



Park & Recreation Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

August 13, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council,

On behalf of the City's Park and Recreation Commission, we are writing to express our support for the AlexWest Draft Small Area Plan released by the City in June. The plan addresses a number of issues critical to ensuring residents have ready access to open space, recreation facilities, and other amenities that improve quality of life. This Small Area Plan was highlighted for an update by City staff and the Council in the FY 2023 Long-Range Planning Interdepartmental Work Program, and one of the primary areas of interest to the Commission is the proposed improvements to open space and recreation facilities.

The AlexWest Small Area Plan will increase the number of parks and open space areas, as well as make sure that all residents can reach one of these areas within a 10-minute walk of their home. Existing resources in the areas are significant -- 132 acres of publicly accessible parks - but easy access from the surrounding neighborhoods is not. Currently, 23% of residents living in the area are outside of this 10-minute radius. In the development of this plan, an emphasis was placed on increasing access points and making sure that city spaces and amenities are more evenly distributed. This represents effective and efficient use of City resources, and City staff should be commended for their significant efforts to provide equitable access to open space. In addition, the city did extensive outreach with the community and continues to receive and respond to feedback on the website.

Certain items in the plan should be prioritized. This includes the need for an additional recreation center that is open to community use during school hours. The only recreation center currently in Alexandria West is William Ramsay which is unavailable during school hours. The City should also increase the network of trails and other pedestrian- and bike-friendly routes that connect the existing and planned parks and open spaces, and upgrade access points to ensure all users can take advantage of them. The plan calls for new parks and open space, and we encourage the City, through the planning process, to


incentivize developers to also improve access to existing resources and create even more open space and recreation resources as part of the development approval process.

Lastly, as the City is about to embark on updating the Environmental Action Plan, we urge a renewed focus on cataloguing the existing tree canopy and taking every opportunity to increase the number of native trees in the City. This could include adding trees to existing open spaces, but the priority should be to plant native trees as part of new open space development and throughout the plan area. As you know, increasing the urban tree canopy has demonstrable environmental (reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, and reducing stormwater runoff), economic (increasing property values), and social (adding shade to improve open space recreation areas) benefits.

The Commission encourages City Council to adopt the AlexWest Small Area Plan and to continue to look for ways to further improve open space and recreation resources in this growing area of our City.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Commission if we can further advise on this issue.

Sincerely,


Dana Colarulli (Aug 14, 2024 17:34 EDT)

Dana Colarulli, Chair
Park & Recreation Commission


Geoffrey Goode (Aug 14, 2024 17:57 EDT)

Geoff Goode, Planning District II
Park & Recreation Commission

cc: Park & Recreation Commission members
James Parajon, City Manager
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities










PRC Alex West Letter of Endorsement August 2024

Final Audit Report

2024-08-14

Created:	2024-08-13
By:	Wilma Newby (wilma.newby@alexandriava.gov)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAARq0QV8ahT8XV-mCWz5uabwxejKjJlJpyJ

"PRC Alex West Letter of Endorsement August 2024" History

-  Document created by Wilma Newby (wilma.newby@alexandriava.gov)
2024-08-13 - 9:08:14 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Dana Colarulli (danacolors@gmail.com) for signature
2024-08-13 - 9:08:18 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Dana Colarulli (danacolors@gmail.com)
2024-08-14 - 8:11:48 AM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Dana Colarulli (danacolors@gmail.com)
Signature Date: 2024-08-14 - 9:34:33 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Document emailed to geoffrey.goode@gmail.com for signature
2024-08-14 - 9:34:35 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by geoffrey.goode@gmail.com
2024-08-14 - 9:34:43 PM GMT
-  Signer geoffrey.goode@gmail.com entered name at signing as Geoffrey Goode
2024-08-14 - 9:57:15 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Geoffrey Goode (geoffrey.goode@gmail.com)
Signature Date: 2024-08-14 - 9:57:17 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
2024-08-14 - 9:57:17 PM GMT