



Open Space Discussions: **Session 2**

Planning Commission
April 2, 2019

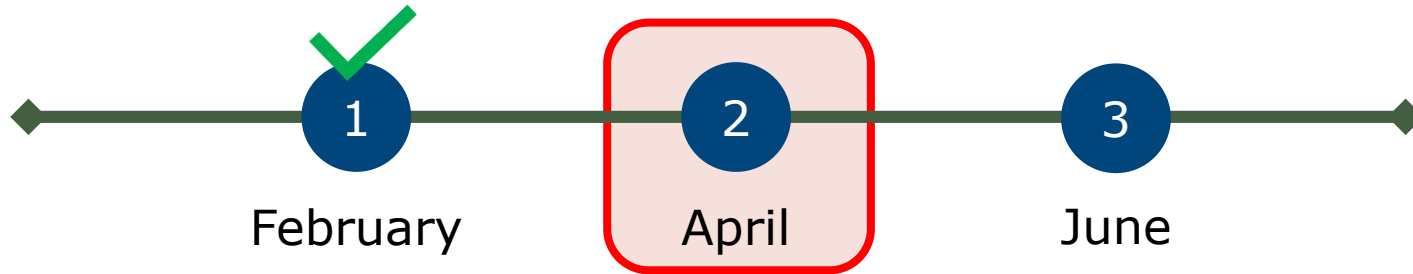


EAP Phase 1

“By FY2020, evaluate and update, using a public process, the requirements of open space on residential, commercial and mixed-use private development. Issues to be addressed include:

- how to achieve meaningful and publicly accessible open space, particularly at the ground level,
- how to value developer contributions to off-site open space,
- how to minimize impervious surfaces,
- how to align vegetation requirements with canopy and native species goals described in Chapter 4.A.1. above; and,
- how to ensure consistency of open space requirements across similar zones.”

Project Overview



- Objective for the series:
 - Review the origins and outcomes of open space;
 - Assess key factors of quality open space on private land in the urban realm; and
 - Recommend potential practices and long-range workplans to create policies for private open space.



Recap of Session One

- **Defined what is open space?**
 - Public, “public-private” and private
 - Focus is “public private” and private open space: open space on private land
- **Examined how open space on private land is currently measured and regulated**
 - Varying, inconsistent percentage requirements
 - Majority of recent projects have complied

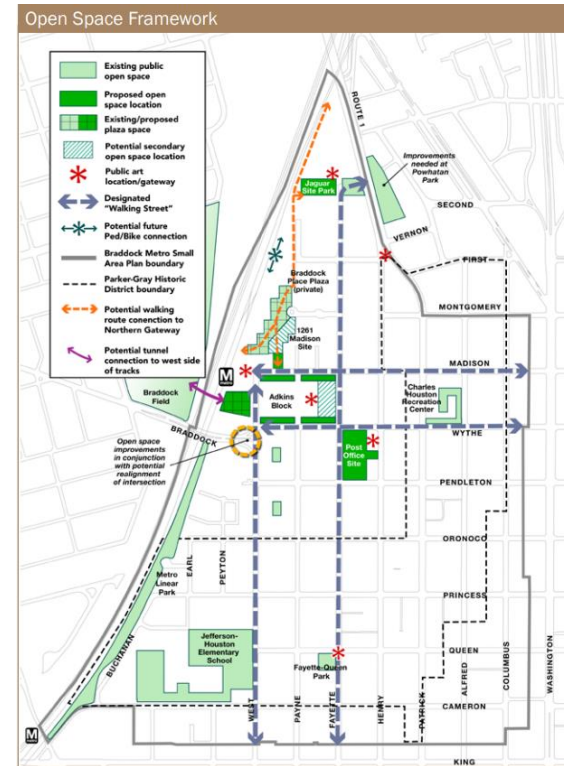
Continuum & Planning Mechanisms of Open Space



Public

"Public-Private" Space

Private



- Types of open space divided along lines of ownership
- Public → Open Space Master Plan and Small Area Plans
- Public-Private → Small Area Plans
- Private → Development Special Use Permit (DSUP)

Role of Open Space on Private Land



Historic: Form Defining



Historic: Visual Relief



Evolving: Outdoor Living



Evolving: Environmental



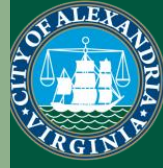
Feedback from Session One

- Planning Commissioners noted that having same open space requirement (generally 40%) may not be appropriate in all zones
- The character of open space on private land is more important than a flat percentage
- Optimal open space is an appropriate mix of publicly accessible and private; ground-level and above-grade. What is a recommended proportion?

