



City of Alexandria, Virginia

Planning Commission Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019

The Planning Commission is appointed by City Council and performs its duties under Sections 15.2-2223 and 2225 and Chapter 9 of the City Charter. It is charged with adopting, reviewing and amending the City's Master Plan, making final decisions on Subdivision and Site Plan regulatory cases, and making recommendations to City Council on other regulatory cases such as Zoning Text Amendments, Special Use Permits, Development Special Use Permits, Encroachments and Vacation proposals.

Summary of Activities

One hundred twenty-five regulatory cases were considered by the Planning Commission in FY 2019, with the Planning Commission meeting sixteen times. To accommodate the number and complexity of the projects considered this fiscal year, the Planning Commission held two public hearings during six months, September through December, February, and June. The number of cases for FY 2017 and FY 2018 is included for comparison. All regulatory cases as noted were either recommended to City Council for approval or approved by the Planning Commission. Subdivisions and Site Plans are cases which are approved by the Planning Commission and do not require approval by the City Council.

In addition to the Special Use Permits (SUPs) that required review by the Planning Commission in FY 2019, staff approved an additional 48 Special Use Permits (SUPs) administratively. In FY 2018, 50 SUPs were approved administratively. Many of the administrative SUPs were requests for both a change of ownership and for minor amendments to an existing SUP.

The following pages provide examples of several regulatory case types from the Planning Commission's FY 2019 Dockets and as reflected in the below chart.

INSIDE THIS REPORT

Long Range Planning	2
Zoning Text Amendments	5
Land Use Services	7
Development Cases	8
Membership & Attendance	11
Other	13

Regulatory Cases			
	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Special Use Permits (SUP)	43	37	44
Encroachments, Subdivisions and Vacations	7	21	13
Development Projects (DSP/DSUP)	18	17	23
Master Plan Amendments and Re-zonings	2	13	18
Text Amendments	6	12	12
CDD Conceptual Design Plans	1	5	4
City Charter Section 9.06	3	1	1
Transportation Management Plans	7	7	10
Total	87	113	125

LONG RANGE PLANNING

South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy and the RMF/Residential Multifamily Zone for the Preservation or Creation of Housing Affordability

In September 2018, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy (Strategy), as an amendment to the City’s Master Plan. The recommendation followed an extensive planning and community engagement process that included a charrette, open houses, pop-up events, online engagement, a walking tour, and eight community meetings that were live streamed and offered language interpretation and childcare. The Planning Commission participated

in a March 2018 work session and was briefed on two occasions throughout the planning process (December 2017 and June 2018).

The Strategy pro-actively addresses expiring federal rental assistance contracts associated with two of the City’s deeply affordable communities, namely, the Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West III, by establishing a framework for redevelopment to guide the preservation of those resources and housing diversity

while also being compatible with the existing neighborhood. Subsequent to the Strategy’s adoption, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the RMF/Residential Multifamily Zone in February 2019 as a regulatory tool to expand housing affordability by incentivizing private investment. The RMF Zone allows densities up to 3.0 Floor Area Ratio with a Special Use Permit if a minimum of one-third of the additional density is provided as committed affordable housing.



Pre-charrette walking tour with the community



Community presentations at the week-long charrette

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Landmark Neighborhood

In April 2019, the Planning Commission recommended approval of an amendment to the City's Master Plan for a Landmark Neighborhood chapter. The recommendation followed a six-month planning and community engagement process that included two public meetings, an open house, and a Saturday workshop led by the Eisenhower West/Landmark Van Dorn Implementation Advisory Group. Several members of the Planning Commission participated in the community engagement events, and the Planning Commission received a briefing in February 2019. The new chapter builds on the vision outlined in the 2009 Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan for a unique and connected mixed-use neighborhood with an urban street grid and building forms, community amenities including a school site, connected open spaces, and a range of housing and job opportunities, with an anticipated 20-25-year build-out of 5.6 million square feet of new development.



Conceptual rendering of the Central Plaza and surrounding active retail streets



Round table discussions at the community workshop

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

Height and Front Setback Regulations

A package of City Zoning Ordinance amendments was adopted to provide greater flexibility in the development and redevelopment of homes in Alexandria. The term “contextual block face” which refers to abutting properties that share the same street frontage or frontages, was created as part of the package. One major change included an increase in home building heights from 25 feet to 30 feet and up to 35 feet with a special exception

granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). Only in rare instances, where other homes in a contextual block face are higher than 30 feet, can the BZA consider heights beyond 30 feet through the special exception process. Another major change was the establishment of a new flexible front yard requirement based on a subject property’s contextual block face. Under the newly adopted amendments, the front yards of dwellings within the

contextual block face establish a range for the subject property’s required front setback rather than setting a hard build-to line based on the average of the entire block. The package of amendments replaced very complex sections which required significant staff time to implement and enforce.



