ULI Washington
Land Use Leadership Institute
mini Technical Assistance Panel
Shirlington Crescent/Four-mile Run (Arlington County)
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Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Project Team:

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This mTAP was established to determine:

1. National examples of preserving service industrial or heavy commercial uses, and how these might apply to the study area.
2. Available zoning and land use tools that promote preservation or integration of uses for redevelopment and revitalization.
3. Whether the County should promote redevelopment, and what land uses would complement the existing service-oriented businesses.
4. What is “best” for this area vs. what is good for the region.

Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Study Area

Figure 5: Real Property Tax Map
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Current Planning Area Challenges – Technical

- Last significant contiguous area planned and zoned industrial in ARL
- Traditional industrial uses will continue to decline;
- County does not need industrial uses to perform successfully anymore;
- Changing conditions could result in unplanned and piecemeal development patterns;
- Steady deterioration and disinvestment has negative impact on residential and commercial areas nearby.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Current Planning Area Challenges – Community

• Industrial landscape uninviting to pedestrians and bicyclists
• Large amounts of asphalt; minimal to non-existent greenery other than the designated park areas
• Lack of streetscaping
• Area not integrated with surrounding neighborhoods
• Stream degradation from runoff, etc.
• Insufficient lighting
• Existing park areas not meaningfully connected
• Existing service – industrial uses back to stream and parkland detracting from recreational user experience
• Overall deterioration and divestment
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Current Planning Area Assets

• Large amounts of County-owned parkland
• Ample transportation capacity and transit options
• Existing hiker and biker trails
• Civic and Community Services (Shirlington, Barcroft, Fairlington)
• Connectivity to Shirlington Town Center
• Rich Cultural History and Places
  – AME Zion Church
  – Weenie Beanie
  – Jennie Dean Park
Planning Area Assets: Popular Opinion and Direct Feedback

• Shirlington Dog Park highest rated Arlington dog parks

• Commentary on recent press indicates desire for open space and recreational use…not necessarily “more Shirlington”; negative comments related to unregulated vehicle parking/storage and lack of upkeep and not to type of businesses operating.

• Concrete plant is heavily used, driving economy/jobs

• Existing municipal and not-for-profit occupants
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Studies by Other Jurisdictions

Is industrial land still important to local economy?

- Plays an expanding role from service, manufacturing and warehousing to light industrial, R&D facilities, back-room operations and start-up space.
- Supports more efficient goods movement and access to services for communities.
- Accommodates Production and Technical Employment (PTE) for lower-wage earners.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Examples from Other Jurisdictions

- **San Francisco Bay area**—seeks a sustainable model for industrial businesses and services while making room for commercial and residential infill in industrial areas, which requires a multi-jurisdictional approach.
- **Prince George’s**—Industrial businesses are a strong source of employment for County residents a vital part of local economy. About 2/3 of the industrial areas are healthy and not facing competition and the remaining requires further study.
- **Montgomery County**—market will drive out smaller independent users due to land costs; landowners and developers move toward flex uses more than industrial uses. Some favor an industrial reserve like the agricultural reserve.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area
Examples from Other Jurisdictions (cont.)

• **Baltimore**— rezoning to include four new zones recommended to strengthen industrial zoning categories and offer districts that better meet current development needs. Stricter standards for industrial sites near residential areas and high-visibility sites.

• **DC**—favors a market-driven approach. Proximity to clients and central location keep many from relocating elsewhere in spite of higher costs of locating in DC. Inertia (existing companies staying for lack of other options or reasons to relocate) is a factor. DC aims to maintain 100 acres of industrial property for municipal use and PTE opportunities for its residents.

• **Chicago**—created fifteen Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMD) since the mid-80’s which have since been studied and have shown increased job growth and economic stability.
Shirlington Crescent – Four Mile Run
Planning for a More Sustainable Future
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Recommendations:

**OPTION 1:** Preserve industrial uses by leaving existing zoning in place.

The 2000 study and subsequent indications from County Planning and County Economic Development indicate that some level of rezoning is desired, so this appears to be the least desirable option.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Recommendations:

**OPTION 2:** Apply liberal zoning, to allow market forces to determine use of space.

- *Traffic studies?*
- *Market viability?*
- *Community opposition?*
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Recommendations:

**OPTION 3:** Employ a hybrid approach, where existing park space can remain while allowing limited light industrial, mixed-use and residential development adjacent.

