

THE Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor

Early Visions

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Corridor**
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PLANNING DIVISION STAFF:

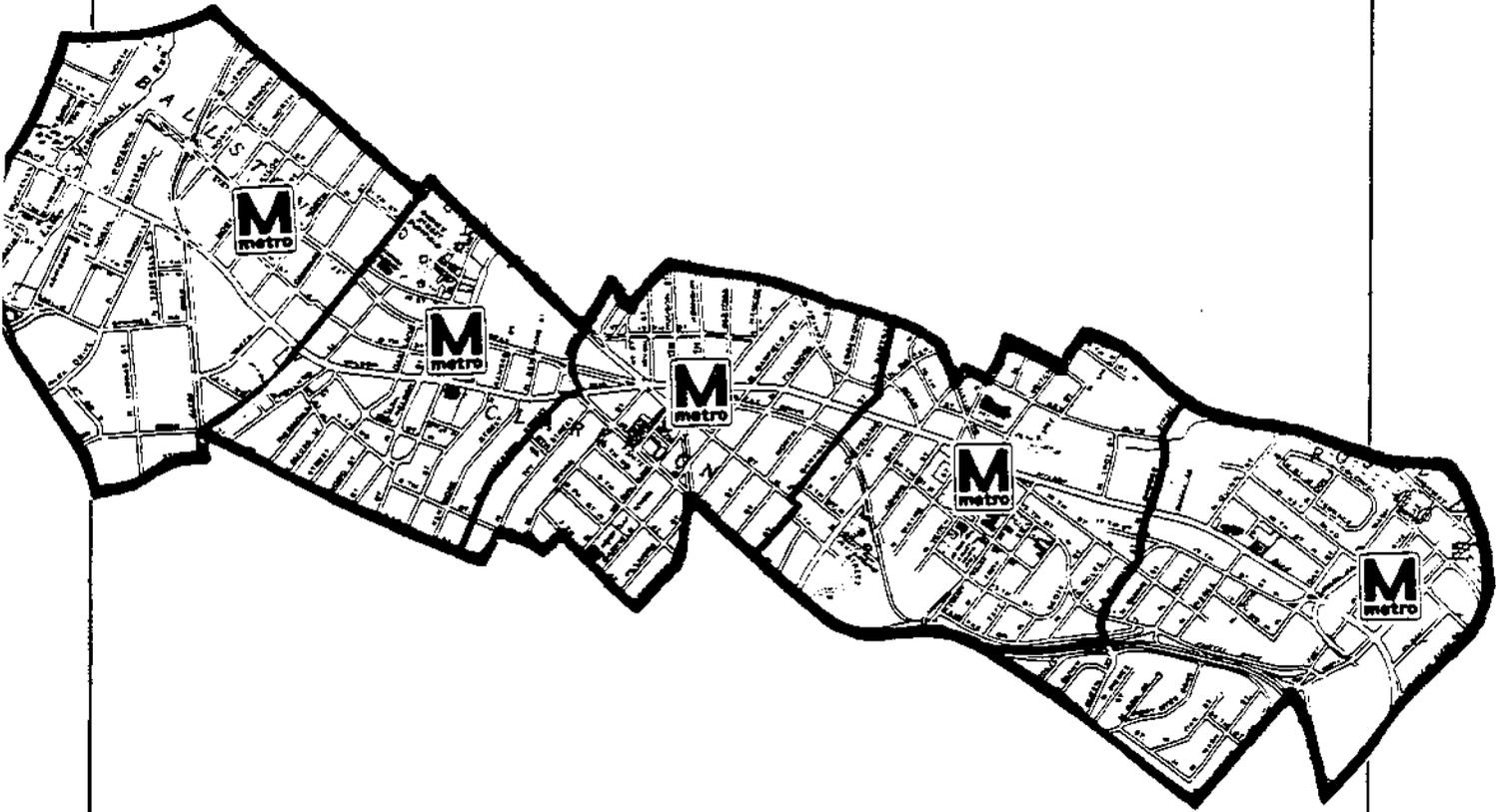
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Map:
Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor



Chronology
Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor

1961	Arlington County Board adopts land use plan and site approval procedure for Rosslyn redevelopment
1970-71	"Blue Reports" explore alternative Corridor land use options
November 1972	<u>RB '72</u> released
May 1974	Peat, Warwick, Mitchell & Co. Study on Arlington growth patterns
May 1975	Initial County staff projections for Corridor
June 1975	Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Committee Report (RBCC I)
December 1975	Long Range County Improvement Program adopted.
March 1976	County Staff Corridor General Plans series released
September 1976	RBCC II Report on General Plans
1976 - 1978	Hearings on Corridor Land Use alternatives
July 1977	Rosslyn Metro opens
October 1977	Rosslyn Station Area Plan
December 1979	Orange line opens to Ballston
May 1980	Ballston Sector Plan adopted
April 1981	Court House Sector Plan adopted
August 1983	Virginia Square Sector Plan adopted
May 1984	Clarendon Sector Plan adopted

The Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor

Early Visions

Introduction

In 1972, Arlington County released RB '72: Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Alternative Land Use Patterns. Seven years later the Corridor became a reality with the opening of the Orange Line to Ballston. The period in between was one of intense study and debate by County planners, decision makers and residents as to what the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor should be, and how the County should go about attaining that "vision."

