



County of Fairfax, Virginia

September 25, 2018

**Fairfax County
Office of Community Revitalization**

SUBJECT: Volume I: Urban Design Guidelines for Fairfax County Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas—Recap of community engagement activities and revisions to the document based on stakeholder feedback

In early June 2018, OCR announced the release of the draft Urban Design Guidelines for the CRDs and CRAs (Volume I). During the months of June and July, OCR conducted community outreach and engagement on the document. The outreach process to inform the community about the Guidelines and to solicit feedback included direct emails to over 250 individuals; announcements sent to community organizations, listservs, newsletters; postings on NextDoor; presentations and small group discussions at meetings of revitalization partner groups; open meetings at libraries and community centers; presentations to the Lee District and Mason District Land Use Committees; an online survey; and, phone conferences with developers and community members.

OCR received a substantial amount of feedback on Volume I, including over 270 unique comments. These comments were incorporated, as appropriate, to produce the final document. In general, the document was revised to ensure that they are helpful, informative, concise and flexible, and that it is clear that they do not create additional layers of regulation but allow for easy implementation and the use of innovative treatments. Some comments could not be incorporated because the recommended change was beyond the scope of the Guidelines or conflicted with existing county standards.

Document-wide changes include a number of minor editorial changes. Some graphics were modified at the request of stakeholders to include additional details or to improve their readability. In some cases, *Design Strategies* were revised to use more flexible phrases such as: “May include”, “Where appropriate”, “As appropriate”, “Should consider”, “Are encouraged”, and “Techniques include”. This change was made to encourage developments in certain instances to propose alternative, innovative solutions and to not be limited to the strategies provided in the Guidelines. Below is a summary of more significant edits organized by chapter.



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Summary of Changes to the Volume I: Urban Design Guidelines for Fairfax County Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas (since the June 2018 revised draft was released)

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

- The section on Social Equity was revised to include the Park Authority and also to incorporate an updated reference to the One Fairfax Policy.
- The sections on 'Intent of these Guidelines' were revised to ensure that it is clear that the Guidelines are meant to offer design guidance only and there is flexibility in how or whether a design element or recommendation can be realized to promote creativity in new developments.
- Revisions to the Flexibility section was intended to ensure that these Guidelines are used to encourage high-quality revitalization and not used as an additional layer of regulation. Phrases such as "are encouraged", "should consider", and "as appropriate" replaced words like should throughout the document to promote flexibility and encourage innovation.

2. Chapter 2: Street & Streetscape Design

- Chapter Introduction: revised to ensure that it is clear a balance needs to be struck between accommodating all of the transportation modes needed for a street to function and keeping the street as narrow as feasible.
- Section 2C: further described how pedestrian crossings should be designed on wide boulevards to accommodate the amount of time pedestrians need to cross the entire street.
- Section 2F: revised Design Principle #1 to encourage the use of native plant materials and a diversity of species for restoration of natural ecosystems while also recognizing that there are appropriate uses and benefits of non-native species.
- Section 2L: clarified the benefits of bio retention facilities in the streetscape.

3. Chapter 3: Open Space

- In the description of the Urban Parks Framework: references to dog parks and what features these parks should include were added to the recreation-focused urban park section.
- Section 3B, Design Strategy 1 B ii: revised to emphasize that where possible, protecting and/or minimize disturbance to existing vegetation including soils that are in good condition is important.



- Section 3B, Design Strategy 1 C: revised to prioritize the planting of native pollinator and bird-friendly plants as part of landscape design in green spaces.

4. *Chapter 4: Building Design*

- Section 4B introduction: revised to reference the need to relate positively to identified or potentially historic buildings
- Section 4C, Design Strategy 1 C: added additional strategies to create activated ground floors when retail uses are not supported by the market.
- Sections 4D, 4E, and 4H: language was added referencing bird-friendly designs for building facades and LEED Pilot credit #55 on designing a bird-friendly building and site.
- Section 4G, Design Strategy F: revised to clarify that access to building loading and trash collection should be located on the portion of the site that is least intrusive to adjacent properties, existing and planned park spaces and other pedestrian areas. Locations should avoid streets and those with commercial storefronts where loading may impede pedestrian movement.

5. *Chapter 5: Parking and Access*

- Section 5A, Design Strategy 1 D: added language that facades should be designed to reduce light pollution caused by headlights shining on adjacent buildings.
- Section 5A: added language that encourages the use of solar panels and solar panel canopies on rooftops of parking garages.
- Section 5A, Design Strategy 1 F: added language that prioritizes the safety and security of less visible parking areas, particularly those provided at the rear and sides of a building and explained that if not visible from street or public spaces, parking areas should be well lit and dead-end corridors or areas where people could hide should be avoided.

6. *Chapter 6: Additional Placemaking Elements*

- Section 6A, Design Strategy 2: added language that overly lit wayfinding signs that create light pollution or distract drivers should be avoided. International wayfinding symbols should be incorporated, where feasible.
- Section 6D, Design Principle 2: added language that encourages water features to serve multiple functions to serve environmental functions such as for capturing and treating stormwater runoff or to benefit wildlife.

7. *Chapter 7: Interim Development Conditions*

- No major changes



8. *Appendix*

- Revised the tree and plant lists to include more native species while eliminating some non-native species.
- Appendix A2: Revised the language in the Sustainable Design toolbox to emphasize the use of native plant species and the restoration of natural ecosystem services as a benefit to providing sustainable infrastructure as part of new developments.

