

From: [KENNETH SHERWOOD](#)
To: [PlanComm](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan
Date: Saturday, October 26, 2024 6:57:46 AM

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Dear Planning Commissioners,

I purchased my home in the Alexandria City section of Fairlington Villages on June 27, 1978, and have lived in my home since – forty-six wonderful years living in a peaceful oasis within which is found a large and well-maintained multiple brick 2-3 story building neighborhood nestled in a plethora of large, magnificent trees and beautiful plantings in an environment where residents live in individual, interpersonal and community harmony. It is an open, quiet, seemingly slow-paced neighborhood with a significant amount of natural scenic beauty. It is not uncommon to see the occasional fox, raccoon and even deer. Fairlington Villages has been designated one of Alexandria's seven National Register Historic Districts.

The proposed draft AlexWest Small Area Plans will bring a significant, devastating cityscape to King Street Area 2. This proposed cityscape of 10-12 story buildings giving permission to replace the remaining 4 low-rise buildings on King Street Area 2 negatively impacts the City's Fairlington residents living along King Street Area 2 – it will impact our day-to-day living. This is very disturbing. I don't believe that the city would consider doing anything like this for development adjacent along a 3-4 block portion nor partially adjacent to "old Town" Alexandria. "Why treat one of the City's "National Register Historic District" differently?"

The proposed plans for the 4-story Condominium and 150 Feet High Neighborhood Area 2 of multiple 150 feet high and 175 feet high with affordable housing filling in that area will turn that neighborhood into a mini cityscape like Crystal City, the new Pentagon City or Eisenhower, something it is currently not.

Fairlington Villages' requests of 60 Feet High buildings and with affordable housing 85 Feet High buildings on King Street Area 2 is a compromise and for the 150 feet High and 4-story Condominium Neighborhood (Area 2) – to build 150 feet high rises within the nature and character of the established residential neighborhood with affordable housing within the 150 feet height more than adequately describes the compromised vision as well as the concerns with the adjacent King Street (Area 2) and partial adjacent 4-story Condominium and 150 feet High Neighborhood (Area 2). The Alexandria residents living in Fairlington Village were told by City staff that they were stakeholders in developing the Plan. The decision about these two neighborhoods will dramatically impact us. My question is - "How can we be stakeholders if the concerns about these two neighborhoods that are adjacent to us and partially adjacent to us and will affect us not be included in this proposed plan?" Please give high consideration that the citizens living in this neighborhood are highly concerned that the City's proposal supports the evolution of King Street Area 2 and the 4-story condominium and 150 feet Height Neighborhood Area 2 into a cityscape or mini-cityscapes.

Regards,

KENNETH E. SHERWOOD
4912 28th Street South (A-2)

Arlington, VA, 22206-1423
571.317.5762

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From: [Erin Mackay](#)
To: [Justin Wilson](#); [Amy Jackson](#); [John Chapman](#); [Kirk McPike](#); [Canek Aguirre](#); [Alvia Gaskins](#); [Sarah Bagley](#); [PlanComm](#)
Cc: [Suzanne Derr](#); [Mark McHugh](#); [Kristine Devine](#); [Michele Griffin](#); [Karl Bach](#); [Regina Benavides](#); [Christine Macey](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan
Date: Sunday, October 27, 2024 3:34:50 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from erinamackay@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear City Council Members and Planning Commissioners,
I have owned a condo in Alexandria City of Fairlington Villages since 2012.

I have lived here much longer than anticipated, choosing in recent years to stay and raise my son as a single mom. The proximity to Shirlington and Washington, DC made it an easy decision in 2012, but I've stayed for the small neighborhood feel, the mature trees, and the relative quiet. I am grateful everytime I stare out (certain) windows and see nothing but leaves and sky.

While I support your efforts to build a multicultural and multilingual community and in particular to expand access to affordable housing, I write to oppose 10-12 story buildings on King Street; and a city setting on King Street and in nearby neighborhoods.

I'm grateful for your consideration and wish you luck planning a Community that can adapt to growth while maintaining the beauty and heart of the city of Alexandria.

Sincerely,
Erin A. Mackay

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From: [Suzanne Elliot](#)
To: [PlanComm](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan -- second try
Date: Sunday, October 27, 2024 8:21:43 PM

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Dear Planning Commission Members,

* I am attempting to resend my previous email as it may have been truncated; I apologize.

I am writing in regards to the drafted plans for the AlexWest area, adjacent to Fairlington Villages. While I have lived in Northern Virginia for most of my life, I have spent the past 3.5 years as a resident in the Alexandria City section of Fairlington Villages and hope to stay. I was drawn to this neighborhood for its lush natural beauty including mature trees, the relative quiet, and proximity to the District and other parts of NoVA (e.g. Pentagon City, Old Town, Clarendon / Courthouse, and Merrifield). I love that despite being so close to I-395 and bordered by King Street, the neighborhood truly feels like a sanctuary from the stress / chaos, congestion, and pollution of city life. Additionally, I sought to live in an area that is reasonably quiet, tranquil, and conducive to the rest and healing I need to survive with difficult chronic health conditions.

