



**AlexWest Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**  
**As of August 22, 2024**  
*Additional questions may be added as they arise.*

**1. Why do we need a new Plan?**

Creating an updated community vision for the future allows us to proactively plan for change and prepare for challenges and opportunities in the years to come. Creating a great City and great neighborhoods don't just happen. This plan is intended to build on the many strengths of the area while building lasting value and opportunity for all residents. An updated Plan will enable:

- Comprehensive updates of the existing 10-30 year-old land use plans ([1992 Alexandria West Small Area Plan](#) and [2012 Beauregard Small Area Plan](#)) to address current community needs and incorporate current city policies and best practices.
- Addressing near and mid-term housing vulnerability and affordability by prioritizing development that minimizes resident displacement, leverages new committed affordable housing through development, housing resources, and partnerships.
- An approach developed with the city and community to guide and shape future development and make expectations clear for the community, city and developers.

**2. What happens if we do nothing?**

Without a Plan, the housing challenges faced by many existing residents in AlexWest will continue to worsen. The Plan's Land Use Strategy prioritizes development of new market rate housing and new committed affordable housing on surface parking lots and underutilized commercial and office space to minimize displacement of existing residents.

**3. When and how does the Plan get implemented?**

The Plan timeframe is ~20 years. The Plan is implemented through Plan-identified public improvements carried out by the City, as well as new development constructed by private property owners. Development applications submitted for sites in the Plan area will go through a review and approval process that typically takes about 18-24 months, and includes review and input by City staff, community members, Planning Commission, and City Council. The Plan includes an implementation chapter detailing tasks, responsibilities, and anticipated timing for implementation. Department of Planning and Zoning staff track the implementation of the City's Small Area Plans, which you can find here: [alexandriava.gov/planning-and-zoning/long-range-planning-processes-and-plans-in-active-implementation](http://alexandriava.gov/planning-and-zoning/long-range-planning-processes-and-plans-in-active-implementation)

**4. Why don't we stop the planning process until we have the tools needed to protect residents?**

The City does not have the legal means to prohibit development, so stopping this planning process will not stop development from happening. As a result, delaying the Plan will only mean that



development will continue to come in but without any of the new requirements that the AlexWest plan would create.

**5. What can Planning do – and what can't it do?**

Planning can create a vision for a specific area and create a framework for providing quality of life elements, like access to amenities, safety while walking and biking, access to and the quality of public transit, parks and open space. Planning can also achieve housing affordability in exchange for density. Planning cannot: 1) alter the market/land economics (for instance, it can't change the fact that rents are going up), 2) override existing land use approvals, or 3) go beyond Virginia state limitations regarding affordable housing. For example, planning can't impose rent control or adopt inclusionary zoning without authority from the Virginia General Assembly.

**6. Why doesn't the Plan require deeply affordable units at or below 40% AMI?**

Housing at this income band (at or below 40% AMI) is extremely expensive to produce and difficult to finance. Providing these types of units will require some type of public-private partnerships that necessitate a lot of financing sources to come together including City funding. One zoning tool that incentivizes units at deeply affordable levels is the Residential Multifamily zone (RMF).

**7. With increased development, how is the Plan addressing impacts to schools?**

Staff from Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and the City of Alexandria (City) regularly update our analysis of the number of students “generated” by different housing types in the City of Alexandria. Among other insights, the analysis sheds light on how many students can be expected to reside in new development projects approved by the City. For small area plans, ACPS and the City collaborate to review demographic and development forecasts and conduct a student generation analysis. Based on this analysis, we do not anticipate that the new development forecasted in AlexWest will require new school facilities. For more information about student generation rates, and how the City and ACPS work together please visit [alexandriava.gov/neighborhood-development/joint-city-acps-capital-planning-initiatives-and-implementation](https://alexandriava.gov/neighborhood-development/joint-city-acps-capital-planning-initiatives-and-implementation).

**8. What are the underlying economics that impact development in AlexWest?**

Market rents dictate the construction types of buildings that will be built. In AlexWest, market rents do not currently support the cost of construction for steel and concrete high-rise buildings. It is expected that developers in AlexWest will build wood frame buildings that max out at 85 feet or about 8 stories.

