



West End
Planning Opportunity Area 4, 7, & 8

DRAFT

West End



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



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West End Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



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1. Introduction & Background

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Purpose

The City's Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for future development of the City. The Plan describes demographic trends, describes existing conditions, and sets policies for future conditions in the City, including land use, transportation, urban design, and the environment.

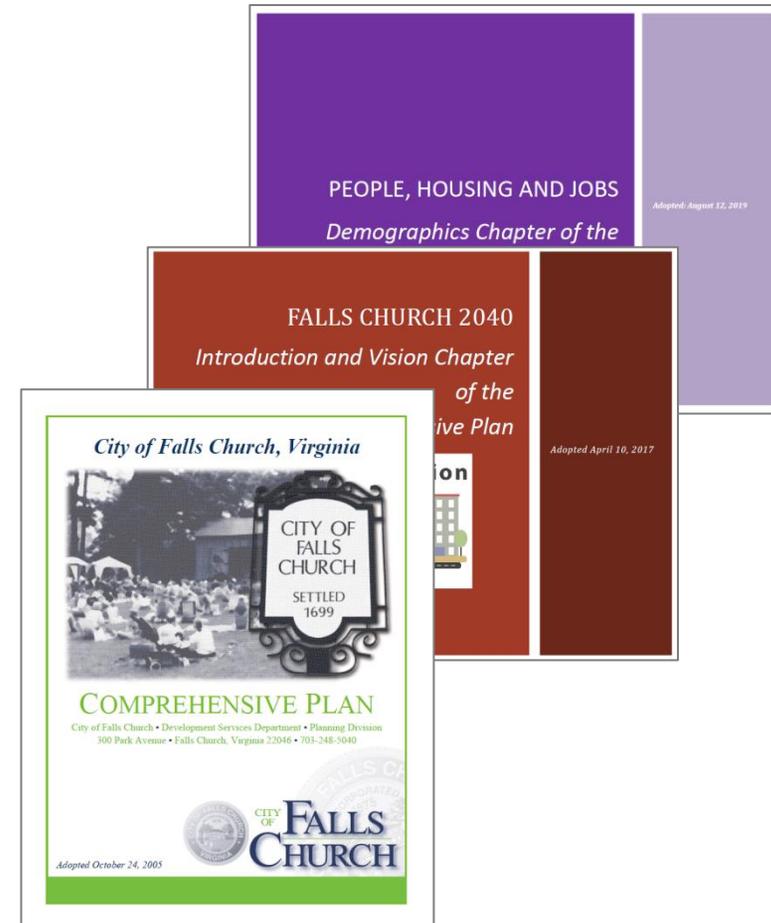
Within the context of setting policies for development of the City, the Comprehensive Plan identifies several Planning Opportunity Areas (POAs) (See the Opportunity Area Priority/Schedule map on page 1-5). The Comprehensive Plan describes POAs as being areas where property is currently underutilized. Redevelopment could help improve quality of life in these areas of the City and further the realization of the Plan's overall vision for the City.

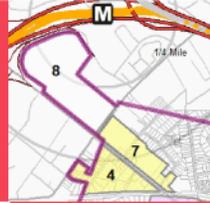
This Small Area Plan will provide a general concept for the City's West End which covers three POAs: the Gordon Road Triangle (POA 4), West End (POA 7), and School-Related Parcels (POA 8). This plan is intended to provide an area-specific framework for redevelopment that supports and builds upon the guidelines established in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Authority of the Plan

This plan and the concepts herein create a conceptual framework for redevelopment and public improvements for the City's West End that, when combined, will create a vibrant, economically viable, walkable, bicycle friendly, destination along one of the City's major commercial corridors adjacent to the West Falls Church Metro Station and Interstate 66. The recommendations in this Plan are meant to provide a starting point for public and private investment into general improvements to the area. This Plan does not constitute a change to the City's

Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map, Zoning Ordinance, or Zoning Map.





Local Context and Geography

Chapter 4 of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan identified the area between the W&OD Trail and the western City boundary as two separate POAs, the Gordon Road Triangle (POA 4) and the West End (POA 7). In 2013, the City of Falls Church acquired land from adjacent Fairfax County through a legal agreement and referendum. A large portion of this land, referred to as “Schools-Related Parcels,” was designated as POA 8. This plan examines these three POAs together to develop a coordinated vision for redevelopment of the City’s West End.

The Schools-Related Parcels POA is located at the westernmost end of the City, north of the intersection of Leesburg Pike (SR 7) and Haycock Road. This land comprises over 34 acres and includes the George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School campuses. It is bordered by Interstate 66 to the north, and is between the Leesburg Pike exit off Interstate 66 and the West Falls Church Metro Station.

The West End POA (POA 7) is located on the northeastern side of West Broad Street between the W&OD Trail and Haycock Road. The area currently includes the Falls Plaza Shopping Center which is bisected by Birch Street.

On the south side of West Broad Street at the intersection with the W&OD Trail is the Gordon Road Triangle POA (POA 4). This area currently contains a mix of automobile sales and service, retail sales, light industrial services, office, vehicle storage uses, and the City’s property yard.

