

The Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor

Threshold of
Opportunity:

Mid-Course Review

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Prepared for:

The Arlington County Board and
The Citizens of Arlington County

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Organized by:

Partners for Livable Places

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of an intensive three-day analysis of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor by four community design experts. Commissioned by the County Board and the citizens of Arlington County, the purpose of this effort is to identify issues and ideas that might benefit the Corridor's overall development and to help guide the remaining 50 percent of the projects that can still be constructed.

The principal recommendation of the team is that the County devote considerable effort to thoroughly defining what might be described as a corridor-wide design framework -- those critical urban design and place making aspects of development which are now only vaguely articulated in the zoning ordinances, land use plan and sector studies. In short, this corridor-wide design framework would, through illustrations, drawings and three-dimensional models, establish an overall vision of the area so individual projects can be designed to fit better within the general Corridor scheme, so open space and transportation systems can be planned and described as they relate to the Corridor, and so each sector can achieve a individual image with the broader context of the Corridor.

INTRODUCTION

Taking the Next Step

At the turn of the century, Daniel Burnham, one of the most distinguished planners and architects in the United States, urged professional and civic leaders to:

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably will not themselves be realized. Make big plans. Aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble and logical diagram, once recorded, will never die.

Certainly history indicates the advice is well taken. The grandeur of contemporary Rome owes a great deal to the squares and avenues proposed by Pope Sixtus V at the end of the sixteenth century; today, much of what we admire in Paris is the result of Baron Georges Haussmann's vision during the nineteenth century; and in our own country, Savannah, San Antonio and San Francisco come to mind as just a few examples of successful, livable cities that maintain a high quality of life through community-wide planning and design. In short, great communities just don't happen automatically, they happen by design!

In the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor, citizens of Arlington County are experiencing the initial results of a decade of public debate concerning development in the region. A four-mile long, east-west path from the Potomac River to I-66 with rapid transit nodes at Rosslyn, Court House, Clarendon, Virginia Square and Ballston, plans for the Corridor ultimately suggest construction of 26,500 housing units and 19.25 million square feet of office/commercial space.

Facing the prospect of such massive amounts of new construction, the citizens of Arlington County recognized the need for an overall vision to guide growth. Key elements in this profile were summarized in "The Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor: Early Visions" paper prepared by the Planning Division staff:

The result was that, when Metro service to Ballston opened in December 1979, the various "visions" which had figured in County Planning for the Corridor had coalesced into a fairly broad set of common assumptions and expectations. The most important are summarized below.

A. The Corridor would be the focus of a major increase in land use density, with virtually all no-residential acreage with the 1/4 mile bulls-eyes surrounding Metro stations subject to renewal.

- B. Highest density uses would be concentrated within walking distance of Metro stations, with building heights, densities and uses "tapered down" to existing single family residential neighborhoods.**
- C. Such a mixed-use approach, coupled with common design criteria aimed at ensuring a quality pedestrian environment, would ensure an active, vibrant core area throughout the Corridor, including at night.**
- D. Existing family and most apartment communities would be preserved and improved.**
- E. Commercial revitalization would come about primarily as a function of redevelopment of the core areas and associated increases in residential density.**
- F. While some adjustments to the Corridor's principal vehicular thoroughfares were envisioned (primarily to limit through traffic in residential neighborhoods), no major changes to the County Master Thoroughfare Plan were contemplated.**
- G. Within these parameters, each of the five stations was to serve a unique function and have a well-defined identity: Rosslyn as a major business and employment center; Court House as a government center; Clarendon as an urban village; Virginia Square as the focus for cultural, recreational and educational activities; and Ballston as a new downtown in central Arlington.**
- H. Unity of the entire Corridor would be ensured through such devices as: an upgraded Fairfax Boulevard running from the Corridor's entrance at Custis parkway to the Court House; impressive architectural and landscape "gateways" at Rosslyn Circle and Ballston; and common features such as street setbacks, ground floor retail shopping, and restrained signage.**

This plan is now 50 percent complete, either built or approved. And there is, at this juncture, enough new construction to reach detailed conclusions about the quality of place that has evolved and options for the future. This mid-course review, then, is the first step of an effort to determine if the results are living up to the vision, if the vision is still shared, and if new tools are needed to reevaluate the vision and achieve its objectives. This report summarizes the findings of a team of urban designers, planners and architects who met, at the invitation of the County Board, over a three-day period to address these issues. As a document, it is intended to raise questions, bring forth new ideas, and provide the County leadership with a departure point for assessing Corridor development, and the need for new directions to guide development, from this mid-point into the future.

No undertaking of this kind is done in isolation. Thanks, therefore, are due to all who so enthusiastically contributed to this review: to Board members Ms. Bozman, Mr. Eisenberg, Mr. Milliken, Mr. Newman and Ms. Whipple, to County Manager Tony

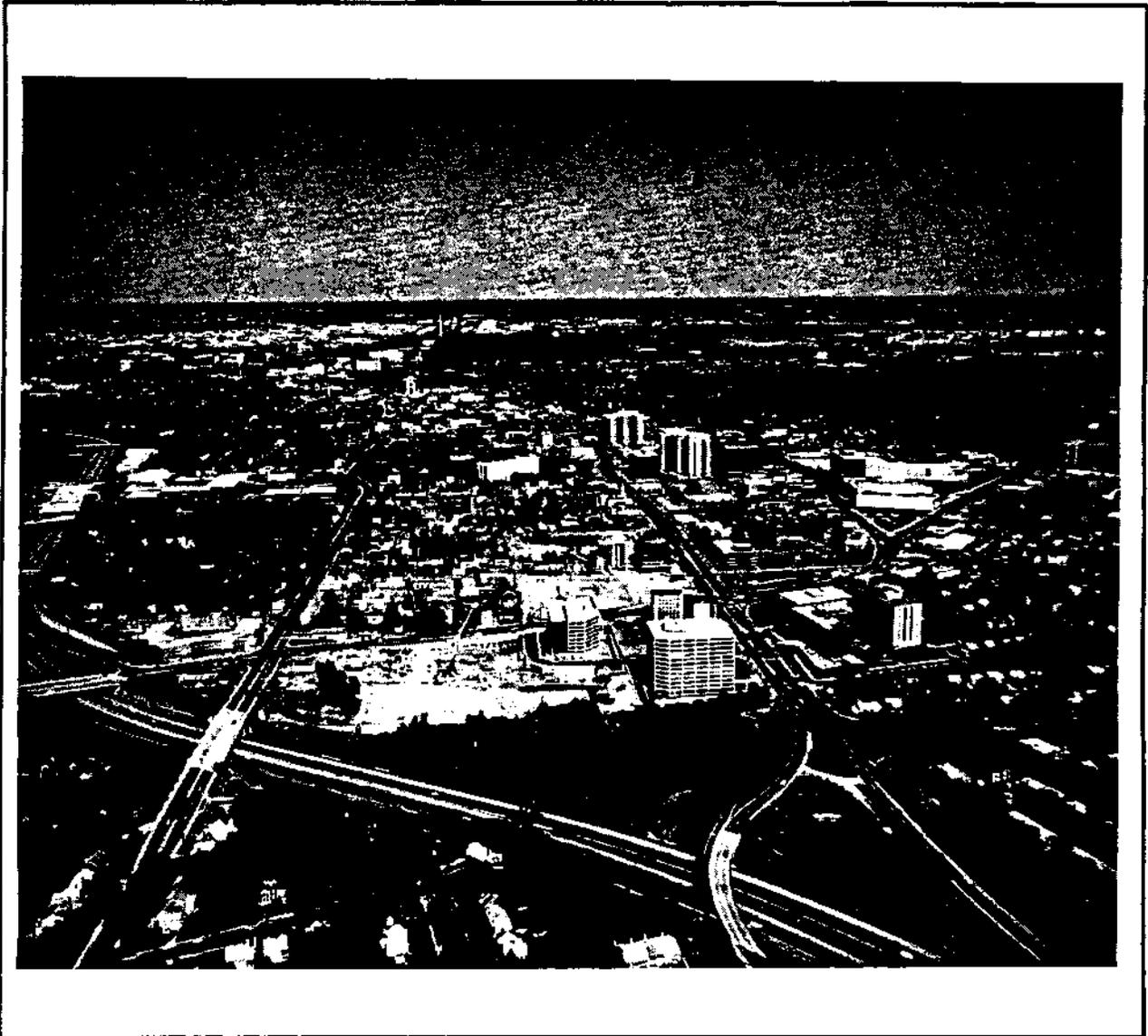
Gardner, to County Attorney Charles Flinn, to the County Planning Office, especially Director Bob Brosnan and staff members Jody Gebhardt and Gabriela Acurio, to the County Planning Commission and its Chair, Mike Murtha, to the many conscientious members of the Citizens Advisory Committee, to numerous public-spirited citizens who so ably expressed their individual concerns, to Bob McNulty, Danielle Withrow and Mary Stover of Partners for Livable Places, and to Thomas Walton who prepared this text.