*It is the conclusion of this mini Technical Assistance Panel that Option 3 provides the best consistency with Arlington’s stated regional goals and the most harmonious integration of the neighborhood’s history with its ultimate potential.*
Proposed Zoning Map

AREA 1 (Green): “Central Park” will be fully developed through proffers. (Zoning: S-3A; S-D)

AREA 2 (Blue): Medium density, mixed-use residential/office above ground-floor retail. 8 stories (consider a step-back at the 5th or 6th floor to appease the residents across the street). (Zoning: C-O-1.5)

AREA 3 (Red): Low density (4 - 5 story) residential. (Zoning: R-15-30T)

AREA 4 (Yellow): Flex/industrial (DMV and Dominion substation sites are here today and are likely staying anyway.) (Zoning: C-M, M-1, M-2)
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Recommendations: OPTION 3 Rationale

1. Arlington County Industrial Land Use and Zoning Study predicts traditional industrial uses will continue to decline to the point of being insignificant; Industrial uses are not necessary today for the economic success of the County.

2. Transition from industrial zoning to low density residential and medium density mixed use development will enable the Shirlington Crescent – Four Mile Run area to be integrated with the existing surrounding neighborhoods and existing park assets, creating a livable, walkable area attractive to existing residents and to visitors.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Recommendations: OPTION 3 Rationale (cont.)

Land use recommendations supported by:

1. Arlington County Master Transportation Plan
2. Arlington County Public Spaces Master Plan
3. Arlington County Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan
4. Arlington County Public Art Master Plan
5. Current Plans for expansion of Jennie Dean Park
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Additional Recommendations: Enhanced Park Network and Amenities

- Stream restoration and enhancement
- Expansion of Jennie Dean Park
- Improvement and enhancement of lighting, park/trailside benches, and public art on the Four Mile Run Trail
- Continued progress toward master-planned visual and performing arts facility, possibly incorporating some of the properties leased to non-profit groups by the County.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Integrated park network creates attractive, cohesive, lively spaces attractive to all generations.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Sustainability in Action

• Greener, newer construction
• Asphalt reduction
• Increase green space
• Reduction in stormwater runoff
• Reduced dependence on auto – more walkable and bikeable
• Stream restoration
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area

Enablers for Redevelopment:

1. land swap opportunities between current industrial-zoned, Arlington County-owned properties and private property owners.
2. Public-private partnerships
3. TIF districts.
5. Capital investment by the County in public spaces and possibly site remediation.
Shirlington Crescent/Four-Mile Run Area
mini Technical Assistance Panel (mTAP)
Shirlington Crescent/Four-mile Run

Panelists:
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Background: The Study Area

The area in question is one of a few remaining areas in Arlington County with industrial businesses. It comprises 95 acres in southern Arlington, close to I-395, and adjacent:

- Open and recreational spaces to the south and west;
- Residential neighborhoods to the north;
- Service and commercial areas along S. Shirlington.

(Courtesy of Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development)

Figure 5: Real Property Tax Map

Buildings within the study area make up 815,749 sf. floor space, of which 85% is used for warehousing; 11% for office/commercial; and 3% for retail. The Industrial Land Use and Zoning Study of 2000 concluded that:

1. The study area is the last significant contiguous area planned and zoned industrial.
2. Traditional industrial uses will continue to decline.
3. County does not need industrial uses to perform successfully anymore.
4. Changing conditions could result in unplanned and piecemeal development patterns.
5. Steady deterioration and disinvestment has negative impact on residential and commercial areas nearby.

The Council of Governments’ Regional Goal is the, “Enhancement of established neighborhoods of differing densities with compact, walkable infill development, rehabilitation and retention of historic sites and districts, and preservation of open space, farmland and environmental resource land in rural areas.

Industrial land is important to communities for:
- Playing an expanding role from service, manufacturing and warehousing to light industrial, R&D facilities, back-room operations and start-up space.
- Supporting more efficient goods movement and access to services for communities.
- Accommodating Production and Technical Employment (PTE) for lower-wage earners.