Each Planning Opportunity Area (POA) in the City presents its own opportunities. The factors that make this area of the City special include the following:



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- The City's high school and middle school, George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School;
- Proximity of the West Falls Church Metrorail Station;
- City ownership of approximately 34 acres of land, almost 10 of which will be used for economic development; and
- Large parcels of land that are under single ownership which create the opportunity for larger mixed-use development footprints to expand market presence within the Northern Virginia and Washington Metro Area.

Each POA fits a unique role and purpose within the larger City. The West End POAs collectively define an area characterized by strong multimodal regional connectivity and a growing interest for attractive, coordinated mixed use redevelopments projects on the sites adjacent to the planned economic development project.



Regional Context

The West End is one of the key places in the constellation of Northern Virginia. West Broad Street is part of a major regional roadway (State Route 7) that extends from Leesburg to Alexandria and also connects the City to Tysons Corner, Seven Corners, and Bailey's Crossroads. The POA is located at the western edge of the City with direct access to the West Falls Church Metro Station and Interstate 66. It is approximately 2.5 miles from Tysons Corner along Leesburg Pike (SR 7), and 6 miles from Ballston via Interstate 66.

The West End is surrounded on three sides by Fairfax County. On the eastern side is the VA Tech/UVA joint campus and a private, entry-controlled surface parking lot. The West Falls Church Metro Station is just beyond the campus, and includes a five story parking structure. Just south of the West Falls Church Metro Station is a condominium neighborhood. West of Leesburg Pike (SR 7) in Fairfax County are single family houses and a new townhouse neighborhood. The W&OD Trail, a 45-mile regional trail between Shirlington and Purcellville, borders the southern edge of the POA.