Session 2 Overview

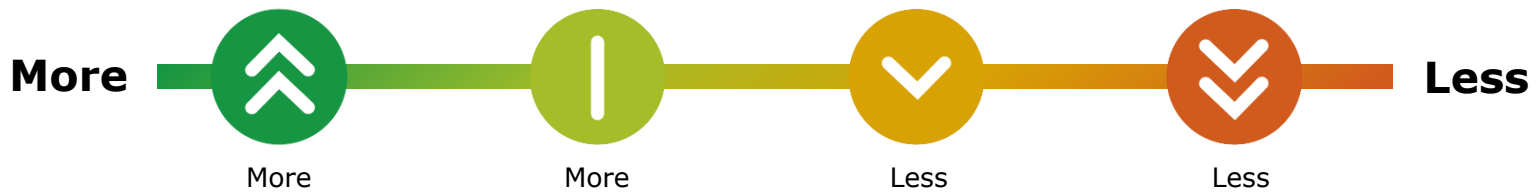
- 1** Overview of case studies in the City.
 - What are examples of successful open space on private land? What are attributes of poorly implemented open space?
- 2** Commonalities of successful and less effective open space
- 3** Topics for Session 3

Case Studies



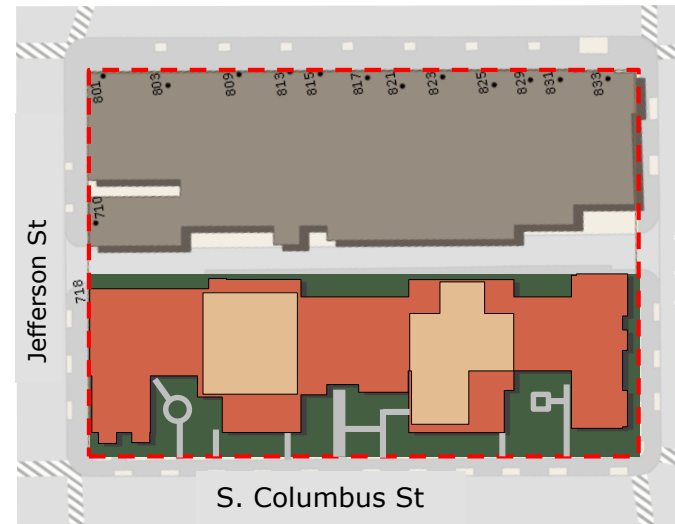
Case Studies Legend

- Distinctions for visibility, form defining, outdoor living, environmental

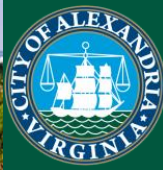
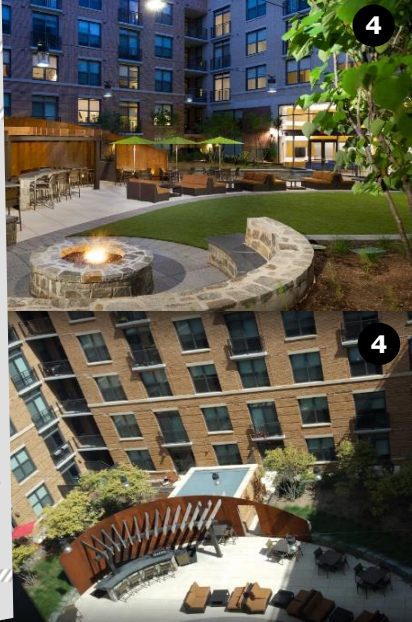


- Diagram Legend

- Building
- Rooftop Open Space
- Ground Floor Open Space
- Public or Accessible Open Space
- Non-conforming Open Space
- Site Boundary



