

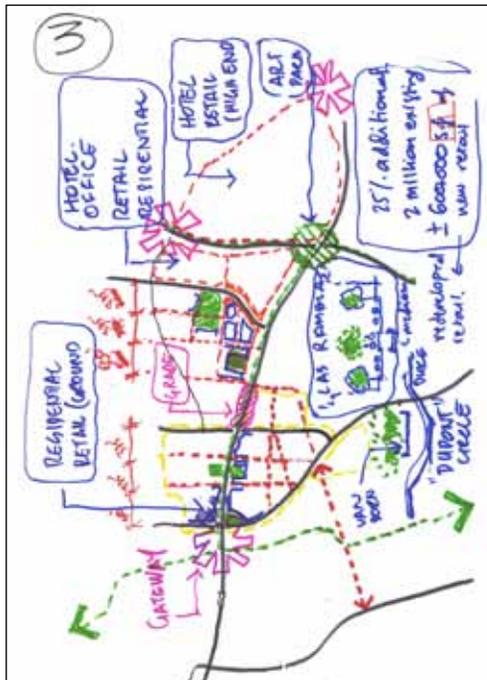
# Vision and Guiding Principles



Breakout groups at work.



Breakout group land use concept and street framework. (Drawings rotated to show north at top consistent with graphics in plan.)



Breakout group land use concept and street framework

## 2.1. Vision

This Plan sets forth a vision to transform the greater Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor into one of the finest mixed-use communities in the Washington Region. The Plan will be achieved largely through redevelopment of Landmark Mall and older retail centers along Duke and Van Dorn streets, creating two distinctive mixed-use centers. Landmark Mall and nearby retail properties are redeveloped into “West End Town Center”- a lively town center of regional scale, with major office, retail, and residential uses establishing a distinctive gateway into the City of Alexandria. The older retail centers near Van Dorn and Pickett streets are redeveloped into “Pickett Place”-- an active mixed-use center providing community-level office, retail, and residential uses well integrated into nearby established neighborhoods. The two centers are connected by a redesigned Van Dorn Street, reconstructed as an attractive green boulevard with dedicated transit lanes and new pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Together, the new centers create an active mix of uses and strong sense of place supporting and enhancing the nearby residential neighborhoods where land use change is not proposed.

The Plan includes new open space and gathering places, and tree-lined streets, trails, and open space linking the town centers and community to nearby natural areas such as Holmes Run and Backlick Run. The planning area is transformed from its current suburban, auto-oriented character into an active urban community with smaller blocks and landscaped streets designed for pedestrians and new transit services.

The greater Landmark/Van Dorn area is attractive to its residents and visitors not just because of its convenient location, but because of its lively mix of uses, distinctive urban character, and community life. Its diverse population sees the community as something of value, worthy of an investment of time and energy to make the community in which they live a great place for themselves and their children.

This vision has been shaped through interaction with the Landmark/Van Dorn Advisory Group and through public

participation in community meetings and workshops throughout the planning process. It defines the kind of place citizens want the area to be in the future, providing a long-term perspective for achieving positive change over time.

While the vision focuses on the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor planning area, it also considers Landmark/Van Dorn’s role in improving the quality of life in Alexandria’s West End as a whole. Early in the planning process, residents expressed their strong belief that the Landmark/Van Dorn area is important as a center of activity for people throughout the West End. The West End of today is a vitally important part of the City of Alexandria, but one that needs a community focus of its own.