West Falls Church Metro

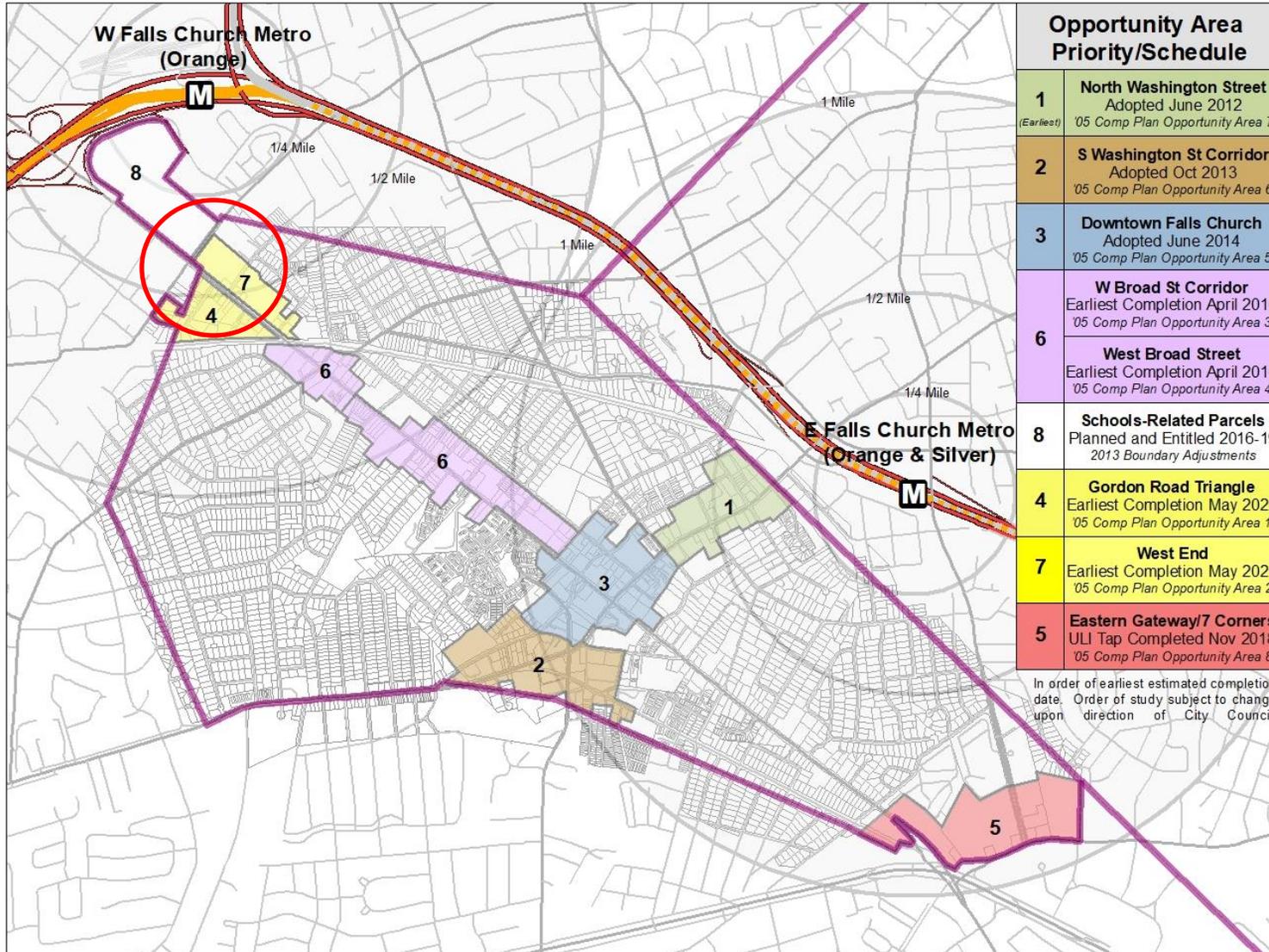


West End

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Intro & Background

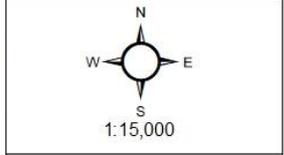


Opportunity Area Priority/Schedule	
1 <small>(Earliest)</small>	North Washington Street Adopted June 2012 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 7</i>
2	S Washington St Corridor Adopted Oct 2013 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 6</i>
3	Downtown Falls Church Adopted June 2014 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 5</i>
6	W Broad St Corridor Earliest Completion April 2016 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 3</i>
	West Broad Street Earliest Completion April 2016 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 4</i>
8	Schools-Related Parcels Planned and Entitled 2016-19 <i>2013 Boundary Adjustments</i>
4	Gordon Road Triangle Earliest Completion May 2020 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 1</i>
7	West End Earliest Completion May 2020 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 2</i>
5	Eastern Gateway/7 Corners ULI Tap Completed Nov 2018 <i>'05 Comp Plan Opportunity Area 8</i>

In order of earliest estimated completion date. Order of study subject to change upon direction of City Council.

October 2019

Planning Opportunity Area Priority/Schedule

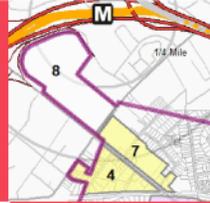


City of Falls Church

Legend

- City Boundary
- Planning Study (Opportunity) Areas





Methodology

This plan is a product of the City of Falls Church, commissioned by the Falls Church City Council. The plan blends information from several sources including adopted City policies, local history, regional context and trends, best practices and input from the Falls Church community, landowners and business owners. Quantitative data was acquired from a number of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the City of Falls Church Real Estate Assessor. GIS data for map creation and analysis was created by the City of Falls Church. Site pictures are from Google Images, Google Earth, Bing Maps, and on-location by City officials. Qualitative data was acquired from community meetings, developers, planners, the City of Falls Church City Council, and the City of Falls Church Planning Commission.

Stakeholder workshops were held on February 23, 2017, and June 19, 2019. The workshops consisted of key stakeholders for the study area including representatives from the following:

- Regional Agencies (Virginia Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, Northern Virginia Regional Commission);
- Fairfax County (Supervisors Offices, Department of Planning & Zoning, and Department of Transportation);
- City staff (Planning Division and Public Works); and
- Landowners/Adjacent business owners (Virginia Tech/University of Virginia, Washington Metro and

Transit Authority, Federal Realty Investment Trust, George Mason High School redevelopment team, West Falls Church Gateway Partners, and Beyer),



October 26, 2019 Community Meeting

A community kickoff meeting was held on March 25, 2017, in the Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School Cafetorium. This community meeting focused on redevelopment opportunities in the Schools-Related Parcels POA. There was an attendance of about 45 people, 20 of which were community members.

Another community meeting was held on October 26, 2019, at Falls Church Episcopal. At this meeting, local stakeholders, residents, and city staff came together to review what has already been planned and entitled for POA 8 and then discussed how that connects with future redevelopment in the West End and Gordon Road POAs.

Public input received at the community meeting was incorporated into the draft and presented at the December 2, 2019 Planning Commission work session.



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History

Past

The West End was once part of the 1,279 acre Pearson Grant of 1724, owned by Captain Simon Pearson. Most of the area was in agricultural use historically. The site contained a farm and house known first as "Montpelier" in the 18th and early 19th century, and in the mid-19th century it was renamed "Wayside."

The Wayside property was later sold to Ellen and Leonard S. Gordon (for whom Gordon Road is named) in 1886. In 1895, Leonard Gordon divided the Wayside property and sold the north side (area north of Leesburg Pike) including the Wayside house to Kate Flagg.

The Town of Falls Church incorporated in 1948 to become the City of Falls Church. Falls Church City Public Schools separated from the Fairfax School system upon authorization from the Virginia Board of Education in 1949. Later in 1949, the Falls Church City School Board purchased the Wayside property from Kate Flagg for the construction of George Mason High School. The "Wayside" house remained on the site until its demolition in 1952 for the construction of George Mason High School.

George Mason High School originally served both middle and high school students from the City of Falls Church. Several additions to the school building were completed between 1953-1972. The additions have resulted in a sprawling campus that covers over 30 acres of the West End.

In 2005, Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School was constructed to relieve overcrowding in the George Mason High School building. The 136,000 sq. ft. middle school

was built with a compact, vertical design at a height of 3 stories.

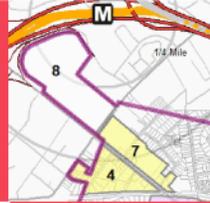
Washington & Old Dominion Railroad

The Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad operated in the City from 1859 to 1968. The West Falls Church railroad station was once located close to the intersection of West Broad Street and the W&OD Trail. This station was primarily used for freight while the East Falls Church station was used by passengers.

All W&OD services were ended in 1968. When W&OD operations ceased, the Virginia Electric and Power Company bought the right-of-way for its electric transmission lines. In 1974, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority began to purchase the right-of-way. The first section of the W&OD Bike and Pedestrian Trail opened in Falls Church later that year.



