

# Parking Standards for Multi-Family Residential Development Projects

## Guiding Document



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### Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Overview.....	4
New Multi-Family Parking Standards .....	5
Parking Ratios and Allowable Credits .....	5
How to Calculate the Number of Bedrooms.....	6
How to Calculate the Final Parking Ratio .....	6
How to Calculate the Parking Requirement.....	7
Applicability of New Parking Standards Regulation with Existing City Regulations .....	7
Coordinated Development Districts.....	7
Existing Approvals.....	8
Parking Districts and other Zoning Districts .....	8
Small Area Plans.....	9
Prior Existing Buildings and Structures.....	9
Modifications to the New Multi-family Parking Regulation.....	9
Walkshed Maps.....	10
Purpose.....	10
Application of Walkshed Maps .....	10
Walkability Index.....	11
Application.....	11
Requirements .....	11
Required Documentation .....	12
Definitions.....	12

Appendix 1. Walkshed Maps ..... 15

Appendix 2. Walkability Index Use Types & Categories Chart..... 18

Appendix 3. Final Parking Ratio and Parking Requirement Calculation Chart ..... 19

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## Overview

In 2013, the City of Alexandria initiated Phase 1 of a two-phase study to update its citywide parking standards codified in the Zoning Ordinance. Phase 1 focused on multi-family parking and is discussed in this *Guiding Document*. Phase 2 will commence in FY 2017 and will focus on commercial, office, and retail parking.

Since the parking standards were last updated in the 1960s, opportunities for alternate modes of travel in urban areas have increased and single-occupancy auto travel as well as per household car ownership have declined. These trends highlight the decrease in consumer demand for vehicles and, by extension, parking facilities. The goal of this study is to “right-size” the City’s parking standards to reflect City policies, changing demographics, and market trends.

Extensive data collection and research conducted for this study indicate that, on average, more parking is provided at multi-family residential developments than is being used. The data show a direct relationship between lower parking utilization and the following factors:

- proximity to transit;
- walkability of the neighborhood and proximity of neighborhood services;
- income restricted affordable housing units; and
- percentage of studio units in the development.

After analyzing local data, researching national best practices and trends, and consulting with developers and practitioners, City staff created a performance-based parking standard that responds to these factors that most impact parking demand.

***The Parking Standards for Multi-Family Residential Development Guidelines*** is a user’s guide to understanding and applying the City’s new “right-sized” parking standards for new multi-family development projects. It includes:

- details of the new parking standards for both market-rate and affordable multi-family residential development projects;
- instructions on calculating parking ratios;
- explanation of the applicability and exclusions of the new standards;
- process for requesting modifications to the new standards;
- guidance on applying and interpreting the walkshed maps and walkability index;
- definitions of relevant terms;
- walkshed (i.e., walkable area) maps;
- walkability index scoring chart; and
- parking ratio and parking space requirement calculation chart

## New Multi-Family Parking Standards

### Parking Ratios and Allowable Credits

The new parking standards establish parking ratios with allowances for lower ratios when particular conditions are met. This parking ratio is a starting point, from which projects may apply allowable credits according to the development's proximity to transit, walkability index score, and percentage of studio units within the development project.

Table 1 shows the parking ratios for market-rate housing developments. Projects located within ½ mile walking distance of a Metro Station have a 0.8 per bedroom parking ratio. Projects outside of the ½ mile walking distance of a Metro Station have a 1.0 per bedroom parking ratio. Table 2 shows the allowable credits, or deductions, that can be applied to the parking ratios.

Table 1. Market-Rate Parking Ratios

Development Project Location	Parking Ratio
Project located within .5 mile of Metro Station walkshed	0.8 space/bedroom
Project located outside of .5 mile Metro Station walkshed	1.0 space/bedroom

Table 2. Market-Rate Allowable Credits

Allowable Credits on Parking Ratios	
Project located outside 0.5 mile Metro Station walkshed but within 0.5 mile BRT stop walkshed	10%
Walkability Index score is between 90-100	10%
Walkability Index score is between 80-89	5%
Four or more bus routes stop within .25 mile of development entrance	5%
Development project has 20% or more studio units	5%

Income-restricted affordable housing units have parking ratios according to the household income that the units serve. Local data collected supports the direct correlation of lower parking demand and income-restricted housing units. Table 3 shows that income-restricted affordable units at or below 60% AMI have a 0.75 parking ratio per unit, units at or below 50% AMI have a 0.60 parking ratio per unit, and units at or below 30% AMI have a 0.50 parking ratio per unit. As with market-rate housing units, allowable credits, or deductions, can be applied to the parking ratios as shown in Table 4.

