This Small Area Plan has been amended by City Council. Contact staff for details or copies of amendment. (703) 838-4666
(9/03)

LAND USE

ADOPTED 1992 MASTER PLAN
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

One of the purposes of the Master Plan is to implement the following land use goals, objectives and policies:

GOALS

1. To have a harmonious set of land uses that preserves the predominant character of Alexandria as a city of residential neighborhoods with a lively and attractive mix of commercial, institutional and community facilities, and recreational activity, and maintains an appropriate economic base.

2. To preserve and enhance residential neighborhoods.

3. To preserve and enhance the historic aspect of the city.

4. To preserve the residential and commercial diversity which has historically characterized Alexandria.

5. To preserve and increase parkland (for both active and passive uses) and open space throughout the city.

OBJECTIVES

1. To promote mixed use development in most major development or redevelopment areas.

2. To maintain existing residential areas.

3. To ensure that new development is compatible with adjacent or nearby residential neighbor-hoods.

4. To maintain a mix of uses compatible with existing uses and pedestrian oriented scale.

5. To maintain existing mixed use areas and ensure that nearby development is complementary.

6. To require open space or parkland, particularly in nearby developing areas targeted for dense residential and commercial use.

POLICIES

1. All new large scale development or redevelopment on parcels of 10 acres or more shall be residential or mixed use, and at densities that may be lower, but in no case higher, than allowed prior to the adoption of this plan, except where a small area plan determines that residential use is inappropriate.

2. In areas designated for mixed use development, development of parcels of 2 acres or more shall be residential or mixed use or shall contribute to achieving the mix desired in the area.

3. The dual use of public space shall be promoted, where appropriate, to encourage activity for longer periods each day.

4. Areas of the city currently zoned residential should remain zoned for residential use at no higher than their current density.

5. New development in or near the older areas of the city must be compatible with and provide for a transition in height, density, scale, and design from the old to the new.

6. The mixture of uses in new development must be compatible with nearby existing mixed use areas.

7. Development plans should make effective use of existing parkland and open space by site plan orientation, enhancement of existing stream beds and coordinated plazas.

8. The use of publicly-owned space should be periodically reassessed to determine if such space can be converted to parkland or open space use.

9. Land should be purchased for public use where no other reasonable alternatives exist to provide desirable parkland and open space.

10. Coordinated Development District development must include dedicated and protected parkland and/or open space.

11. Non-residential development adjacent to 1 or 2 family housing areas should be limited to low density, low scale (say 3 1 /2 story) uses which are compatible with residential areas. Appropriate uses might include small-scale retail, townhouse office, or service establishments.

12. Non-residential development adjacent to medium density residential areas (townhouses and garden apartments) should be limited to moderately low density, moderate scale (say 50 feet) uses which are compatible with residential areas. Appropriate uses might include moderate scale retail and service establishments, small office buildings, and other with high performance standards.

13. Residential areas should be buffered, where possible, from high impact or potentially incompatible uses such as industry, high-impact retail or eating establishments.

14. Shopping centers and high-intensity commercial activity should be concentrated in a small number of relatively compact commercial areas.

15. Large scale and high density office concentrations should be limited to designated development potential areas where high density concentrations are appropriate and where the traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods are relatively limited. These concentrations should be limited to areas served by expressways or arterials and, preferably, by Metrorail. In all such areas, mixed use development should be promoted to limit the adverse impact of office-only development. in medium and high density areas where there is a tenuous balance between residential and office development a concerted effort should be made to maintain that balance and mixed use development will generally be preferred.

16. Industrial, wholesale, distribution and heavy service uses should be concentrated in industrial areas well located with respect to transportation facilities and well buffered from residential areas.

OVERVIEW

The way in which land is developed and used is critical to the quality of life in an urban area and to the local government's fiscal capacity to provide and maintain the infrastructure and services that are needed to support the uses of the land.

The last major revision of the city's Master Plan was adopted in 1974. That plan recognized the potential impact of the Metrorail system, the growing problems of traffic congestion, the need for affordable housing, adequate recreational facilities and open space, the growing public concern with good urban design and the need to protect residential neighborhoods, historic areas and the natural environment. The Plan also recognized the need for Alexandria to remain economically competitive within the region and to develop employment opportunities for its residents.

