### Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability

Recommend Old Town North as a pilot Eco-District with potential targets, strategies and incentives for Energy, Water, Stormwater, Tree Canopy and Habitat Sustainability.

#### Open Space, Recreation and Cultural Activities

Promote a stronger network of open spaces through expanded public open spaces such as the planned linear trail park. Promote retention of existing art institutions - MetroStage and The Art League - and support other existing and potentially new sectors of the creative economy.

#### Historic Preservation

Incorporate an interpretation component as part of the review and approval process of all Development Site Plans (DSPs) and Development Special Use Permits (DSUPs).

#### Economic Development

Continue to strengthen the Retail Focus Areas and establish Retail Corridors to retain and expand businesses and amenities for both daytime and nighttime populations, and to promote innovative and creative sectors of the economy.