

Public Spaces, Biophilia, and Landscaping in Site Plan Projects

A Presentation to the Parks and Recreation Commission

Matthew Pfeiffer, CPHD Planning Division
Marco Rivero, DPR, Park Planning Division

July 18, 2023



Presentation Agenda

1. Site Plans and Site Plan Conditions
2. Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) Process
3. Post-Approval Permitting Process
4. Processes for Public Space Planning

Focus of Presentation: Clarification of Terms and Processes



Site Plans

Legal Framework



Site Plans and Conditions

- **What are Site Plans?**

- The Code of Virginia enables localities to require special exception permits in order to implement *incentive zoning*. As such, the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) allows for development at a density and intensity above the “by-right” standards in order to implement County goals and objectives and provide additional flexibility above by-right standards on density, building form and placement, land use, parking, and other aspects of the development.

- **What are site plan drawings?**

- ACZO Sec. 15.5 requires applicants for special-exception site plans to submit applications compliant with Administrative Regulation 4.1. The major component is a requirement for civil engineering plans, architectural plans, conceptual landscape plans, and any other plan drawings or documents that describe the proposed development. These drawings, when approved by the County Board, are regulatory.

- **What are site plan conditions?**

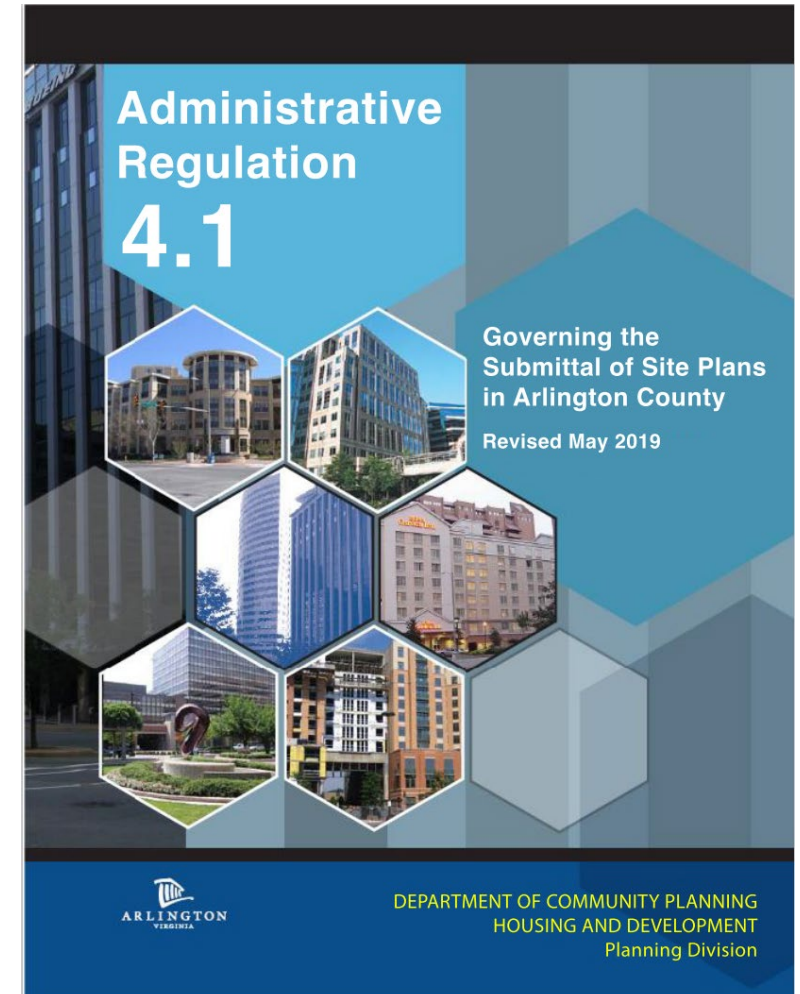
- Legal instruments that, along with the 4.1 Site Plan drawings, regulate land use, development statistics, features, amenities, mitigations, building and site operations, construction activities, and permitting processes. Site plan conditions are adopted as a component of the ordinance to approve a site plan and remain effective for the life of the site plan.