In consideration of these diverse needs, the Plan attempted to strike a balance between encouraging growth and development and protecting, stabilizing and improving residential areas. This balance was to be achieved by encouraging development in designated growth areas and by discouraging development in residential areas. To create more vibrant development areas and to lessen traffic impacts associated with new development, the Plan emphasized providing a mix of uses in the designated growth areas.

These issues, raised and discussed in the 1974 Master Plan, continue to be of major issues of concern to Alexandrians. The Plan's approach toward addressing these concerns is still valid and provides a solid foundation upon which to base the 1990 Master Plan. However, the 1974 Plan needs to be updated and refined to reflect and respond to ever changing conditions and needs in a dynamic urban environment.

This chapter documents some of the key land use and development changes which have affected the City over the past 15 years and discusses how the City might continue to change in the future based on economic and demographic projections. The chapter then discusses the strategies used in the Small Area Plans to implement the Goals, Objectives, and Policies adopted by City Council to guide the City's future development.

CURRENT LAND USE

The current uses of land in Alexandria are summarized in Table 1 on the basis of the geographical units used in the development of Small Area Plans.

Table 1
1990 LAND USE BY SUBAREAS OF THE CITY
(in acres)

	Res.	Com	Ind.	Inst	Parks	Vacant
Alexandria West	487.0	67.7	7.7	109.6	67.6	170.2
Braddock Road Metro	63.6	16.6	41.0	12.7	8.5	12.6
Fairlington/Bradlee	5.6	28.9	7.9	3.1		
King Street/Eisenhower	2.4	98.3	148.4	14.2	7.5	87.1
Landmark/Van Dorn	273.3	189.1	304.6	178.1	4.3	74.1
Northeast	43.0	3.2	5.3	1.4	1.6	5.1
North Ridge/Rosemont	720.4	6.1	6.8	83.4	16.8	14.0
Old Town	144.2	63.8	12.5	12.5	63.5	10.0
Old Town North	39.1	61.0	27.9	7.2	3.4	
Potomac West	808.9	75.5	68.0	1.2	100.4	30.0
Potomac Yard	304.4	107.0				
Seminary/Strawberry	754.9	76.6	91.0	349.5	108.5	32.4
SW Quadrant	62.3	19.6	55.5	26.2	9.2	7.3
Taylor Run/Duke St.	347.7	20.6	70.7	71.1	35.4	17.6
Total	3,752.4	727.0	1,144	867.8	537.5	466.9
Percent	50%	10%	15%	11%	7%	6%

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

This table indicates that although the predominant land use in the City is residential the City and its neighborhoods are quite diverse. The table also shows that the City is mostly built up with only 6% of the land vacant and undeveloped.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS SINCE 1974

Office Space

In 1974, 390 acres of land were in commercial use. This had nearly doubled by 1990. Most of this growth has been in office buildings. More that 10 million square feet of office space has been built in the city since the early 1970s; over 5 million of this in the past 5 years.

During the early part of this period–between 1970 and the mid-1980s--most of the large office buildings were built in or adjacent to the Central Business District or along Eisenhower Avenue. More recently large office buildings and multi-building office parks have been developed near

the Metrorail stations, in close proximity to an 1-395 highway interchange, or on the north waterfront, which provides easy access to National Airport and the District of Columbia. Multi-building projects typically are developed in stages: The Carr-Norfolk Southern project, for example, is expected to take 20 years to reach completion.

Table 2
LOCATION OF OFFICE DEVELOPMENT
1974-1990

	Gross Sq. Ft.
Alexandria West	2,206,247
Braddock Road Metro	474,054
Fairlington/Bradlee	0
King Street/Eisenhower Avenue	2,390,838
Landmark/Van Dom	654,145
Northeast	35,162
North Ridge/Rosemont	198,280
Old Town	1,533,707
Old Town North	2,230,915
Potomac West	77,488
Seminary/Strawberry	115,835
S.W. Quadrant	29,833
Taylor Run/Duke Street	186,511
Total	10,133,015

Note: Includes all office buildings over 5.000 square feet.