This report seeks to identify the elements of such a vision as of Metro's arrival in Ballston in December 1979. To gain necessary perspective, it first examines the historical context in which key decisions affecting the Corridor's development were made. It then summarizes elements of a County "vision" which emerged from this process, both for the Corridor as a whole and for individual stations. Finally, it identifies issues which emerged during the planning process, but had not been resolved by the early eighties, when the Orange line had opened and final sector plans for each station were being completed.

The Historical Context

Beginnings

The concept of a Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor tied together by Metro emerged in the late 1960's as a result of Arlington County consideration of the optimum alignment of a proposed subway spur through the County's central region. The County ultimately decided against alternate Metro routes along the I-66 right of way and Columbia Pike in favor of a path along Wilson Blvd. and Fairfax Drive. It was hoped that such a routing would revive the flagging fortunes of that corridor's significant but aging commercial centers. It was also generally assumed that construction of the Metro line would result in significant redevelopment along the alignment, particularly in light of the explosive growth of Rosslyn earlier in the decade.

Arlington County's prior experience with Rosslyn would be a key factor in determining its hopes and expectations for the new Corridor. In the wake of a federal government decision to lease rather than build additional office space for its growing bureaucracy, Rosslyn in the early sixties had become the focus of intensive redevelopment. Arlington County had taken advantage of the trend to pioneer the site plan approval process as a means of promoting public redevelopment objectives through private initiative. By the time planning for Metro began in the late sixties, as a result, Rosslyn was well on its way to transformation from a tawdry collection of warehouses and service establishments to a high density urban office environment, and the County had

acquired considerable experience in managing large-scale redevelopment. As this had been achieved at no cost to Arlington taxpayers, moreover, the process could be viewed a major success in terms of planning policy.

That success was blurred, however, by what came to be perceived as shortcomings in the way Rosslyn had grown. The high density office buildings which fueled Rosslyn's rebirth created an environment which some considered architecturally sterile. The absence of new residential construction discouraged commercial and restaurant development, causing the area to become an "urban desert" at night. A lack of open spaces and street level retail facilities, combined with the uncoordinated development of pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems, added to Rosslyn's user-hostile image. Finally, speculation that neighborhoods surrounding the Rosslyn plan area would themselves become high-density development targets led to their deterioration. When these negative facets of Rosslyn's redevelopment became the focus of press and community attention, "Rosslyn" became a symbol of what Arlington residents did not want to happen in or near their own neighborhoods.

Such perceptions were fostered by the emergence of a broader phenomenon -- public questioning in Arlington County and elsewhere of the desirability of new growth. In response to traditional arguments that redevelopment would broaden local tax bases, expand commercial opportunities and provide jobs, no-growth advocates raised quality of life objections in terms of the effect of development on established neighborhoods and existing commercial establishments. By the early seventies, it could therefore no longer be assumed that County residents agreed -- as they generally had in the fifties and sixties -- that growth was a desirable end in itself. In the absence of a consensus, it was clear that planning for so major an undertaking as redevelopment of the R-B Corridor would need to be the subject of unprecedented public discussion.

RB '72: Alternative Visions

To initiate such a process, Arlington County planners in the early seventies produced and circulated a series of studies on alternative growth strategies for Arlington County in general, and for the prospective R-B Corridor in particular. These "Blue Reports" provided the raw material for the first comprehensive examination of redevelopment options in the Corridor -- RB '72. Explicitly commissioned by the County Board as a basis for public discussion, RB '72 described three alternative paradigms, to be considered along with separate growth pattern and traffic studies, as the basis for developing policy guidelines for development of the corridor:

- A limited growth option, aimed at preserving single family and garden apartments in the corridor, while providing limited possibilities for development of office, apartment and hotel uses;
- A "balanced" option retaining the limited high-density office development growth of the first, but providing for significant increases in residential density throughout the central spine of the corridor;

- An "employment" option providing for major increases in office space development, with highest densities around metro stations.

Common to all three alternatives were two objectives which would guide all future considerations of development in the corridor.

- The preservation of established single family and apartment neighborhoods;
- The concentration of mixed high density use near Metro stations in "bulls eyes" of approximately 1/4 mile in radius.

Finally, RB'72 posited a series of assumptions which, like the two objectives noted above, would become points of reference for future public discussion of the corridor's future. These are attached as a separate tab for reference.