- **What are standard site plan conditions?**

- Standard site plan conditions serve as a starting point for site plan projects. Site plan conditions are molded and supplemented on a project-by-project basis to suit the needs of the site plan proposal, the community, and through negotiations with the developer.

Administrative Regulation 4.1

- Standards for submission of Conceptual Landscape Plan Drawings:
 - Streetscapes and on-site open spaces in relation to proposed above and below-grade structures and utilities, including proposed grading
 - Open space easement areas including labelling of sizes
 - Planting details, including specifications for major types of plants (e.g., evergreen trees, shrubs, groundcover, ornamentals, etc.)
 - Hardscape material specifications and street furnishings
 - Existing tree survey
- **Contemplated changes:**
 - **Biophilic design narrative**
 - **Draft plant palette**



Standard Condition #21 – Final Landscape Plan

- Requires compliance with approved Conceptual Landscape Plan drawings and applicable landscape standards
- Sets forth standards for information provided in plan submission
 - More specific information on site features coordinated with Final Civil Engineering Plan (CEP)
 - More specific information on location and species of plantings, specific hardscape materials and site furnishings
- Sets forth performance requirements for landscaping; ex: location of ventilation grates.
- Sets forth timing for delivery of landscaped elements

***Potential changes post-adoption of Forestry and Natural Resources Plan**

Site Plan Review Process



Site Plan Review Committee

- The Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) is a standing committee of the Planning Commission charged with facilitating the public review of special-exception site plan applications.
- SPRC rosters contain liaisons from Board-appointed commissions and committees, such as the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC), and the Climate Change, Environment, and Energy Commission (C2E2)
- Public Space, Landscaping, and Biophilic Design is a standard discussion item during SPRC Online Engagements and at SPRC meetings



Staff Review of Site Plans

- Staff reviews site plans for compliance with County codes and ordinances and conformance to adopted plans and policies
- Staff negotiates with applicants on a package of site plan features and amenities to earn additional density when requested, enabled by ACZO Sec. 15.5.9 and in conformance with applicable plan guidance
- County Manager recommendations on site plans must balance many competing policy priorities

Understanding
Arlington County's

Comprehensive Plan

The **Comprehensive Plan** guides coordinated development and sets high standards of public services and facilities in the County. It is a decision-making tool for the County Board, the Planning Commission and County Departments. The plan was established in 1960 and originally included five elements. Today, it includes these eleven elements:



Post-Approval Permitting



Permitting Process Following County Board Approval of a Site Plan



Post-Approval Plans

- Post-4.1 Plan
- Tree Protection Plan
- Civil Engineering Plan
- Maintenance of Traffic Plan
- **Final Landscape Plan**
- Façade Plan
- Others



Land and Building Permits

- Land Disturbing Activity Permit
- Demolition Permit
- Excavation, Sheet piling and Shoring Permit
- Footing to Grade Building Permit
- Final Building Permit



Certificates of Occupancy (CO)

- Shell & Core CO
- COs for Tenant Occupancy
- Master CO

Final Landscape Plan Review

Final Landscape Plans are reviewed by an interdepartmental team of staff for compliance/conformance to:

- The approved Conceptual Landscape Plan and the standards of Condition #21.
- The Arlington County Landscape Standards:
 - ACZO landscape standards
 - Standards for planting and preservation of trees
 - Recommended trees and invasive species list
 - Landscape and tree preservation plan checklists
- Best planning/urban design practice



Changes to Site Plans Post-Approval

■ Major Amendments


- Principle use or density changes more than five percent of the total floor area
- Building height changes by more than 12 feet
- Change in the site area used to calculate density
- Other criteria

■ Minor Amendments

- Changes to the site plan involving development statistics, conditions, or major changes to design elements that do not meet criteria for major amendment

