



Virginia

Technical Assistance Panel Report

Southwest Fairfax Circle Activity Center

ULI VIRGINIA

AUGUST 30 AND 31, 2022



Introduction



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The Urban Land Institute

- We're a nonprofit, member-based research and education organization advising communities on land use issues.
- The mission of the Urban Land Institute: Shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide



TAP Panelists

Sal Musarra, PLA, LEED AP
TAP Chair
Land Planner

Andrew Bleckley, PLA
Design Forum, Inc.
Land Planning/LA

Chris DeWitt, AICP
VHB
Land Planning/Engineer

Joshua Batman
Hauscraft
Principal and Lead Designer

Nick Cooper, AIA, NOMA
Hanbury
Architect

TAP Methodology

- Review of Background Materials
- Site Tour
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Processing Input
 - What We Heard / Learned
 - Primary Takeaways
 - Observations / Recommendations



TAP Objectives

- The goal of the requested Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) is to develop a vision for the southwest Fairfax Circle area that meets the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, identifies and overcomes barriers to redevelopment or reinvestment in properties (with particular focus on recommended next steps and outcomes for 3520 Old Lee Highway), and encourages coordination and partnerships between property representatives as well as the City.

Study Area

- The southwest Fairfax Circle area is an area made up of eight parcels within the Fairfax Circle Activity Center, one of five activity centers identified in the City of Fairfax 2035 Comprehensive Plan, where a greater mix of uses, coordinated redevelopment, and a pedestrian oriented atmosphere are encouraged.
- Per recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, the City intends to develop a Small Area Plan for the entire Fairfax Circle Activity Center, which would help define parameters for new growth and encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in existing properties.
- The schedule for the Small Area Plan has not been confirmed but it is expected to begin later in 2022. Figure 1 below shows the extent of the Fairfax Circle Activity Center from the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map, with the proposed Southwest Fairfax Circle Study Area identified by the dashed line.
- Figure 2 provides an aerial of the Southwest Fairfax Circle Study Area with the eight parcels identified.

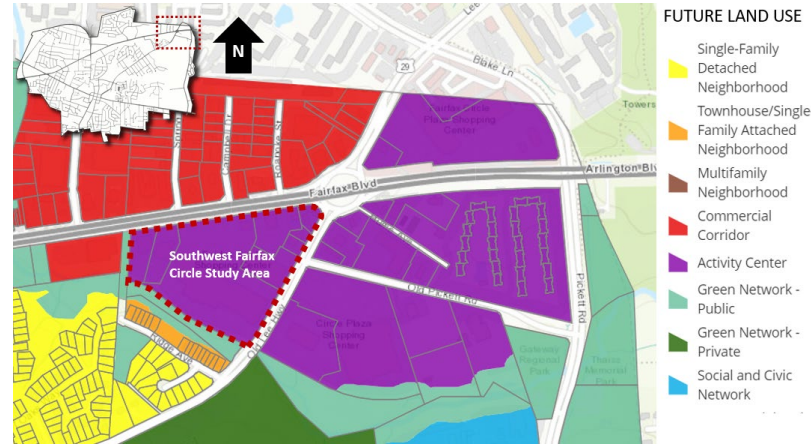


Figure 1: Fairfax Circle Activity Center

Figure 2: Southwest Fairfax Circle Study Area



List of Stakeholders

We interviewed the following stakeholders

- Joe Lothrop (owner of 9607-9625 Fairfax Highway)
- Mark Angres (Planning Commission chair) and Matt Rice (Planning Commissioner)
- Glenn Rosenthal (owner of Fairfax Circle Shopping Center [3260 Old Lee Highway, 9629-9709 Fairfax Boulevard])
- Don Earl Stedham (Chief Operating Officer for Aksoylu Properties [3250 Old Lee Highway]) and Carlos Montenegro (land use attorney for Aksoylu Properties)
- Jennifer Rose (Executive Director, Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce) and Kathleen Paley (Chair, Fairfax City Economic Development Authority)
- Amit Kapoor (owner of Shell station [9605 Fairfax Blvd])
- David Meyer (Mayor of Fairfax City)