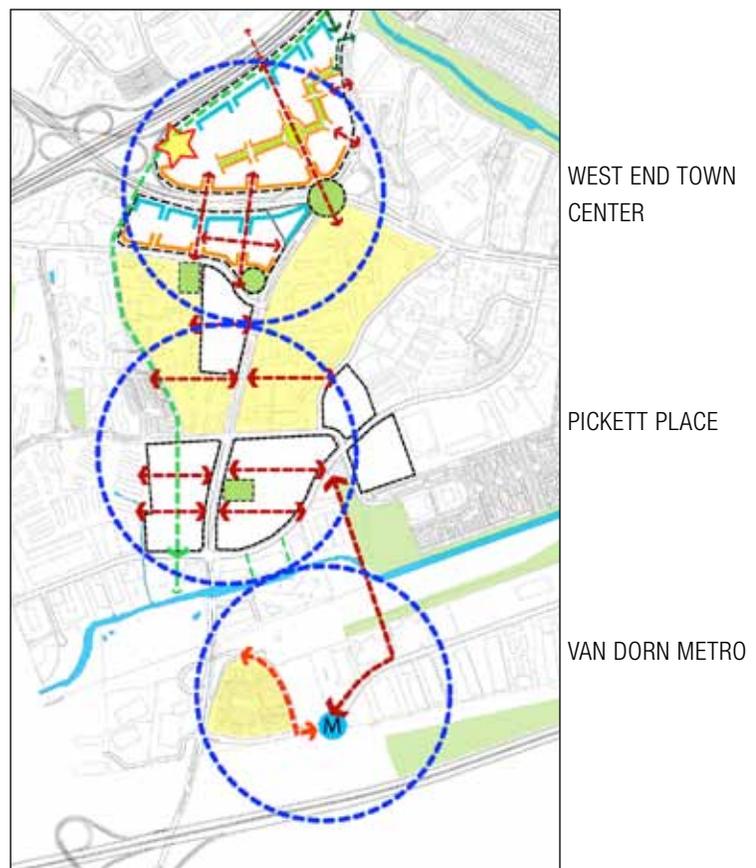


Figure 2-1. Key organizing features of the Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan, summary diagram as developed in community workshops.



Recent mixed-use development at Bethesda Row



Near Eastern Market in Washington, DC



Light rail transit in Portland, OR

## 2.2. Community Goals

The Advisory Group agreed upon the following community goals that form the basis for the vision:

### Housing, Development, and Neighborhood Enhancement

- The Landmark Mall area should become an attractive gateway for the City of Alexandria.
- Landmark Mall should serve regional, local, and neighborhood needs.
- A mix of uses and sizes of development should be provided, with a focus on vibrant neighborhoods, neighborhood needs, and human-scale.
- A variety of housing types should be provided, including mid-rise and high-rise units, compatible with existing housing types and groups within the community.
- A diverse mix of ownership and rental housing, and market rate, affordable, and workforce housing should be maintained.
- The history and cultural diversity of the area should be promoted as background for establishing and reinforcing neighborhood character.

### Transit and Transportation

- A more connected, urban street grid system should be created where feasible with walkable blocks to provide increased mobility for both pedestrians and vehicles.
- Transit ridership should be increased through reliable, convenient, and coordinated transit services throughout the area, with emphasis on effective transit service along Van Dorn Street between Landmark Mall and the Van Dorn Street Metro Station.
- Safe, convenient, and attractive pedestrian and bicycle access should be provided to all transit nodes, centers, and stations.

- Off-street, dedicated pedestrian and bicycle paths should be provided where feasible to connect transit, activity centers, neighborhoods, open space, and community facilities.

## Open Space and Civic Amenities

- Existing green space, natural areas and features, including privately-owned neighborhood-oriented open space and parks, should be preserved and enhanced.
- Facilities should be provided that can be programmed for seasonal activities that serve all age groups, such as an ice rink, farmer's market, fountains, evening events, recreation centers, and plazas.
- More cultural and public art facilities should be introduced and integrated into adjacent uses and neighborhoods.



Market Square, Old Town

## Environment & Sustainability

- An area-wide, comprehensive approach should be established for environmentally sustainable development, including Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, best practices in local and regional stormwater management, reduced impervious areas, enhanced water quality, and protection and restoration of habitat areas and natural features throughout the planning area.



Formal path.

## Implementation and Fiscal Sustainability

- The City's Economic Sustainability Work Group recommendations should be used as a guide to maximize office, retail, and hotel development, in a manner consistent with creating vibrant activity centers and mixed-use neighborhoods.



Pentagon Row. Plaza in mixed-use development.

## 2.3. Planning Principles



Based on the community goals, the following planning principles were developed to provide guidance to achieve the vision. The planning principles have provided guidance in preparation of Chapters 4 through 9 that include recommendations on land use, transportation, urban design, environmental sustainability, and implementation:

**An Attractive Gateway to Alexandria** with entryways, streetscapes, and development forms that establish a distinctive image and identity for the West End.

- Establish a “West End Town Center” at the northern portion of the planning area with regional-level office, retail, supporting residential development, and a varied skyline of distinctive architecture as the primary gateway into west Alexandria.
- Implement gateway improvements (distinctive signage, landscaping, public art, etc.) at other prominent City entrances within the planning area.
- Improve the visual character of roads and streets through streetscape improvements and guidelines for building and site design that promote good urban form.
- Use public art, wayfinding signage, and other coordinated visual improvements to build a distinctive visual image and identity for the new activity centers.



