

Arlington County Retail Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arlington will be a community where retail is convenient, appealing, activating and sustainable; that provides interest and authenticity, entertainment and experiences, and goods and services to residents, employees and visitors; and where local, independent, regional and national businesses thrive.

The Arlington County Retail Plan (“Retail Plan”) will replace the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Retail Action Plan (“2001 Retail Action Plan”) as the resource for retail policies and varying types of ground floor uses. The Retail Street Maps will update and replace the retail maps provided in the 2001 Retail Action Plan. Additionally, there are several departures from the 2001 Retail Action Plan including an expanded geography; a strategic focus for primary retail sales locations; the accommodation of variety of uses on the ground floor; the creation of an environment for successful retail; and an increased importance of the public realm.

The Retail Plan is divided into five main sections including:

Introduction	Sets forth the purpose of the document including why the Retail Plan is necessary; what the Retail Plan will accomplish; and how the Retail Plan will be used.
Arlington’s Retail Vision, Principles and Policies	States the vision for Arlington’s retail environment and those principles and policies to achieve the vision.
Retail Overview	Defines the term “retail” in Arlington County vernacular and delves into general information about the dynamics of retail; introduces the concept of retail equivalents; identifies important pieces of retail infrastructure; and highlights the current retail environment in Arlington.
Implementation Elements	Retail Street Maps, design guidelines and an action plan which will implement the vision, principles and policies for retail in Arlington.
Appendices	Includes a basic primer on retail; Arlington’s retail history and current ownership patterns; changing retail trends and a glossary.

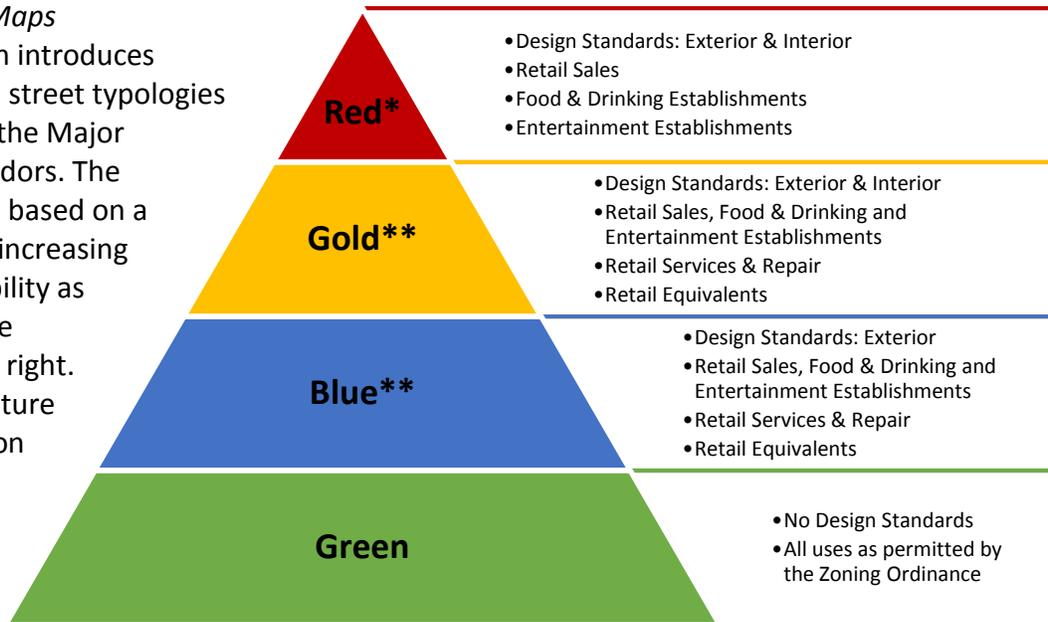
Retail Principles: The six principles, shown below, and the thirteen accompanying policies which implement each principle (found in Chapter 2.), collectively provide the means for which Arlington achieves its Retail Vision.

- Retail evolves and changes. Retail reflects the trends.
- Retail is a mix of local, independent, regional and national retailers.
- Retail needs customers.
- Retail needs to look like retail.
- Retail thrives in a well-designed and well-managed public realm.
- Retail likes to cluster.

Implementation Elements: Implementation of the vision includes three pieces: the Retail Street Maps, design guidelines and an action plan.

Retail Street Maps

The Retail Plan introduces updated retail street typologies and maps for the Major Planning Corridors. The typologies are based on a pyramid with increasing levels of flexibility as depicted in the graphic to the right. The nomenclature and designation on the maps indicate preferences as to the placement, design and use of ground floor space to achieve the retail vision.



* Retail equivalents may be approved, on a case-by-case basis, by the County Board.
 ** Other uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance may be approved, on a case-by-case basis, by the County Board.