■ Administrative Changes

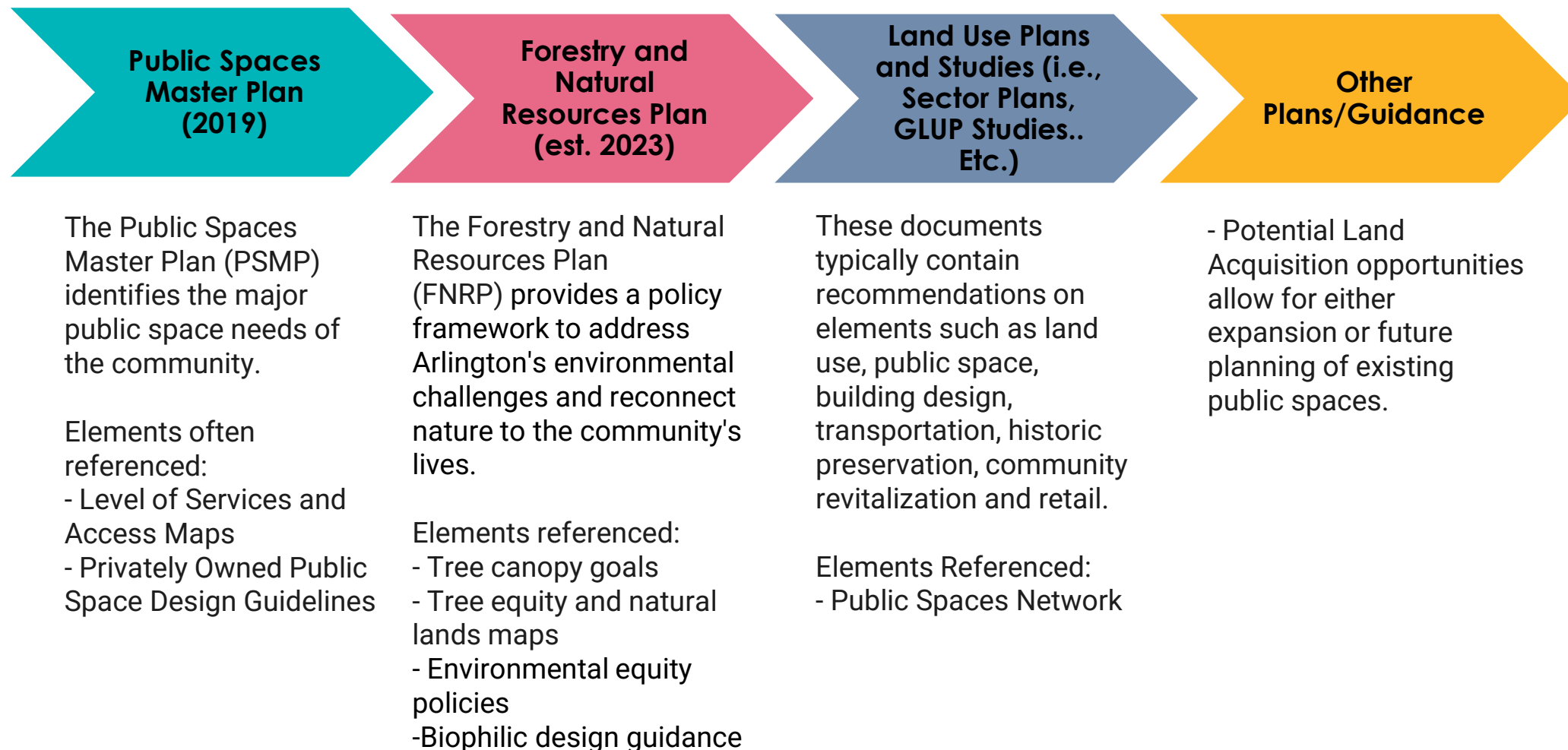
- No changes to density, height, parking
- Minor changes to design elements compliant “with the spirit of [the] zoning ordinance, the intent of the County Board in its approval of the site plan, and the general purpose of the Comprehensive Pan ...”