This mTAP was established to determine:
1. National examples of preserving service industrial or heavy commercial uses, and how these might apply to the study area.
2. Available zoning and land use tools that promote preservation or integration of uses for redevelopment and revitalization.
3. Whether the County should promote redevelopment, and what land uses would complement the existing service-oriented businesses.
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**Industrial Studies by Other Jurisdictions**
The following jurisdictions have commissioned studies of industrial areas:

- In the San Francisco Bay area, urban planners sought a sustainable model for industrial businesses and services, while making room for commercial and residential infill in industrial areas. This required a multi-jurisdictional approach.
- In Prince George’s County, MD, industrial businesses are a strong source of employment for County residents and a vital part of the local economy. About two thirds of the industrial areas in Prince George’s are healthy and are not facing pressure from encroaching economic development; the remaining one third requires further study.
- Montgomery County, MD had found that the market will drive out smaller independent users due to land costs there; landowners and developers move toward flex uses more than industrial uses. Some within the county favor an industrial reserve like the agricultural reserve.
- The City of Baltimore expended its number of industrial zoning categories and now offers districts that better meet current development needs. Stricter standards for
industrial sites near residential areas are in effect, and high-visibility sites still accommodate industrial uses but mandate a mix of other uses as well.

- The **District of Columbia** favors a market-driven approach. Proximity to clients and central location keep many from relocating elsewhere, in spite of higher costs in D.C. Inertia (existing companies staying for lack of other options or reasons to relocate) is also a factor. D.C. has committed to actively preserving 100 acres of industrial property for municipal use and PTE opportunities for its residents. The shortage of industrial land in the District is exacerbated by the fact that large portions of its existing industrial land is rendered unusable by conditions such as rail right-of-way and federal claims.

- The **City of Chicago** created fifteen Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMD) since the mid-1980’s. These have since been studied and have shown increased job growth and economic stability. Chicago has the oldest and debatably the most successful program of industrial land preservation.

**Lessons Learned from Other Jurisdictions**

While other cities (DC, Baltimore, Chicago, etc.) seek to aggressively preserve industrial property, we did not find such will here from the County, necessarily. Specifically:

- No port, rail or road infrastructure to make heavy industrial use attractive; in fact, the study area is rather difficult to access (Four Mile Run is not a navigable waterway, except for dogs).

- Industrial services can be sourced from adjacent jurisdictions, to some extent, except that those jurisdictions will have some of the same development pressures as the study area might have.

A common theme among other jurisdictions studying the issue of preserving industrial land use is the need for more specifically defined/limited zones to achieve a more harmonious mix of uses. This strategy could work well in the study area considering the following factors:

- Shirlington Dog Park is the highest rated of the five Arlington dog parks listed on Yelp (dogs’ appreciation of stream to play in cited often).

- Commentary on recent press indicates desire for open space and recreational use...not necessarily “more Shirlington”; negative comments are mostly related to unregulated vehicle parking/storage along Four Mile Run Drive and to lack of upkeep on properties, and not to type of businesses operating.

- The concrete plant is run by Vulcan Materials (a division of Virginia Concrete), which has several plants around the region. This plant serves customer locations in DC, Arlington and Alexandria; since concrete is a perishable product, it is needed to maintain the current volume and level of service being provided by Virginia Concrete. The plant is unlikely to choose relocation even in the face of significant pressure from buyers.
• Arlington County has indicated that some not-for-profits operating out of the existing County buildings must be left in place to serve the community

It would seem that the conditions found in the study area most closely mirror those in parts of Montgomery County. Currently, Montgomery County’s industrial properties face increasing pressure from urban infill development; public opinion is divided, and the current County Planners are in the preservation camp as it relates to industrial space.

It is also worth noting that the City of Alexandria has recently undergone a rezoning of a waterfront area of comparable size to the study area, despite vocal public opposition and an ongoing eminent domain dispute. It seems that the public opposition to the plan is based not on a desire to preserve the existing industrial uses on the land in question, but to avoid traffic congestion and additional density; it is worth noting that such concerns from the surrounding community (density and its perceived human consequences, traffic congestion, etc.) might be present here as well.