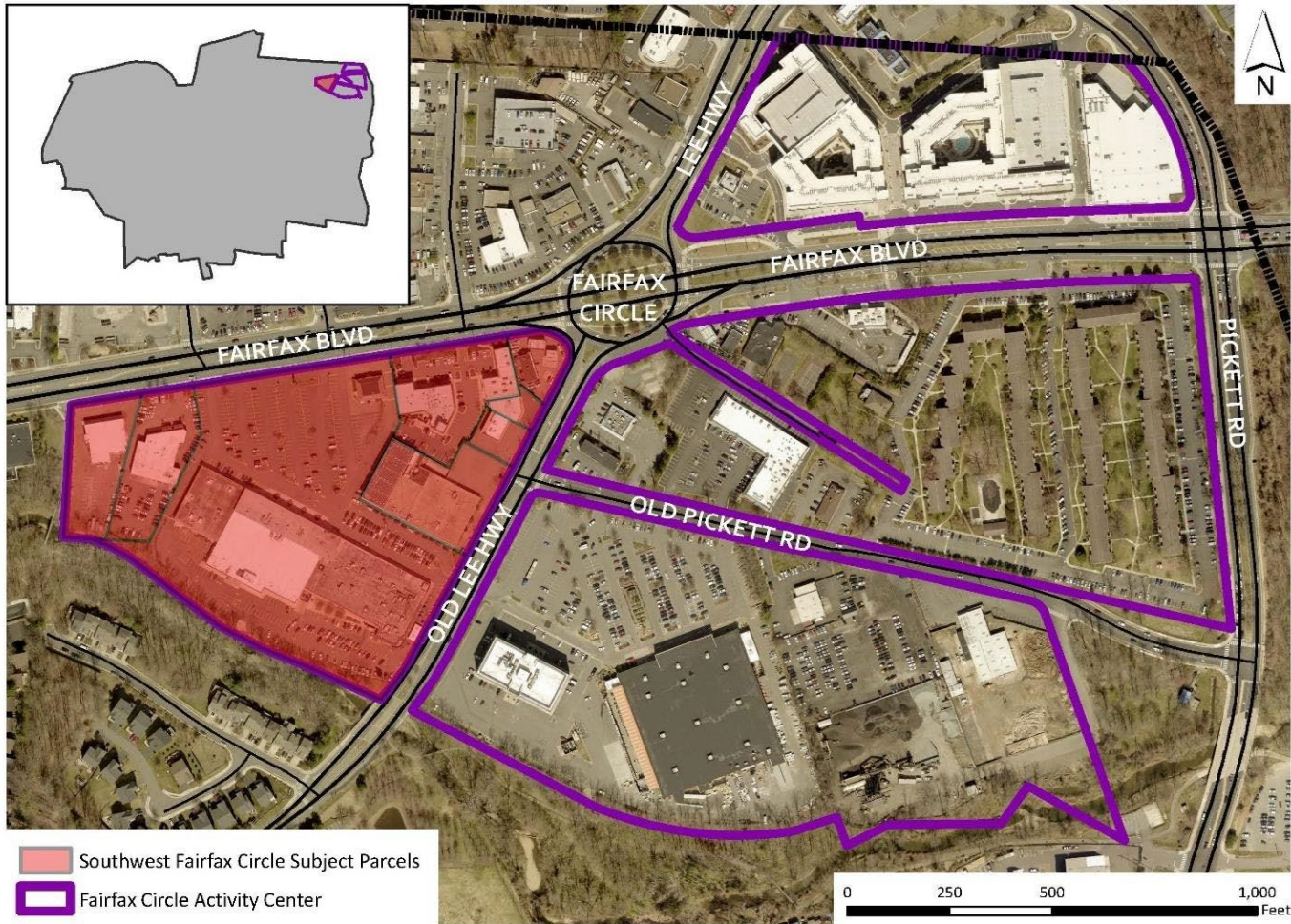


Existing Conditions



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Southwest Fairfax Circle - Local Context



