



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

# Vienna: The Historical Town at the Heart of the Washington & Old Dominion Trail

**TOWN OF VIENNA, VIRGINIA**

SPONSORED BY:  
Town of Vienna, Virginia  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

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 **Urban Land  
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# Executive Summary

The Town of Vienna is located in the northeastern portion of Fairfax County and is approximately 14 miles from Washington, DC. In 2015 the Town of Vienna updated its Comprehensive Plan, and as part of the update, the Town set goals for creating/updating master plans for the Town's parks, including the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad Regional Park.

The W&OD Park is a linear trail that runs from Shirlington in Arlington County, Virginia to Purcellville in Loudoun County, Virginia. The Park is approximately 45 miles long, and approximately two miles of the Park trail runs through the heart of Vienna. In developing a plan for the Park, the Town is focusing on the following issues: 1) opportunities for physical improvements, 2) constraints to making improvements, 3) use of the Park to promote economic development, and 4) parking as it relates to the trail and the industrial uses adjacent to the trail.

The objective of this TAP is to obtain recommendations prior to a full master plan of the Park to identify physical opportunities and constraints for the Town.

During the course of the one and one-half day TAP, the Panel developed a vision of Vienna as a historic trail town at the heart of the Washington & Old

The W&OD Trail is a 45-mile long multiuse trail that includes a two-mile section running through the heart of Vienna. Source: ULI Washington.



Dominion Railroad Regional Park and trail and used this vision as a driver for the Panel's recommendations.

**The Panel affirms and embraces the Town of Vienna's intent to integrate the Trail into the strategic planning and development of the community.**

The Panel affirmed that this is a highly localized opportunity to promote alternative forms of transportation that represents a nation-wide trend towards diversifying mobility options in pursuit of creating high-quality livable communities. In the case of the W&OD Trail, these transportation elements represent a historic transportation legacy which can be reinterpreted in a contemporary manner that enhances the lives of all members of the Vienna community.

The Panel acknowledged that the Town of Vienna is well positioned to enhance and further develop key sites around the trail, including multifamily residential and retail development opportunities, but such improvements will require overcoming planning, parking, and a variety of other constraints, including 1) an inadequate urban design framework for the trail and/or properties along the trail, 2) uses along the trail that are not the highest and best uses for their sites, and 3) height limitations that make it unlikely the Town will achieve desirable mixed-use development involving residential over retail development, as the basic development economics of creating a building with a retail podium level on the first level would require at least four levels of wood-frame residential above, which would exceed the height limits in the Town. Safety, access, and parking are all important issues that should be addressed in improving trail design and trail integration with the town as well.

Panelists also recommended that the town develop a specific area plan for the several blocks surrounding the trail area between Locust Street and Ayr Hill Avenue, including the addition of multifamily and/or mixed-use development, with ground floor retail and office/multifamily residential above, with up to five floors of residential. The addition of these uses could enliven and activate the area, and bring more retail and restaurant businesses to the Town center, strengthening the sense of place for the heart of the Town.

Two key recommendations regarding implementation are as follows: 1) the Town should join the NOVA Parks board as a recognized municipal member, rather than relying on Fairfax County to represent its interests, and 2) search for a variety of funding sources (federal, state, foundation, private and NOVA Parks) to finance many of the improvements mentioned above.

The recommended improvements outlined in this report, especially those relating to the Town center area, will strengthen the character of the Town and reinforce its sense of place as a distinct and unique community within northern Virginia. These improvements will also strengthen the trail as whole, better defining Vienna as a central place and destination at the heart of the trail.

# Background and Scope

In 2015 the Town of Vienna (to be referred to as the “Town”) updated its Comprehensive Plan. As part of the update, the Town set goals for creating/ updating master plans for the Town’s parks, including the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park (to be referred to as the “Park”). The Town invited the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to provide advice and assistance with foundational work for a future master plan of the Park, by identifying physical opportunities and constraints along the roughly two mile stretch of the Park located within the Town.

## STUDY AREA LOCATION

The Town of Vienna is located in the northeastern portion of Fairfax County and is approximately 14 miles from Washington, DC. It is connected to the surrounding Northern Virginia and Washington, DC area by highways and arterial roads, public transit and pedestrian and bike trails.

The Vienna Metrorail Station, an endpoint on the Orange Line, is located less than half a mile outside of the southern portion of the Town boundary. The Greensboro Metrorail Station, a stop on the recently completed Silver Line, is located one half mile from the northern tip of the Town. In addition there are multiple bus lines, from both WMATA and the Fairfax Connector, that run throughout the Town.

Vienna is also located nine miles away from Dulles International Airport and around 11 miles from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

The Park is located between Shirlington in Arlington County, Virginia and Purcellville in Loudoun County, Virginia. The whole Park is approximately 45 miles long and serves bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, and equestrians. The width of the Park is 100 feet. The portion that runs through Vienna is approximately two miles long. The Park connects Vienna to nearby cities and neighborhoods, including the City of Falls Church (approximately 30 minutes away by bicycle) and Reston Town Center (approximately 35 minutes away by bicycle).



## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As part of the 2015 Update to the Comprehensive Plan, the Town established the goal of creating master plans for all of the Town's parks. This includes the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park, which runs through the Town and intersects with the Town Green and the Church Street and Maple Avenue Commercial Corridors, and is owned and operated by NOVA Parks. The objective of this TAP is to obtain recommendations prior to a full master plan of the Park to identify physical opportunities and constraints for the Town.

The Park enjoys high volumes of bicyclists and pedestrians and connects the Town to other towns and cities throughout Northern Virginia. The Comprehensive Plan states the following in regards to the Park (also referred to as the W&OD trail):

“The trail is an asset to the Town in terms of its popularity and ridership and its connection to other parts of Fairfax County. The Town should support further improvements of the trail and remain an active partner with NOVA Parks.”

The Town believes that there is significant potential for enhancing the Park throughout the portion that runs through Vienna. There may be opportunities for public art, recreational facilities, and a way to better connect the trail to Vienna's commercial corridors.

However, there are some constraints, which include the fact that Vienna is not the owner of the Park and the Park is located around various land uses (including residential, industrial, office parks, commercial, and park and recreational) and therefore has stakeholders with varying interests.

The Panel was asked to address the following questions:

1. Generally, what are the opportunities for physical improvements and what are constraints for the portion of the Park that is located in the Town of Vienna? How can the Park be used more as a linear park versus just a trail?
2. How can these opportunities be fully realized? How should identified constraints be dealt with?
3. How can the Town use the Park as a way to promote economic development and still be in line with the goals and objectives of the owner and operator of the Park, NOVA Parks?
4. Part of the Park is currently being used by surrounding industrial businesses for parking. Is there a way for the areas being used for parking to be reclaimed for Park use without negatively impacting the businesses who rely on the parking?



Vienna and the trail in context.  
Image source: ULI Washington.



The Panel during a tour of the Town, including the Freeman Store.  
Image source: Schwanke.

# Overview

Public spaces are an important part of economic development strategies for communities, and ULI welcome the opportunity to advise the Town of Vienna regarding how the W&OD Railroad Regional Park can be improved to benefit both the Park and the Town. Following tours and interviews with numerous community leaders and residents, the Panel began by developing a vision statement – and outlining some constraints – regarding the Town, to help guide the recommendations.

## VISION STATEMENT

The ULI Panel developed a vision of Vienna as a way to drive its recommendations. Vienna is a trail town – a historic town at the heart of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park and trail. This multi-use rail-to-trail serves as a central green spine to support the citizens of Vienna (and bicyclists from across Northern Virginia) to visit the Vienna town center in order to live, work, play and learn in a healthy, sustainable and environmentally-friendly way. Personal safety and respect for our community are at the center this vision.

## CONSTRAINTS

While the trail is a wonderful asset, it could be even better, but there are several constraints to achieving any of the suggested improvements that the Panel recommends in this report. These constraints include the following:

- The trail is owned and maintained by NOVA Parks, and any changes or improvements on Park land must be undertaken in cooperation with this entity. NOVA Parks also has developed guidelines and use restrictions that must be adhered to when improvements are being considered.
- Dominion Energy has easement rights for the power lines that run through the Park, and these easement rights restrict the height of trees and other features of the trail that could impact the power lines.

- Numerous legacy users have parking leases on the trail park land. Parking is not an ideal use for this land, but the businesses are valuable to the community and the parking is necessary for successful operation of these businesses. Any decision regarding changes to these parking leases must be carefully considered and evaluated in terms of the impact on these businesses.
- Maple Avenue, which crosses the trail at the heart of Vienna, is a state road controlled by VDOT. Any changes to the intersection of the trail and Maple will need to be coordinated with VDOT.
- There is scarce dedicated funding and limited funding in general for making changes or improvements to the trail within the town of Vienna.

## EXAMPLES AND PRECEDENTS

Bicycling is enjoying a renaissance in the U.S. and around the world, and walkability is the preferred goal of most new urban design schemes. As a result, there are now many fine resources and examples of urban design and planning strategies that incorporate both bicycle and pedestrian-friendly designs. Examples for the Town to consider include the following:

- The ULI book *Active Transportation and Real Estate*, which focuses on bicycling and trails as they relate to real estate. <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Active-Transportation-and-Real-Estate-The-Next-Frontier.pdf>
- The book *Urban Green: Innovative Parks for Resurgent Cities*. <https://islandpress.org/book/urban-green>
- The Trail Town Program® in Maryland and Pennsylvania. <https://www.trailtowns.org/>
- The Rails to Trails Conservancy. <https://www.railstotrails.org/>
- The East Coast Greenway. <https://www.greenway.org/>
- The North Country Trail Association. <https://northcountrytrail.org/>
- Trail Town Titusville. <http://www.titusvillepatrailtown.com/>
- The Erie Canalway. <https://eriecanalway.org/>
- Copenhagen, where a regional trail system and bike network connects rural and suburban communities to urban centers. <http://www.urbantrailseries.dk/en/>
- Portland, Oregon, where regional bike trails have been integrated into community centers and active urban spaces. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/39402>



Several of the Panelists toured the trail on bikes, in the rain. Town staff and ULI Washington greatly appreciate their commitment!  
Image source: Schwanke.