The Retail Plan continues to promote the concept of pure retail streets identified as Red Streets with the preferred uses limited to retail sales, food and drinking establishments, and entertainment establishments. These more conventional retail environments work best when clustered; allowing customers to see all of the retail; accommodating a park-once and shop environment; and creating a hub of activity. However, even in these Red Streets, the plan allows for future flexibility by providing the County Board criteria through which they can legislatively approve other types of uses in ground floor spaces.

The Retail Plan incorporates a new term, “retail equivalents,” into the typology nomenclature. Retail equivalents are uses that, while not traditional retail uses, provide similar visual interest and active street life within a storefront to traditional retail uses. Retail equivalents provide valuable pieces to the community infrastructure, and may include uses such as child care centers, schools and other educational facilities, medical uses, civic and government uses, and in some instances residential amenities. This retail equivalent concept increases the level of flexibility, accommodates the changing nature of retail and improves Arlington’s level of competitiveness in attracting future office tenants with a desire to create an enhanced work environment.

Design Guidelines: The built environment is as important to the pedestrian experience as are the uses contained within, therefore, the Retail Plan recommends a level of design standards suitable to the various retail street types. Exterior and interior design standards should be considered for both Red and Gold Streets and exterior design standards for Blue Streets. These design standards are intended to create a strong street frontage while maintaining flexibility for a variety of uses over time within the space. The design guidelines, will be used to analyze special exception projects and will assist developers, property owners, business owners, staff and the community in developing retail spaces that: operate functionally; provide interest to the pedestrian; allow for a sense of authenticity; accommodate a variety of users and uses; and remain accessible both visually and through the ease and convenience of the customer in reaching the retail. Other adopted plans and policies may provide more prescriptive guidelines or standards; however, for retail uses, the Retail Plan will provide the starting point for design from a retail perspective.

Action Plan: The action plan itemizes specific tasks necessary to realize the vision, principles and accompanying policy statements. Implementation measures include continued County practice; amendments to Arlington County Code; and updated administrative regulations. Additionally, several recommendations are designed to be the first step in a broader County discussion.

The Retail Plan and its action plan reinforce the importance of key pieces of Arlington’s retail infrastructure: grocery stores and regional shopping centers. Achieving the retail vision for Arlington requires both of these elements. However, these elements have qualities that don’t always align with standardized rules and regulations. In 1985, the Arlington County Board adopted a Grocery Store policy, in recognition of the importance of grocery stores to neighborhoods, the challenges presented by existing zoning regulations, and closure of existing grocery stores due to redevelopment. The Retail Plan validates the continued importance of such a policy and recommends that updates to its application are necessary to address the changing dynamics of the grocery store concept.

As critical pieces in the retail infrastructure and with the ability to draw shoppers, employees and residents into an area, strong regional shopping centers can significantly improve the neighborhoods where they are located. Two of Arlington’s regional shopping centers, Ballston Common Mall and Fashion Centre at Pentagon City, are over 20 years old. Due to the size and placement within the Ballston and Pentagon City neighborhoods, these centers must increase placemaking efforts – pulling storefronts to the street, creating multiple entry points and creating activity and attractions on the outside as well as inside. These exterior improvements, combined with interior renovations, will create the strong regional shopping centers Arlington desires. To encourage and facilitate such changes, the Retail Plan calls for the flexibility and creativity required for the repositioning of these regional centers.

Finally, the Retail Plan recognizes the importance of the public realm and its relationship with retail. The public realm must be managed appropriately to ensure that all uses are accommodated while granting enough flexibility to encourage spontaneity and activity. The Retail Plan acknowledges that the public realm often acts as the buffer between retail activities

and residential uses. Finding a balancing between these, sometimes incompatible, uses is important.