THE EVALUATION TEAM

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May 1989

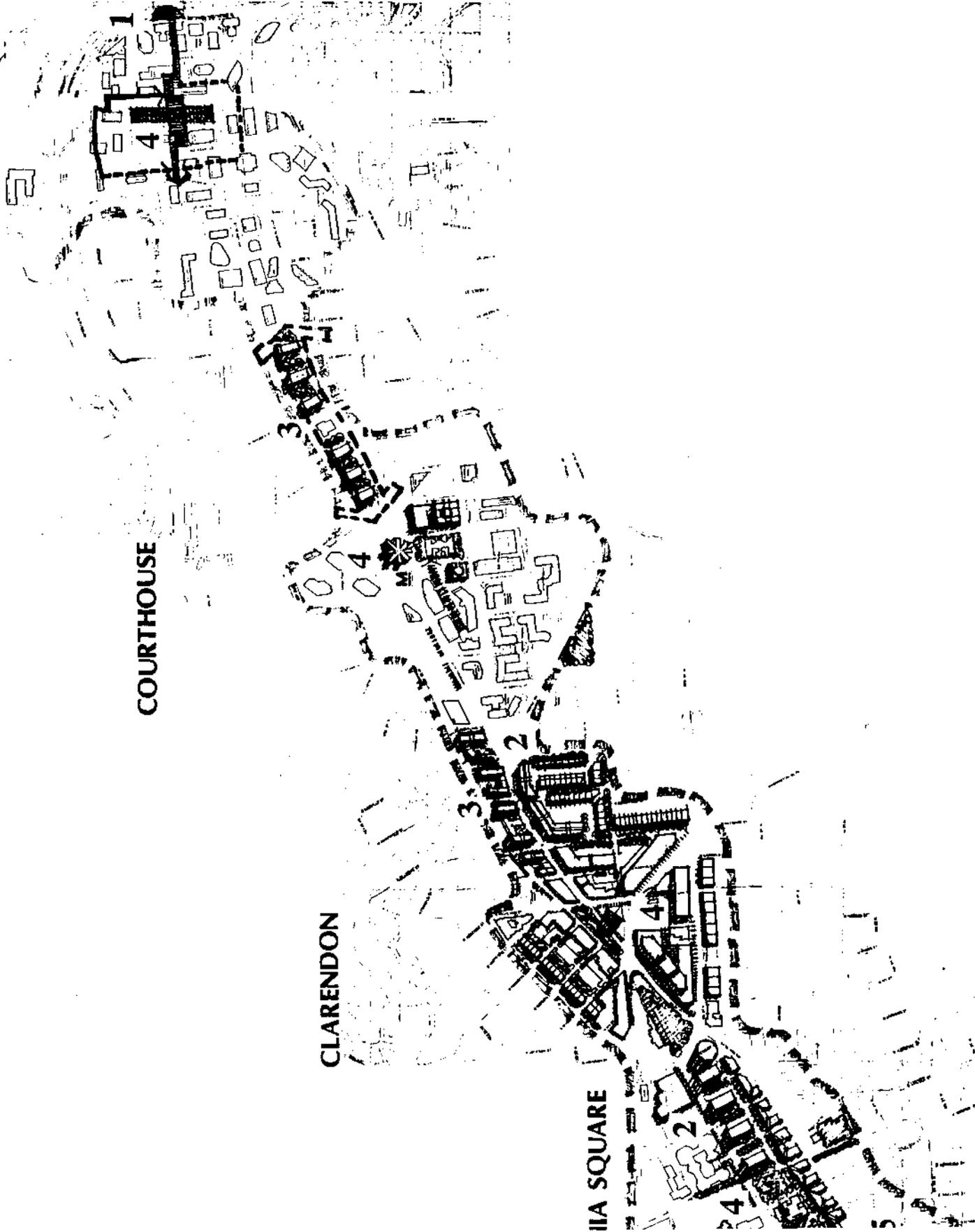
Illustration 1 - Existing Conditions



ROSSLYN

Arlington, Virginia

Neighborhood-wide Proposals



THE NEED FOR A CORRIDOR-WIDE DESIGN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Urban Design and the Making of Place

If, indeed, great communities happen by design and not by chance, a clear understanding of both the realities and aspirations of the community is essential to a coherent design strategy. To this end, the mid-course review team solicited a broad range of insights – from individuals, elected representatives, government officials, county legal and planning experts, civic groups and an intensive on-site walking and bus tour. It would be presumptuous to imply this is sufficient information to come to final conclusions. At the same time, it is enough of a "snapshot" to outline the problems and promise of the area and point out issues that require more research.

One of the team's most immediate and telling observations is that the Corridor is a study in contrasts:

- * On the one hand, the land-use plan and transportation system indicate the Corridor should be analyzed as a single entity. On the other hand, the five sector plans describe each station area as a unique community: Rosslyn is the dense office center; Court House is the government complex; Clarendon is an "urban village;" Virginia Square is a blend of residential and cultural/educational facilities; and Ballston is the "new downtown" with an emphasis on mixed-use development.
- * At another level, the county wants to support growth with a well designed and continuous infrastructure, but implements undergrounding and streetscape projects on a piecemeal basis.
- * From the viewpoint of automobiles, commuter parking is discouraged yet single-family residential neighborhoods are overwhelmed by cars from nearby high-rise apartments and group homes.
- * Still one more illustration is the notion that while there is consensus regarding the need to improve the overall quality of architecture and relationships among new buildings, there are no design tools or review procedures to do this with any consistency.
- * Finally, while the images of new construction proposed for the Corridor allude to the development of small town centers, squares and streets, the community design traditions from which current development has drawn its models relate more to suburban development than to small town design traditions.

This last observation touches on a central issue, namely, that there is a critical gap in the way the County presently plans for and manages growth. At the macro-scale, it exploits the land use plan and zoning to limit function and bulk on a site-by-site basis. At the micro-scale, it refers to the sector plans for details such as planting and pavers. The difficulty is that there are little or no mechanisms for coherently guiding corridor-wide. Even in those instances where a required site review offers the opportunity for more elaborate commentary and modification, the benefits of this activity are reduced because each project is evaluated independently. The team aptly characterized the likely outcome as "parcelitis" – the situation where individual developments respond to the general plan but have almost nothing to do with one another.

For example, as already mentioned, each station stop is to have its own special image and create its own "sense of place." However, at this juncture, precise three-dimensional concepts and design guidelines are needed to ensure that each Metro stop can have and maintain its own character. Further, the areas between each stop must be considered as part of the Corridor's overall development. Without the creation of an overall framework, the issue of how the various parts will function individually and together will not be addressed. Among the topics that merit consideration as part of a corridor-wide design framework are:

- * **Use** – Here, the question is not only what general uses are allowable, but within any category, a listing of limitations and rules for how uses must be distributed on the site and throughout a specific sector. In the case of an office complex, for instance, the first floor may be designated as retail but exclude functions such as branch banks and travel agencies while requiring a restaurant or cafe.
- * **Building Design Type** -- This covers a multitude of large and small scale design decisions. Building to building relationships, height, setbacks, and orientation are typical, but some communities go further to stipulate such things as materials, the location of entrances, and the size of windows.
- * **Open Space Systems** -- Although this obviously includes parks, it also encompasses sidewalks, street design, bike paths, lighting and both passive and active recreation facilities. The perspective should be corridor-wide rather than sector plan specific. Distributing open space in a manner that complements land use allows for the creation of a corridor-wide park system in advance of development. Planners might also suggest parameters for the creation and links between private open spaces.
- * **Transportation Management** -- A corridor-wide transportation plan must coordinate automobile, rapid transit, bicycle, and pedestrian options with the intensity and type of land use. These decisions require a corridor-wide, rather than sector-by-sector perspective. Mixed-use neighborhoods are the most challenging problem where the desire to minimize commuter parking conflicts with the need to provide sufficient space for residents and the convenience of shoppers.