I have been delighted by the wildlife still in this neighborhood (e.g. birds, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, ducks) and all of the avian visitors to my bird feeder, year-round. It is remarkable to have such frequency and variety of species given how close we are to the District as well as mini urban areas like Crystal City and Pentagon City. My pet and I both enjoy birds' songs (somewhat disrupted by noise from King Street & nearby towers) as well as views of squirrels and chipmunks from our unit.

For about half of the year, there is enough foliage to provide some privacy and somewhat buffer against the effects of the three nearby towers (Alexander, Northampton Place, and Halstead Tower) -- noise, lights, and other forms of stimulation. However, there is still considerable noise from living this close to King Street and the hundreds of residents in these three towers. Noise can be heard at nearly all hours of the day, every day -- and all the more so when the temperatures and the leaves fall, when that buffer becomes limited. I typically keep my windows closed for this reason; and even overnight, there is enough noise coming into my building & unit to disrupt sleep. Sadly, there is also limited sunlight and sky view due to these large towers. I must walk a couple of blocks in order to see a sunset or view the unobstructed sky. While these things may seem minor, they impact one's quality of life and the nature of the neighborhood.

In light of the conditions caused by the nearby towers and the proposed AlexWest SAP, I am asking for the heights on the adjacent properties on King Street (Area 2) to be no more than 60 feet high and 85 feet high with affordable housing. For the partially adjacent neighborhood (150 feet heights and 4-Story Condominium

Neighborhood) that buildings be built within the current nature and character of the neighborhood and affordable housing be within the 150 feet heights (**not** a city-scape setting). For the very nearby neighborhood of Newport Villages, I am asking that it be more of a town-like setting like Cameron Station, since a suburban setting is no longer an option. These measures will help mitigate / limit the increased noise from developed housing units and traffic as well as other disruptions (such as sunlight and negative impacts to wildlife habitats) to existing adjacent communities. Any 10-12 story buildings on King Street as well as a city setting along King Street and nearby neighborhoods would drastically change the nature of this area and quality of life.

I am asking that our neighborhood's concerns be a part of the equation too and not disregarded. I am asking that Fairlington Villages' hopes as stated in the Fairlington Villages email be considered within the complexity of these situations. As a person who works in public health and also lives with disabilities, I support affordable housing options as part of this plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Suzanne Elliot

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From: [Holly Berman](#)
To: [PlanComm](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan
Date: Monday, October 28, 2024 6:59:50 AM

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Dear Planning Commissioners,

I own a condominium in the Alexandria City section of Fairlington Villages that I bought 24 years ago.

These are my concerns with the draft AlexWest Small Area Plan (SAP) for Area 2 next to Fairlington Villages.

I purchased my home here because it was not in a city setting nor next to a city setting. There is a very different day-to-day lived-in experience living away from a city setting, as opposed to a suburban setting. When living in a suburban setting like Delray or Fairlington Villages or a town setting like Cameron Station- there is a quieter feel, a slower-paced feel, a relaxed feel. It provides a more peaceful, more comfortable living experience, away from the hustle and bustle of a city.

These lived-in day-to-day experiences is an instinctive feeling and is a quality-of-life experience.

For me, two examples of a city (although there are more, including mid-rise cities) is the new Pentagon City on Eads Street and near Whole Foods, and Crystal City on Crystal Drive and Richmond Highway, and 15th - 23rd Streets.

I do like visiting cities, knowing that when I leave, I will return to my home and enjoy a more peaceful setting.

The character and nature of the neighborhoods that are adjacent, partially adjacent, and very close to Fairlington Villages will be effectively dismantled and become a city setting, if the plan is fully implemented. Something they are currently not. And certainly not what it was when I bought my home 24 years ago.

I purchased my home before the Alexander, Northampton and Halstead Tower were built. During the development process, we in Fairlington Villages communicated our concerns with the height and dimension of the Alexander and Northampton and in our opinion, our concerns were not considered. These buildings are 16-stories with very wide dimensions. I and my neighbors live across the street and our buildings are 2-3 stories with much smaller dimensions and in a suburban-like setting.

When I bought my home, I was told that area was limited to one 7-10 story normal size hotel building, not three 16 story wide dimension high rises grouped very close together to become a city setting.

Within Washington DC, there are 10-12 story buildings. They are quite large and would over-shadow us as the Alexander, Northampton and Halstead Tower have, given the topography and other factors that are a part of planning, and completely change the setting.

The section of Fairlington Villages in the City of Alexandria is asking for the heights on the adjacent properties on King Street (Area 2) to be 60 feet high and 85 feet high inclusive

of affordable housing. For the partially adjacent neighborhood in Area 2 (150 feet heights and a 4 story condominium neighborhood), we ask that buildings be built within the current nature and character of the neighborhood and affordable housing be within the 150 height.