Table 3. Income-Restricted Affordable Housing Parking Ratios

Household Income Being Served	Parking Ratio
Housing Units Affordable at or below 60% AMI	0.75 space/unit
Housing Units Affordable at or below 50% AMI	0.65 space/unit
Housing Units Affordable at or below 30% AMI	0.50 space/unit

Table 4. Income-Restricted Affordable Housing Allowable Credits

<b>Allowable Credits on Parking Ratios</b>	
Project located within 0.5 mile Metro Station walkshed OR the 0.5 mile BRT stop walkshed	10%
Walkability Index score is between 90-100	10%
Walkability Index score is between 80-89	5%
Four or more bus routes stop within .25 mile of development project entrance	5%
Development project has 20% or more studio units	5%

It should be noted that the parking ratio for income-restricted affordable housing is established on a **per unit basis**, whereas the parking ratios for market-rate housing is established on a **per bedroom basis**. The per unit ratio is a better measure for car ownership and usage in affordable housing units since the units are closely monitored and usually occupied by one household typically sharing resources, including cars, childcare, and other needs. Data collection and analysis supports this. Market-rate units, in this urban area, have far more occurrences of multiple head of households sharing two- or three-bedroom units, leading to higher parking demand, which makes a per bedroom parking ratio more accurate in market-rate units.

### How to Calculate the Number of Bedrooms

For market-rate projects, in order to calculate the required number of parking spaces, first the number of bedrooms must be determined. For this purpose, the following applies:

- Studio units shall be considered one bedroom;
- One bedroom units shall be considered one bedroom;
- Two bedroom units shall be considered two bedrooms;
- Any bedroom above the second bedroom in a unit *may* be included, but is not required to be included, in the total count; In other words, projects are not required to provide parking for the third and fourth bedrooms, but may do so if desired; and
- If the building includes affordable units that are exercising the optional parking ratio for affordable housing, such units shall be removed from the count and calculated separately on a per unit basis.

### How to Calculate the Final Parking Ratio

The final parking ratio should be calculated using the following equation:

$$\text{Final Parking Ratio} = (\text{Parking Ratio}) - (\text{Parking Ratio} \times (\text{Credit 1} + \text{Credit 2} + \text{Credit 3}))$$

The framework for the new parking standards applies as follows:

- Applying the credits to the parking ratio is optional; however, it informs the appropriate ratio for the development project. The final parking ratio for each project will reflect the needs of the project and its neighborhood; and, it will be approved by the Planning Commission and City Council with the development approval for the project.
- Applying the “Income-Restricted Affordable Housing Parking Standards” is not compulsory but optional for those development projects that are eligible.
- The final ratio represents a minimum and a maximum requirement. Modification of the parking requirement may be requested with a special use permit.
- A project requesting a parking ratio higher than the parking ratio (maximum – no credits applied) or lower than the final parking ratio (minimum with applicable credits) will require a parking modification Special Use Permit with review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. If a project requests and receives a parking modification, the City Council could require that the development mitigate any negative impacts to the transportation network and/or adjacent community.

### **How to Calculate the Parking Requirement**

The parking requirement (number of total spaces required) for market-rate housing is equal to the number of bedrooms (as defined above) multiplied by the final parking ratio (as defined above). The parking requirement (number of total spaces required) for affordable housing is equal to the number of units multiplied by the applicable final parking ratio (as defined in Tables 3 and 4). In addition:

- Visitor parking is included in the parking ratios. It is recommended that developments set aside 5-10% of the parking for visitor parking, which should be identified in each project’s parking management plan.
- To allow for possible physical constraints in the layout of a parking structure, each development is permitted to provide 5% more or 5% fewer parking spaces than required under this recommendation without a Special Use Permit.

## **Applicability of New Parking Standards Regulation with Existing City Regulations**

### **Coordinated Development Districts**

Generally, Coordinated Development District (CDD) zones that address parking requirements in their regulations are not affected by a change to the citywide regulations. If a property within a CDD zone already has its CDD Concept Plan and DSUP approval, the plan is likely “vested” and any change to zoning regulations would only apply if a change is made to their existing zoning approvals through an amendment.

CDD zones that do not address parking requirements in their regulations are subject to citywide parking regulations; including the new parking standards discussed in the Guidelines.

