



# **Open Space Discussions:**

## **Session 1**

Planning Commission  
February 7, 2019

# Impetus for Open Space Discussion

- Long range workplan to study open space in new development
  - Review of private development project compliance
  - Guidance on allocation of open space at ground-level versus roof top
- Review of private open space in the City of Alexandria

# 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 1 Overview

- What is open space?
  - Public, “public-private” and private
  - Focus is private open space
- How is private open space currently measured and regulated?
  - What is our achievement rate for new private open space?



# Guided Discussion Points

- What are your thoughts on the zoning ordinance requirement for open space as it relates to density?
- Are there recent development projects which you feel have provided quality open space?

# Open Space

What is Open Space?



# Continuum of Open Space



Public



“Public-Private”  
Space



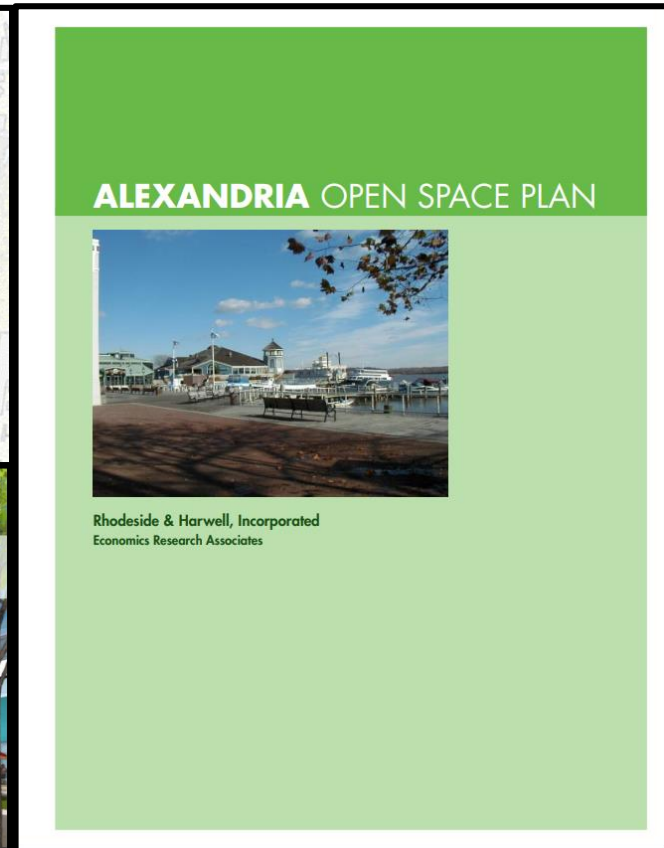
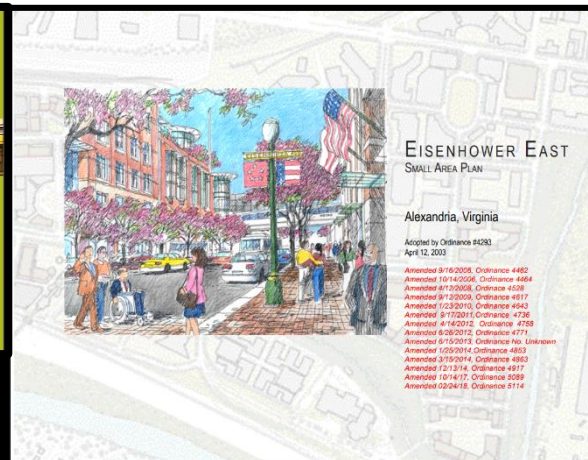
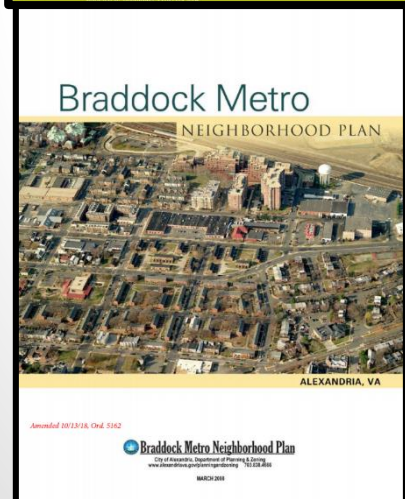
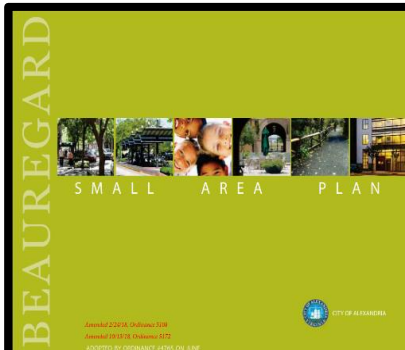
Private