Southwest Fairfax Circle Land Constraints

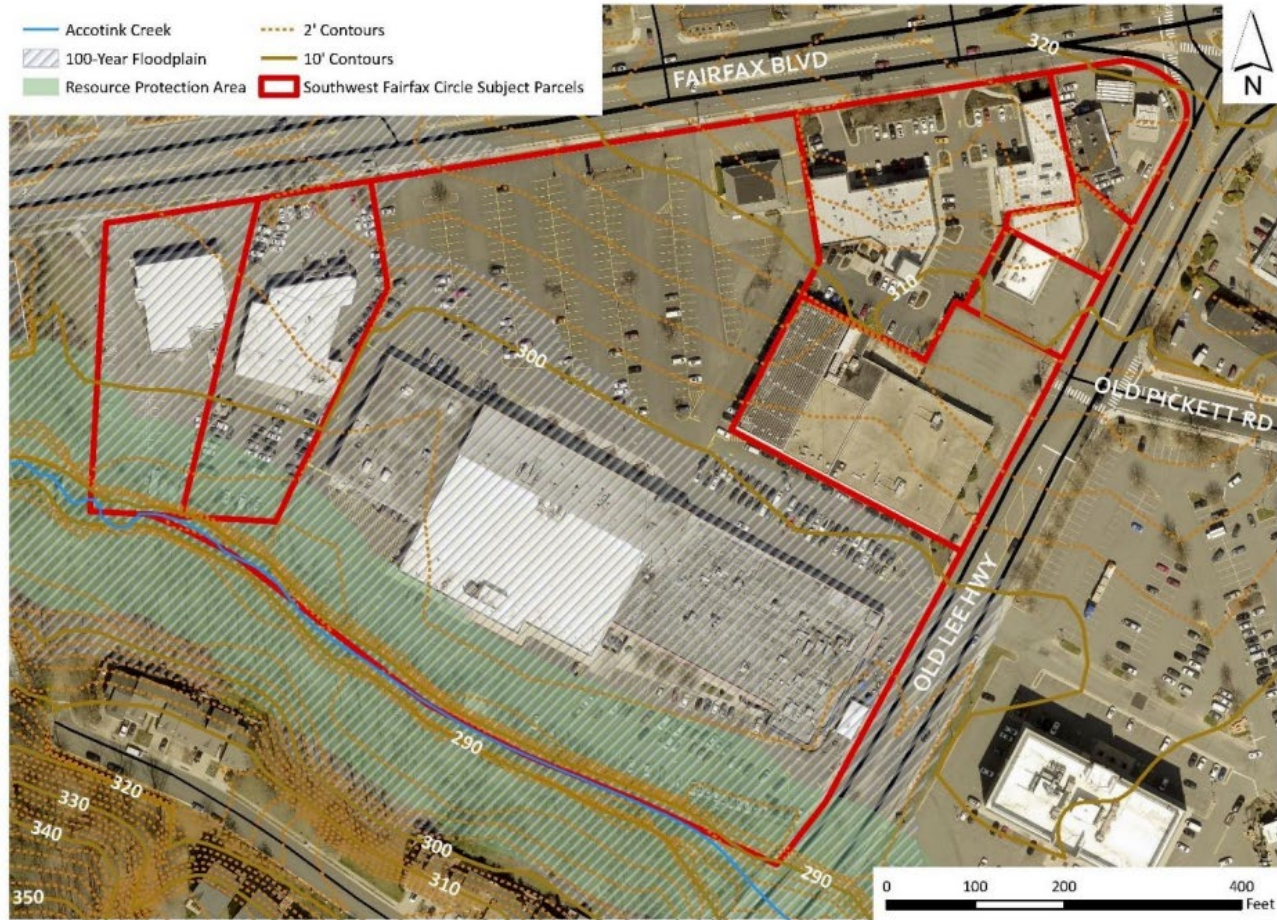


Figure 7: Land and other environmental constraints that impact the Study Area.

Existing Conditions

- Significant grade change across site, but this might be advantageous
- Almost 100% impervious, which again might be advantageous
- RPA/Floodplain
- Narrow public sidewalk frontage; few viable shade trees; some updated lighting; no overhead utilities

Existing Conditions

- Traffic circle problematic, unsafe – redesign in study
- Pedestrian safety is a major issue
- Plan for multimodal transportation infrastructure on Old Lee Hwy
- Multiple site access locations from Fairfax Blvd; limited from Old Lee
- Public transportation routes good; poor connectivity to stops and Metro

Existing Conditions

- Site is divided into multiple parcels with multiple owners
- Existing parking inventory appears more than sufficient, however, distribution and allocation to parcels is not efficient
- Limited bike facilities
- Adjacent Accotink Creek trail – no trailhead branding / wayfinding

Existing Conditions

- Zoned CR commercial retail
- ACOD – design guidelines
- Possible code modifications to support redevelopment
- Scout on the Circle
- Existing land use is not consistent with future land use plans