RB'72 served as the basis of extensive public discussions in the months after its release. It was followed and complemented by detailed studies of various aspects of the Corridor's development

- A study by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & C. provided a Profile of existing development patterns against which alternative station growth options could be compared (May, 1974);
- Corridor thoroughfare and park requirements were examined in the context of broader, County-wide studies;
- Preliminary County staff growth projections for the corridor and individual stations were prepared for public discussion (May, 1975);
- A "Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Committee" (RBCC) representing a wide range of community interests presented at the request of the County Planning Commission recommendations on the future character of the Corridor (June 1975).

The RBCC Vision

As the most comprehensive "non-official" statement of County residents' hopes/expectations for the Corridor, the RBCC recommendations merit special attention.

The document was perhaps most notable for its overlap with RB '72. RBCC explicitly accepted the basic objectives and assumptions of the earlier study. From these naturally flowed similar conceptual visions of a high-density central spine throughout the Corridor, with the most intense development centered in quarter-mile radius bulls-eyes around stations, tapering off to preserved, existing single-family and apartment communities. While the RBCC report acknowledged internal differences over the merits of intensive growth, it reached a consensus that significant growth was inevitable in the corridor, particularly in the areas immediately adjacent to the

new Metro stations. Indeed, it concluded that virtually all of the acreage in the five bulls-eyes should be subject to redevelopment.

But RBCC laid down some strong markers that growth in the corridor as a whole should be within bounds which would preserve "those values of life in Arlington that we find so attractive.

- The Committee was adamant that the Rosslyn experience should not be repeated in the Corridor.
 - "While Arlington can live with a Rosslyn ... on its periphery, to have a development of that size in an interior location, such as one of the Metro stations in the RB Corridor, would have a devastating impact on ...adjacent residential communities."
 - "The Committee is deeply concerned about the nighttime "ghost town" atmosphere in Rosslyn, which seems to result from the concentration of office space and the virtual exclusion of dwelling units and commercial retail space..."
- RBCC therefore recommended that density within station bulls-eyes should not exceed half that of Rosslyn's; that development near stations be balanced among residential and non-residential uses and whenever possible emphasize retail commercial opportunities; that residential development not replicate the high-density Crystal City model, and that due and early attention be given to amenities such as pedestrian access, architectural quality, and amenities.
- The Committee attached particular importance to the provision within the corridor of adequate park and open space, recommending that not less than 75 acres be acquired for the corridor as a whole, with a minimum of 5 acres of park/open space in each bulls-eye.

These considerations led the RBCC to set targets for new office/commercial space in the corridor well below (3 to 5 million additional sq. ft.) RB '72's minimum option (6.5 million), and in the middle range (12,000 to 15,000 new units) of the earlier study's residential development alternatives.

RBCC's recommendations were closer to -- but still only half of -- the County 1975 staff projections of 6.7 to 10.5 million sq. ft. for office/commercial development. (The County residential projections of from 8,800 to 15,900 new units bracketed RBCC's recommendation.) Already clear, therefore, was a tension between community hopes for relatively higher growth in housing and commercial opportunities, and County projections that the market would favor development of office space at the expense of other uses. In apparent recognition of this, the RBCC noted in presenting its report that its growth recommendations were the product of a difficult balancing of interests. The Committee warned that selective implementation would erode the widespread support which could be expected for the package if adopted as a whole.

The Vision Sharpens

The process leading to the 1975 Staff and RBCC reports was part of a larger effort by Arlington County to develop a public consensus on goals and objectives to be pursued through the year 2000. In December, 1975, the County Board adopted A Long Range County Improvement Program (LRCIP) setting forth County policies for the remainder of the century. While the document was county-wide in scope, many of its provisions were driven by or would directly affect the development of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. Drawing on work done since RB '72, including RBCC, LRCIP made certain key assumptions for the Corridor as a whole:

- That its population would double by the year 2000;
- That jobs in the Corridor would increase by 50%;
- That land use patterns would result in a balance of net new residential/office-commercial growth as follows:
 - 15,000 new dwelling units;
 - 4 million additional sq. ft. of office/commercial floor space.

LRCIP's specific objectives for the Corridor confirmed the basic conceptual pattern of development (density tapering up from neighborhoods to station bulls-eyes) common to earlier official and unofficial studies, while echoing the "quality of life" concerns sounded in the RBCC report. It's quantitative objectives were very close to those of the RBCC, and it endorsed many of the concepts recommended by the Committee for humanizing relatively high density zones (through the improvement, e.g., of pedestrian access) and protecting established neighborhoods (e.g., through the use of lower-density "buffer" zones).

LRCIP's policy guidelines laid the foundation for more detailed planning of the Corridor and its individual stations. This new phase was set in motion with the release in early 1976 of separate County Staff studies (termed "General Plans") of land use alternatives for each station area. Positing alternative "high" and "low" growth scenarios, the series recommended specific changes to the County General Land Use Plan (GLUP) consistent with the LRCIP. For each station it recommended quantitative growth objectives, within LRCIP's overall growth parameters. Special considerations, such as neighborhood preservation programs or potential conflicts between county objectives (as in the case of the proposed redevelopment of the Colonial Village apartment complex) were identified.