Case Study: Belle Pre



Quick Facts: Multi-family building; CRMU-H Zone; 40% Open Space

Visibility



Form Defining



Outdoor Living



Environmental



Open Space Observations



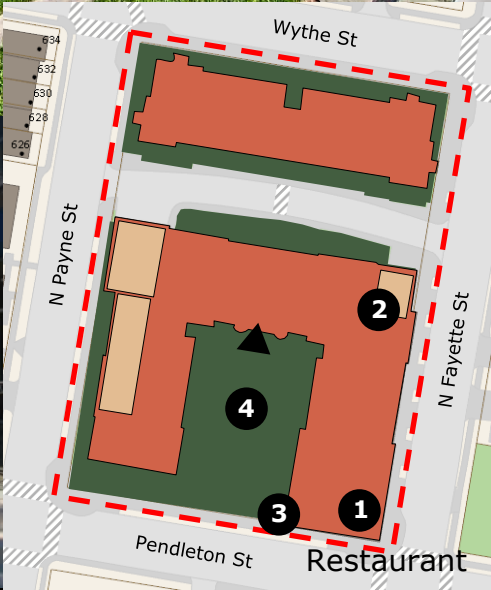
- Open space is **a mix (approx. 50/50)** of visible ground-level space and non-visible space
- Portion of open space is **publicly accessible** and feels welcome due to directly adjacent commercial uses
- Open space creates a **varied** street wall with building breaks and recessed areas
- **Intensively amenitized** public and private open space create highly usable areas for a range of users
- **Green infrastructure** in planters that provide bioretention and biofiltration services for stormwater

Open Space Takeaways



- Division of open space is **balanced**
- Balanced between visible and non-visible open space (similar at-grade and above-grade)
- Clear delineation of public, public-private, and private space
- Amenitized private open space provides social gathering space

Case Study: The Asher



Quick Facts: Multi-family building; CRMU-H Zone; 41% Open Space

Visibility



Form Defining



Outdoor Living



Environmental



Open Space Session



Open Space Observations

- **Dimensions** of ground-level open space do not create an inviting environment
- Ground-level open space **unsuccessfully combines** private, semi-private and public open space in one area
- Open space has limited amenities and is **not activated**



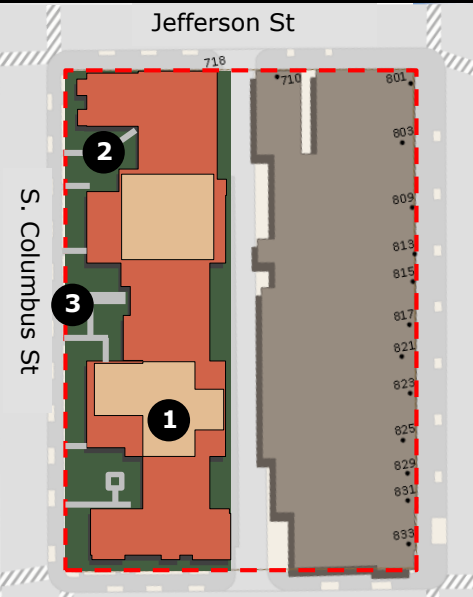


Open Space Takeaways

- Design focus of courtyard is the formal building entrance of The Asher, which acts to **privatize** the ground-level open space
- Publicly-accessible open space has **few or no amenities**, including seating
- Rooftop open space is residual, providing for very few residents, and **lacks fundamentals** of living space – particularly shade and green