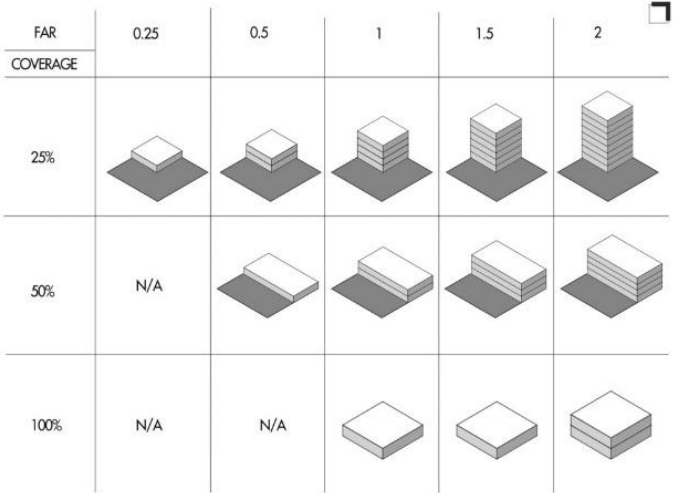
**9. Why are heights being changed for the John Adams and William Ramsay school sites?**

The proposed height change is not to incentivize development but rather to bring the Small Area Plan heights into consistency with the Zoning Ordinance which allows heights up to 60 feet on public school sites. This change in the draft Building Heights map was shared with the community at the April 25 meeting and can be found on the [project webpage](#).

**10. What does Floor Area Ratio (FAR) mean in the Plan recommendations?**

FAR is a tool for regulating building mass or bulk on a development site. In addition to FAR, development must meet other requirements, such as building heights, setbacks (how close a building can be to the boundaries of a lot) and ground level open space, that would prevent the building from covering the entirety of the lot (getting 100% coverage). The AlexWest Plan allows FAR of 3.0 in the Focus Area to incentivize development in areas such as parking lots and underutilized commercial areas to minimize residential displacement. Area 2 has an FAR of 2.0, a lower FAR that hold less of an incentive for redevelopment.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is defined in the City’s Zoning Ordinance, and in simplified terms, generally means “the total floor area of a building (including all the floors if there are more than one) divided by the total area of the lot, tract, or tract of land it is built on.” The image below provides examples to help illustrate the concept.



**11. Why doesn’t the City implement rent control?**

The City is limited in terms of what it can do to control existing rents (for instance, we are not able to implement rent control). Both in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 7 the Plan discusses utilizing existing City policies to address increases in rents due to development pressures. The additional housing units produced by the development incentivized in the Focus Area will relieve some of this development pressure, however we know that this is not enough and does not address rent escalation that is happening today. The new development will also be required to provide 10% of



the additional development as committed affordable units set aside for households that earn less than 60% of the area median income. In addition, the upcoming Housing Master Plan Update will continue to address these problems at a citywide level and the City is committed to pursuing legislative authority and other additional tools and partnerships to address these challenges.

**12. How do you define Affordable Housing?**

Affordable housing is defined as rental or ownership housing costing no more than approximately 30% of a household’s gross monthly income before taxes. For more information on levels of affordability based on household income, please visit: [alexandriava.gov/housing/housing-publications-reports-and-videos#HousingDefinitionsandTerminology](http://alexandriava.gov/housing/housing-publications-reports-and-videos#HousingDefinitionsandTerminology)

**13. Will there be affordable units at or below 40% of the area median income (AMI) in AlexWest?**

The Plan recommendations require Committed Affordable Units (CAUs) obtained through development in AlexWest to be at or below 60% AMI. The Office of Housing will work with property owners and developers to obtain more deeply affordable units through other means such as land dedication and public-private partnerships, as detailed in the Plan recommendations.

**14. How is the Plan minimizing displacement of existing residents?**

The Plan’s Land Use Strategy prioritizes the development of new market rate housing and new committed affordable units on surface parking lots and underutilized commercial and office space to minimize displacement of existing residents. For areas with existing garden apartments, those may be retained if they achieve housing affordability goals of the Plan and comply with the open space and connectivity recommendations of the Plan.

**15. Does the Plan expand tenant protections for residents?**

The City does not have legislative authority to require more stringent protections. The City will continue to promote and seek compliance with the Voluntary Rent Increase Policy and will work with property owners during redevelopment to minimize impacts to tenants through the development of the comprehensive Tenant Relocation Assistance Plans.

**16. How do I report apartment property maintenance issues?**

Please refer to [Renter Resources](#) page under “Report Apartment Maintenance Request.” You may also contact Alex311 at 311 or 703.746.4311.

**17. What is the latest with the parallel road on Monday Properties?**

The Plan’s draft Street Network map has a modified street network around 1900 N Beauregard and no longer shows a street connection between The Blake through 1900 N Beauregard. This was shared with the community at the March 4 and April 25 community meetings as part of the release of the draft recommendations and transportation updates.



## **18. What are the plans for the intersection at Seminary Road and N. Beauregard Street?**

The Plan recommends a redesign of the intersection of N. Beauregard Street and Seminary Road that will better accommodate all users, provide safety measures that increase the comfort and visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists, enhance the streetscape, and maintain ease of access for public transit and vehicles to pass through.