The 1975 County land use plan alternatives were reviewed by a second Rosslyn-Ballston Committee (RBCC II), which presented its report in March 1976. RBCC II endorsed the County's general approach, but advocated generally lower quantitative objectives than those identified by the County staff (or even by RBCC I, whose station-by-station recommendations were very close to those of the 1976 staff studies). Nearly two years of subsequent hearings led

in late 1977 to County Board approval of changes to the General Land Use Plan for the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor, clearing the way for more detailed planning.

The Sector Plans

Translating the changes in the County's General Land Use Plan into a more focused vision of what the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor should become was handled through the preparation of detailed sector plans for each station area. Staff limitations and conflicting views of what sector plans should cover initially complicated the process, which would not be complete until 1984. Conversely, the opening of the Rosslyn Metro station in December 1977, and of the entire Orange line in 1979, put a premium on the development at an early date of detailed plans for the individual stations.

Again, Rosslyn served as a proving ground with the release in October 1977 of a study outlining County development priorities both for the area covered by earlier Rosslyn redevelopment plans, and for peripheral areas. Because the Rosslyn plan was essentially an "after the fact" effort, however, its focus was more on correcting adverse consequence of previous development than on future growth.

Only with the publication in May 1980 of the Ballston Sector Plan did the County develop a format which could serve as a comprehensive reference point for achieving LRCIP's goals for the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. In addition to outlining the land use changes approved for the station area in 1977, the Plan included features which would become standard in subsequent plans:

- A unifying concept for the station (a "new downtown" in central Arlington);
- Detailed descriptions of urban design elements to be emphasized;
- Highlighting of special problems/opportunities in the station area (notably the Parkington complex and Ballston mixed use areas) and procedures for dealing with them;
- Options for meeting County open space/park objectives in the station bulls-eyes and adjacent areas;
- Descriptions of how established neighborhoods would be buffered from higher density redevelopment around the station area cores.

The Court House sector plan followed a year later. Completion of the Virginia Square and Clarendon plans, however, was delayed as the County sought to reconcile alternative use concepts for these stations. The issues were not new ones: they sprang from tension inherent in the County objectives of high density development of the immediate station areas and protection of established residential communities and retail services. In the absence of a readily defined

identity such as that for the Court House and Ballston stations, however, it proved harder to find the right balance between these objectives in Virginia Square and Clarendon.

Planning for Virginia Square was complicated by George Mason University's decision to locate a law campus in the station area. This created the opportunity to develop Virginia Square as a unique recreational/cultural/educational center in the corridor -- a desirable vision, but one at odds with earlier expectations that the station would be primarily residential in character, and one which put into question the viability of existing grocery and other retail services. The Virginia Square sector plan was finally completed in 1983, after the adoption of a special General Land Use plan for the area.

In Clarendon, the problem was acute. On the one hand, existing high-density zoning in the core area created the possibility of essentially uncontrolled redevelopment at odds with the County objective of balanced mixed-use growth. On the other hand, local neighborhood opposition to any high density development was particularly strong in Clarendon, where important single family developments directly abutted the core area. A final sector plan would not be agreed upon until 1984.

The Shape of the Vision

The product of a decade's public debate over the shape of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor, the sector plans come as close as any single set of documents to providing a comprehensive picture of the vision which emerged from the process. As the Virginia Square and Clarendon cases demonstrate, the "vision" was by no means monolithic. Indeed, from the release of RB '72 to the completion of the sector planning process, it would be more accurate to speak of alternate -- often competing -- "visions" of the Corridor:

- Established neighborhoods were consistently most concerned with the impact of growth on their own quality of life, and at least initially viewed the high-density development which Metro would bring as an unavoidable evil to be managed by close scrutiny;
- Developers and landowners sought a redevelopment strategy which would maximize density and height of new construction, and thus their own returns on investment;
- County planners were generally supportive of efficient land use in the corridor, bullish on the capacity for high-density mixed use development to revitalize commercial life, but necessarily sensitive to the quality of life concerns reflected in County policy.

At any given point in the process, County decisions inevitably tended to reflect the interplay of such viewpoints. Occasionally the result was a degree of ambiguity about ultimate objectives -- the notion of Clarendon as an "urban village" is perhaps the best example. In other cases where it proved impossible to establish consensus in the abstract, the County resorted to such devices as

the establishment of "Special Coordinated Mixed Use" zones to ensure that future development would be subject to adequate scrutiny. Throughout, the process was greased by extensive consultation at each stage among the County and representatives of major community interests, as well as by an (at times grudging) recognition that redevelopment of the Corridor was inevitable, and that its character would in large measure be determined by the market.

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.