### **Existing Approvals**

Site Plan and Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) applications that have been approved but not constructed must provide parking per the development conditions of their approval. If the developer wishes to apply the new multi-family parking standards, the approved development application must be amended and re-approved via the same process as its original approval process. For site plans amendments, the application will be reviewed and considered by the Planning Commission. For DSUP amendments, the application will be reviewed and considered by both the Planning Commission and City Council.

### **Parking Districts and other Zoning Districts**

The six general parking districts within Alexandria are established in Section 8-200(18)(a) of the Zoning Ordinance (“Parking district 6 shall encompass the area located within a radius of 2,000 feet from any entrance to any Washington/Metropolitan Transit Authority rail station. The boundaries of this and parking districts 1 through 5 shall be shown on the map designated "City of Alexandria Parking District Boundaries," dated May 26, 1987, signed by the mayor, the clerk of the council, the chairman of the planning commission, which map is on file in the office of the planning commission and which is hereby made a part of this Article VIII.”). These parking districts are used in the regulation of retail, office, and some industrial uses; not residential. Therefore, the new multi-family parking regulation will not impact the provisions of these six parking districts.

The Zoning Ordinance also includes two specific parking districts that are overlays on the parking district map - the Central Business District and the King Street Transit Parking District. The Central Business District does not address residential parking requirements so is not affected by the new regulation. The King Street Transit Parking District does address residential parking requirements and includes a specific regulation for multi-family uses within the district (8-400(B)(2)). The new parking requirements apply to the multi-family uses within the King Street Transit Parking District and the relevant zoning section is amended.

Additionally, the new parking requirements apply to multi-family uses within the King Street Urban Retail Zone (KR) and the Neighborhood Retail Zone (Arlandria) (NR); the relevant zoning sections are amended.

However, “accessory multi-family uses” within the KR and Commercial Downtown Zone (CD) are not subject to the new parking requirements and will be considered during Phase 2 of this project when commercial, office, and retail uses are studied.

## **Small Area Plans**

The City's Small Area Plans together make up the Master Plan for the City, which is the policy document that guides the regulations adopted either through the Zoning Map (rezonings) or the Zoning Ordinance (Text Amendments). Many of the more recent Small Area Plans have addressed appropriate parking requirements for new development projects within the specific Small Area Plan. The language included in a Small Area Plan about the appropriate parking requirements has often served as justification for reductions of the Zoning Ordinance parking requirements through the current Parking Reduction Special Use Permit (SUP) process.

The new multi-family parking regulation will amend the parking requirements for multi-family buildings citywide regardless of the parking ratio recommendation in a Small Area Plan. However, because zoning regulations cannot address every circumstance, the parking modification option through an SUP may be necessary to address unique circumstances in specific Small Area Plans.

## **Prior Existing Buildings and Structures**

The new multi-family parking requirements will apply to an existing building if it has "changed in use, significantly enlarged or significantly altered" as those terms are defined by Section 8-200(F)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance. There are certain exceptions to this rule that apply to buildings built prior to 1987. Therefore, if an existing multi-family building changes use or undergoes renovation as defined, it will need to comply with the new parking regulation. If it has insufficient parking according to the new regulations, it will need to request a parking modification SUP. If the development project has more on-site parking than would be required under this new standard, the project's parking approval is "grandfathered" and will not be required to remove any existing parking.

## **Modifications to the New Multi-family Parking Regulation**

Zoning regulations, no matter how well written, cannot address every circumstance. Therefore, developers will continue to have the ability to apply for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to modify a development project's parking requirements. The existing parking reduction SUP regulations will be modified to allow for an SUP to supply more parking than would be allowed under the new regulations for multi-family buildings. The existing parking reduction SUP regulation already allows for modifications to provide less parking than is required.

## Walkshed Maps

### Purpose

Studies have shown that residents that live within an acceptable walking distance of public transit will use transit, own fewer cars, and create less demand for parking facilities. Current research in transportation-oriented development, land use planning, and transit planning indicate that the acceptable walking distance from a commuter's home to transit facilities is approximately 0.5 mile for rail and 0.25 mile for bus. Research published by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) in 2014 demonstrates that 90% of its peak AM riders live within its 0.5 mile walkshed. The walkshed is defined as a true walking distance – where there are sidewalks and walking paths that create a walking route – and not an “as the crow flies” buffer.

