



# 2

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION & URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION & URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

## 2A SUMMARY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR MCLEAN

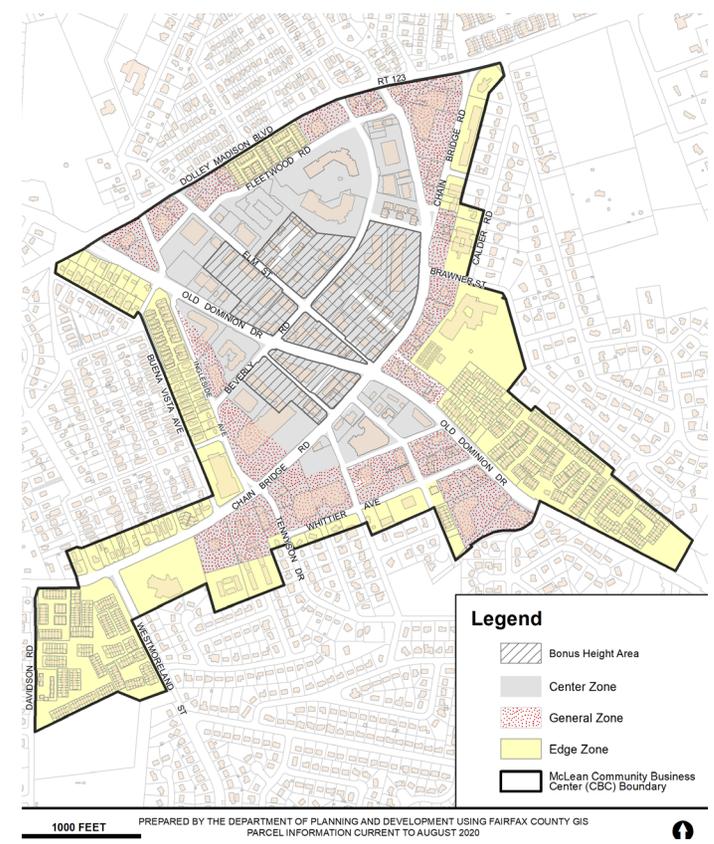
The vision for the McLean Community Business Center (CBC) as described in the Comprehensive Plan is to sustain and enhance the community-serving business area while encouraging quality mixed-use redevelopment that supports walkability, public infrastructure, open space, and parks. A diversity of land uses with inviting street level facades primarily in mid-rise buildings should be concentrated mostly towards the central portion of the CBC. The Plan organizes the area into three distinct zones including the Center, General, and Edge zones. These zones provide important building form and site design transitions from the center of the CBC to the surrounding neighborhoods. Each zone is envisioned to have different urban design characteristics employing a form-based approach to planning.

- Center Zone (including the Bonus Height Area):** The Center Zone is planned for the highest density of mixed use development within McLean. Developments are encouraged to provide community benefits such as the Signature Park, vibrant and lively streetscape complete with outdoor cafes, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, and amenities. Parking is predominately provided in structured garages with some "teaser" surface parking permitted.
- General Zone:** The General Zone includes many of the same elements envisioned for the Center Zone but with lower building heights to promote an appropriate transition into the Edge Zone. Parking may be provided in either structured garages or in adequately screened surface lots.
- Edge Zone:** The Edge Zone will exhibit much of the same character that presently exists. Developments should include streetscape elements to maintain consistency throughout the CBC by employing street trees, pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities. Parking is generally provided in surface lots.

The CBC is envisioned to be connected by a network of bicycle and pedestrian pathways linking McLean's various businesses, urban parks, points of interest, landmarks, and community amenities. The network should incorporate high-quality streetscapes and green infrastructure.

[Comprehensive Plan for the McLean CBC](#)

**FIGURE 2-1: McLEAN CBC ZONES**



## 2B URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT - NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGE

The urban design vision for McLean is for it to have a small town feel with a variety of human-scaled gathering spaces that foster social interaction and communal experiences. The diversity of local merchants continues to meet many of the daily shopping and service needs of area residents. Dining options help define McLean as a destination for area residents. Well-designed streetscapes and off-street pathways offer comfortable connections to these destinations as well as from the surrounding neighborhoods into McLean. McLean will showcase itself as a sustainable community with shade trees, green areas, and innovative environmental features. The history of McLean is embraced through the scale of blocks and the finer-grain texture of building fabric that contributes to the sense of community.



