

Urban Design

The Landmark/Van Dorn Area is expected to be redeveloped over a number of years by many different owners and developers. In order to achieve the plan's vision and planning principles, the plan requires a coordinated approach to the layout and development of streets, parks and infrastructure, and to the design of buildings.

The urban design principles outlined here are critical to achieving the goals set out in the plan. The principles include creating three distinct subareas, providing an urban mix of uses, dividing large tracts into walkable blocks, creating a street framework with a hierarchy of street functions, and creating a coordinated open space network.



6.1. Urban Design Principles

A series of design principles resulted from the analysis of the planning area which are intended to guide future development in the Landmark/Van Dorn corridor. These principles define Landmark/Van Dorn's place and role in the City and at a more localized level, what the place should look and feel like within its neighborhoods, blocks and streets. They lay out the concept for the pedestrian environment, and for public access to and the experience of the public open spaces. This chapter establishes the principles to guide the transformation of an automobile-dominated landscape into sustainable, mixed-use neighborhoods and districts that each have distinctive character, are well connected to the city at large via transit, and that offer residents, workers, shoppers and other visitors a human-scaled, pedestrian-oriented environment.

6.2. Creating New Blocks – Urban Street Grid

An important role of the street grid is to create appropriate-sized blocks. Block dimensions are of critical importance because they establish the physical parameters and conditions for appropriate development. Development in a pattern of blocks provides for incremental redevelopment as conditions change.

The Plan requires that wherever permitted by site conditions, blocks are to be limited to a maximum length of 350 to 500 feet and a maximum width of 300 feet. Block dimensions are of critical importance because they set up the physical parameters and conditions for appropriate development. The blocks created with the street grid establish the framework for a quality street environment which also enables pedestrian-scale buildings and streetscapes. The streets will have generous sidewalks, street furniture, and pedestrian-scale street lights. The blocks are oriented with the long dimension on Van Dorn Street and Duke Street to provide the opportunity for continued and varied uses and building types. Most interior neighborhood blocks are oriented east to west, following the contours of terrain. The blocks in the West End Town Center are configured to incorporate larger building footprints for large anchor stores and typical office building floor plates.

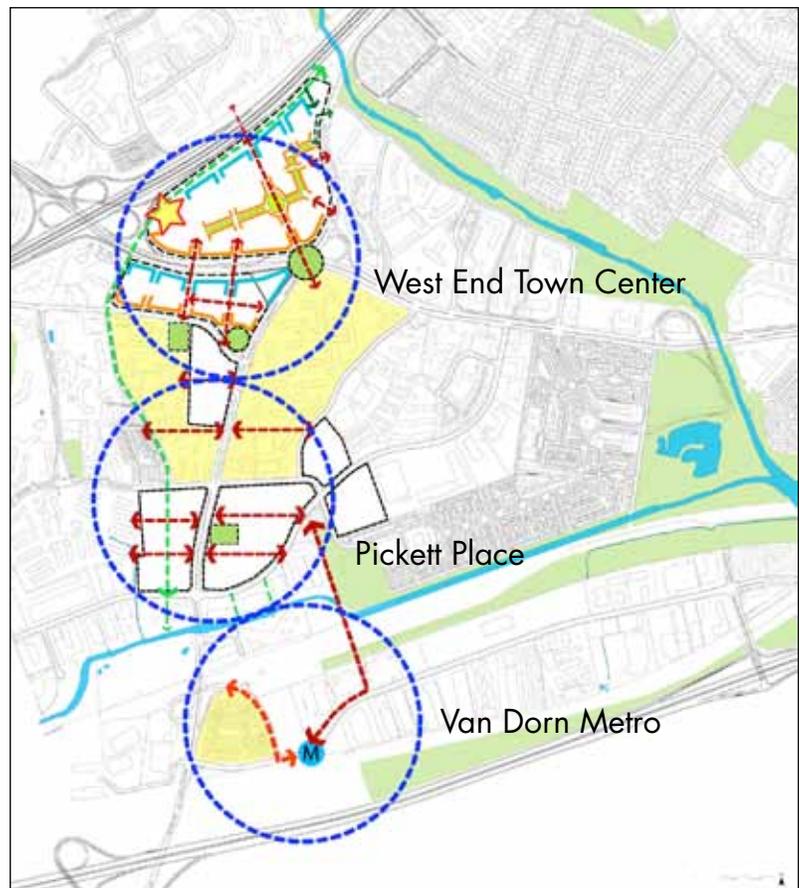


Figure 6-1. Three distinct districts were identified within the planning area in community workshops. This diagram summarizes the common design features from three breakout groups. All three groups emphasized the importance of linkages across Duke Street and linking the Van Dorn Metro to the rest of the planning area.

6.3. Street Framework



Figure 6-2. New blocks and existing parcels.

The plan includes a compact framework for streets that promotes walkability, creates convenient access to the Landmark Mall site, and provides for a multi-modal transportation system. The street framework includes two important bridge connections – one across Duke Street to link Landmark Mall with the parcels to the south of it, and one from Pickett Street to Van Dorn

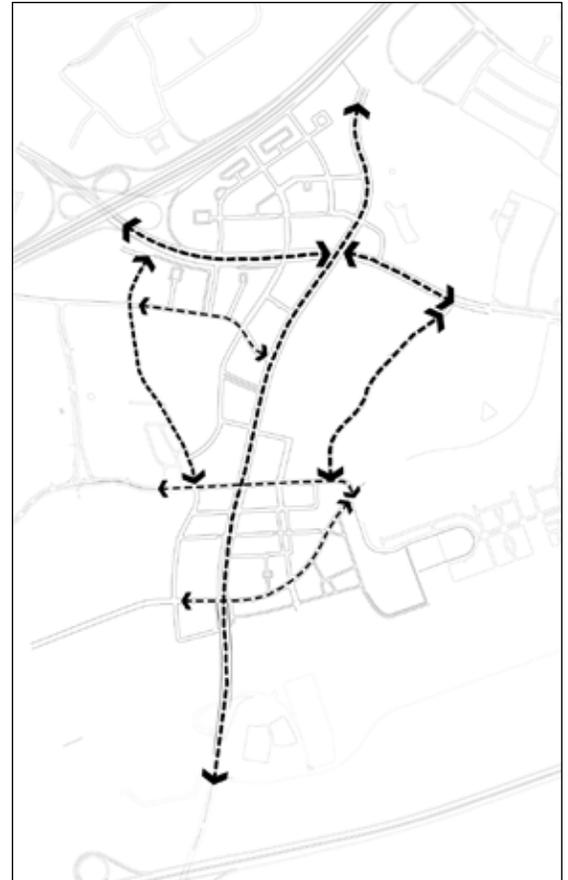


Figure 6-3. The current street pattern is coarse grained, with large blocks that pose barriers to movement by all travel modes.

Metro, in order to create convenient access to this major transportation asset.

At its simplest, the proposed street grid consists of two new north-south streets that run parallel to Van Dorn Street, a new east-west retail street for Pickett Place that runs perpendicular to Van Dorn Street, and a new east-west shopping street in Landmark Mall that runs parallel to Duke Street. Additional streets supplement this framework at regular intervals to provide convenient connections and pedestrian access throughout the planning area. The grid also includes reconfiguring the right-of-way along Duke Street and Van Dorn Street to create new boulevards that are more visually attractive,

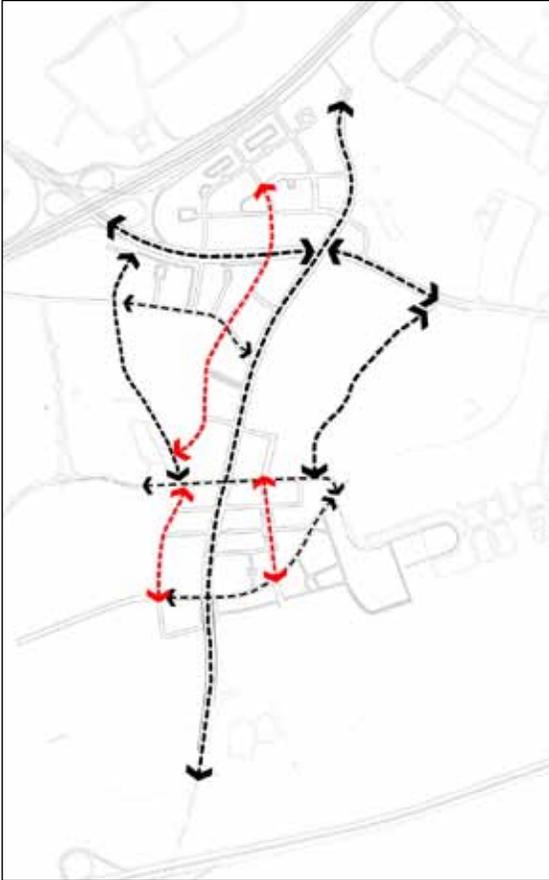


Figure 6-4. New north-south parallel streets provide options for local circulation without competing with through traffic on arterial streets.

are more comfortable for pedestrians both to walk along and to cross, and which accommodate improved transit.