Case Study: The Clayborne



Quick Facts: Multi-family building; CRMU-L Zone; 43% Open Space

Visibility



Form Defining



Outdoor Living



Environmental



Open Space Observations



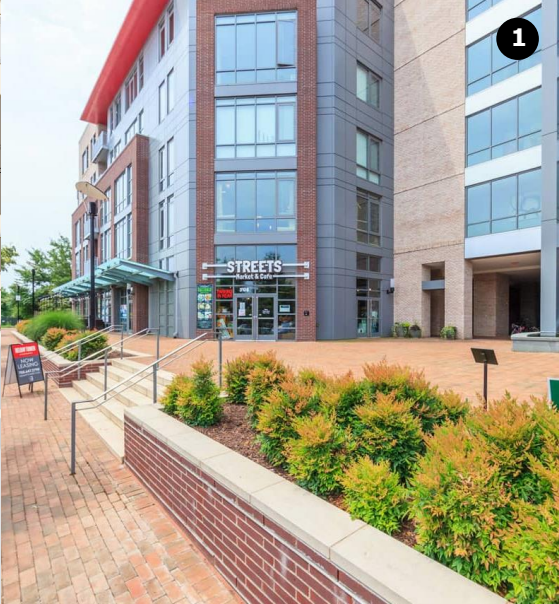
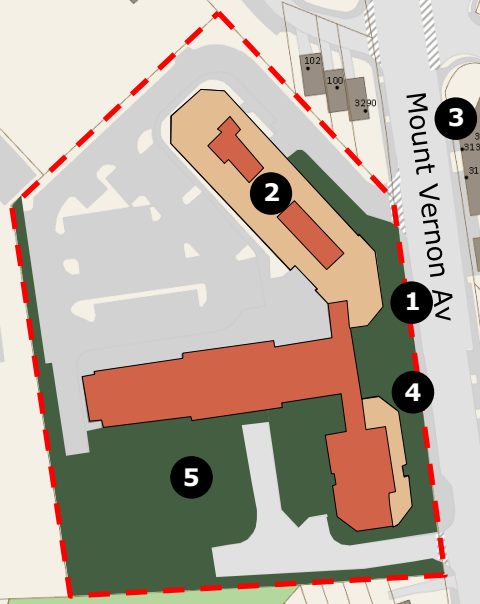
- Open Space shapes the **building form** and provides ground-level courtyards
- Open space **engages the neighborhood**
- Open space is visible from the right-of-way with **clear transitions/ boundaries** indicating private space
- **Minimal outdoor living** amenities are passive with limited utility

Open Space Takeaways



- Successful use of ground-level open space:
 - **Defines building form**
 - Creates strong engagement with the neighborhood
- **Design and programming,** including the lack of landscape, of above-grade open space greatly **restricts desirability/utility** for residents

Case Study: Del Ray Towers



Quick Facts: Multi-family building; CRMU-M Zone; 43% Open Space

Visibility



Form Defining



Outdoor Living



Environmental



Open Space Session



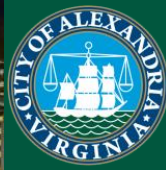
- **Environmental features**, such as green roof and cisterns integrated into outdoor amenity spaces
- **Small percentage of open space** is utilized along Mt. Vernon Ave to **inform building form** and provide neighborhood relationship
- Private open space, above- and at-grade, is **non-visible** and highly amenitized

Open Space Takeaways



- Highly programmed open space is reserved for private use and serves residential community
- Private open space is designed to support multi-season use, and **includes amenities that would otherwise impact public parks** system, particularly a dog park
- Private open space is mainly non-visible and above grade