- The Corridor would be the focus of a major increase in land use density, with virtually all non-residential acreage within the 1/4 mile bulls-eyes surrounding Metro stations subject to renewal.
 - Sector Plans for the Corridor ultimately posited net new construction of 24,000 - 26,500 housing units and 19.25 million sq. ft. of office/commercial space -- equaling or topping RB '72's maximum projections in both categories.
- 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.
 - Within the Metro core areas, a mixture of office, hotel, retail and residential development would be encouraged. Residential development would be a particularly high priority in all station areas.
- 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.
- Existing single family and most apartment communities would be preserved and improved.
 - County-approved neighborhood conservation plans calling for, e.g., the establishment of "greenways" and buffer zones of relatively low density development (e.g., townhouses) would be implemented;
 - County capital improvements (sidewalks, etc.) would encourage investment in rehabilitation and "in-filling."
- Commercial revitalization would come about primarily as a function of redevelopment of the core areas and associated increases in residential land use density.
 - In certain cases, the County would encourage the incorporation of retail services judged to be important to neighborhood viability (e.g., grocery stores) into redevelopment plans.

- New commercial enterprises would be incorporated in the ground and second floors of new construction for residential/office use.
- 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.
- Within these general 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.
 - The identities would be created primarily by differences in the scale, height and density of development in each core area, and in the mix of uses in those areas.
 - Each station area would feature integral pedestrian circulation systems connecting residential, commercial facilities and Metro entrances.
 - Adequate open space in the station areas in general, and the core areas in particular, would be obtained through a combination of County acquisitions and the site plan approval process.
- 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 design features such as street setbacks, ground floor retail shopping, and restrained signage.
 - While individual sector plans contained detailed standards for "streetscape" elements, no Corridor-wide standards were adopted. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a general expectation that similar standards would prevail throughout the Corridor.

Individual Visions

Summarized below are the key elements of community "visions" for individual stations within the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. In general, descriptions reflect the outcome of the planning process as reflected in the various Sector Plans. As such, visions for different stations do not necessarily correspond to a single point in time, e.g., the 1979 opening of the Orange Line

to Ballston. Rather, they represent a snapshot of the vision for that station as of the time the relevant sector plan was released.

Rosslyn

For purposes of County planning, there were two Rosslyns in what would become the current station area: that covered by the original 1962 Rosslyn development plan; and the peripheral area west and south of the central core, comprising a mix of existing residential and commercial uses.

- Planning for the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor always assumed that the area covered by the original Rosslyn plan would be completed essentially as planned. The 1977 Sector Plan therefore focused on steps to complete the renewal of still underdeveloped areas, while correcting perceived shortcomings in prior redevelopment. A citizen review of the plan had noted that in Rosslyn "the race is still on between mediocrity and class." The sector plan sought to ensure the race came out right by:
 - Giving priority to early redevelopment of high-priority underutilized areas, notably those necessary to complete the core area's traffic and pedestrian circulation systems.
 - Taking advantage of the pending completion of I-66 to deck over its right of way under Rosslyn Circle, reuniting Rosslyn with the Marriott Motel, Key Bridge and the Potomac shoreline, and creating an eastern gateway to the Corridor.
 - Remediating longstanding complaints with respect to pedestrian access, open space and landscaping to create a more human, inviting environment conducive to the expansion of restaurant and retail commercial opportunities.

- Planning for Rosslyn's neglected periphery sought to balance the high-density office/commercial growth in the station's core area by expansion of residential usage and improving the viability of established single family and garden apartment communities. Key elements of that strategy included:
 - Supporting such neighborhood preservation areas as Colonial Terrace through strict administration of zoning requirements and upgrades of public utilities;
 - Encouraging the replacement of garden apartments on the fringes of the Rosslyn office district by higher density residential uses;
 - Stimulating the revitalization of the Colonial Village shopping center commercial district opposite the center through roadway and sidewalk improvements.
 - Expanding open space holdings throughout the area (through, inter alia, acquisition of the Hessik tract), to be focuses of a pedestrian walkway linking the Rosslyn station area's diverse business, commercial and residential segments.

- The study anticipated expansion of Rosslyn's high-density office use pattern into only one area not covered by the original 1962 plan -- the center of the block bordered by North Oak St, North Quinn St., and Wilson Boulevard.
 - The Wilson Community Center would provide a buffer between this new high density cluster and the surrounding residential uses.

Court House

All participants in planning for the Corridor recognized that the Court House station area was a prime candidate for intensive redevelopment by virtue of its location, ease of access and stock of existing county and private office space. The goal was a model urban governmental center featuring a cohesive mix of high-density residential and office uses, while preserving established uses on the periphery. Two issues posed challenges to realization of this vision: the proximity of the historic Colonial Village garden apartments to the Metro station; and County plans to expand its government center. Also acute was the problem of how to reconcile plans for intensive development of the station area with the parking needs of County employees and those conducting business at County facilities.