To reflect this, as well as to encourage residential development projects to locate proximate to transit, credits on parking ratios are available for projects that are within a true walking distance from a Metro station, bus rapid transit (BRT) stop, and bus stop. WMATA published walkshed maps for each of its Metro stations to illustrate its 0.5 walkshed. Using WMATA's walkshed as a model, City Staff used the City of Alexandria's GIS data to create Alexandria walkshed maps for Metro stations and bus rapid transit stops. These maps have been adjusted to fully include all blocks that were partially within the original 0.5 mile walkshed. So, for example, if a portion of a block was included in the 0.5 mile walkshed, staff manually included the entire block. Therefore, the maps actually include a slightly larger walkshed area than 0.5 mile. The maps are located in these Guidelines and labeled as Appendix 1.

### Application of Walkshed Maps

The City's “Metro ½ Mile Walkshed” and “Bus Rapid Transit ½ Mile Walkshed” are both identified in the “City of Alexandria Metro Station Walkshed Map” and the “City of Alexandria Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Map”. Development projects that lie within those boundaries are automatically eligible for the relevant parking ratios and credits.

If a development project is not within the boundary of the maps and wishes to apply for these credits, the developer can demonstrate to the Directors of the Departments of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services that the development project's main entrance is located within walking distance of a Metro station or BRT stop. The walking distance must be calculated using sidewalks and formalized walking paths.

The City will update the walkshed maps when new BRT stops and Metro Stations are operational or under construction. Applicants may request updates to the maps if new transportation-related infrastructure that positively impacts the walkshed is proposed as part of a DSUP application.

## Walkability Index

The City of Alexandria Walkability Index was informed by the *Surrounding Density & Diverse Uses Credit of the Location & Transportation* suite of the LEEDv4 Rating System. It serves as a performance-based criterion to assign a walkability index score to a development project based on a project's proximity to a diverse number of neighborhood services, civic and community facilities, retail, and community anchors. A chart identifying the qualifying Uses or Services Type and number of points each is granted can be found in Appendix 2. It will be updated by staff as conditions change.

### Application

- Applicants shall receive points for each Use or Service Type identified within a 0.25 or 0.50 mile walking distance of the project site's main building entrance. Some uses receive points for only 0.25 mile. Others uses receive points for being located within 0.50 mile of the development project.

### Requirements

- The project must feature at least one Use or Service from three of the five Categories, exclusive of the building's primary use. Additionally, points earned per project may not exceed the total specified for each Category (See Appendix 2).
- A land use may only count as one Use or Service Type (e.g., a retail store may be counted only once even if it sells products in several categories).
- With the exception of restaurants and retail, only one Use or Service Type may be counted per project (e.g., a project may claim points for an elementary school or a middle school, but not both).
  - Up to two restaurants may be counted.
  - Several retail uses may be counted as long as they are different types of retail (e.g. a project may claim points for both a shoe store and a retail bakery but may not claim points separately for two shoe stores).
- Up to one Use or Service Type within the project building may be counted; provided that the Use or Service Type is accessible by and serves the public. In cases where the use is known, the corresponding score that is on the Use Types and Categories chart will apply. In cases where the new use is not known, a maximum of 3 points will apply.
- Points are allocated per Use or Service Type and may only be counted once per project (e.g., per Appendix 2, a supermarket within 0.25 miles of the project receives 15 points; it does not receive 20 points).
- In addition to the main building entrance, walking distance may be measured from one other functional building entry that fronts a public street (not alley) and whose primary design is not an emergency exit or garage door.

- Contributing Uses or Service Types outside of the project building must be in existence at the time of the development application.
- Services not listed in the Table are generally not eligible but may be considered on a case-by-case basis subject to the approval of Staff. Only one use not listed in the Table will be permitted per project, with a maximum value of 3 points; the use must be within a quarter mile of a qualifying building entrance. Supporting evidence must be provided demonstrating that the proposed use meets the definition of Use or Service Type and is a significant driver of walkability. Additionally, sites which are either not open to the public or do not offer services on-site (call centers or mobile-maid cleaning services are just two examples) will not be considered qualifying services.

### Required Documentation

The applicant shall provide a scaled area plan or map showing the location of the project site, applicable building entrance(s), each identified contributing use, and the walking routes as well as distance to each identified use. Per the Walking Distance definition, qualifying uses are based on walking distance (i.e. walkshed) and not a radius.

### Definitions

**Affordable housing or Income-Restricted Affordable Housing:** Rental or ownership housing units that are conditioned, as part of development project approvals, to be affordable for a household at a specific income level for a specified period of time.

**Area Median Income:** Median family income reflects the income level at which half of all families earn more and half earn less. The 2014 AMI in the Washington DC Metropolitan area is \$107,000. In household-size adjusted figures, the actual median is associated with a household of four.