Existing Conditions

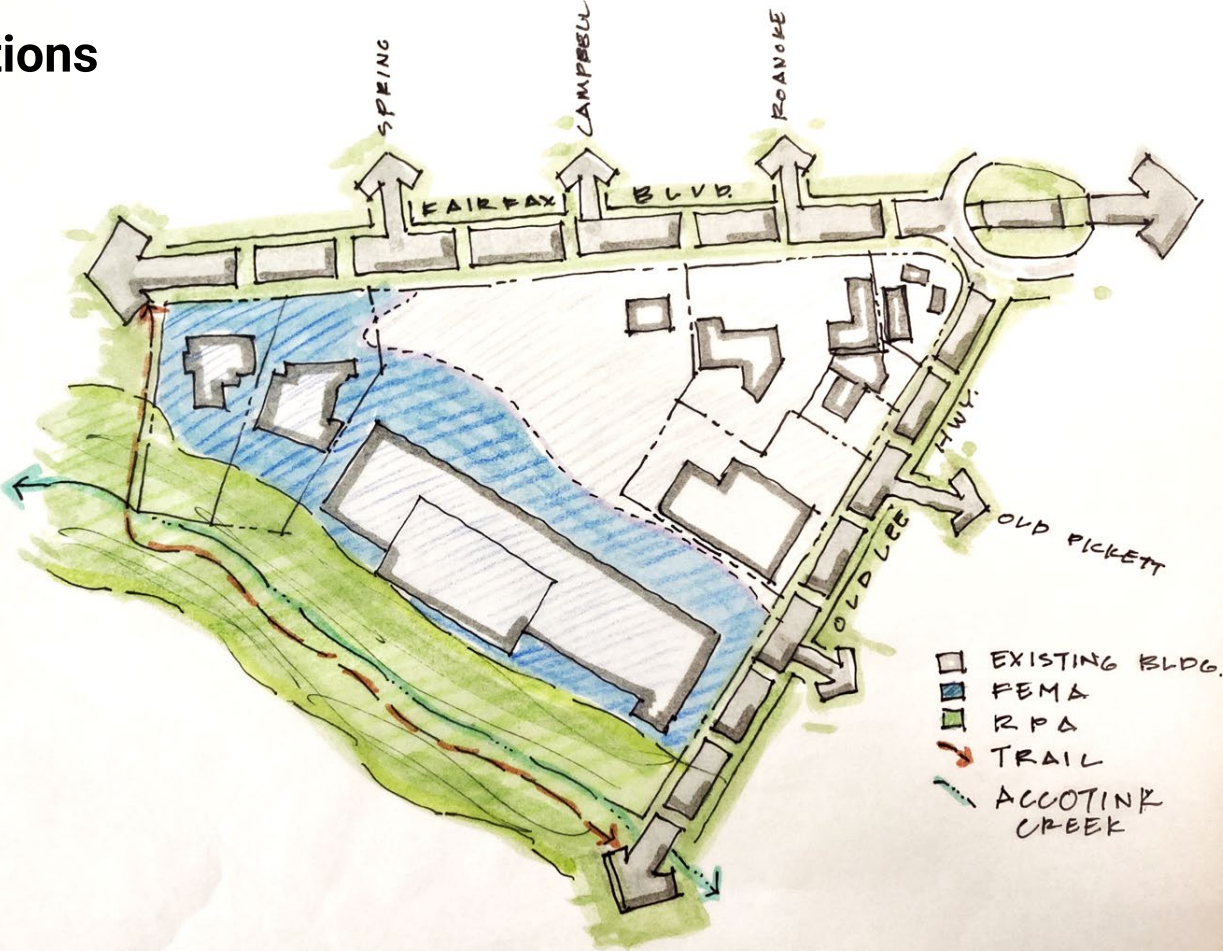
Market Demand Input

- Existing retail space is regularly near 100% occupancy
- Good demand for workforce housing
- Limited demand for office

Other Conditions

- Vagrancy Issue

Existing Conditions



Site Images

Fairfax Circle Shopping Center



Site Images

Lothrop Shopping Center (near corner of Fairfax Circle)



Site Images

Former 7-Eleven property and abandoned Lotte property



Site Images

Accotink Creek behind the study area and Willcoxon Trail (along creek and western edge of the study area)





Challenges and Opportunities



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What We've Learned

Challenges

- Property ownership – multiple parcels with different owners
- Pre-existing traffic issues with Fairfax Circle need to be addressed regardless of redevelopment
- Pedestrian safety major concern along both Fairfax Blvd and Old Lee Hwy
- RPA / Floodplain
- 15-20 year long leases involving some of the parcels
- Property owners not all in favor of through-street – would need buy-in
- Fire protection access

What We've Learned

Challenges

- Site feels “cut off” from other parts of the city
- Parking (inventory and location)
- Safety and security
- Lack of awareness that trails exist, lack of signage

Key Takeaways

Opportunities

- Area should showcase “gateway” to City of Fairfax
 - Create another “destination” in the city
- Site presents opportunity to create a context in alignment with the activity center concept
- Options for more incremental redevelopment; however, each step should consider overall coordinated plan
 - Proposed Lotte site redevelopment could be catalyst for redeveloping the rest of the property in future