	Admin. Process	County Board Approval	SPRC, PC, CB Review
Admin. Change			
Minor Amendment			
Major Amendment			

Public Space Process in Site Plans

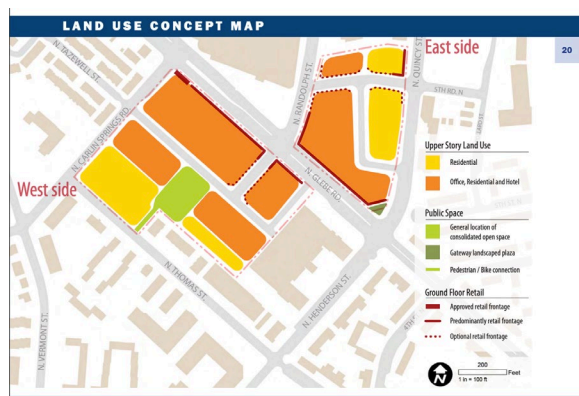


Comprehensive Planning Guidance



Public Spaces through Site Plans

- Site Plans are guided by Comprehensive Plans such as Sector Plans (i.e., Clarendon, Crystal City, Rosslyn, Pentagon City, etc.), Special General Land Use Plans (GLUP), and Area plans.
- If a site plan has a public space identified in the applicable comprehensive plans, then staff will work with the developer in coordinating the planning and design of that public space through community engagement. *(Some examples - Harris Teeter Public Space, Arlington Junction Park, Crystal City Water Park, and Met Park).*



North Quincy St. Plan Addendum (2013) - Harris Teeter Site – identified a future 0.5-acre Public Space. The Design Process went concurrently with SPRC process and Site Plan was approved in 2019.



Arlington Junction Park, Park Master Plan and Design Guidelines (2021) – New public space area identified post-adoption of the Crystal City Sector Plan (CCSP). Area was master planned post-site plan approval of the adjacent Altaire and Sage residential buildings. Park construction anticipated to commence in late 2023-early 2024.



Crystal City Sector Plan (2010) - Public Space Map, #4 is the Crystal City Waterpark and proposed improvements. Renovation are wrapping up and expected to be open late 2023.

Public Space Planning Process Steps

General Public Space Planning Timeline

- **Initial** – Develop concepts informed by applicable plans and policies.
- **1st Public Engagement** – Present concept(s) to the Community and Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) and/or Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) to solicit feedback. (If process is concurrent with SPRC - if requested applicant and staff will present at Civic Associations.)
- **Internally** – Revise concept(s) to develop 1 final design concept.
- **2nd Public Engagement** – Present revised concept(s) to Community, PRC and/or FNRC to solicit feedback.
- **Internally** – Revise final concept, finalize reports and any use permit associated (if applicable).
- **Final Step: present to PRC and/or other applicable Commissions** (if a public space is being designed concurrently through the SPRC process, then as part of the site plan project, staff will present to Planning Commission and other Commissions as well) before presenting to County Board for adoption.

**DPR Commissions: Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC).*

Thank you!

Questions?



Design Process Steps

Project Initiation

Programming & Site Selection:

- Program (*Site Plan directed, Developer led, Designer refined*)
- Site Selection (*identified within Redevelopment plans from Comprehensive/Sector/Feasibility Plans*)

Site Inventory

Identify Existing Site & Contextual Conditions and Attributes:

Physical, Biological and Cultural

Site Analysis

Program + Existing Conditions = Site Suitability (Constraints and Opportunities)

- Assess On site and Off-Site opportunities and constraints and influences

Conceptual and Schematic Design

- Major program elements and existing conditions
- Circulation
- Major uses /activity ones
- Several options leading to consolidated option
- Assess functionality, circulation, cost with each option/scheme

- Create sectional and elevation studies
- Precedent imagery

Design Development

Refine Concept and Revise:

- Refine 1 option or consolidate best elements from each into 1, from client and program feedback
- Finalize details of general design
- Site plan/Master plan
- Illustrative rendering

Project

- Construction Documentation/Drawings & Specifications
- Post Bid/Award/Build/Construction Administration

Post Project

- Analyzing Post Construction/Lessons Learned