Some flexibility will be needed in locating some street linkages. However, to ensure coordinated development of streets between property owners and across streets, certain streets are required to be constructed generally as shown in Figure 6-6, Street Framework. The Framework Plan shows New High Street originating in Landmark Mall and continuing south across Stevenson Avenue to an ultimate connection with Whiting Street; the exact location of New High Street between Duke Street and Whiting Street will be determined during the development process Whether developed under CCD

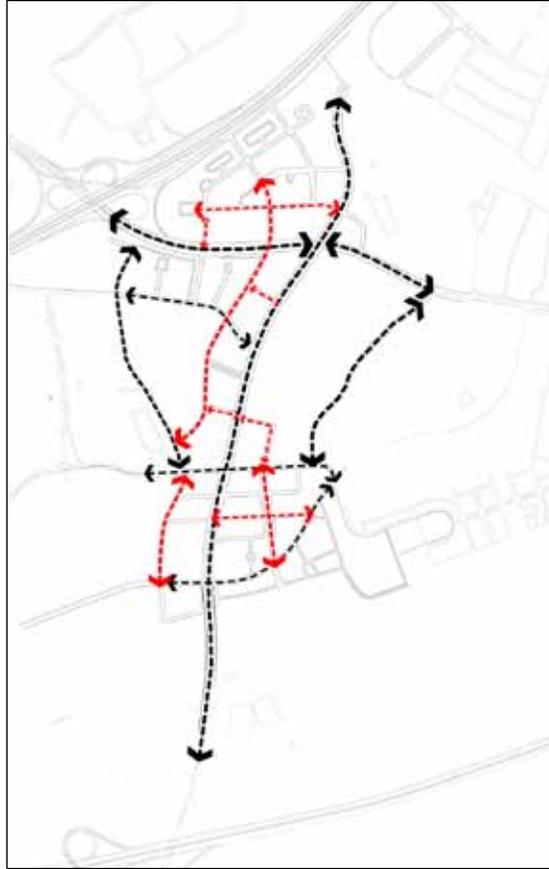


Figure 6-5. Additional streets are added in areas expected to redevelop to create blocks that have walkable dimensions and human scale.

zoning or under existing zoning, new development on all parcels in the planning area is required to accommodate and provide the street framework. The location of the remainder of the streets within each block will be evaluated and approved as part of the development approvals for each block, based on the principles of the plan.

The street framework illustrated shows key elements and general locations, but is not intended to depict the details. Detailed engineering analysis will be conducted at the time of development of each building and block.

Two major infrastructure elements have been recommended to complete the street grid:

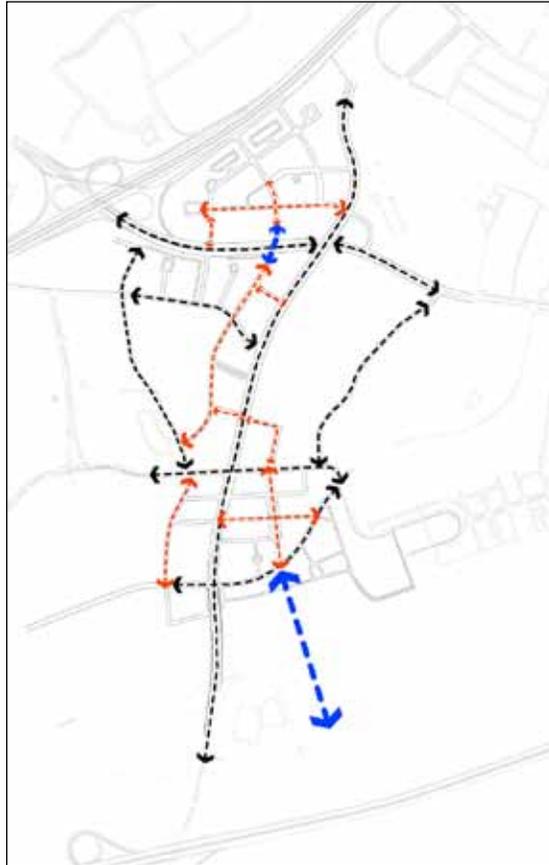


Figure 6-6. Bridges to Landmark Mall and Van Dorn Metro complete the links to interconnect the planning area conveniently for all travel modes.

1. A New High Street bridge across Duke Street that provides convenient access between Landmark Mall and the rest of the West End Town Center.
2. A bridge near Pickett Place that spans over Backlick Run, the Virginia Paving site, and the Norfolk-Southern railway tracks that connects the new street east of Van Dorn Street to the Van Dorn Metro Station.

6.3.1. Street Hierarchy

A hierarchy of streets has been developed to maintain a high-quality street environment and offer a variety of streets – from the most important to those streets which provide parking access and service access.

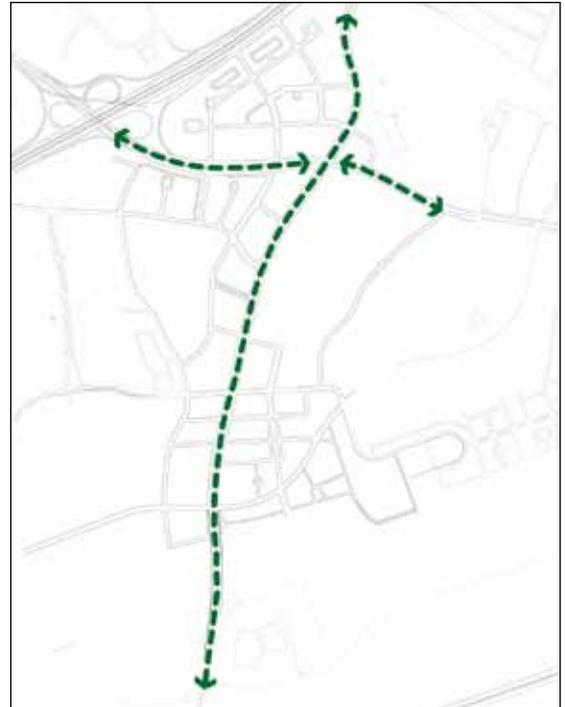


Figure 6-7. A1 streets are the most significant streets, providing regional connections and creating the image of the area for through travelers.

A-1 and A-2 Streets

“A” streets are important circulation elements and are also important character-defining features of the community. These streets are important in establishing the character of adjacent districts and neighborhoods.

Design Principles for “A” Streets

“A” Streets include Duke Street, Van Dorn Street, New High Street north of the point where retail frontage ends south of Stevenson Avenue, the Landmark Mall main shopping street, and Pickett Place Main Street.

These streets form the major front doors for each district and offer access to important commercial addresses. The rights-of-way of these streets have been allocated to encourage pedestrian activity. Curb cuts, entrances to parking garages and service bays are in general pro-

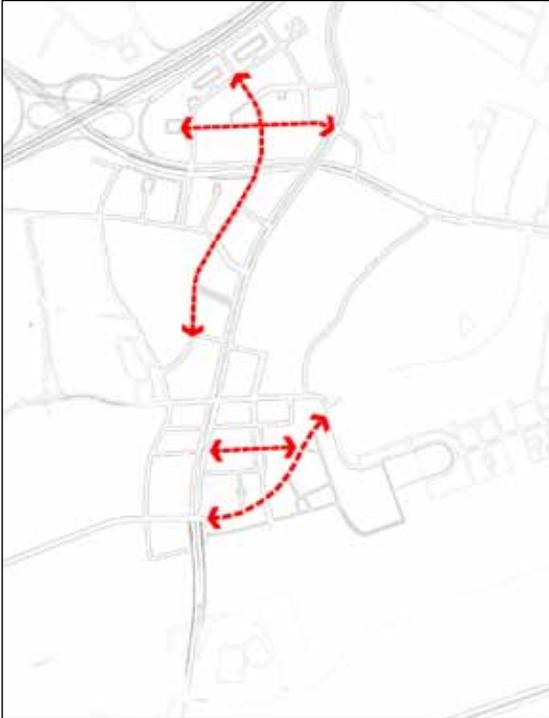


Figure 6-8. A2 streets are significant community streets, with important image-creating roles within districts and neighborhoods.

hibited, and the streets are subject to the highest design standards.