- * **Quality of Place** -- Corridor-wide design guidelines would establish how the area should be framed as a whole and how each specific sector relates to the overall scheme. For example, in Clarendon, the objective to achieve an "urban village" character may or may not have anything to do with "historic" buildings, and more to do with the scale and quality of the existing building fabric. Strategies are difficult to develop without specific targets that are visually understood by all parties involved in negotiating future development proposals.
- * **Linkages** -- In an area where there are many land uses, designing appropriate transitions is significant. For example, citizens demand buffers between residential and commercial functions; but the relationship of residential neighborhoods surrounding the Corridor varies from sector to sector. A comprehensive plan for buffering, parking and open space cannot be developed on a sector-by-sector basis. Instead these issues must be considered from a corridor-wide point of view.

At this mid-course juncture, the overriding need is to evolve a more complete approach to design decision-making. This is not an easy charge. The character of each sector needs to be amplified with drawings, three-dimensional models and extensive community discussion; overlapping and conflicting concerns need to be sorted out; and guidelines and procedures have to be developed and tested for negotiating future development proposals within the context of a detailed design framework. This is a long-term commitment if the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor is to become a standard of excellence, where architecture and landscape not only shape spaces, but are creatively orchestrated to make memorable places.

The work cannot be accomplished in a three-day review. In order to be successful in this effort, the Board, the Planning Office and the Planning Commission must draw upon additional management and design mechanisms. Briefly, the types of tools most needed are:

- * Zoning that permits greater control over specific uses, offers transfer development rights in certain situations, and designates setbacks, build-to lines and building-to-building relationships.
- * Sector plans with thorough design guidelines including information on materials, scale, and diagrams showing how buildings should address the sidewalk and street.
- * A corridor-wide design as well as site review process and guidelines.
- * The public right to assemble property for future projects.
- * A corridor-wide open space system defined as part of the land use and sector plans.

- * The creation of a corridor-wide design element in the comprehensive plan as a basis for negotiating with developers to achieve commonly agreed upon goals.

Although some of the suggestions outlined may not be possible under Virginia law, the County Attorney may be able to offer substitute methods.

CORRIDOR-WIDE OPPORTUNITIES

This section of the report is devoted to specific ideas, observations and recommendations affecting the entire Corridor. The format, which is also applied to each of the five sectors, consists of three components: **ISSUES** that highlight problem areas; **OPPORTUNITIES** that suggest design improvements; and **MECHANISMS** to suggest ideas for accomplishing the proposed changes. To create a discrete agenda and avoid ambiguity, lists rather than narrative statements are used to summarize the mid-course review team's analysis.

THE CORRIDOR

ISSUES

- * There are no "gateways" to the Corridor. How do you know when you arrive or leave?
- * There are no links among diverse activities along the Corridor. Each station has its own proposed theme and that is good. But what ties it all together? There are roads, but where is the "Main Street" that gives the Rosslyn-Ballston experience that special sense of place? What is the quality of the string that ties the pearls together?
- * The open space strategy for the Corridor is unclear. What active and passive activities would contribute to the vitality of the area? Where should they be located and how should they be connected along the entire length of the Corridor?
- * The areas between stations are visually chaotic or lack identity. What kind of definition should these "in-between" areas have?
- * Service retail appears on the decline. Since these shops do not provide a high economic return but are still essential to the neighborhood, where and how should such uses be incorporated in the plan?
- * The transitions between commercial/office centers and residences are often abrupt and ineffective. What are the design options for the critical buffers and links between these zones?
- * Many commercial streets are lifeless. What land use, architectural and economic changes would ameliorate this situation?

- * Pedestrian and vehicular traffic are often at odds. Each is crucial, so how can movement systems be created so they complement rather than fight each other?
- * Everybody agrees overhead power lines are incompatible with the corridor's identity and intense development. Should "undergrounding," however, be completed simultaneous with new construction or as a prerequisite to it?
- * There is inadequate residential and after-hours parking, especially in mixed-use areas. How can this problem be solved without encouraging more commuter traffic?

OPPORTUNITIES

- * At Rosslyn -- as you cross the Potomac River and come off I-66 -- and at Ballston -- as you exit I-66 at Glebe Road -- it is possible to celebrate the corridor's entry points through the definition of vistas and the coordinated design of buildings, sculpture and landscape architecture.
- * Carefully detailed boulevards could serve a dual purpose: 1.) creating a stronger unity among the five stations; and 2.) acting as a linear green-belt with connections to the larger open space system.
- * Neighborhood retail and service might be preserved if specific uses were identified and incentives created to locate those functions in certain parts of the Corridor.
- * Development around the stations should emphasize the unique spirit of each area and retain significant and historic structures where possible as a sign of stability and continuity with the past.
- * The appropriate traffic signalization could maximize pedestrian crossing during off-hours and permit the efficient movement of vehicles during peak periods.
- * The immediate and intense street planning -- varied modestly to respond to the character of each neighborhood -- and the removal of overhead lines could dramatically improve the visual coherence and identity of the Corridor.
- * Private parking structures should be built to meet the needs of evening and residential users.

MECHANISMS

- * Implement Corridor Improvement Bond issue to finance streetscape, undergrounding, lighting, right-of-way acquisitions, open space acquisition and improvement, pedestrian bridge connections, gateways, bikeways, mini-bus, public art and facade preservation (corridor-long systems).**
- * Evaluate current Capital Improvement Program priorities to provide the most strategic benefits over the next decade.**
- * Consider the creation of development districts with public land-assemblage.**
- * Where appropriate, adjust the density of residential, commercial and open space throughout the Corridor and reallocate it to achieve specific sector plan targets.**
- * A corridor-wide retail plan is needed. Study retail mix and distribution throughout the Corridor and implement necessary changes to the sector plans.**
- * Revise zoning to add specific development controls and trade-offs to achieve corridor-long improvements and amenities for each sector.**
- * Develop buffer zones, screening, and building bulk models to address conflicts between neighborhoods and commercial centers.**
- * Develop and implement urban design guidelines for boulevards and station areas, in addition to design guidelines for specific project review.**
- * Organize and implement a Benefit Assessment District for all commercial properties in the Corridor to partially finance (with a very small assessment) joint promotion and special activities.**
- * Develop and coordinate street management, promotion and animation programs including vending, street musicians, festivals, fairs, parades, etc., for the entire Corridor.**
- * Use the Corridor as a demonstration art-in-public places program by implementing percentage-for-the-arts in private development and public improvement programs as part of a corridor-long arts plan.**
- * Implement public signage and graphic standards to improve legibility throughout the Corridor.**

STATION AREA OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to development surrounding the five stations, the mid-course review team determined that two other locations merit attention. These are transition areas: the low level retail Corridor between Rosslyn and Court House; and the Sears area to the east of Clarendon. In both cases, there is an opportunity to create distinctive environments. This analysis moves from east to west, from Rosslyn to Ballston and these sites are included in that sequence.

ROSSLYN

ISSUES

- * The area has a chaotic image. What can be done to make it more legible and easier to get oriented?
- * The architecture is mediocre. Without losing the unique identity developers demand for their projects, what design strategies can be exploited to improve quality, scale and coherence?
- * The pedestrian circulation is incomprehensible. There are lots of short blocks and narrow, unorganized skyways but no sense of a system. What are the options for improving movement and orientation?
- * There is no focus or central place. This can be incorporated, but should it be a park, a shopping arcade, a river front promenade or some other activity?
- * There is an over emphasis on accommodating vehicles. There are too many roads and the street level is full of parking entrances, bus stops, and garages with vast blank walls. How can this pattern be reversed? And are there modest and potentially more successful alternatives to redesigning the entire street level?
- * Rosslyn is on the threshold of a second generation of building. Structures will be resurfaced, demolished and rebuilt as first generation projects come to the end of their physical and economic life. How can this redevelopment be channeled to improve the overall quality of Rosslyn?