The thrust of the Sector Plan released in 1980 was to promote intensive redevelopment of the area's central core, while preserving communities and established uses in surrounding areas.

- The focal point of the area would be a zone immediately surrounding the Metro and government center, visually unified by a series of plazas and common architectural treatments, the whole designed to emphasize integrity and public accessibility.
 - Options for expansion of County offices, and for establishment of public parking facilities were to be preserved in the area immediately to the west of the Court House.
 - Property swaps would consolidate the property immediately to the east of the Court House tower in County hands, preserving a vista of the Washington Monument and Capitol.
 - Within the station area as a whole, 4,000 new residential units were expected to be constructed, along with 3 million sq. ft. of new office/commercial space -- the highest targets for either category anywhere in the Corridor.
- The Colonial Village area would be redeveloped in phases under an agreement with its new owners which provided that:
 - Its southwest corner (an area inside the 1/4 mile radius of the Metro station) would be replaced by medium-density office/apartment/hotel use.

- 90% of the original Colonial Village complex would be renovated and preserved.
- Undeveloped land south of Lee Highway would be divided between parkland and new middle-density residential uses.

Clarendon

Of all the station areas, Clarendon was the most intensely studied, the most hotly debated. Here the collision of visions inherent throughout the Corridor was most acute: fueled on the one hand by active and well organized neighborhoods committed to reviving an historic small town atmosphere; and tempered on the other by the reality that only a significant influx of new investment would reverse the area's long slide.

Studies of Clarendon by County and citizens' groups in the sixties had reached a consensus on the imperative of preserving Clarendon's residential neighborhoods, and on the consequent importance of ensuring adequate transition between those neighborhoods and any new development. Coming up with a strategy for achieving these goals proved more elusive, particularly in view of the fact that existing zoning in the station core provided for high-density development as a matter of right. As the debate continued into the early eighties, neighborhood concerns over the impact of increased density, height and traffic as a result of the redevelopment of Clarendon's core tended to become more, not less, acute. A concentration of Indochinese immigrants in the area in the late seventies added yet another layer to the problem.

The long-delayed 1984 Clarendon Sector Plan sought to reconcile these conflicting viewpoints in the concept of an "urban village." Its elements included:

- A central open area around the Metro station, with the new high-rise Olmsted Building as a focal point recalling the cathedrals of European villages;
- Height limits in the immediately surrounding "Commercial Redevelopment District" aimed at providing a rapid "tapering down" of height and density.
- A surrounding medium density mixed use zone designed to reconcile existing commercial rights with the need to buffer established neighborhoods.
- The establishment of a "Special Coordinated Mixed Use District" in the eastern-most commercial segments of the area (occupied most notably by Sears) to ensure close scrutiny for future redevelopment of this area, closely bordered by single family housing.
- In all, the Sector Plan projected the development of 8,000 to 12,000 new residential units in the area, and 3 million sq. ft. of new office/commercial floor space.

- Town house developments and open spaces would be used to insulate existing neighborhoods from higher density uses.

- The coherence of the urban village concept would be encouraged by:
 - Establishment of special pedestrian routes (featuring special paving treatment and landscaping) tying together residential areas, retail services and the Commercial Redevelopment District.

 - Use throughout the station area of standardized, high quality pedestrian fixtures and signage.

 - Taking advantage of the area's immigrant population to promote an "international" ambience reflected inter alia in restaurants and retail services.

- Integration with the Corridor as a whole would be effected by continuation of the tree-lined, ceremonial Fairfax Boulevard concept along 10th Street and implementation of the Ashton Heights Greenway.

Virginia Square

The Virginia Square station area (labeled "Ballston" in early planning studies) was initially conceived as a primarily residential environment. It was the only one of the Corridor's five stations identified as meeting the County Long Range Improvement Program's call for preserving the option of keeping at least one station area as primarily residential in character. Early official and unofficial studies saw it primarily as a buffer between relatively high density uses at the Clarendon and Glebe (later "Ballston") stations, with medium-density residential development in the area's fragmented central sector the primary focus of new growth.

These assumptions changed in the early eighties with the acquisition by George Mason University for an Arlington campus of the former Kann's site. Given its proximity in the Virginia Square station area to the County library, Central Park, and Arts Center, the GMU decision created the opportunity to develop a significant cultural/educational/recreational center at the heart of the County. Such a vision, while not necessarily at odds with the concept of an essentially residential community environment, became controversial when GMU sought to develop land used by the only grocery in the station area for parking.

The 1983 Sector Plan sought to reconcile the earlier residential and subsequent "cultural" visions for Virginia Square.

- The plan reaffirmed the "predominantly residential" character of the community, which would be enhanced by the establishment of the Ashton Heights Greenway, buffering of

established neighborhoods by apartments, and the establishment of a major pedestrian walkway along Monroe St.