Recommendations: Three Options for the Four-Mile Run Study Area

OPTION 1: Preserve industrial uses by leaving existing zoning in place. The 2000 study and subsequent indications from County Planning and County Economic Development indicate that some level of rezoning is desired, so this appears to be the least desirable option.

OPTION 2: Apply liberal zoning, to allow market forces to determine use of space. It is questionable whether traffic studies and public opinion would support this option based on our observations and experiences in nearby jurisdictions. Some limitation seems prudent to preserve some open space and meet CoG’s regional goal of “…rehabilitation and retention of historic sites and districts, and preservation of open space…”.

OPTION 3: Employ a hybrid approach, where existing park space can remain while allowing limited light industrial, mixed-use and residential development adjacent. It is the conclusion of this mini Technical Assistance Panel that Option 3 provides the best consistency with Arlington’s stated regional goals and the most harmonious integration of the neighborhood’s history with its ultimate potential.
AREA 1 (Green): “Central Park” will be fully developed through proffers. (Zoning: S-3A; S-D)

AREA 2 (Blue): Medium density, mixed-use residential/office above ground-floor retail. 8 stories (consider a step-back at the 5th or 6th floor to appease the residents across the street). (Zoning: C-O-1.5)

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Rationale for and Benefits of Proposed Zoning
Arlington County Industrial Land Use and Zoning Study predicts traditional industrial uses will continue to decline to the point of being insignificant. Since industrial uses are not necessary today for the economic success of the County, transition from industrial zoning to low density residential and medium density mixed use development will enable the Shirlington Crescent – Four Mile Run area to be integrated with the existing surrounding neighborhoods and existing park assets. Ultimately, the proposed zoning creates a livable, walkable area attractive to existing residents and to visitors.
These land use recommendations are supported by:

- Arlington County Master Transportation Plan
- Arlington County Public Spaces Master Plan
- Arlington County Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan
- Arlington County Public Art Master Plan
- Current Plans for expansion of Jennie Dean Park

Community benefits of the proposed zoning include:

- Stream restoration and enhancement via additional landscaping.
- Expansion of Jennie Dean Park with new park amenities, such as a splash park, new playground, public art, new pavilions, new ball fields, an amphitheater for public concerts, a community garden and/or recreational amenities.
- Improvement and enhancement to lighting, park/trailside benches, and public art on the Four Mile Run Trail and throughout the overall park network.

Lastly, Arlington County can advance its sustainability goals through this rezoning, which will promote:

- Greener, newer construction.
- Asphalt reduction.
- Increased green space.
- Reduced stormwater runoff.
- Reduced dependence on automobiles for more walkable and bikeable space.
- Stream restoration and environmental remediation across the study area.

Design guidelines are needed for physical compatibility to match building types and create context for the new neighborhood. New residential and mixed use development should be oriented toward the northern portion of Four Mile Run in order to create one unified space in the Shirlington Crescent – Four Mile Run Area. This will enhance streetscaping on south side of Four Mile Run Drive, including a green buffer between the sidewalk and the street. The proposed plan encourages “pocket parks” and green alleys separating new redevelopment, creating connections between surrounding neighborhoods (like the Nauck District) with the Four Mile Run park network and recreational amenities.

To accomplish the proposed land use, the County may explore land swap opportunities between current industrial-zoned, Arlington County-owned properties and private property owners. Such opportunities could include a plan for the master-planned visual and performing arts facility, possibly incorporating some of the properties leased to non-profit groups by the County. Public-private partnerships and TIF districts could be established to promote the proposed redevelopment, in concert with financial incentives and/or capital investments.
In conclusion, we believe our proposed zoning is consistent with the Council of Governments regional planning goal to, “[enhance]...established neighborhoods of differing densities with compact, walkable infill development, rehabilitation and retention of historic sites and districts, and preservation of open space, farmland and environmental resource land in rural areas.”
RESOURCES


City of Baltimore, Maryland. Industrial Land Use Analysis. 23 Nov. 2003


RESOURCES (Cont.)


Stanley, Rollin. “Do we have room to grow?” Weblog post. The Director’s Blog. 1 Sep. 2011 http://montgomeryplanning.org/blog-director/?p=814


