



## A Smart Growth Platform for Alexandria Fall 2015

Alexandria is the original smart growth city! From its 266-year-old walkable street grid in Old Town, to walkable street car neighborhoods like Del Ray, and to the last two decades of walkable, mixed-use transit-oriented development, the city is thriving. Smart growth in Alexandria has been good for the environment and human health, improved transportation, supported good fiscal health and enhanced economic competitiveness.

Beginning with forward-thinking decisions to connect Alexandria to Arlington, DC and National Airport via Metrorail and to focus development around the stations, to balancing protection of the historic fabric of the city with new development, to investment in new transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, a revitalizing waterfront, energy efficiency, parks and schools, Alexandria has achieved great success:

1. The City successfully fought back against the inner-suburban decline typically seen in older inner suburbs when a region sprawls outward.
2. A significant share of the property tax base is being generated from new development including the large scale redevelopment near the King Street and Eisenhower Metro stations.
3. Potomac Yard is being transformed from a vacant rail yard to walkable, transit-accessible community with parks, bike trail, Metroway, and plans for a new Metro station and the type of mixed-use development that will attract office tenants.
4. The city is adding bicycle facilities including Capital Bikeshare.
5. The city continues to attract tourists and is increasingly attracting younger residents and downsizing empty nesters.
6. Thanks to the efficient infrastructure of compact development and the attractiveness of walkable urban living, the city has a strong tax base to support high-quality services.

### **But challenges remain:**

1. The city is dealing with cut-through commuter traffic from surrounding jurisdictions.
2. The West End lacks the street connectivity, public spaces, and transit it needs, and the city could do more to make walking and bicycling safer.
3. The success of Alexandria has meant rising residential real estate prices and rents, making finding housing that is affordable an increasing challenge, particularly so for lower income residents.
4. Government sequestration is reducing office demand.
5. The pace of change and the cost of continued investment in infrastructure have made some nervous.

### **Why should we continue on the smart growth course?**

1. It's the best way to handle growth in a way that reduces the amount of driving and traffic.
2. It's key for attracting the next generation workforce and companies to support the tax base.
3. It's good for the environment.
4. It offers more transportation and housing choices.
5. It contributes to health by creating walking and bicycling-friendly neighborhoods



## Here are key policies and approaches to support:

1. Keep investing in making Alexandria a great place to live including parks and recreation, schools, walking and bicycling, and other public services.

*Examples include protected bicycle lanes, road diets that make streets safer for children, seniors, walkers, bicyclists and drivers, expansion of parks and inclusion of parks and public spaces in new development, and investment in new and renovated schools.*

2. Tackle affordable housing needs, combining public and private resources and strategies to ensure that housing is affordable and available for all levels of the workforce. Without housing for all levels of the workforce, companies won't locate in Alexandria and traffic from commuters would be even worse, and without a secure place to live, children cannot focus on learning and achieve success.

*Examples include ensuring that redevelopment of housing authority owned parcels achieves one-for-one replacement with units permanently affordable to those at 30% of area median income (AMI), while also adding more 30% units as well as units below 60% of AMI. Provide more public funding and incentives for inclusion of affordable units in new projects.*

3. Invest in new, high-quality and frequent transit services, including in partnership with surrounding jurisdictions, to reduce the amount of driving and vehicles that would otherwise add more traffic and undermine quality of life.

*Examples include funding 8-car trains for Metro, fixing the Rosslyn Tunnel bottleneck and Blue Line service, finally providing the once promised transit across the Wilson Bridge (including the option of Metrorail), construction of the West End transitway and the east-west corridor, construction by Fairfax of its Route 1 bus rapid transit corridor, and evaluation of a connection along Route 1 into Old Town.*

4. Ensure robust and in-depth public involvement in planning for the future of our community.

*Examples include the Braddock Metro Plan, Potomac Yard, Waterfront Plan, and the current bicycle-pedestrian plan.*

5. Focus on the details that create a great sense of place, community interaction, healthy living and connections to the outdoors.

*Examples include active public plazas, parks and connected green spaces, bike and walking trails, street art, outdoor cafes, farmers markets and festivals.*

## For the Future:

With growth continuing to come to our successful region, it's best to focus it where we can provide high-capacity transit in a walkable environment, minimizing driving -- in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Prince George's and other area jurisdictions. Investment in transit-oriented development can pay back the taxpayer many times over as has been the experience with Metro. And, if we care about the environment, smart growth means we can reduce driving and the resulting air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, save parks and forests, and fix old stormwater problems to restore our streams.