OPPORTUNITIES

- * The vistas out of and into this area could become dramatic gateways, and it is obviously the only station that can create a link to the Potomac River.

- * This is the premier office center in the Corridor. It is economically healthy (less than a 1% vacancy rate) and many of its buildings will be reskinned or redeveloped in the next few years. This indicates it will be feasible to improve the quality of design and amenities.
- * As part of a future renewal effort, multiple sites might be assembled to make possible the development of a more coherent architectural and open space ensemble including the designation of more inviting parks.
- * Since the street facades are dominated by garages, redesigning the second level walkways with a more easily understood and grandiose gesture might be both an economical and attractive way to accommodate pedestrians. Potential options (see illustration) would include extending the walkway system to overlook the Potomac River; widening and focusing retail activity on the walkway system; and making the system legible by highlighting its location and path through special lighting, painting and art.
- * Complementing this last proposal, with a day-time population of approximately 100,000, there is the chance to profitably increase retail space. This might be consolidated around the skyway network as a contribution to the vitality of that element.
- * Served by two Metro lines, this community has superior subway service, suggesting that, after further study, excess streets may reasonably be closed.

MECHANISMS

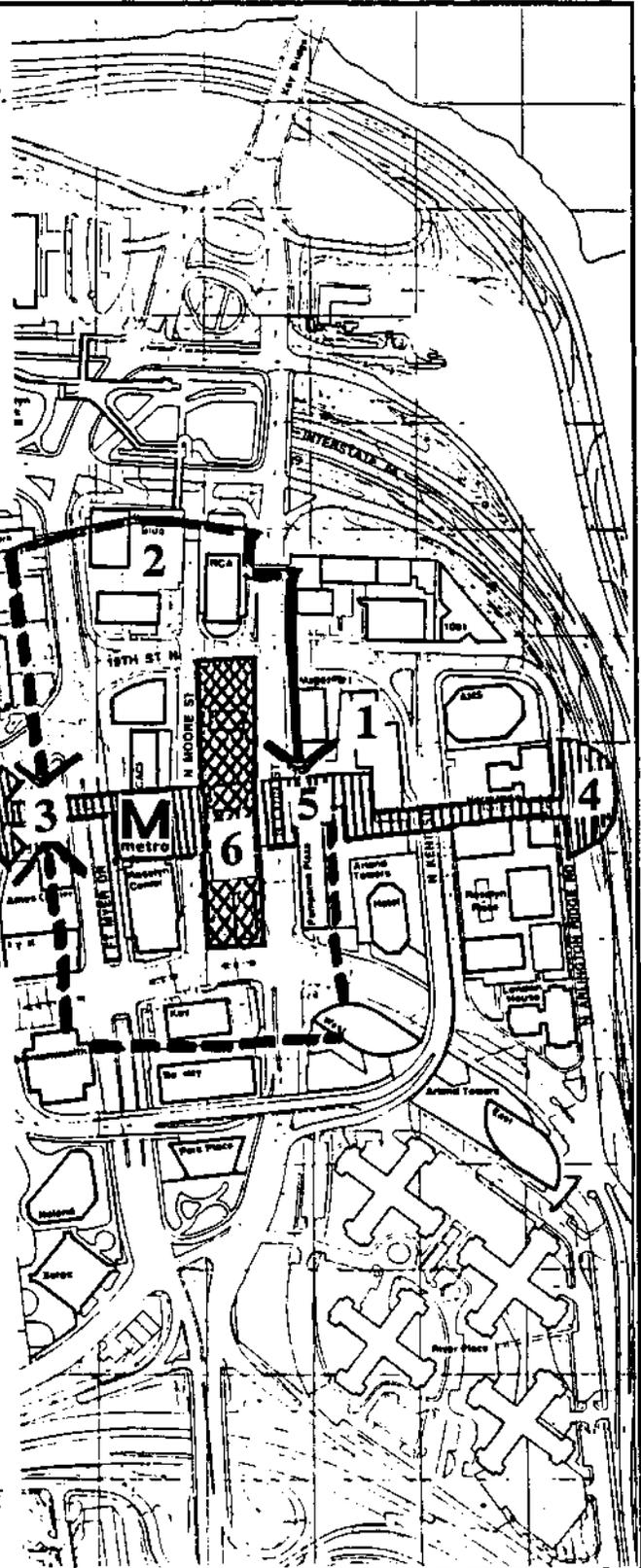
- * Amend the Sector Plan to reflect expectations for future site development, new open space and the expanded second level pedestrian system.
- * Encourage higher quality architecture with more elaborate design guidelines and a more comprehensive review process.
- * Introduce bonus incentive zoning to encourage future parcel consolidations on commercial building sites.
- * Establish a master plan for the skyway system with a major retail center as its focus.
- * Make bonus density available to the remaining housing sites to encourage development of the the enhanced second level bridges.
- * Use Corridor bond funds to rationalize traffic and recapture roads for pedestrians and private use.

Illustration 3 - Rosslyn Close-up

- 1** The vistas out and into this area could become dramatic gateways, and it is obviously the only station that can create a link to the Potomac River.
- 2** Rosslyn is the premier office center in the Corridor. It is economically healthy and many of its buildings will be reskinned or redeveloped in the next few years. This indicates it will be feasible to improve the quality of design and amenities.
- 3** Redesigning the second level walkways with a more easily understood and grandiose gesture might be both an economical and attractive way to accommodate pedestrians.



- 4** Potential options would include extending the pedestrian walkway system to overlook the Potomac River; widening and focusing retail activity on the walkway system; and making the system legible by highlighting its location and path through special lighting, painting and art.
- 5** With a day-time population of 100,000, there is the chance to profitably increase retail space. This might be consolidated around the skyway network as a contribution to the vitality of that element.
- 6** As part of future renewal effort, multiple sites might be assembled to make possible the development of a more coherent architecture and open space ensemble including the designation of more inviting parks.



ROSSLYN-COURT HOUSE TRANSITION

ISSUES

- * Although most of the land north of Wilson Boulevard is zoned low medium residential and designated a "Coordinated Preservation and Development District," there is no coherent urban design proposal for the area. What form should the housing take and how should it be integrated with existing projects?
- * To the south of Wilson Boulevard, the service commercial is presently an unassuming mix of small businesses but risks more intense development as Rosslyn and Court House are built out. How can you maintain existing uses and avoid development of these blocks as mere extensions of the Rosslyn and Court House districts?
- * Presently this area is a nondescript but effective buffer between two intense commercial centers. What guidelines would enhance this function and improve design quality?