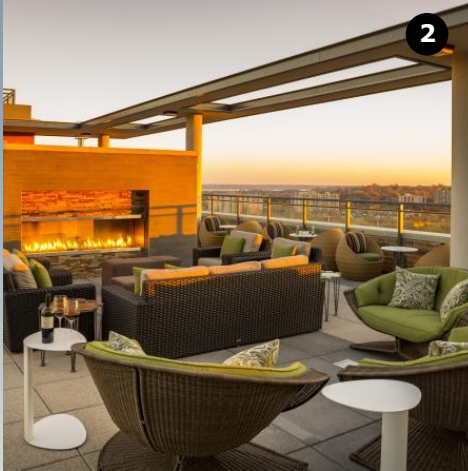
Case Study: Parc Meridian



1



2



2



4



3



Quick Facts: Multi-family building; CDD#2; 48% Open Space

Visibility



Form Defining



Outdoor Living



Environmental



Open Space Session

Open Space Observations



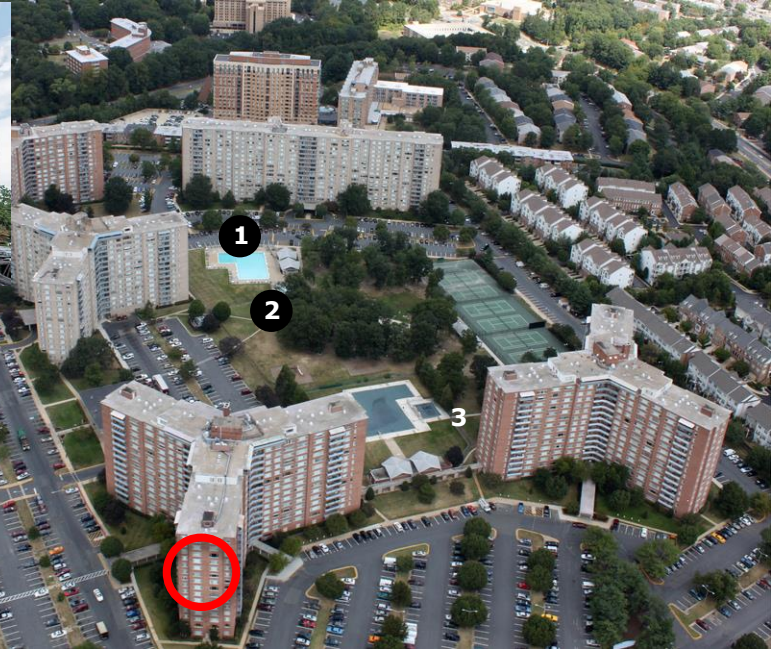
- Open Space is **defining attribute** of the site design
- Mix of publicly accessible and private ground level open space
- Ground-level open space has both a **visual and physical connection** between public and private open space
- **Variety** of outdoor living spaces with differing levels of privacy, activity, and multi-season usability for residents and public

Open Space Takeaways



- Open Space design was **integral to the site and building design** – no residual open space
- **Clear distinction** between private and public space while capitalizing on adjacencies of either
- Residents have strong visual and path-of-travel connection to the open space, integrating open space into resident's community

Case Study: Southern Towers



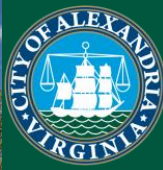
Quick Facts: Multi-family building; RC; 42% Open Space

Visibility

Form Defining

Outdoor Living

Environmental



Open Space Session

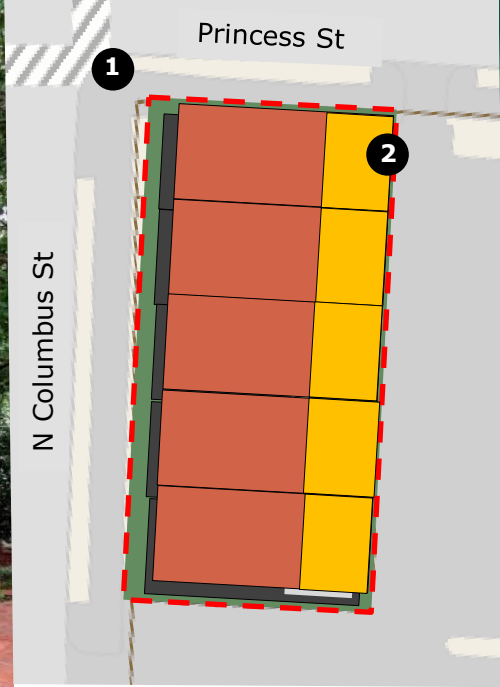


- Open space is **screened** from the public right-of-way by parking
- Open space and buildings **do not relate** to each other
- Outdoor living opportunities are akin to a “neighborhood” level of open space and **not typical** for a private or building-level experience



- Open space **does not connect** Southern Towers with the surrounding community.
- Open space amenities are purpose-driven destinations.
- Open space **not visually accessible** for most residents
- **Pre-dates most environmental regulations**, which would significantly change development today

Case Study: Cromley Row



Quick Facts: Townhomes; CD Zone; 9%/42% Open Space

Visibility



Form Defining



Outdoor Living



Environmental



Open Space Session



Open Space Observations

- Design of building and ground-level open space are **consistent** with surrounding community and appropriately scaled
- Above-grade rear private decks **are very similar in use and position to ground-level patios** typical in townhomes





Open Space Takeaways

- Rear decks are an extension of interior living space and are functionally similar to rear patios at single-family homes
- **Zoning Ordinance did not allow** accounting of majority of open space as it is above-grade



Commonalities





Commonalities of “Successful” Open Space

- Better developments have open space that address all four roles: visibility, form defining, outdoor living, environmental
- Good open space connects the community of the building with the community of the neighborhood
- Open space is not a residual aspect of the design process but integral to the site functionality and presentation
- Successful projects typically have a clear delineation between the public and private realm, including where the public realm may simply be the public sidewalk
- Private open space is important
 - Well executed open space relieves pressure on the use of public open space