- Generous sidewalks should be provided, that allow for wide tree planting zones and space for pedestrians, and for bicycles if not provided in the travel lanes.
- Buildings shall front these streets.
- Main pedestrian building entries shall be located along “A1” street frontages to the greatest extent possible.
- Active uses shall be located on all street frontages.
- The highest quality of architectural façade and streetscape treatment shall be used.
- No permanent curb cuts or service alleys shall be permitted along “A” street frontages with the exception of parking structure entrances under

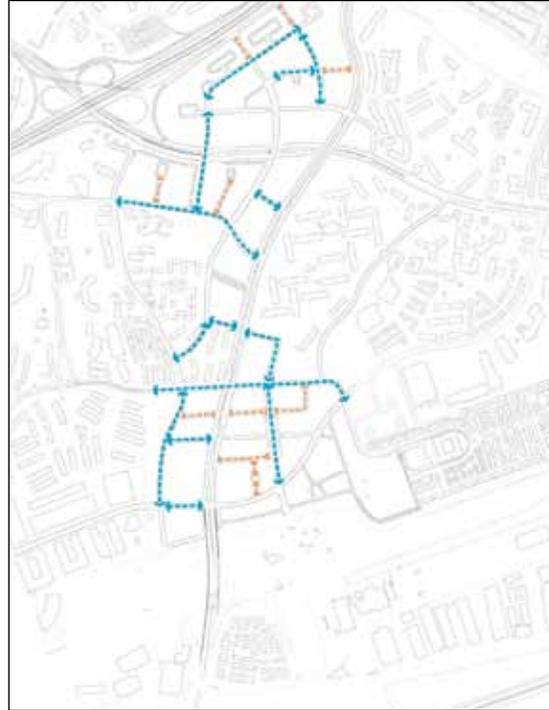


Figure 6-9. B and C Streets provide local access and service access. These streets complete the network and provide access to all parcels.

the proposed New High Street bridge or as reasonably required for access or service due to site constraints.

Design Principles for “B” Streets

“B” streets are the secondary streets of each neighborhood. They connect primary streets to each other and to service streets, and provide access options through each of the neighborhoods for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles. Bicycles are typically accommodated in shared lanes.

- Buildings shall front the street.
- Active uses shall be located on each street frontage.
- One curb cut per block shall not be exceeded on both sides of the street.

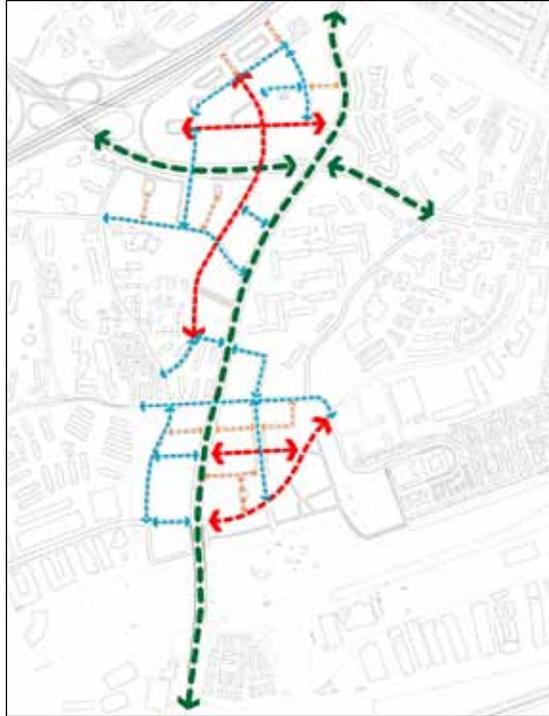


Figure 6-10. The complete street hierarchy for the Landmark/Van Dorn corridor. Design principles protect functions and help communicate street roles in the hierarchy.

- Main building and pedestrian entrances shall be located along B street frontage unless adjacent to a higher category street.
- A high quality of architectural façade treatment shall be used.

Design Principles for “C” Streets

“C” streets provide a means of access and service entries to parking as well as tertiary streets through the neighborhood. They are the least public in nature of all of the streets and, therefore, the least restrictive in design. The “C” streets allow the “A” and “B” street frontages to function as more public primary streets. Bicycles use travel lanes.

- Curb cuts, alleys and garage entrances shall be located on “C” streets.

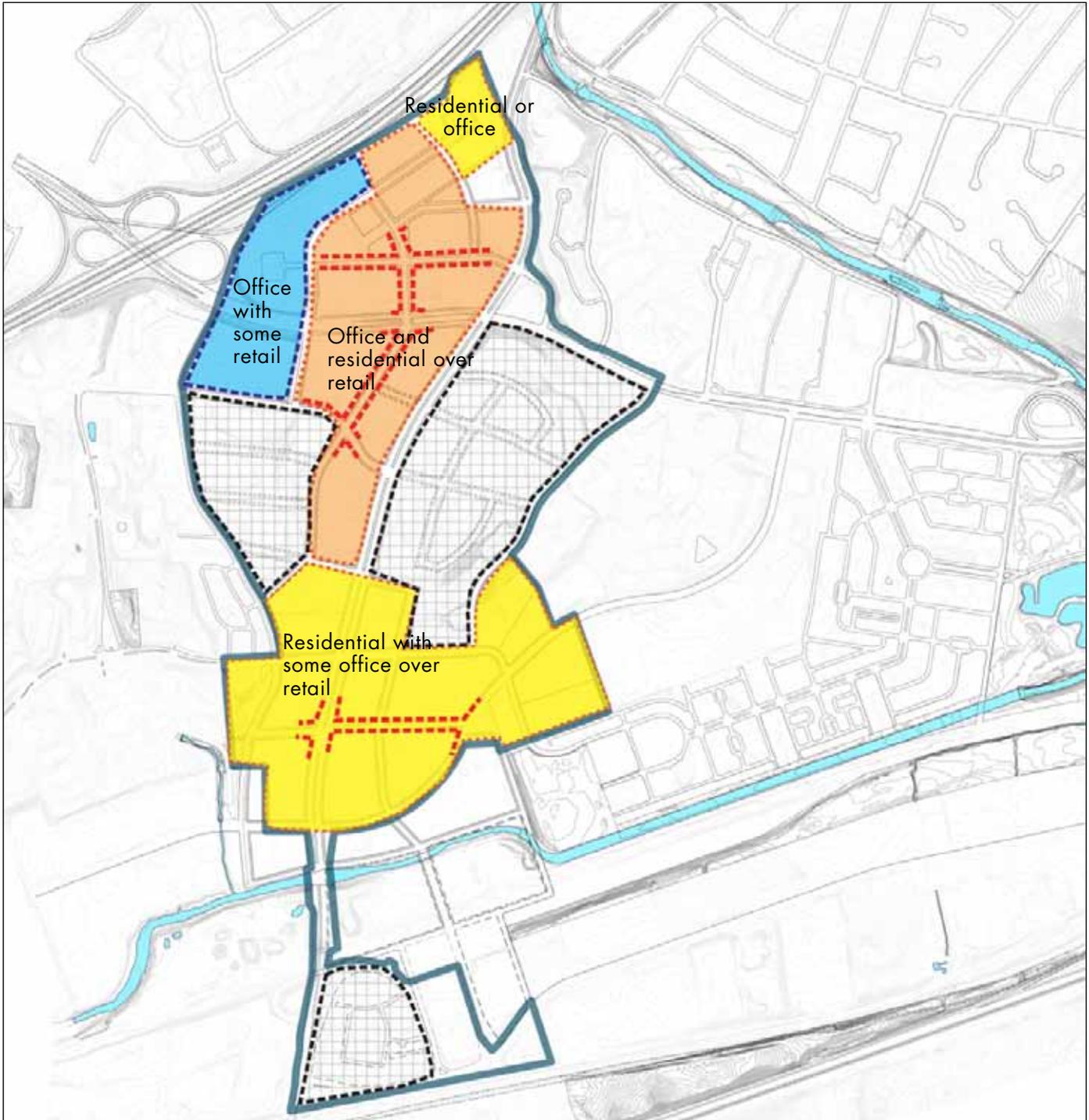


Figure 6-11. The mix of uses varies within the planning area based on the potential market for various uses and the character sought for each district. Uses with regional markets including a significant employment center and regional retail center are concentrated in the West End Town Center district. Red dashed lines show retail frontages that provide the core of the retail districts in the West End Town Center and Pickett Place.