OPPORTUNITIES

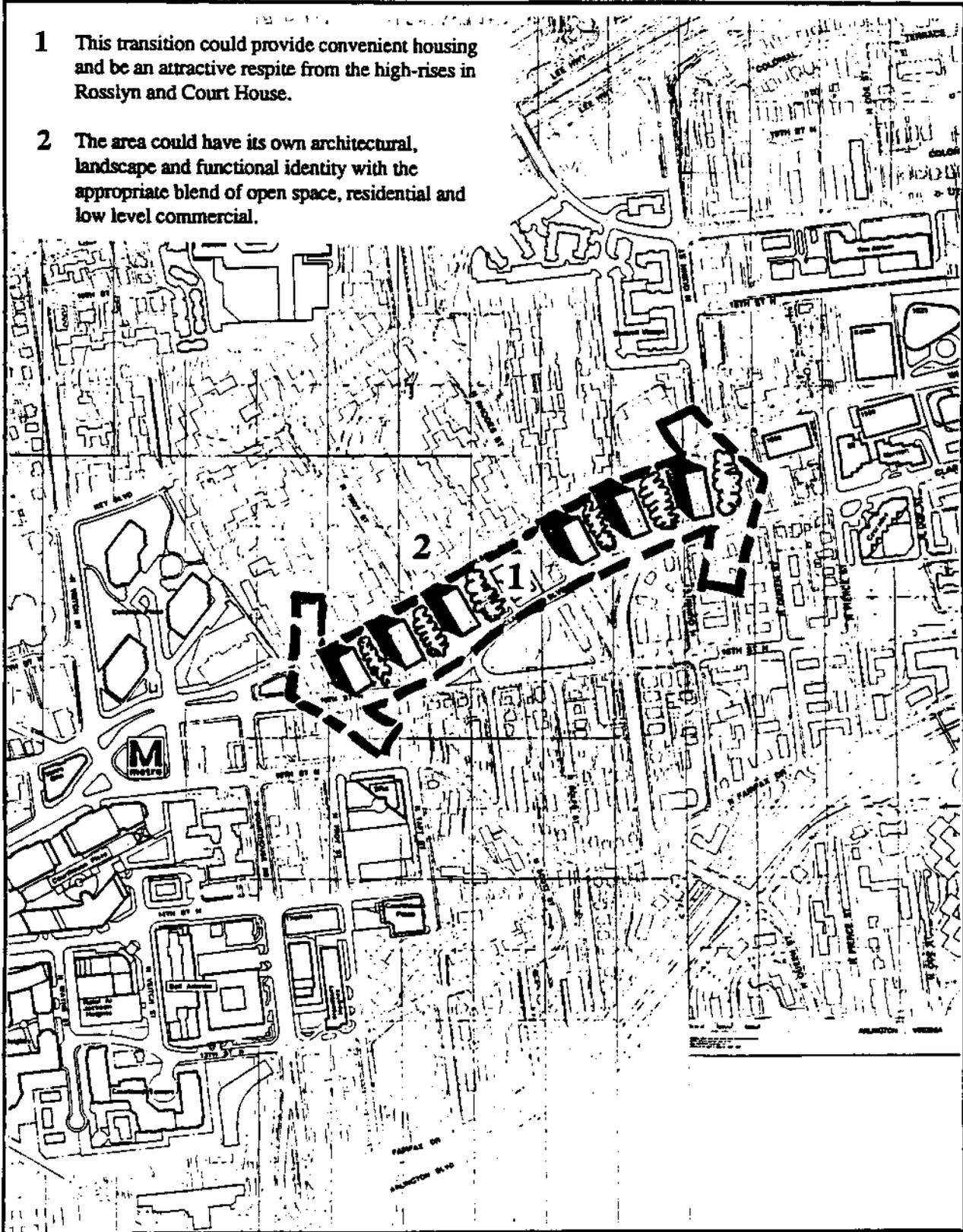
- * This transition could provide convenient housing and be an attractive respite from high-rises in Rosslyn and Court House.
- * The area could have its own architectural, landscape and functional identity with the appropriate blend of open space, residential and low level commercial.

MECHANISMS

- * Modify the sector plans to include design guidelines for service commercial.
- * Institute a design and site review process for the residential development.
- * Give density incentives for providing low and moderate income housing and for developing the area in large comprehensive parcels.

Illustration 4 - Rosslyn-Court House Transition Close-up

- 1 This transition could provide convenient housing and be an attractive respite from the high-rises in Rosslyn and Court House.
- 2 The area could have its own architectural, landscape and functional identity with the appropriate blend of open space, residential and low level commercial.



COURT HOUSE

ISSUES

- * In spite of the fact that this is the seat of government, there is nothing to indicate this civic stature. What features should be introduced to create this identity?
- * The area does not have any focus. There are lots of spaces among the new buildings, but how can these be integrated to make that critical sense of place? Where is the Court House center?
- * In a gesture that seems to conflict with the community profile of this neighborhood, the entrance to the proposed jail is prominently located near a major boulevard. What can be done to ameliorate this situation?

OPPORTUNITIES

- * There is an ideal site for an impressive symbolic building at the intersection of Wilson and Clarendon Boulevards, an edifice whose image should be that of a great civic landmark.
- * Just south of the tract mentioned above, by using a portion of the County-owned property for a park, it is possible to create a "Court House Square" with landscaped promenades leading to important surrounding structures and open space.
- * As a complement to the government offices, the County should explore the option of including a civic auditorium or cultural facility in this area.
- * The design, location and orientation of the jail should be reconsidered to minimize adverse effects it will have on the vitality of this center.

MECHANISMS

- * Revise the Sector Plan to reflect changes in land use and open space.
- * To assure an appropriately civic landmark, offer to transfer the Metro station development density to other sites.
- * Use bond funds to purchase additional space for the Court House Square, the landscaped links to surrounding sites and the civic auditorium.

COURT HOUSE-CLARENDON TRANSITION

ISSUES

- * Basically the Sears commercial center, this multi-block site is presently designated as a "Special Coordinated Mixed Use District." Potential uses include relatively high density office, apartment, hotel and residential functions. But does this simply extend the kind of development already occurring in Court House rather than create a distinctive transition to the lower scale commercial in Clarendon?
- * Affordable housing is a high priority in the County. Considering the size of this generally underdeveloped parcel, would this be a viable location to address this issue?

OPPORTUNITIES

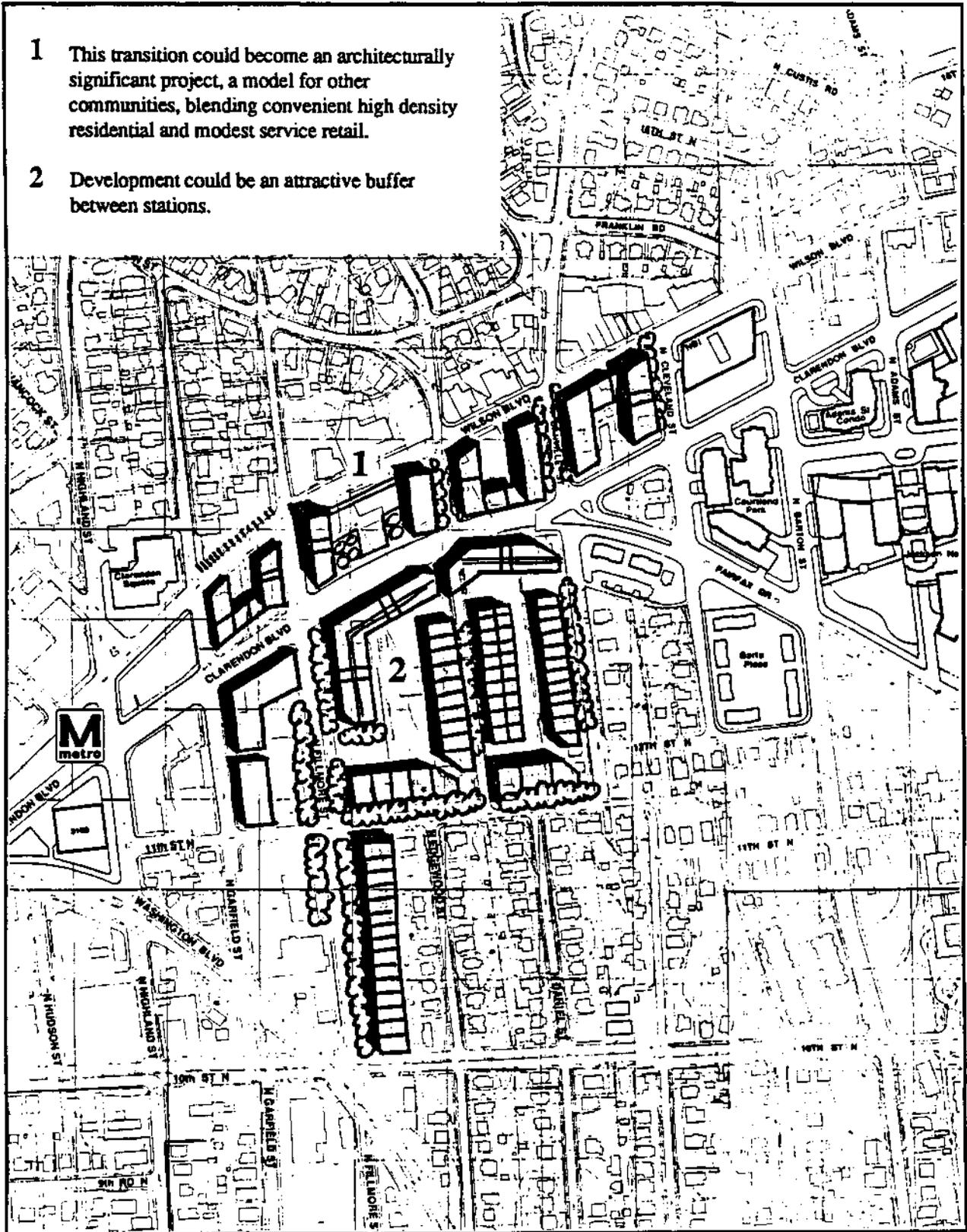
- * This area could become an architecturally significant project, a model for other communities, blending convenient high density residential and modest service retail.
- * Such a development would be an attractive buffer between stations.