I have just seen the *Agenda Alexander* recording in which Arlington County Chairperson Libby Garvey and Mayor Wilson were interviewed on the topic: "*Are Local Governments In Sync with their Constituents?*" When Ms. Garvey spoke about the proposal to implement 8-unit multi-family homes in single family home neighborhoods in Arlington County, she recognized the concerns of both groups: the current residents and the need to provide more affordable housing across a range of incomes. She suggested 4-unit multi-family homes, since both the size is closer to that of a single-family home and is also more in line with the character and nature of single-family home neighborhoods. For us, this is the equivalent, since we are 2-3 story buildings in a suburban setting, and the proposal is for 10-12 story buildings in a city setting.

I am a retired special education preschool teacher, and I support affordable housing. Quality of life is important to me both professionally and personally. I have many stories about improving children's and families' quality of life. Over the years, I have received many notes/letters of gratitude from parents. I would be happy to share them with you.

In the beginning of the AlexWest Small Area Plan process, we were told that we are stakeholders, and that we have a say.

I am asking that Fairlington Villages' hopes and concerns with regard to the adjacent property and partial adjacent property be included, since we will be directly affected by these decisions. I am asking that our concerns be included within the complexity of this situation.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Holly Berman

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From: [Michael Snoddy](#)
To: [PlanComm](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan
Date: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 12:17:45 AM

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Dear Planning Commissioners:

My name is Michael Snoddy and I am a resident of the City of Alexandria since 1978 when I purchased my condominium in North Fairlington Villages. I value the quiet peaceful area where I live.

I am asking for the heights on the adjacent properties on King Street (Area 2) be 60 Feet High and 85 Feet High with affordable housing. For the partially adjacent neighborhood (150 feet Heights and 4 Story Condominium Neighborhood) that buildings be built within current nature and character of the neighborhood and affordable housing be within the 150 Heights.

Sincerely,
Michael Snoddy
Sent from my iPad

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From: [Owen Curtis](#)
To: [PlanComm](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Docket 11/07/24 Meeting, Item 5: Master Plan Amendment #2024-00003, AlexWest Small Area Plan
Date: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 2:26:31 PM
Attachments: [SWCA comments on AWSAP draft plan 073124 final.pdf](#)

Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission:

When this item came before you at your September meeting, I provided the comments below and in the attachment. To make it easier on you, I am sending them again.

Of all the many concerns our community has about the Alex West Small Area Plan, I would say our largest is regarding the West End Transitway. We were not told until the planning process was completed that the Transitway was a GIVEN for this study, and was never to be considered for elimination or revision. As a professional transportation planning engineer with 50 years of experience conducting master plans and transit development plans, I am appalled that all ideas and options were NOT on the table during this plan's development. One cannot meet the responsibility in the City's code for competent, considerate, and sound small area planning if the transit system is NOT part of the planning effort.

For that reason alone, we request that you further table this plan, send it back to staff to work with the community, and develop appropriate transit services and facilities that makes sense today and over the next twenty years. We love transit, we have had high quality transit for most of the 50 years I have lived in Alex West, and we look for that to continue. But this plan will not provide that. The out-dated West End Transitway concept built around serving the mass of office development in the former Winkler tract, of which essentially nothing is left, requires a fresh look that HAS TO be developed in sync with the rest of the Small Area Plan.

Sincerely,

Owen P. Curtis
 President
 Seminary West Civic Association

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Owen Curtis <opctiger72@aol.com>
To: PlanComm <plancomm@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Justin M. Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>; Amy Jackson <amy.jackson@alexandriava.gov>; John Chapman <john.taylor.chapman@alexandriava.gov>; Alyia Gaskins <alyia.gaskins@alexandriava.gov>; Sarah Bagley <sarah.bagley@alexandriava.gov>; Kirk McPike <kirk.mcpike@alexandriava.gov>; Canek Aguirre <canek.aguirre@alexandriava.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 30, 2024 at 10:07:02 AM EDT
Subject: 09/05/24 Meeting, Item 6: Master Plan Amendment #2024-00003, AlexWest Small Area Plan

Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission:

Attached please find the final set of comments submitted August 1 on the AlexWest Small Area Plan (AWSAP) by the Seminary West Civic Association (SWCA). SWCA has been in operation since 1977, and represents some 600 townhouse and detached single family homes from N Beauregard St. to the City Line, north of Holmes Run to the NVCC Campus. Our members have closely followed, participated with, and provided comments on the AWSAP to the City staff over the past several years.

We are disappointed that this plan continues the damage to our community that began with the Beauregard Small Area Plan a few years ago. This plan is all about a level of density and development unlike anything in Alexandria West. It more or less prescribes the same dense, urban development that is underway in so many other parts of the city, and thus does not respect the distinct nature of the various neighborhoods.

In particular, we are distressed that in response to our comments about the destructive impact of the West End Transitway (WET) along the city's nicest tree-lined boulevard, N. Beauregard Street, staff responded that the WET was a GIVEN for this plan based on out-of-date plans started more than a dozen years ago. Why bother doing a comprehensive SAP if all things are not on the table for the community to determine if they are appropriate, necessary, and worth their cost? Everyone in the City knows how things have changed with the loss of office space, the conversion to residential, the significant increase in work-from-home, and the drop in regional transit usage. Such massive changes truly call for a complete reconsideration of the WET, but the staff said no, it is a *fait accompli*.