6.4. A Mixed-Use Development

To ensure an urban character, office, residential and retail uses are located within each subarea, and are not built as large, single-use complexes. Mixed-use development can substantially reduce vehicle travel compared to single use complexes, since many trips for convenience goods and services can be made on foot within the block. With the variety of activities encompassed in mixed-use areas, street life is sustained throughout the daytime and evening hours.

While there is a significant concentration of office development within the West End Town Center, those uses are balanced with the retail and residential uses and open space within the neighborhood.

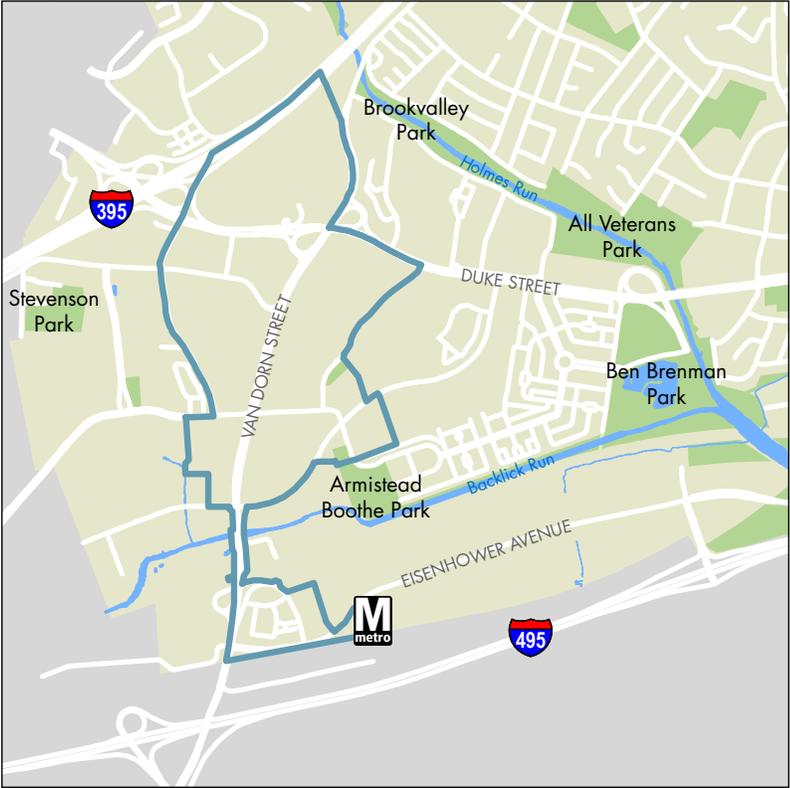


Figure 6-12. Existing open space. The nearby area includes five City parks with a total area of 134 acres. Holmes Run is a major regional open space corridor, with a multi-use trail connecting to Fairfax County. A similar trail connection is planned for Backlick Run.

June 13, 2009

6.5. Creating a Connected Open Space Network

There is a regional network of parks with greenway connections within a mile of most parts of the planning area. These parks and their associated facilities include:

- All Veterans Park (9.6 acres): memorial park, picnic areas, sitting areas, trails for walking, biking, and jogging, and a dog exercise area parallel to Pickett Street.
- Armistead Boothe Park (15 acres): lighted softball / soccer field, a picnic pavilion with grills, restrooms, a playground area with play equipment, two tennis courts, a combination tennis / basketball court, and pedestrian and bike trails.
- Ben Brenman Park (50 acres): softball field, little league baseball field, soccer field, tot lot, lake with gazebo and fountains, restrooms, pedestrian bridges, picnic pavilion, pedestrian and bike trails, fenced dog park, and a small amphitheater.
- Brookvalley Park (50 acres): community park, scenic natural area, biking and walking, playground, exercise area, sitting and picnic areas, ball field, community garden plots, and the Bicentennial Tree (oldest tree in Alexandria). Brookvalley Park is connected by trail to Holmes Run Scenic Easement to the north, All Veteran's Park to the southwest, and Tarleton Park to the southeast.
- Stevenson Park (9.5 acres): Little League baseball, lacrosse practice and games, soccer practice, basketball court, volleyball, playground, sitting area and park shelter, and summer camp program site.

These parks comprise approximately 134 acres of parkland for 21,240 people residing in the three census tracts that encompass Landmark/Van Dorn. This is approximately 6.3 acres of open space per 1,000 people. The Open Space Plan recommends a target of 7.5 acres of open space per 1,000 people.

Open Space Connections

The Holmes Run Trail is part of a regional multi-use trail system that runs along Holmes Run from where it joins Cameron Run in to Fairfax County to the west. The Holmes Run Trail connects Ben Brenman, All-Veterans and Brookvalley parks, which form a continuous open space corridor from Cameron Run to where the trail crosses under I-395.

Ben Brenman and Armistead Boothe parks are along Backlick Run. A trail is proposed along Backlick Run in the Open Space and Trails Master Plan that would connect to a trail system along Turkeycock Run in Fairfax County. Implementation of this trail system depends on acquisition or agreements with private property owners along the run.

Proposed Open Space Network

As density is increased and an urban environment is established, office, retail and mixed-use areas will require additional internal open space to maintain human scale and character. The plan recommends new urban parks within both the West End Town Center and Pickett Place to provide nearby public open space for new mixed-use developments. These parks should be designed primarily as passive landscaped parks. They have an area ranging from half an acre to over two acres, and are typically defined on at least three sides by streets. A central “town green” is also recommended as a space for community gatherings and civic events for the Landmark Mall site. Large open spaces and natural areas need to be at the periphery and in interconnected open space corridors where they do not break up the critical continuity of pedestrian-oriented activity.

- Landmark Mall at West End Town Center – an approximately 3 ½-acre open space network that extends across the site, with terraced open space with frontage along Van Dorn Street sloping into the middle of the site and connecting to the new green boulevards, open space and squares that incorporate

sustainable design elements. Major features include Landmark Plaza, the town green central to the site, and Terrace Garden, connecting to Van Dorn Street.

- New High Street Park – an approximately 0.5 - 1.0-acre of parkland with frontage along Stevenson Avenue between Van Dorn Street and Walker Street. The park would provide passive open space for residents and workers in the area.
- Pickett Square – an approximately one-half-acre urban square in the heart of the Pickett Place neighborhood. Modeled after successful active urban open spaces, the square would be bounded by retail uses at the ground level with residential uses on the upper floors.
- Pickett Plaza – approximately one acre of land could be consolidated with the existing park to expand the existing Armistead Boothe Park to create park frontage along Pickett Street. The site is currently developed with a self-storage facility and a vacant lot used for storage. Expansion of the park requires the consent of the property owner, or action on the part of the City to acquire the land.
- Edsall West Park – an approximately one-acre park between the proposed extension of Whiting Street and the South Port apartments to the west. This potential park provides a connection to a small drainage course that joins Backlick Run, and could potentially provide a link to the proposed Backlick Run trail system.