Washington & Old Dominion Railroad



UVA/VT Land Agreement

The City of Falls Church owns approximately five acres of land in Fairfax County adjacent to POA 8, which was acquired in 1975. On February 14, 1994, this land was ground leased to UVA and Virginia Tech for at least 25 years and up to 40 years based on City Ordinance 1461. The institutions pay rent of \$1 annually to the City as well as any utility and maintenance costs on the property. The lease allows the institutions to build additional buildings on the land as long as they are used for institutional purposes. There is currently only one building on the land, the remainder of the property is occupied by parking.

The lease stipulates an option to purchase the five acres. At the beginning of the lease period the institutions paid the City \$500,000 for this option, which begins in the 26th year of the Ground Lease. The purchase price at that time would be \$3,350,000, and would increase yearly at a rate of 3.6% compounded through the end of the term.

Present

There has been almost a decade's worth of planning for the City's West End. The following subsections highlight some of the major studies and actions for the area.

2013 Boundary Adjustment

Planning Opportunity Area 8 is referred to as the "Schools-Related Parcels" in the 2013 boundary adjustment agreement between the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County adopted by Falls Church City Council resolution 2013-11 on April 22, 2013, and approved by voter referendum on November 5, 2013. On December 13, 2013, a Special Court appointed by the Virginia Supreme Court approved the voluntary boundary adjustment agreement and transfer of 38.4 acres from Fairfax County to the City of Falls Church. The Schools-Related Parcels

Site History and Past Studies	
Dec 2010	Gordon Road Student Study
Dec 2013	Boundry Adjustment
Oct 2014	ULI Technical Assistance Panel Study (TAP)
Dec 2014	Virgina Tech Study
Mar 2015	ULI Mini-TAP
Aug 2016	Comprehensive Plan Admendment [Revitalization Areas]
Mar 2017	UDA Grant - Urban Design Guidelines
Jun 2017	Nelson Nygaard Study
Jan 2018	Comprehensive Plan Admendment [Revitalization District / Land Use Change]
Aug 2018	Zoning Ordinance Amendment
Dec 2018	Zoning Map Amendment
July 2019	WFC Special Exception Entitlement Approval
STUDIES	ACTIONS

area is the larger of two areas transferred to the City in the adjustment, it is 34.56 acres. The stipulations of the agreement for the Schools-Related Parcels allows up to 30% of the acreage to be used for any lawful purpose.

Recent Planning Studies

A number of recent planning studies have been completed for the City's West End. These studies are summarized below and available in the City's Planning Library (www.fallschurchva.gov/planning).

Gordon Road Student Study (2010) During the Fall 2010 semester, Virginia Tech's Urban Affairs & Planning graduate studio conducted an analysis of Falls Church's Gordon Road Triangle and created a concept plan for redeveloping the site. Creating a walkable, transit-oriented development with ample green space was among the major recommendations from the study.



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Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) (2014) - A TAP coordinated by ULI took place in October 2014. The TAP focused on redevelopment of the Schools-Related Parcels POA and included experts from fields related to urban design, development, and real estate. Members of the public and City officials attended and gave feedback regarding the property. The TAP recommended a mix of uses in “agora” type development focused on the corner of Haycock Road and Leesburg Pike (Rt 7) on the City property. The panel also recommended redevelopment of adjacent Metro property in Fairfax County that would provide an urban and transportation continuation between the POA and the West Falls Church Metro Station.

Virginia Tech Study (2014) - A Virginia Tech graduate studio (Fall 2014) conducted an analysis of the ULI TAP to examine land use and development issues in the Schools-Related Parcels POA. Key recommendations from the study included increasing park and open space land, creating affordable housing, designing a wayfinding system to the West Falls Church Metro, and enhancing safety through pedestrian-oriented design.

ULI mini-TAP (2015) - ULI conducted a mini-TAP in 2015 which focused on redevelopment opportunities for the Gordon Road Triangle POA. Recommendations from the study included creating a gridded street network, establishing retail frontage along Broad Street, and incorporating streetscape, pedestrian, and park/open space improvements into redevelopment.

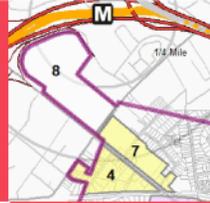
Urban Development Authority (UDA) Grant (2017) - The City received a UDA Planning grant through the Commonwealth’s Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment. Through that grant, the City worked with Rhodeside & Harwell to develop Urban Design Guidelines

for the Schools-Related Parcels POA. The study recommended a number of guidelines to create a mixed-use urban center and a “special place” for Falls Church including:

- incorporating architectural features to break up the massing of buildings;
- using ground floor treatments to foster an active and human-scale environment;
- creating special street corners;
- incorporating streetscape and public art;
- using built elements to create a welcoming gateway; and
- creating a development pattern that is sensitive to the surrounding land uses and includes appropriate transitional areas.



Public Works Yard Potential Design (ULI mini-TAP)



Nelson-Nygaard Study (2017) - With funding from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) program, Nelson/Nygaard conducted a study of the transportation network in the West Falls Church area. The study included several important recommendations including:

- improving street connectivity through the site and to adjacent properties;
- establishing a high quality bicycle network; and
- providing safe and efficient pedestrian circulation within and around the site.

