The Village of Shirlington

Suburban Smart Growth Without Rail Transit

July 2018
Agenda

• History (1940 to present)
• Attributes and Outcomes
• Lessons Learned
Setting the Stage – Arlington County

• Arlington is a 26 sq. mi. County, originally established in 1847
• Population of 222,800 and 222,300 jobs
• Operates as a unified local government, providing the services of both a city and a county
• Located in rapidly growing Washington, D.C. region (6.2 million people)
Shirlington

- Located at the south end of the County
- 27-acre site adjacent to I-395 (major highway)
- Outside Metrorail corridors, but has good bus access
- Restaurants and retail at street-level, supported by 1,000 apartments and condominiums, a 142-room hotel and over 500,000 sq. ft. of office space
1940 – 1976: Suburban Shopping Center, from Thriving to Declining

• Originally developed by Joe Cherner, a local car dealer
• Original goal was to turn the site into an airport, plans were never approved
• Shopping center construction began in 1942, completed in 1944
• Shirlington throughout the 1950s
• Area began to decline in the mid-1960s with the opening of Alexandria’s Landmark Shopping Mall
1976 – 1982: Redevelopment Lost

• By 1976, Shirlington was suffering decline and was not targeted for Metrorail service
• New zoning designations with density incentives were approved
• The first Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) was adopted for the area
1982 – 2000: Redevelopment Started and Stalled

- In 1982, the County adopted a new PDSP, laying the foundation for the first major redevelopment of the old shopping center
- The 1982 PDSP divided the site into five different proposals
- A central change resulting from the PDSP was the creation of a main street for Shirlington: Campbell Avenue
2000 to Today: The Right Plan at the Right Time

- The 2000 PDSP took four years to complete, including extensive public review
- Retail was reduced by 35%, with increases to residential units (40%) and office development (2%)
- This also created a strategy for better integrating Shirlington into the surrounding community by building on characteristics that make the area a unique and special place
Amenities: Design Guidelines

• The Shirlington Design Book contains recommendations for public spaces and circulation on guided streetscape development
• Developed in conjunction with the 2000 PDSP
• Includes graphics and signage, garbage receptacles, bicycle racks, landscaping, fountains, lighting, paving, public art, decorative planters, benches and more
Amenities: Main Street Extension

• One of the earliest examples of the County’s participation was its decision to contribute 2.4 acres of its Trade Center site, in order to extend Shirlington’s main street
• South 28th Street was renamed Campbell Avenue and doubled in length
• Street design incorporates pedestrian-friendly elements that make the Avenue a comfortable and exciting place for people to walk
Amenities: Library, Theater and Plaza Complex

• Previous library was isolated from activity, moved in order to create a civic presence

• Signature Theatre was once located in an industrial area, moved in order to increase activity, now reaches over 100,000 people annually

• Quarter-acre plaza envisioned as a civic gathering place, includes multiple public art installations
Amenities: Bus Transfer Station

- Served by five regional bus routes and two local bus routes
- Even before the transfer station opened in 2008, Shirlington was one of the busiest bus hubs in Arlington, with 1,000 daily passenger boardings
- Since the station opened, ridership has doubled to more than 2,000 boardings per day
Amenities: Additional Public Parking

• In order to achieve the 4,539 parking spaces the PDSP called for, Shirlington had to make the transition from surface parking to structured parking

• Negotiation and compromise on parking has been continuous

• While Shirlington remains largely car-oriented with five structured parking garages, the emphasis is on shared parking so that visitors only have to park once in order to enjoy all of Shirlington’s amenities
Amenities: Grocery Store

• Shirlington lacked a grocery store between the 1980s and mid-2000s
• Few grocery chains were willing to adapt their large, suburban stores to the smaller, two-story space that was available
• The developer reached an agreement with Harris Teeter, and a 23,000 sq. ft. store was built
• Harris Teeter has become critical to Shirlington’s success as a residential center
Amenities – Conclusion

• Between 2000 and 2010, the Shirlington PDSP was completely implemented
• Fortunately, the plan was amended prior to a development boom
• Had the plans not been in place, the area would have missed a significant opportunity to revitalize
• Today, Shirlington is a thriving, mixed-use urban village in its own right, but at a different scale than smart-growth communities within rail transit corridors
Lessons Learned – Planning

• First iterations of plans are not always successful
  • It took an entire generation to transform Shirlington into the vibrant urban village it is today

• Success requires creativity, in addition to increased density
  • Excluded density provided the library, theater and plaza complex

• Support a mix of uses that are sustainable in the local market
Lessons Learned – Partnering

• Strong and innovative public-private partnerships facilitate development
  • Both Arlington County and Federal Realty were highly motivated to turn Shirlington into a community asset

• Tie investment to specific attributes and outcomes, giving investors some degree of certainty
  • By creating detailed streetscape and building guidelines, as well as building new infrastructure, investors have a clearer idea of the end result
Lessons Learned – Engaging

• Engaging residents is the key to creating successful, contextual plans that build on the community’s assets
  • Neighboring communities provided input throughout planning process at over 50 meetings leading up to the adoption of the plan

• Proactively address community concerns
  • Concerns raised about increased traffic
  • Developer was required to contribute $200,000 to be used for traffic-calming measures in neighborhoods
Thank You!

Arlington County Planning Division

CPHD@arlingtonva.us

703-228-3525