Comprehensive Plan Image: Vision for Old Dominion Drive



Comprehensive Plan Image: Conceptual rendering of the Signature Urban Park area



Comprehensive Plan Image: Vision along Elm Street

## URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGE

### TOP RIGHT

Human-scaled gathering spaces foster social interaction and communal experiences  
Image Credit: Fairfax County

### BOTTOM LEFT

Well designed streetscapes and pathways offer comfortable walking and cycling experiences  
Image Credit: Fairfax County

### BOTTOM RIGHT

A variety of block scales and finer-grain building fabric contribute to the sense of a Neighborhood Village  
Image Credit: Fairfax County

## URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

### 2C URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Figure 2.2 depicts the layers that comprise the Urban Design Framework of the Neighborhood Village concept. The Urban Design Framework includes the following elements: (see subsequent pages in this chapter).

**Note:** Figure 2-2 is an illustrative diagram to articulate the urban design elements which are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan but contains further articulation of the Plan's ideas. Slightly different terminology is used.

**FIGURE 2-2: MCLEAN URBAN FRAMEWORK PLAN**

**LEGEND**

- McLean Central Business Center
- Existing Open Space
- Places of Character (See Chapter 1D)
- Bonus Height Area
- Center Zone
- General Zone
- Edge Zone
- Building Frontage
- Old Dominion and Chain Bridge - "Green Avenues"
- Beverly and Elm "Main Streets"
- Future Pedestrian Mall
- Pedestrian Connections



## FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS



St. John's Episcopal Church, McLean, VA

Image Credit: VivaTysons

### 1. ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The character of the built environment of McLean has evolved naturally over time in relationship to the transportation systems that served the area. McLean is characterized by a central crossroads with an overlay of a grid of streets. This layout, along with the preponderance of local businesses over national chains and big-box retailers, fosters the small-town vibe and village feel. New developments should consider historical block patterns when designing their project. Projects should also incorporate historical elements such as the names of influential figures in McLean's past, vernacular building materials and styles, and public art and educational signage that convey community stories.



Washington, DC

Image Credit: AIA Washington DC

### 2. QUALITY BUILDING ARCHITECTURE AND MATERIALITY

McLean's communities desire excellence in building architecture, materials, and construction quality. Natural and authentic materials, such as masonry, are encouraged to reflect a high-quality and substantive built environment. New development should be designed to be context-sensitive but avoid sameness from building to building.

Architectural variety along the street front is important on long blocks to create greater visual interest. Street-facing building facades should consider employing strategies that modulate the architecture with demise lines, fenestration, or other patterns. Consider the pedestrian's experience of the first 2-3 floors of the building to contribute to a quality urban environment. Celebrated building entrances, highly transparent facades, overhangs that engage the streetscape, and materials that withstand regular cleanings are desirable aspects of ground floor building design.

### 3. TRANSITIONS.

Transitions in building height are incorporated into the form-based Comprehensive Plan to establish a tiered development pattern between development zones. Compatible transitions between adjacent zones should be considered, and may include the use of façade articulation, screening and buffering, material usage, and other treatments.

Separately, appropriate transitions should be considered in the case of the single consolidated project in the Bonus Height Area and are expected to be provided when properties abut the boundary of the CBC, including single-family residential uses. In such instances, appropriate transitions may include the use of building setbacks and step-backs, screening and buffering, and other techniques that achieve appropriate transitions.



### 4. ACTIVE BUILDING FRONTAGES ALONG KEY STREETS AND AT IMPORTANT NODES.

Encourage variety and human scale designs of building ground floors to contribute to a village feel. This is particularly important for buildings along Beverly Road and Elm Street. Use the 'Building Zone' to connect buildings to the public sidewalk creating opportunities for social interactions for all types of residential and commercial buildings. Encourage additional opportunities for outdoor dining and outdoor seating spaces.



### 5. ENVIRONMENTALLY-FOCUSED DESIGNS.

Streetscapes and public spaces should showcase and celebrate sustainable designs that increase the number of trees and green spaces. These "green corridors" are used to reduce rainwater runoff and heat island impacts. New development or building retrofits should also place an emphasis on green building and sustainable technologies.





Indianapolis, IN

Image Credit: Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association

## 6. SYSTEM OF SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS.

Trails and other connections between streets improve the pedestrian experience by linking various active uses/spaces such as restaurants and outdoor spaces. Such pathways should be characterized through their use of greenery, public art, distinctive paving and furnishings, wayfinding, and lighting.



Rockville, MD

Image Credit: RockvilleTownSquare.com

## 7. NETWORK OF PUBLIC SPACES LINKED TO A SIGNATURE URBAN PARK.

The Signature Urban Park should be accompanied by retail/restaurant uses nearby to generate day and nighttime activity. Ensure that there is a system linking the park with a network of green spaces and “nooks” to support pedestrian connectivity. Public spaces provided with developments should complement the open space system for the CBC.



Boston, MA

Image Credit: Copley Wolff Landscape Architecture

## 8. UNIFYING VISUAL ELEMENTS.

Employ public realm features that embody McLean’s character. This may include public art, wayfinding, low walls comprised of brick/stone, arcades that are integrated into building facades, and a distinctive sidewalk paving design.