**Coordinated Development District (CDD):** A CDD is established for those areas which are of such size or are so situated as to have significant development related impacts on the city as a whole or a major portion thereof and in order to promote development consistent with the master plan. A site zoned CDD is intended for a mixture of uses to include office, residential, retail, hotel and other uses with appropriate open space and recreational amenities to serve the project users and residents of the city. A CDD zone is intended to encourage land assemblage and/or cooperation and joint planning where there are multiple owners in the CDD zoned area. A review process is established to ensure that such developments exhibit a proper integration of uses, the highest quality of urban and architectural design and harmony with the surrounding areas of the city.

**Development Special Use Permit:** Consists of a special use permit and a site plan for review before the Planning Commission and City Council. The use permit offers a process for

considering and approving land uses, densities, open spaces, and/or heights that may differ from the underlying zone district. Conditions and standards may be imposed.

**Dwelling Unit:** A group of one or more rooms designed for or intended for occupancy by a single-family. In determining whether a dwelling is a single-family dwelling, a two-family dwelling, a townhouse dwelling or a multifamily dwelling, consideration will be given to the separate use of or the provision made for cooking, heating and sanitary facilities whether installed or not; both the actual use to which the dwelling is being put and the potential use to which the dwelling might be put; and whether kitchen and bathroom facilities and bedrooms are so located as to provide privacy if occupied by an additional family. It is the intent of this provision to prohibit the installation of facilities in a dwelling unit which would extend the use of the premises for occupancy by more than one family.

**Functional Building Entry:** A building opening designed to be used by pedestrians and open during regular business hours. It does not include any door exclusively designated as an emergency exit, or a garage door not designed as a pedestrian entrance.

**Multi-family Dwelling:** A building or portion thereof containing three or more dwelling units, located on a single lot or parcel of ground; two over two or stacked townhouse style buildings are considered multi-family.

**Off-Street Parking:** Parking spaces that are not located in Public Right of Way.

**On-Street Parking:** Parking spaces located in the Public Right of Way

**Occupancy Rate:** Number of parking spaces used at a particular location and time.

**Parking Demand:** The amount of parking that would be used at a particular time, place, and price. Parking demand is affected by vehicle ownership, trip rates, mode split, duration (how long motorists park), geographic location (i.e., downtown, regional town center or suburban), the quality of travel alternatives, type of trip (work, shopping, recreational), and factors such as fuel and road pricing.

**Parking Ratio:** A measurement that indicates the relationship between the number of parking spaces and a land use (e.g. square footage, number of seats in a venue, units, bedrooms). This measurement gives directions to developers and planners to provide enough parking to meet the demand generated by a new development. Residential parking ratios are based on the number of dwelling units or number of bedrooms.

**Right-Sized Parking:** Parking standards which are based on locally credible and context sensitive data on parking demand. Right-sized parking is designed to support economic development, improve urban land use sustainability and encourage multi-modal transportation.

**Small Area Plan:** A visionary guidance document which establishes a long-term (20 to 30 years) vision and framework for future infrastructure, land uses, open space, affordable housing and is also intended as a guide for public and private investment.

**Use or Service Type:** A distinct, officially recognized business, nonprofit, civic, religious, governmental organization, or offices (commercial office use). It has a stationary postal address and is publicly available. It does not include automated facilities such as ATMs, vending machines, and touchscreens.