Key Takeaways

Opportunities

- Street improvements
 - Greenway connections
 - Wider sidewalks
 - Improved public realm along frontages
 - Increase pervious area and tree canopy
- Densification and mixed-use
 - Site is appropriate for additional height and density
 - Introduction of residential uses
- Improved transportation
 - Opportunity to break up “superblock” with better connectivity
 - Tie-in to City’s existing multimodal plans on Old Lee Hwy
 - Could become a transit hub within Fairfax Circle activity area with stronger connections to Metro

Key Takeaways

Opportunities

- Trails and potential green space/open space can contribute to “sense of place”
 - Bring resilient green space into the site and incorporate public education features
 - Public art program
- Real and perceived safety is critical
 - Lack of pedestrian infrastructure and traffic issues are a major safety concern
 - Vagrancy
- Consider a business improvement district as a funding mechanism for site amenities and security



Land Use and Economic Development Strategies



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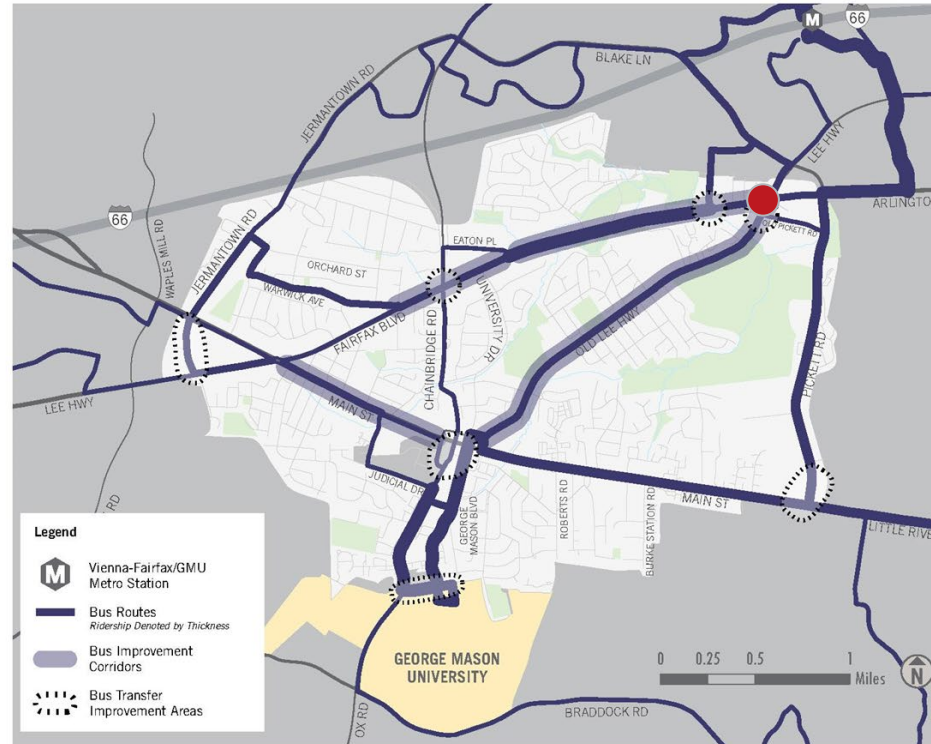


Conceptual Development Program

- Mix of residential and unrestricted ground floor retail
- Mixed density with diverse population
- Mix of heights, including midrise and higher would be appropriate for this site
- Programmable outdoor amenity space/outdoor open space
- Trail connectivity and improved access to the creek
- Green infrastructure including restored RPA
- “Right sized” parking requirements; consider structured parking to reduce overall impervious area
- Local transit hub with improved connection to metro
- Public art to activate trail/open spaces
- Reinforce historical circle with architecture, landscape, and pedestrian circulation (“hardscape geometry”)