- New high density residential development (an anticipated 1,400 to 1,700 new units) would be encouraged in the blocks adjacent to the Metro station.
- The plan created the basis for the development of a cohesive urban environment and focal point for the station area by establishing in its northeast quadrant an area earmarked for intensive redevelopment.
- An expanded GMU campus, linked to the Monroe St walkway and 10th St. by an intersecting mall would create the axis for mixed use development.
 - Community retail needs could be incorporated in the newly developed area, replacing existing services.
 - Ultimately, 1.7 million sq. ft. of new office/commercial space was expected to be built, a sharp escalation from the County's 1976 "high" projection of .2 million.
 - Left unresolved was whether the County should actively seek to promote the creation in collaboration with GMU of a separate Cultural Center.
- An up-graded Fairfax Boulevard would tie together thematically the new residential and non-residential elements of the Virginia Square station, and integrate Virginia Square with the rest of the Corridor.

Ballston

With the possible exception of Court House, the County's vision of what the Ballston area could become was from the start clearest of any of the five stations. The western terminus of the Corridor, served by major regional roadways (including after 1979 by I-66), and with an existing major retail center (Parkington), Ballston (initially called "Glebe") was envisioned as a gateway to the Corridor as a whole and as its commercial center of gravity. The presence of established neighborhoods to the north and south of the new Metro station, however, were important parameters on the character and density of new growth.

County planners hoped that early redevelopment in Ballston, coupled with continuing growth in Rosslyn, would stimulate progress throughout the Corridor. Aggressive County efforts to get Ballston off to a fast start were instrumental in setting in motion the private redevelopment of the Parkington complex and lay behind a 1978 amendment of the General Land Use Plan to create a "Coordinated Mixed Use Development District" in the blocks surrounding the Metro Station between Wilson and Fairfax Boulevards. The 1981 Ballston Sector Plan, which would serve as model for subsequent stations, set as a goal the creation of a "new downtown" in central Arlington, distinctive features of which included:

- A high-density mixed-use core between Fairfax and Wilson Boulevards, in which substantial increases in residential units (2,900 new units were projected) would be blended with a combination of new office (1.7 million sq. ft.) and commercial space. The plan envisioned a 50-50 split between residential and non-residential uses in this area, but recognized that market conditions might well dictate a different ratio.
- Redevelopment of the Parkington complex with at least two, and possibly three retail "anchors", including a possible extension of the shopping mall across Wilson Boulevard.
 - Development of the Pocahontas tract as a retail center was flagged as an alternative if the Parkington option proved unfeasible.
 - Ultimately, development of 720,000 additional sq. ft. of commercial space was envisioned for the station area as a whole.
- Development of Fairfax Boulevard as a gateway entrance to the Corridor from I-66, to be continued with common setbacks and landscaping themes through the Virginia Square and Clarendon stations to the Court House.
- Establishment of a Stuart St. walkway to provide internal pedestrian access between the high-density central core, the redeveloped Parkington retail complex, and residential neighborhoods to the north.
- Buffering of established single family neighborhoods through promotion of townhouse construction in areas adjacent to higher density uses.

Unresolved Issues

As noted above, the achievement of consensus on elements of such a vision for the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor did not imply resolution of all the issues which arose during the planning process. The precise balance to be struck in each station area between high-density redevelopment and quality of life considerations would clearly remain as much a constant after completion of the sector plans as it had during their elaboration. Over and above this constant, however, certain issues had emerged by the early eighties which participants in the planning process recognized could have particular impact on future decisions affecting the Corridor.

- Metro: To what extent would it prove to be the spur to development once in operation that it had been expected to be since the early seventies? To what extent would this direct link to Washington and its urban problems adversely affect the Corridor?

- How realistic were the County's goals of ensuring that high-density development in the Corridor included a major residential component?
 - New residential construction had stagnated in the late seventies. Demand for office space remained strong.
- How successful would the County's establishment of Special Use zones in Ballston prove in providing generating the rapid growth outside experts saw as necessary for the success of redevelopment of the Corridor as a whole?
- How successful would the Special Coordinated Mixed Use zones in Clarendon and Virginia Square prove in reconciling development priorities with local neighborhood resistance to higher density growth?
- What course would an unresolved debate over parking strategies in the Corridor take once Metro opened?
- To what extent would County resources enable it to play the major role implied in the sector plans in acquiring open space/parkland in the station area, and in providing the capital improvements necessary to encourage neighborhood rehabilitation and "in-fill"?
- To what extent would assumptions hold that development would be limited to the Corridor area itself, particularly if it became clear that the market would support more higher density growth further from Metro stations?
- And, finally, to what extent would it prove possible to avoid the "mistakes" of Rosslyn? Would realization of all or part of the County's "vision" for the Corridor give it the kind of lively, convivial atmosphere it desired? Or would the reality fall short of the dream?