Referendum

In November 2017, Falls Church voters approved a referendum for the issuance of up to \$120 million in bonds for the construction of a new George Mason High School. As part of the strategy to mitigate taxpayer costs for this new high school, the City Council, School Board, Planning Commission, and Economic Development Authority jointly planned and marketed approximately 10 acres of land from the Schools-Related Parcels POA for private economic development. A long-term land lease for the site will be granted to the developer, and the value of that land lease and the future tax revenues from such redevelopment will be used to help defray the cost of annual debt service for the new school.

Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Amendments

A number of land use and zoning changes were approved to facilitate and support the development of the new high school and a significant mixed-use project. These changes are summarized below and discussed in more detail in the Land Use & Zoning chapter of this plan.

- January 22, 2018 – Amended Chapter 4 of the Comprehensive Plan to create a “Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development” and designate the schools related parcels POA as “Parks & Open Space” with two School Symbols and “Mixed-Use” within a “Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development” on the Future Land Use Plan map.
- August 13, 2018 – Amended B-2 zoning district to create new special exception provisions (Special Exception Entitlement and Special Exception Site Plan) to provide additional flexibility in height and density needed to achieve significant mixed-use development projects and allow for by-right development of an elementary or secondary school up to a height of seven stories.
- December 10, 2018 – Amended the Official Zoning District Map to change the existing zoning in the Schools-Related Parcels POA from R-1A , Low Density Residential to B-2, Central Business to accommodate the anticipated special exceptions and site plans for the economic development project and to permit additional height for the new urban scale high school.



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Intro & Background

New George Mason High School

Phase 1a and 1b site plans for the new George Mason High School were approved on May 20, 2019, and August 5, 2019 respectively. The new high school which broke ground on June 14, 2019, is expected to open in January 2021.

West Falls Church Special Exception Entitlement Approval

On July 8, 2019, City Council approved a Special Exception Entitlement (SEE) for the West Falls Church mixed-use development project. The SEE governs the general locations of the development's buildings, height of buildings, location, type, and amount of individual uses on the site, infrastructure and transportation on the site, public facilities and utilities, and other aspects related to future approvals and development on the subject property. More detailed plans showing the final project design will be developed as part of the Special Exception Site Plan process.



Rendering of the new George Mason High School



Massing Diagram for Approved West Falls Church SEE Application



Existing Comprehensive Plan Guidance

The Comprehensive Plan establishes land use and urban design goals for the City's West End. These principles for each of the three POAs are consolidated below.

Land Use & Zoning:

- Modify the Future Land Use Map to reflect the areas where development will occur.
- Create a retail appearance on West Broad Street with retail uses on the first floor of buildings.
- Consolidate lots to achieve effective site planning and large-scale or mixed-use development.
- Rezone from the default R-1A zoning district to a district compatible with desired redevelopment, or create a new zoning district that is compatible with desired redevelopment.
- Replacement or renovation of George Mason High School.

Urban Design:

- Design guidelines that are appropriate for an area that includes schools as well as a mixture of commercial uses. These would not supersede the existing Design Guidelines but complement them in regard to the special area and circumstances of the POA including the two schools and the West Falls Church Metro Station.
- Locate buildings as close to West Broad Street as possible with parking in the rear of buildings.

- Effectively use screening and buffering techniques for adjacent uses in the City and the neighboring areas of Fairfax County, as well as compatible transitions to the adjacent neighborhoods in terms of height, scale, and intensity.
- Achieve specific and consistent architectural goals (building materials, window types, roof overhangs, roof pitch, and porches).
- Promote a positive image of the City as part of a gateway.
- Effectively landscape the interior of parking areas and provide screening from the street.
- Use uniform signage.

Sustainability:

- Economic Sustainability in regard to new commercial development.
- Environmental Sustainability involving Net Zero, District Energy, geothermal systems, and LEED Gold certification.
- Include green space along the southern border of the triangle with the Grove Branch to provide a better buffer for the stream and as an attraction and entrance area for cyclists along the W&OD Trail.

Transportation:

- Create connections to the rest of the City of Falls Church via West Broad Street (SR 7) and the West End and Gordon Road Triangle POAs.



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- Create regional connections via the West Falls Church Metro Station, Leesburg Pike (SR 7), and Interstate 66.
- Consider the reconfiguration of Gordon Road and the alignment with Birch Street.
- Provide convenient and safe pedestrian access and bicycle access from West Broad Street to businesses and from businesses to West Falls Church Metro station and the W&OD Trail.
- Consolidate entrances.



2. Concepts

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Concepts

Vision & Goals

Vision

With the Comprehensive Plan as guidance, this plan uses the following vision statement for developing recommendations and future scenarios for this area:

The West End is a vibrant gateway into the City of Falls Church. Residents and visitors are immersed in a welcoming and inclusive community. Building upon activity already underway, investment supports the area's economic vitality, enhances safety and walkability, and affirms the City's commitment as an urban sustainability leader.

Goals

To achieve that vision, this plan establishes the following goals for investment in the area:

- Provide a guide for the coordinated redevelopment of the City's West End that establishes a live/work/play community. Promote redevelopment that incorporates vibrant retail, Class A office space, and a diverse supply of housing that supports a range of incomes.
- Encourage quality urban design that creates an attractive gateway into the City and builds upon a sense of place through consistent streetscape and materials, walkable neighborhoods, and community spaces.
- Enhance transportation connections and accessibility. Incorporate safe, frequent pedestrian crossings and improve multi-modal connections to the metro and other areas of the City.

- Ensure utility and infrastructure planning meets the current and future demands of the City's residents and businesses. Innovative, sustainable, and climate-resilient strategies should be incorporated and tree-canopy coverage should be increased.
- Incorporate publicly accessible parks and open space areas into redevelopment.

The following subsections provide discussion of key concepts that support the Plan's vision and goals. Each subsection corresponds to a subsequent chapter of the Plan that provides additional details and guidance.



The “West End”

Together the School-Related Parcels, the Gordon Triangle, and the West End POAs create an exciting section of the City, known as the “West End.” The construction of the new George Mason High School, the West Falls Church Economic Development Project (9.45 acre site) and nearby Founders Row development are spurring revitalization in surrounding areas. Planned redevelopment of Virginia Tech’s campus and the West Falls Church Metro highlight the economic potential of this area and create the opportunity for a larger mixed-use development.

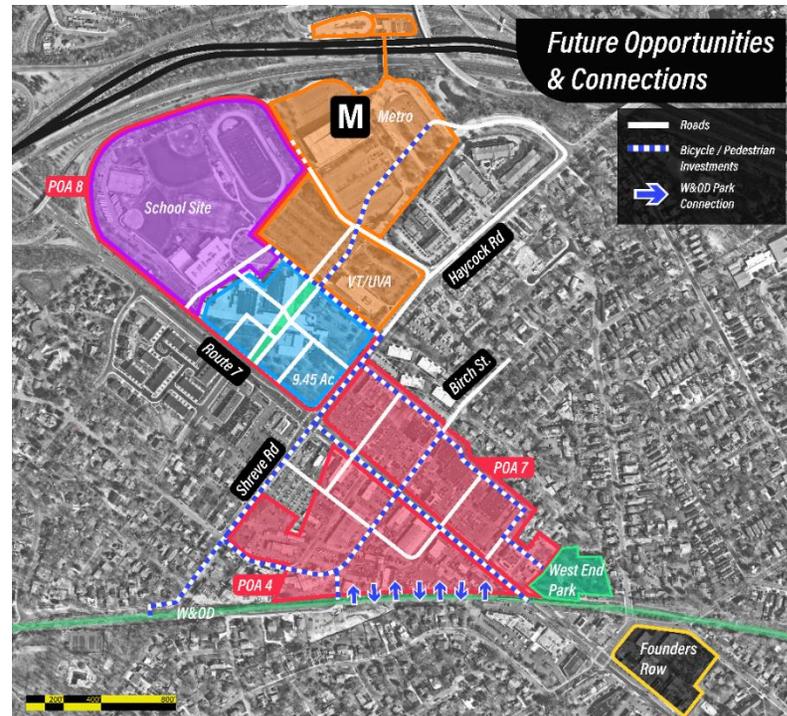
As investment in the POAs continues, it is important to consider how the West End can become a new destination that not only draws in regional interest but becomes a place that people want to repeatedly visit.

Creating a Vibrant Destination

A vibrant destination should offer diverse amenities to build experiential depth, intriguing visitors to return and explore. Modern activity centers are expected to include a number of services and amenities such as restaurants, bars, breweries, retail, public spaces, and programmed community events. Pairing the West Falls Church Metro with vibrant retail, housing, and office space can support a live/work/play environment.

Creating an Inclusive Community

Creating a successful live/work/play environment requires a variety of housing types and price points to draw people to the area and support an inclusive community. Redevelopment of the City’s West End presents a unique opportunity to provide a range of affordable housing options in a well-connected, transit-oriented community. As the area redevelops, opportunities to co-locate affordable units with future community facilities and partner with other



Connectivity Concept Map



Co-location of Affordable Housing located above a fire station in Alexandria, VA

Concepts



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Concepts

entities to incorporate affordable housing into projects should be explored.

Celebrate the Old, Imagine the New

Building upon the City’s heritage and considering local and regional needs can help to create a successful destination. The W&OD trail, used by walkers, joggers, cyclists, and commuters, was once a historic railway and is a great example of an existing feature that could be celebrated. The City’s history could be integrated into a modern design which builds upon the existing trail. One possibility is to create a park parallel to the trail which tells the history of the railway while offering inviting restaurants and amenities for those entering or exiting the trail.

Future redevelopment provides numerous opportunities to incorporate a mixture of new uses. For example, a food hall could be a major draw providing a variety of food, drinks, and opportunities for community interaction. Something similar to the successful Eastern or Union Markets in DC and tailored to the City’s scale and aesthetics could be viable. This may also provide an opportunity to showcase some of the City’s famous Vietnamese cuisine from the Eden Center.



The Indianapolis Cultural Trail: how bike trails and cities can positively interact



Union Market – Washington D.C.



Quality Urban Design that Builds Upon a Sense of Place

The City of Falls Church is a unique place in the heart of Northern Virginia. The City has always prided itself on urban design – both in the design of its streets, such as lined Broad Street, and the cohesive design of its accenting features such as its red brick sidewalks, peaked roofed bus stops, green bicycle racks, and colonial lampposts.

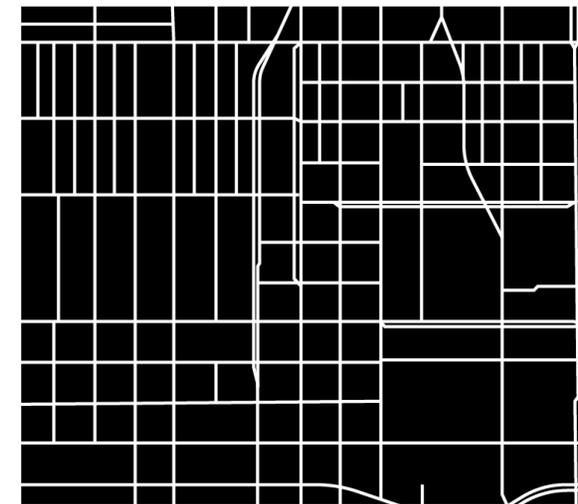
Walkable Neighborhood

A pedestrian scaled urban framework is an important first step to enhancing urban design. Street grid connectivity and accessibility between the three POA parcels is currently a challenge with Route 7 and Haycock functioning more as an obstacle than a link. Block lengths range from 600 feet to over 1,000 feet (by comparison Downtown Falls Church is 300-400 feet). Building setbacks are placed far from the sidewalk creating large seas of parking lots further creating an obstacle for pedestrians.

The area would benefit from a new street grid which focuses on smaller, walkable blocks. This could be created through additional interior streets, enhanced connectivity across major roads to adjacent sites, and locating buildings closer to the sidewalk. Prioritization of paths leading to regional transit connections such as the W&OD Trail, West Falls Church Metro, and Metrobus stops is also critical to creating a multi-modal community.



Savannah, Georgia has a typical block length of 550' by 650' broken up by secondary mid-block lanes and green public squares.



Phoenix, Arizona has a typical block size ranging from 750' to 2,300'.

1-Square Mile Comparison of City Blocks



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Concepts

A pedestrian-oriented urban framework is not a guarantee to a successful space, but it can help a place to flourish through the creation of smaller, interconnected experiences.

Wide, tree-lined sidewalks; pedestrian-scaled lighting; places for stopping and sitting; public art; and opportunities for sidewalk dining are all simple streetscape features which help to elevate a place in the minds of local residents and visitors. Placement of flexible spaces for gathering, such as plazas and urban parks, should be considered early on in the redevelopment process.

Consistent Materials and Streetscape

In 2017, the City adopted updated streetscape standards for commercial streets. The standards include details for street furniture, cross sections, crosswalk materials, and frequency of crosswalks. As a whole, the standards call for wide, tree-lined sidewalks with opportunities for sidewalk dining mixed with pedestrian amenities.

All of the features and characteristics listed above accumulate to establish a theme and familiar pattern adding to a community's identity and sense of place. Serving as the western gateway into the City, these three POAs have the opportunity to convey a unified welcoming message and sense of arrival into Falls Church.



Example of experiential design features



Multimodal Connectivity and Accessibility

The West End has the opportunity to serve as an important transportation hub where many transportation modes come together, including rail, bus, auto, bike, and pedestrian. Transportation investments should strengthen regional transportation links and increase safety and accessibility for all travelers.

Safe Connections and Amenities

The City's West End should build upon existing connections to Washington, D.C., and the Northern Virginia region and strive to be an adaptable, welcoming transportation hub for those who live within or visit Falls Church. The ease at which people are able to safely circulate throughout the area and transfer from one mode of travel to another is essential to encouraging longer visits and returns. Frequent pedestrian crossings are needed to make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Other amenities can also help to enhance circulation and accessibility throughout the area. Quality streetscape including tree-lined sidewalks and benches enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage people to walk. Shared parking garages promote the opportunity for visitors to park once and visit multiple destinations or spend a few hours exploring the area.

Bikeshare

The City's 2019 launch of the regional Capital Bikeshare system has enhanced connections with adjoining jurisdictions and strengthened the utility of the W&OD Trail. There is currently one bikeshare location in the study area located near the intersection of Haycock Road & Leesburg Pike. Another bikeshare station is located just outside the City at the West Falls Church metro station. Additional



Cady's Alley in Georgetown, Washington D.C.



Rendered Vision for Bus Rapid Transit Lanes in Detroit, MI



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



bikeshare stations throughout the West End would make it more convenient to use.

Bus Rapid Transit

The positioning of the study area along Route 7 makes it a good candidate for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. A BRT would provide more efficient circulation throughout the West End and the City as a whole. Through the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the City along with Fairfax County, Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria has participated in the Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III studies for a Route 7 BRT. A future Phase IV study will provide additional engineering details and guidance for construction.

Greenways

Greenways are vegetated linear corridors that enhance connectivity and provide pathways for walking and bicycling. Redevelopment within the Gordon Road Triangle could enhance connections to the W&OD Trail, creating a more permeable edge to the City that invites people into the site.



Potential Concept to Connect Development with W&OD Trail

Concepts



Community Building Blocks

Utilities and the natural environment are building blocks of any community. Having the right infrastructure to build upon is critical to achieving the vision and goals of this plan.