# Public Open Space

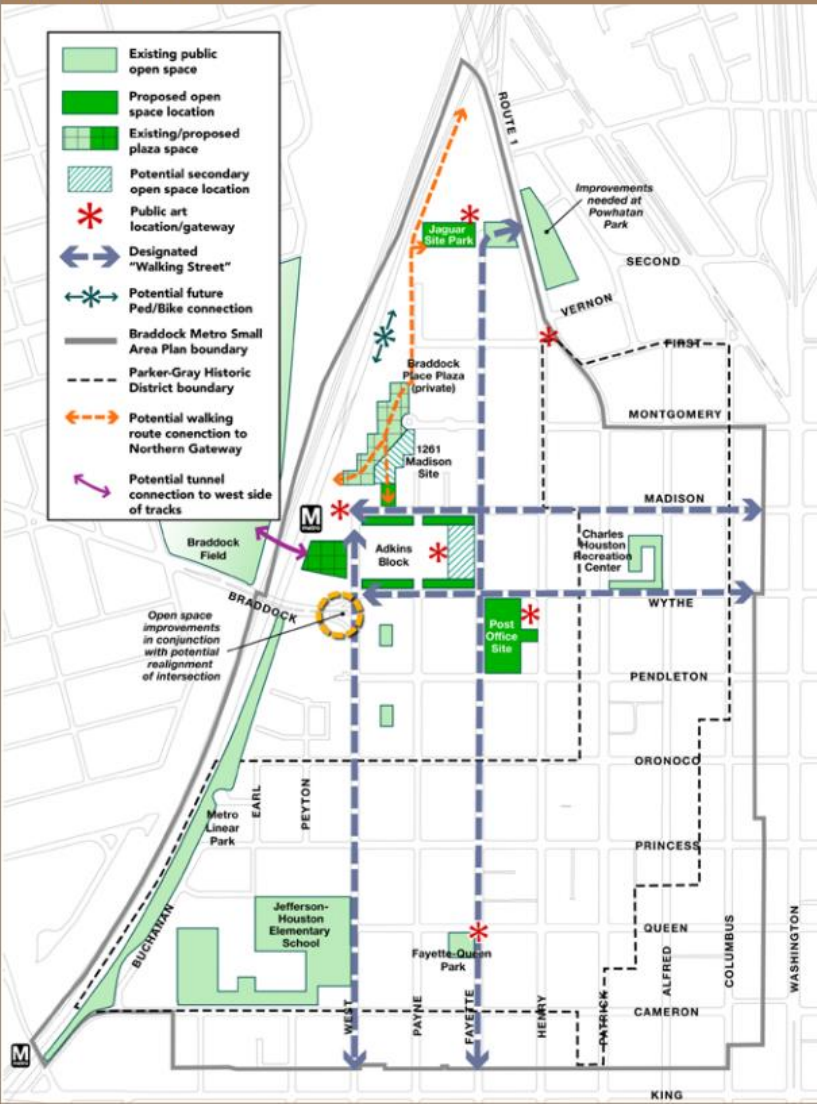
- Open Space Master Plan
- Small Area Plans





# Braddock Metro SAP

## Open Space Framework



Braddock Interim Park

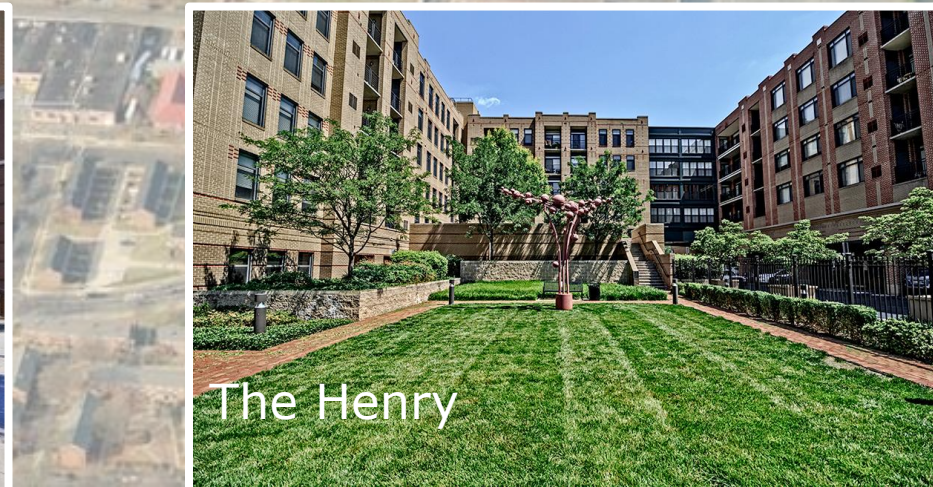


Jefferson-Houston School



# “Public-Private” Space

## Braddock Metro





# Private Open Space



Patios and Decks



Yards



Rooftops

- Outside of Public Right-of-Way without a public access easement
- Private use for building residents, guests and authorized users.
- Both passive and active uses.

# Open Space

What is Private Open Space?