EVOLUTION OF STATION AREA DENSITY EXPECTATIONS TO YEAR 2000

Station/ Corridor	Baselines ¹ (total)	RB '72 (net new)	1975 County Staff Study		1975 RBCC - 1		1975 LRCIP		1976 Staff HI-Low ² Projections	1976 Staff ² Recommendations	1976 RBCC - 11	Sector Plans	
			(net new)	(new total)	(net new)	(new total)	(net new)	(net total)	(net new)	(net new)	(net new)	(net new)	(new total)
Residential³				3		3							
Rosslyn	5,000		2,500- 3,200	7,500- 8,200	3,000	8,000			2,300- 2,700	2,500- 3,200	2,400	(n/a)	7,500-8,200
Courthouse	2,900		1,400- 4,400	4,300- 7,300	2,000-4,000	4,900-6,900			4,100- 5,400	4,400- 4,800	2,800	4,000	6,900
Clarendon	700		800- 1,600	1,500- 2,300	2,000-4,000	2,700-4,700			1,000- 2,500	800- 1,600	1,500	800-1,200	1,500-1,900
Va. Square	1,600		2,100- 3,500	3,700- 5,100	2,500	4,100			1,500- 3,500	2,100- 3,500	2,800	1,400-1,700	3,000-4,300
Ballston	2,300		2,000- 3,200	2,300- 5,500	2,000	4,300			3,200- 6,300	3,700- 4,900	3,400	2,900	5,200
Total	12,100	Alternatives: A. 2,900 B. 25,900 C. 18,300	8,800- 15,900	19,300- 28,400	12,000-15,000	14,200-17,200	15,000	27,000	12,100-20,400	13,500-18,000	12,900		24,100-26,600
Office/ Commercial³				3		3							
Rosslyn	4.5		.8	5.3	.9	5.4			.7 - .7	.8	.7	.7	5.13
Courthouse	.92		1.8-3.6	2.5-4.3	1.1	2.0			.5 - 1.5	.9	.9	2.45	3.36
Clarendon	1.0		.9-1.4	1.9-2.4	.6	1.6			.9 - .7	.9	.6	3.0	4.0
Va. Square	.67		.2	.87	.7	1.36			.2 - .2	.2	.2	1.7	2.4
Ballston	1.94		3-4.5	4.94-6.44	.7	2.64			1.9 - 1.9	1.0 - 2.0	.2	2.4	4.36
Total	8.7	Alternatives: A. 9.4 B. 6.5 C. 13.6	6.7-10.5	15.51-19.17	3.0-5.0	12-14	4	13.2		3.5 - 5.4	1.9	10.25	19.250

¹ As indicated in sector plans, except totals which are million sq. ft. of office/commercial from LRIP floor space

² In residential units or million sq. ft. of office/commercial floor space

² From Goals and Objectives; Planning Process, Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor General Plans, Arlington Co. Dept. of Environmental Affairs, Planning Division, March 1976.

³ Not included in original studies. Projection for illustrative purposes based on baseline figures. RBCC 1 totals are from Committee report. Totals do not always reflect sum of projections for individual stations.

RB '72 Assumptions

1. Single-family neighborhoods adjacent to the Corridor will be preserved.
2. No new high density office development will be allowed adjacent to single-family neighborhoods
3. Means will be found to prevent or discourage the development of high density Office Floor Area Ratios on existing commercially zoned land.
4. Major commercial areas of Sears, Virginia Square and Parkington will be preserved.
5. The Rosslyn Plan will remain unchanged.
6. Metro will be completed substantially as planned.
7. Traffic analyses for alternative land use plans will be carried forward on alternative assumptions regarding the construction of I-66. Internal street capacities will be developed through these analyses.
8. There will be no increase in density in the existing Zoning District Classification and no new classifications with higher density will be adopted.
9. The County Board will adopt "C-O 2.5," "C-O 1.5" and "RA-H 3.2" zoning districts, or through site plan approvals, will hold development densities to such related planning goals. Each area of the plan designated for "C-O" type use will also suggest the maximum percentage of office use which will be allowed in that particular area.
10. The density chart shown below shall be used to formulate the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor alternatives.

	"C-O 3.5"	"C-O 2.5"	"C-O 1.5"	"RA-H3.2"	"RA-4.8"
Uses Permitted by Right	C-1-O	C-1-O	C-1-O	RA-8-18	RA-14-26
Max. Office F.A.R.	3.5	2.5	1.5	N.A.	N.A.
Max. Apt. Density (Units/Acre)	135	115	90	135	90
Max. Hotel Density (Units/Acre)	210	180	135	210	N.A.

11. Bonus provisions of the Zoning Ordinance (Section 32) will not significantly increase density.
12. Highest densities and highest percentages of office use will be planned closest to transit station entrances.
13. The County will acquire, through easements or fee, the property required for parks, other public facilities and transportation rights of way.
14. Uses and densities shown on the plan are established as desirable goals without any guarantee that the incentives are great enough to assure private enterprise redevelopment.

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