Commonalities of “Successful” Open Space

- **Visibility**

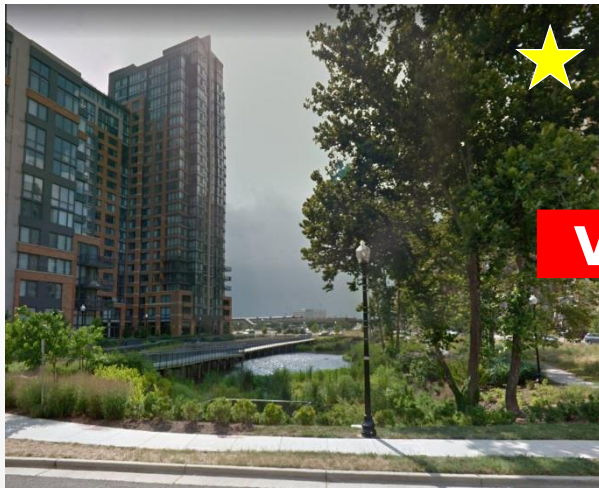
- Projects have a mean of 15% or median of 17% non-visible open space (out of 40%), or about 50/50
 - Less successful case studies exhibited a similar range, indicating amount of visible vs. non-visible space may not determine a good vs. a bad open space

- **Above-Grade**

- Non-visible open space provides a similar function as above-grade open space
 - Balancing flexible percentage with qualitative requirements may provide a mechanism to determine appropriate mix
- Above-grade space can provide environmental roles
 - Canopy can be provided – encouraged in Landscape Guidelines
 - Green infrastructure for stormwater can be provided entirely above structure

Additional Commonalities

- Steep slopes are a challenge for the perception and utility of open space
 - Integration of slopes into the program & design from the beginning aids its success