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

Table 3
MULTI-BUILDING OFFICE PROJECTS

Office	Year Project Completed	Sq. Ft.
Braddock Center (1)(2)	1986	322,950
Transpotomac Canal Center	1987	546,883
King Street Station (2)	ongoing	546,900
Roundhouse Square	1979	104,083
Duke Street Station	1986	182,345
Alexandria Tech Center (1)	ongoing	346,000
Transpotomac Plaza	1985	354,871
Mark Center Office Park	1979	317,544
Mark Center (1)	ongoing	715,000
Park Center (1) (2)	ongoing	3,321,325
King Street Metroplace(1)	ongoing	389,157
Carlyle(2)	ongoing	2,800,000

(1) Includes some planned space not built or under construction

(2) Total includes other uses; residential, retail and/or hotel
Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

Chart 1
OFFICE DEVELOPMENT 1964-1989
Not available in online version

Hotel Rooms

The development of office space and the continuing decentralization of activities away from the core city of Washington have created new demands for hotel accommodations in Alexandria. Twelve hotels, with more than 2,200 guest rooms, have been built in the city since 1970.

Table 4
NEW HOTELS 1970-1990

	Rooms
Old Town Holiday Inn, 480 King Street	220
Ramada Inn, 4641 Kenmore Avenue	201
Executive Club, 500 Bashford Lane	81
Madison Place, North St. Asaph Street	248
Compri, 2700 Eisenhower Avenue	176
Old Colony Inn, North Washington Street	105
Morrison House, 116 South Alfred Street	47
Ramada Inn, 901 North Fairfax Street	254
Raddison Mark Plaza, 500 Seminary Road	500
Rodeway Inn, 6254 Duke Street	150
Days Inn, 110 South Bragg Street	200
Bragg Towers, 99 South Bragg Street	109
Total	2,282

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

Retail Space

New offices in Alexandria and the population growth in residential areas adjacent to the city have created a demand for retail space. Over 1 million square feet of new retail space has been built since 1974, including a 694,000 square foot expansion of the city's only regional shopping mall--Landmark Center–and the 147,500 square foot Hechinger Commons on Duke Street.

Retail space has also been provided on the ground floor of many of the city's new office buildings, and over 365,000 square feet of retail space is expected to be built as a part of the Carr-Norfolk Southern development.

Industrial Uses

The use of land for industrial purposes declined by 20% between 1974 and 1990. There were 1,180 acres of industrially-used land in 1974; only 947 in 1990.

The industrial uses that dominated the north waterfront have been replaced by office and residential uses. Industrial uses are also disappearing from Cameron Valley as land costs in that area increase and from the areas adjacent to the south end of Potomac Yard that were but up by businesses that required rail-road access.

Little new industrial development has occurred in the city since 1974, although some 130 acres have been developed for warehouse uses, principally on Wheeler and Eisenhower Avenues and on the former Fruit Growers Express Company property south of Duke Street.

Residential

Between the early 1970s and 1990, the number of housing units in the City increased by over 30 percent; 11,400 units have been built since 1974 resulting in an estimated 58,000 units in the housing stock in 1990.

Table 5

HOUSING UNITS

1970	1975	1980	1985	1990
44,424	51,161	52,041	55,989	57,996

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and Alexandria Dept. of Planning and Community Development

Although, on average 712 new units have been added to the stock annually since 1974 housing construction in Alexandria has been highly cyclical. As Chart 2 illustrates, housing booms occurred in the early 1970's, reaching over 3,000 units in one year, in the late 1970's, reaching almost 3,000 units in one year, and again in the late 1980's, reaching over 1,700 units in one year.

Over three-fourths of the housing built in the city since 1974 has been located west of Quaker Lane. Most of the 8,700 new units in that area were mid and highrise apartments/condominiums, with some town-houses.