We also note that the staff took comments of the draft plan from all areas of the City and from some outside the City. In particular, the YIMBY groups were well organized, and by our count, 25% of the comments were duplicative, often verbatim, sent in by organized groups from elsewhere who do not have anything at stake in AlexWest and our neighborhood other than their socio-political beliefs. They attacked our neighborhood, Area 2, in particular, stating in a dozen or more comments that we were a wealthy, white area that should no longer exist, but rather should become dense urban development because they mistakenly believe it will lead to more affordable housing. Our neighborhood, of almost any in the City, is likely to suffer the greatest impact from the ZFH zoning change, as our SF homes are older and smaller, and on somewhat larger lots, thus ripe for a six-plex of townhouses. But having lived here since 1977, I can tell you it is precisely because of our affordable SF homes that we have been the targeted neighborhood for immigrant families to buy into their first home once they have enough capital. Our neighborhood is roughly 50% European-descent, 25% Latino, 15% Middle Eastern / African (chiefly Muslim), and 10% Asian. It is the very type of neighborhood that this plan and this City should be encouraging -- diverse, friendly, and as affordable as anything in the City.

We hope you will see that the AWSAP needs some changes to make it reflective of

what the residents of Alex West want, and what is best for the future of our city.

Sincerely,

Owen P. Curtis
President
Seminary West Civic Association

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Seminary West Civic Association

MEMORANDUM

July 31, 2024

TO: Christian Brandt, Jose Delcid, Jeff Farmer; P & Z

CC: SWCA Board, Gus Ardura

FROM: Owen P. Curtis, President, SWCA

RE: Comments on the Draft Plan for the Alexandria West SAP

Our Association has been actively involved in providing input to and feedback on all stages of the development of the Alexandria West Small Area Plan. You and your staff have joined a number of our meetings to present materials and to hear our comments. On March 27, we submitted seven pages of comments on the draft recommendations, and we attended the Open House on June 25, where we provided additional comments and engaged staff in some discussions.

At this stage of the process, we believe it most useful to provide Big Picture comments and concerns, rather than reiterate the many detailed comments we have already provided. We hope that staff, Planning Commission, and Council take these comments seriously, and work with us to amend and improve the plan.

Our overall concern with the draft plan is that it is not respectful of the many positive attributes of Alexandria West. As a consequence, it does little to protect, preserve, and enhance those positive qualities. Indeed, the very dense, urban vision shown in this document is a threat to the ambiance, character, openness, greenness, and pleasant living which attracted the current residents and businesses, and which continue to do so. The specific threats in this plan include:

- The West End Transitway (WET)
- Dwindling tree canopy and decreasing setbacks
- Increasing building heights.

Each of these is explained below.

The plan also fails to do several important things:

- Fully disclose the enormous changes coming to Alex West as a result of Zoning for Housing (ZFH) and the automatic blessing given in this plan to virtually everything which was approved and included in the BSAP 12 years ago. The BSAP should have been seriously challenged in this planning effort to see if it still makes sense in the larger context of Alex West.
- Develop strategies for preserving the market-affordable rentals which are the bulk of multi-family dwelling units in Alex West.

Seminary West Civic Association

- Provide an enhancement to the community by including a focus area or project – a community center, if you will – that would help tie the various sub-communities and neighborhoods together better than all the ad hoc development included in this plan.

Each of these is explained below as well.

West End Transitway

The idea of the WET was hatched by some transit advocates on the Council nearly 20 years ago. Since that time, Alex West has seen enormous changes in land use (loss of nearly all office space), in demographics, and in life style, especially regarding commuting. Nothing in this plan asked the hard questions about whether a dedicated transitway still makes any sense. In general, Alex West today has a high level of transit service with connections to a large number of destinations. The bus routes penetrate the neighborhoods and thus walking distances to stops are short. There is no evidence of a pattern today or in the future that suggests a need for a special focus on higher transit speeds to get to the Van Dorn Station or to Shirlington (if Arlington is even going to continue the transitway through its territory). We in Alex West need to go to the Pentagon, King Street, Braddock Road, Old Town, Carlyle, Ballston, and many smaller destinations within the City far more than we need to go to Shirlington or Van Dorn, which is near the end of the line.

So this plan potentially supports spending several hundred million dollars for an unneeded facility that will destroy the beauty of the nicest boulevard in the City, N. Beauregard Street, from King Street to Sanger Avenue. It will make us walk farther to/from a stop, and create pedestrian safety issues to cross six or more lanes, especially for the children attending four elementary schools which are or will be along Beauregard.

We fully support location-specific improvements to signal timing, bus priority treatments, et al., and would be happy to work on improvements to our already excellent transit service, but otherwise, **please remove this unwise, expensive, unnecessary, and ugly idea from the plan.**

Trees and Setbacks

Alex West has only 33 percent tree canopy, compared to the national guidance for 40 percent. And we have experienced **major** tree canopy loss in the recent past due to how the City permits development to occur. Every new development in our neighborhood in the past 20 years has removed virtually every tree on the property. Examples include the Blake, where more than 100 mature hardwoods were removed; the St. James Place apartments and the townhouses next door, which wiped out nearly four acres of tree canopy; the Spire, or ... the list goes on and on, **and this plan does NOTHING to prevent that from continuing to happen.** Moreover, this plan is ALL about densification of development, trying to squeeze in more and more dwelling units on a finite amount of land. None of the proposed development will save our tree canopy; rather, new, dense development will continue to wipe it out. Building residences on existing surface parking

Seminary West Civic Association

lots, most of which do have some trees, eats away at potential green space, and wipes out the trees in the lots.

The plan is full of very urban images, trying to show them as “green.” But there are NO images of the quality of green openness and tree canopy that we have in Alex West. Our residents cannot relate to the images in this plan because NONE of them show what Alex West is all about and what we want to have maintained. In particular, all one has to do is see the near-zero setbacks of The Spire, St. James Apartments, or all the new development at King/Beauregard to conclude that this plan envisions a street, curb, sidewalk with narrow planting strip (if at all), and then the building. We in Alex West came here because the buildings were well set back from the street: 35–50 feet for SF homes, > 50 feet for places like Mark Center, and many apartment and townhouse developments.

The bottom line is this plan does not respect the quality of the Alex West neighborhoods, does not protect or preserve what is desirable, and is hell-bent on creating dense urban development like Crystal City, Rosslyn, or Carlyle. No one in Alex West wants that.

Building Heights

Alex West has some of the tallest buildings in the City. Tall buildings have a place in Alex West. Building heights *per se* are not so much the problem. Rather, it is where the plan permits the existing heights to be greatly increased that we find problematic. The building heights in general show no respect for the character of the neighborhood, nor for the provision of adequate light and air for adjacent buildings. A recent case in point was at 2000 N Beauregard St., for decades a four-story office building, well set back from the street and adjacent residences, surrounded by trees and parking. Now that site is the Blake Apartments, six stories, hard by the street and far too close to the adjacent residences, some of which now do not even get blessed with sunlight.

The previous plan kept ALL the really tall buildings between Beauregard and I-395. We asked at the start of this planning effort to preserve that, and to step down the heights as one got closer to one- and two-story residences. This plan instead brings heights too high into too many residential areas, and that is an affront to the people who live in Alex West. No one bought in with the idea that they would not be able to see the sun from where they live.

Major Coming Changes are NOT Disclosed in the Plan

In its discussion of the Focus Area, and in its discussion of Area 3, the text tends to downplay that anything much (if anything at all) has changed with this plan. The text fails to be candid with the residents of Alex West by these sins of omission. The plan needs to be fully candid and clear about two things:

- In the Focus Area, nearly everything was pre-approved as part of the BSAP, and it will bring INTENSE change to the Focus Area. And then the plan needs to clearly state exactly what will change: density, building heights, land use types, loss of thousands of mature trees, etc.

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- In Area 3, which is nearly all SF homes, detached or townhouses, (of which, by the way, there is not one image of any in the plan report, further demonstrating that the plan cares not about such land uses/types), the plan needs to spell out all of the zoning changes which were made less than a year ago, and which will, when implemented, destroy the character of these fine residential areas. Multiple dwelling units on small SF lots, no off-street parking, etc. -- these are ENORMOUS changes, which the average person in Alex West likely does not really know is coming their way. They must be spelled out in the plan.

Lack of Preservation Ideas for Market-affordable Housing

The City went to great efforts to reach out to the relatively low-income, non-English native speaking, chiefly immigrant residents of the many MF buildings in Alex West. This is to the City's credit. And the plan does flag the concerns these residents have about rent increases, evictions, et al. But the plan really does not present any concrete ideas on how to preserve such market-affordable rentals. Alexandria is not the only city in the US facing these issues, and they have been addressed over the past 75 years through a variety of options -- conversion to condo ownership via low/no-interest mortgages supported by government and charitable organizations, conversion to co-ops (in similar ways), etc. In Alexandria, this was done with, e.g., Park Fairfax in the 1970s. Can the funds be found to save ALL such market-affordable units? Perhaps not, but this plan spends its efforts on talking about trying to squeeze in new construction, which will not be market-affordable until it is as old as the market-affordable rentals currently in Alex West. The residents in the existing market-affordable housing are our neighbors and friends, and our children go to school together. We know, we work, we play with these folks, and they are working hard and saving to be able to buy into our neighborhood, which still has some of the most affordable SF housing in the city (small, older homes). To not come up with better ideas to preserve what we have, rather than focus on the more expensive "let's build some small amount of new affordable housing" truly misses the boat, and is greatly disappointing.

There Is No "There" There in The Plan

Pardon the quote of the old expression, but it seems to fit with our last concern. Since annexation in 1952, Alex West has grown in fits and spurts through a series of unrelated developments. Some were large - Southern Towers, e.g., - and had a modest degree of internal community. The Mark Center development - the old Hamlets with a common club and several pools, and the Hamlet Shopping Center with its park-like interior -- were highly attractive, and created some modest common space for their residents. But the City has never invested in working with developers and/or using public funds to create a community center or focus area west of I-395. Contrarily, such an effort WAS done when Cameron Station was BRACed and developed, with a large park area being the public contribution.

This plan continues what many see as a neglect by the City as it does not propose some sort of public/private focus area for all or at least a significant part of Alex West. It can be hard to provide just one, give the long, narrow configuration of the planning area, but none are provided in this plan.

Seminary West Civic Association

Our concept for such a place would be roughly where the Shops at Mark Center are. Adjacent are two elementary schools, a focus of human activity and foot traffic already. This plan should show/tell/order(?) the developers of that area to create, with the City, some open space, surrounded by retail and residential (with adequate parking, but behind the buildings) as a true Alex West community gathering place. The City is doing some of that at Potomac Yard, so why not here? Splash fountains for the kids, art in public places, etc. – City staff well knows what to consider and provide. There is no reason this plan should lack such amenities, which are available in other parts of the City.

While we appreciate that you have worked with us over the two years of the plan, you can tell that we are not satisfied with a number of critical aspects of the plan. We remain willing and able to continue working to get this plan improved by addressing the areas of concern that we have identified in this memo. Thank you.



Owen P. Curtis
President
Seminary West Civic Association

From: [Oscar Giron](#)
To: jeffrey.farner@alexandria.gov; [PlanComm](#)
Cc: [Greg Roby](#); [Melanie Alvord](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan
Date: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 3:40:21 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[Alexandria Attachment King Street Pictures October 2024.pdf](#)

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Fairlington Villages A Condominium Association

October 30, 2024

Dear Planning Commissioners

Fairlington Villages is a historically designated site of two-three story buildings built in the 1940s to provide housing for civilian defense workers. In the 1970s, Fairlington Villages underwent renovations to become a condominium community. At that time, this was the largest condominium community in the area, and continues to be among the largest. The architect and contractor in the 1940s had a vision for providing a high-quality, livable community and as a result many generations have benefited and continue to benefit.

Currently, we do not support the draft AlexWest Small Area Plan (SAP) for King Street Area 2, and two close-by neighborhoods.

Fairlington Villages is adjacent to King Street Area 2.

The proposed SAP calls for 100-120 feet high buildings on King Street (Area 2). Fairlington Villages has only two to three-story buildings. If this plan is fully implemented on the four possible redevelopment sites along King Street Area 2, we will have a small version of Crystal City or the new Pentagon City, directly across from us.

In the year 2001, during the residential input phase for the development of

the Alexander and Northampton, Fairlington Villages expressed concern over the heights and dimensions of these proposed buildings in proportion to Fairlington Villages, directly across from this site. These concerns were not considered nor addressed in the development phase. Soon after the Alexander and Northampton were approved, the Halstead Tower, another 16-story building was approved; the justification for its size was based on the approved plans for the Alexander and Northampton.

However, on the same side of the street as these new buildings, starting at Park Center Drive and extending east on King Street to I- 395, two-story office buildings and four-story condominiums (now known as The Pointe) had been planned and approved in 1988. Both sites were in proportion to Fairlington Villages and reflected its character and nature and were approved prior to the subsequent high-rises very near them.

The Alexander, Northampton, and Halstead Tower, resulted in a small city—tall, wide buildings built closely together on small parcels of land. The attachment includes pictures showing the effect these three buildings have had on our neighborhood. Although this site is not in reality a wall of building after building, the pictures show a different perspective when looking from Fairlington Villages.

With the proposed 10-12 story buildings, we will now not only have a small section, which we in Fairlington Villages opposed in 2001, the whole south side of King Street (Area 2) will be a city of over-sized buildings overwhelming Fairlington Villages.

Due to the topography and other aspects in planning, this will have a similar effect as the three 16-story buildings.

Within the City of Alexandria staff's Bonus Height Presentation video, the architect stated that bonus height buildings can be built so they are in proportion to established buildings. It is our understanding that he made this point because residents are concerned that new buildings will not be in proportion to the building heights and dimensions of the adjacent properties. Residents have concerns that the entire look and nature of an adjacent neighborhood and established setting in that neighborhood could be changed.

King Street Area 2 would not be in proportion to our low-rise buildings, and while we would prefer the height of The Point's 4-story condominiums or the 2-story office buildings next to it on Park Center Drive and King Street, we

understand that the buildings may need to be taller. Further we recognize the need for affordable housing.

For King Street in Area 2, we are asking for 60 feet high buildings, resulting in 85 feet high buildings inclusive of affordable housing.

As you may know Fairlington Villages residents are teachers, nurses, police officers, government workers, military personnel, young families, and retired professionals. Quality of life in both our professions and neighborhood are important to us. Many have numerous stories of improving the quality of life of those they have served.

The second neighborhood we are concerned about is partially adjacent to Fairlington Villages and directly behind King Street (Area 2). It includes two 4-story condominiums and two high rises. We understand that if the site is fully realized as stated in the AlexWest Draft SAP, it will look like a mini-Crystal City with several 150 feet high-rises and with the addition of affordable housing, 175 feet high rises.

Within this partially adjacent neighborhood, we ask that any new high rise(s) be built within the area's current nature and character, namely a suburban setting and that the height limit be 150 feet, inclusive of affordable housing.

The last neighborhood of concern is Bolling Brook, a 4-story condominium community directly across from Fairlington Villages on 28th Street South and where the topography is hilly. The proposed new height for Bolling Brook's 4-story condominium location is 60 feet, from the current 45 feet. Bolling Brook's 4-story condominiums is not a rental complex. Residents own these homes. We ask that the height remain at 45 feet.

Several of our Fairlington Villages City of Alexandria neighbors provided comments on the AlexWest Draft SAP, stating concerns about proposed building heights and the establishment of a city setting on the adjacent property and partially adjacent property to Fairlington Villages.

This is in addition to Fairlington Villages sending letters in Spring 2023, one of which had over 100 signatures, Fairlington Villages' residents completed staff's November 2023 survey requesting Area 2 remain a suburban setting, and compiled comments were sent in March 2024 for the first draft - all during the development phase of the AlexWest SAP.

During the first phase of the development of the AlexWest SAP, we were told that we are stakeholders. We would like to believe that these are not just

placating words. The most important part of the SAP for us is what is built on 1) King Street Area 2, our adjacent property, 2) partially adjacent property (4-story condominiums and two high rises neighborhood Area 2), and 3) Bolling Brook 4-story condominiums. We have been communicating this throughout the development process.

Small Area Plans provide the blueprint for future development in each neighborhood. Once a Small Area Plan is approved, residents' concerns are limited to the parameters of that Small Area Plan and residents' hands become tied.

With the goal of more affordable housing, we recognize that this is a complex situation, and we ask each of you to recognize this complexity, while honoring the adjacent property owners' and adjacent renters' concerns. We believe our compromise suggestion offers a solution that will allow for both affordable housing and address the established affected neighborhood's concerns.

We ask that we not only be listened to, but that our suggested compromise be accepted as part of the AlexWest SAP. Fairlington Villages will be affected by the decisions made by this SAP for generations.

We cannot support the AlexWest Draft SAP as currently written.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Melanie Alvord

Fairlington Villages Ward VI Board Director (Alexandria)

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Alexandria Attachment - - Pictures of the effect of the three high rises (Alexander, Hampton, and Halstead) on Fairlington Villages (Adjacent Property)

There are 7 sets of pictures (A-G).

They were taken from 7 different locations within Fairlington Villages (adjacent property) and are within the City of Alexandria's boundaries in Fairlington Villages.

Over 100 families/individuals whose homes are in this area are affected by the view. For 5 ½ - 6 months of the year, due to the lack of leaves on the trees, this is the view we in Fairlington Villages have.

We are concerned that if building heights on King Street are not adjusted from the proposed 100 feet height as well as details and specifics are not included, given multiple factors in planning on adjacent properties and absent in the SAP for King Street in Area 2, we will continue to have more of this effect on our neighborhood and it will extend to our entire north side of Fairlington Villages from 28th Street South to 30th Street South.

Some of these multiple factors in planning may include a combination of changes in topography, position of building, no established or known set-backs, building placement in relationship to adjacent properties, size of buildings' heights and dimensions in relationship to adjacent property, building size to land ratio and setting, to name a few. As stated, we are concerned if heights are not adjusted from the proposed 100 feet height and details and specifics are not a part of this SAP, the same or similar effect will occur again.

Fairlington Villages

Fairlington Villages is a historically designated site of 2-3 story buildings. This Community was built in the 1940s to provide housing for civilian defense workers. In the 1970s, Fairlington Villages, and Fairlington, underwent renovations to become a condominium community. At that time, this was the largest condominium community in the area, and continues to be among the largest. The architect and contractor in the 1940s had a vision for providing a high-quality, livable community and as a result many generations have benefited and continue to benefit.

Set A: Pictures taken from the South 29th Road cul-de-sac, which is a well-traveled area that affects approximately 70 individuals and families who live in this area. The first picture is of the Halstead Tower, and the second picture is of the Alexander.



This second picture is of the Alexander.



Set B: The picture was taken from South Dinwiddie Street between two buildings in Fairlington Villages (2916 and 2902 S. Dinwiddie Street). It is a picture of the Halstead and the Alexander.



Set C: Three pictures taken from South Dinwiddie Street, but slightly further back. The first house is at 2918/2916 S. Dinwiddie Street, and it has a picture of the Alexander. The second house is at 2902/2900 S. Dinwiddie Street, and it has a picture of the Alexander and the North Hampton. The third house is also at 2918/2916 S. Dinwiddie Street, and it has a picture of the Halstead and the Alexander.



This is a picture of the Alexander and the North Hampton (2902/2900 S. Dinwiddie Street).



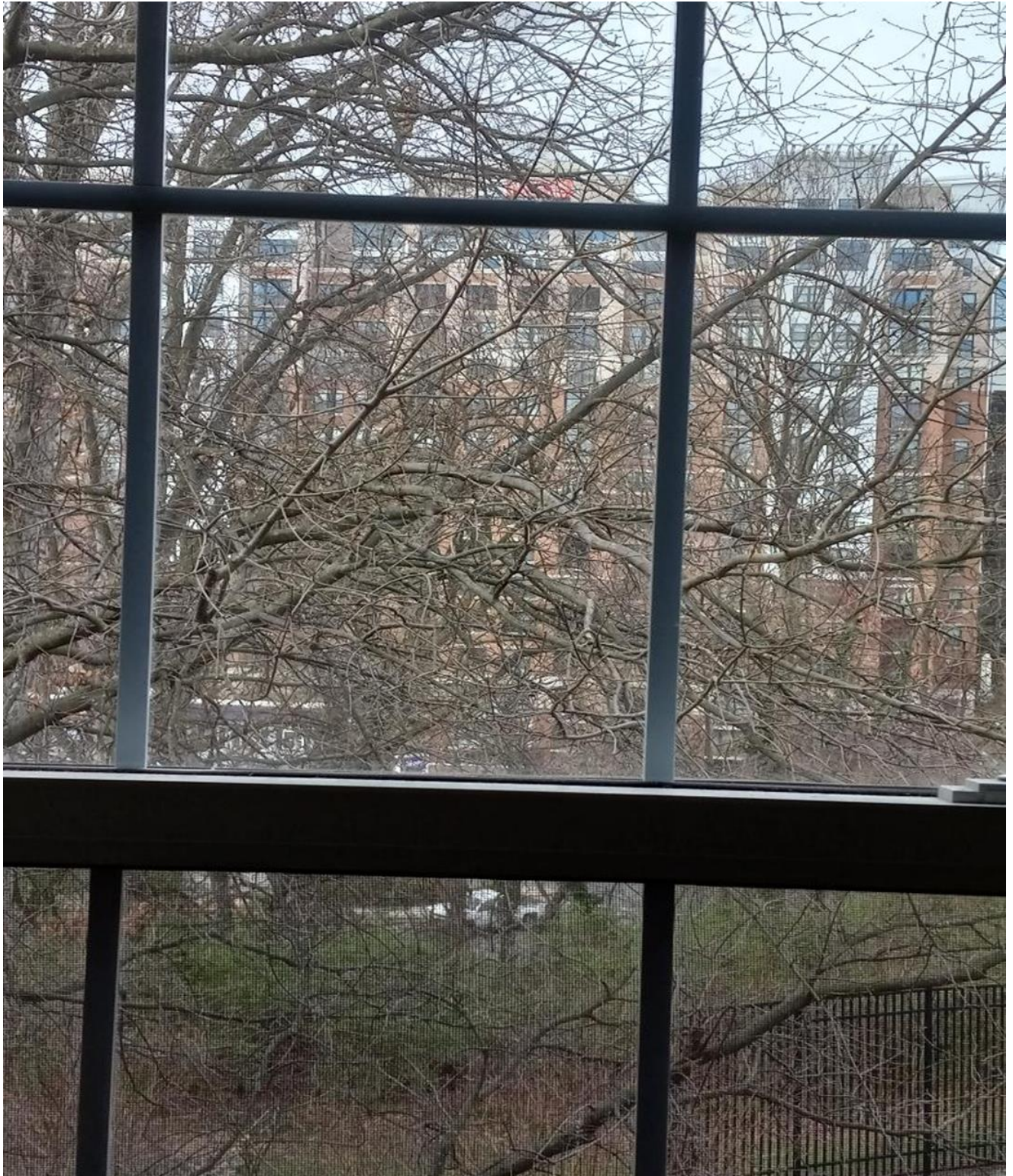
This is a picture of the Halstead and the Alexander (2918/2916 S. Dinwiddie Street).



Set D: Two pictures were taken from a resident's home (4907 S 29th Road). The first picture is of the Alexander and taken from one of the residents' windows. The second picture is of the Halstead Tower and taken from the next window in the same resident's home. Both windows are side by side in the resident's living room. There are other neighbors who have this view too, including the residents who use the pool and/or walk through this part of the neighborhood.



The second picture is of the Halstead Tower and taken from the next window in the same resident's home. Both windows are side by side in the resident's living room.



Set E: This picture is taken from a resident's backyard (2822 S. Columbus St). It is a picture of the Alexander.



Set F: This picture is taken from another resident's backyard (2812 S. Columbus St.). It is of the Alexander and the North Hampton.



Set G: This picture is taken from the backyard of three residents' homes (4920/4918/4916 S 29th Rd). It is of the Halstead Tower.

