

Subject: Ameliorating the Explosive Growth of Old Town North

14 March 2022

To: Alexandria Planning Commission, Planning Staff, and City Council

From: North Old Town Independent Citizens Association (NOTICE) Board

Residents consider Old Town North a wonderful place to live and work. The community has changed dramatically over the past 40 years from an industrial area to a great neighborhood for families. We thank those who helped develop Old Town North and those serving Alexandria today. However, we are concerned that Old Town North may be developing too quickly. Our community is evolving into a “Rosslyn” or “Crystal City” and away from the Old Town North we know and love.

In 2017, when Alexandria leaders drafted the Small Area Plan (SAP) for Old Town North, 2280 housing units existed with a population of 3118 people. Today, 2667 housing units exist with a population of 5000. With 1) 801 N Fairfax, 2) Alexan Florence, 3) The Venue, 4) Abingdon Place, and 5) The Muse opening in 2022, ***our population will climb in a year by over 25% to 6268***. In addition, anticipated construction at 1) Tidelock (232 units), 2) 901 North Pitt (250 units), 3) Montgomery Center (375 units), and 4) the power plant site (~2000 units) will increase ***our total population to as much as 12,163 in the next 4-8 years—an increase of 143% from today***.

The Old Town North SAP estimated ***full growth to be 7700 people in 2040***. With current and anticipated efforts, Old Town North greatly surpass that level in the next few years. With currently anticipated development, ***our population could expand to between 10,117 (SAP planning factor) and 12,163 (city planning factor) people within ten years***.

Based on this rapid growth we work cooperatively with the city to:

- Review, adjust, and accelerate actions referenced in the Old Town North SAP. (See attachment 1)
- Consider limiting zoning that reduces open space from 40% to 25%.
- Consider limiting double density bonuses.
- Limit building heights to those noted in the SAP (50-77 feet) with limited exceptions in the former power plant area.
- Coordinate application of height to achieve an interesting but not overwhelming skyline.
- Define "substantial community benefit" in the SAP.
- Prepare a comprehensive Arts and Cultural District Implementation strategy.
- Coordinate development of community-serving open space.

Unlike Crystal City or Rosslyn, Old Town North is not an ideal high-density population area. We have no schools, Metro stations, sports parks, major shopping areas, community centers, post offices, libraries, houses of worship, medical facilities, and few family support centers. Old Town North experiences local flooding so there remains a requirement to increase open space, trees, and permeable surfaces. With ongoing global environmental change and increasingly intense storms, ecological goals are more important than ever. We support growth and improvements. However, growing too fast results in adverse community effects that will be difficult to remedy. Attached find a spreadsheet (attachment 2) containing base numbers from the city and the number of new dwellings from site estimates that we relied upon in writing this letter. Thank you for your time and service to our city. We look forward to your response to our requests.

Sincerely,

The NOTICE Board

**9 Points:
NOTICE Areas of Focus for Old Town North Development**

As the population of Old Town North grows at an unprecedented rate, the City of Alexandria should focus on supporting these areas of the Old Town North Small Area Plan (SAP):