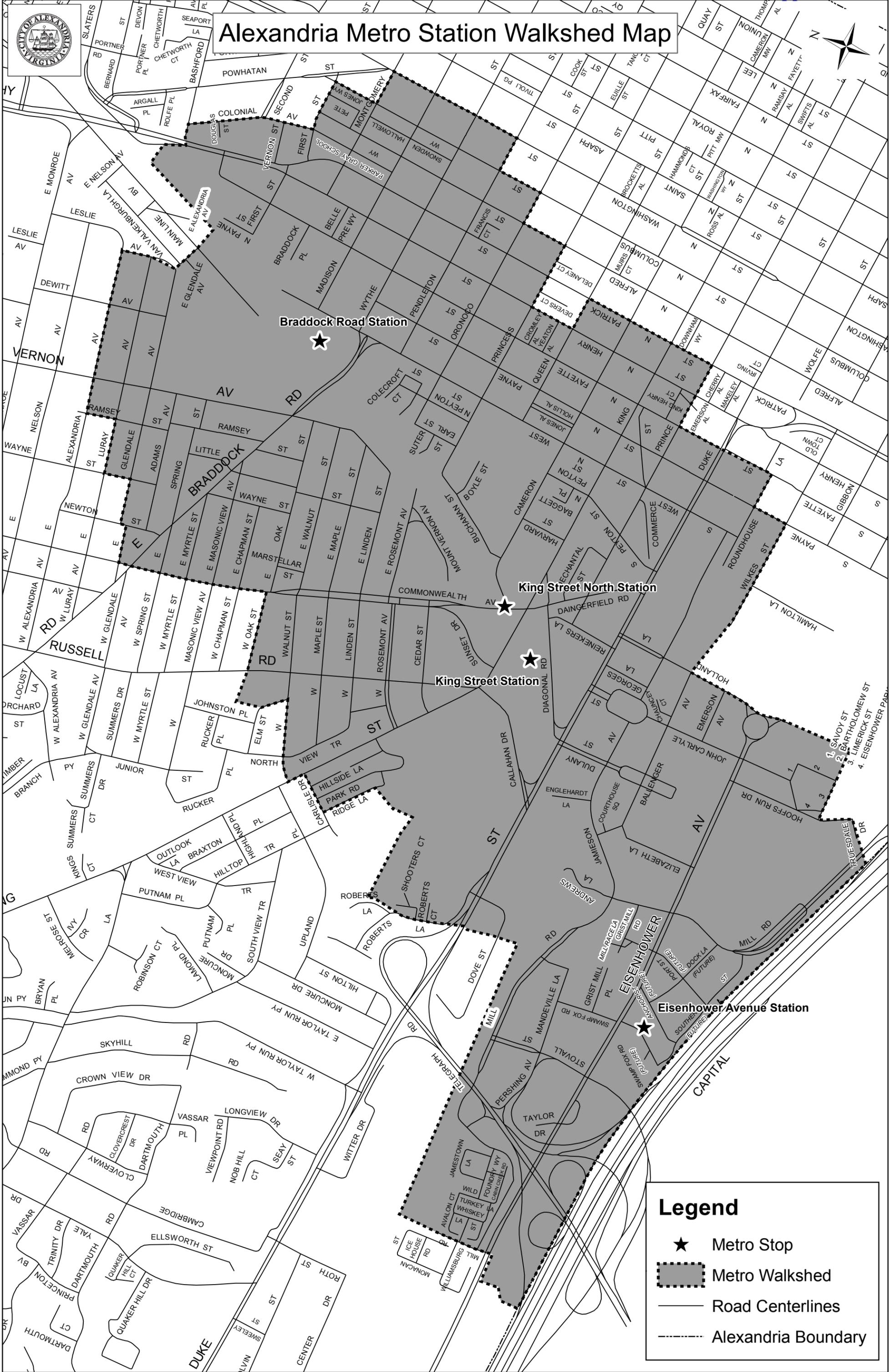
**Walking Distance:** The distance that a pedestrian must travel between origins and destinations without obstruction, in a safe and comfortable environment on a continuous network of sidewalks, all weather-surface footpaths, crosswalks, or equivalent pedestrian facilities. The walking distance must be drawn from an entrance that is accessible to all building users.

**Walkability Index:** A tool used to measure the degree to which a person can travel on foot between places of work, live, and play. The tool considers the presence of neighborhood services, civic and community facilities, retail, and community anchors. It also considers the presence of sidewalks and other physical infrastructure which contribute to a safe and pleasant pedestrian experience.