Major Planning Corridors – Columbia Pike

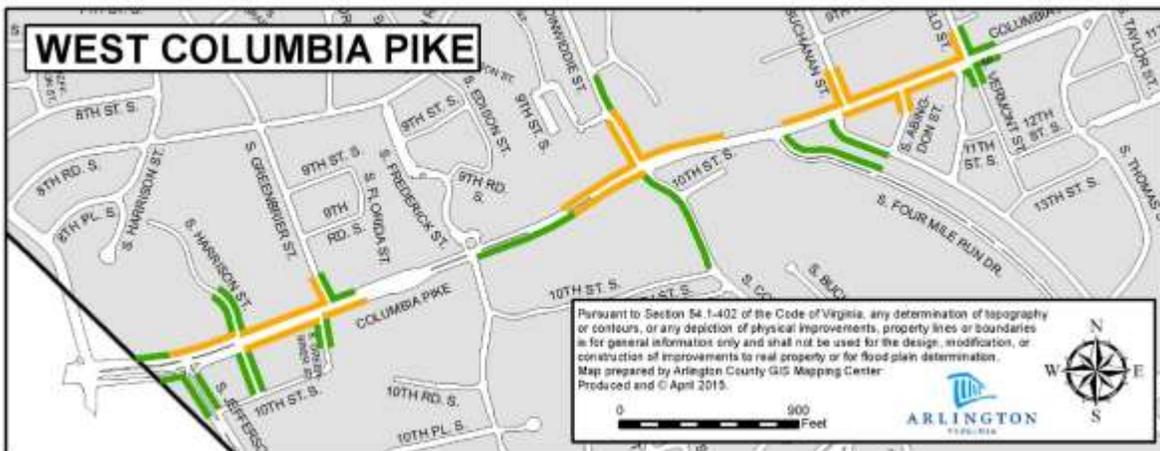
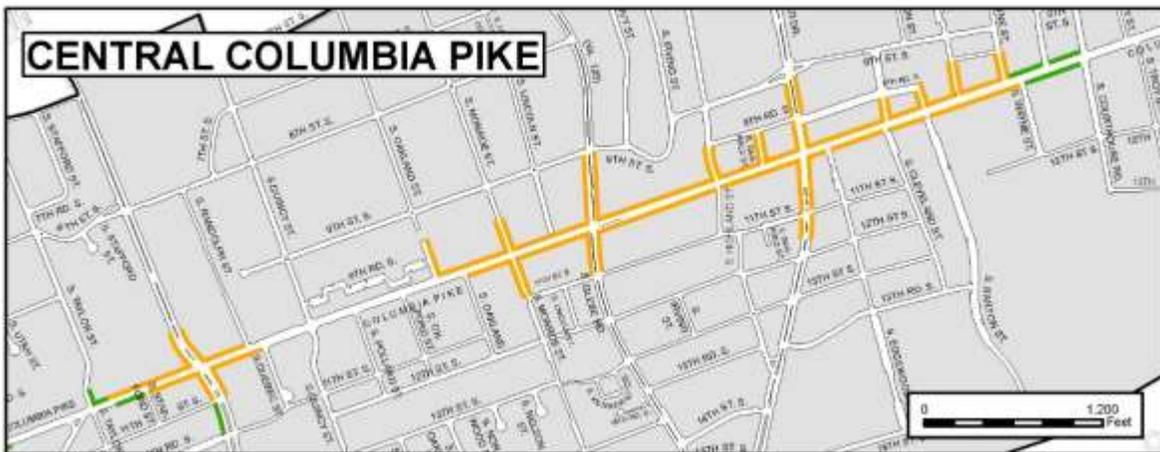
Columbia Pike

- Continued planning has occurred along Columbia Pike since the 1990s. Today, the *Columbia Pike Initiative – A Revitalization Plan, Update 2005* (CPI – 2005), the *Neighborhoods Area Plan* (2012) and the *Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District Form Based Code* (2003) provide guidance and regulation for development along Columbia Pike.
- The *Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District Form Based Code* (FBC) represents a cutting-edge, revitalization and redevelopment tool: a legal document that regulates land development by setting careful and clear controls on building form – with broad parameters on building use – to shape clear public space (good streets, neighborhoods and parks) with a healthy mix of uses including retail.
- Retail is concentrated on the “Main Street Sites” within the four, major, mixed-use development nodes: Western Gateway, Neighborhood Center, Village Center and Town Center. The FBC definition of retail is inclusive and includes: “consumer comparison goods (general merchandise, apparel, furnishings and other types of similar merchandise— commonly referred to as GAFO categories in the retail industry— convenience goods, food/delis, gifts, drugstore items, personal care, cards/stationery), personal business services, professional offices, restaurants, grocery stores, and hotel, theater, and other uses that provide visual interest and create active street life.”
- Recent development projects along Columbia Pike have seen their ground floor space successfully leased to a variety of retailers and food and beverage categories.
- With the recent adoption of the *Neighborhoods Form Based Code* (N-FBC), the implementation tool for the *Neighborhoods Area Plan*, a substantial amount of new density (housing units) is expected. The increased population will help to support the existing commercial centers and businesses within them.
- Retail uses were not a main focus for the new N-FBC; however, the N-FBC completed the planning and regulatory framework for a few key intersections already regulated under the existing FBC. The N-FBC does indicate a few areas where optional retail is possible in support of the increased population.

Map Notes

The map is intended to be consistent with the adopted Columbia Pike Initiative, Neighborhoods Plan, Form Based Code (FBC) and Neighborhood-Form Based Code (N-FBC). The allowed uses within the ground floor are as prescribed in the CP-FBC and CPN-FBC. Design standards as required by the Form Based Code take precedence over those found in the Arlington County Retail Plan.

Columbia Pike



Where an adopted plan identifies a park or open space at the back of the sidewalk, the retail street type on this map applies to the ground floor frontage located within or at the back of the park or open space.



Arlington Economic Development
1100 North Glebe Road, Suite 1500
Arlington, Virginia 22201
(703) 228-0808