Contextual block face

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

Private Residential Garages

Text amendments were also adopted to provide a moderation on the prohibition of forward-facing attached garages, whether part of an addition or a new house when forward-facing garages are the prevailing design in a neighborhood. The amendments allow a forward-facing garage if at least 50 percent of the contextual block face contains forward-facing

attached garages. A special exception may be considered by the BZA if 50 percent or more of the homes in an expanded block face, typically an entire block, contain forward-facing garages. The amendments provide greater flexibility and consistency for homeowners requesting residential garages and ensures that the character of the neighborhood is maintained. In

addition, the amendments will allow for a detached free-standing garages on lots with a minimum lot size of 2,500 square feet, down from the previous 5,000 square foot lot minimum.



Forward-facing attached garage with appropriate setback

LAND USE SERVICES

Special Use Permits

Urbano 116

A Special Use Permit for carry-out window service was approved in September for Urbano 116 located at 114 and 118 King Street in Old Town. The approval marks the first time carry-out window service has been permitted along King Street. The carry-out window serves churros and tacos.

Torpedo Factory

An outdoor food and crafts market was approved along the City's waterfront adjacent to the Torpedo Factory in December 2018. The Special Use Permit allows for a 90-seat outdoor restaurant space serviced by a vintage Airstream trailer with ample space for local artists to sell their creations.

Del Ray Gardens

In April 2019, Del Ray Gardens, located at 1503 and 1505 Mount Vernon Avenue, was approved for a Special Use Permit to operate an 86-seat outdoor restaurant at a former garden center site. The restaurant will operate seasonally depending upon the weather and offer special events during the holidays.

Modern Food Hall

As part of redevelopment of the former General Services Administration office into a mixed-use apartment building, a Special Use Permit was approved in July 2019 for a modern food hall with 290 indoor seats. The food hall, located in Eisenhower East, will include 12 food vendors, indoor games and live entertainment.



Carry-out window at Urbano 116



Outdoor food and crafts Market at Torpedo Factory

DEVELOPMENT

WMATA Headquarters Building – Eisenhower East

In July 2019, the Planning Commission recommended and City Council approved a new office building to serve as the Virginia headquarters for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). A new addition to the Eisenhower East neighborhood, the office building will be adjacent to Metro Blue Line tracks on currently vacant land. The 14-story building will include: four levels of above-grade parking designed for possible future conversion into office space, an accessible green roof and terrace space, and a modern, high-quality architectural façade. These elements combined with an improved workplace interior will be part of an effort to achieve LEED Platinum certification for the building, the second in the City. Additionally, the area of the property currently planned as a surface parking lot has long-term plans of being developed with a residential building, increasing the vibrant, urban development envisioned for Eisenhower East. Other improvements associated with the new office building are the addition of a multi-use sidewalk along Mill Road, new street trees and landscaping, coordinated shared access with the adjacent City-owned facility, and on-site public art. Further, WMATA has agreed to allow public access and use for neighborhood open space under the elevated Metro Yellow Line tracks.



WMATA Headquarters Building

DEVELOPMENT

Braddock Gateway

The Planning Commission and City Council achieved a major milestone in the transformation of the Braddock neighborhood with approval of Braddock Gateway Phase III in December 2018. The Braddock Gateway Phase II and Phase III developments build on the success of Braddock Gateway Phase I, or the Dalton, which was completed in mid-2018. Phases II and III are anticipated to begin construction in the fall of 2019. Together, Phases II and III will deliver approximately 10,000 square feet of retail, 628 residential apartment units, and a public park that measures approximately one-third of an acre in size - all within one-quarter of a mile from the Braddock Road Metro Station. Delivery of Braddock Gateway Phases II and III completes the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan's vision for the Northern Gateway site bounded by First Street, Slaters Lane and North Fayette Street as a transit-oriented, vibrant community consisting of quality architecture and neighborhood-serving open space and land uses.

The Braddock Gateway Phase III development is located immediately west of the development application approved by City Council in September 2018 at 1200 N. Henry Street. The 1200 N. Henry Street approval consists of a seven-story building with 115

residential apartments above a 10,000 square foot day care and 17,000 of neighborhood-serving retail on the first and second floors. A publicly accessible pocket park at the north end of this



Braddock Gateway Phases 2 and 3

site compliments a signature gateway feature marking the entrance to the plan area. The site was recently sold to NOVO Properties, which plans to begin construction in spring 2020.