MECHANISMS

- * Modify the zoning to limit commercial development and provide incentives for high density residential use.
- * Amend the Sector Plan to include design guidelines for the entire site including specific proposals for open space.

Illustration 6 - Court House-Clarendon Transition Close-up

- 1 This transition could become an architecturally significant project, a model for other communities, blending convenient high density residential and modest service retail.
- 2 Development could be an attractive buffer between stations.



CLARENDON

ISSUES

- * The sector plan calls for the development of an "urban village." But what does this image really mean and is it compatible with the growth projections?
- * By maintaining a few blocks of small shops, some of which are of local historic value, the identity of this commercial center has important links to the past. This continuity creates a pleasant scale and texture. New projects, however, which are larger and more anonymous, do not respect this character and threaten to overwhelm older development. What controls are needed to preserve the unique quality of this station area?
- * There is an interesting variety of retail here including many restaurants and small businesses. Is it possible to retain this diversity?
- * Existing zoning permits new structures that could, in their height and mass, easily overwhelm nearby residential districts. Some buffers have been created with the introduction of townhouse commercial streets, but what other options are available for improving the transition between housing and office/retail?

OPPORTUNITIES

- * The "urban village" concept could be an effective design tool but requires a finer grain of definition with community and developer input.
- * The Fairfax Drive park should be designed as a gateway to the "village" and be complemented with intensive street tree planting.
- * Some older facades might be incorporated in new buildings to maintain the desirable scale and texture.
- * Without changing the total allowable development, the height and bulk requirements in specific locations might be modified to reinforce the "urban village" theme and provide adequate residential buffers.

MECHANISMS

- * Using models and other visual aids as part of the study, the Sector Plan should be revised to reflect greater detail regarding the "urban village" approach. Recommendations should be described in carefully prepared design guidelines.
- * Build-to and set back requirements should be implemented to keep the height and bulk of buildings within parameters established by the guidelines.

- * Designating the area a "Development District" and assembling parcels into larger tracts would enhance the likelihood of more coherent relationships among projects.
- * A design review process should be used to ensure new development responds to the guidelines and should also include negotiations to re-install existing restaurants and small businesses.
- * Older existing building scale should be imitated to maintain the character of this commercial center. When feasible specific buildings or facades might be preserved.
- * To enhance the "urban village" quality and provide an appropriate buffer, building density on the north side of Wilson Boulevard should be decreased and reallocated to parcels on the south side of the street.
- * Bond issue funds should be used to execute the landscape and open space proposals.
- * Beyond short-term, at-grade parking for diners and shoppers, the County might review the possibility of structured parking as a way to consolidate that function and encourage appropriately scaled buildings.

VIRGINIA SQUARE

ISSUES

- * This area already has a strong residential focus. Using the existing garden apartments as base, how can this housing resource be amplified and enriched?
- * The community also has a commitment to certain educational and cultural institutions. What planning strategies would help ensure that these functions as well as limited development of office/commercial will not overpower the residential emphasis?
- * A complementary requirement for this type of neighborhood is for sufficient open space and recreation facilities. Where should additions of this nature be proposed?

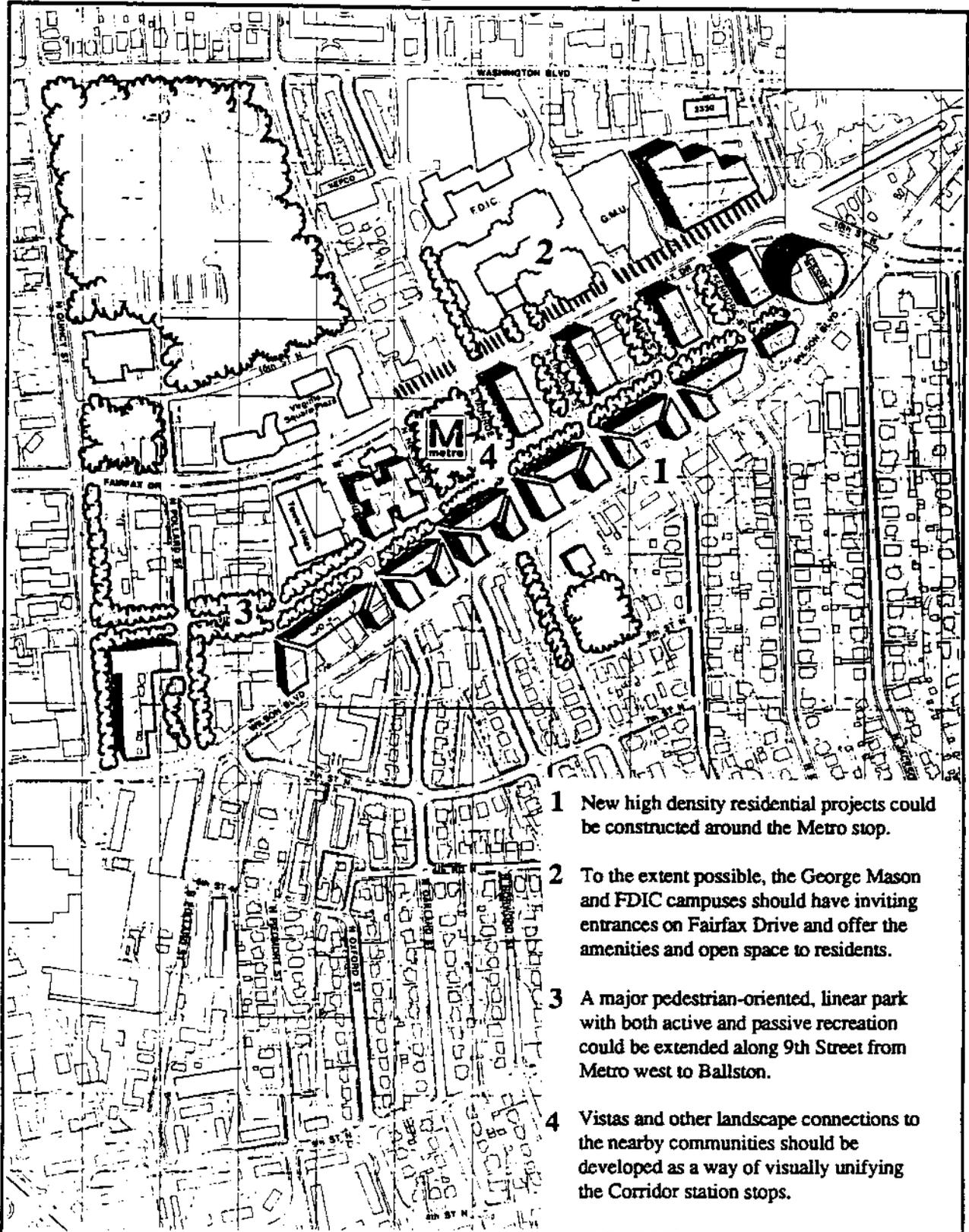
OPPORTUNITIES

- * New high density residential projects could be constructed around the Metro stop.
- * To the extent possible, the George Mason and FDIC campuses should have inviting entrances on Fairfax Drive and offer amenities and open space to residents.
- * A major pedestrian-oriented, linear park with both active and passive recreation could be extended along 9th Street from Metro west to Ballston.
- * Vistas and other landscape connections to nearby communities should be developed as a way of visually unifying the Corridor station stops.

MECHANISMS

- * The sector plan should be revised to reflect an expansion of residential and recreation uses.
- * Minimum spacing and design review requirements might be established as part of the approval process for new or renovated housing schemes.
- * Design guidelines should be prepared for specific open space and park projects including those on the George Mason and FDIC campuses.
- * Corridor bond funds should be used to design, acquire and implement the 9th Street park.