Chart 2
RESIDENTIAL PERMITS AUTHORIZED 1970-1989

Not available in online version

Although the number of single family homes built each year has remained relatively constant, single family homes have consistently fallen as a percentage of the city's housing stock. While in 1970, 39 percent of the housing stock was single family homes, by 1985, less than a third of the housing in the city was single family units. In the future, given increased land costs. it is likely that an even greater share of the new housing will be multi-family.

The character of multi-family residential construction has and will also change. Prior to 1970, two-thirds of all apartments in Alexandria were garden apartments. Increasingly, multi-family residential development has been in midrise or highrise buildings at much higher densities.

LAND USE DEVELOPMENT BEYOND 1990

As part of the region's Cooperative Forecasts, each jurisdictional member of the Washington Area Council of Governments (COG) submits to COG growth forecasts for employment, households and population. For Alexandria, these forecasts were based on the amount and zoning of vacant and redevelopable land, announced development plans, and an office market study provided by Hammer, Slier George & Associates.

Zoning of Vacant and Redevelopable Land

About 97 percent of the 1,100 acres of vacant and redevelopable land in the City is zoned for commercial development. Given the existing zoning of these sites, 128 million square feet of commercial development could be built in the City. Most of this land is located in the Alexandria West, Landmark/Van Dorn, King Street / Eisenhower Avenue and Potomac Yard.

Table 6
ZONING OF MAJOR COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL VACANT/REDEVELOPABLE SITES
Land Area

Zone Class	Vacant (Acres)	Redevel-opable (Acres)	Total Vacant and Redevelopable (Acres)	Off.Potential Current Zoning (Millions Sq.Ft.)
C-2	120.3	21.0	141.3	18.4
C-2-B '	12.5	2.5	15.0	1.9
C-3		0.5	0.5	0.1
C-0	67.0		67.0	5.8
1-1	9.9	247.3	257.2	28.0
1-2	56.7	448.5	505.2	65.9
M-1	-	4.4	4.4	0.6
M-3	3.9	36.8	40.7	6.2
W-1		7.5	7.5	.8
Total	270.3	768.5	1,038.8	127.7

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

The vacant and redevelopable land that is zoned for residential development is less than 40 acres, which at a maximum, could be developed for about 1,700 units. Although residential development could theoretically occur on most of the commercially-zoned parcels, the densities allowed for commercial uses in a commercial zone is far greater than that allowed for residential uses.

In effect, Alexandria's zoning and its relationship to vacant and underutilized land subject to redevelopment reveals the enormous bias of the zoning code toward high density office development and the potential to develop office levels which exceed by a factor of two all the office development experienced by the city so far in its history.

As will be discussed below, the market demand for even a tenth of this potential office space on developable commercially-zoned land will probably not occur in 20 years or, for that matter, in a century.

Employment Forecasts

The employment forecasts are largely based on the growth of office employment in the City

projected in the Hammer, Siler, George & Associates market analysis. The consultant concluded that the marketplace would absorb from 931,000 to 1,019,000 square feet of office space between 1988 and 1994 and from 611,000 to 749,000 square feet between 1994 and 2005. This is less than the annual rate of 1 million square feet needed in the mid-1980s, and reflects a projected reduction in the total regional demand for this type of space. Alexandria's share of the regional demand is, however, expected to increase from 5% in 1988 to 8% between 1995 and 2005.

The projected demand for office space in Alexandria in the period from 1988 to 2005 is 13.6 million square feet. This is, of course, much less than the 128 million square feet possible under the present zoning ordinance. Based on the data developed during the Hammer study. it is concluded that the more restrictive zoning provisions now under consideration will not adversely affect the city's economic base.

The bulk of the new office space will be located in identifiable major growth areas. These are:

o King Street/Eisenhower Avenue. This area has excellent access to 2 Metrorail stations and the Capital Beltway. Over 2.8 million square feet of office space is planned for the Carlyle mixed use development. Other large development sites include the Hoffman property and Cameron Center.
o Potomac Yard. Plans are being developed by the owner of Potomac Yard to curtail railroad operations and build a mixed use project that would contain a substantial proportion of office space. It is, however, unlikely that the city can permit development on the massive scale envisioned by the developers because of the potential traffic impact.
o West End of Cameron Valley. Development will occur around the new Van Dorn Metro station, which is scheduled to open in 1991.
o Alexandria West. Large potential development sites, with access to 1-395, are located in the West End north of 1-395. These include the Winkler properties, with 100 acres still undeveloped, and the Stone tract.