Braddock Gateway Phases 3



1200 N. Henry Street

DEVELOPMENT

Fairlington Presbyterian

In November 2018, the Planning Commission and City Council advanced another important affordable housing project for the City with the approval of a proposal from Wesley Housing Corporation and the Fairlington Presbyterian Church to build the Waypoint. This new 81-unit affordable, multi-family building was awarded \$1.8 million in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) by the State in

June 2019 to support the project. The development will be comprised of a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units available at 40-60% Area Median Income (AMI). The four-story, brick building of approximately 100,900 net square feet will be constructed in a portion of the Church's surface parking lot and will include an underground parking garage of 83 parking spaces to provide all parking on-site. In addition to

the delivery of much needed affordable housing, the development will include a number of sitewide benefits, such as the undergrounding of overhead utility lines, an improved pedestrian streetscape, and the creation of a new dual parking lot and plaza, which can host community events.



Fairlington Presbyterian

MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE

There were changes in the membership of the Planning Commission for FY 2019. After 24 years of service on the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Planning Commission, Chair Mary Lyman’s term expired. She attended her last Planning Commission public hearing on January 3, 2019. On February 12, 2019, at the City Council Legislative meeting, Mayor Justin M. Wilson presented Chair Lyman with a City Council Proclamation in recognition of her 24 years of impeccable public service to the City of Alexandria.

In January John Goebel was appointed to the Planning Commission, and

Stephen Koenig and David Brown were reappointed to 4-year terms. At its March 5, 2019, public hearing, the Planning Commission unanimously elected Nathan Macek as Chair and Maria Wasowski as Vice Chair for a one year term. All members attended at least 75 percent of the scheduled meetings in FY 2019.

In October 2018, the Planning Commission held a Retreat at Brandywine Living at Alexandria on the West End to discuss topics of particular interest including Open Space in New Development; Affordable Housing, including Accessory Dwelling

Units; and the FY 2020 Long Range Interdepartmental Work Program and Revenue/Fiscal Strategies for Future Planning. The Planning Commission also conducted a short walking tour of nearby development and infrastructure on the West End as part of the Retreat. It also held a Joint work session on Open Space with the Environmental Policy Commission and Park & Recreation Commission this past fiscal year.

Planning Commission Appointments to Other Commissions and Work Groups

Group	Planning Commission Member
Transportation Commission*	David Brown & Melissa McMahon (Vice Chair)
Waterfront Commission*	Nathan Macek (Vice Chair)
Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group*	Stephen Koenig
ARHA Redevelopment Work Group	Stephen Koenig
Resolution 830 Working Group	Stephen Koenig
Eisenhower West/Landmark Van Dorn Implementation Advisory Group	Mindy Lyle (Chair)
Green Building Policy Task Force	Stephen Koenig
Affordable Housing Contributions Work Group	Stephen Koenig
Four Mile Run Joint Task Force	Maria Wasowski
Eisenhower East Small Area Plan	Nathan Macek

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
MEETINGS ATTENDANCE REPORT
JULY 1, 2018 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2019

COMMISSION: Planning Commission

CHAIRS: Chair Nathan Macek and Vice Chair Maria Wasowski

Chair Mary Lyman (term ended in January 2019) and Vice Chair Nathan Macek

*The Planning Commission is in recess during the month of August.

2018									
Board Member	July 3	Sept 4	Sept 6	Oct 2	Oct 4	Nov 1	Nov 6	Dec 4	Dec 6
Mary Lyman, Chair	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nathan Macek, Vice Chair	-	X	E	X	X	X	E	X	X
Maria Wasowski	-	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X
Mindy Lyle	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E
David Brown	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stephen Koenig	-	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X
Melissa McMahon	-	E	E	X	X	X	X	X	X

2019									
Board Member	Jan 3	Feb 5	Feb 7	Mar 5	Apr 2	May 7	June 4	June 25	
Mary Lyman, Chair (term ended in January 2019)	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Nathan Macek, Chair	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Maria Wasowski, Vice Chair	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	
Mindy Lyle	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
David Brown	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Stephen Koenig	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Melissa McMahon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
John Goebel	N/A	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	

INDICATE: (X) PRESENT; (E) EXCUSED, (U) UNEXUSED

LIST OF THOSE WHO DID NOT ATTEND 75% OF MEETINGS: None.

APPROVED:



Nathan Macek, Chair

OTHER

Planning Commission Information

The Planning Commission's process for elections to fill leadership positions, namely, Chair and Vice Chair, is covered in its By-laws and involves the election of officers on an annual basis in March. Elections this year are described in the summary of activities. As called for in the By-laws, it is the vote of the Planning Commission that determines changes in leadership. Term limits can also affect changes to the Planning Commission's leadership.

Questions? Please contact Planning & Zoning staff at 703.746.4666 or email the Planning Commission at PlanComm@alexandriava.gov.

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