**Walkshed:** The area that a person can comfortably or conveniently cover on foot.



# Alexandria Metro Station Walkshed Map

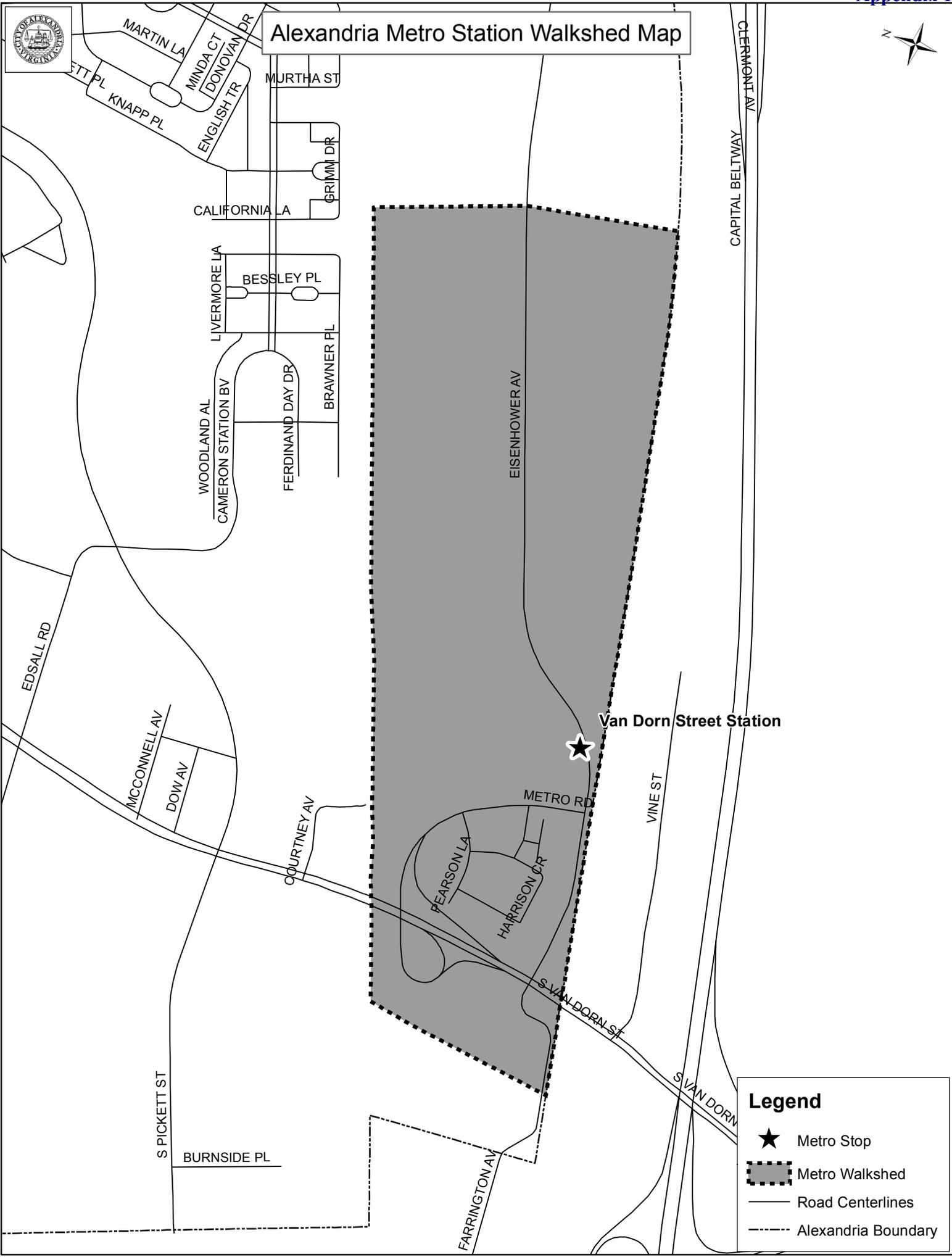


### Legend

- ★ Metro Stop
- ▭ Metro Walkshed
- Road Centerlines
- - - Alexandria Boundary



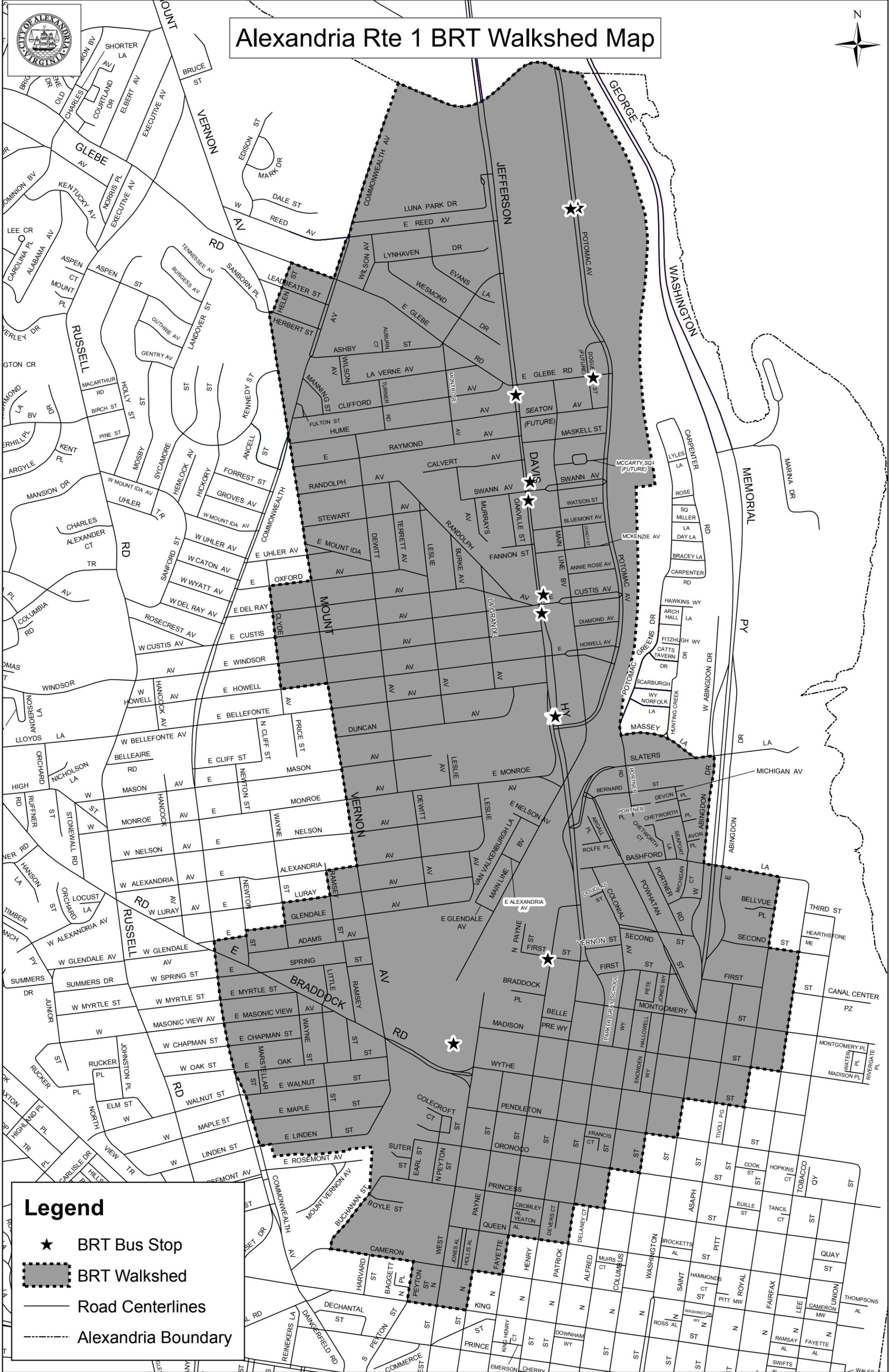
# Alexandria Metro Station Walkshed Map



**Legend**

-  Metro Stop
-  Metro Walkshed
-  Road Centerlines
-  Alexandria Boundary

# Alexandria Rte 1 BRT Walkshed Map



**Legend**

- ★ BRT Bus Stop
- ▭ BRT Walkshed
- Road Centerlines
- - - Alexandria Boundary

## Walkability Index Use Types &amp; Categories Chart

<b>TABLE: USE TYPES &amp; CATEGORIES</b>				
<b>Category</b>	<b>Max. Points</b>	<b>Use or Service Type</b>	<b>0.25 mi. or less</b>	<b>0.25 - 0.5 mi.</b>
<b>Food Retail</b>	15	Supermarket or grocery with produce section (min. 5,000 gross square footage)	15	5
<b>Community-serving retail</b>	20	Convenience Store	7	3
		Farmers Market (min. 9 months per year)	5	-
		Hardware store	5	-
		Pharmacy	10	5
		Other retail <sup>1</sup>	3	-
<b>Services</b>	20	Bank (not ATM)	5	-
		Family entertainment venue (e.g. theater, sports)	5	-
		Gym, health club, exercise studio	5	-
		Hair care	3	-
		Laundry, dry cleaner	5	-
		Restaurant, café, diner (excluding those with only drive-thru only service) <sup>2</sup>	5	5
<b>Civic and community facilities</b>	35	Adult or senior care (licensed)	3	-
		Child care (licensed)	3	-
		Cultural arts facility (museum, performing arts)	5	-
		Education facility (e.g. K-12 school)	10	5
		Education facility (e.g. university, adult education center, vocational school, community college)	5	-
		Government office that serves public on-site	3	-
		Medical clinic or office that treats patients	3	-
		Place of worship	5	-
		Police or fire station	3	-
		Post office	5	-
		Public library	5	-
		Public park	10	5
		Social services center	3	-
<b>Community anchor uses</b>	10	Business office (100 or more FTE)	10	5

<sup>1</sup>Multiple retail uses may be counted if they are of a different type

<sup>2</sup>Up to two restaurants may be counted

## Appendix 3. Final Parking Ratio and Parking Requirement Calculation Chart

(This chart is in development, will be provided soon).

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