Implementing this system will require proactive efforts by the City, including consideration of:

- Collaboration with private owners to facilitate the creation of New High Street Park, Edsall West Park and the expansion of Armistead Boothe Park;
- Establishment of an open space fund for developer contributions to acquire, design and construct High Street Park, Edsall West Park, Pickett Square and Pickett Plaza. These contributions would be

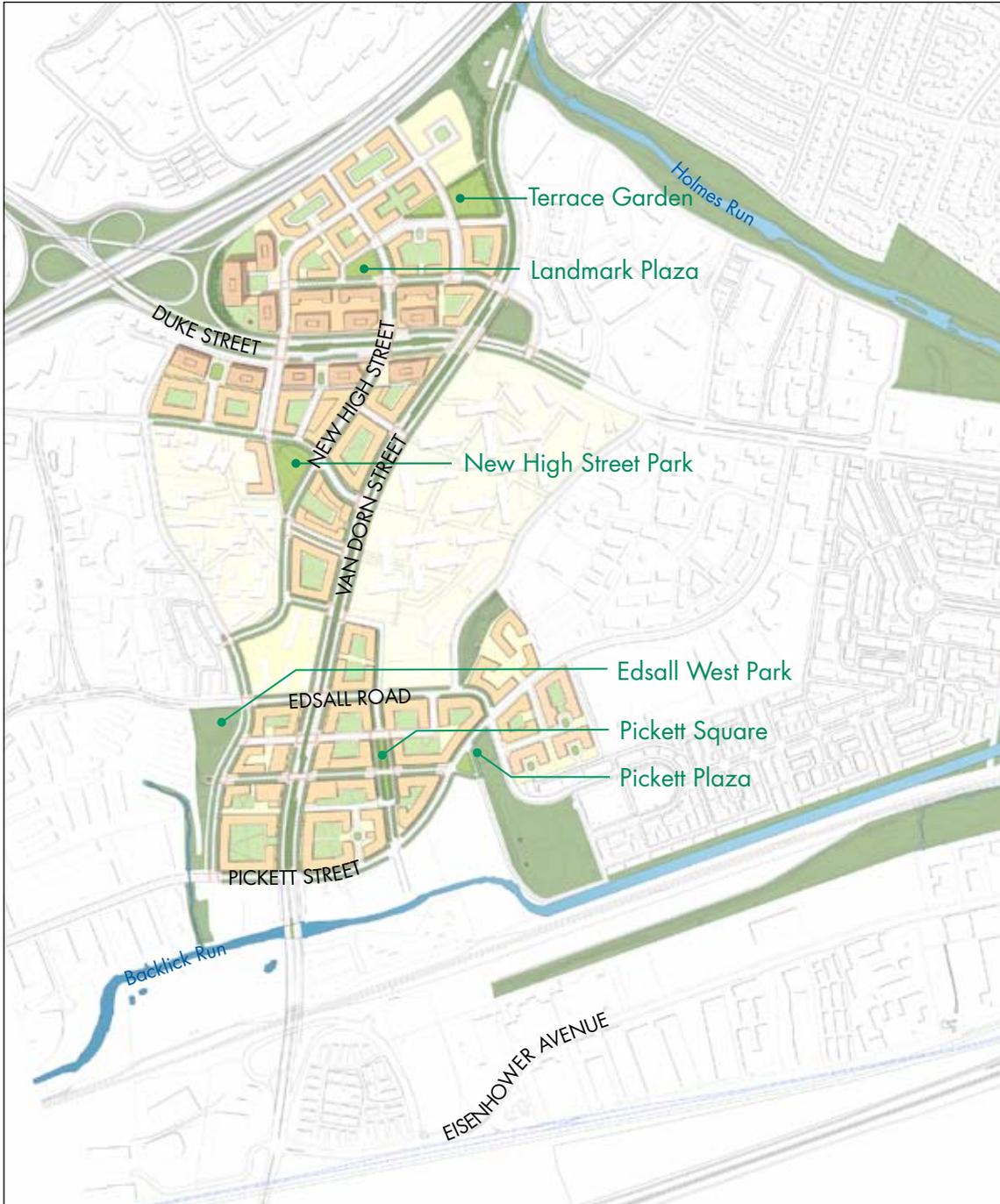


Figure 6-13. Open Space Plan. A number of small urban parks will provide nearby open space for new mixed-use developments. All areas within new mixed-use developments are within an easy walk of one of these public open spaces.

required at the time of redevelopment, with rates of contribution based on expected acquisition costs.

The plan recommends that in all projects 25% of the site area excluding streets be provided as ground-level open space. Such open space may be provided above the ground level or may be reduced with a contribution to an open space fund if such alternatives better meet the Plan objectives.

As part of future planning efforts, the plan encourages the evaluation of the potential reuse of the Virginia Paving site to meet stormwater management needs and as an open space asset connecting Backlick Run and the Clermont Cove property, which is currently on the City's open space priority list.

6.6. Density and Massing

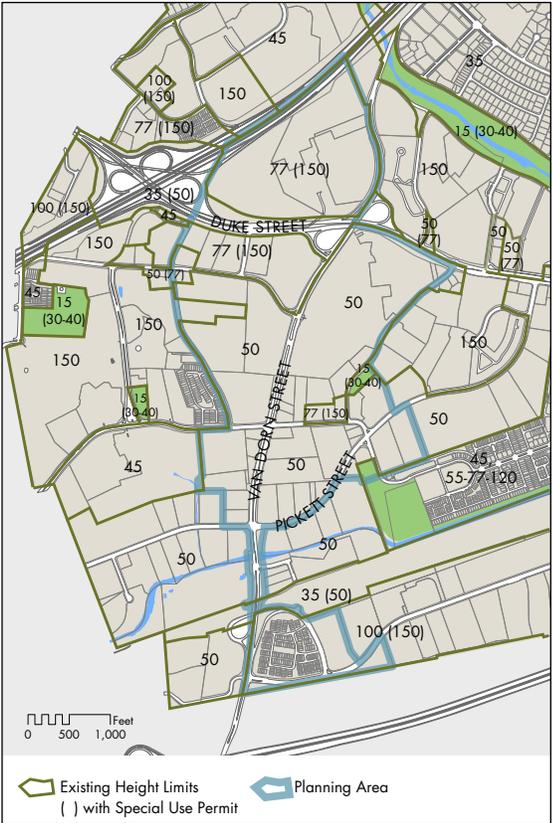


Figure 6-14. Building heights permitted by existing zoning in and near the planning area. A height of 150 feet is now permitted in most of the West End Town Center area.

The heights of buildings, site coverage, and the character of building tops define the skyline of each neighborhood from a distance. The width of streets from building face to building face, building setbacks, and the continuity of the setback and street wall establish the character of each neighborhood. The character and articulation of the facades refine the street character at the individual block and pedestrian level.

Figures 6-14 and 6-16 show the existing and proposed building height limits in feet within the planning area and nearby areas. The existing height limits are derived from the existing zoning designations. In the case of the Commercial Residential Mixed Use Medium and High (CRMU-M and CRMU-H) Districts, the existing zoning calls for building heights to conform to the limits set

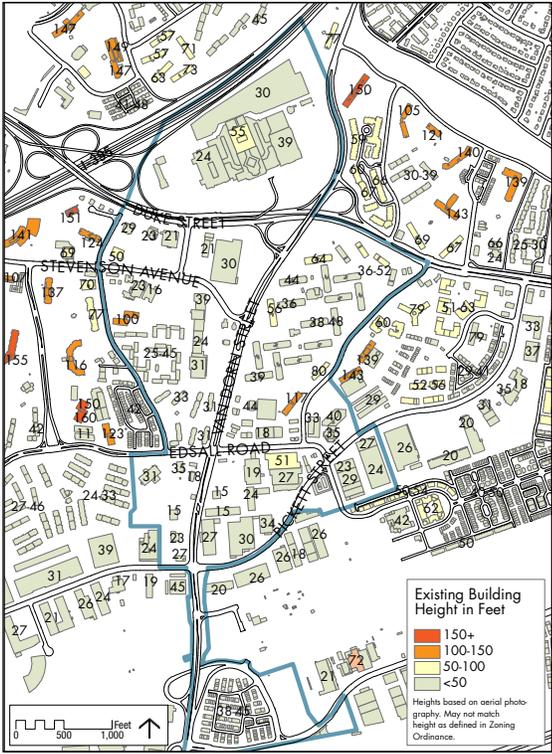


Figure 6-15. The heights of existing buildings in the planning area and immediate surroundings are shown, with buildings more than 100 feet tall shown in orange. All existing buildings taller than 100 feet are residential.

in the Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan adopted in 1992. The heights of existing buildings in and near the planning area are shown in Figure 6-15.

As shown in Figure 6-16, building heights within the West End Town Center neighborhood are proposed for a range of 85 to 250 feet. Height ranges have been proposed within this neighborhood to provide variety in heights and transition into adjacent areas. Heights ranging from 150 to 250 feet are proposed on the frontage of Duke Street. Heights up to a maximum of 250 feet are proposed along I-395 north of Duke Street to allow for a signature building or complex at this prominent gateway location. All building heights within this neighborhood will be subject to approval through the development special use permit (DSUP) process, with varied heights,

transitions, and high quality architecture being required. Exceptional architectural design and building quality will be required for the taller signature buildings.