- 1. Establish land uses and building heights compatible with the neighborhood.**
 - a. As in the SAP, limit the predominant building heights in the plan area to mid-rise (50 - 77 feet), with a limited exception in the former power plant development.
 - b. Limit or eliminate density bonuses to mitigate population increase.
- 2. Support small business.**
 - a. Finds ways to retain long time businesses that are dislocated by new development.
 - b. Help attract compatible businesses and office uses in the future.
 - c. Design flexible buildings that adapt to changing market demands.
 - d. Provide amenities and strategic zoning amendments to retain and attract commercial uses.
- 3. Create a variety of passive and active open spaces and parks.**
 - a. As noted in the SAP, continue developing publicly accessible open space in Old Town North from the current 31 acres to approximately 40 acres
 - b. As in the SAP vision, continue adding an additional 7 to 10 acres of new public parkland.
 - c. As part of the SAP, a minimum 25% of tree canopy will be provided on-site for development sites. To the extent that the required tree canopy cannot be provided on-site, a contribution will be provided to enable tree canopy to be provided within the plan area and/or other nearby areas as determined as part of the development review process.
 - d. Encourage developers to create parks and open space as was done by the developers of the Alexandria House (Alexandria Park) and Rivergate (Rivergate Park).
 - e. As per the SAP, complete the conversion of the rail corridor into a linear park with separated bicycle and pedestrian trails. This will add approximately 4 acres of new open space that could be used for a variety of passive and active recreational uses and improve the connection from the Parkway to the Mount Vernon Trail along the waterfront. A tram is a consideration for partial use of this space.
 - f. Incorporate the history of the plan area into future redevelopment sites, parks, and open spaces.
 - g. Actively support retaining established trees and planting new ones.
 - h. Establish a city Old Town North Open Space and Streetscape Improvement/Tree Canopy Fund(s).
 - The funding will be provided by sites where the required ground level open space, streetscape improvements, and/or tree canopy requirements are not provided on-site.
 - Monetary contributions will be provided to the Fund(s), and the amount of contribution will be established as part of the implementation process.
- 4. Ensure that waterfront park improvements are consistent with the Waterfront Plan and protect against anticipated future flooding and rising sea/ocean levels.**
- 5. Explore initiatives to promote Old Town North's branding and marketing programs, expanded arts and cultural venues, and programming for the enjoyment of residents, employees, and visitors.**
- 6. Take Pro-Pedestrian and Car Alternative Actions.**
 - a. Prioritize pedestrian traffic versus extending streets.

- b. The Hilco Woonerf is the first innovative concept prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists that has been proposed—ideas like this should be encouraged.
 - c. Expand pedestrian and bicycle connections to waterfront parks.
 - d. Convert the rail corridor to a linear park with east-west pedestrian and bicycle connections.
 - e. As noted in the SAP, establish local and circulator transit service to provide more frequent and convenient service between the King Street Metrorail Station and the Braddock Road Metrorail Station, as recommended in the City's Transportation Master Plan. The service would traverse through Old Town North using North Fairfax, Madison, and Montgomery Streets.
 - f. Improve access and connectivity of Old Town North to the Parkway, the surrounding neighborhoods, and to the Braddock and Potomac Yards Metrorail Stations
- 7. Institutionalize green infrastructure stormwater practices that reduce the volume of stormwater runoff and conserves open space, providing green space, reducing energy demand, reducing urban heat island effect, and reducing flooding. The city staff should consider:**
- a. Vegetated green roofs.
 - b. Urban bioretention.
 - c. Dry swales.
 - d. Rooftop/downspout disconnection.
 - e. Sheet flow to vegetated filter strip.
 - f. Rainwater harvesting.
 - g. Planter boxes.
 - h. Integrating these efforts will cool the overall temperature of the area, decreasing energy costs, and improving habitat and pedestrian comfort.
 - i. New public streets and streetscapes that incorporate green elements and stormwater management as part of the design of the street to the extent feasible.
- 8. Use the Old Town North Historic Interpretation Guide in combination with the Design Standards and Guidelines, and other resources, to interpret the history of private and public sites in the plan area.**
- 9. Incorporate historic interpretation into all development site plans (DSPs) or development special use permits (DSUPs) projects and follow up during the review and approval process.**

Attachment 2

OTN Population Estimates

Development	Year	Dwellings	Population (City Planning Factor 2.1)	Population (Old Town North Small Area Plan Population Estimate 1.5)
Current Development	Jan-22	2667	5000	5000
600 N Royal (Alexan Florence)	2022	298	626	447
801 N Fairfax	2022	54	113	81
925 N Fairfax (Venue)	2022	160	336	240
1101 N Washington (Abingdon Place)	2022	19	40	29
1201 N Royal (Muse)	2022	73	153	110
TOTAL	2022	3271	6268	5906
1033 N Fairfax (Tideloc)	2024	232	487	348
901 N Pitt	2025	200	420	300
Montgomery Center	2025	375	788	563
Power Plant	2026-2028	2000	4200	3000
Total	2026	6078	12163	10117
Small Area Plan	2040		7700	7700
Population Increase Over Small Area Plan	2026		4463	2417