Planned Transit Enhancements

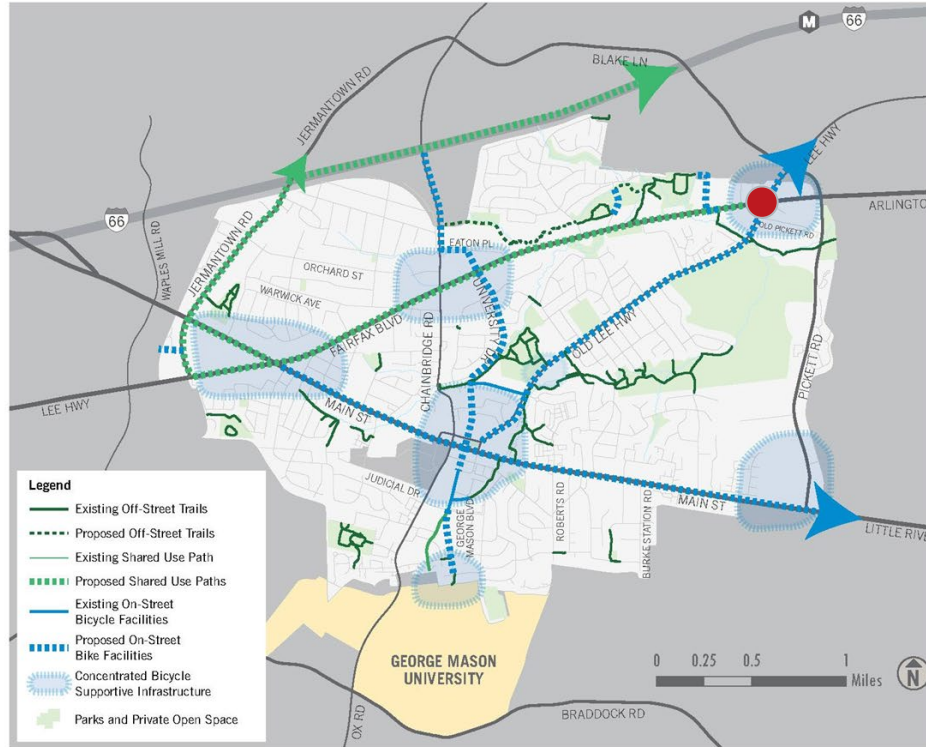
FIGURE 26 PROPOSED TRANSIT NETWORK ENHANCEMENTS



(See Outcome MM2.4)

Planned Bike Enhancements

FIGURE 25 PROPOSED NETWORK FOR BICYCLE TRAVEL



(See Outcome MM2.3)

Planned Trail Enhancements

FIGURE 24 PROPOSED GREEN RIBBON OF RECREATIONAL TRAILS AND ENVISIONED CONNECTIONS



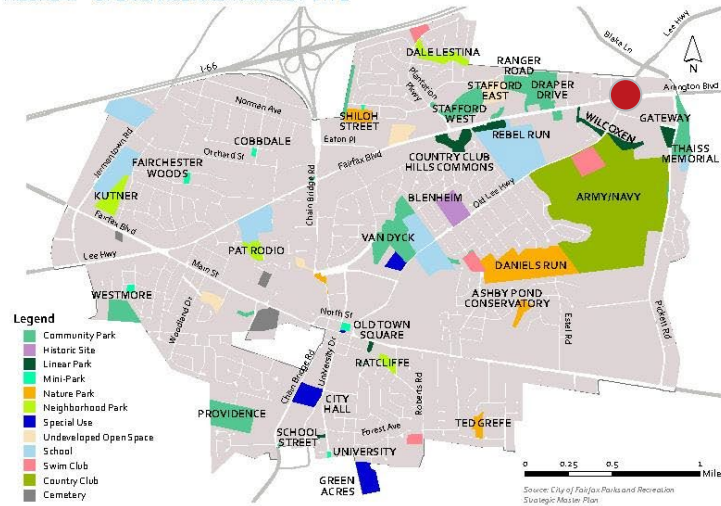
(See Outcome MM2.2)

Parks and Recreation

A diverse network of public parks and open space areas, including recreation fields, natural areas, informal open spaces, and a trail system is provided throughout the City. Containing approximately 200 acres of land, the City's parks fall into four categories: regional parks, community parks, neighborhood parks, and vest pocket parks as shown in Figure 47. Most trails in the City are multipurpose recreational trails serving the needs of pedestrians, joggers, and bicyclists.