Building heights within Pickett Place are proposed to range from 65 to 120 feet, with the maximum 120 foot height restricted to the central portion of the activity center. A maximum of 65 to 85 feet would be allowed along the frontage of Van Dorn Street at the new neighborhood main street, and along a segment of Pickett Street. Buildings in the 65 to 85 feet range are proposed at key locations to provide variety in scale and transition into nearby neighborhoods with similar heights. Actual building heights will be subject to approval through the development review process.

Proposed building heights east of Pickett Place at the intersection of Edsall Road and Pickett Street range from 65 to 85 feet, with the higher heights located along Pickett Street and lower heights adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods. In all cases, a variety of heights is proposed, and heights will transition to lower heights when near existing residential neighborhoods with lower buildings.

Similar heights are proposed west of Pickett Place along the west side of Van Dorn Street between Edsall Road and Pickett Street.

Chapter 7.0 provides additional criteria and design principles for placement of buildings and building heights within the activity centers.

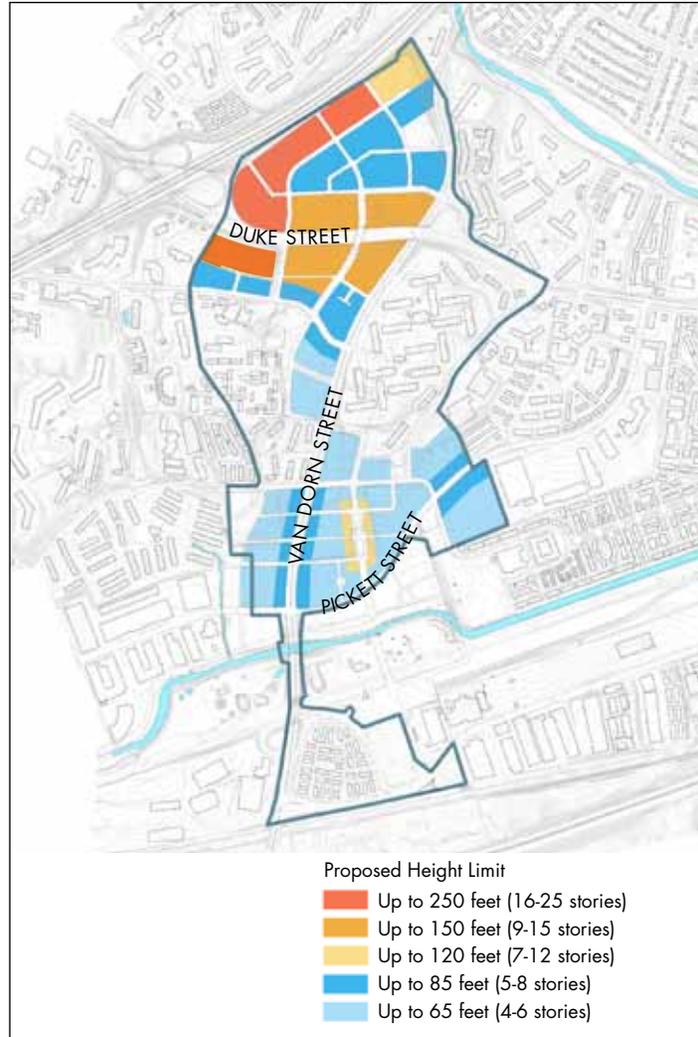
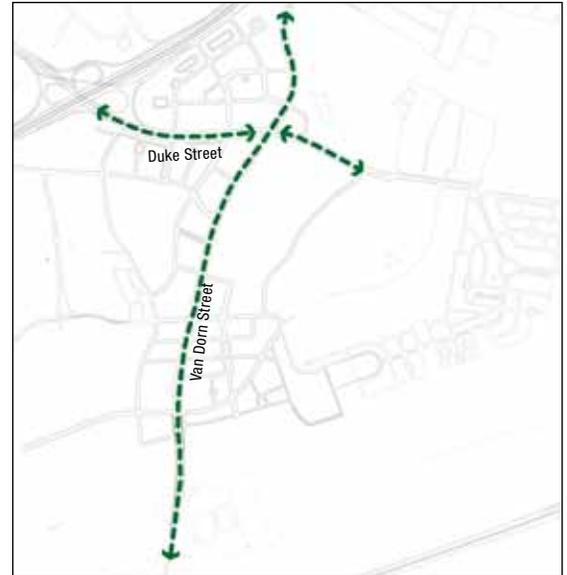


Figure 6-16. Proposed building height limits provide for taller buildings than today's zoning in image-defining locations along I-395 and in the core of the Pickett Place district.

6.7. Summary of Urban Design Principles

6.7.1. General Principles

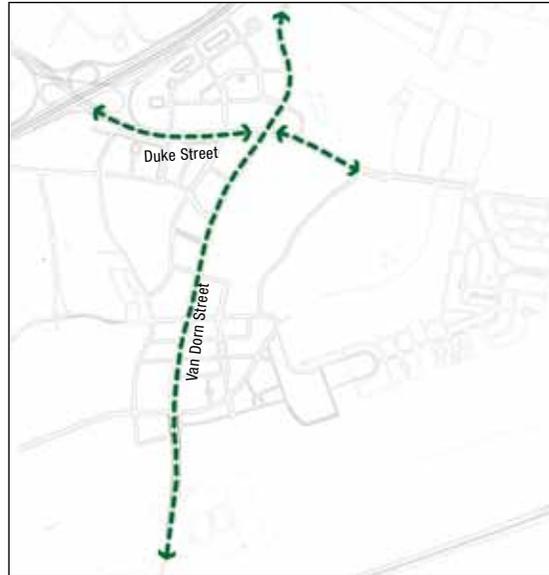
- Create compact pedestrian-friendly mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Organize development by a modified orthogonal grid of interconnected streets.
- Establish convenient, multi-modal, at-grade connections to the Town Center at Walker Street, at the BJ's Site, and at the Van Dorn/ Duke Street crossing; and create smaller, walkable blocks at the BJ's, CompUSA and Safeway sites
- Create smaller, walkable blocks between Edsall Road and Pickett Street
- Connect to Holmes Run by using a green spine that links through the Town Center, and takes advantage of viewsheds to the south
- Create a central main street that connects Van Dorn with Pickett
- Create new urban parks within each of the districts of the plan and connect to the citywide system of open space and natural corridors.
- Create a park between Walker and Van Dorn, off Stevenson Avenue
- Create a "four corners" retail intersection at Van Dorn and the new Pickett Place Main Street
- To the extent feasible, all parking should be located below grade or lined with an active use
- Plan for a new street connection from Pickett Place to Van Dorn Metro
- Leverage high visibility along Duke Street and I-395 by creating distinctive skylines and building tops along both major arterials
- Create a central gathering place or Town Green within the West End Town Center.
- Establish strong regional office and retail presence at West End Town Center, while maintaining a fine-grained mix of uses