## **19. What is the latest with the West End Transitway? How does it fit into the Plan?**

The West End Transitway was proposed and approved as part of a separate process that included significant community engagement over multiple phases, incorporated as part of the Alexandria Mobility Plan, and most recently approved by City Council in 2021, all before the AlexWest Small Area Plan began. You can read more about the project here:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/transportation-planning/west-end-transitway>

The AlexWest Small Area Plan builds on existing City policy, including the policy recommendations of the Alexandria Mobility Plan (AMP), which recommends the Transitway for the Plan area. The AlexWest Plan does not preclude future implementation of the Transitway through additional setbacks of buildings, particularly on Beauregard. Any future design and implementation of a dedicated transitway will require an additional community input process.

The current transitway improvements include signal priority and queue jumps that are modest improvement to the existing streets. The transit stations will be greatly enhanced as part of the transitway improvements.

## **20. Did the City consider existing and forecasted traffic in the Plan area?**

As part of the planning process, KimleyHorn and Associates prepared a high-level traffic study to evaluate the impacts of the changing traffic demands on the surrounding transportation network with the Alexandria West Plan. Major study area corridors include N Beauregard Street, Seminary Road, Little River Turnpike, W Braddock Road, Sanger Avenue, and King Street. The traffic study analyzed the transportation network under the following land use scenarios:

- 2022 Existing Conditions
- 2045 Base Conditions - Based on forecasted volumes from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (MWCOG) travel demand models.
- 2045 Sensitivity Test - Considers a 30% growth in addition to the 2045 projected growth.

The study concludes that the transportation network can reasonably accommodate the currently forecasted growth, based on the 2045 MWCOG travel demand models and the 2045 sensitivity test. This study does not negate the requirement for site-specific transportation studies for individual development projects, as required by the City's Transportation Planning Administrative Guidelines.





**21. What is the latest with the Holmes Run Trail repairs?**

For project updates, please visit the [Holmes Run Trail Repairs](#) project page.

**22. Does the Plan propose a connection across I-395 to Landmark Mall?**

Staff have identified this as a potential desired connection and included a note on the Bicycle Network Map for a potential future connection over I-395 to the Landmark Mall site. Any future connection would require coordination from State and Federal agencies as well as grant funding for implementation.

**23. How are office-residential conversion projects addressed in the Plan?**

The Plan area has Class B and Class C office that is either underutilized or not being developed. This is happening not just in the City but across the region and country, reflecting dramatically reduced demand for office space. In response, many commercial building owners are converting their buildings to residential buildings. In some cases, commercial property owners have existing zoning that allows a conversion from office to residential if they don't exceed the density requirement. If a parcel requires a rezoning, the City discusses what the impacts of development will be and how to address through community benefits contributions.

The City studied conversions as part of Zoning for Housing/Housing for All project. For more information, please visit the [Zoning for Housing](#) project webpage.

For the AlexWest Plan area, while there are not specific recommendations related to office-to-residential conversions, one of the benefits of these projects is the provision of net new housing stock that doesn't displace existing residents.

**24. How is the City responding to development applications while the planning process is ongoing?**

The Alexandria West planning process is intended to create an updated community vision for the future that proactively plans for change and prepares for challenges and opportunities in the years to come. As we undergo the planning processes, we are aware that landowners have the ability to submit redevelopment proposals. Because the AlexWest planning process is ongoing, we want to make the community aware of this and share information about the City's standard practices for development proposals received within an active plan update area.

- Development proposals are permitted to move forward in the development review process if they are substantially in compliance with their existing approvals and/or the existing Small Area Plans (SAP).
- If development proposals are anticipated to require one or more significant amendments to the existing SAP, those amendments will only be considered in the context of the small area planning process underway.

**25. What are the boundaries of the Alexandria West Plan?**



The Plan encompasses the area of the City generally west of I-395, with the exception of the area east of I-395 at Seminary Road.

**26. How do I stay up to date on AlexWest updates?**

You can [sign up for City eNews](#), under Planning and Zoning, select All Community Meetings and All General Information. You may also join the WhatsApp Group by messaging 571.358.7569 through WhatsApp messenger which is an App that can be downloaded from the App Store. Or you can contact Christian Brandt, Urban Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning at 703.746.3859 or [Christian.Brandt@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Christian.Brandt@alexandriava.gov).

**27. How can I provide feedback?**

You can use the online community comment form on the project webpage at [alexandriava.gov/AlexandriaWest](http://alexandriava.gov/AlexandriaWest), or you can call or email Christian Brandt, Urban Planner, at 703.746.3859, [Christian.Brandt@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Christian.Brandt@alexandriava.gov). We're happy to talk and answer any questions anytime!