# Role of Private Open Space



Historic: Form Defining



Historic: Visual Relief



Evolving: Outdoor Living



Evolving: Environmental



# Private Open Space Characteristics



Not always green



Not always public



Not always visible



Not always permeable

# Zoning Ordinance Definition

- Open and Usable Space: That portion of the lot at ground level which is:
  - a) Eight feet or more in width;
  - b) Unoccupied by principal or accessory buildings;
  - c) Unobstructed by other than recreational facilities; and
  - d) Not used in whole or in part as roads, alleys, emergency vehicle easement areas, driveways, maneuvering aisles or off-street parking or loading berths.
- The purpose of open and usable space is to provide areas of trees, shrubs, lawns, pathways and other natural and man-made amenities which function for the use and enjoyment of residents, visitors and other persons. (Section 2-180)



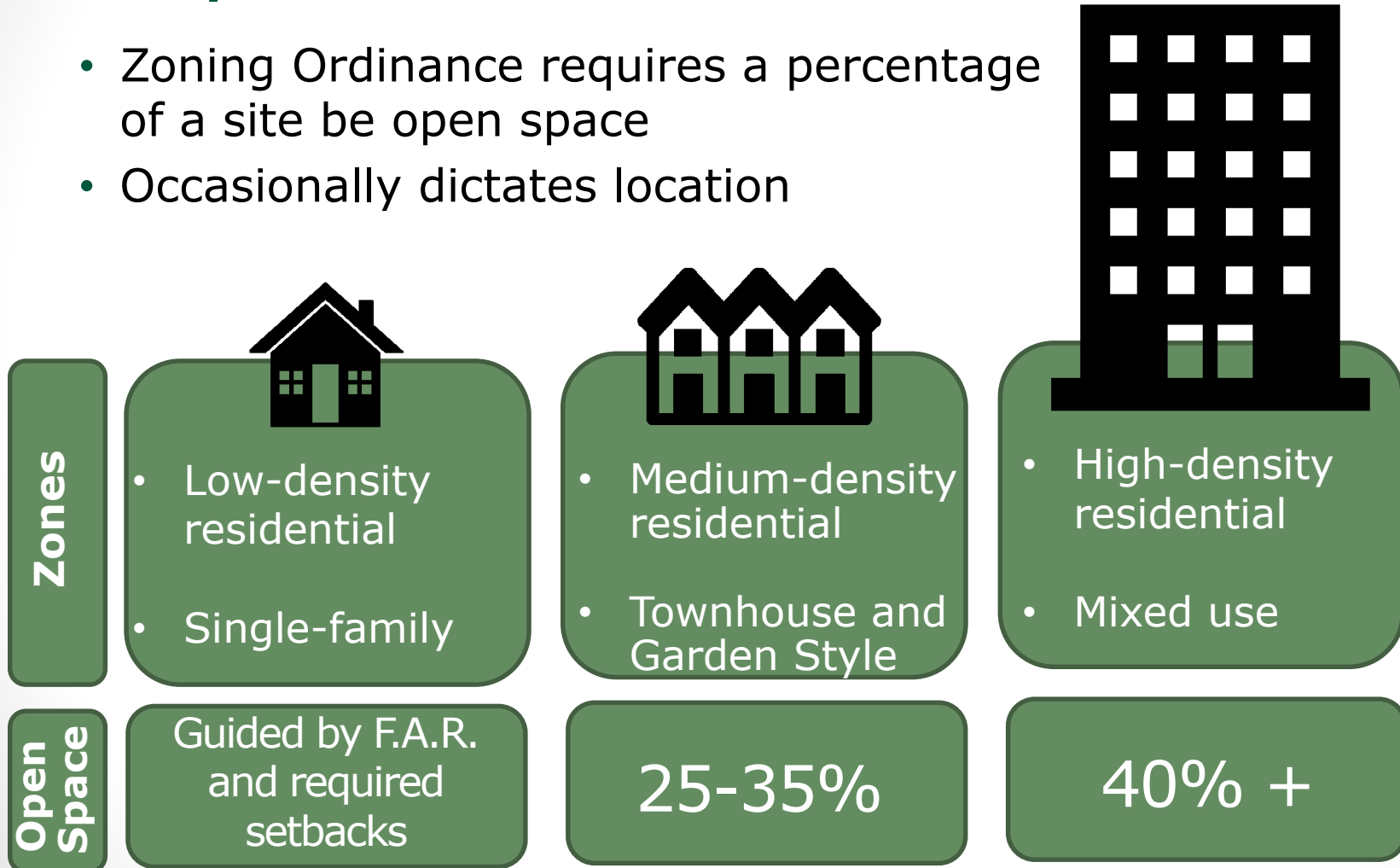


# Zoning Ordinance Definition

- Key Takeaways
  - Establishes a broad definition of open space
  - Definition does not distinguish between types of ownership (public, “public-private”, private)
  - Default location for ground-level open space – may be modified in zone specifications
  - Permits flexibility on design of open space

# Zoning Ordinance Requirements

- Zoning Ordinance requires a percentage of a site be open space
- Occasionally dictates location



# Open Space

How is private open space measured  
and assessed?