6.7.2. Strategies for Areawide Organizing Features

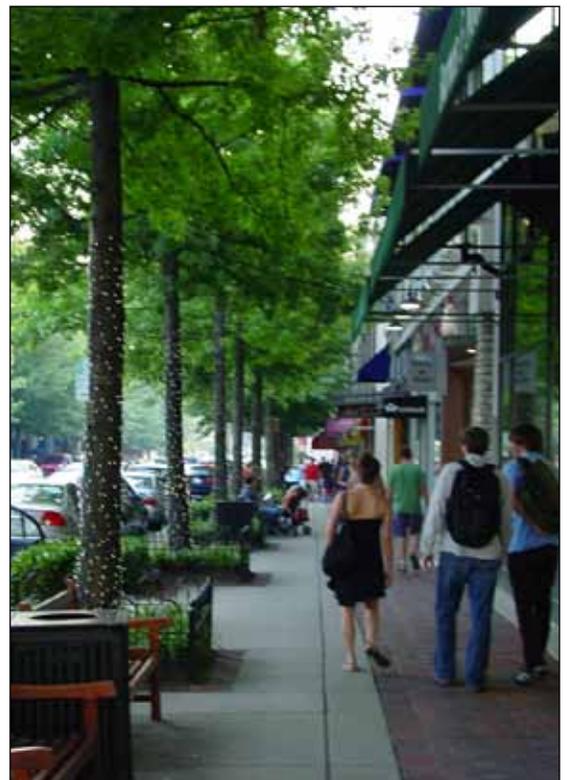
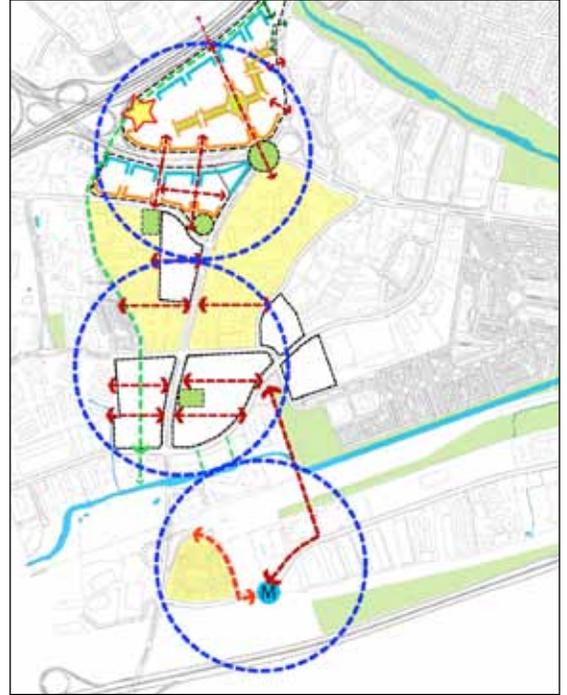
Establish Van Dorn Street and Duke Street as Tree-lined Transit Boulevards

Tree-lined boulevards with broad medians provide a strong organizing element to the areas through which they pass. The boulevard's character ties areas along it together and gives them a shared identity. The boulevard can humanize the hostile environment of high-capacity roadways and create a much more appealing front door to the community.



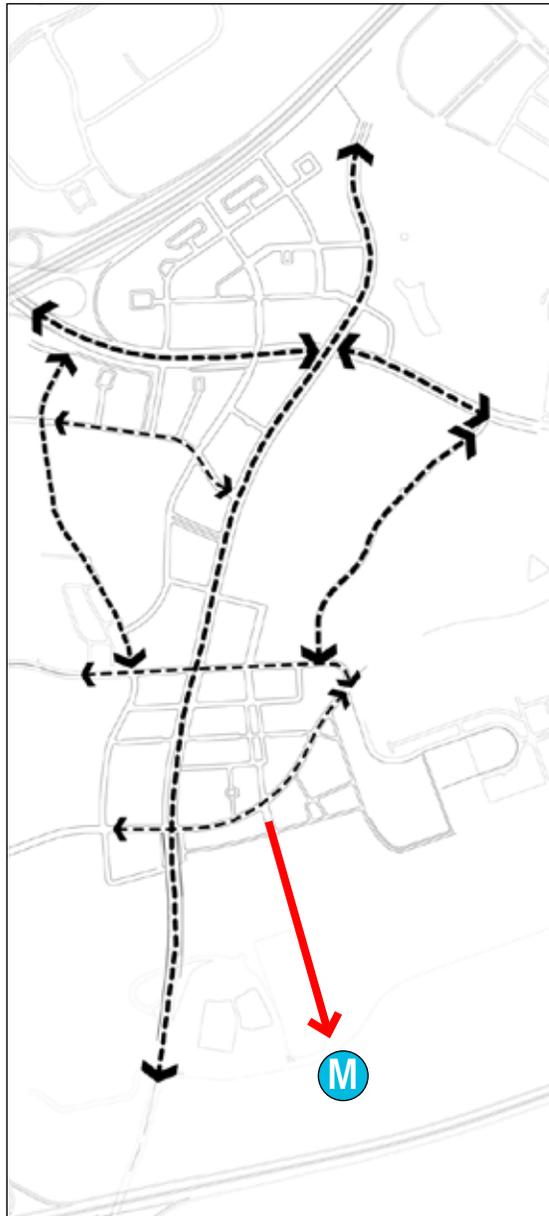
Create a distinctive character for each neighborhood and district within the planning area

Establishing a sense of place and unique identity is important to creating a feeling of being in a particular neighborhood or community. This uniqueness and identity can be encouraged by giving each neighborhood identifying features in its public areas and open spaces, by creating a different feel to each area through proportions of streets and buildings, and development of unique character particularly at gateway locations with architectural features and public art.



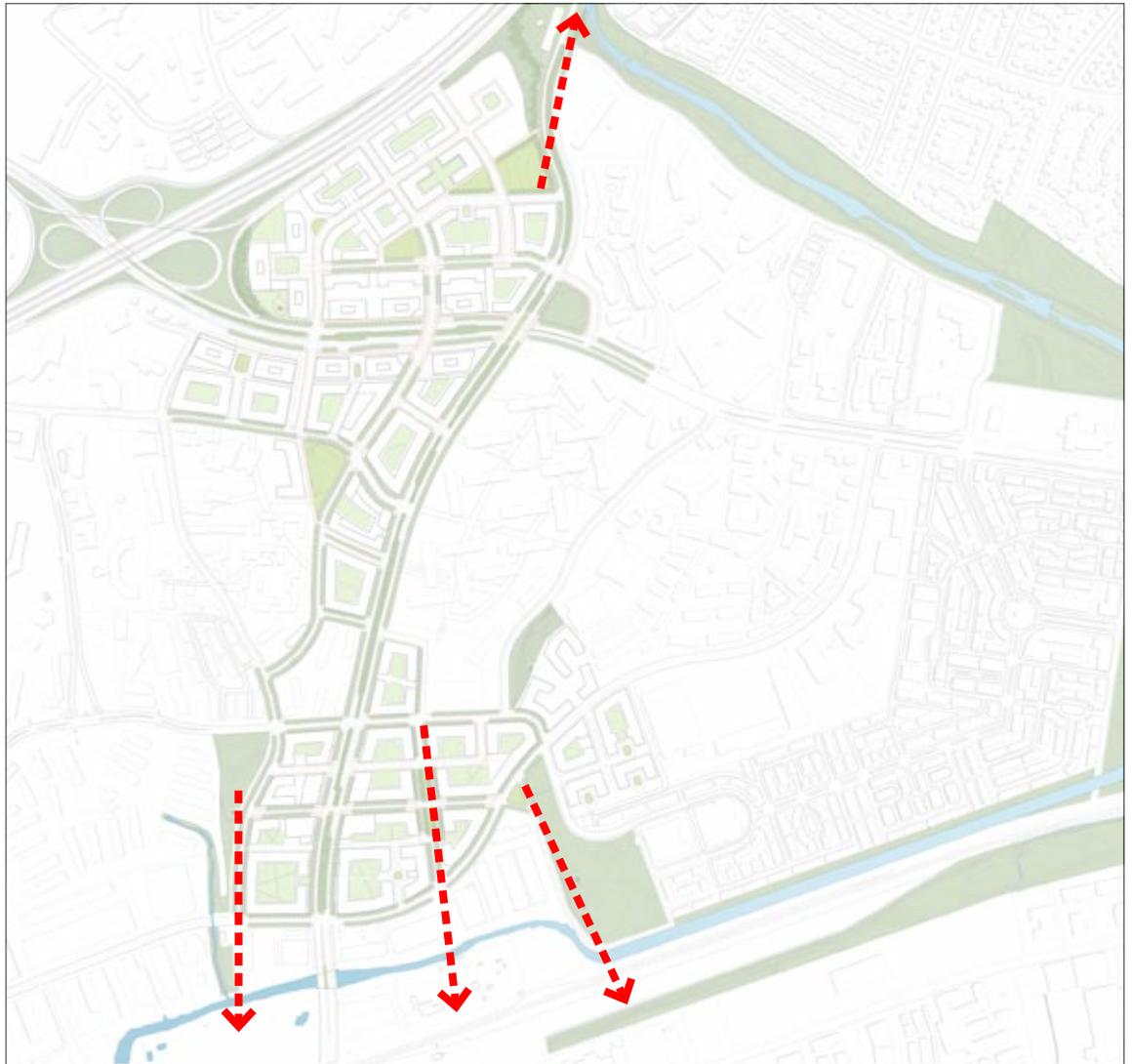
Establish a framework for convenient future connections to Van Dorn Street Metro

Anticipating the ultimate development of a bridge connection to the Van Dorn Metro means locating and designing Metro Street so that it provides good connections through Pickett Place and to Edsall Road to improve Metro access for areas east of Van Dorn Street.