FIGURE 47 OPEN SPACE AND PARKS BY TYPE



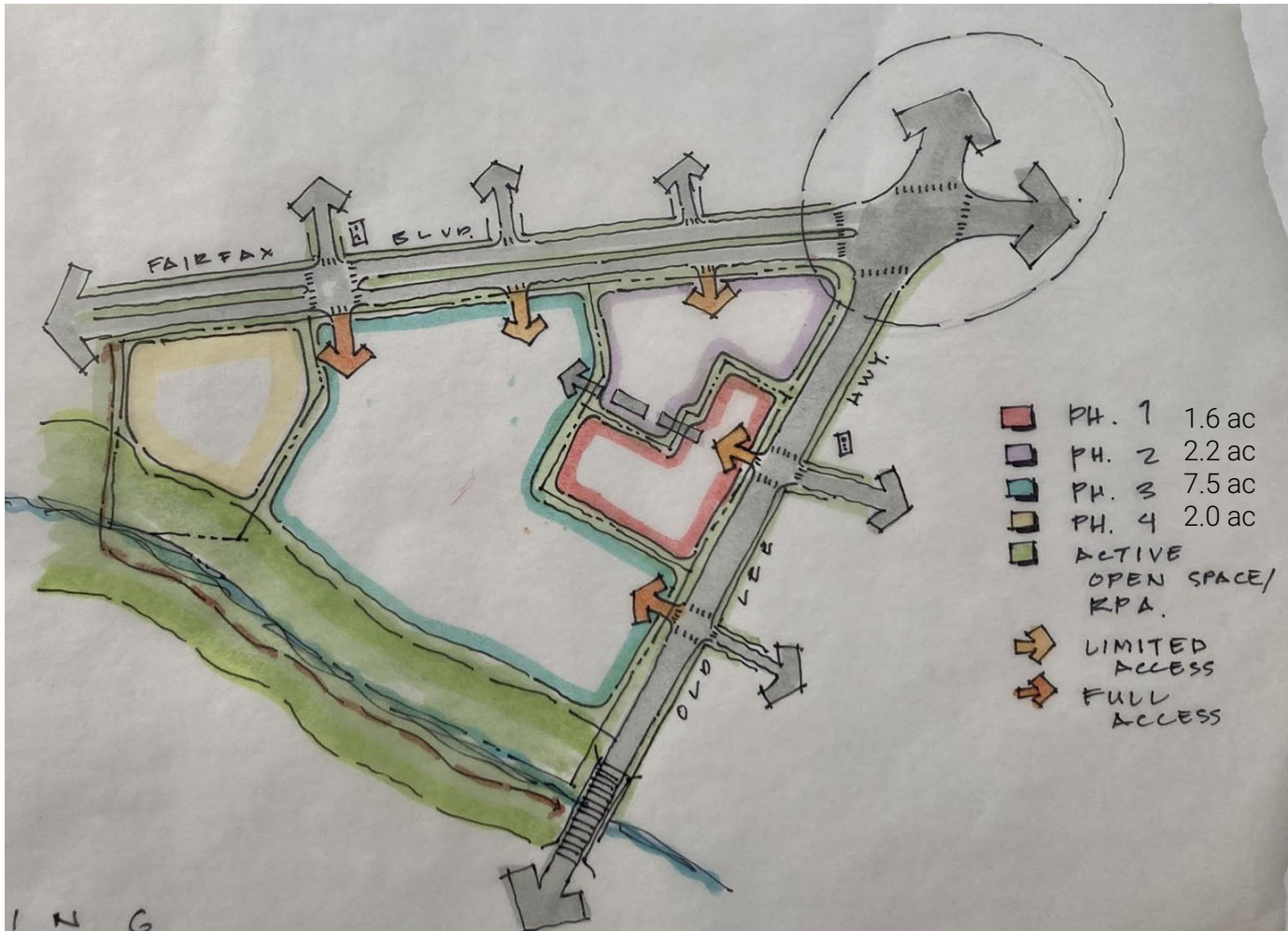


Conceptual Land Plan

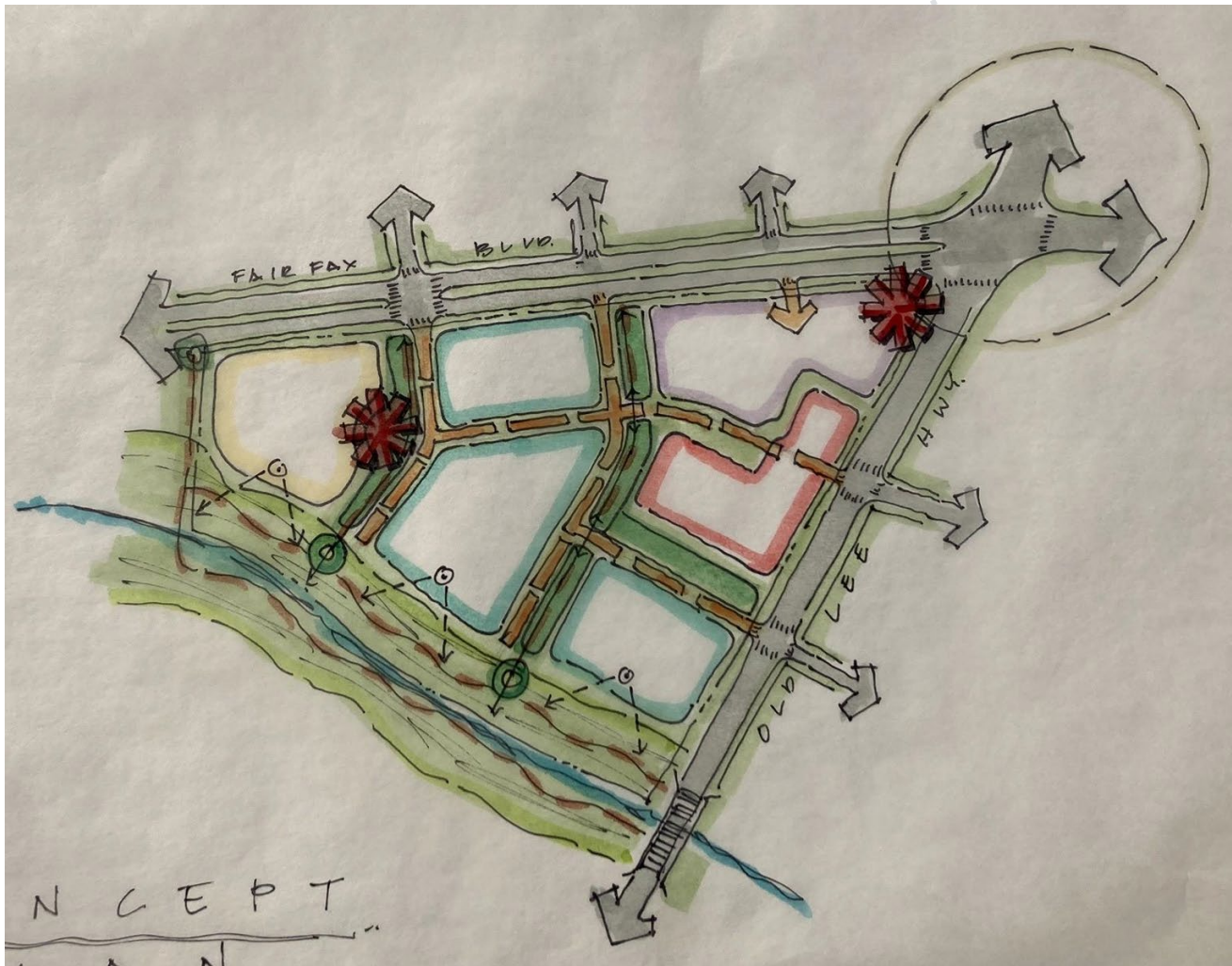


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Phasing Plan



Concept Plan







Example of Programmable Green Space

Town Center at Atlantic Station Amenities Space









Recommendations

Panel Recommendations

Priority Recommendations

1. Select an alternative for Fairfax Circle – of the alternatives that were advanced in previous studies, it appears that a traditional signaled skewed intersection might work best.
 - The purpose of selecting an alternative at this stage is to secure funding and to inform the land plan for the quadrant
 - The existing hamburger is more of a signaled intersection than a true roundabout
 - Further traffic study is needed
 - Even if the Fairfax Circle is removed, we can reflect its historical character in the landscape and hardscape geometry of the site
1. Streetscape improvements and pedestrian/bike safety improvements are paramount for any redevelopment regardless of what happens with Fairfax Circle
 - Improve streetscape frontages - Establish design standard for public realm along major frontages for all quadrants
 - Traffic calming measures could improve pedestrian/bike safety

Panel Recommendations

Additional Recommendations

1. Introduce mixed use (flexible residential, civic, and commercial uses)
1. Increase density and height, and focus tallest buildings closest to intersection
1. Reduce impervious areas - convert to green space
 - Height/density/other bonus for repairing RPA