Illustration 8 - Virginia Square Close-up



- 1** New high density residential projects could be constructed around the Metro stop.
- 2** To the extent possible, the George Mason and FDIC campuses should have inviting entrances on Fairfax Drive and offer the amenities and open space to residents.
- 3** A major pedestrian-oriented, linear park with both active and passive recreation could be extended along 9th Street from Metro west to Ballston.
- 4** Vistas and other landscape connections to the nearby communities should be developed as a way of visually unifying the Corridor station stops.

BALLSTON

ISSUES

- * The plan for this area works well, but individual architectural elements are not of consistently high quality and often compete with one another visually. How can design and unity of this neighborhood be improved?
- * There are several planned but yet-to-be constructed mixed use proposals as well as a few similarly zoned parcels for which there are still no specific schemes. In these cases, how can the balance of uses and designs be fine-tuned to fittingly complete development in this area?
- * Many of the buildings fail to address the street, creating a rather inhospitable public pedestrian environment. What guidelines and activities would reverse this situation?
- * The transition among uses is sometimes rather abrupt. How can lower scale development, parks and open space be exploited as more successful buffers?
- * This station is clearly a crescendo in the corridor's development process. What kind of gateway -- the counterpart to Rosslyn -- could help celebrate this identity?
- * The WMATA site will soon become available. Its size and location make it a valuable asset, but what should the character of this project be and what relationship should it have with surrounding development?
- * Group houses and an abundance of apartments and condominiums have overwhelmed nearby streets with parked cars. Without encouraging commuter traffic, how can this problem be solved?

OPPORTUNITIES

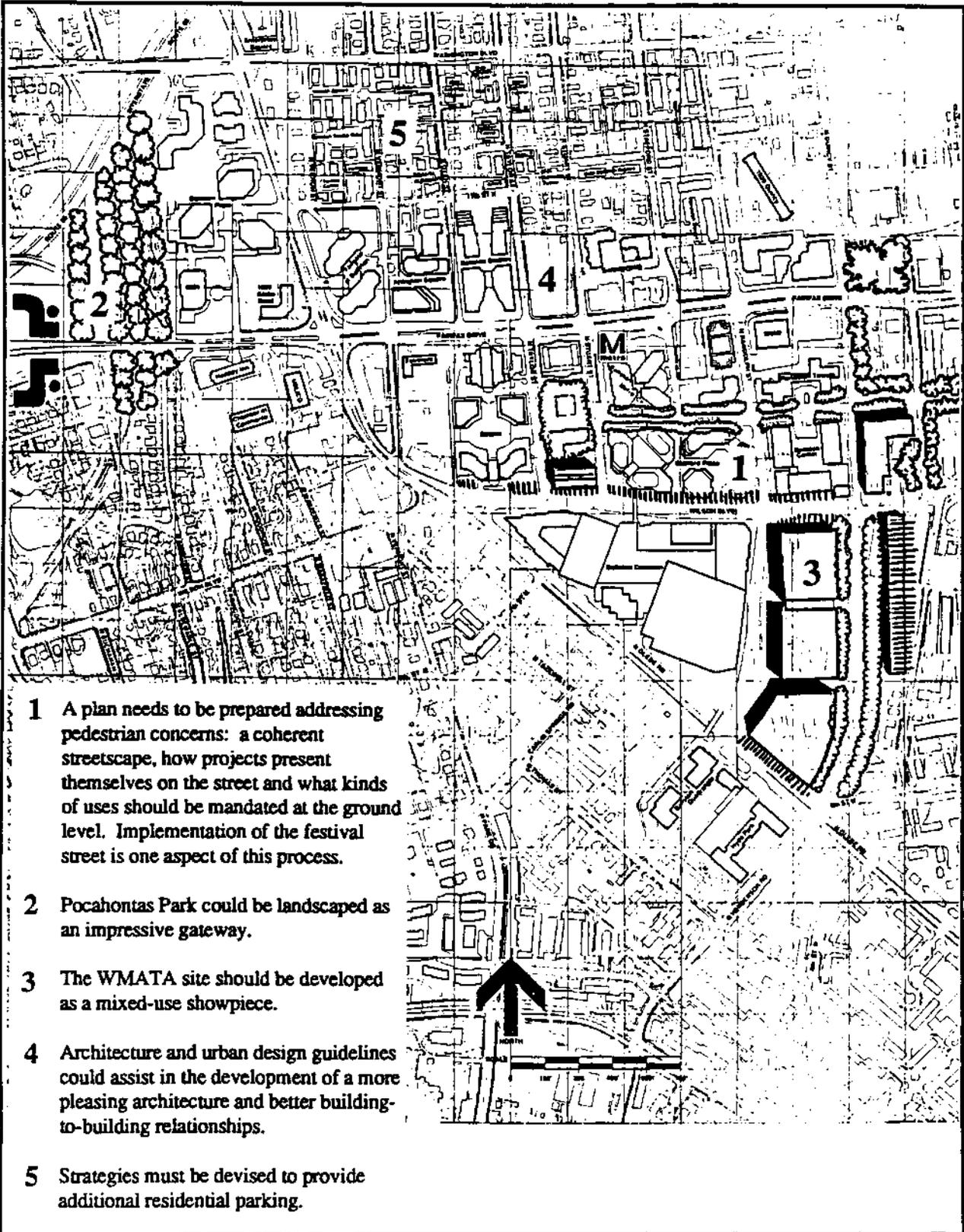
- * Architectural and urban design guidelines could assist in the development of a more pleasing architecture and better building-to-building relationships.
- * A plan needs to be prepared addressing critical pedestrian concerns -- a coherent streetscape, how projects present themselves on the street and what kinds of uses should be mandated at the ground level. Implementation of the festival street is one aspect of this process.
- * Detailed massing and open space models should be proposed as alternative approaches to the transition to single-family residential areas.
- * Pocahontas Park could be landscaped as an impressive gateway.

- * The WMATA site should be developed as a mixed-use showpiece.
- * Strategies must be devised to provide additional residential parking .

MECHANISMS

- * Urban design guidelines should be developed as amendments to the Sector Plan. These should include recommendations for open space, precise height, mass, build-to and set back regulations, building-to-building relationships, streetscape and activity proposals, and parameters for developing the WMATA site.
- * An architecture and site plan review process should be established.
- * The Pocahontas Gateway Park should be executed with funds from the Corridor bond issue.
- * A design/develop competition should be held to secure a high quality project for the WMATA parcel.
- * A thorough study of the parking problem should be undertaken to resolve that issue.

Illustration 9 - Ballston Close-up



A FEW LAST WORDS

This is a vast amount of information and, no doubt, raises more questions than it answers. In addition, some of the changes offered here take a course that significantly departs from present tendencies -- upgrading the Rosslyn skyway system, the emphatic emphasis on housing, the introduction of new parks and pedestrian streets, suggestions for more precise regulation and aggressive policies with respect to amenities funding, land acquisition and transfer zoning rights.

If the first response is skepticism, that is healthy. If, however, that attitude results in limiting the options considered without giving them further study, then there is the likelihood that important opportunities will be overlooked. At this point, there are lots of questions. There is the distinct, sometimes daunting, possibility that things might actually change. But the truth of the matter is that the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor is already changing dramatically. The remaining 50 percent growth can occur much as the first 50 percent has happened. Or it can be guided -- with wise leadership -- to become an even more wonderful environment.

The challenge to the citizens of Arlington, its officials and the many professionals who help shaping its future is not to adopt any of the specific proposals presented here, but rather, to seek out even better answers to the questions raised by this analysis. It is a difficult task. It requires patience, compromise, constant refinement and the long-term commitment to excellence. Still, as already noted, the rewards from such an effort are livable communities that people proudly call home for generations to come.

APPENDICES

MID-COURSE REVIEW TEAM BIOS

LIST OF MATERIALS PROVIDED THE TEAM PRIOR TO THEIR VISIT

"CHARRETTE ISSUES" -- CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**LIST OF CITIZENS WHO SENT LETTERS DISCUSSING THEIR
CONCERNS REGARDING THE MID-COURSE REVIEW**

MID-COURSE REVIEW TEAM BIOS

CHARLES S. ZUCKER, AIA (Team Chair) is Senior Program Director for Professional Programs at the American Institute of Architects in Washington, DC. A graduate of Princeton and the University of Illinois with professional and graduate degrees in architecture, he was formerly a principle of a Baltimore architectural firm and has particular expertise in residential planning, design research and participatory planning. He has taught at Princeton, Rutgers and the City College of New York and co-authored the "Planning and Design Workbook for Community Participation." His experience as a member of urban design evaluation teams throughout the country is extensive and he has chaired these studies in Jacksonville, Florida, and Portland, Oregon.