Enhance and connect the area's natural assets, such as Holmes Run and Backlick Run

These natural features provide identify and connected-ness for the entire planning area to other natural areas throughout Alexandria and into surrounding areas of Fairfax County. Backlick Run in particular is underutilized as a natural asset today. Its long-term potential for open space, trails and potential stream restoration for storm-water quality enhancement and natural habitat should be further evaluated.



6.7.3 Urban Design Principles for West End Town Center



Figure 6-17. Establish convenient, multi-modal, at-grade connections to the Town Center at Walker Street, at New High Street, and at the Van Dorn Street bridge over Duke Street. Create smaller, walkable blocks at the Saul Centers/Passport, Choi and Van Dorn Plaza sites.



Figure 6-18. Connect to Holmes Run by using a green spine that links through the Town Center, and takes advantage of viewsheds to the south.



Figure 6-19. Leverage high visibility along Duke Street and I-395 by creating distinctive skylines and building tops along both major arterials.



Figure 6-20. Create a central gathering place within the Town Center for Alexandria's West End



Figure 6-21. Create a park between Walker Street and Van Dorn Street, off Stevenson Avenue.

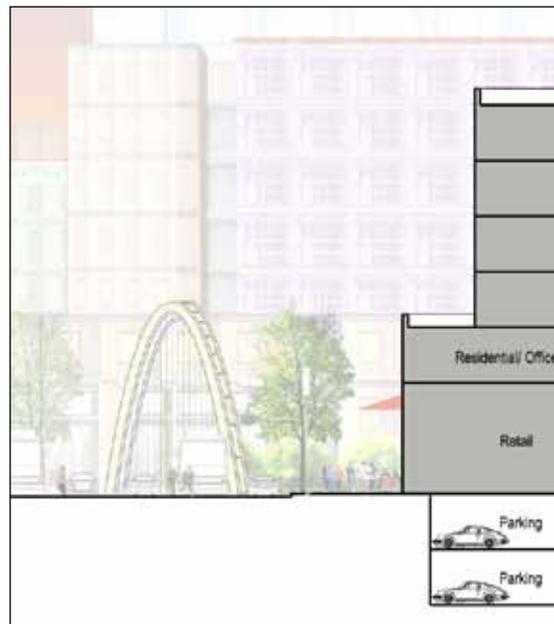


Figure 6-22. To the extent feasible, all parking should be located below grade or lined with an active use.



Figure 6-23. Establish strong regional office and retail presence at West End Town Center, while maintaining a fine-grained mix of uses.

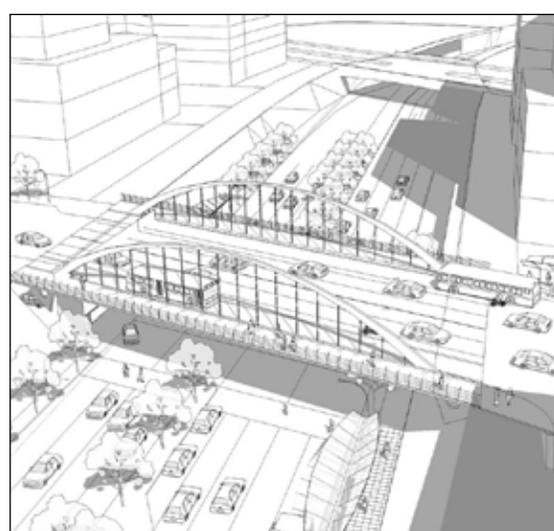


Figure 6-24. Create a strong and direct pedestrian and vehicular connection to link both sides of Duke Street at New High Street, preferably with a grade separation.



Figure 6-25. West End Town Center. This view looks toward the west from along the main shopping street in West End Town Center. Landmark Plaza is the open square on the right, with tall buildings along I-395 past the plaza. Retail frontages line the main street, with office buildings and residences stepped back above.



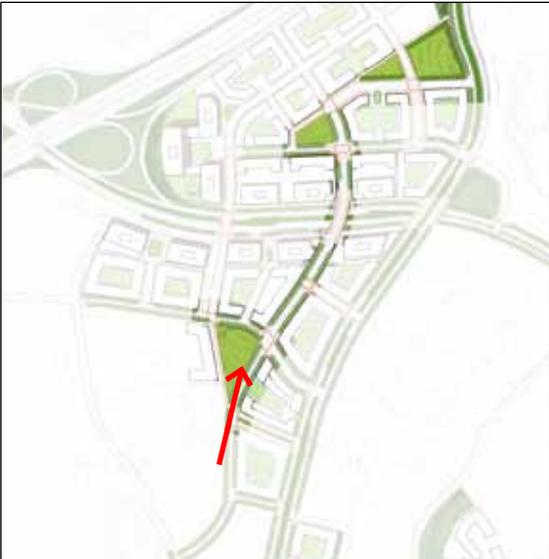


Figure 6-26. West End Town Center, looking east along Duke Street by the New High Street Bridge. The Van Dorn Street bridge is visible near the top of the rendering. The bridge connecting the north and south sides of Duke Street at New High Street is an important link to make the north and south sides of the Town Center function as a single place. Transit on the bridge is connected to transit on Duke Street below.





Figure 6-27. New High Street Park. This scene shows the view up New High Street from south of Stevenson Avenue with the taller buildings at Duke Street in the distance and buildings framing the park on Stevenson Avenue and New High Street.



6.7.4. Urban Design Principles for Pickett Place

This district includes the part of the Plan area between Edsall Road and Pickett Street, and includes several parcels on either side of Van Dorn Street, the major arterial that serves this area, that are likely to re-develop in the near term. The proximity to existing developments such as Cameron Station and the EOS-21 apartments, the natural resource of Backlick Run along with the community’s vision for the sub-area present an opportunity to develop an “Urban Village” that is distinct from the West End Town Center to the north. This urban village will be centered on a Main Street that forms a retail spine, and have good access, in the future, to a recovered and enhanced Backlick Run. A compact street grid, created by adding three new streets, along with well-integrated retail uses and open spaces will give special character to West End’s new urban village. The Pickett Place district is imagined as a mixed-use community center, developed to a lower intensity than the town center further north, but is still a magnet for residents of and around it. A new Main Street forms the spine for this district, while a new north-south Metro Street will eventually link to a bridge over Backlick Run and the Norfolk Southern rail line.



Figure 6-28. Create smaller, walkable blocks between Edsall Road and Pickett Street.



Figure 6-29. Create a central main street that connects Van Dorn Street with Pickett Street.

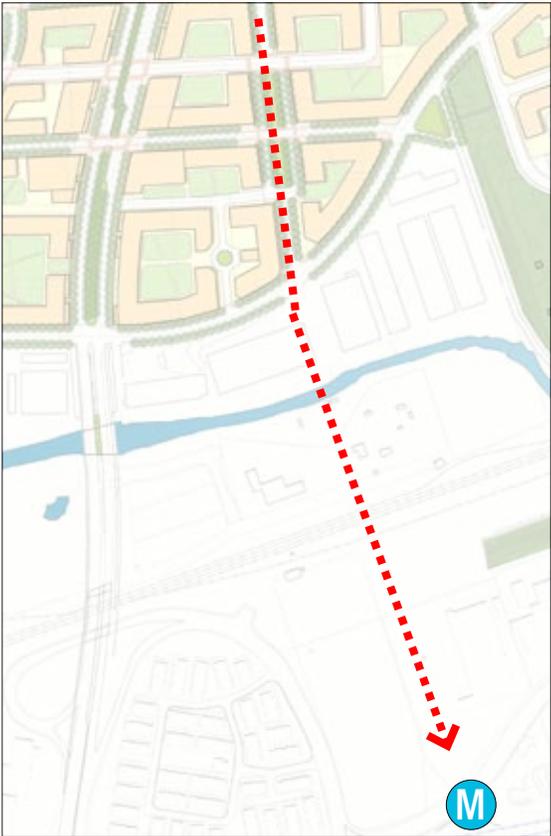


Figure 6-30. Plan for a new street connection from Pickett Place to Van Dorn Metro.



Figure 6-31. Pickett Place Main Street at Pickett Square. Looking east along Pickett Place Main Street, the wide median park of Pickett Square is visible. Retail buildings line the main street, while a tall residential building with retail use on the ground floor fronts Pickett Square.