- Indianapolis, Indiana, which has integrated bike trails with art, transit, and community festivals. <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DPR/Greenways/Pages/home.aspx>
- Frederick, Maryland, where a trail has been used to enhance the central civic space of the community. <https://frederickcountymd.gov/3090/Bicycle-Pedestrian-Planning>



The Panel during interviews with Town of Vienna citizens at the Caboose Brewery. Image source: ULI Washington.

# Community Development

The Town of Vienna is well positioned to enhance and further develop key sites around the trail, including multifamily residential and retail development opportunities, but such improvements will require overcoming planning, zoning, parking, and other constraints.

## VIENNA IN CONTEXT

Panelists identified several unique positive attributes of the Town, including:

- Vienna is well-positioned within a growing and dynamic region where quality of life is a key local and community concern;
- Vienna is one of the most educated and wellness-oriented communities in the country, where people embrace sustainable lifestyles;
- Vienna enjoys a unique and proud history which has directly shaped the quality of the civic center of the community;
- The Town has cultivated a civic life which has a clear community-orientation (parades, festivals, schools);
- Vienna is led by a town government which takes local and community challenges very seriously, by being independent and responsive to community concerns;
- The Town has invested in planning, including a comprehensive plan and zoning, with a special Maple Avenue Commercial (MAC) Ordinance;
- Vienna is a town of many small parcels and independent small property owners, with a history of small-scale development activities;
- The Town enjoys important locational attributes including a location midway between downtown Washington and Dulles Airport, adjacency to



Vienna enjoys a unique and proud history which has directly shaped the quality of the civic center of the community.  
Source: Schwanke.



An industrial zone definition for the Town is de facto a non-residential zone that includes many retail and other uses.  
Source: Schwanke.

Tyson's Corner, and access to both the silver and orange metro lines, with new investments being catalyzed nearby due to the new silver line (including regional traffic impacts);

- The Town enjoys a very strong residential market in a community that is broadly recognized as a safe place to raise a family, with highly ranked public schools.

## CHALLENGES

In addition to these positive attributes, the town faces some challenges with regard to improving the trail and areas surrounding the trail, including the following:

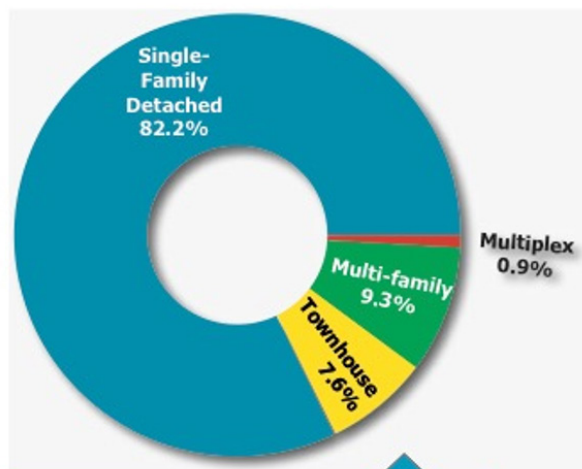
- There is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage strategy;
- Planning for historic assets along the Church Street commercial corridor is somewhat deficient;
- There is an inadequate urban design framework for the trail and/or properties along the trail (both public and private);
- The grandfathering mechanisms for nonconforming parking uses along the trail is not ideal for the town and should be looked at very carefully. These parking issues and constraints “trap” existing grandfathered uses;
- There are uses along the trail that are not the highest and best uses for their sites;
- There are many small parcels around the trail that create assemblage challenges if redevelopment is desired;
- An industrial zone definition exists for the Town that is de facto a non-residential zone that includes many retail and other uses;
- The Town includes many stakeholders with diverging interests;
- Height limitations (45’ in Industrial zone; 54’ in MAC zone) make it unlikely the Town will achieve desirable mixed-use development involving residential over retail development, as the basic development economics of creating a building with a retail podium level on the first level would require at least four levels of wood-frame residential above, which would exceed the height limits in the Town. Thus, the market for mixed-use development will not respond to current policies.
- The public land devoted to the Northside property yard seems inappropriate for this location, and this land could be better utilized if the yard were moved elsewhere.

## RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY

The area along the trail at the center of Vienna does offer significant town-home and multifamily residential development opportunities if the town chose to pursue higher density development in this area. Such development could provide the following benefits to the Town:

- Provide a greater variety of housing stock, including multifamily housing for first-time homebuyers and renters as well as for empty-nesters and older citizens looking to downsize or age in place within the Town. