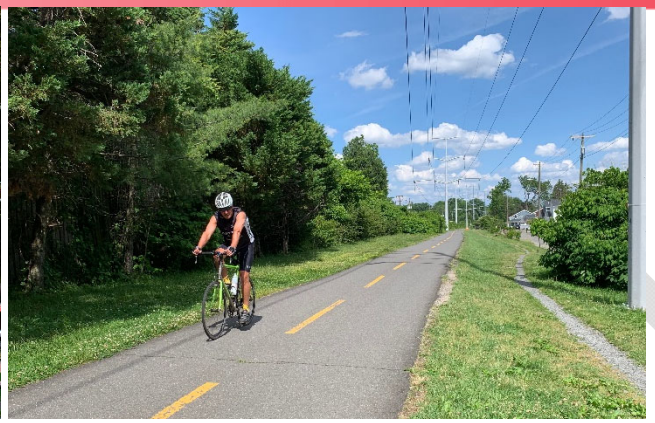
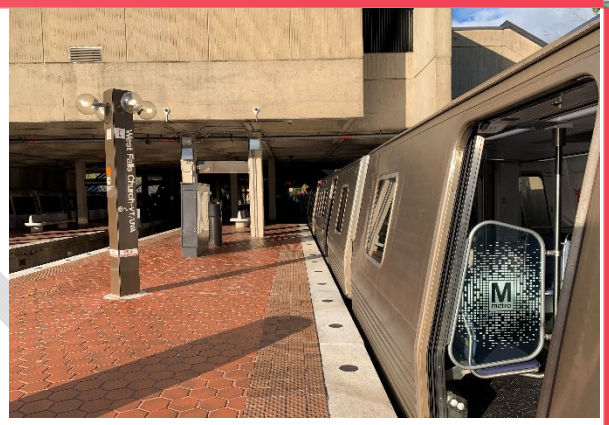
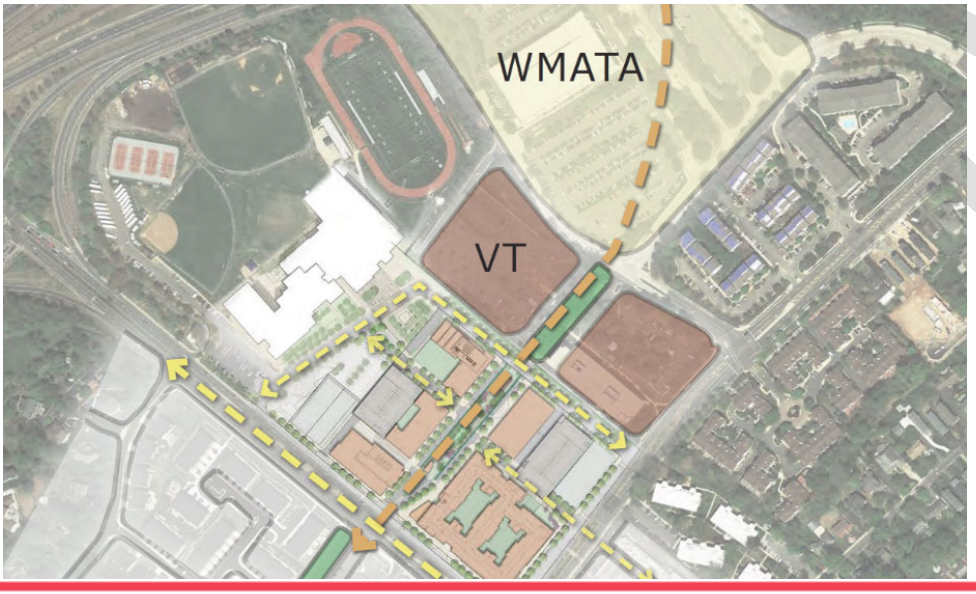




# West End

## Planning Opportunity Area 4, 7, & 8

**Draft v7 – August 26, 2020**



West End

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**City of Falls Church Department of Community Planning & Economic Development Services**
300 Park Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22046

703-248-5040 (TTY 711)
703-248 5225 fax
plan@fallschurchva.gov

The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This document will be made available in alternate format upon request. Call 703 248-5080 (TTY 711).

Policy of Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Disability:

The City of Falls Church does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its employment practices or in the admission to, access to, or operations of its services, programs, or activities. Cindy Mester, 300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, Virginia 22046 has been designated to coordinate compliance with the ADA non-discrimination requirement.

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Public Meeting Participants


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# Contents


## 1 Introduction & Background

- 1-1 Purpose
- 1-2 Local Context and Geography
- 1-4 Regional Context
- 1-6 Methodology
- 1-7 History
- 1-12 Existing Comprehensive Plan Guidance

## 2 Concepts

- 2-1 Vision & Goals
  - 2-1 Vision
  - 2-4 Goals
- 2-2 Key Concepts
  - 2-2 The West End
  - 2-4 Quality Urban Design that Builds Upon a Sense of Place
  - 2-6 Multimodal Connectivity & Accessibility
  - 2-8 Communities Building Blocks
  - 2-10 Public Gathering Spaces that Create Opportunities for Community Activities

## 3 Land Use & Zoning

- 3-1 Existing Land Use
- 3-2 Future Land Use
  - 3-2 Recent Land Use Changes
  - 3-2 Special Revitalization District
  - 3-5 Planning Concept
- 3-9 Density
  - 3-9 Existing Density
  - 3-9 Proposed Density
- 3-10 Zoning
  - 3-10 Zoning Map
  - 3-10 Zoning Districts
- 3-13 Land Use & Zoning Strategies

## 4 The West End – Economic Development

- 4-1 Overview
  - 4-2 Land Values & Tax Base
- 4-4 Live/Work/Play/Learn Community
  - 4-4 Vibrant Destination
  - 4-6 Housing Diversity & Affordability
  - 4-8 Office Space
  - 4-10 Connection to the W&OD Trail


DRAFT

# Contents

4-12 Connection to the Schools
4-13 Industrial Uses
4-15 Tools and Incentives to Encourage Redevelopment
4-15 Tax Increment Financing
4-15 Business Improvement Districts
4-15 Industrial Revenue Bonds

## 5 Character & Urban Design
5-1 Importance of Human Scale
5-2 Urban Foundation
5-2 Block Design
5-8 Urban Form
5-10 Streetscape
5-14 Gateway
5-15 Environment & Landscape
5-15 Gathering Space, Squares, Plazas
5-16 Lighting
5-17 Wayfinding
5-18 Public Art

## 6 Multimodal Connectivity & Accessibility – Transportation
6-1 Overview
6-1 Transportation Impacts
6-2 Mode Share
6-3 Making Connections
6-5 Transportation Modes
6-5 Pedestrian
6-7 Transit - Metrobus
6-8 Transit - Metrorail
6-9 Bicycle
6-11 Scooters and Dockless Bicycles
6-12 Automobile

## 7 Community Building Blocks – Infrastructure & Environment
7-1 Overview
7-1 Tripps Run Tributaries
7-1 Water
7-2 Sanitary Sewer
7-4 Storm Sewer
7-5 Overhead Utilities
7-6 City Property Yard
7-7 Urban Agriculture
7-8 Environmental Remediation
7-8 Environmental Sustainability
7-8 Climate & Air

## 8 Public Spaces that Create Opportunities for Community Activities – Parks & Open Spaces
8-1 Overview
8-1 Existing Conditions

DRAFT

# Contents

8-2 Evaluation of Needs
8-3 Future Parks and Open Spaces
8-4 Successful Spaces
8-6 Precedents

**9 Implementation**
9-1 Realizing the Vision
9-1 Action Implementation Matrix
9-2 Actions

**Appendix A: Excerpt from 2010 Gordon Road Triangle Virginia Tech Study**
A-1 Virginia Tech Study Excerpt

**Appendix B: Public Engagement**
B-1 List of Public Meetings
B-2 Planning Commission Action
B-3 City Council Action

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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, environmentally sustainable and resilient 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.

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Overview of the study area

## 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 collectivity 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.

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## 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.

The areas surrounding the West End are experiencing an increase in development interest. To the east of the study area on the other side of the W&OD Trail is Founders Row, a 4.3-acre mixed-use development project. The project is under construction with the first of its retail and residential units anticipated to be completed in summer 2021. To the north of the study area, Virginia Tech and WMATA have submitted a joint comprehensive plan amendment application and are planning a mixed-use development that could tie into the economic development project in the City.

West Falls Church Metro

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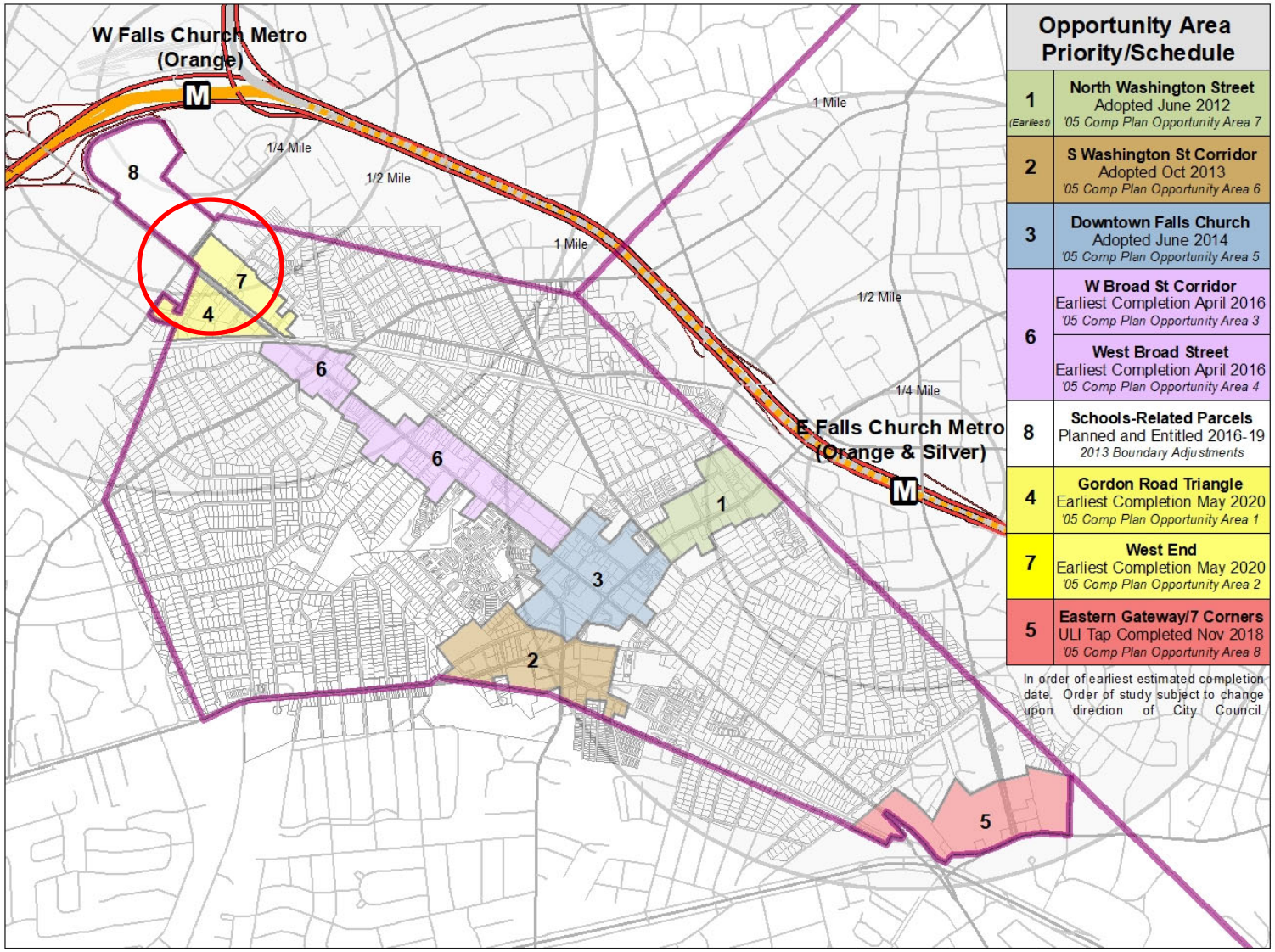
# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*




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

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**

N
W E
S
1:15,000

**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, and on-location by City officials. Qualitative data was acquired from community meetings, developers, planners, the City of Falls Church City Council, and 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, and West Falls Church Gateway Partners),

October 26, 2019 Community Meeting

A 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 discuss 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 December 2019 Planning Commission and City Council work sessions.

The Plan was further revised based on Planning Commission and City Council input and presented at February 2020 work sessions. Following those work sessions, the draft was shared with the City's advisory boards and commissions to refine the Plan. Additional work sessions were held with the Planning Commission and City Council to finalize the plan.

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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. For more information, see Appendix A which contains a brief history on the Gordon Road Triangle from an excerpt of the 2010 Virginia Tech study on Redevelopment of the Gordon Road Triangle.

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

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## Present

### 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. On July 2, 2019, the University of Virginia assigned its interest in the ground lease to Virginia Tech, making it the sole tenants. Under the lease terms, Virginia Tech has the option to purchase the property beginning in 2021. The lease provides restrictions on the uses that can be placed on the property, even after the option to purchase.

The City anticipates that Virginia Tech may seek to purchase the property and redevelop it. The plans under consideration would require amendments to some of the lease terms, including the uses. The current plan for the property includes three multifamily residential buildings, a building for the Virginia Tech academic buildings, and an office building and innovation center for Hitt Construction Company. Redevelopment of this property would complement and support the planned economic development project within the City.

### 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 of City-owned land from Fairfax County into the City of Falls Church. The Schools-Related Parcels 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

There has been almost a decade's worth of planning for the City's West End. These studies are summarized below and available in the City's Planning Library (www.fallschurchva.gov/planning).

| 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

**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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Public Works Yard Potential Design (ULI mini-TAP)

**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 and 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.

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**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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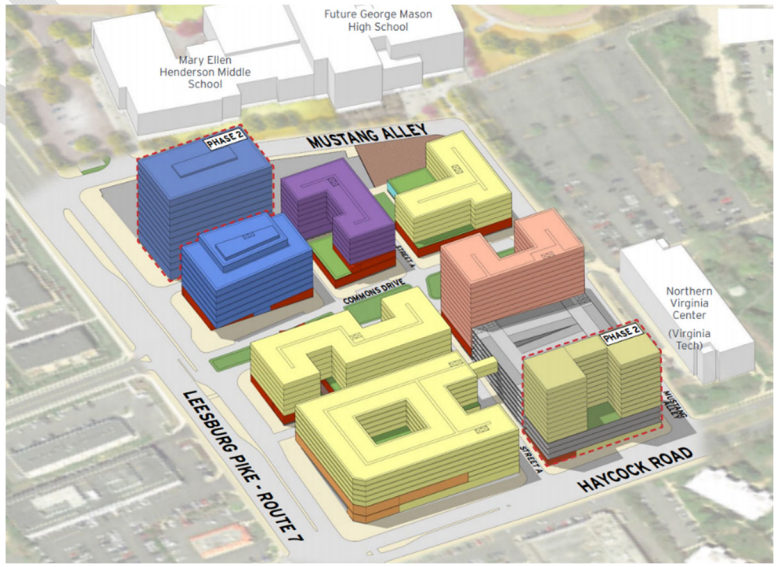
## New George Mason High School

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

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## Existing Comprehensive Plan Guidance

Chapter 4 of the City's Comprehensive Plan establishes land use and urban design goals for each of the City's POAs. These principles for each of the three West End 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.

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# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



**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.
- 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.

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# 2. Concepts

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# 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. Gathering spaces and a mix of uses, including the Falls Church City Public Schools' campus, immerse residents and visitors in a welcoming and inclusive community. Continuing investment builds upon activity already underway and supports the area's economic vitality, enhances safety and multimodal transportation connections, and affirms the City's commitment as an urban environmental sustainability and resilience 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/learn community. Promote redevelopment that incorporates vibrant retail, Class A office space, light industrial, and a diverse supply of housing that supports a range of incomes.
- Encourage quality urban design that creates an attractive gateway into the City, supports efficient land development, 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 multimodal connections to the metro station and other areas of the City. Incorporate wayfinding to and from the West End and other key destinations in the City.
- Ensure utility and infrastructure planning meets the current and future demands of the City's residents and businesses. Incorporate innovative, environmentally sustainable, and climate-resilient strategies and increase tree-canopy coverage.
- Incorporate publicly accessible parks and open space areas into redevelopment that connect to nearby parks outside of the planning area.

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.

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# Key Concepts

## 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.

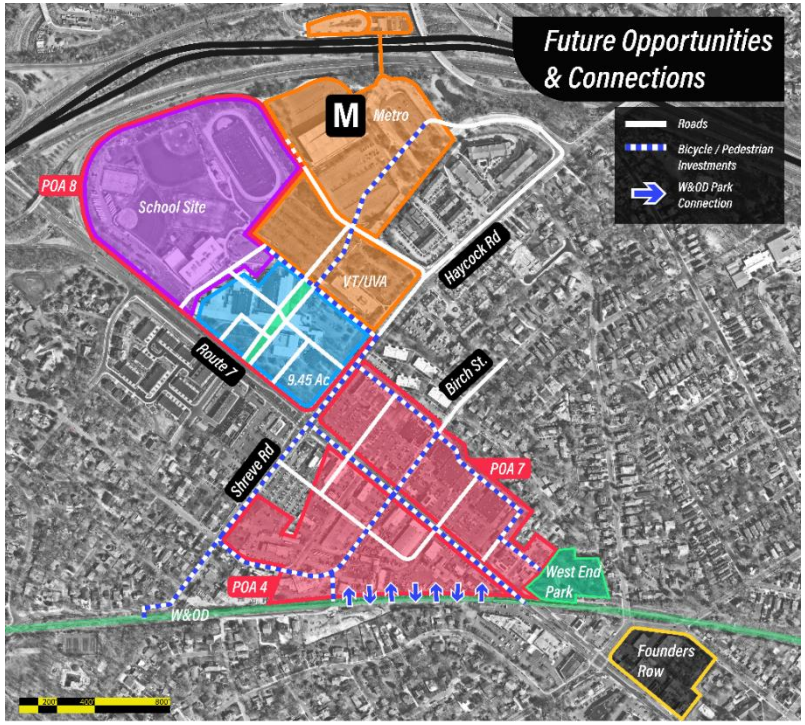
As investment in the POAs continues, it is important to consider how the West End can become a new destination that not only draws in regional interest but becomes a place that people want to repeatedly visit.

### 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, unique attractions, housing, and office space can support a live/work/play/learn environment.

### Creating an Inclusive Community

Creating a successful live/work/play/learn 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




Connectivity Concept Map

Co-location of affordable housing located above a fire station in Alexandria, VA

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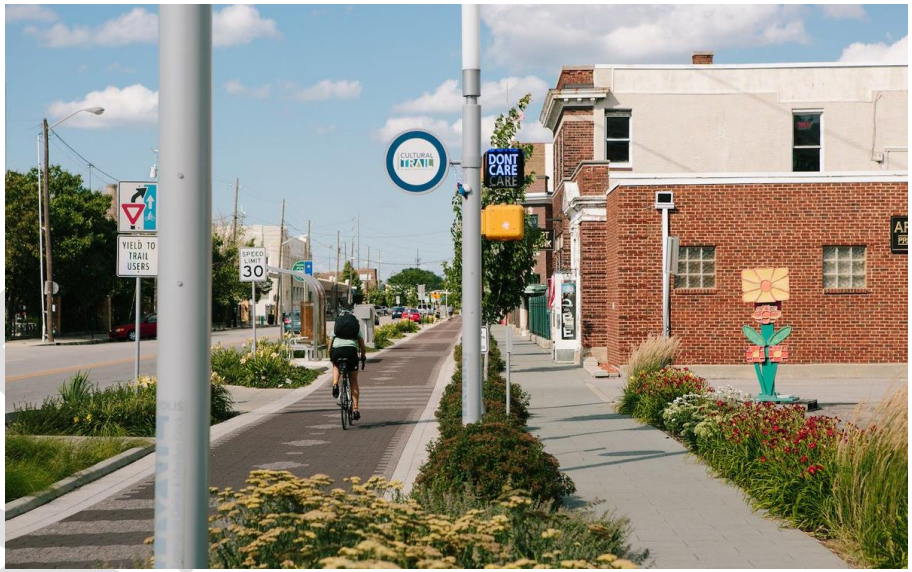
in a well-connected, transit-oriented community. As the area redevelops, opportunities to co-locate affordable units with future community facilities and partner with other entities to incorporate affordable housing into projects should be explored.

### 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 area should consider building designs that referance back to past industrial buildings and uses. 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.

The West End is already home to the City's only middle school and high school. This area provides a unique opportunity to build upon the connection to the City's Schools. In addition to strengthening the area as an academic center, there are also opportunities to celebrate the Schools' sports programs, creating a stage for the community to come together and host visitors.

Future redevelopment provides numerous opportunities to incorporate a mixture of new uses and unique attractions. 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.

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## 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 tree-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). Large seas of parking lots separate buildings from the sidewalk network 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 multimodal community.

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.

Comparison of block size and breakup between Phoenix, AZ (top) and Savannah, GA (bottom).

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Wide, tree-lined sidewalks; pedestrian-scaled lighting; shaded places for stopping and sitting; public art; landscaping; 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.

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## 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 in 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 shaded 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

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

Rendered Vision for Bus Rapid Transit Lanes in Detroit, MI

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City at the West Falls Church metro station. Additional 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 & Landscaped Streets

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 and other nearby parks, creating a more permeable edge that invites people into the site.

Landscaped streets help to enhance the pedestrian experience through street trees that provide shade and plantings that provide visual interest. Redevelopment should incorporate green landscaping into street design to create more enjoyable surroundings for walking.

Potential Concept to Connect Development with W&OD Trail

Example of landscaped street in Shirlington (Arlington, VA)

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## Community Building Blocks

Utilities and the natural environmental 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 and projections for future City population growth and employment (see Chapter 2 of the City's Comprehensive Plan for more information). 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, impede pedestrian movement, 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.

### Climate Resilience and Sustainability

New buildings should be "Net-Zero Energy Ready" to ensure new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and to meet the City's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. Buildings meeting these standards 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

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practice would allow future West End redevelopment to quickly adapt to new renewable inputs, helping to push buildings to 100% net zero energy consumption.

Innovative architectural and design solutions that reduce the use of fossil fuels should be incorporated in development. These include window shading, and high efficiency lighting, heating, and cooling systems. Local generation, storage, and use of renewable energy should also be incorporated. Solar and geothermal energy generation are both viable and practical options in the Washington D.C. region.

Vehicle-to-grid technology such as that currently being tested by Dominion Energy Virginia, and other energy storage should also be addressed, to maximize resilience and allow optimal electric grid utilization.

### Dominion Smart Cities

Dominion Energy Virginia 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 Energy Virginia as this initiative is rolled out.

### Urban forest

Trees are a defining feature of the City; however, the City's West End has sparse tree canopy coverage. 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

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## 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, shade, and shelter, places to sit, public art and elements that create a sense of place, and flexible space for programmed events and uses throughout the year. Other elements such as water fountains and hand sanitizing stations should also be considered. Most importantly, these spaces 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.

Pentagon Row – Arlington, VA

Pentagon Row (winter use) - Arlington, VA

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## 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, support a variety of activities, and link to nearby parks.

## 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.

Rendering of the Commons (West Falls Church Economic Development Project)

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

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# 3. Land Use and Zoning

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## Existing Land Use

The three POAs west of the W&OD trail include institutional, commercial, and light-industrial uses.

### POA 4 – Gordon Road Triangle

The Gordon Road Triangle currently contains a mix of industrial and commercial uses, including automobile sales and service, retail sales, light industrial services, office, vehicle storage uses, and the City's property yard. With the exception of the land acquired through the Boundary Line Adjustment, the current zoning in this area is M-1 (Light Industrial). At an FAR of 0.29, these properties are underdeveloped.

The 20-acre area is owned by multiple property owners. The Beyer family and the City of Falls Church are the two largest land owners, owning more than half of the Gordon Road Triangle area. The Beyer properties are well located with frontage along West Broad Street and Shreve Road.

### POA 7 – West End

The West End of Broad Street currently includes the Falls Plaza Shopping Center which contains strip retail shopping facilities such as a supermarket and drugstore. This POA also include a few pad sites used for banks and gas stations.

### POA 8 – Schools-Related Parcels

The Schools-Related Parcels POA is currently used for George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School. The area includes the school buildings as well as recreation fields including: tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball fields, and a football field.

### George Mason High School Redevelopment

A site plan for the construction of a new George Mason High School was approved by the Planning Commission on August 5, 2019. The new high school will be part of a 24-acre campus site including new multi-purpose sports fields and the existing Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School. Construction of the new George Mason High School is anticipated to be completed by fall 2021.

| EXISTING LAND USE | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Land Use Category** | **Approx. Total Acres** | **% of Total Land Area** |
| **Residential** | | |
| Multi-family Residence | 0.03 | <1% |
| **Commercial** | | |
| Shopping Center | 10.53 | 16% |
| Individual Retail and Service | 4.68 | 7% |
| Office | 0.21 | <1% |
| **Industrial** | | |
| Light Industry/Auto | 9.02 | 14% |
| **Institutional** | | |
| Public Facilities & Institutions | 37.97 | 58% |
| **Parks and Open Space** | | |
| Parks/Open Space | 0.59 | <1% |
| **Right of Way** | | |
| Right of Way | 2.37 | 4% |
| **Total** | **65.40** | **100%** |

Note: All numbers are estimates based on available GIS and Assessment Data.

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Rendering of West Falls Church Economic Development Project

## Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map is an official policy document and an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Map shows the preferred uses of different areas in the City. Future land use maps are intended to be more general than a zoning ordinance. A zoning ordinance includes legal definitions and requirements while a land use map depicts concepts. The City's Future Land Use Map was last reviewed comprehensively with the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Since then, the Map has been amended from time to time as part of the redevelopment process.

### Recent Land Use Changes

By default, as part of the 2013 Boundary Adjustment, the School-Related Parcels POA did not initially have a land use designation. The City's Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map were amended in January 2018 to better align with the City's vision for the type and scale of development at this site. As part of that action, the Schools-Related Parcels POA was designated on the Future Land Use Map as "Parks & Open Space" with two school symbols and "Mixed Use." The Future Land Use Map was also amended to designate the other two areas that were added to the City as part of the boundary adjustment (City Property Yard and part of Falls Plaza shopping center) as "Business."

### Special Revitalization District

The City's Comprehensive Plan was revised in January 2018 to designate the Schools-Related Parcels POA as a "Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development." This Special Revitalization District is proposed to be developed with educational uses and a mix of commercial and residential uses. The goals of this new district include:

1. Recognize the requirements set forth in the Voluntary Boundary Adjustment Agreement between the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County requiring that 70% of the area is used for school purposes and 30% for economic development purposes, while encouraging revitalization and further development.

2. Provide a gateway to the City which instills a sense of place through the use of high quality urban design, a flexible and connected street grid, multi-modal access within and to adjacent sites, appropriate buffering between educational and economic development uses, and green space and plazas to serve both the educational and economic development uses.

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3. Encourage creative proposals and successful economic development to offset school construction debt service and to provide other community benefits by developing planning and zoning guidelines and standards, such as an appropriate mix of uses, a range of densities and heights within suitable locations, and explore options for a special tax district.

4. Promote environmentally-responsible development that is supported by sustainable systems of green infrastructure and utilities and that integrates educational and environmental stewardship opportunities for the students of George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School.

5. Encourage collaboration between economic development uses and the educational programs anchored by the Virginia Tech and University of Virginia Northern Virginia Center and Falls Church City Public Schools.

6. Provide an inclusive process in the plan development and implementation for the site.

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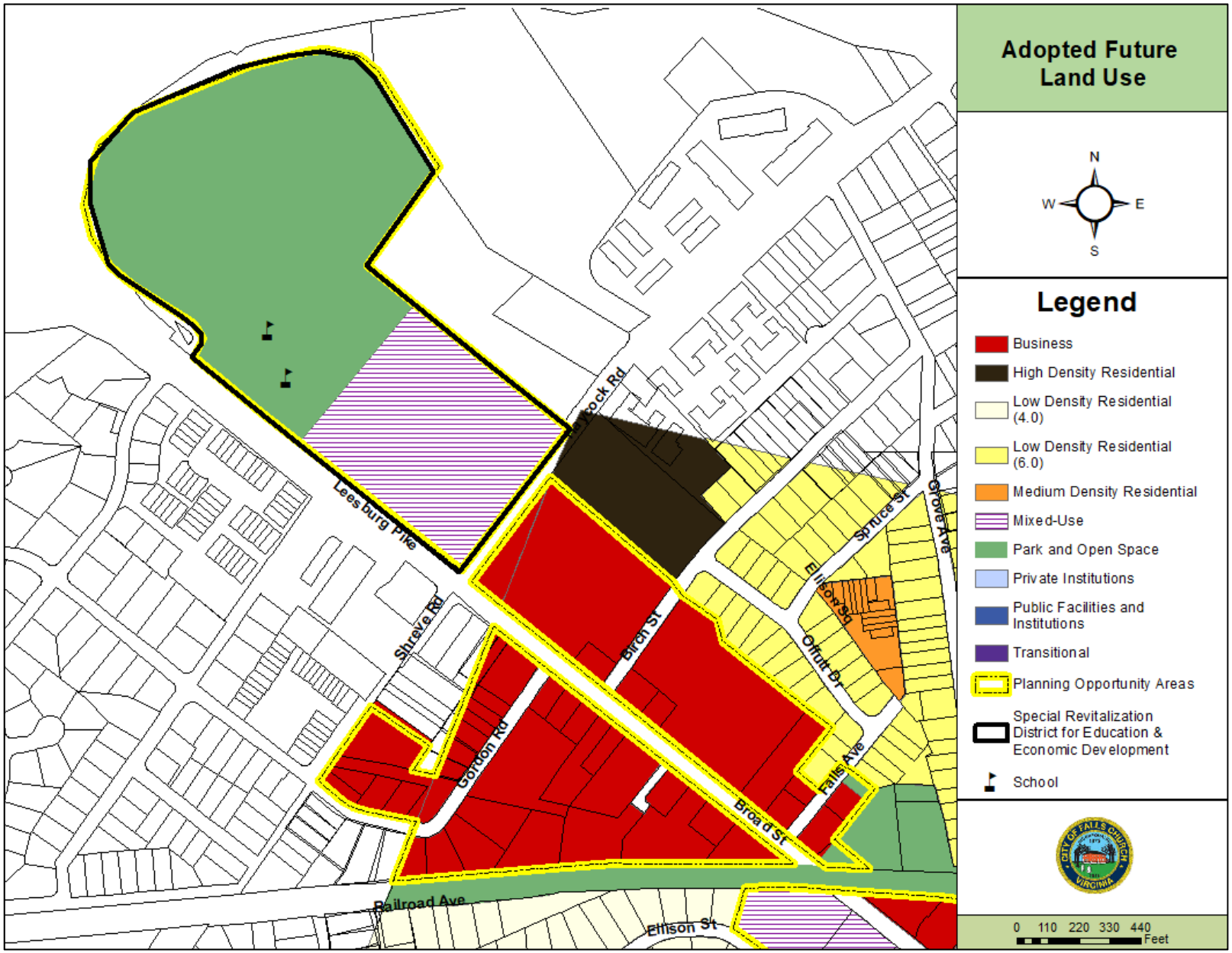
# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



# West End
## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



### Planning Concept

The vision and goals of this Plan (see Chapter 2), call for developing a vibrant live/work/play/learn community. At the district level, this area is envisioned as Mixed-use. This Plan is not meant to be used as a tool to force redevelopment of any property within the boundaries of the POAs or elsewhere in the City.

### Step-down Zones

Transitions between redevelopment along the West End and the surrounding residential neighborhoods are important to minimize the impact of higher density development. A softer residential edge, such as townhomes, can serve as an effective transition from the commercial area moving towards existing neighborhoods (general area shown as yellow on the Concept map). The step-down zone is intended to be part of the overall district rather than a standalone project.

### Active Retail

Greater concentrations of commercial activity are suggested in the Active Retail area. Generalized boundaries are shown in red on the concept map. In this area, taller buildings that taper towards residential areas are appropriate. Active retail would be an encouraged ground floor use with residential uses located in upper floors.

### Office/Commercial

Additional retail and office uses are recommended throughout the study area which can serve as destinations and connections to the active retail areas. Uses that serve as cultural destinations to bring people together and define a community such as a music concert venue, music school, and movie theatre would be desirable. This generalized area is colored blue on the Concept Map.

Market Commons in Clarendon provides an example of creating a mixed-use district with a transitional area that is sensitive to surrounding residential areas.

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Interior of Market Commons in Clarendon includes an active retail area and open space amenities.

## Light Industrial/Office

Light industrial uses (breweries, data centers, City Property Yard) and office space may be appropriate within the Gordon Road Triangle. This generalized area is shown in orange on the Concept map.

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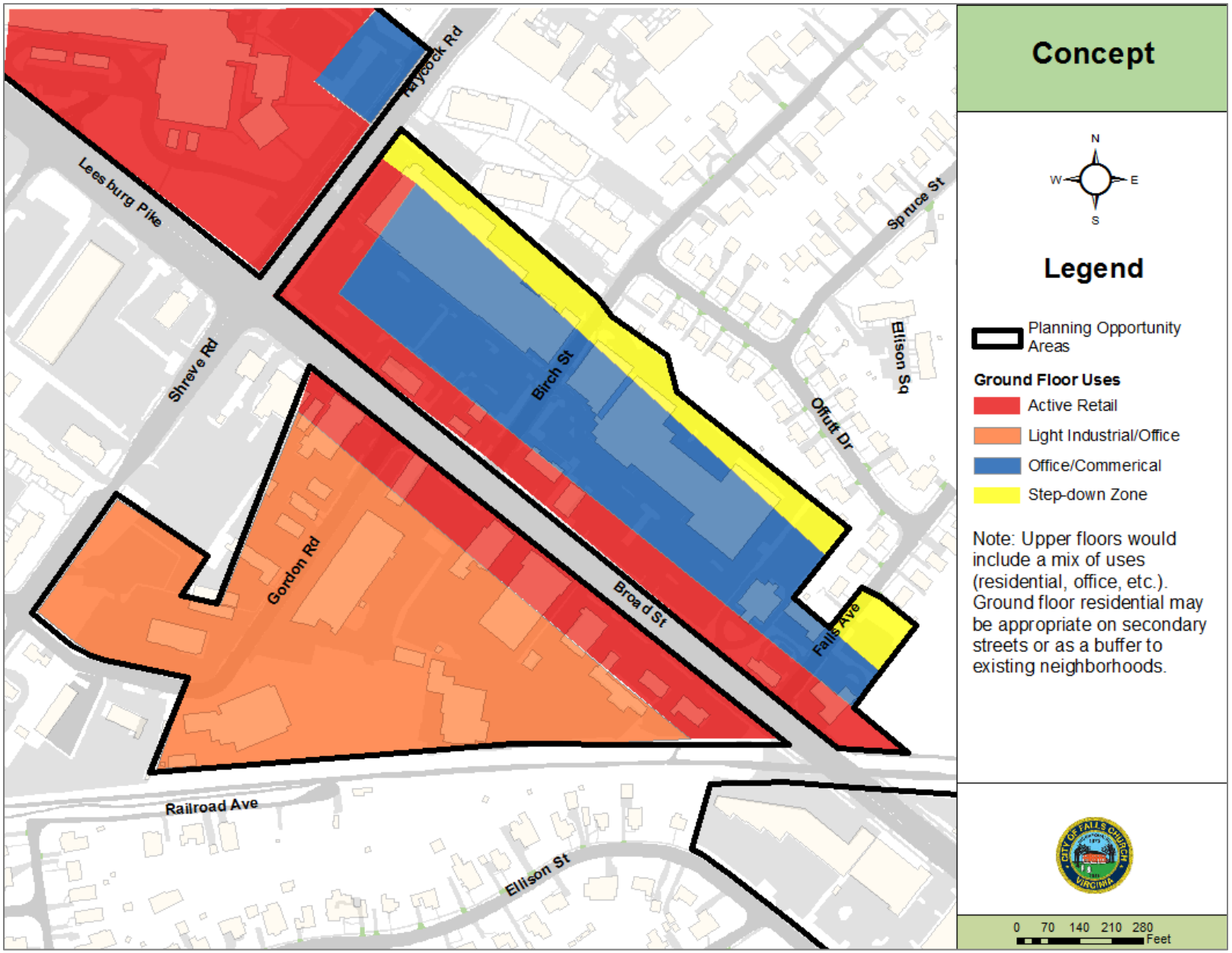
# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



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7
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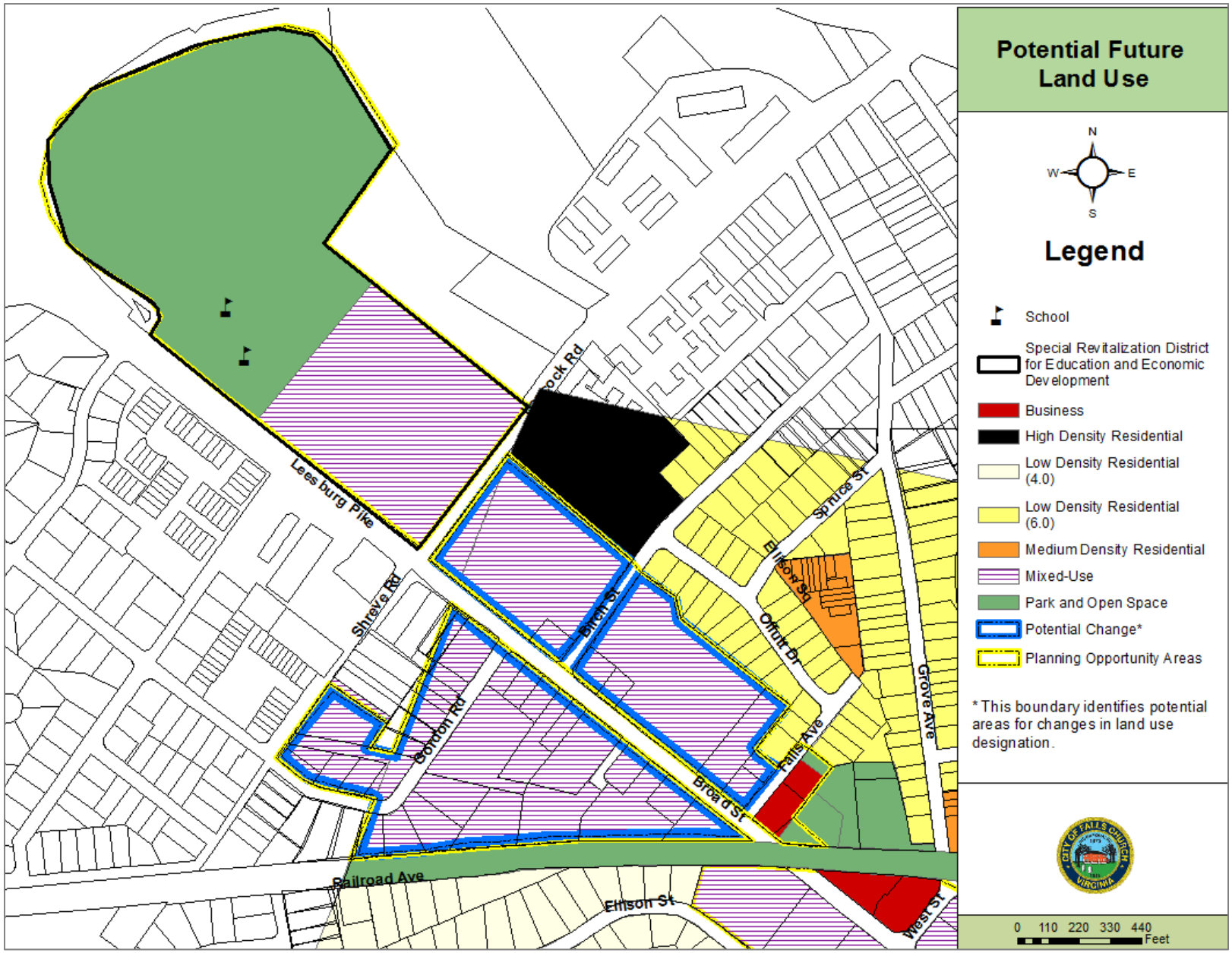
Potential Future Land Use
N
W
E
S
Legend
School
Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development
Business
High Density Residential
Low Density Residential (4.0)
Low Density Residential (6.0)
Medium Density Residential
Mixed-Use
Park and Open Space
Potential Change*
Planning Opportunity Areas
* This boundary identifies potential areas for changes in land use designation.
0 110 220 330 440
Feet
Lees burg Pike
Shreve Rd
Gordon Rd
Birch St
Broad St
Railroad Ave
Ellison St
West St
Grove Ave
Falls Ave
Ellison Sq
Spruce St
Orchard Dr

## Density

### Existing Density

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) relates the square footage of a building to the square footage of the land that it sits on. Density within the Gordon Road Triangle and West End is relatively consistent. The aggregate FAR for both areas is 0.30.

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is an industry group of real estate and land use experts. ULI provides resources and research to help plan for development that is appropriately scaled to the desires and needs of a community. ULI's "Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Business Districts" describes the key attributes of existing business district types. Within the categories described, the City's West End most closely resembles a "Dispersed Suburban Business District." Key characteristics of this district type include FAR below 0.5, very high spatial separations between buildings, buildings set back from the road, and very high dependence on cars for access. Such characteristics are consistent with the existing conditions in the West End.

### Proposed Density

Redevelopment should occur at a higher density level than existing conditions. Higher density redevelopment is necessary to make ground-floor retail in mixed-use buildings viable. It also increases the area's tax base and provides vibrant communities for visitors and residents.

It is important to note that while there is a correlation between height and density, more density does not always translate into taller buildings. The City should assess structural massing in new developments to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods. Adequate buffering and transition areas between new development and adjacent residential properties are also critical. Denser redevelopment should be focused in areas that have the least impact on nearby residential properties, such as towards the planned West Falls Church Economic Development project site, and taper towards lower density neighborhoods. Heights are encouraged to vary across sites to create visual interest.

In 2016, the General Assembly approved amendments to the Code of Virginia regarding provisions applicable to conditional rezoning proffer regulations. These amendments placed new regulations on the ability of jurisdictions to accept or amend proffers for residential development or residential uses however, certain areas were exempted from the new statute. Exemptions include areas that have an approved small area comprehensive plan in which the area is designated as a revitalization area, encompasses mass transit as defined in §33.2-100, includes mixed use development, and allows a density of at least 3.0 FAR in a portion thereof. In August 2016, City Council adopted revitalization districts throughout the City which were areas deemed feasible for projects with a FAR of 3.0 or higher.

The City should aim to create a minimum FAR of 3.0 for the West End to support the scale of development necessary to sustain mixed-use buildings and Class A office space. Within the categories described in ULI's "Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Business Districts," a FAR over 3.0 would correspond to a "Compact Business Suburban District." Key characteristics of this district type include a grid street layout, low spatial separation between buildings, strong pedestrian orientation, moderate dependence on cars, and good choice in transit modes.

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## Zoning

Zoning is a tool for regulating land use with the intent of supporting the vision of the community. The City's Zoning Ordinance limits the kind of uses that can exist on a particular property, such as residential, retail, office, or industrial. The Zoning Ordinance also includes other development standards including maximum building heights, lot coverage, and building setbacks from property lines.

Although closely related, zoning and land use planning are separate activities. Land use planning speaks to future development and what could happen while zoning speaks to what can happen and what is currently allowed. For this reason, the zoning map is often more restrictive than the future land use map.

### Zoning Map

The Zoning Map is part of the City Zoning code and, in combination with the descriptions of the zoning districts limits the permitted land uses and building sizes.

### Zoning Districts

To regulate land use, the Zoning Ordinance divides the land within the City into various zoning districts or areas. Within each of the zoning districts, a different mix of land uses and sizes can be built. The districts present in the West End of the City are described below.

#### B-1, Limited Business

The B-1, Limited Business zoning district allows most commercial uses by-right and mixed-use redevelopment with a special exception. Buildings in this district can reach a height of 55 feet by-right and up to 85 feet with special exception.

The Falls Plaza shopping center is zoned B-1.

*Falls Plaza Shopping Center*

#### B-2, Central Business District

In August 2018, the B-2 zoning district was amended to provide additional flexibility in height and density that is needed to achieve a significant economic development project. Specifically, the zoning text amendment to the B-2 zoning district allows for additional height for by-right elementary and secondary schools and creates a special exception for a mix of uses, including residential and additional density for areas located within a Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development.

The zoning text amendment established a two-step special exception and site plan approval process for sites within a "Special Revitalization District for Education and Economic Development:"

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- Step 1, Special Exception Entitlement (SEE) – establishes entitlements for building heights and uses and the general layout of the site
- Step 2, Special Exception Site Plan (SESP) – equivalent in level of detail to a site plan as called for in 48-1134 and includes architectural design and level of detail typical for special exception and site plan approvals under B-2 zoning.

The Schools-Related Parcels POA was rezoned from R-1A, Low Density Residential to B-2 in December 2018.

### B-3, General Business

The B-3, General Business zoning district allows most commercial uses by-right and mixed-use redevelopment with a special exception. Buildings in this zoning district reach a height of 55 feet by-right and 85 feet with a special exception.

Within this area only two small parcels at the front of the Falls Plaza shopping center are zoned B-3.

### M-1, Light Industry

The M-1, Light Industry zoning district allow most B-3 uses, some light industrial uses, and mixed-use redevelopment in accordance with the Mixed-Use Redevelopment (MUR) regulations. The (MUR) overlay is intended to promote parcel consolidation and coordinated mixed-use redevelopment. While the intent of these regulations aligns with the goals of this Plan, the regulations are too prescriptive and a development has never been built using the MUR overlay option. The 2010 Zoning Ordinance Advisory Committee (ZOAC) report recommended eliminating the MUR overlay Citywide due to deficiencies with the regulations.

Parcels within the Gordon Road Triangle with the exception of a portion of the City's property yard are zoned M-1.

### R-1A, Low Density Residential

The R-1A, Low Density Residential zoning district is intended to be comprised generally of low-density residential uses.

The City's Property Yard and a small section of the Falls Plaza shopping center are zoned R-1A by default as a result of the 2013 boundary adjustment.

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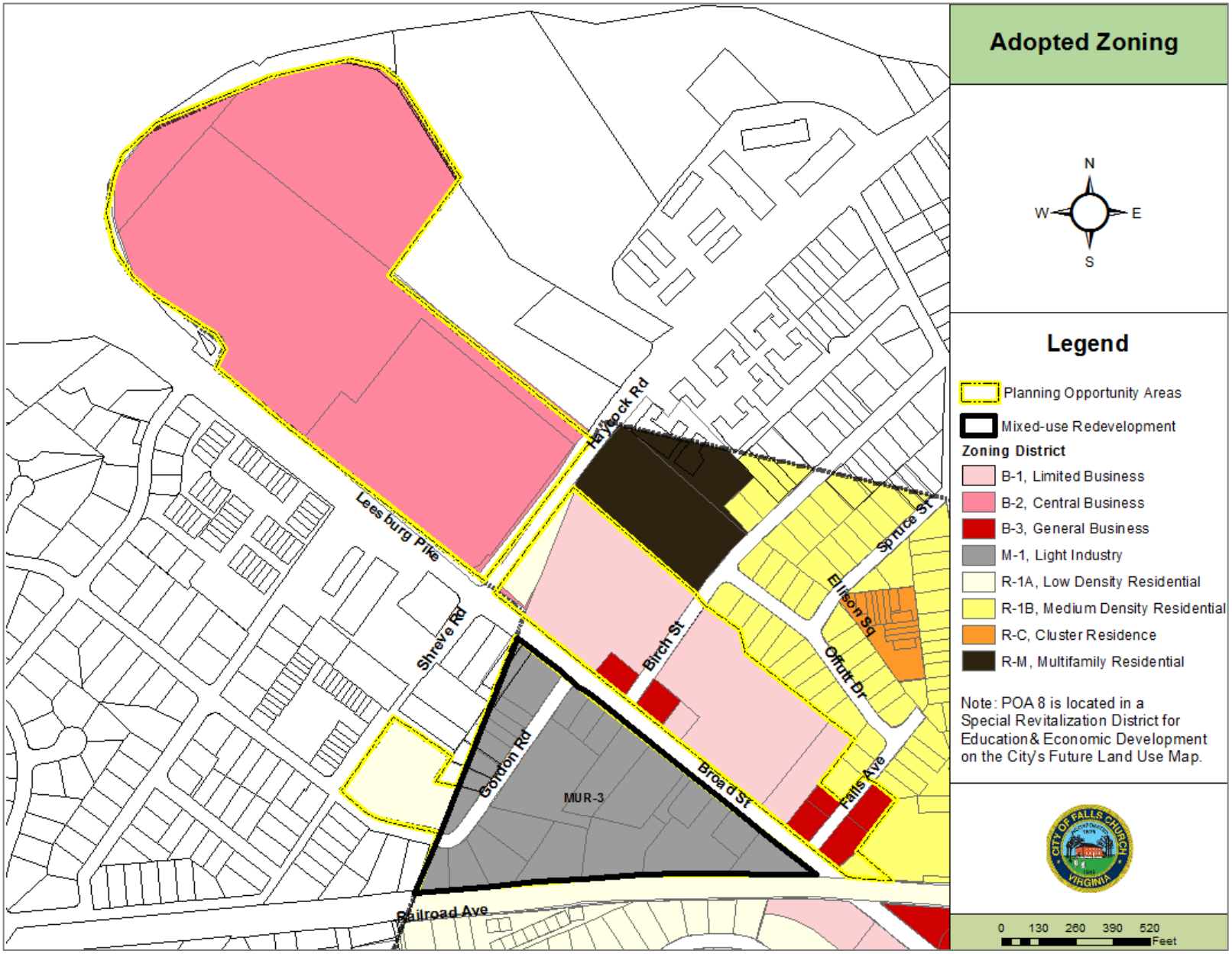
# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



## Land Use & Zoning Strategies

This Plan recommends transforming the area into a vibrant live/work/plan/learn community that is thoughtfully planned to achieve high standards for economic benefits and environmental sustainability and resiliency including greater levels of tree canopy coverage. Those goals depend on public and private investment in the area and partnership with property owners.

Updates to the City's land use policies and zoning ordinance can enable and encourage investments that advance the community's goals. The following strategies are intended to encourage larger scale redevelopment and/or phased development that allows for greater opportunities for community benefit.

*Strategy:* Continue to amend the adopted Future Land Use Map and Zoning Map on a case-by-case basis as part of the redevelopment application and review process. Amendments should be made for redevelopment proposals that are consistent with the goals of this Plan.

*Strategy:* For sites of at least 2 acres, amend the zoning ordinance to allow M-1, Light Industry district access to B-2, Central Business uses and the Special Exception (SE) Application process.

*Strategy:* For sites of at least 5 acres, amend the Zoning Map and Ordinance to replace the MUR overlay with a more flexible mixed-use redevelopment option for POA 4 and 7 that promotes phased development[1] of a master planned site[2].

*Strategy:* Review and discuss the pros and cons of the SEE/SESP process.

*Strategy:* Update industrial district regulations or develop a new industrial district that supports data centers, breweries, distilleries, arts and craft markets, maker spaces and food production.

*Strategy:* Encourage sites that can be planned at 5 or more acres to achieve 15% tree canopy coverage.

*Strategy:* Continue to monitor industry and retail changes and amend the Zoning Code as appropriate to remain flexible to an evolving market. For example, flexibility should be provided if changes in retail result in pick-up zones becoming more common.

*Strategy:* Work with Fairfax County on the joint land use planning of the corner of the Gordon Road Triangle that is outside of the City. Evaluate a boundary adjustment for that area.

[1]Phased development would still include controls for the mix and percentage of uses within each phase.

[2]Until such time as a new process for phased development is created for larger, master planned sites, the SE process would apply for sites proposing a mixed-use development project.

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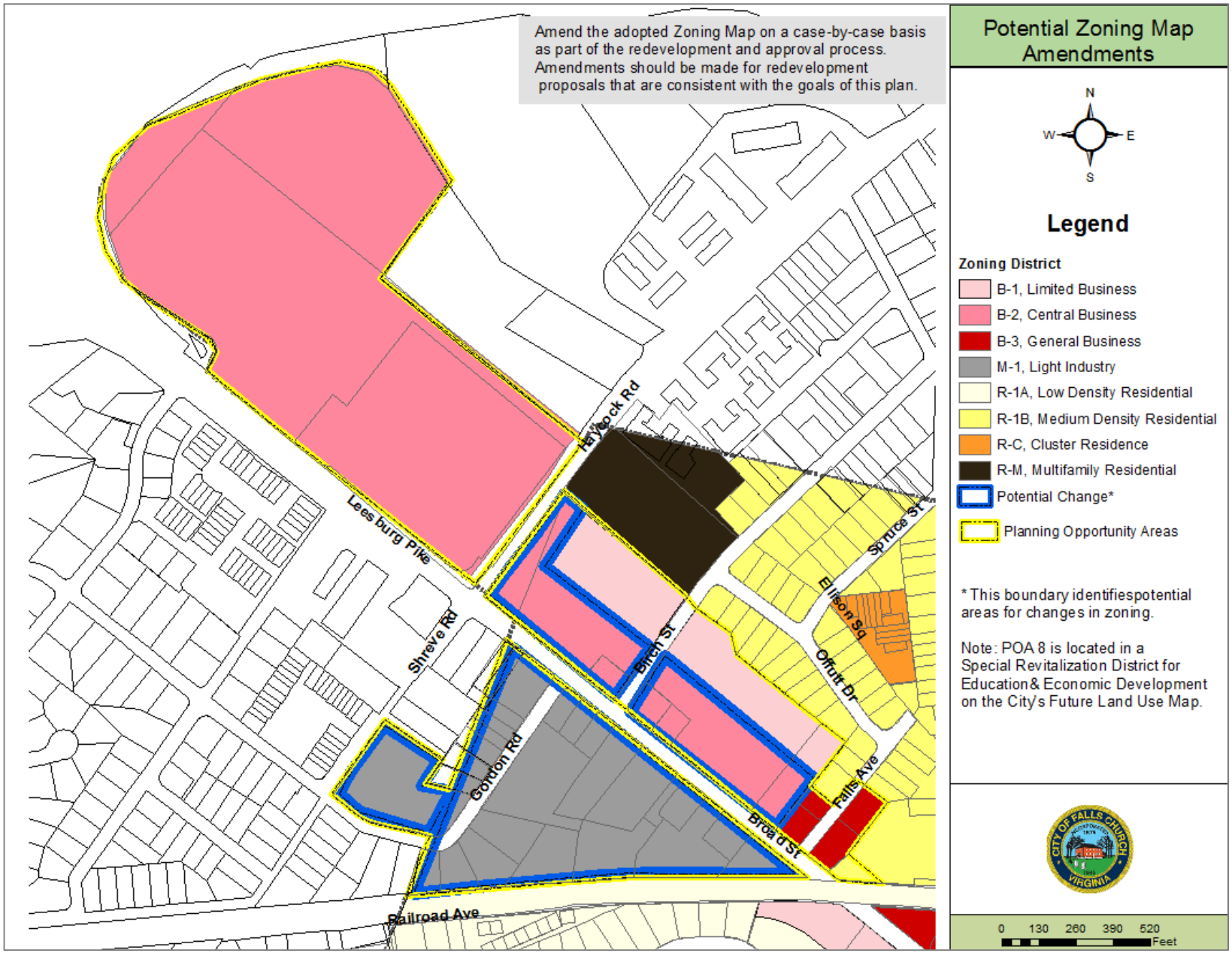
8
7
4


Amend the adopted Zoning Map on a case-by-case basis as part of the redevelopment and approval process. Amendments should be made for redevelopment proposals that are consistent with the goals of this plan.
Potential Zoning Map Amendments
N
W
E
S
Legend
Zoning District
B-1, Limited Business
B-2, Central Business
B-3, General Business
M-1, Light Industry
R-1A, Low Density Residential
R-1B, Medium Density Residential
R-C, Cluster Residence
R-M, Multifamily Residential
Potential Change*
Planning Opportunity Areas
* This boundary identifies potential areas for changes in zoning.
Note: POA 8 is located in a Special Revitalization District for Education & Economic Development on the City's Future Land Use Map.
0 130 260 390 520 Feet
Haycock Rd
Leesburg Pike
Shreve Rd
Gordon Rd
Birch St
Spruce St
Ellison Sq
Offutt Dr
Falls Ave
Broad St
Railroad Ave

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# 4. The West End – Economic Development

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# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



## Overview

Activity underway at the 9.45-acre West Falls Church Economic Development Project site is spurring revitalization in the surrounding area. This area has the potential to serve as a distinct, welcoming entry point into the City of Falls Church. While the West End benefits from its location along Route 7, a major regional roadway, it also has the potential to further build upon the W&OD Trail as an asset to the area.

The West End already has several large tracts of land under single-ownership, an essential key to coordinated redevelopment. In the Schools-Related Parcels POA (POA 8) the City and the Falls Church School Board are the sole property owners. Of the approximately 14.6 acres that make up the West End POA (POA 7), approximately 10.7 acres are owned by Federal Realty Investment Trust. In the Gordon Road Triangle (POA 4), there are two large land owners (one of which being the City) and the remaining land area is in mixed ownership.

For more than a decade, there has been continued mixed-use development interest throughout Falls Church. Located several blocks from the new Founders Row mixed-use development, the West Falls Church Economic Development project will be the first iteration of mixed-use development within the City's West End. The close proximity of the Gordon Road Triangle and the Falls Plaza Shopping Center to the West Falls Church Economic Development project give them an excellent opportunity to be considered for future investment that can directly connect to and create a larger, coordinated development within the City's West End.

Rendering of Founders Row

The Wharf, Washington D.C.

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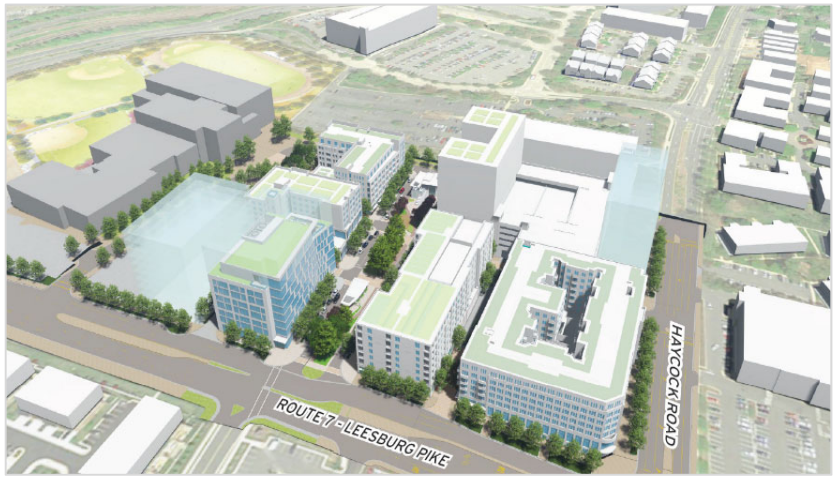


Aerial view of the proposed West Falls Church Economic Development Project, Special Exception Site Plan Preview, December 2019

## Land Values & Tax Base

Over half of the West Falls Church study area is currently non-taxable land. Once the new high school is complete, the school campus will be consolidated onto approximately 25 acres of land. About 9 acres of land which formerly housed the City's high school will be added as taxable real estate. The remaining land in the study area is currently zoned for commercial or light industrial uses.

According the 2019 assessment data, the total valuation of the West End study area is approximately $98,832,899. The aggregate building value is more than half the land value within the study area – the buildings being worth approximately $31,434,000 and the land valued at a total of approximately $67,391,600. A valuation skewed in favor of land can be a sign of properties that are underutilized in regard to economic potential. As redevelopment continues, the West End's significance as an economic and academic gateway into the City will grow. As many of the buildings within the West End are worth less than the land they sit on, existing land owners in the area may benefit from considering redevelopment of their properties. Continued investment within the West End will help strengthen the City's tax base and support realization of the vision and goals of this Plan.

## Potential Yields of Future Development

The City's Economic Development Office conducted a preliminary annual net fiscal impact projections for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the West Falls Church Economic Development proposal. The projected net annual fiscal revenue is $5,101,955 for Phase 1 and $1,839,466 for Phase 2, for a total of $6,941,421 for the entire development. The estimated unit mix and square footages used for this analysis are subject to change depending upon the ultimate development plan that will be determined during the Special Exception Site Plan phase.

The City's Economic Development Office also performed fiscal impact projections for the Founders Row, as approved in August 2018, and Broad & Washington projects, as approved in April 2018. Based upon the projections for these two projects and the West Falls Church Economic Development project highlighted above, the average annual net revenue per acre is between $472,676 and $536,253 Assuming redevelopment of the Gordon Road Triangle and West End POAs resulted in similar yields, net annual fiscal revenue could be between $14,695,517 and $16,672,100.

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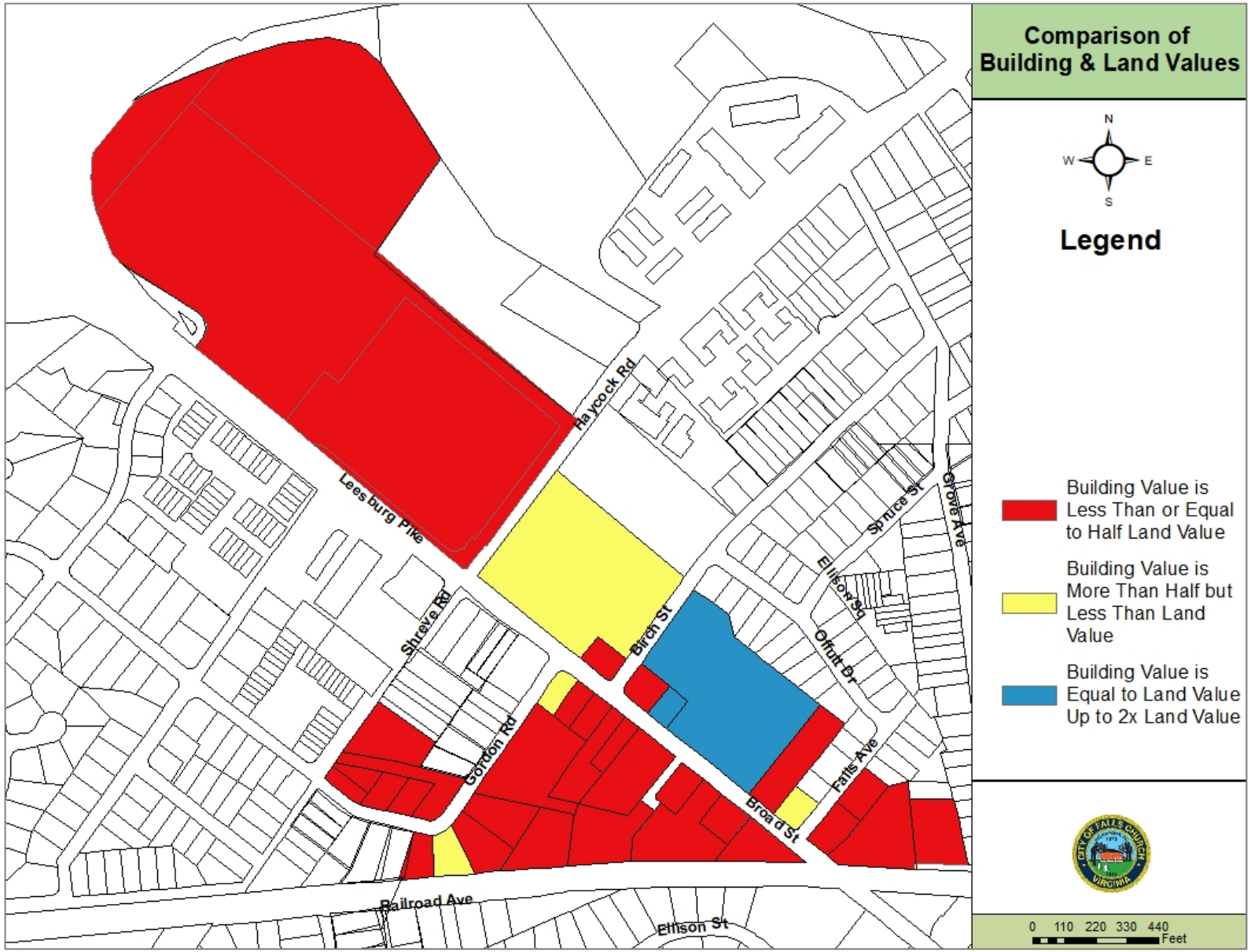
# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



## Live/Work/Play/Learn Community

Concept, Pike and Rose, Bethesda, MD

Market Commons, Arlington, VA

### Vibrant Destination

The West End serves as a critical gateway into the City. The urban streetscape currently contributes to a sense of arrival as one enters the City along West Broad Street. This feature should be extended throughout the area with more street trees and other features to strengthen the West End as a vibrant gateway into the City. As will be discussed in the Urban Design Chapter of this plan, the West End provides critical first impressions to visitors as they enter the City. It provides an opportunity to convey the City's heritage and values.

Future investment in the Gordon Road Triangle and West End POAs along with planned investment at the Schools' site provides the opportunity to further enhance the West End as a gateway into the City. Continuing to emphasize a more vibrant and welcoming district that embraces and strengthens its connections with surrounding neighbors and the rest of the City should be a priority for the West End.

Previous concept plans for the West End have aimed to create a unique, welcoming agora which can build upon academic, recreational, and commercial opportunities. Development within the West End should encourage interaction between the school system, the Falls Church community, visitors, and the commercial areas. An overarching objective for the West End moving forward should be to provide a mix of unique and interesting attractions, retail, and commercial uses which regularly welcome residents and repeat visitors to Falls Church. Publicly accessible gathering spaces that can be used for programmed events also help to identify the West End as a destination. This helps to create an area with activity around

the clock; providing commercial office space and amenities for daytime workers, and dining, entertainment, and shopping options for residents and visitors on nights and weekends.

*Strategy:* Encourage future development to include high-quality urban design and placemaking that builds upon the West End's sense of place.

*Strategy:* Incorporate a variety of uses to create an 18-hour community that also includes flexible spaces for programmed events.

*Strategy:* Develop pedestrian-oriented wayfinding that directs visitors towards commercial and recreational spaces. This could include a visitor information station or kiosk that provides information about the West End and attractions in other parts of the City.

*Strategy:* Prioritize safe pedestrian spaces which provide access to a wide variety of uses, encouraging multiple, long visits.

*Strategy:* As part of larger redevelopment work with developers to include unique, original attractions that will draw people to the area.

Rendering of West Falls Church Economic Development Project

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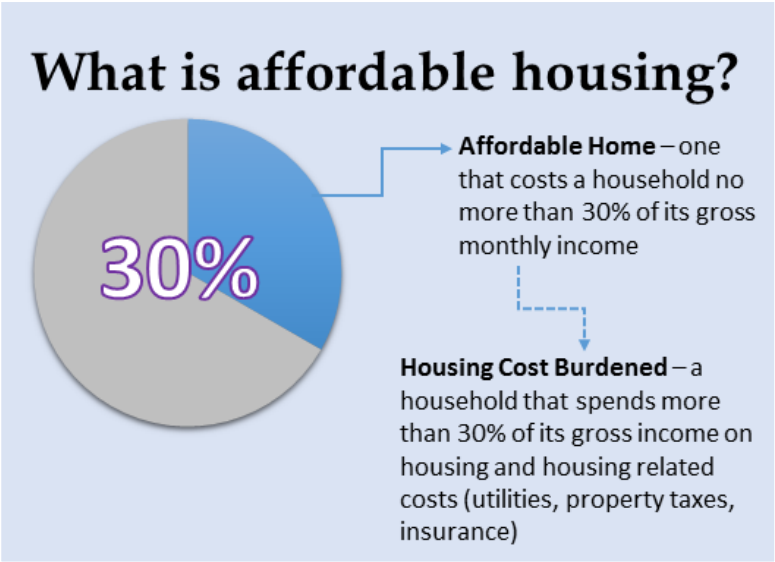
## Housing Diversity & Affordability

The West End has the opportunity to be a versatile area of the City supporting a variety of uses and needs. Incorporating housing into the West End can provide a number of benefits including support for a vibrant 18-hour community and residential foot traffic which provides additional eyes on the ground to promote security.

The provision of diverse, affordable housing options is a top priority for the City as population and employment opportunities within the City and region expand. The 2019 MWCOG Report 'The Future of Housing in Greater Washington' suggests that there should be a 320,000-unit production target within the Washington D.C. metro region before 2030 in order to keep up with growth demands. The D.C. metro region needs 75,000 more units than what is currently planned for. The West End is one area of the City that could support additional housing to help meet regional housing targets.




The City's Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need to diversify the City's housing stock. Currently, the City's housing stock is limited with regards to condominiums for ownership and larger multi-family units which would be appropriate housing to encourage within the West End. Additionally, the City should ensure there is flexibility for different types of residential uses. For example, with the recommended uses within the Gordon Road Triangle – breweries, distilleries, arts and craft markets, and maker spaces – low-rise residential, flexibility to have residential on the ground floor, and live-work units may be appropriate.

The Comprehensive Plan also highlights the need to ensure affordable housing is available for a range of household incomes, sizes, and stages of formation. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the FY2019 area median income (AMI) for the Washington D.C. region is $121,300. Affordable housing initiatives generally refer to the following income groups:

- *Low-income* – households whose incomes do not exceed 50 percent of the median income for the area with adjustments for smaller and larger families.
- *Moderate-income* – households whose incomes are from 51 to 80 percent of the median income for the area with adjustments for smaller and larger families.
- *Workforce-income* – households whose incomes are from 81 to 120 percent of the median income for the area with adjustments for smaller or larger families.

Nearly three-quarters of current households in the City of Falls Church have incomes at or above the median for the

Washington DC region. By 2045, it is anticipated that 55 percent of future housing needs in the City will be for households in this higher-income range and there will be more housing demand from households in the lower income brackets. To meet this demand, the City will need to emphasize strategies that maintain and increase the availability of housing affordable to a range of income levels. The West End provides an excellent opportunity to incorporate new housing that supports the City's projected future housing needs.

Future housing in the West End has the advantage of having access to multi-modal transportation options and walkable retail, educational, and recreational uses. According to the USDOT, City residents spend an average of about $12,446 per year on transportation costs. Affordable housing in a location close to the metro or other multi-modal connections can help to alleviate this burden for the City's workforce.

As the City's West End transforms into a vibrant, walkable destination, diverse housing options, including options tailored to incomes in the 30% to 80% AMI ranges, will be necessary. Redevelopment provides opportunities to enhance rental and home ownership options that are affordable for a range of incomes. City incentives might be appropriate such as additional project height allowances or parking reductions. The City's voluntary concession policies might also be adjusted to prioritize committed affordable units or cash-in-lieu of units in new developments.

*Strategy:* Incentivize the provision of more workforce, moderate, and low-income housing.

*Strategy:* Prioritize committed affordable units and/or voluntary contributions to the City's Affordable Housing fund with each new development.

*Strategy:* Encourage micro-units, where appropriate, to enhance housing affordability options.

*Strategy:* Encourage developers to incorporate a variety of housing types and sizes. Provide flexibility for different types of residential uses within the West End.

*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment to incorporate entry-level homeownership opportunities.

*Strategy:* Explore co-locating affordable housing with other uses as appropriate.

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1776 Wilson Blvd, Rosslyn, Arlington, VA

Rosslyn Overlook, Arlington, VA

## Office Space

Aside from the future West Falls Church Economic Development project, the West End does not include any commercial office space. While the City currently has office space available that may be an appropriate size for smaller companies and start-ups, there are fewer large spaces (3,000-10,000 sq. ft.) available as companies grow and need additional space. With the addition of new, Class A office space, the West End can provide room for successful businesses to expand and that are looking for spaces with more amenities. New office space would also provide much needed "daytime population" for City businesses with office works dining and shopping during their lunch hours or after work.

Due to the proximity to I-66 and the West Falls Church Metro Station, offices within the West End would be the most accessible and well connected offices in the City. Class A office space located in close proximity to a metro station would make Falls Church a more attractive location for companies that prefer to locate near metro stations and need office space.

The West End also provides the opportunity to incorporate co-working spaces. These flexible office spaces may be an attractive alternative to a traditional office for small businesses, independent contractors and telecommuters.

No new office space has been constructed in the City since 2009 when the 800 W. Broad Street project, anchored by the U.S. Post Office, was completed. Market conditions within the last decade have not been conducive to stimulating more office buildings in the City, including medical offices, as current regional supply of office space far exceeds demand for office space. A primary challenge in the office market are the construction costs, including the

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cost to provide required parking, particularly if parking is underground. Financing office space is also difficult due to pre-leasing requirements. Typically, this requires spaces to be 50% or more pre-leased which is challenging with an existing regional oversupply of office space. The office market also has demonstrated a strong preference for new office space to be built near metro stations.

Events such as pandemics and other industry changes may impact the long-term needs for office space and may result in changes to the way office space is delivered. It is important that the City continue to monitor and remain response to office market trends.

Creative City policies and initiatives could be considered to try to overcome these challenges, especially for projects located in close proximity to the West Falls Church metro station. City incentives might be appropriate such as additional project height allowances or use of the City's existing commercial real estate tax abatement program. The City's voluntary concession policies might also be adjusted to encourage developers to include office use within their projects.

*Strategy:* Encourage the development of Class A office space to provide opportunities for higher wage jobs to locate within the City.

*Strategy:* Continue to monitor and remain responsive to office market trends. This could include revising the City's tax incentive programs.

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Indianapolis Cultural Trail (Indianapolis, IN)

Example of restored W&OD Train Station (Purcellville)

## Connection to the W&OD Trail

The W&OD Trail is another important connection to the area. Much like the gateway into the City via Broad Street, the W&OD Trail which borders the Gordon Road Triangle has potential to serve as another entry point into the City for non-motorized traffic. Currently, the W&OD Trail is not conveniently accessible from the uses within the Gordon Road Triangle. Further embracing this trail frontage would enable the West End to serve as a convenient, useful, and unique stop along the trail. All present and future commercial uses within the West End can benefit from increased accessibility to pedestrians and bicycle riders alike.

Many communities have been successful in providing an abundance of bike and pedestrian friendly options for dining and lodging close to the trail path entrance. Wayfinding geared towards those who wish to access the trail, as well as access to businesses from the trail, has also led to direct economic progress. Bike shops, running stores, sporting goods stores can thrive if they have the proper connections to their audience. The W&OD Trail can become even more of an asset to the City if a more permeable edge that connect to the Gordon Road Triangle is created.

The connection of the West End to the W&OD Trail could be further celebrated through a replica or monument of the original 19th century West Falls Church freight and passenger station for the railroad and trolley line. The West End Park on West Broad Street is now at approximately that location. The existing West End Park or a pocket park on the south side of West Broad Street may provide an opportunity to incorporate a structure or monument which celebrates this aspect of the City's heritage and reinforces the linkage between the W&OD and the West End. Examples of this idea have been done along the W&OD

Trail in Purcellville. The Purcellville Train Station celebrates the historic W&OD Railroad and provides amenities to trail users such as restroom facilities, water fountains, and benches to stop and rest.

*Strategy:* Embrace the W&OD Trail along its frontage with Gordon Road Triangle while prioritizing bicycle connections from the W&OD Trail over to the school site and West Falls Church Metro station. Recognize the trail as an additional point of entry to the West End and work with the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to emphasize linkage of the trail to the West End.

*Strategy:* Create an attractive, convenient, and unique space that serves as an exciting landmark along the W&OD Corridor for trail users.

*Strategy:* Encourage bike shops, running stores, and other uses that would appeal to W&OD Trail users to locate near this area.

Potential concept for replica of a West Falls Church freight and passenger station

Schuylkill River Trail (Philadelphia, PA)

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## Connection to the Schools

While George Mason High School & Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School have a wide footprint within the West End, the district also benefits from its proximity to the Northern Virginia Center (NVC), which houses a number of academic programs for Virginia Tech. While just outside the City limits, the NVC still provides Falls Church with a unique academic connection. The City should strive to strengthen these connections to educational opportunities through safety and mobility enhancements.

The new George Mason High School campus will continue to provide versatile recreational space for students to access. The multi-use sports fields and indoor competition gym on the campus will add even more utility to attract people to the West End, giving it potential for hosting sporting events including district, regional or state tournaments. These events when supplemented by the nearby dining and hotel spaces within walking distance, would create a unique gathering spot for visitors and residents alike.

*Strategy:* Emphasize the importance of traffic calming and safe multimodal connections between the schools, transit centers, and commercial spaces.

*Strategy:* Celebrate the connections to the schools throughout the West End.

*Strategy:* Work with Virginia Tech to provide additional academic opportunities for students and residents.

*Strategy:* Encourage workforce connections for students within the West End. For example, future makerspaces could provide student job opportunities.

Concept, GMHS High School, West Perspective

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## Industrial Uses

### Data Centers

Given the existing light industrial zoning within the Gordon Road Triangle, the West End may already be in a prime position to become an innovation zone, providing data services and infrastructure to the community and the region. Data centers have the capability to provide network and data storage infrastructure for organizations both within and outside of the City.

As the Northern Virginia region develops further and advances its smart city technologies and the shape of the technology industry changes, data centers are becoming a key component for the success of businesses and communities alike. Data centers and the technology they use can become more flexible and adaptable as time moves on. Traditional "hyperscale" data centers can provide a massive amount of data storage but require a facility with a larger physical footprint and thus are less desirable within urban areas. According to a 2020 report from the Northern Virginia Technology Council, edge data centers that are relatively smaller and located in more populated areas will likely be needed to meet the demands of new technology. These would not replace larger data centers but would serve as complements as the data center industry continues to grow and evolve. The Gordon Road Triangle may be an appropriate area of the City for edge data centers but further study of this use along with an evaluation of the economic benefits would be needed.

### Other Industrial Uses

In addition to the growing prominence and need for data centers, other light-industrial uses such as small-scale manufacturing opportunities can add a unique mix of

Examples of how to incorporate art to create an engaging industrial area (Asheville, NC)

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production businesses. Small-scale manufacturing uses such as breweries, distilleries, arts and craft markets makerspaces, or food production would be desirable uses within the Gordon Road Triangle. Such uses can benefit the City through additional employment opportunities, and production of local consumer goods. Each of these types of businesses have the capability to add something unique to Falls Church.

Incorporating public art, murals, paving designs, and street lighting can help to enhance the aesthetics of the Gordon Road Triangle, making it an inviting place to explore or stop along the W&OD Trail.

*Strategy:* Ensure the City's zoning regulations stay flexible and responsive to market changes and technological advancements. This could include revisiting use definitions as well as building requirements and constraints.

*Strategy:* Consider opportunities to revitalize the Gordon Road Triangle without eliminating industry.

*Strategy:* Encourage the use of murals and other art to create an engaging industrial area that celebrates the City's heritage.

Brewery in Asheville, North Carolina

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## Tools and Incentives to Encourage Redevelopment

### Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing enables the City to support development of projects with great social benefit that may not develop otherwise. This financing tool takes advantage of the increment (increase) in tax revenue resulting from redevelopment to pay off the debt on the project or improvements in public infrastructure, utilities, etc. in the project area. It assumes some financial risk so that the project provides the greatest value to the community. The City assumes financial risk under the assumption that the investment will increase the overall value of the project or project area.

### Business Improvement Districts

The City can establish by ordinance a business improvement district (BID) in a defined area within which property owners pay an additional tax on real estate in order to fund improvements or services within the district's boundaries. Taxes generated by BIDs can be used for district maintenance, security, capital improvements, marketing and promotion, facilities operation and staffing, and more. The services provided by a BID would be supplemental to those already provided by the City.

### Industrial Revenue Bonds

The City's Economic Development Authority, with City Council approval, may issue tax-exempt or taxable industrial revenue bonds (IRBs) on behalf of qualified companies to finance the construction of buildings and related infrastructure (including parking). Examples of qualifying projects are construction of corporate headquarters and facilities for nonprofit corporations, such as trade associations. The Tax Analysts Building was financed by a $25 million IRB, while Easter Seals was financed by about a $3 million IRB.

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# 5. Character & Urban Design

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## Importance of the Human Scale

Human scale design focuses on creating objects or environments that are the size and shape comfortable for people to use. In terms of City planning, human scale design involves creating pedestrian centered developments that include smaller walkable blocks, narrower streets, plenty of walking room, flexible public spaces, engaging streetscapes, and welcoming ground floor building facades. This style of design is key to making cities walkable, vibrant places. In contrast, automotive scale is characterized by wide, fast-paced streets, intimidating crossings, long blocks, blank walls, buildings set back far from the sidewalk network, and expansive parking lots.

With its proximity to a middle and high school, a regional bicycle route, and a metro station, the City's West End is well-positioned to move away from the existing automotive-scaled environment while enhancing the area's multimodal infrastructure and responding to user needs. The following sections outline recommendations to transform the West End into a healthy and safe pedestrian-friendly environment.

Pitt Street Mall, Sydney Australia

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## Urban Foundation

There are a number of design elements that impact how pedestrians interact with a development including block design, depth of building setbacks, building height in relation to street width, building façade lengths, and frequency of doors and windows. POAs 4 & 7 currently consist of low density automobile-focused development, leaving plenty of opportunities to enhance the pedestrian environment along West Broad Street. This section provides urban design recommendations to create a framework for attractive and engaging pedestrian experiences.

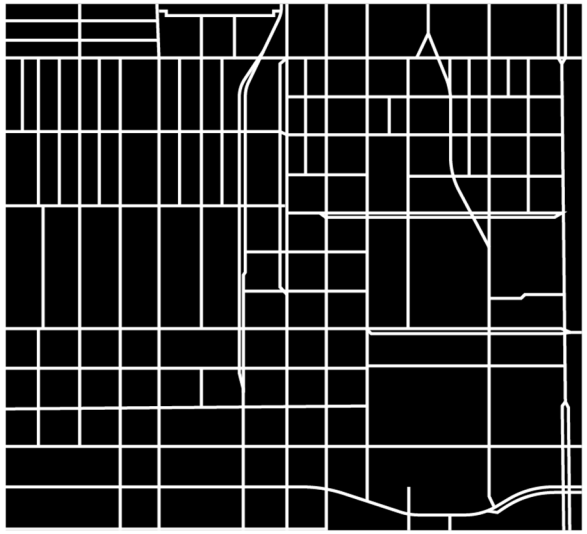
### Block Design

Generally, small to moderate block sizes of 300-500' are conducive to healthy walking environments. Larger blocks can be sustained and enjoyable to walk when they include an interior hierarchy of smaller pedestrian-scaled streets, active alleyways, and public spaces.

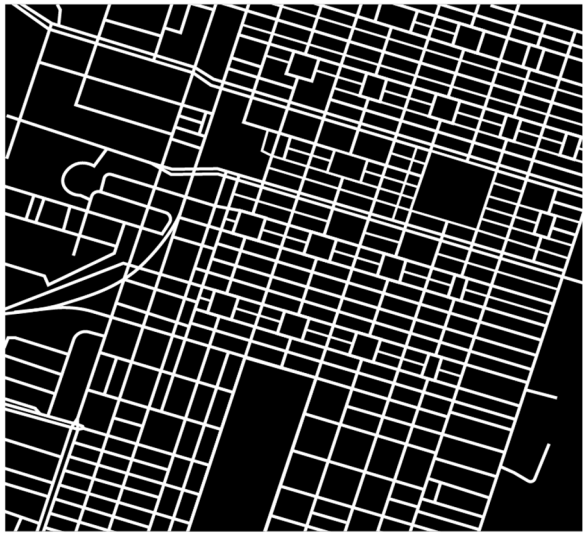
A portion of the Gordon Triangle extends 1,700 feet before a break created by Gordon Road. The Federal Reality property is divided by Birch Street into two blocks roughly 600 and 800 feet in length along West Broad Street. In comparison, downtown Falls Church's best example of a walkable block between Little Falls St and N Maple Ave along W. Broad Street is 370 feet long.

Oversized blocks need to be broken up through the creation of new streets, commercial alleyways, parks and plazas, and quality pedestrian facilities. In addition, better connectivity is needed between these three POAs as well as the rest of the City. One option is to extend Birch Street across West Broad Street through the Gordon Road Triangle to Shreve Road.

**1-Square Mile Comparison of City Blocks**



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



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

# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



The West End POA would benefit from a revised street grid which breaks up the large blocks and creates interior pedestrian paths. Pedestrian and bike connections from the W&OD Trail and West End Park to Haycock Road and the school's campus are desirable and would help to activate this area. Although the current site is not pedestrian-oriented, the Falls Plaza shopping center receives an unusually large amount of foot traffic from September to June when the school day ends. Redevelopment of the Falls Plaza Shopping Center could complement and extend the new redevelopment project on the adjacent 9.45-acre property, providing gathering places for students on their way home from school.

The Street Network Connections map on page 5-4 shows a conceptual plan for a new street grid in the City's West End. Street realignments including the realignment of the Birch Street Intersection are encouraged. The map is provided for illustrative purposes with flexibility for final locations to be determined in coordination with the City and through the development review process.

*Strategy:* Work with property owners during redevelopment to align streets to create a new street grid with smaller walkable blocks that enhance connectivity between the POAs and the rest of the City.

*Strategy:* To the extent that aligning the Falls Plaza Shopping Center entry on Haycock Road to the West Falls Church Economic Development site creates orphaned land along the back of the Falls Plaza property, encourage that area to be used for open space and allow density to be shifted elsewhere on the site.

*Strategy:* With the creation of a new street grid, require block lengths to be no more than a maximum of 500 feet long.

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# Street Network Connections

Existing Streets

Proposed Streets

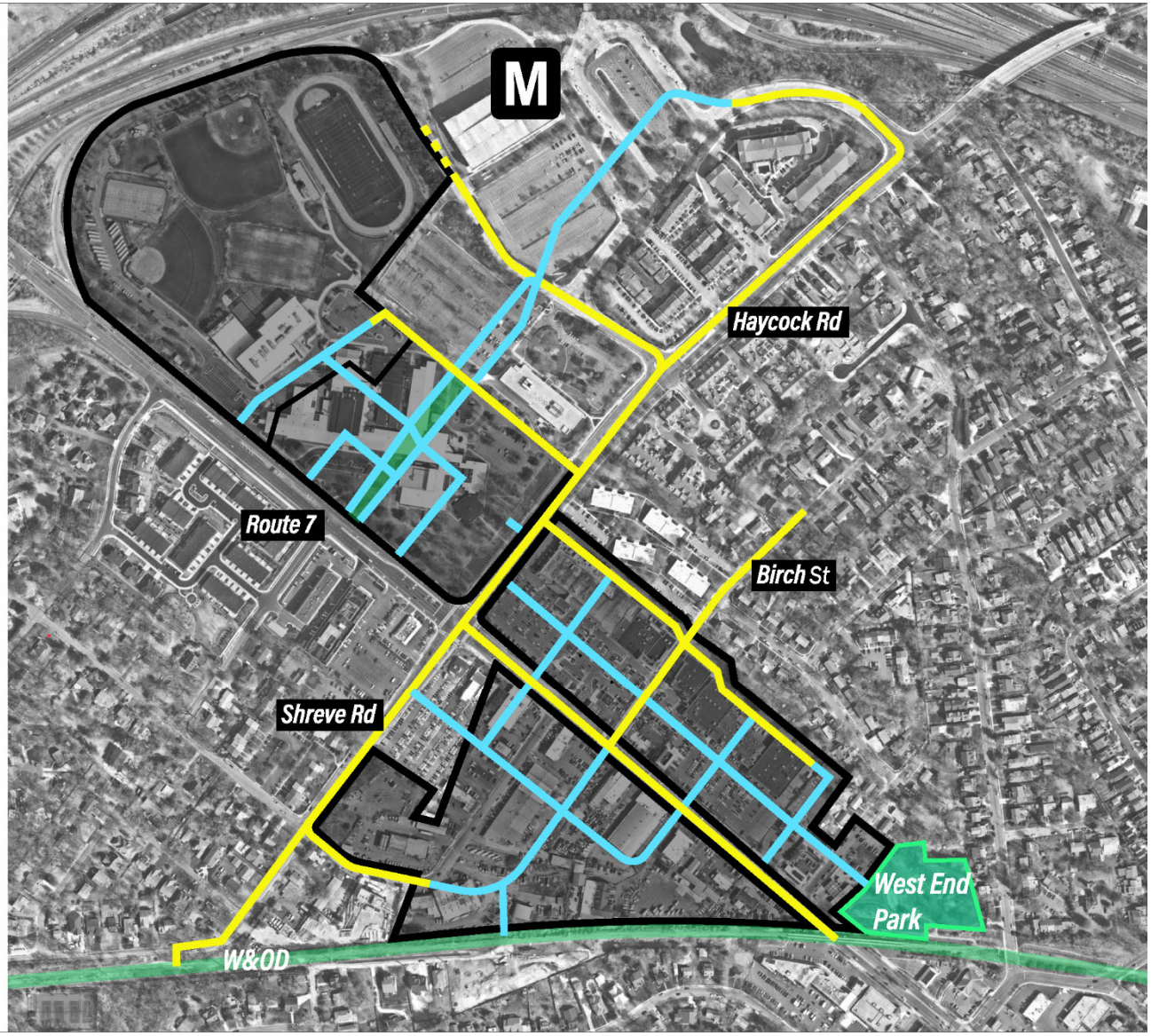
Parks & Open Space

POA Boundary

500'
Max Reccommended
Block Size

100'

N

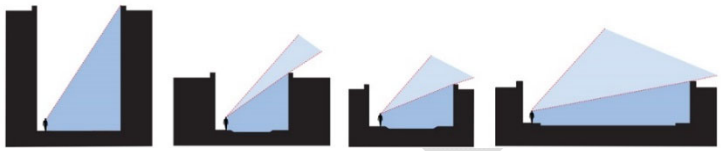


## Setback

Having buildings front on the sidewalk network rather than on a surface parking lot helps to create a more engaging pedestrian experience. Having storefronts and outdoor dining lining the sidewalks provides exciting visual stimulus for pedestrians. Setbacks can provide opportunities for placemaking such as seating and places to pause through intentionally placed ledges, steps, along with adequate space for street tree growth and other landscaping.

Relatively uniform setbacks should be encouraged along the buildings' ground-floor frontages to create a consistent street wall that frames the pedestrian realm. However, this should not preclude the incorporation of architectural details that breakup facades and create a visually engaging environment such as the development of building colonnades, recessed entries, or modified building setbacks at special corners. Ground floor setbacks or recesses should not occupy more than 25 percent of the street frontage.

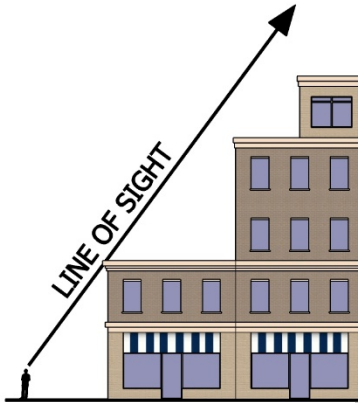
Existing conditions found in POA 7 can be enhanced through infill development along West Broad Street. By designing new buildings that meet the sidewalk an active retail space is created along West Broad Street. This will help to break up the existing sea of surface parking which currently is a barrier to visiting the Falls Plaza Shopping Center in anything other than an automobile.




In the long-term, the goal is to shift parking from surface lots located in front of buildings to the rear of buildings, on-street parallel parking, or structured garages (preferably underground). The existing surface can then be redeveloped with additional development blocks, public plazas, and green space.

## Stepbacks

The use of stepbacks in building design can give the impression of a lower-scale building while still allowing for higher density. Stepbacks can also be important to supporting the healthy growth of street trees. Building stepbacks are encouraged above to reduce the building's perceived massing and relate to surrounding building heights.




Example showing how stepbacks can provide the impression of a lower-scale building.

## Building / Street Ratio

The height of a street's buildings in relation to the width of the street provides an important first impression for an area. There is no precise ratio and a ration should not preclude a particular building height but there should be consideration in how the ratio impacts the feel of an area. Wider roadways typically lead to faster thoroughfares designed to funnel cars from one point to another. On the other hand, narrower, urban streets create more intimate and lively spaces which can be shared by all modes of transportation. A more balanced ratio helps to create a comfortable sense of enclosure.

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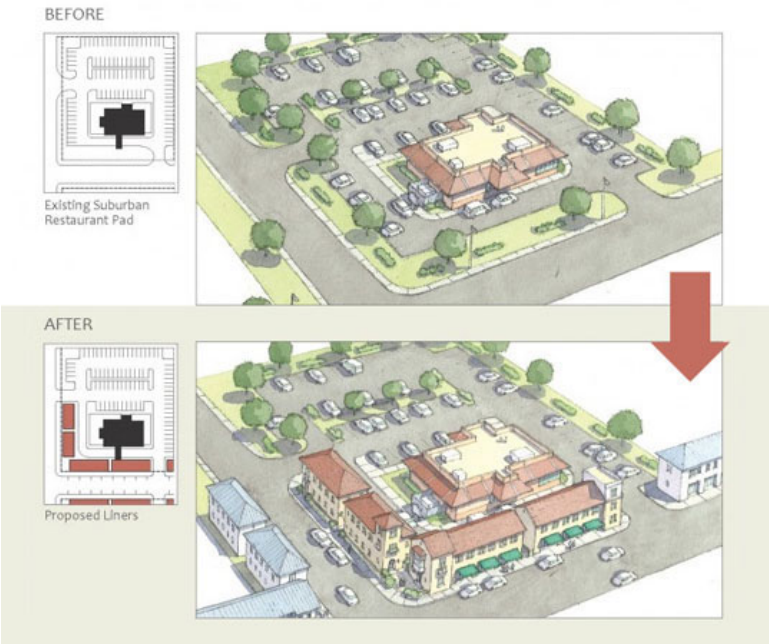
West Broad Street has two 11-foot travel lanes in each direction and a center turn lane totaling 55 feet of roadway. The shopping outlets in POA 7 are far removed from any street activity with the exception of the gas station, credit union, and funeral home. On the other side of West Broad Street, the Gordon Triangle's industrial uses have little to no separation from the street but at only one story in height feel dwarfed by the roadway.

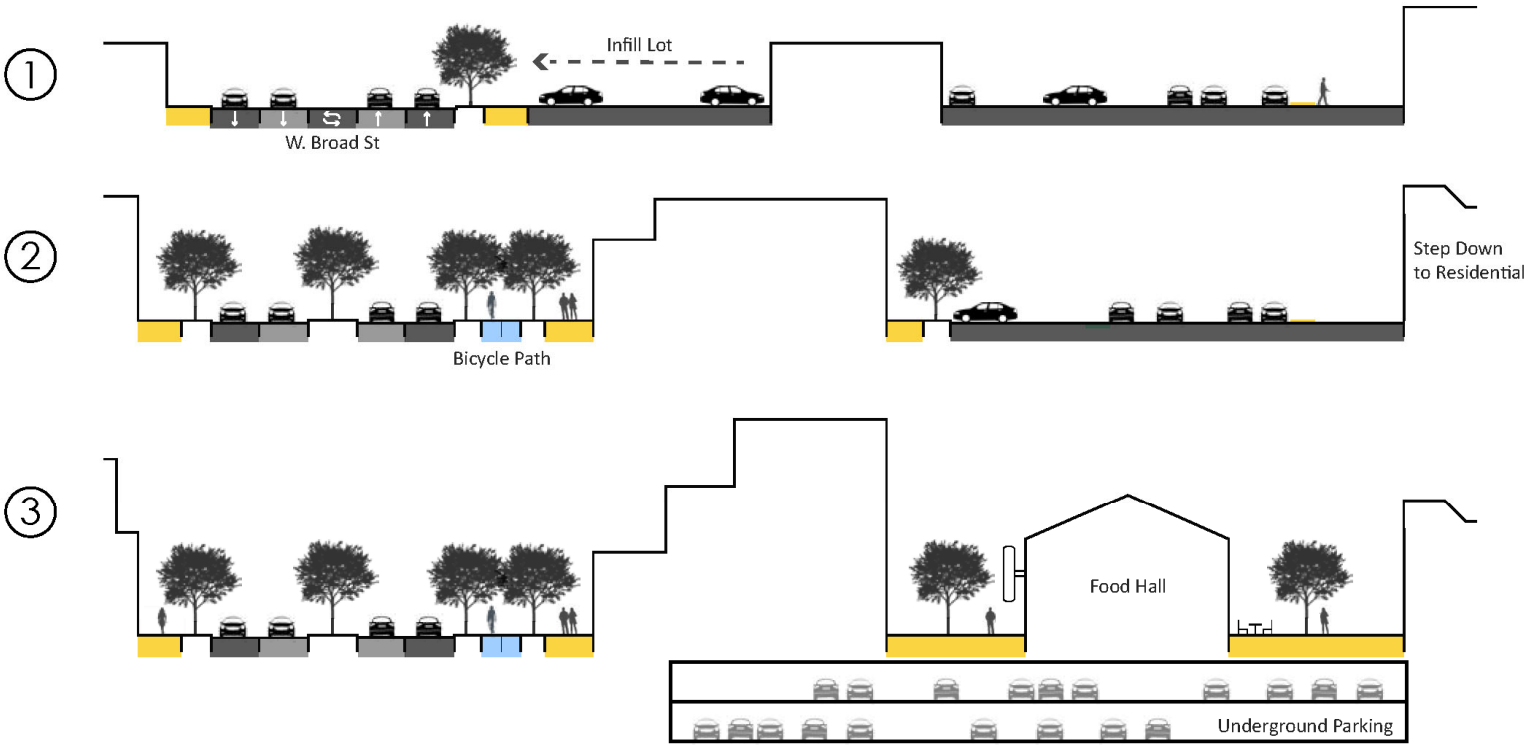
The first step in creating a more pedestrian scaled environment is to incorporate infill development in the parking lots with storefronts oriented along West Broad Street. Sidewalks along West Broad Street should also be widened to include a shared use path to encouraging safe cycling to the school sites and new development. Transforming the center turn lane of West Broad Street into a landscaped median and crossing island will enhance pedestrian connectivity throughout the area. In the longer term, surface parking can be consolidated in a garage above or below ground ultimately being replaced by new development blocks with a variety of amenities from urban parks to food halls. This concept is illustrated on the following page.




Example of improved streetscape through infill development (*The Sprawl Repair Manual*, Galina Tachieva).

Example of an automotive centered place versus a more walkable place (*The Sprawl Repair Manual*, Galina Tachieva).

Existing Conditions of West Broad Street




The graphic above illustrates (1) the current urban pattern of West Broad Street. (2) Future infill development could provide an initial transition into a more pedestrian friendly environment with development located closer to the street. The center of the block would still be dedicated to parking. (3) If consolidating parking in garages or underground lots is economically feasible during later stages of development the central space can be reclaimed as green plaza or communal gathering hub such as a food hall or beer garden.

## Urban Form

### Scale & Rhythm

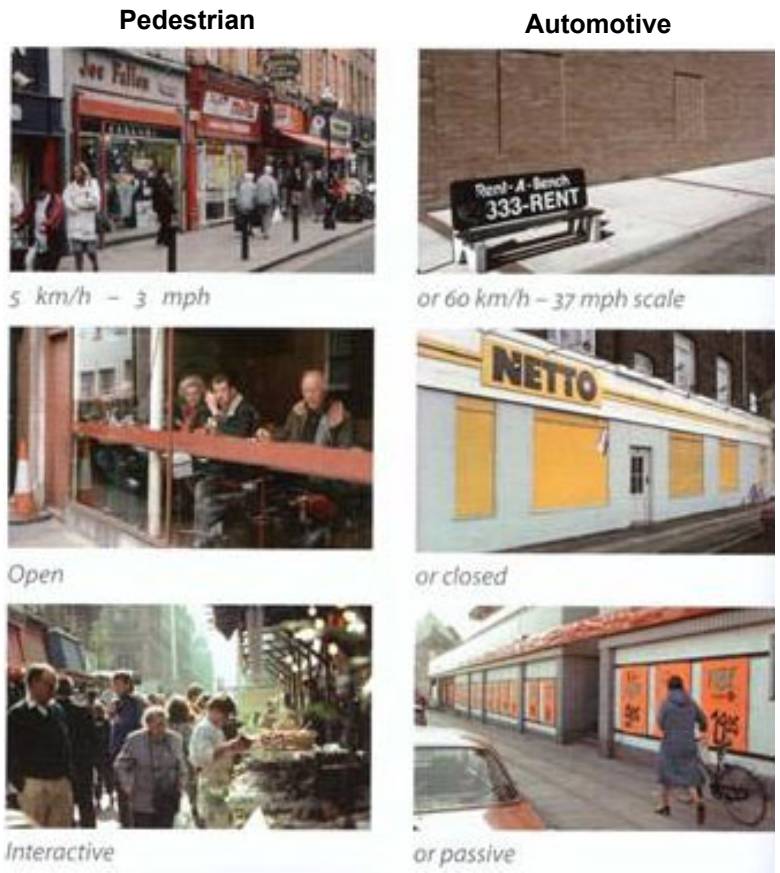
At the automotive scale (25+mph), fewer and bolder details are needed to capture attention. Wide, repetitious horizontal building masses become monotonous and off-putting to pedestrians. Considering a pedestrian's pace (approx. 3 mph), compact, narrow units housing a wide variation of functions and services provide a more intriguing streetscape encouraging patrons to explore. Additionally, heights are encouraged to vary across sites to create visual interest. It is recommended this design form be applied to larger commercial buildings and anchor retail which can often dominate a block's ground floor.

### Transparency

The walking experience is further enhanced through transparent retail frontages that allow passersby a preview inside buildings. This also gives patrons a front row seat to street life. Buildings which turn their back on the street do not encourage pedestrians to slow down, observe, and explore.

### Appeal to Many Senses

Well-designed buildings will provide interest while the best buildings provide opportunities for interaction. Aside from being visually engaging, buildings can invite pedestrians in from the street. For example, the waft of aroma from restaurants that open onto the street with outdoor dining enliven the senses, building the anticipation of taste. The sound of lively music, or simply an opportunity to take a break on a comfortable seat out front provide further opportunities for pedestrian interaction.




*Images from Jan Gehl's *Cities for People*

## Celebrate Heritage of the Area

Redevelopment of the West End provides the opportunity to incorporate elements that reflect the unique history of the area. The area should consider opportunities for new restaurants or other commercial redevelopment to incorporate designs that reference back to past industrial buildings and uses such as the railroad. Public art and other placemaking features that tell the historic nature of the City including its origin as a colonial settlement shared with Native Americans should be considered.

## Ground Floor Texture and Details

The ground floor is a critical feature of the building because it is the primary element pedestrians see and interact with. Appealing ground floors offer texture, quality materials, and visual details. The elements which create successful commercial and retail areas are numerous and overlap with streetscape.

*Strategy:* Provide opportunities to sit (architectural ledges, steps, chairs, benches).

*Strategy:* Encourage restaurants to include outdoor dining areas. If opportunities for phased development are expanded to POA 4 and 7, provide flexibility that supports outdoor dining.

*Strategy:* Provide decorative lighting on facades and break up facades with pedestrian alleyways to make ground floor blocks engaging.

*Images from Jan Gehl's *Cities for People*

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## Streetscape

This Plan envisions transforming the West End into an attractive, vibrant and unique area with streetscapes and public spaces that contribute to the area's sense of place. The safety and functionality of pedestrian and bike facilities is critical to consider when designing the streetscape in this area. In addition, it is also important to consider how the buildings heights relate to the street widths. Wider, multi-modal zones are more appropriate in areas with higher heights and more activity. These considerations can help to create a successful space that encourages visitors and residents to walk and bike, gather, and linger.

As the West End redevelops into a more active area with higher building heights, wide, multi-modal zones that are free of any obstructions (signs, utility poles, streetlights, and other infrastructure) should be incorporated. See the figures on pages 5-12 and 5-13 for general concepts for streetscape along Haycock Road and West Broad Street.

*Strategy:* In accordance with the City's adopted *Streetscape Design Standards for Commercial Streets*, ensure public infrastructure projects, infill development, and building retrofits along Broad Street includes a minimum 20-foot setback for streetscape.

*Strategy:* To support the vibrancy and transportation needs associated with higher density developments and taller buildings, encourage larger scale redevelopments to provide streetscapes that are wider than the minimum established in the City's adopted Streetscape Standards which could include multi-use paths, shared streets, and wider sidewalks.

Examples of wide, multi-modal zones in Indianapolis (top image) and Denmark (bottom image).

## Sidewalks

As the primary space for pedestrian activities sidewalk design is critical to creating a successful pedestrian-oriented development.

*Strategy:* In order to prioritize alternatives to automotive travel and create a vibrant destination, provide wide, multimodal zones for walking and biking.

*Strategy:* Work with developers to provide engaging streetscape and where necessary acquire space through dedications or easements for future streetscape improvements.

## Street Furniture

Experiences of a pedestrian can be defined as spaces that move people towards destinations or places to stop and linger. The majority of the urban landscape is dedicated to moving people – along sidewalks, through plazas and parks, and into and out of buildings to their next mode of transportation. Street furniture provide design cues, conveying places to pause, rest, and linger. These spaces are equally important and often overlooked in the streetscape design process. Currently within the West End, there are no elements incorporated into the streetscape to encourage people to stop and enjoy the space.

*Strategy:* Incorporate a variety of street furniture such as regular benches along the sidewalk, moveable seating in plazas and parks, planters, and public art.

Fisherman's Wharf Redesign – San Francisco

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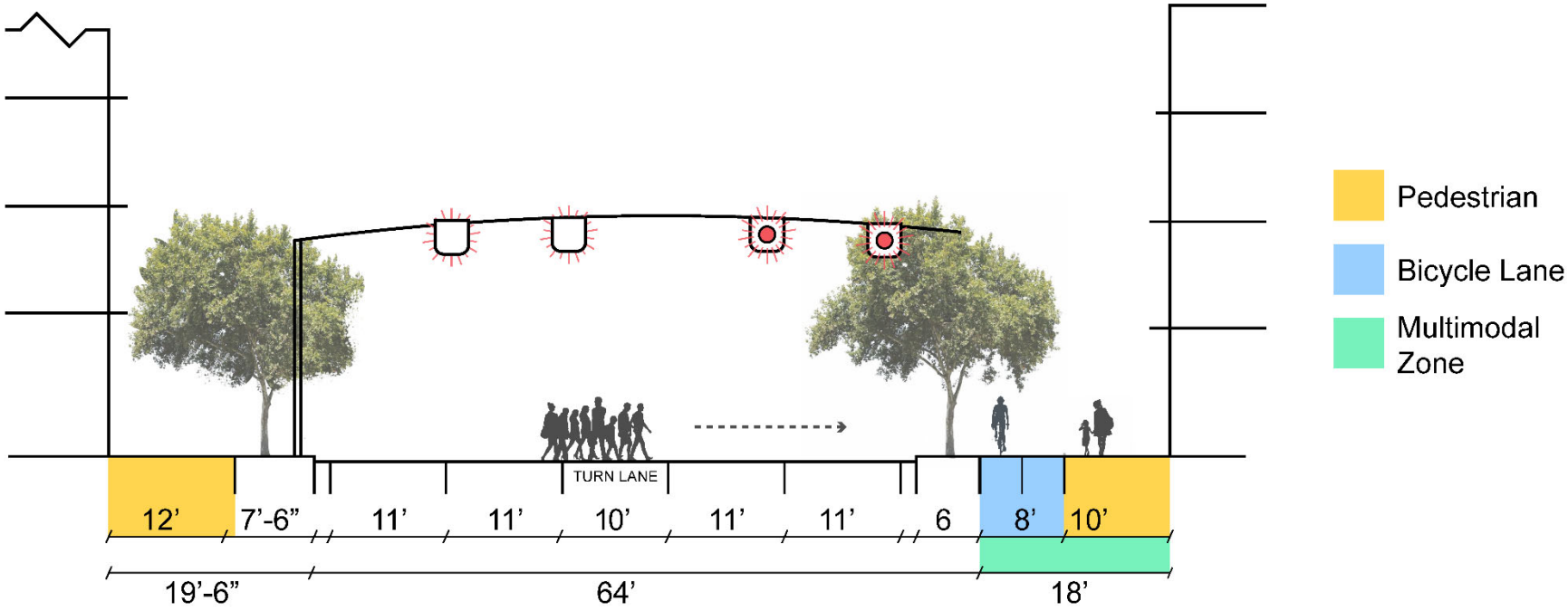
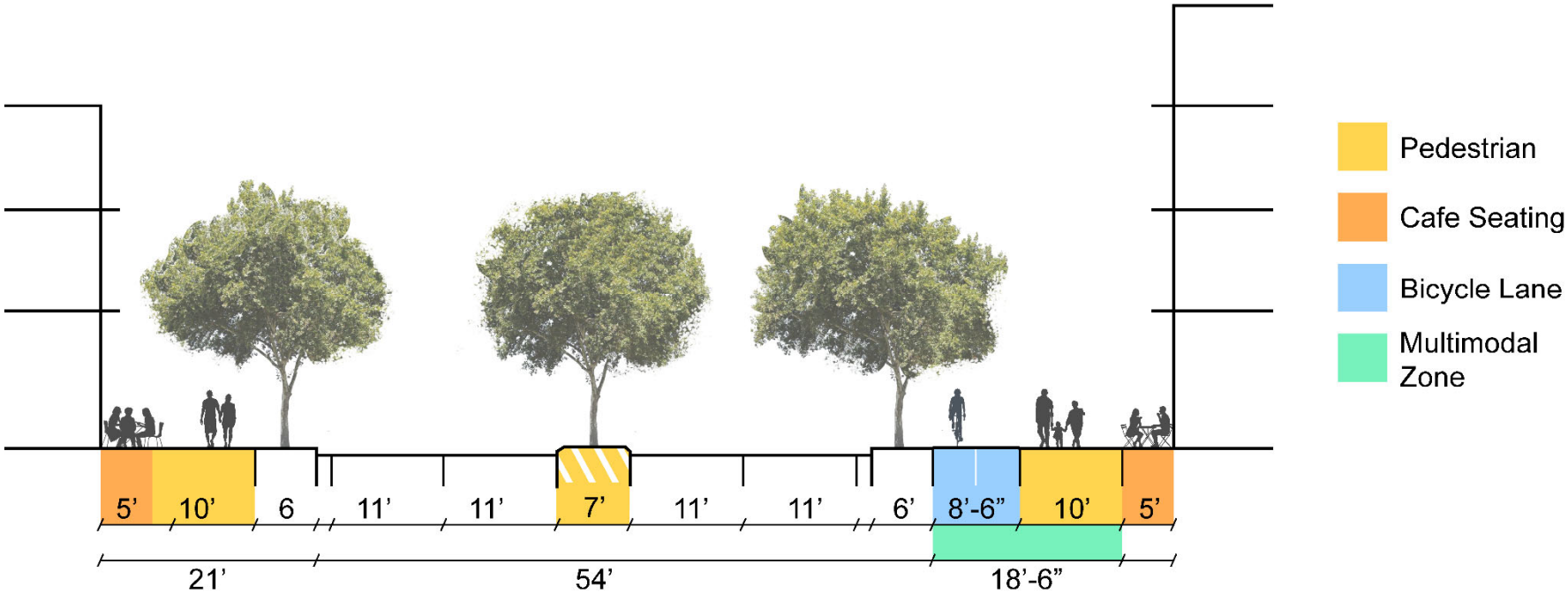



Typical Cross Section – Haycock Road

Notes:

1) This figure is intended to provide general zone locations and dimensions. Exact design to be determined as part of the development review process.
2) To the extent practicable, encourage reducing the number of travel lanes on Haycock Road to further narrow the roadway. A road diet and/or flexible on-street parking during non-peak travel periods may be appropriate.
3) Location of bicycle facilities (on- or off-street) to be determined as part of the development review process.
4) Buildings are shown for illustrative purposes only.




Typical Cross Section – West Broad Street

Notes:

1) This figure is intended to provide general zone locations and dimensions. Exact design to be determined as part of the development review process.
2) Location of bicycle facilities (on- or off-street) to be determined as part of the development review process.
3) Buildings are shown for illustrative purposes only.

## Gateway

The new West Falls Church Economic Development Project will become a new marker for those entering the City. Additional improvements to the West End can further enhance this sense of arrival. Gateways are first impressions and uniquely connected to placemaking and identity. It can become an opportunity to convey what the city prioritizes and values.

Built elements along the West Broad frontage — including buildings, landscaping, streetscape design, signage and art—should establish a sense of arrival and provide a variety of visual cues that express the special qualities of West Falls Church and a notable transition from neighboring Fairfax County. The following strategies should be incorporated to create a vibrant western gateway into the City.

*Strategy:* Expand and enhance landscaping and streetscape along West Broad Street.

*Strategy:* Incorporate branding, public art, and unique signage within the medians and architectural elements on building facades, rooftops, and building frontages to reinforce the gateway experience and celebrate the City's historic and cultural heritage.

Short North district arches – Columbus, OH

Example of urban branding through building façade – Helsinki, Finland

## Environment and Landscape

Expanding tree canopy coverage and landscape spaces provides both aesthetic and environmental benefits. Currently there are street tree plantings along West Broad Street. More efficiently placing curb cuts along West Broad Street would help to minimize disturbance to the streetscape and enhance the pattern and density of these plantings.

Plantings and tree canopy coverage throughout the West End could be expanded. Larger sites (5 acres or more) provide the opportunity for coordinated redevelopment that can thoughtfully incorporate trees and green spaces to maximize benefits such as shade, comfort, and enhanced air and water quality.

*Strategy:* Encourage the use of green infrastructure over conventional grey infrastructure in the West End.

*Strategy:* Enhance existing tree canopy coverage and green space throughout the West End and encourage the selection of native species.

*Strategy:* Encourage sites that can be planned at 5 acres or more to set aside 10% of the site for dedicated open space that includes native plantings and trees.

*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment to pursue certification under LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED ND).

*Strategy:* Incorporate biophilic planning and design principles into future development to expand natural elements within the City's built environment.

## Gathering Spaces, Squares, Plazas

Historically gathering spaces, squares, and plazas were the center of communities. These public places serve as places

San Jacinto Plaza in El Paso, Texas

Gathering Space, Pike & Rose

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to congregate, celebrate, and recreate. The following strategies should be incorporated to create gathering spaces that create a unique sense of place:

*Strategy:* Encourage the inclusion of multiple attractions (food and beverage vendors, café seating, fountains, music, art, areas to play) and amenities (seating, lighting, shade) to create vibrant destinations. Where appropriate spaces should be flexible to accommodate a variety of uses and events.

*Strategy:* Incorporate programming (ice skating, outdoor cafes, concerts, markets, and pop-up spaces) to create vibrant year round spaces that come alive each season. Public-private partnerships can help support the operation and maintenance of these spaces.

*Strategy:* Ensure gathering spaces are easily accessible locations for community activities.

Well-lit streets in Sommerville, MA

## Lighting

Adequate lighting is needed at night to make a place feel safe. Lamp posts should be placed within the sidewalk furniture zone interspersed with street trees. Lighting should be human-scaled, LED, and ideally dark sky compliant.

*Strategy:* Ensure adequate, dark sky compliant lighting is provided throughout the West End.

Example of colored lighting paired with public art to spark interest down a pedestrian alley.

## Wayfinding

Wayfinding signage should be incorporated into new development to further enhance placemaking. Wayfinding strategies should align with City-wide wayfinding efforts to establish a distinctive identity and sense of place that connects West Falls Church to the rest of the City. Orientation can also be provided through unique and iconic objects or buildings.

*Strategy:* Incorporate wayfinding throughout the West End and to key destinations in the City. Examples of areas where wayfinding should be placed include destination attractions, intersections, and areas where transportation modes shift to pedestrian (transit stops, W&OD entrance and exits, etc.).

Directional signage and local maps create a simple yet powerful synergy to provide orientation.

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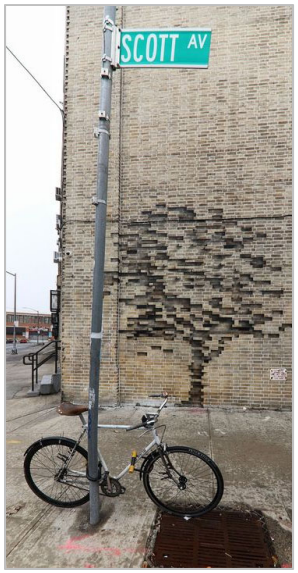



Public art comes in all shapes & sizes from creative use of facade materials to interactive murals, colorful paneling, and sculptures.

## Public Art

Public art contributes immensely to fostering a "sense of place" within an urban environment. Public Art is about more than aesthetics – it plays an important role in community history and culture. Public Art can reveal and reflect society, enhance meaning in civic and public spaces, add uniqueness to communities, and engage people in places at a deeper level. It can humanize the built environment at the same time that it can humanize past, present, and future narratives.

The West End in many ways, provides a clean slate for public art and reimagined spaces. The blank walls that lend themselves to murals, the future open spaces that provide a scenic backdrop for sculptural works, and the infrastructure that can be creative while practical, all provide opportunities for art that builds a sense of place.

In order to adequately embrace the diversity and complexity of the urban environment while nurturing creativity, public art guidelines should be flexible. At the same time, while art's value to a place is highly subjective, a general goal for public art is that it embraces, complements, and responds to its immediate surroundings. A variety of art media (i.e. sculptures, murals, audio/light installations, etc.) provides further visual interest. Public art should also be blended into the streetscape and infrastructure projects as appropriate. Ideal locations for public art include gateways, areas of transition or respite, areas that terminate paths or vistas, and areas where pedestrian interaction and lingering is encouraged.

*Strategy:* Incorporate a variety types of public art such as murals, sculptures, temporary art installations, and mosaics.

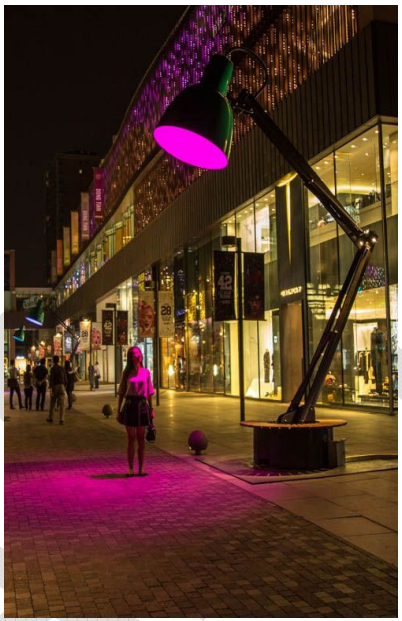
*Strategy:* Explore partnerships with the George Mason High School art students to include student art in the West End.

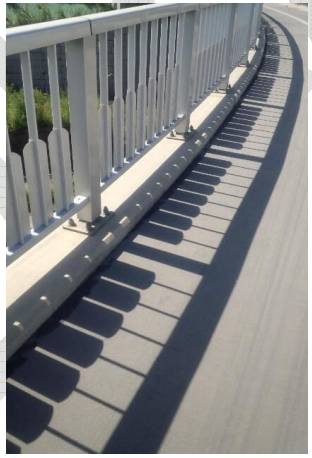
*Strategy:* Incorporate public art that celebrates the unique heritage of the area including the railroad, past industrial uses, and other key points in the City's history.

### Art can be practical

Urban art can go beyond simply adding visual interest and interactive elements, it can be creatively ingrained to provide practical functions.

*Strategy:* Enhance everyday infrastructure (bicycle racks, signage, seating, etc.) by designing these features to be practical art pieces.





Practical public art is about finding opportunities to turn necessary urban objects and features into extraordinary ones.

# 6. Multimodal Connectivity & Accessibility

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## Overview

Transportation is a key component of everyday life. The places it connects people to and how safe, predictable, and reliable it is affects community quality of life. Transportation costs are also the second largest household expense after housing. It is for these reasons that sustainable, connected, and integrated transportation is fundamental to sustained success and livability of the city.

### Transportation Impacts

Transportation not only impacts the way people move in a city and access day-to-day needs but also has a significant impact on the shape of communities. The transportation network's design directly affects how people use it. Streets designed with the sole purpose of moving vehicles – with wide travel lanes and no sidewalks – will only attract more cars and the land uses that serve those needs. On the other hand, transportation networks designed to serve people – with bike facilities, wide sidewalks, and other pedestrian accommodations – will attract more pedestrians and bicyclists and support active, livable communities. The transportation network should both inform and respond to the surrounding context, and provide safe accommodations for all users.

In order to achieve the vision and goals of this Plan, it is important to focus on enhancing pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access throughout the West End.

Example of a well-balanced multi-modal street.

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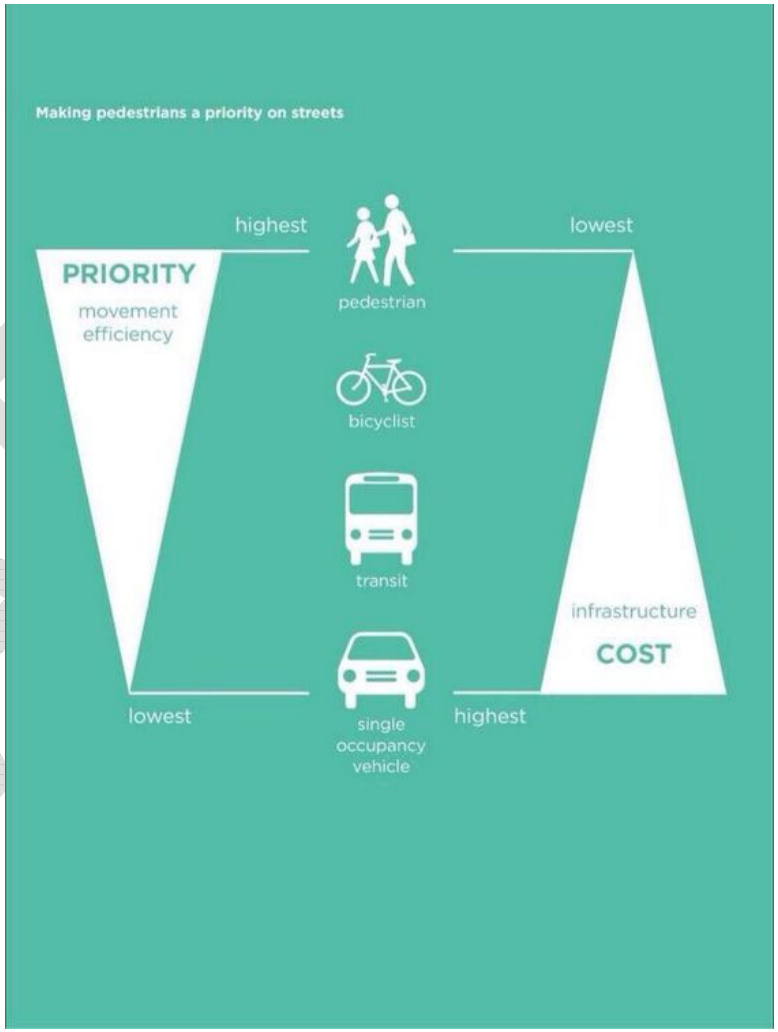
## Mode Share

Travel in Falls Church already includes walking, bicycling, and transit use, as well as driving. The current mode split between different modes of travel, for commute trips originating in the city differs fairly significantly from the mode split for all daily trips – trips to work, the gym, the store, to visit friends, etc. – demonstrated by data from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). A 2014 MWCOG travel study noted that 86% of all trips were made by car and Census data for 2015 shows that 65% of commute trips are in a car. This data indicates that a significant number of trips are taken by car.

Based upon population projections and forecasted travel increases, MWCOG expects the demand for travel is expected to increase by approximately 9 percent through 2030. To meet that demand, the City will need to increase mode share of non-auto trips from 14 percent to at least 21 percent.

Investment in transportation should consider pedestrians and cyclists foremost, followed by public transit, and automobiles. This hierarchy also is cost effective allowing the greatest value of improvements to be seen by those which will have the largest impact.




Prioritizing pedestrians first creates safer, more enjoyable cities and is more cost effective than maintaining large roadways.

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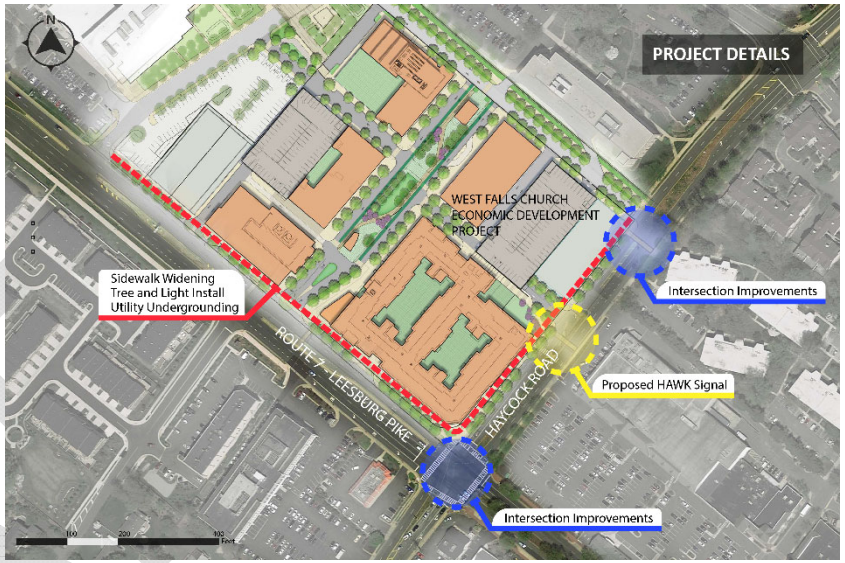
## Making Connections

Direct pedestrian and bicycle, connections to the West Falls Church Metro Station will be instrumental in creating a Transit Oriented Development. Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections between the POAs and nearby properties in the City, including Founders Row and the W&OD trail, will help to connect this area to the rest of the City and allow safe passage for students walking to and from the high school and middle school.

In June 2018, the City received a $15.7 million grant from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) to improve crossing from sites connecting to POA 8. The project details installation and synchronization of four traffic signals and crosswalks including a high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) pedestrian signal on Haycock Road; widening existing sidewalks; relocating and undergrounding utilities; and installing lighting and trees along Haycock Road and Route 7.

In July 2020, the City received a $6.9 million grant from NVTA to improve multimodal connections along Shreve Road between the W&OD Trail and West Broad Street. The project scope includes a new 10 foot wide multi-use path and 6 foot planting strip; acorn style lights; a crosswalk near the intersection of Shreve Road and Gordon Road; and new benches near the entrance to the trail. This project will better connect ongoing and future development near the West Falls Church Metro Station and the western part of the City.




West Falls Church NVTA Grant Improvements

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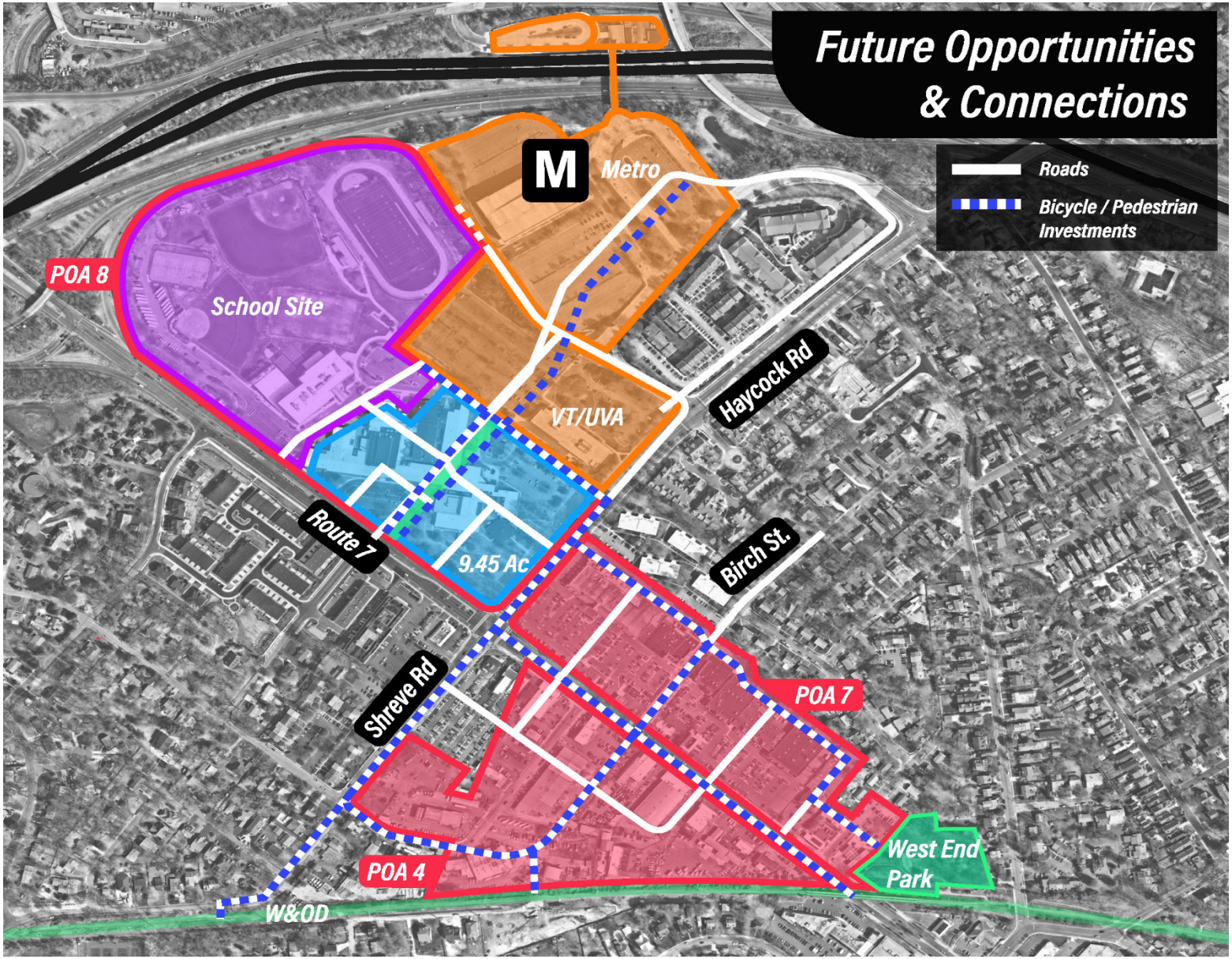


Conceptual new street network which creates increased connectivity to the W&OD Trail and West Falls Church Metro while also creating stronger connections between the three sites.

## Transportation Modes

### Pedestrian

Sidewalks are generally present on both sides of the street throughout the area, however sidewalk conditions and walking experiences vary. Pedestrian accessibility in the POA is limited by narrow existing sidewalks, sidewalk obstructions, long block distances, and a lack of mid-block crossings uniform streetscape. In addition, large seas of parking lots generally separate retail locations from the existing sidewalk network creating further difficulties for pedestrian access.

### Sidewalk Widths

To create a vibrant, pedestrian and bike-friendly area, wider sidewalks than are called for in the *City's Streetscape Design Standards* may be needed (See Chapter 5 for more discussion on recommended streetscape design). Additional sidewalk space should be allocated for street trees, café seating, and other amenities (benches, trash and recycle bins, bike racks, etc.). Currently within the City's West End, sidewalks do not meet the *City's Streetscape Design Standards.*

*Strategy:* Sidewalks in the area should be widened, especially along West Broad Street to anticipate potential future redevelopment (See Chapter 5 for more discussion on recommended streetscape design).

### Sidewalk Obstructions

Many sidewalks in the area are obstructed by utility poles, street lights, redundant signage, and other infrastructure. These obstructions reduce sidewalk width and, in some cases, conflict with ADA requirements.

*Strategy:* Remove or relocate sidewalk obstructions.

Frequent opportunities to cross the street on marked crosswalks create a strong pedestrian presence on the street (New Brunswick, NJ).

### Safe Crossings and Connectivity

Best practices in pedestrian planning call for safe crossings every 300 to 400 feet. Currently, pedestrian crossings along West Broad Street are separated by as much as 2,640 feet (more than 6 times the recommended distance).

*Strategy:* Provide additional pedestrian crossings so that there are safe crossings every 300 to 400 feet. This could include crossings at intersection and midblock crossings.

*Strategy:* Construct landscaped medians to bridge the gap and provide safer, less intimidating crossings.

*Strategy:* Reduce lane widths on West Broad to 11 feet.

*Strategy:* Remove center turn lane on West Broad Street, use excess space for a crossing median, on-street parking, or bicycle lane.

*Strategy:* As redevelopment occurs, ensure sites have internal pedestrian connectivity as well as connections to the rest of the City.

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## Intersection Geometry

Intersections and crossings are high risk areas for pedestrians. Reducing the distance of crossings while increasing visibility of pedestrians to motorists is key to better safety.

*Strategy:* Incorporate curb extensions into intersections with on-street parking to prevent people from parking too close to intersections. This increases pedestrian visibility and shortens the distance pedestrians need to cross.

Bump outs create safer crossings and can function as areas for additional seating, wayfinding, or biofiltration.

## Adequate Lighting

The perception of safety is key to creating an inviting walkable space. Well-lit areas will encourage pedestrians to walk at night. Lighting should be human-scaled, LED, and ideally Dark Sky compliant.

*Strategy:* Encourage coordinated lit walking paths throughout the West End to increase visibility and safety. Work with Virginia Tech, WMATA, and Fairfax County to ensure well-lit, safe pedestrian paths connect from the City up to the West Falls Church Metro station.

## Shared Streets

Shared streets, also called woonerfs, are low-speed, low-volume streets shared by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Instead of dividing a street with barriers like curbs, sidewalks and bike lanes, woonerfs open up the street allowing multiple uses simultaneously. These shared streets are designed to allow cars but are not designed for cars. Woonerfs encourage cars to drive slowly, yielding to pedestrians and cyclists. This design would work particularly well for internal commercial streets within the POAs.

*Strategy:* Incorporate woonerfs where appropriate.

Conceptual example of a woonerf (The Wharf, Washington D.C.)

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## Transit – Metrobus

Buses routes are an important component in the City's multimodal goals. Buses are particularly useful during peak traffic hours as they help to more efficiently transport commuters on heavily traveled roads compared with single-occupancy vehicles.

### Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

BRT systems involve dedicated lanes for buses enabling them to make stops and move throughout their route without the issue of automobile congestion. BRT is designed to provide improved capacity and reliability in comparison to traditional bus systems.

*Strategy:* Continue to work with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and neighboring jurisdictions through the NVTC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to evaluate a Route 7 BRT.

### Bus Stop Amenities and Bus Shelters

Most stops in the area are marked by a simple pole sign and there is only one bus shelter in the study area along West Broad Street. The City's Bus Stop and Bus Shelter Master Plan calls for consolidation and enhancement of bus stops along West Broad Street. Bus stop consolidation will increase travel speeds for transit riders. Bus stop enhancements, such as shelters, benches, trash cans, bicycle racks, and route information brochures will improve rider comfort and make riding the bus a more attractive travel choice.

*Strategy:* Evaluate where bus stop and bus shelter enhancements are needed throughout the West End.

### Bus Frequency

Bus service in the corridor arrives approximately every 20 minutes during rush hour. During non-peak travel times, service frequency drops to every 30 minutes. This low level of service means that travel by bus is not time competitive with other mode choices. To make bus travel more competitive, the City's *Mobility for all Modes* plan calls for increasing bus service frequency to 15 minutes throughout the day.

*Strategy:* Work with WMATA and other service providers to provide 15-minute service throughout the day.

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## Transit – Metrorail

The West End is located near the West Falls Church Metro Station (Orange Line). The Schools-Related Parcels (POA 8) is less than a 1/4 mile from the station equating to about a 5-minute walk. Creating a safe, attractive pedestrian connection to the metro could make the metro station a real asset to the City's West End.

## Connecting to Metro

Accessibility to and from the metro station will be vital to the future West End Economic Development project's early success. Currently a 0.36-mile informal path through a parking lot would be the shortest route from the metro station to the northern edge of the project site. This path to the metro could be improved with formal wayfinding, wider sidewalks, and improved street lighting to make the walk feel comfortable and safe. As shown in the image on the right, Commons Drive could be extended through the Virginia Tech property to provide that connection. Improvements to the existing metro connection may be necessary in the interim until Commons Drive can be extended as part of the redevelopment of the Virginia Tech and WMATA properties.

*Strategy:* Coordinate with Virginia Tech and WMATA to establish an improved interim route between WMATA, Virginia Tech, and the new West End Economic Development project site.

*Strategy:* Continue coordination with Fairfax County, Virginia Tech, and WMATA on the extension of Commons Drive to the metro station.

December 2019 concept to connect the West Falls Church Economic Development Project site up to the West Falls Church metro station.

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## Bicycle

There are currently no dedicated City bicycle lanes within the City's West End, however the W&OD Trail, a major regional trail, runs adjacent to POA 4. Improvements are underway to widen the trail along a one-mile segment, between Little Falls Street and N. West Street, to create separate cyclist and pedestrian travel lanes. Park Avenue, which ends near the eastern edge of POA 7, is a designated bicycle route with shared-lane markings ("sharrows") and wayfinding signs that connects to the W&OD Trail. Similar wayfinding signs and enhanced connectivity of the West End POA to the trail could make the W&OD Trail an important bike route in the area.

### Bicycle Lanes

The largest barrier to biking is safety and comfort while cycling on the street. Bicyclist will choose another mode of transportation, likely an automobile, if the route feels hurried, stressful, disjointed, or risky due to the proximity and speed of passing cars.

*Strategy:* Install better bike facilities throughout the West End with a preference for shared-use paths and protected bike lanes over sharrows.

### Bicycle Routes

The City's *Bicycle Master Plan*, identifies future bicycle routes throughout the City, several of which run through the POA. Once completed, the routes will provide better bicycle access and site connectivity.

George Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School are within biking distance for many students. As part of the new high school and West Falls Church Economic Development Project a cycle track is planned along Mustang Alley leading to the schools. Creating safe

Shared Path

Protective Parking

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bicycle paths that will connect to that cycle track should be a key priority.

*Strategy:* Prioritize a bicycle connection from the W&OD Trail to the school site. This connection could be made along the back of the Federal Realty property between Haycock Road and West End Park.

*Strategy:* Complete the bicycle routes identified in the City's *Bicycle Master Plan* including the connections to the W&OD Trail and the schools.

### Bike-Share

The City recently installed bike share in the city at 10 locations, only one of which is located in the West End POA.

*Strategy:* Install additional bike-share stations along the West Broad Street corridor, the W&OD trail and encourage future redevelopment to set aside space for permanent bike-share stations.

### Bicycle Parking

A lack of adequate spaces to safely secure bicycles can be an obstacle to cyclists and may result in some bicycles being locked in places where they do not belong. Public bicycle racks that fit with any new streetscape designs can be used at strategic locations throughout the area to reinforce bicycle usage along Route 7 and interior POA streets. A spot to rest along the W&OD trail and the Gordon Triangle would be an opportune spot to increase bicycle parking.

*Strategy:* Place bicycle racks near likely mode shift locations such as bus stops, W&OD exits, and entrances to walkable areas.

*Strategy:* Include both long-term and short-term bike parking options to meet a variety of user needs.

Short-term and long-term bike parking options.

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## Scooters and Dockless Bicycles

The National Capital Region has seen a recent surge in demand for rentable electric scooters and dockless bicycles. These rebranded forms of alternative transportation are supplied by numerous competing private companies. Electric scooters and dockless bikes provide affordable, convenient, emission-free mobility which is well suited for the compact City of Falls Church. Creating dedicated and protected right-of-way for scooters and bicycles (docked or dockless) helps to create safer conditions for using these devices. Additionally, providing proper parking eliminates another potential barrier to users.

*Strategy:* Provide designated e-scooters and dockless bike parking throughout the West End.

*Strategy:* Build out the bicycle lanes recommended in the City's Bicycle Master Plan which can be used for e-scooters and dockless bikes.

Designated scooter parking provided in a curb extension.

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## Automobile

West Broad Street is part of State Route 7, a regional roadway that runs from Alexandria, VA to Tysons Corner and beyond. One of the most travelled roadways in the City, it is designated as a major arterial and is five lanes wide (including a center turn lane) throughout the commercial portions of the City, briefly becoming 6-7 lanes (including turn lanes) within the study area.

### Regional Travel Patterns

Redevelopment activity is ongoing or planned in several areas around the City and West Broad Street is heavily affected by regional development patterns. Future development will likely increase travel demand regionally (including in and through the City). The City is also affected by freight and truck travel patterns. Truck restrictions on nearby Route 50 push truck traffic onto Route 7. This situation is inconsistent with recent development activity and the goals of this Plan, which envisions West Broad Street as a more walkable environment in the City.

*Strategy:* Increase options for non-automotive travel and create disincentives to automotive travel to mitigate local automobile travel patterns.

*Strategy:* Work with regional neighbors and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to reverse existing truck restrictions so that trucks are permitted on Route 50 and restricted from Broad Street.

### Access Management and Curb Cuts

Properties in the area generally have one or more curb cuts. The frequency of curb cuts disrupts both pedestrian and automobile traffic.

*Strategy:* Develop inter-parcel connectivity and shared parking arrangements to limit the number of times drivers have to enter and exit individual lots.

### West Broad Street

Lane widths along West Broad Street vary, but they are typically 12 feet wide. Recent research shows that wide lanes actually decrease safety by encouraging people to drive faster. Lane widths of 11 to 10 feet have been shown to reduce the frequency, number, and severity of crashes. Eleven foot lanes are wide enough to support travel by buses, emergency vehicles, and trucks.

As demand for travel along West Broad Street increases, the City may have to explore more space-efficient travel options. Communities throughout the U.S, have converted some travel lanes for Bus Rapid Transit, and cycle tracks, and High Occupancy Vehicle lanes during rush hour. This temporary conversion allows communities to maintain accessibility for all travelers while also increasing the capacity of the road to carry more people.

*Strategy:* In order to achieve safety benefits at limited travel cost time and allow for a mix of transit modes, decrease speed along W. Broad Street to 20-mph which may require roadway redesign.

*Strategy:* Synchronize signal timings and signal progressions to reduce wait times for both motorists and pedestrians.

*Strategy:* Explore the use of BRT/HOV/bus only/cycle lanes during rush hour.

### Haycock Road

This plan recommends streetscape enhancements to Haycock Road to create a successful place that encourages residents and visitors to walk, bike, and linger. The street

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design and speeds limits on Haycock Road should be evaluated to balance the safety and needs of all users.

*Strategy:* In order to achieve safety benefits at limited travel cost time and allow for a mix of transit modes, decrease speed along Haycock Road to 25-mph when the West Falls Church Economic Development Project is developed. Note this may require roadway redesign and coordination with Fairfax County and VDOT.

*Strategy:* To the extent practicable, encourage reducing the number of travel lanes on Haycock Road to further narrow the roadway. A road diet and/or on-street parking during non-peak travel periods may be appropriate.

### Automobile Parking

Currently, automobile parking in the West End largely consists of private surface parking lots. Shared parking allows visitors to park once and visit multiple destinations. Fostering agreements among property owners could dramatically increase the available parking supply in the City's West End.

*Strategy:* Share parking across sites to reduce the need to build additional parking spaces.

*Strategy:* With the area located in close proximity to a metro station, reductions in parking requirements may be appropriate. Develop incentives to encourage reductions in provided parking.

*Strategy:* Provide both short-term and long-term parking options. Metered on-street parking can provide frequent turnover of parked cars, thereby increasing access to area businesses while structured parking may provide visitors the flexibility to visit multiple destinations.

*Strategy:* Explore opportunities to provide public parking structures.

### Car-share & Ride-share

Car-share services allow vehicles to be rented for single trips, a day, or even in the form of monthly commuter subscriptions for work week travel. Zipcar and Car2Go are two popular models in the metropolitan area.

Ride-share services are a popular alternative to reliance on individual vehicle trips, and in some cases car ownership entirely, by providing door to door service. Uber and Lyft are currently two of the most prevalent services.

*Strategy:* Encourage partnership with car-share services and dedicate parking for their use.

*Strategy:* The City should encourage designated pick-up & drop-off (PUDO) zones.

### Planning for Autonomous Vehicles

Autonomous vehicle (AV) technology is expected to significantly transform the transportation system over the coming decades. As this technology continues to move forward, there will be implications for the planning and design of development and transportation systems on both the local and regional levels. For example, shared AVs could result in a significant reduction in private ownership leading to a reduced need for parking while at the same time an increased need for pick-up and drop-off areas.

*Strategy:* Continue to monitor AV technology and market changes to remain responsive and flexible to infrastructure needs to support AV use.

*Strategy:* Continue to evaluate the potential impacts of AVs and revise land use regulations and design standards as appropriate.

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# 7. Community Building Blocks - Infrustructure & Environment

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## Overview

Infrastructure and Environment in this context refers to underground water and sanitary sewer lines, storm sewer, overhead utilities, property yard, urban forestry and agriculture, and environmental sustainability and resiliency. These all contribute to the City's 2040 Vision and Environmental Sustainability core value as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

### Tripps Run Tributaries

Grove Branch, a tributary to Tripp's Run is located between the southwestern border of the West End POA and the Washington & Old Dominion Trail. Pearson Branch, another tributary to Tripps Run, is currently located underground within the Gordon Road Triangle. Connections should be made between the West End POAs and the W&OD Trail. Grove Branch and Pearson Branch could act as an environmental asset, being maintained in a way where it is visible and accessible to people in the West End.

*Strategy:* Daylight Tripp's Run tributaries to provide water features within the Gordon Road Triangle and manage stormwater.

### Water

The water distribution system is owned and maintained by Fairfax Water. According to the City GIS data, the West End POAs are served by a 12 inch waterline along West Broad Street and a 20 inch waterline along Haycock Road. Smaller waterlines serve the various properties such as the shopping center, the existing George Mason High School, and the various properties along Gordon Road.

Tripp's Run stream improvements in neighboring Fairfax County.

Water line repair on Broad Street.

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## Source

The City's source of raw water is the Potomac River. Water utilities are owned and maintained by Fairfax Water. The City is supplied water by the Washington Aqueduct division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Raw water is drawn from the Potomac River and treated at the Washington Aqueduct's Dalecarlia and McMillan water treatment plants, both of which can provide water for distribution in the City.

*Strategy:* Continue working with Fairfax Water to ensure adequate water distribution infrastructure for redevelopment.

The Potomac River, the source of the City water supply.

## Sanitary Sewer

According to the City GIS data, the West End POAs are currently served by a 12 inch and 8 inch gravity sanitary sewer along Haycock Road and West Broad Street, respectively. Sanitary sewer is owned by the City of Falls Church and maintained by the Department of Public Works.

The majority of the sanitary sewer system in the City of Falls Church was installed between 1950 and 1960. The Department of Public Works (DPW) manages a comprehensive inspection program that collects pipe conditions and ranks portions of the system for rehabilitation. The City has over 1,000 manholes and 47 miles of pipe ranging from six inches to 21 inches diameter.

The City is working on a West End Sanitary Sewer Project that will include 1,200 linear feet of new 8 inch diameter sanitary sewer pipe starting at the edge of the GMHS development site, running south down Shreve Road and then east on Gordon Road. This project is intended to convey flows from the new high school and the future West Falls Church Economic Development Project site.

City workers repairing a Sanitary Sewer line in Falls Church.

DRAFT

# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*

The Gordon Road Triangle and West End POAs are not included in the capacity of the West End Sanitary Sewer Project. The City will need to assess the sanitary sewer impacts related to pipe capacity and individual treatment plant capacity.

*Strategy:* Aging sanitary sewer lines should be replaced. Additionally, the City should continue to evaluate improvements necessary to support redevelopment.

*Strategy:* For redevelopment in the Gordon Road Triangle and West End POAs, assess the sanitary sewer impacts related to pipe capacity and individual treatment plant capacity.

*Strategy:* Ensure newly constructed City streets are sufficiently wide to allow for sewer maintenance/cleaning activities such as CCTV and bypass pumping.

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Storm Sewer pipe installation.

Pervious pavers allow natural stormwater drainage on surfaces that would otherwise be impervious.

## Storm Sewer

DPW manages, maintains, and repairs the City's stormwater system, which includes 140,000 linear feet of storm drain, 1,400 appurtenances, and 8,100 feet of stream channel in the Four Mile Run and Tripp's Run watersheds. The West End POAs are located within the Tripp's Run watershed.

A 20 inch concrete storm sewer is located under West Broad Street. Properties in the study area generally drain into the storm drain along West Broad Street.

Impervious surface contributes to increased runoff and storm sewer backups. This can happen because water cannot be absorbed by these surfaces and instead must flow through the City's storm sewer system. Increasing the use of green infrastructure on a site helps to absorb stormwater and reduce the amount of stormwater that must be conveyed through the storm sewer system.

The West End is almost entirely covered by impervious surface, the majority of which is dedicated to surface parking. Redevelopment projects should ensure proper drainage into adequate storm sewers. This is especially important due to the higher densities proposed in these POAs and the current expanse of impervious surface. Redevelopment should iincorporate green infrastructure over grey infrastructure where feasible to reduce stress on the storm sewer system. Opportunities to reuse rainwater should also be considered.

A private storm sewer easement is located along the shopping center north of West Broad Street. Public easements are located along the Gordon Road Triangle south of West Broad Street.

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*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment to incorporate green infrastructure over grey infrastructure for stormwater management where feasible.

*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment to consider climate-related stormwater volume increases when developing stormwater management plans and designing infrastructure.

## Overhead Utilities

Overhead utilities are generally strung between 34 foot high poles and include lines for power, phone, and cable, among other uses. In the study area, these poles run along Haycock Road and Shreve Road.

The City's adopted Streetscape Plan states that overhead utilities in the commercial areas in the City are to be undergrounded. Every large commercial development project should include undergrounding of overhead wires as part of the special exception process.

*Strategy:* Require undergrounding of overhead utilities as part of the redevelopment process.

Stormwater drainage designed as a water feature.

Overhead utility lines and poles at the intersection of West Broad Street and Haycock Road.

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Part of the City Property Yard, located at 7100 Gordon Road.

Street tree canopy at the intersection of Broad Street and Washington Street.

## City Property Yard

The City's Property Yard is the hub of the DPW Operations team. It is situated along Gordon Road in the City. Some of the land was previously in neighboring Fairfax County, but was ceded to the City of Falls Church in the 2013 Boundary Adjustment. Existing uses include the storage of vehicles, leaf collection, homeless shelter, recycling center, and some community events such as the post-Halloween pumpkin launch/smash. It has been proposed that the City retain Property Yard activities with a more efficient site layout. This would allow for a more compact Property Yard while freeing space for redevelopment.

*Strategy:* Start planning for the eventual replacement and redevelopment of the Property Yard parcels.

*Strategy:* Evaluate opportunities for a public-private partnership (ex. partnership to construct self-storage on part of the Property Yard site or space for an innovative use such as training technicians on electric vehicle maintenance) to redevelop the Property Yard which could help to realize other West End planning strategies.

## Urban Forestry

The City's urban forest includes every tree in the City on both public and private property. The City of Falls Church has been awarded the title of "Tree City USA" 40 years, and was the first city in Virginia to be given the title by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

The City of Falls Church Urban Forestry Commission is composed of five members who make recommendations on regulations, plans, policies, and programs for the care and improvement of the City's urban forest. They also advise

the City Arborist, City Council, and City Manager on tree-related matters.

According to GIS data, there are approximately 405 trees in the West End.

Urban trees can provide a variety of benefits. Trees help to frame important areas of the City, they provide shelter from the sun, reduce air pollution, absorb stormwater runoff, and increase aesthetic value. Within public/semi-public open space, native trees supplemented by an understory of shrubs, groundcovers, perennials, and annuals of varying types and sizes can be used to add beauty and provide environmental benefits.

*Strategy:* Maintain existing trees and enhance tree coverage in streetscape, parks, and future redevelopment.

*Strategy:* Encourage trees to be incorporated into green infrastructure projects and open space areas to manage stormwater and provide other benefits.

*Strategy:* Encourage selction of native trees and plantings in green spaces.

## Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture can support production of fresh, locally sourced produce that can be donated to those in need or sold at farmers markets. Urban agriculture can refer to rooftop gardens, aquaponics centers, or agriculture on vacant lots. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the benefits include closer neighborhood ties, reduced crime, and education. The USDA provides assistance through grants for the establishment and maintenance of urban agriculture. The USDA also provides technical and financial assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NCRS has Service Centers around the country dedicated to assistance — the nearest to the City of Falls Church is in Warrenton.

*Strategy:* Contact the NRCS to learn about, and get assistance with an urban agriculture program.

*Strategy:* Create opportuntities for community gardens (roof top gardens, planters in public spaces, gardens along the W&OD Trail, etc.).

Urban agriculture in West Oakland, CA.

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## Environmental Remediation

Much of the Gordon Road Triangle consists of light industrial uses. This area has not previously been studied to evaluate whether any remediation efforts are necessary. Prior to redevelopment of this area environmental assessments should be performed within the Gordon Road Triangle.

*Strategy:* Pursue brownfield grant funding through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess industrial sites within the Gordon Road Triangle.

## Enviromental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability and resilience are key priorities for the City of Falls Church as emphasized in the core values listed in the Vision chapter and the Environmental Sustainability, Resilience, and Natural Resource chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the City adopted Resolution 2012-24 states that LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver should be a goal for new and renovated public buildings.

The City also encourages new and renovated private buildings to strive for LEED certification. Existing buildings are eligible for LEED Operations and Maintenance. LEED Neighborhood Development should be pursued for multi-building developments.

*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment projects in the City to pursue high standards for climate resilience and sustainability.

*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment projects to incorporate "best environmental practices" for waste management during construction and operation.

*Strategy:* Encourage redevelopment projects to incorporate electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

## Climate & Air

New buildings should be designed to be "Net-Zero Energy Ready," to ensure new development is resilient to the effects of a changing climate. Buildings meeting these standards 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.

In addition to encouraing multi-modal transportation in the West End, infrastructure should also be provided to charge electric vehciles as well as support and promote their use. Vehicle-to-grid technology such as that currently being tested by Dominion Energy Virginia, and other energy storage should also be addressed, to maximize resilience and allow optimal electric grid utilization.

*Strategy:* Ensure that sustainability and resilience are addressed as a priority in all refurbishment, development and redevelopment planning, for public, commercial and residential buildings and all infrastructure.

*Strategy:* Reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiency in building design and refurbishment.

*Strategy:* Support and encourage the use of renewable energy sources and the installation of renewable energy generation facilities and energy storage where possible. Encourage reductions in the use of fossil fuels (including natural gas) for all facilities.

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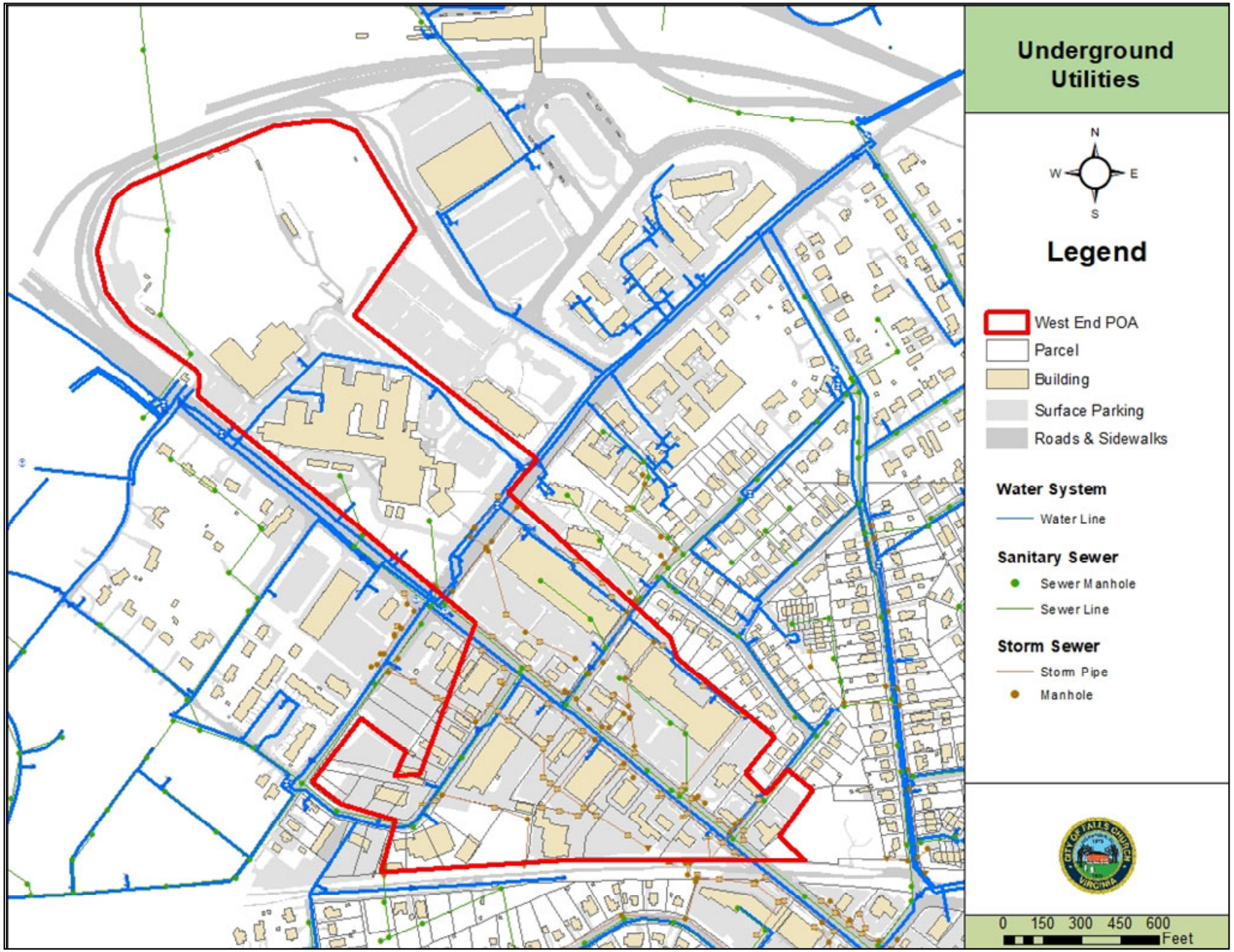
# West End

*Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



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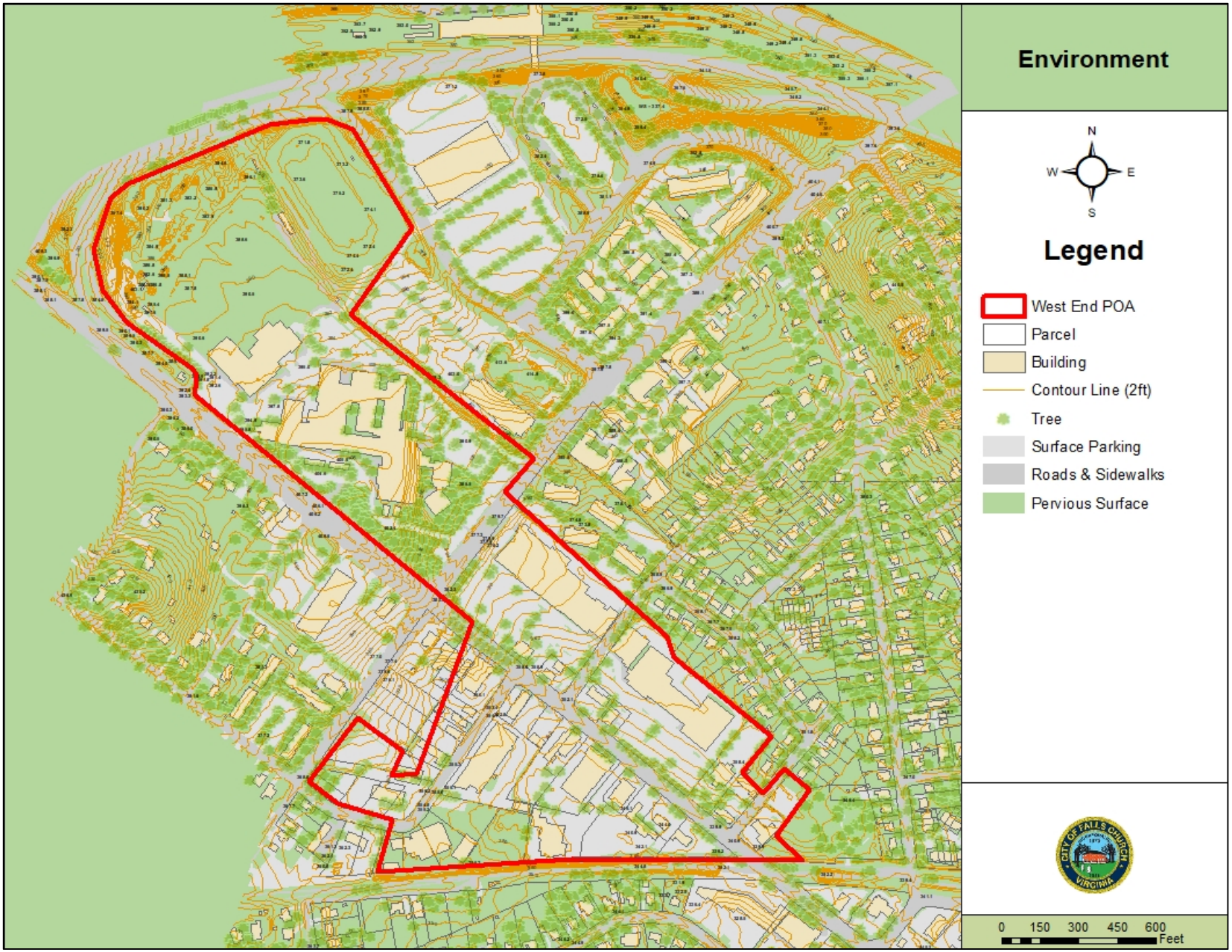
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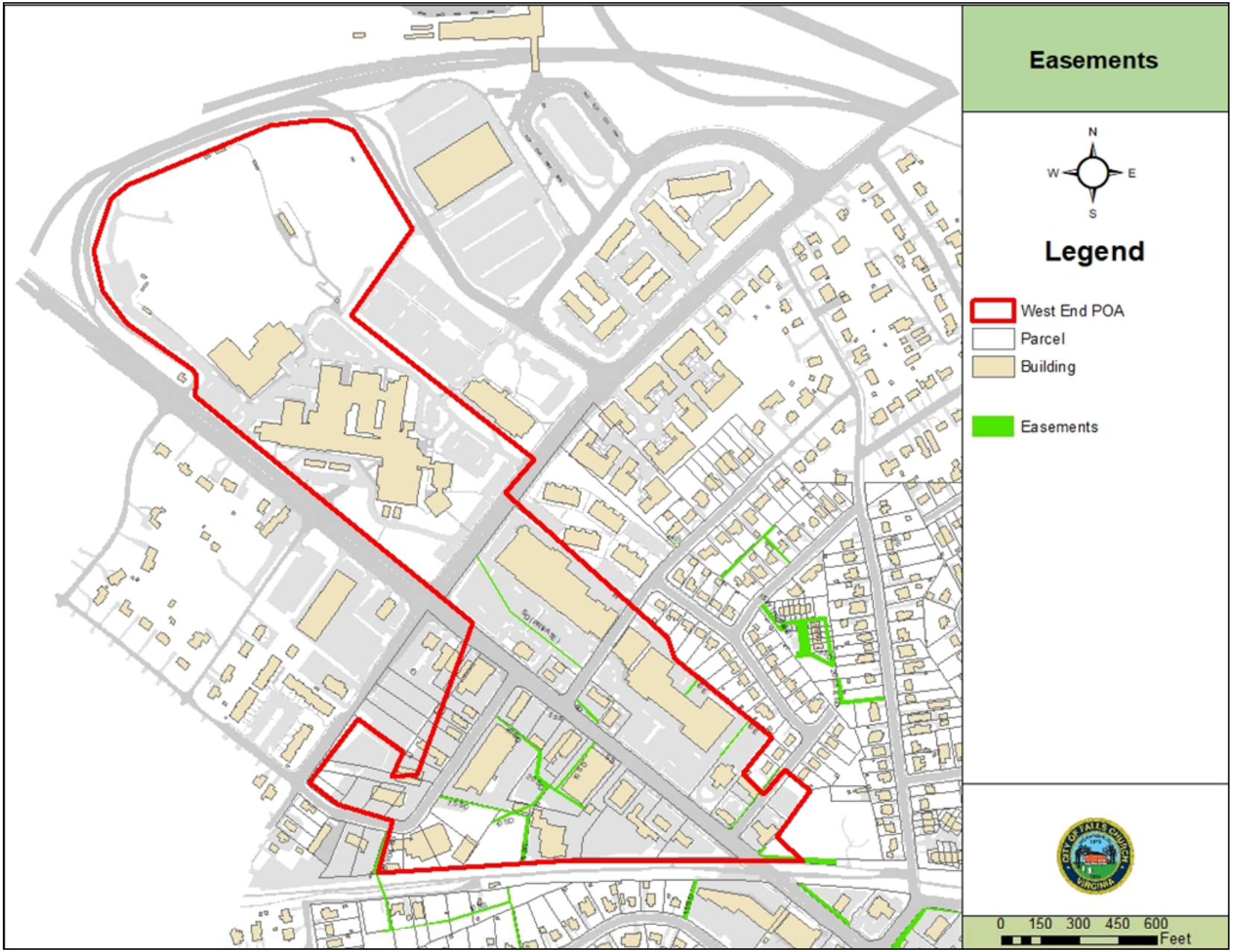
# West End

*Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*



# 8. Public Spaces that Create Opportunities for Community Activities – Parks & Open Spaces

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## Overview

Parks and open spaces are vital components that support healthy and sustainable communities. These spaces offer exercise and recreation opportunities, places to meet and engage with the community. In addition, green spaces help to manage stormwater while enhancing the area's aesthetics.

Future redevelopment of the City's West End will bring new residents and visitors to this area, requiring new parks and open spaces. These areas should be convenient for people to access and include multi-use spaces.

### Existing Conditions

The City's West End lacks gathering spaces. This is partly because the POA boundaries were developed to focus on the commercial areas and thus excluded the City's existing parks. This Plan focuses on increasing connectivity to existing City parks and integrating smaller gathering spaces, such as pocket parks, plazas, central greens and promenades, as the City's West End redevelops.

### Park Connections

There are two parks located adjacent to the West End study area: West End Park and W&OD Park.

West End Park is located adjacent to the W&OD Trail near the Route 7 bike bridge, northwest of the trail's intersection with Grove Avenue. The park is approximately 2.2 acres in size and includes landscaping, walking paths, and a skate area.

The W&OD Park include the popular W&OD Trail. The Park and Trail stretch for 45 miles across Northern Virginia connecting Shirlington to Purcellville. Within the City, the Park covers approximately 16 acres. The Park borders the southern edge of the Gordon Road Triangle.

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## Evaluation of Needs

In 2015, there were an estimated 13,312 residents of the City of Falls Church. According the 2019 update of the Demographics Chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan, the number of Falls Church residents is expected to increase to 14,808 in 2020 and to 20,549 by 2045. The City's West End will likely provide housing for a significant portion of this projected population increase.

The Trust for Public Land developed the ParkScore® index which measures how well the 100 largest U.S. cities are meeting the needs for parks. ParkScore® evaluates four important characteristics of an effective park system: accessibility, acreage, amenities, and investment.

### Park Accessibility

According to The Trust for Public Land, 98% of Falls Church residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. As the City's West End redevelops and more residential units are added, the City should strive to ensure new residential units are located within a 5 to10-minute walk of a park.

### Park Acreage

Both median park size and parkland as a percentage of city area are important metrics to consider when evaluating a park system. Considering the parkland as a percentage of city area helps account for larger "destination parks" that serve many users but may not be within walking distance.

The median park size in the City is 2.85 acres. Citywide approximately 6.5% of land in the City is used for park space. The City should strive to increase the percent of City land used for parks while also focusing on increasing park space specifically in the West End. The following table shows a comparison of the percentage of land in other urban places that is used for parks and recreation.

| Jurisdiction | Percent of Land Used for Parks |
|---|---|
| City of Fairfax | 6% |
| Arlington County | 11% |
| City of Alexandria | 12% |
| Philadelphia, PA | 13% |
| Portland, OR | 18% |
| Washington, D.C. | 21% |

### Park Amenities

Having a park system that offers a range of amenities (basketball hoops, playgrounds, trails, dog parks, etc.) helps to support a variety of interests and needs. Different users – from office employees enjoying lunch outside to residents walking their dogs – require unique park facilities and amenities.

Dog parks are a critical need as there currently are no dog parks in the City of Falls Church. The City should encourage new multi-family residential buildings to include designated areas for dogs.

### Park Investment

Park investment includes public spending, non-profit spending, and volunteer hours. ParkScore® considers the total spending per resident. As the City's population increases, it is important that the City assess the level of investment needed to support a successful park system.

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## Future Parks and Open Spaces

Future parks and open spaces areas in the West End should include both active and passive recreation spaces. The need for such spaces is important to discuss early on in the redevelopment process to ensure sufficient land is set aside and it has been thoughtfully incorporated to meet the community's needs.

Open space is not limited simply to traditional parks and green spaces. The term can also include plazas and urban squares. They provide special gathering spaces outside of the normal streetscape that are often encouraged to be green.

There are a number of key components that should be considered in creating successful parks and gathering spaces. For example, these areas need to be able to adapt to change, include spaces available for both passive and active recreation, and respond to weekly and seasonal fluctuations in use. The Urban Design Chapter (Chapter 5) of this Plan provides additional details and recommendations to create successful public spaces that are adaptable and support community activities.

*Strategy:* Encourage land to be set aside early in the redevelopment process for open space.

*Strategy:* Encourage each development block to include some form of publicly accessible open space.

*Strategy:* Provide a variety of active and passive recreation spaces.

*Strategy:* Utilize public-private partnerships to provide recreational spaces such as an aquatic center.

*Strategy:* Dog parks should be incorporated into future plans for new park spaces. The City should also encourage developers to incorporate amenities for dog owners.

Open spaces should create a sense of enclosure with trees and buildings. Often designed to be a mixture of hard and soft-scape.

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## Successful Spaces

Mr. Browns Park located in the downtown has been successful in part because it is the City's first flexible gathering space located adjacent to the street and near a major activity node. While the City's other great parks provide retreat in a more isolated natural environment or are centered around specific activities like tennis, the best urban areas have a balance of both traditional parks and urban parks which are easily accessible to pedestrians. While there are many factors to consider the following subsections highlight four key characteristics to consider when creating a successful public space.

### Accessibility

The entrance between the sidewalk and the park's interior should be fluid and inviting. Avoid fences, walls, and dense or high landscaping that obstruct visibility in and out of the park. These open spaces do not need to be located directly off of West Broad Street but should be within a pedestrian's clear line of sight.

### Attractions

A great public space provides plenty of reasons to spend time there. Common examples include food and beverage from vendors and adjacent cafes, fountains for play, public art, and music events. A greater variety of potential experiences will draw a more diverse crowd over a wider range of hours throughout the day. The buildings that frame the space, whether civic institutions, restaurants, entertainment venues, or retail, can also enhance the experience and become a reason to visit. Complementary uses should be planned along edges of open spaces to act as a secondary attraction.

Outdoor dining frames the open square.

Plaza blends in seamlessly into streetscape – David Koch Park, NYC.

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## Amenities

A space can be attractive and accessible but amenities are what allow a person to stay comfortably within a space for longer periods of time. This includes lighting, shade, fountains, bike racks, trash receptacles, and plenty of seating. Some amenities may be more site specific. For example, an urban park along the W&OD Trail in the Gordon Triangle might include drinking fountains and bicycle repair stations for cyclists and joggers coming off the trail.

## Flexible Programing

Rigid site specific design not only limits possible uses in the present but may also not transition well over time as the area and user needs inevitably change. A common practice is to leave enough unplanned area within the site to hold events, create temporary structures, and host seasonal actives. Moveable seating and tables are recommended to allow the user to create spaces suited for their purposes.

Flexible programming - Church Street Marketplace, Burlington, Vermont

Bryant Park, NYC providing shopping and ice skating in winter months.

Variety of activities and amenities provided at Granary Square, London

Klyde Warren Park (Dallas, TX)

Rosenburg Swings, Smale Riverfront Park (Cincinnati, OH)

## Precedents

### Klyde Warren Park, Dallas TX

Klyde Warren Park created new urban green space that also served as a connection between the vibrant Uptown neighborhood with the Dallas Arts District and downtown. The increased pedestrian connectivity and opportunities to engage with the natural landscape was part of the ongoing transformation of downtown Dallas, bringing quality of life, foot traffic, and increased development interest in surrounding properties.

Klyde Warren Park was developed through a public-private partnership between the City of Dallas and the Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation. The City owns the park while the Foundation operates and manages the space. The park includes a variety of active and passive spaces as well as spaces that are flexible for programmed events like yoga, Zumba, live music, and other festivals.

### Smale Riverfront Park, Cincinnati, OH

Smale Riverfront Park was designed with the goal of reconnecting downtown to the river and providing a link to the existing riverfront parks. The park includes a series of terraces that help to accommodate seasonal flooding as well as a variety of park features including splash grounds and water play areas, playgrounds, Moerlein Lager House, Rosenburg Swings, picnic areas, and gardens.

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## Downtown Detroit Parks, Detroit MI

Thoughtful placemaking and programming has helped to make Detroit's downtown parks both public assets and year-round, vibrant attractions. Each season, a number of unique features – beautiful landscaping, fountains, historical monuments, dining areas, fire pits, ice rinks, and pop-up indoor areas – help these spaces come alive. Downtown Detroit Parks operates through private funding secured by Downtown Detroit Partnership and support from the City, which provides support, public safety and special event services. This combined effort enables the Parks to provide a wide array of features and programming throughout the year.

Winter Pop-up Markets, Cadillac Park (Detroit, MI)

Urban Beach, Campus Maritus Park (Detroit, MI)

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# 9. Implementation

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## Realizing the Vision

This Plan's vision statement calls for developing the area as a "vibrant gateway into the City of Falls Church" that incorporates gathering spaces and a mix of uses to create a "welcoming and inclusive community," and that "supports the area's economic vitality, enhances safety and multimodal transportation connections, and affirms the City's commitment as an urban sustainability leader. Both short-term and long-term actions will be necessary to achieve the Plan's vision and goals.

This chapter identifies a range of public and private actions and investments that will advance the vision of developing the West End as a vibrant destination and gateway into the City.

## Action Implementation Matrix

The Action Implementation Matrix on the following pages provides a list of recommended actions that support implementation of this Plan's vision and goals. Implementation timeframes are split into two levels – Short term (2021 – 2024) and Long term (2025 or later).

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## Actions

### Policy Actions

| Action | Description | Lead Department | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Future Land Use Map Changes** | Changes to the City's official Future Land Use map may be necessary to achieve the recommendations provided in Chapter 3, Land Use & Zoning. | Community Planning & Economic Development Services (CPEDS) | Short-term |
| **Zoning Ordinance Revisions** | The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed and evaluated to determine whether revisions are needed to achieve the City's land use goals. Ensure any Zoning Ordinance amendments provide flexibility as local and regional development markets change. | CPEDS | Short-term |
| **Zoning Map Amendments/Creation of Overlay Districts** | The City should evaluate necessary amendments to the zoning map to achieve this Plan's land use goals. Additionally, the City should explore the creation of overlay districts that would encourage coordinated redevelopment of the desired scale and composition within the West End. | CPEDS | Short-term |

# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*

Implementation

| Action | Description | Lead Department | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Public Infrastructure Plan** | Develop a more specific public infrastructure plan for the West End that details where and what improvements will be needed (which intersections need improvements, where midblock crossings are recommended, etc.). | CPEDS/DPW | Medium-term |
| **Business Improvement District (BID)** | Create a BID for the West End. | CPEDS | Medium-term |
| **Climate Impact Assessment & Climate Resiliency Plans** | Perform a climate impact assessment and develop a climate resiliency plan for the West End. | CPEDS/DPW | Medium-term |
| **Housing Diversity & Affordability** | Ensure redevelopment proposals provide a diverse range of housing types and price points to accommodate different income levels and stages of household formation. | CPEDS/Housing & Human Services (HHS) | Ongoing |
| **Co-location of Affordable Housing** | Co-locate affordable housing with community facilities where possible. | CPEDS/HHS | Ongoing |
| **Parks & Open Space** | Require proposals for future redevelopment to allocate publicly accessible parks & open space areas. | CPEDS/Recreation & Parks Department | Ongoing |

| Action | Description | Lead Department | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Park Forms & Amenities** | Encourage developers to include a variety of park and open space forms (central green space, plazas, rooftop terraces, pocket parks, etc.) that include active and passive recreation areas as well as amenities such as dog parks. | CPEDS/Recreation & Parks Department | Ongoing |

## Projects

| Action | Description | Lead Department | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Safe Routes to School for Biking** | Work with the Federal Realty Investment Trust to establish a bike route behind the Falls Plaza shopping center that runs from the W&OD Trail over towards the Schools' campus. | CPEDS/DPW | Short-term |
| **Fiscal Impact Analysis** | Conduct an analysis of the net economic return needed from redevelopment in the West End to support the City's operating budget with a declining or steady tax rate. | CPEDS | Short-term |
| **Brownfield Grants** | Pursue brownfield grant funding through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess the Gordon Road Triangle and plan any necessary remediation efforts. | CPEDS/DPW | Medium-term |

# West End

## *Planning Opportunity Areas 4, 7 & 8*

| Action | Description | Lead Department | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Improved Pedestrian Crossings** | Provide frequent pedestrian crossing across West Broad Street and Haycock Road consistent with the recommendations provided in Chapter 6, Mobility & Accessibility. | DPW/CPEDS | Medium-term |
| **New Street Grid** | As redevelopment occurs, the City should encourage the creation of a new street grid consistent with the recommendations provided in Chapter 5, Urban Design. | CPEDS/DPW | Long-term |
| **Sanitary Sewer Improvements** | Explore the sanitary sewer needs to accommodate future redevelopment in the City's West End. Evaluate costs, financing strategies, and methods to provide adequate service. | DPW | Long-term |
| **Pedestrian Facility Improvements** | Work with developers to provide internal pedestrian connections and wider sidewalks throughout the West End. | DPW/CPEDS | Long-term |
| **Utility Undergrounding** | Explore the cost, advantages, and methods of financing for undergrounding overhead utilities. A continuous effort should be made to underground utilities as part of redevelopment projects and public infrastructure projects. | DPW | Ongoing |

| Action | Description | Lead Department | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Public Art** | Design and create public art to be incorporated throughout the West End. | Recreation & Parks/CPEDS | Ongoing |

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# Appendix A: Excerpt from 2010 Virginia Tech Study on the Gordon Road Triangle

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## 2. The History of the Gordon Road Triangle

### A. The Wayside Property

The Gordon Road Triangle was once part of the 1,279-acre Pearson Grant of 1724, owned by Captain Simon Pearson (Figure 1), for whom Pearson Branch is named. More specifically, it was part of the Wayside property that Catherine West (Kitty) inherited from her grandfather Col. Broadwater in 1806 (Figure 2).

**Figure 1:**
A segment of the map published by the Office of Comprehensive Planning Fairfax County, VA dated 1977, showing entire Pearson Grant of 1,279 acres. From *A View of Falls Church, Virginia,* by Connie Pendleton Stuntz

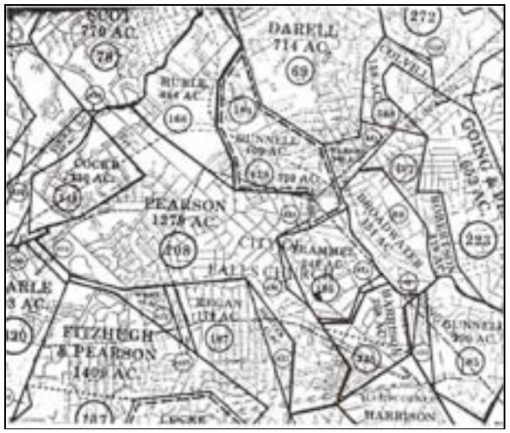
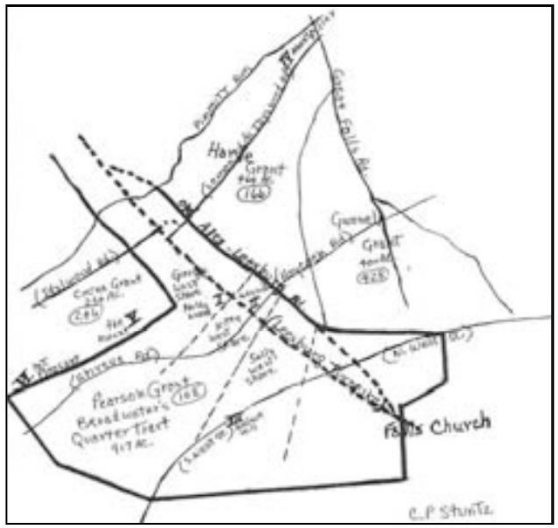



**Figure 2:**
A view of the approximate final distribution of the upper part of the Quarter Tract to each of Col. Broadwater's grandchildren. From *A View of Falls Church, Virginia,* by Connie Pendleton Stuntz




Later on, John West Minor (Kitty's son) received the land, including the Wayside House, and in 1855 sold the property to Daniel H. Barrett for $20 per acre. In 1886 Daniel's widow sold the Wayside Property to Ellen and Leonard S. Gordon (for whom Gordon Road is named). In 1895, the property

was divided when Mr. Gordon sold the north side of the property (north of Leesburg Pike), including the Wayside House, to Mrs. Kate Flagg. We have found no additional information on events associated with the south side of the Wayside property after this purchase. The north side was sold by Mrs. Flagg's son to the City school board in 1949.

### B. The Washington & Old Dominion Railroad

The history of the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad provides valuable information related to the site. The railroad operated from 1859 until 1968. According to maps and photos, the West Falls Church railroad station was once located close to the intersection of West Broad Street and the W&OD Trail (Figures 3- 4). Apparently this station was mainly used for freight, and the East Falls Church station was generally used by passengers (Figure 5).

**Figure 3:**
West Broad Street looking west, at the railroad crossing, circa 1930s. Actual location of the regional park trail bridge. From *Falls Church: A Virginia Village Revisited*, by Bradley E. Gernand

**Figure 4:**
W&OD Railway Right of Way and Track Map. Office of the Chief Engineer, Washington DC, 1916. Courtesy of Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park

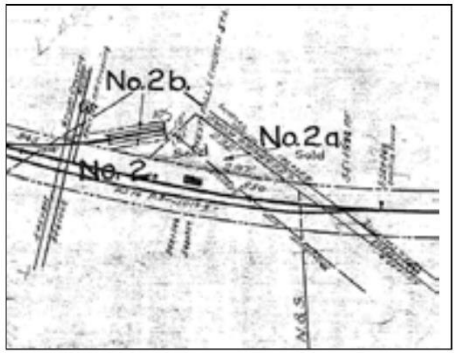


**Figure 5:**
West Falls Church Station from a photo believed to have been taken during the 1890's. Courtesy of Katherine Speakman, Mary Riley Styles Public Library

**Figure 6:**
Washington and Old Dominion freight train blocking West Broad Street in 1967. From *Falls Church: A Virginia Village Revisited*, by Bradley E. Gernand

The W&OD ended all services in 1968, unable to compete with new highways and to pay for upgrading the surface-grade crossings of major thoroughfares, such as its intersection with W. Broad Street (Figure 6). When the W&OD ceased operations, the Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEPCO -- now Dominion Power) bought the right-of-way for its electric power transmission lines. In 1977, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority began to purchase the right-of-way, with purchase complete in 1982. The first segment of the W&OD Trail opened in 1974 in Falls Church. The Trail was an immediate success and was finally extended to Purcellville in 1988.

### C. The Electric Trolley – West Falls Church Station

The electric trolley station known as the W.G. Shepard House was located at 1101 W. Broad Street, circa 1922. The Washington-Virginia Railway electric trolley linked East and West Falls Church with downtown Washington. The trolley line reached East Falls Church in 1897 and was extended to the west end by 1901. The station was the Shepard family home, a store, and the electric trolley station (Figure 7). The electric trolley service ended in 1939 due to a decline in ridership.

**Figure 7:**
The W.G Shepard Home, store and trolley station, 1101 West Broad Street, in 1922. Courtesy of Mary Riley Styles Public Library

### D. The Sanborn Maps

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Falls Church 1946 – Index 1960, were a valuable source of information about the history of the site. The 1946 map shows the existence of Fairfax Drive, an internal road that connected Shreve Road with one of the industrial businesses located between W. Broad Street and the W&OD Trail (Figure 8). This map shows how the site was developed. For its proximity to the West Falls Church railroad station, which was used mostly for freight purposes, it can be inferred that most land uses in this area were industrial and commercial. Years later, this area shifted toward the automobile industry with auto repair shops on site.

**Figure 8:**
Sanborn Map Company Inc. Fire Insurance Maps of Falls Church 1946 – Index 1960. Courtesy of Mary Riley Styles Public Library

**E. Neighborhood and Community**

Images of the 1100 and 1200 block of W. Broad Street – Past and Future Photographs from the 1960s – 1970s suggest that the west side of the city grew inefficiently, without planning, in post-World War II years (Figures 9 and 10). Fortunately, in the early 1990s, the city launched a street renovation and rehabilitation program that removed utility poles and buried cables underground, bricked sidewalks, planted shrubs and trees, and installed street furniture and new lighting (Figure 11).

Today, however, the Gordon Road Triangle is an underperforming commercial area with car lots and dealerships, repair shops, car washes, UHaul center, and other rental facilities that offer an opportunity for the City to achieve much higher tax revenues from the land.

**Figure 9:**
1200 block at West Broad Street, 1960. Courtesy of Mary Riley Styles Public Library

**Figure 10:**
1200 block at West Broad Street looking east from Haycock Road, 1972. Courtesy of Mary Riley Styles Public Library

**Figure 11:**
West Broad Street after its renovation in the 1990s. Nancy Schick photo. From *Falls Church: A Virginia Village Revisited*, by Bradley E. Gernand

# Appendix B: Public Engagement

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## Public Engagement

This chapter was developed with significant public input and collaboration. Regular updates of project status and materials were posted on the project webpage. The plan was developed and refined with community input provided during public meetings or written comments submitted by the City's advisory boards and commissions, and other stakeholder groups:

| Group | Event | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Stakeholder Meeting | Presentation/Discussion | June 19,2019 |
| Community Meeting | Presentation/Discussion | October 26, 2019 |
| Planning Commission | Work Session | December 2, 2019 |
| City Council | Work Session | December 9, 2019 |
| Planning Commission | Work Session | February 18, 2020 |
| City Council | Work Session | February 24, 2020 |
| Housing Commission | Work Session | May 12, 2020 |
| Urban Forestry Commission | Written Comments | May 15, 2020 |
| Environmental Sustainability Council | Written Comments | May 15, 2020 |
| Historic Architecture Review Board | Written Comments | May 15, 2020 |
| Historical Commission | Written Comments | May 18, 2020 |
| Library Board | Work Session | May 20, 2020 |
| Economic Development Authority | Work Session | June 2, 2020 |
| Recreation & Parks Advisory Board | Work Session | June 3, 2020 |
| Arts & Humanities Council | Written Comments | June 3, 2020 |
| Planning Commission | Work Session | June 17, 2020 |
| Architectural Advisory Board | Work Session | July 1, 2020 |
| City Council | Work Session | July 20, 2020 |
| Village Preservation Improvement Society | Written Comments | July 20, 2020 |
| Planning Commission | Work Session | August 19, 2020 |
| Planning Commission | Recommendation to Council | September 2, 2020 |
| City Council | Action | September 14, 2020 |

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## Planning Commission

WHEREAS, the draft West End Small Area Plan establishes a vision for the West End to become a live/work/play/learn community, a vibrant destination that serves as a critical gateway into the City of Falls Church; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan calls for the use of high quality urban design; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan encourages the use of innovative development and building management to improve environmental quality and limit increases in automobile travel; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan identifies specific short term and long term actions that can be taken to help realize the Plan's vision for the area; and

WHEREAS, the concepts in the draft Plan are meant to be a conceptual framework for redevelopment and public improvements; to provide a starting point for public and private investment into general improvements to the area; and do not constitute changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map, Zoning Ordinance, or Zoning Map;

NOW, THEREFORE I MOVE that the Planning Commission of the City of Falls Church hereby endorses the West End Small Area Plan and recommends that the City Council adopt the plan as a Guiding Document in decision making for the planning, zoning, and development review, capital improvements, City regulations and policies, and that it be referenced in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

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## City Council

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE WEST END SMALL AREA PLAN AS A GUIDING DOCUMENT IN DECISION MAKING FOR PLANNING, ZONING, AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, CITY REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES

WHEREAS, the draft West End Small Area Plan establishes a vision for the West End to become a live/work/play/learn community, a vibrant destination that serves as a critical gateway into the City of Falls Church; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan calls for the use of high quality urban design; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan encourages the use of innovative development and building management to improve environmental quality and limit increases in automobile travel; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan identifies specific short term and long term actions that can be taken to help realize the Plan's vision for the area; and

WHEREAS, the concepts in the draft Plan are meant to be a conceptual framework for redevelopment and public improvements; to provide a starting point for public and private investment into general improvements to the area; and do not constitute changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map, Zoning Ordinance, or Zoning Map;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Falls Church hereby adopts the West End Small Area Plan as a Guiding Document in decision making for the planning, zoning, and development review, capital improvements, City regulations and policies, and that it be referenced in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

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