# Open Space Through Setbacks

- Lower density zones achieve open space through required setbacks



## Low-Density

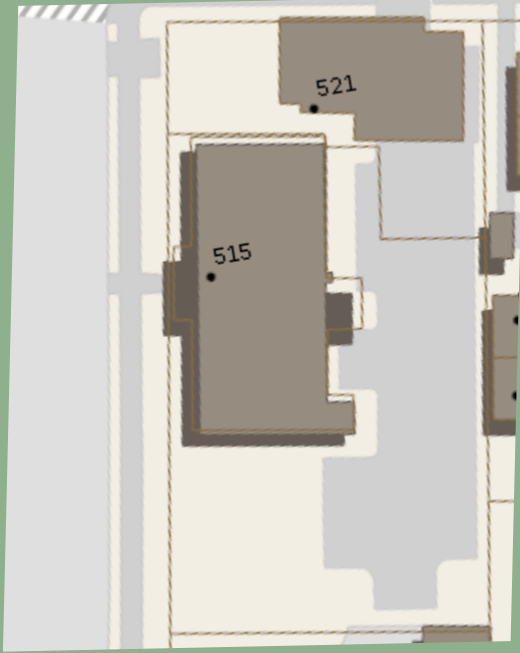
Dwelling Unit,  
Single-Family Detached



# Open Space through Percentages



## Mid-Density The Mill

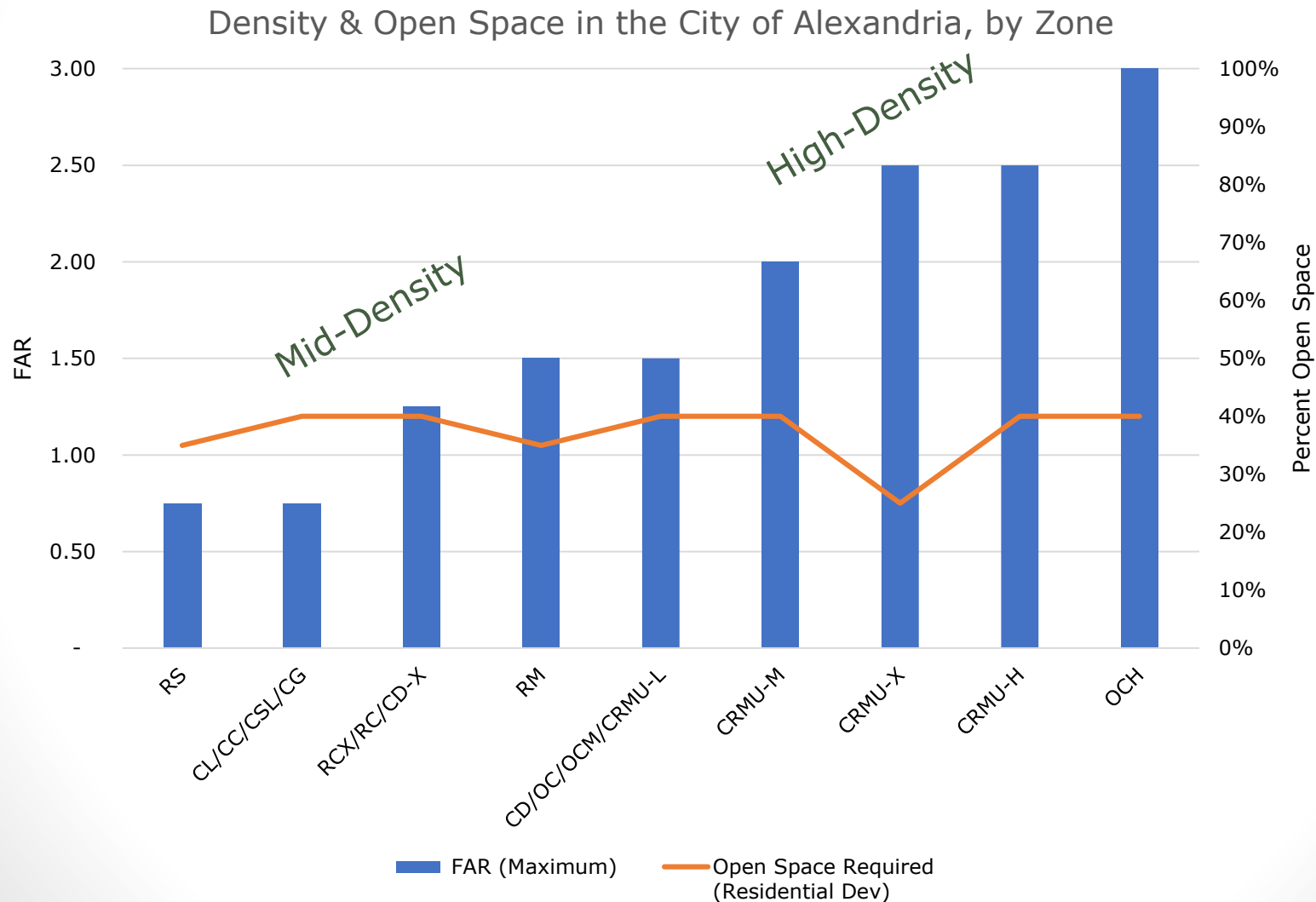


## High-Density The Kingsley





# Density and Open Space





# Consistent Application of Open Space Requirements

Zone	Density	Open Space
Commercial General	0.75	40%
Commercial Downtown	1.25	40%
Commercial Residential Mixed-Use (L)	1.5	40%
Commercial Residential Mixed-Use (M)	2.0	40%
Office Commercial High	3.0	40%

- Residential uses are permitted in the above zones.





# Measuring Private Open Space: Project Compliance

- 84% of **all** Development projects in the past five years (DSPs and DSUPs) have met their open space requirements:
  - 99% of CDD's have met or exceeded open space requirements
  - 70% of projects with a 40% open space requirement have met or exceeded open space requirements
  - 64% of projects with a 25-35% open space requirement have met or exceeded open space requirements



# Measuring Private Open Space: Project Compliance

- On average, projects that did not meet their minimum open space requirements were short on open space by less than 10%
- Typically, townhouse projects in the last five-years were least likely to meet their open space requirements.
- Limits on above-grade open space and requirements for minimum size of open space often prevented projects from meeting their requirements.

## The Middleton

Provided Open Space: 27%

- Modification to count rooftop open space towards open space requirements
- Non-complying open space due to width requirements



 Building Footprint
  Non-Visible Open Space (At Grade)
  Ineligible Open Space
  Above-Grade/Non-Visible Open Space

# Case Study: Non-Compliance



Middleton + Royal Street



Royal Street

Achieving the required percentage of open space does not ensure quality open space.



# Above-Grade Private Open Space

- Majority of zones allow for above-grade open space.
- When considering open space, some zones place limitations on percent of open space permitted above-grade or do not permit above-grade open space to count.
  - RCX/Medium Density Apartment, RC/High Density Apartment, RA/Multi-family, RB/Townhouse
- **If** these zones were permitted to count above grade open space, the City may achieve a higher percentage of compliance.



# Open Space Contributions



## Cameron Park

- **Required:** 25% at grade
- **Provided:** 19% at grade  
8 % above grade
- Provided contributions to fund neighborhood improvements and other negotiated community benefits



## Harris Teeter (The Kingsley)

- **Required:** 40% at grade
- **Provided:** 25% above grade
- Improvements to nearby Montgomery Park
- Establish park maintenance fund for Montgomery Park



## Potomac Yard Park System

- Comprehensive network of open space as part of CDD with a variety of experiences
- Individual sites may have lower open space requirements



# Compliance Summary

- Within the City of Alexandria, private open space requirements vary by zone, are not correlated with density, and inconsistently allow above-grade locations.
- A majority of recent development projects have provided their required private open space requirements and contributed towards open space goals.



# Role of Private Open Space - Revisited



Historic: Form Defining



Historic: Visual Relief

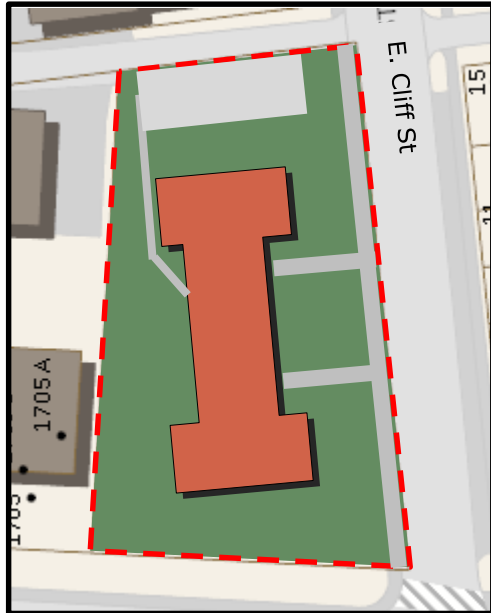


Evolving: Outdoor Living

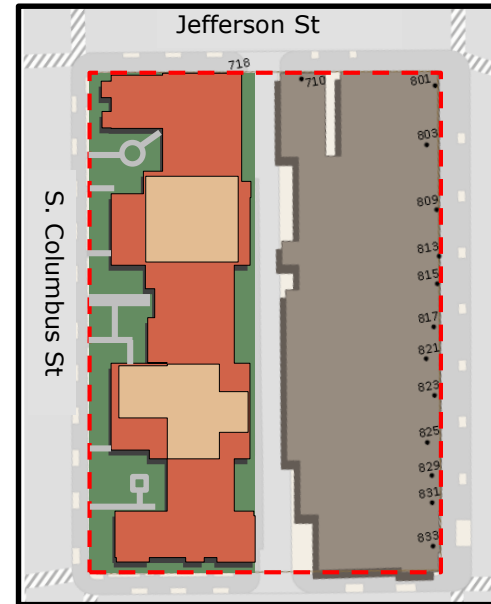


Evolving: Environmental

# Form Defining



The Gardens at Del Ray  
1940s



The Clayborne  
2000s



# Form Defining



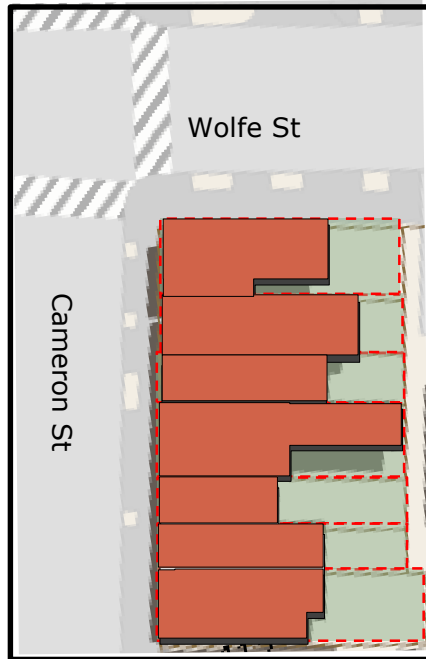
Del Ray Gardens



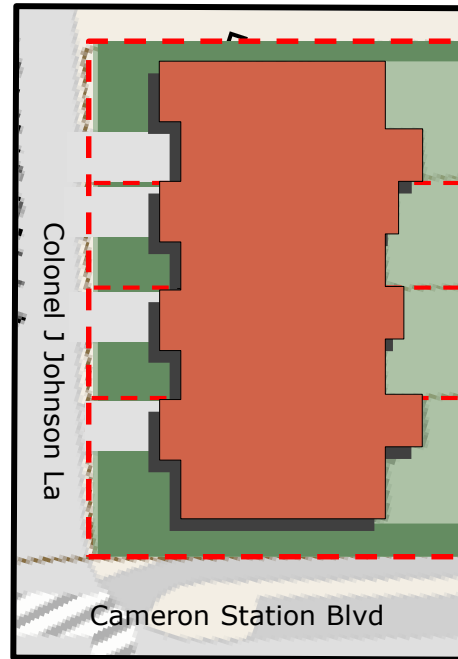
The Clayborne

A quantity-based approach to open space may not result in an improved urban building form.

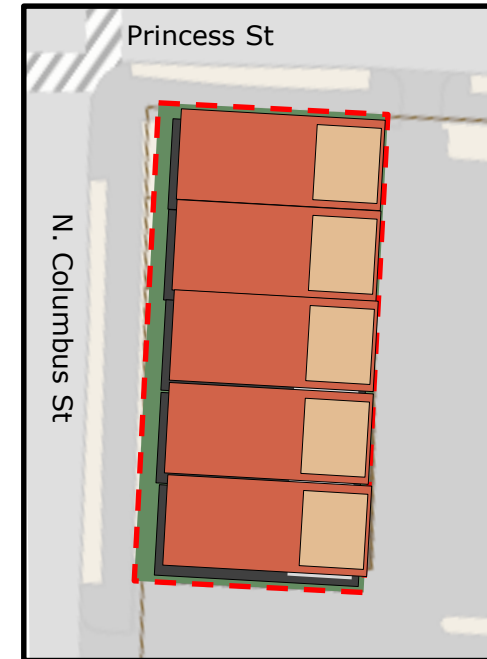
# Form Defining



Old Town  
1820-1880s



Cameron Station  
2000s



Cromley Row  
2010s

# Form Defining



Old Town



Cameron Station



Cromley Row

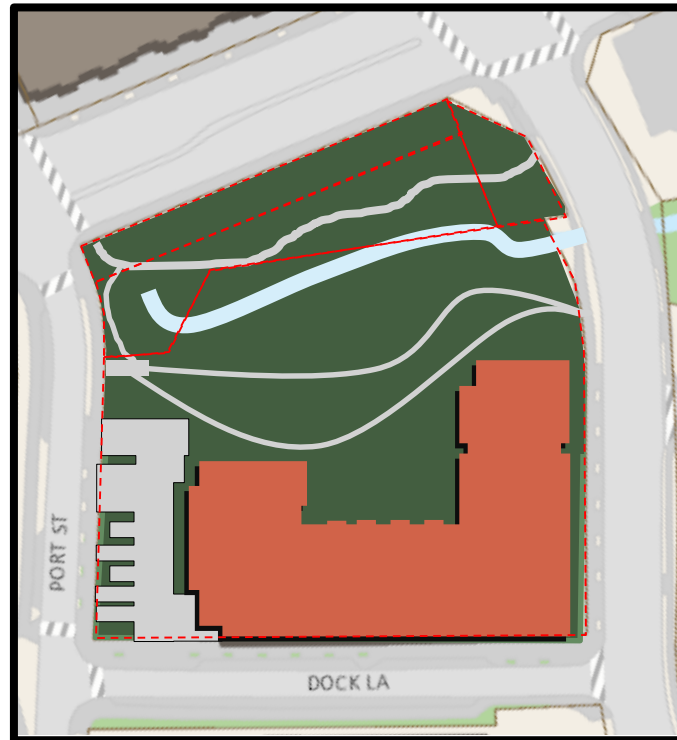
The required scale of open space does not align with the density of development.



# Visual Relief

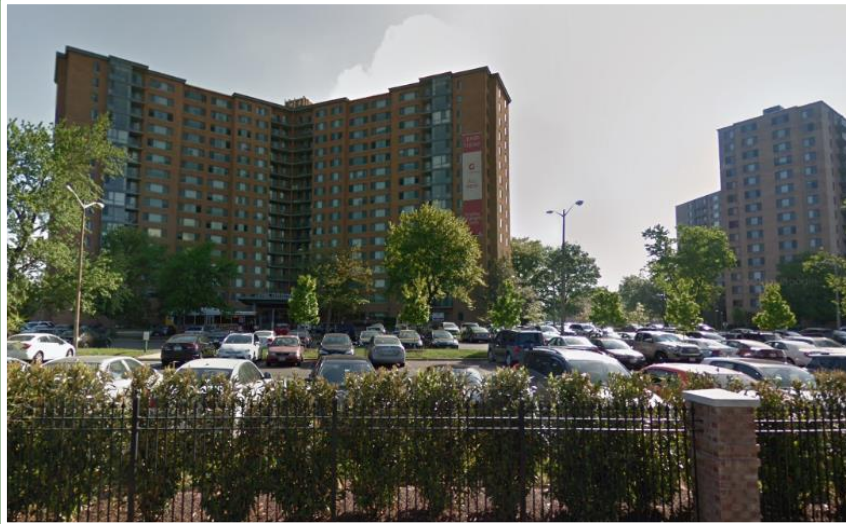


Southern Towers  
1960s

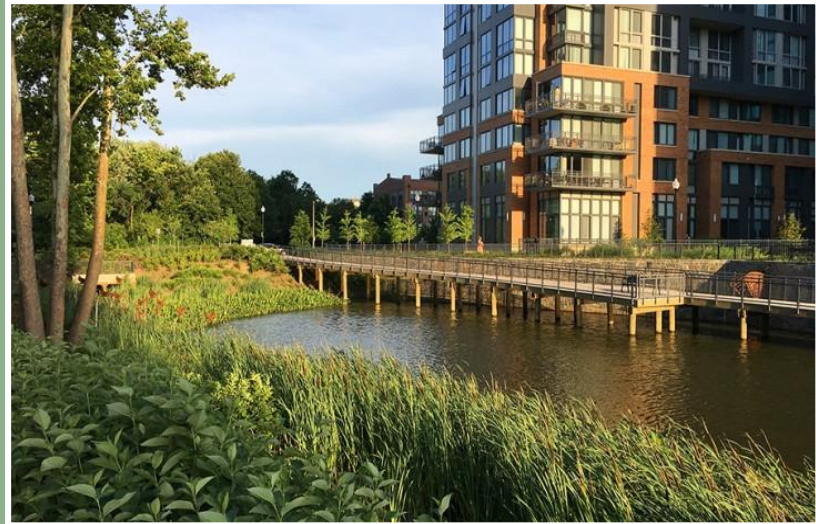


Parc Meridian  
2010s

# Visual Relief



Southern Towers

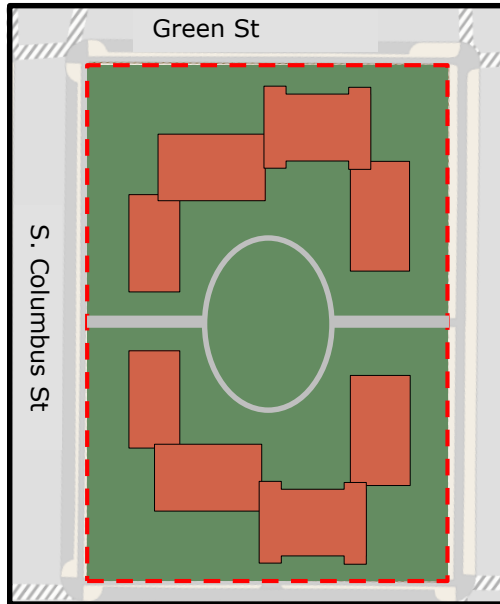


Parc Meridian

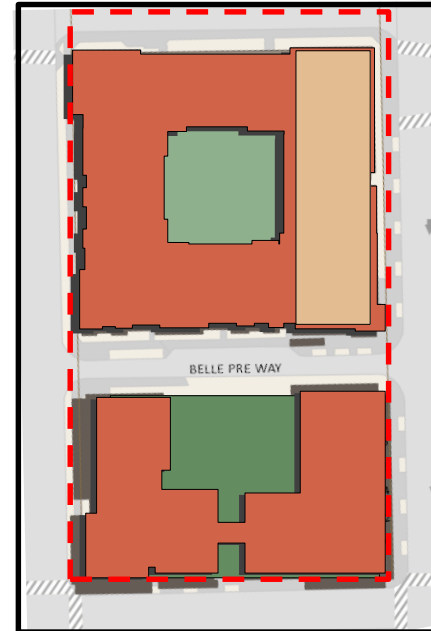
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# Outdoor Living



Gunston Hall  
1940s



Belle Pre  
2010s

# Outdoor Living



Gunston Hall



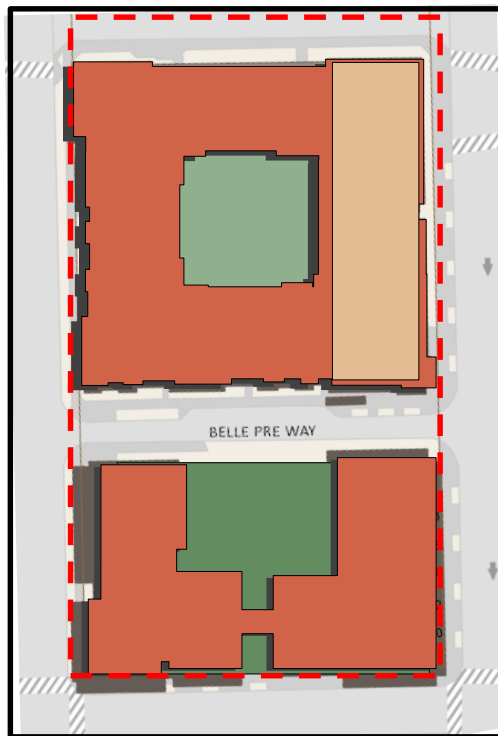
Belle Pre

Amenity spaces are a increasingly incorporated into new developments and can reduce demand on existing public open spaces.

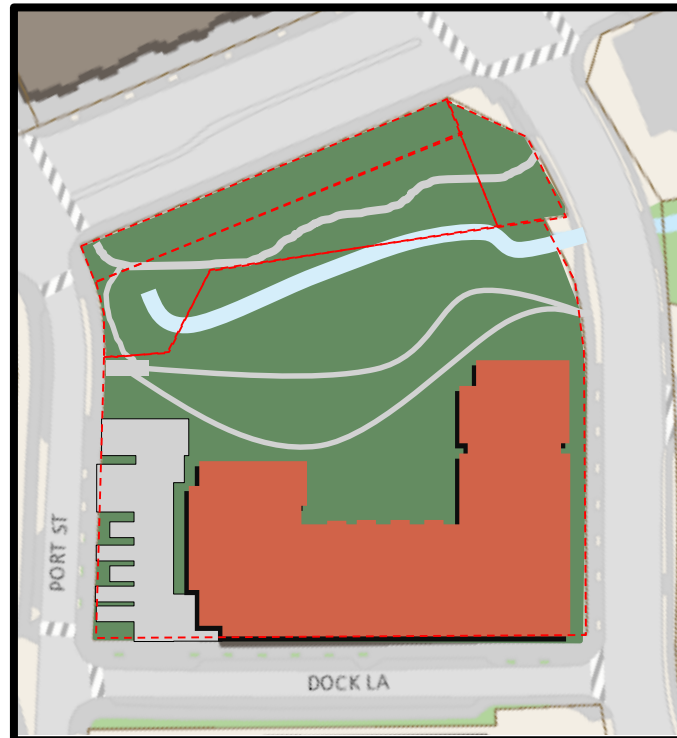


Belle Pre

# Environmental



Belle Pre  
2010s



Parc Meridian  
2010s



# Environmental

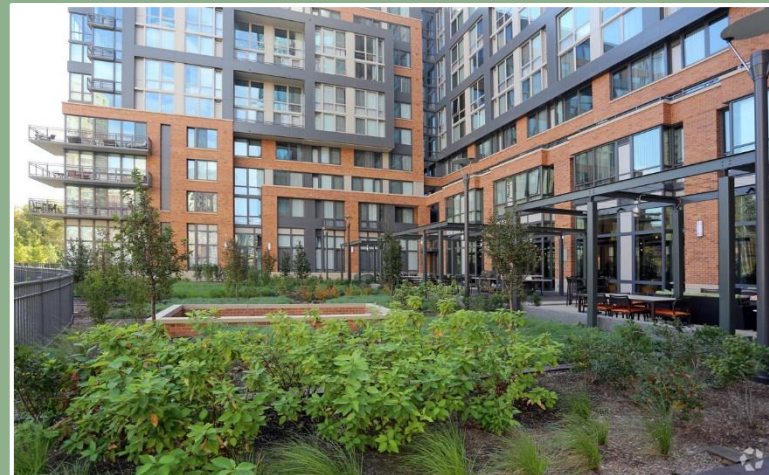


Belle Pre



Parc Meridian

Green infrastructure can provide environmental benefits and enhance public and private amenity spaces.

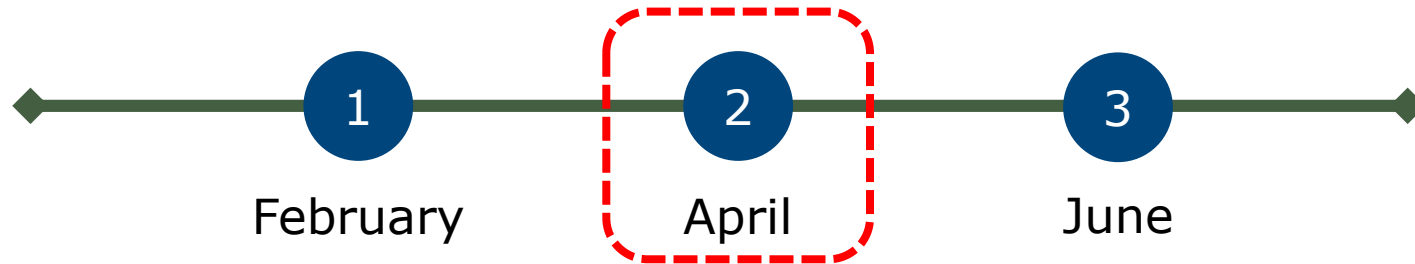


Parc Meridian

# Conclusion

- The open space definition in the Zoning Ordinance is broad.
- Open space requirements in the City are not correlated with permitted density and inconsistently allow above-grade locations.
- A majority of recent development projects have met their private open space requirements.
- Growing expectations for open space to perform multiple functions, including defining the urban form, providing visual relief, providing outdoor living opportunities and treating environmental conditions.

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