Parc Meridian



Potomac Yard



The Alexander

- Successful projects have variety of design, spaces, and uses

Commonalities of “Less Successful” Open Space

- Non-activated rooftop open space with insufficient green

The Asher



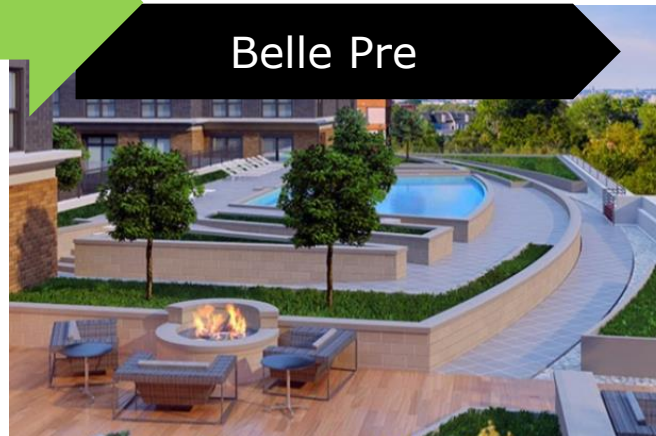
Del Ray Towers



The Clayborne



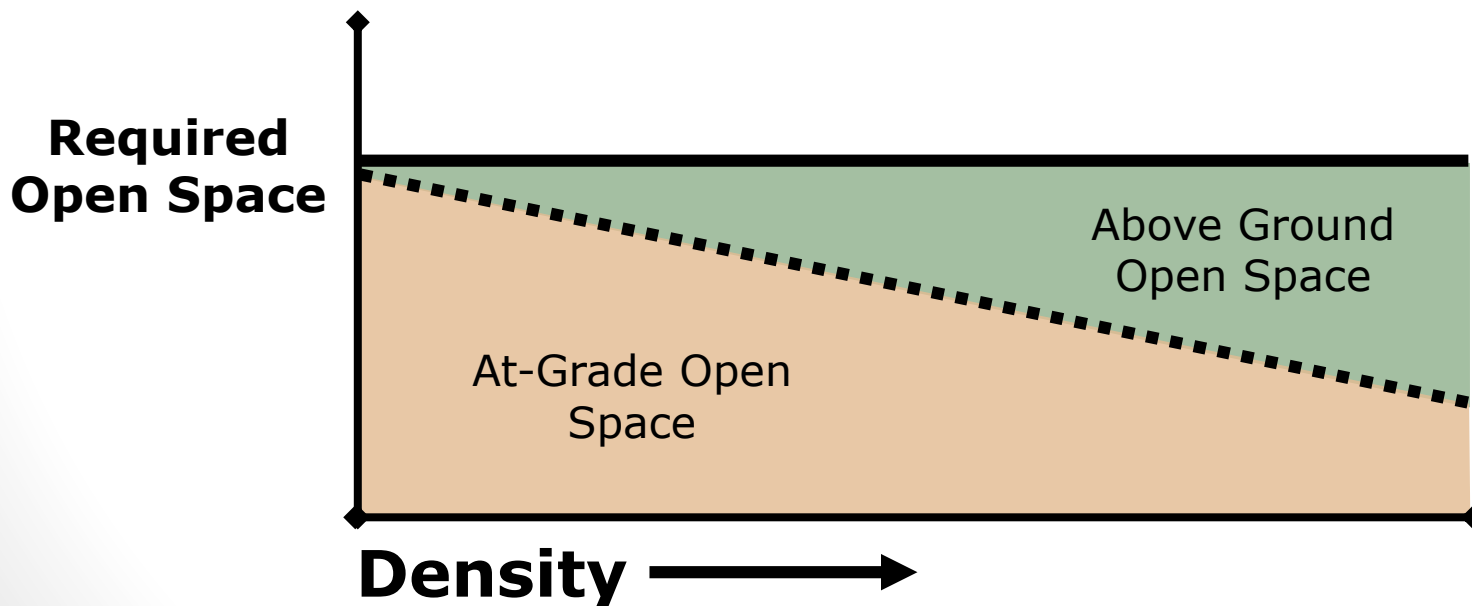
Belle Pre





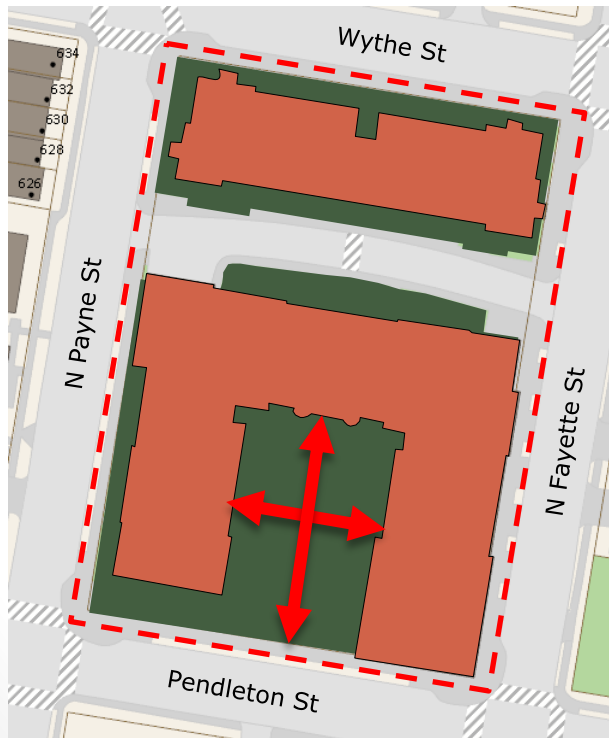
From Commonalities to Guidelines

- Above-grade open space
 - Flexible 40-60% allowed
 - Mix of usable and vegetated space
 - Presence of shade

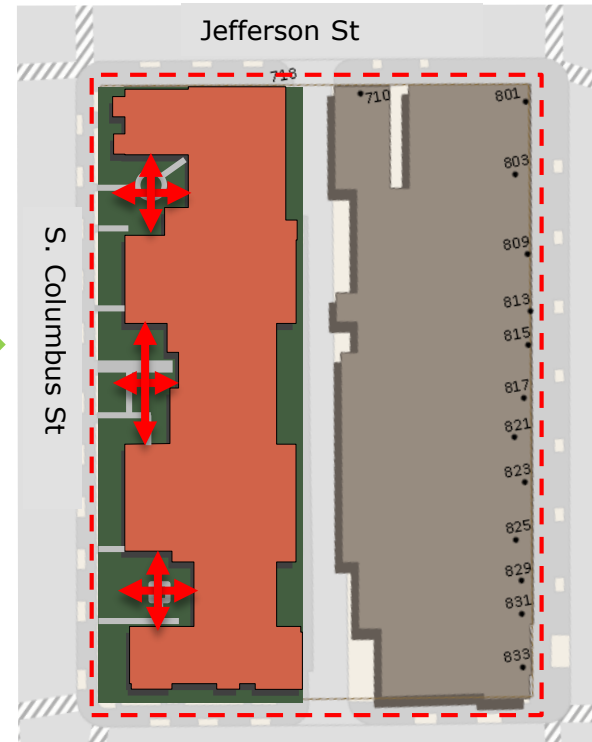
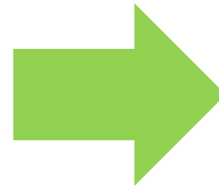