Based on an average office density of 3.5 employees per 1000 square feet of space, the 14 million square feet of projected office development would result in an additional 49,000 office employees in the City by 2010. On the other hand, as commercial development displaces industrial uses , industrial employment will decrease. The table reflects employment projections in five year increments for each major section of the City.

Table 7
EMPLOYMENT, 1990-2005

Area	1990	1995	2000	2005
East & South of the RR	47,300	56,600	64,600	73,100
Between RR & Quaker Lane	10,400	10,200	10,900	11,500
West & North of the RR	39,604	40,500	46,800	50,700
Total	97,300	107,300	122.300	135,300

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

Housing

The number of housing units in Alexandria is forecasted to increase by 28% between 1990 and 2010. By the later year there could be 74,400 housing units in the City.

Table 8

PROJECTED GROWTH IN HOUSING UNITS

	12922	1995	2000	2005	2010	%Change 1990-2010
East of RR	10,100	12,900	15,600	17,400	19,200	90%
Between RR/Quaker	16,900	17,400	18,100	18,200	18,300	8%
West of Quaker	31.000	33.100	34,000	36,300	30,900	19%
Total	58,000	63,400	67,700	71,900	74,400	28%

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

The area east of the tracks is predicted to have the greatest growth in housing units. The 90% growth in housing units forecasted for this area can be attributed to two mixed use developments, the Carlyle development that is approved for the King Street/Eisenhower Avenue area and the proposed Alexandria 2020 project in the Potomac Yard area.

Townhouses and apartments will be typical of new residential development throughout Alexandria. In this mix, apartments will predominate, although a small number of detached houses will be built in areas such as North Ridge/Rosemont and Taylor Run/Duke Street where detached houses are characteristic.

Of the approximately 2,300 housing units under construction in 1990, 78% were apartments and nearly all of the rest were townhouses. These medium and high density forms of housing will continue to be the norm in Alexandria as long as land remains expensive and scarce.

Population

Residential development will increase the City's population. Housing is forecasted to grow by 16,400 units, reaching 74,400 units in 2010. These units could house 72,000 households with an average house-hold size of 1.86 people and a vacancy factor of 3.5% Based on the forecasts the City's population would grow to 135,000 by 2010 or by 22%.

The population east of the railroad tracks is projected to grow by 7% between 1990 and 2010. This population increase is based on an estimated 6,200 people residing in the Potomac Yard's 2020 project by 2010 and 5,300 people residing in Cameron Valley's new housing at Mill Race, Carlyle and other sites. Neither the Potomac Yard nor Cameron Valley had any residents in 1990. The Braddock Road area is also an area with new housing and a growing population which is forecasted to increase by 1,900 people.

In absolute numbers, the area west of Quaker Lane will grow almost as much as the area east of the railroad tracks. Mixed use projects on large sites such as the Stone Tract in Alexandria West and Cameron Station in the Landmark/Van Dorn area will add thousands of housing units and people. Smaller projects such as Breckenridge Place and Skypointe in Alexandria West would also contribute to the West End's growth over the next 20 years.

Table 9
PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH

Area	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	%Change 1990-2010
E. of RR	18,300	23,600	27,100	29,800	32,200	76%
Between RR/Quaker	35,100	35,700	36,700	36,400	36.200	3%
W. of Quaker	56,100	59,300	60,400	64,000	64,900	16%
Sub-Total	109,500	118,600	124,200	130,200	133,300	22%
Institutional	1,700	1,700	1.700	1.700	1.700	0%
Total	112,200	120,300	125,900	131,900	135,000	21%

Source: Alexandria Department of Planning and Community Development

SMALL AREA PLANS

The analysis of development trends and the forecasts indicate that the City has grown and changed enormously over the past 15 years and that these trends will continue for the foreseeable future. Some 49,000 additional jobs and some 23,000 additional people are forecasted to live or work in the City by 2010.