**Pedestrian-Friendly Activity Centers** for residents of the West End and beyond.

- Create both the West End Town Center and Pickett Place with a hierarchy of attractive, walkable streets that provide convenient access and connections to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Establish a pedestrian-oriented character and “sense of place” within each activity center through the design of buildings, open spaces, and sidewalks that:
- Provide a quality public realm with pedestrian amenities

- Bring buildings to the sidewalk and street and animate their facades
- Provide active uses on the ground floors of buildings; such as stores, restaurants, cafes, etc.
- Provide public gathering places to promote informal social contact and accommodate performances, cultural celebrations, and other public events.

**A Multi-Modal Transportation System** providing safe and convenient options for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.

- Address vehicular mobility through targeted capacity improvements and by developing a more interconnected street system.
- Develop a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment with walking connections from neighborhoods to activity centers.
- Develop a system of on-street lanes and off-street paths for bicyclists.
- Provide more frequent, reliable regional and local transit service, with connections to and between activity centers and the Van Dorn Street Metro.
- Ensure that the location and design of parking facilities support the transformation of Landmark/Van Dorn from a suburban, automobile-oriented to an urban, pedestrian-oriented environment:
  - Place parking below grade to the greatest extent possible to minimize barriers to pedestrian movement, decrease the mass/bulk of buildings, and provide more ground-level open space.
  - Locate any above-grade structured parking within a block lined with active uses.
  - Limit surface parking where feasible to on-street parking and integrate green building best practices into parking design.

**An Interconnected Open Space System** comprised of public parks and open spaces of varying sizes and functions connected to green corridors.

- Develop a network of public parks and open spaces of varying sizes and functions:
- Preserve, protect, and rehabilitate natural open space (steep slopes, stream corridors), connecting and expanding area-wide natural systems
- Provide residential open space (neighborhood and community parks)
- Include places of gathering (public spaces within activity centers)
- Establish and enhance green corridors (key street connections).
- Develop Van Dorn Street and Duke Street as Green Transit Boulevards with landscaped medians, street trees, and attractive pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

**Quality Neighborhoods** offering a range of housing opportunities for the area's diverse residents.

- Create and reinforce compact, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with a range of housing types and price levels, including affordable and workforce housing as a priority.
- Promote a variety of neighborhood-oriented retail, service, and entertainment uses within walking distance of neighborhoods.
- Provide usable public open space within neighborhoods and connect neighborhoods to a larger, interconnected park and open space system.
- Provide needed community facilities accessible to residents of Landmark/Van Dorn and the West End.
- Retain and support local businesses serving residents, employees and visitors.
- Maintain a diverse mix of ownership and rental housing, as well as workforce and affordable housing, with an emphasis on the preservation of existing affordable and workforce rental housing.



- Provide heights, scale, and transition in new development that is compatible with established residential development and nearby neighborhoods.

**Environmentally and Economically Sustainable Development** providing long-term benefit to residents and the City of Alexandria.

- Provide for the redevelopment of Landmark Mall in a way that takes full advantage of its potential as a center of economic activity and community life in the West End. Ensure that the site retains its important regional retail role while also providing employment through office development and the 16-hour, 7-day-a-week life of a mixed-use residential neighborhood.
- Ensure that the pattern of new development in the Landmark/Van Dorn area takes full advantage of the environmental and economic benefits of denser, mixed-use urban development with a pedestrian- and transit-friendly pattern of walkable blocks with substantially enhanced transit service.
- Promote fiscal health of the City as a whole by providing a balance of residential and nonresidential uses that responds to the City's objective and long-term market potential for office and other nonresidential development. Develop a critical mass of mixed-use residential development in the Town Center and Pickett Place areas that meets the plan's objectives for building community with a variety of housing that creates neighborhoods and expands the range of housing choices in the Landmark/Van Dorn Area.
- Ensure that development projects in the Landmark/Van Dorn area keep appropriate sites identified in the Plan for office, retail and hotel uses available in anticipation of the time when transit improvements and the mixed-use environment create stronger office and other nonresidential demand. Prevent the premature development of these sites for residential uses.

- Build on the opportunity provided by the Van Dorn Street Metro Station by improving connections from the Metro station to the planning area and by providing local circulator service.
- Take advantage of redevelopment and public improvements to create a more energy-conserving and environmentally sustainable future for the Landmark/Van Dorn area, by applying Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building and site development standards, best practices in local and regional stormwater management for water quality and water quantity, and protection and restoration of habitat areas and natural features in and near the planning area.