JONATHAN BARNETT, FAIA, AICP, is Professor of Architecture and Director of the City College of New York's Graduate Program in Urban Design. Formerly Director of Urban Design for the City of New York, he is also a consultant to numerous government agencies, non-profit groups and real estate developers. The focus of his work is on downtown development, neighborhood planning, environmental design and historic preservation, and planned communities. He has lectured and taught at institutions throughout the world, and has written several books including *Urban Design as Public Policy* and *An Introduction to Urban Design*.

DAVID LEE, AIA is Vice President of Stull and Lee, Incorporated where he is responsible for a broad range of planning, urban design and architectural projects. He is especially proud of his role as Principal-in-Charge of Boston's award-winning Southeast Corridor Transit Project and the Chad Brown/Admiral Terrace master plan and housing renovations in Providence, Rhode Island. The master plan for an 850,000 square foot mixed use office and retail complex in Boston is among his current commissions. In addition, he consults with such cities as Montreal, Los Angeles, and Richmond, Virginia and teaches periodically at Harvard and MIT.

MICHAEL JOHN PITTAS, HAIA, AICP is president of his own international consulting practice with expertise in programming, facility analysis, and the management and organization of art, architecture and urban design competitions. His background is a rich blend of experience as Director of Comprehensive Planning for the City of New York, Senior Urban Designer for Lower Manhattan Development, and Director of the National Endowment for the Arts Design Arts Program. Among the projects he initiated are the PBS "America by Design" series, the Vietnam Memorial design competition, and the Presidential Awards program begun in 1984 at the White House. Now living in Los Angeles, he serves on the Mayor's Task Force on the Arts and is a Founding Principal of the Urban Design Advisory Coalition.



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PLANNING DIVISION
ROBERT E. BROSNAN, CHIEF

May 12, 1989

TO: Urban Design Team Members
FROM: Gabriela Acurio, Planning Division Staff
SUBJECT: Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Mid-Course Review

In preparation for the three-day "charette" scheduled for May 19-21, I am sending you the following background documents:

Summary:

- The Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor: Early Visions final report. This report analyzes historical R-B Corridor planning documents, examines elements of the County "vision", and identifies issues that emerged during the planning process, for both the corridor as a whole and for the individual metro station areas.

General Information:

- Arlington County Profile, general demographic information of Arlington County.
- General Land Use Plan, one of seven separate elements of Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan. The GLUP includes in the back, a brief description of the different metro station areas within the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor.

R-B Sector Plans and Other Information:

- Development in the Metro Corridors, which contains summaries of existing development by decades for both R-B and Jefferson Davis Corridors. You may want to concentrate on pages 1-61, which includes the summaries for the R-B Corridor.
- Rosslyn Transit Station Area Study, adopted in October 1977. You may want to concentrate on the Urban Design

Recommendations (pages 82-102) and in the Implementation Chapter (pages 103-109).

- Court House Sector Plan, adopted in April 1981. You may want to concentrate on the following sections: Concept Plan (pages 1-8), Government Center (pages 47-67) and Urban Design (pages 69-87).
- Clarendon Sector Plan, adopted in May 1984. You may want to concentrate on the following sections: Concept Plan (pages 1-10), Commercial Redevelopment (pages 39-44), and Urban Design (pages 45-74).
- Virginia Square Sector Plan, adopted in August 1983. You may want to concentrate on the following sections: Concept Plan (pages 1-10) and Urban Design (pages 23-66).
- Ballston Sector Plan, adopted in May 1980. you May want to concentrate on the following sections: Concept Plan (pages 7-14), Urban Design (pages 21-36), and Commercial Development (pages 53-62).

In addition, I am enclosing a map of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. If you need additional information, please give me a call at 358-3525.

ROSSLYN-BALLSTON CORRIDOR MID-COURSE REVIEW
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Charette Issues

May 19, 1989

The purpose of this report is to list the issues addressed by the citizen advisory committee in their first meeting, held on May 16, 1989, for consideration by the team of urban design experts during the brainstorming sessions.

The issues have been organized in the following categories:

1. Streetscape Issues

- Control arm units for traffic lights - bigger street signs
- Construction site impacts - mural on fences
- 24-foot sidewalks too wide - need more planting
- Public art - sculptures
- Street signage - directories and location maps outside Metro Stations
- Banners
- Fairfax Drive Boulevard trees, medium steps
- Street vacations used for pedestrian spaces
- Planning street improvements, undergrounding, etc.
- 6-foot amenity strip adjacent to buildings
- Need for key public improvements - undergrounding utilities, street trees, pavers, signage control, etc.
- Public management and maintenance of public improvements
- Similarity and uniformity of streetscape along certain key streets (Wilson Boulevard and Fairfax Drive)
- Financial plan - mechanism for financing needed for public improvements
- Handicap needs have not been addressed

- Town house design - inward oriented, back oriented to street

2. Parking Issues

- West Ballston - impact on neighborhood parking by town house infill
- Shared parking - public parking at night and on weekends in office buildings
- Non-rush hour parking for retail on major streets
- Adverse impact on parking on town houses - parking permits
- Incentive programs to discourage parking in residential areas

3. Traffic and Transportation Issues

- Impact of very large buildings on traffic, i.e., 11th Street and Glebe Road
- Effect of large development on traffic - The Chase, Washington Boulevard and Glebe Road
- Proposed development in Virginia Square (St. George's Episcopal Church site) high-rise hotel over Monroe Street - road restricted to two lanes
- Shuttle bus and jitney routes - checked by Civic Associations
- Discourage single-passenger vehicles
- Role of Metro
- Traffic management - keep traffic on main street and out of residential neighborhoods
- Closing/narrowing streets
- Management of traffic - in neighborhoods adjacent to the Corridor

4. Pedestrian Circulation

- Pedestrian mobility in the Corridor
- Pedestrian movement - Glebe Road (6 lanes)

- Pedestrian friendly - let the elderly get across the street.
- Beeping crossing signs for the blind
- How to facilitate pedestrian movement into Ballston
- Make the Corridor pedestrian friendly - crosswalks
- Handicap needs have not been addressed
- Town house design - inward oriented, back oriented to street

5. Open Space, Beautification and Public Amenities

- Upgrading public areas within the Corridor
- Temporary improvements - murals on construction fences?
- Beautification of vacant sites - Murphy site
- Open space as antidote, fund?
- Stuart Street walkway concept - festival environment
- Construction site safety issues
- 6-foot amenity strip adjacent to buildings
- Similarity and uniformity of streetscape along certain key streets (Wilson Boulevard and Fairfax Drive)
- Interim uses of vacant buildings
- Implementation of Business Conservation Projects - use of consultants
- Open space - acquisition mechanisms

6. Historic Preservation

- Historic preservation - private/public
- HALRB - integrity of Clarendon commercial structures

7. Housing and Neighborhood Amenities

- Mix of units in residential development - more family apartment units

- Family apartments vs. schools - other family requirements
- Neighborhood retail - fleeting of small businesses
- More affordable residential units - rental units
- Affordable retail
- Amenities for children - playgrounds, schools, etc.

8. Character of Metro Stations and Visual Image

- Upgrade the image of the Corridor, plan draft schedule
- Stuart Street walkway concept - festival environment
- Character of Clarendon: "Urban Village" - Is it appropriate? How to make it happen?
- Plan to upgrade image of the Corridor

9. Zoning and Development Issues

- Sears site - what to do with it?
- Wind studies for new buildings
- Reviewing plans, consultants, special tax district
- By-right zoning in Clarendon
- Proposals fitting into larger context - formalize process to require site plan proposals to include model
- Architectural review

10. Transitions

- In between Metro Station areas - who is responsible?
- Transition to neighborhoods
- Tapering of densities
- Buffering from town house development to single-family neighborhoods - Greenway
- Drawing of the Corridor

LIST OF CITIZEN LETTERS

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**William Strang
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**Donald E. Welzenbach, President
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