Stormwater

The City's West End is largely covered by impervious surfaces, such as surface parking lots, building rooftops, roadways, and sidewalks. Redevelopment of this area provides the opportunity to improve stormwater management. For example, expanding tree canopy and incorporating parks and open space areas will help to absorb stormwater runoff. Where possible, redevelopment should emphasize green infrastructure (rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavement, etc.) over grey infrastructure (underground vaults, curbs, gutters, pipes, etc.).



Use of green infrastructure to manage stormwater

Sanitary Sewer

Improvements to the City's sanitary sewer will need to be made in order to accommodate future development in the City's West End. The City should continue to evaluate needed improvements to the sewer system and work with developers to ensure adequate sanitary sewer capacity is available.

Utility Undergrounding

Overhead utility lines should be undergrounded where possible. Some of the existing power, telephone, and cable lines within the study area are located on wooden utility poles which are not aesthetically pleasing, block visibility, and create conflicts with street tree growth.

City Property Yard

The City Property Yard provides the storage and workspaces needed to support many City services. The Property Yard covers approximately 5.5 acres and is in need of redevelopment. A public-private partnership could support the needed investment and make better use of the land area. Redesign of the property yard could include ground-level space to support City operations with upper floors available for office or community uses.

District Energy

District energy systems allow for the efficient use of heat from local Combined Heat and Power (CHP) generation, greatly reducing fuel waste associated with conventional power generation. District energy systems share hot and cold water created as a by-product of locally-made electricity. The City should evaluate strategies and identify actions that would facilitate the creation and installation of district energy systems in the West End.



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Concepts

Net-Zero Energy Ready

"Net-Zero Energy Ready" buildings, certified by the U.S. Department of Energy, are designed to maximize energy efficiency so that the introduction of a renewable energy system can offset all or most annual energy consumption. Encouraging this building practice would allow future West End redevelopment to quickly adapt to new renewable inputs, helping to push buildings to 100% net zero energy consumption.

Dominion Smart Cities

Dominion Virginia Power is investing in smart meter technology in the Commonwealth. Deployment of smart meters will help Dominion to provide better service through power outage detection and remote meter readings. The smart meters would also have other monitoring capabilities including flood detection, air quality, smart parking, and traffic counts. The City should continue to work with Dominion Virginia Power as this initiative is rolled out.

Urban forest

Trees are a defining feature of the City; particularly as one enters Falls Church along West Broad Street. In addition to distinguishing the City from surrounding areas, trees also provide a host of benefits including shade, comfort, and enhanced air and water quality. Redevelopment should expand existing tree canopy coverage.

Urban farms

Urban farming is an important source of local food production that helps to build a healthy community. Urban agriculture can take a variety of forms including rooftop gardens, vertical gardens, and community gardens. Redevelopment should consider innovative strategies to incorporate community gardens and urban farms.



Rooftop urban farm



Tree-lined West Broad Street



Pentagon Row - Arlington, VA



Pentagon Row (winter use) - Arlington, VA

Public Gathering Spaces That Create Opportunities for Community Activities

The City's West End is almost completely covered with impervious surfaces and lacks gathering spaces. Public gathering spaces provide places to meet, celebrate, and enjoy the outdoors. In urban environments, these places often take the form of plazas, parks, promenades, and pedestrian-oriented streets.

Redevelopment of this area provides the opportunity to incorporate spaces for recreation and relaxation. To be successful, adequate land needs to be set aside early on in the redevelopment process. Lot consolidation and coordinated redevelopment can provide the needed space to create gathering areas with room for amenities.

City parks and gathering spaces need to include several key components, including: a mix of sun and shade, places to sit, and flexible space for programmed events and uses throughout the year. Most importantly, they need to be convenient for people to access and should be located in proximity to restaurants and food service.

Plazas

Plazas are gathering spaces which typically are furnished with benches, tables, and landscaping. Plazas typically incorporate public art, fountains, or other unique features that instill a sense of place and attract visitors. Such places create opportunities for socializing and relaxation. Flexible amenities such as moveable chairs and tables can provide people with the ability to adapt the space to their needs.



West End

Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8



Concepts

Central Green Spaces & Promenades

Redevelopment should incorporate central linear green spaces to host large events and create opportunities for active recreational activities. Linear pathways or promenades should also be incorporated to accommodate pedestrian through-traffic. Design of these spaces should be flexible and support a variety of activities.

Pocket Parks

Redevelopment in the City's West End presents the opportunity to incorporate pocket parks which are small open spaces located between buildings or along streets. Such areas create spaces to rest, provide meeting places, and integrate green spaces into the urban landscape.

Streets as Public Spaces

Streets can serve as destinations in themselves rather than simply a means to get from one point to another. To be a successful public space, streets should have lower speed limits and wide sidewalks which make pedestrians feel safe and create an inviting place to visit, relax, and socialize.

Rooftop Terraces

The City's West End also provides the opportunity to rethink how to maximize usable land area. Creating usable rooftop terraces is one way to overcome a site's spatial constraints. Rooftop terraces provide an excellent way to create gathering spaces and bring life outside. Rooftop terraces can supplement other types of gathering spaces, and design preference should be given to spaces that are publicly accessible.



King Street in Old Town, Alexandria: Example of a street serving as a successful public space.