From Commonalities to Guidelines

- Open space dimensions
 - Depth vs. length (width) ratio of 1:1 maximum



The Asher



The Clayborne

From Commonalities to Guidelines

- Provision of amenities
 - Minimum provision of basics – shade, seating
 - Inclusion of social/activity



Del Ray Tower



The Belle Pre

From Commonalities to Guidelines

- Public/private space transitions
 - Provision of architectural & landscape features that delineate private space



The Clayborne



Del Ray Tower / Streets Kitchen & Bar

- Integration of green infrastructure

Commonalities of “Successful” Open Space-Townhomes

- Provision of some “open space” i.e. greenery at street level to soften the building presence along the street
- Provision of usable open space for residents in non-visible private areas (decks, patios)



Cromley Row



The Middleton (rear)

Commonalities of “Successful” Open Space-Townhomes

- If above-grade open space was allowed, Non-visible space varies from 25% to 75% in the case studies examined
- Context of neighborhood “front yards” may provide the best metric for required visible open space



2901 Eisenhower Avenue - *Central Alexandria*



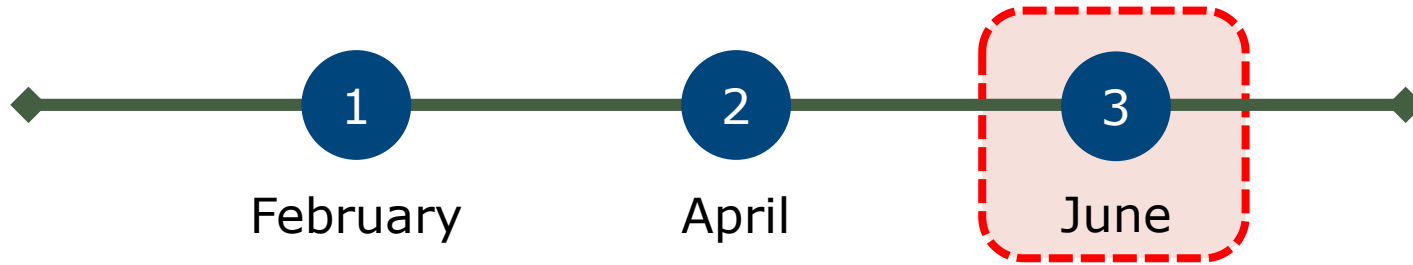
432 South Columbus Street - *Old Town*



From Commonalities to Guidelines - Townhomes

- Surveying the neighborhood context
 - What visible open space is typical?
- Provision of amenities
 - Minimum dimensions of usable space
- Public/private space transitions
- Incorporation of green infrastructure
- Larger townhome (multi-block) projects may have an obligation to provide neighborhood open space
 - Example: Townhomes at 2901 Eisenhower Avenue

Project Overview



- Objective for the series:
 - Review the origins and outcomes of open space;
 - Assess key factors of quality private open space in the urban realm; and
 - Recommend potential practices and long-range workplans to create policies for private open space.



Session 3 Topics

- **Zoning Ordinance Changes** ¹
 - Should open space vary with density?
 - Minimum size of open space in townhome zones
- **Small Area Plan Process for Open Space** ¹
 - Planning of public and public-private space
 - Contribution mechanisms to be considered
- **Above-Grade Open Space Percentages** ²
- **Design Guidelines** ²
 - Impervious surface guidelines
 - Parameters for above-grade open space
 - Integration of open space into building form
 - Dimensions (ratios) of open space
 - Provision of amenities
 - Others

¹ = From Session 1

² = From Session 2