The analysis also reveals that current zoning of vacant and redevelopable land in the City allows far more commercial development than could ever be absorbed by market demand, ever be accommodated by City facilities and services and ever be tolerated by Alexandria citizens. Clearly, an updated and revised land use plan and new zoning are needed to meet the challenge of economic growth, to guide future development and to implement the City's land use policies, goals and objectives.

The City has chosen to use small area planning as an integral part of the Master Plan process to guide the City's future development. The intent of the 14 small area plans is to provide the analytical base for de-tailed land use recommendations affecting each of the City's neighborhoods and development areas. The small area plans also form the basis for changes in the zoning code needed to insure that zoning is consistent with the small area plans and the City's land use policies.

To implement the goals, objectives and policies adopted by the City and listed at the beginning of this chapter the small area plans employ the following strategies;

1. Existing residential land uses, in all its forms, and with few exceptions, are to be preserved.
2. Residential neighborhoods are to be protected from major new development by providing transitional uses, heights and densities between low scale residential uses and higher scaled and more intense commercial uses.

3. Regional, community and neighborhood shopping and retail uses vital to serving residential areas are to be preserved, revitalized and protected from higher density office development.

4. Areas designated for parks and recreation are to be preserved and protected from development encroachment.

5. Areas providing public facilities and public utilities are to be preserved and protected from development encroachment.

6. Private institutional uses in residential areas such as places of religion and schools, should be preserved or if not longer viable, should revert to residential uses compatible with adjacent areas.

7. Viable industrial areas that contribute to the City's economic diversity and varied employment base and provide needed services are to be maintained and protected from significant office development and redevelopment.

8. Major development is to be directed away from existing low scaled residential areas and encouraged on areas designated for development.

9. High density office development is to be limited to sites that are located within convenient walking distance to a transit station and to a high capacity roadway system.

10. High density but lower scaled mixed use development is to be permitted within the Old and Historic Alexandria District and central business district consistent with the character of this built-up urban area and subject to review by the city.

11. Mixed use development is to be encouraged in all areas where coordinated development on relatively large tracks of vacant or redevelopable land is desired and on smaller sites where mixed use development can be used to mitigate development impacts on adjacent residential areas.

12. Large tracts of land whose development could have a major impact on adjacent areas are to be designated as Coordinated Development Districts (CDDs). CDD areas are to be developed for a mix of uses in accord with an overall concept plan and subject to urban design guidelines, a comprehensive amenity plan, an affordable housing plan and a transportation management plan.

ZONING

To implement the Small Area Plans new zoning tools are needed.

The present zoning ordinance, adopted in 1951 and since amended many times, contains 11 residential zones, 3 broad-based commercial zones, 2 industrial zones, and 5 specialized zones related to the Metrorail stations, the waterfront, and recreational uses. It served the city adequately until the demand for large quantities of office space and their supporting facilities, such as hotels, arose in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Concurrently with the revision of the policy sections of its Master Plan, the city has been preparing, in close consultation with property owners and civic groups, a series of Small Area Plans that look at specific areas of Alexandria in terms of how those areas should hereafter develop in order to carry out the land use goals, objectives, and policies.

As the Small Area Plans have gone through the processes of drafting, meetings with citizens, pubic hearings before the planning commission and city council, and adoption, it has been clearly evident that the zoning classifications and regulations of the past, however much they have been amended, are no longer adequate to meet the needs of the 1990s and beyond. In brief, what is needed is not another series of amendments, but a complete revision of the zoning ordinance.

To meet this situation, City Council appointed a citizen task force to prepare a new zoning ordinance designed to implement the City's land use goals, objectives, and policies. The new zoning ordinance must be, and is, based firmly upon this Master Plan. And, as it protects the City's residential areas from intrusions that affect them adversely, directs the growth of non-residential development to the degree that it can be accommodated by the City's infrastructure, and encourages the building of mixed use projects, it must also--and will--protect the legitimate interests of the owners of vacant and redevelopable land to the greatest extent possible.