1. Create a publicly accessible green space with public art to anchor the development
 - Active programming of the space is crucial
1. Improve security: On site police presence / ambassadors program
1. Improve access to trail system; add branding and wayfinding
1. Encourage consolidation of parcels
1. Reconsider the geometry and function of the purposed through street
1. ID any clustering opportunities (art; food; music; maker-space; partnerships; etc...)

Sponsor Questions

- **STUDY AREA PLANNING:** Provide a vision for the southwest Fairfax Circle area with appropriate land uses and urban form in keeping with the Comprehensive Plan Activity Center model while supporting and encouraging investment by property owners
- **LOTTE SITE:** What are primary obstacles to renewed use or redevelopment of the Lotte Plaza property at 3250 Old Lee Highway? What are the recommended short term and long-term next steps
- **COORDINATION:** Should coordination or consolidation among properties be encouraged to help support the vision for the southwest Fairfax Circle area and create a cohesive urban fabric? If so, how can such partnerships be incentivized? What strategies can help ensure a coordinated development strategy for the area if consolidation does not occur.
- **PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE:** What are some public infrastructure improvements or enabling projects that might benefit all parties and spur redevelopment and what are some strategies to allow the goals of City efforts to be realized while supporting better use of the properties in the study area?



Q&A

Thank you!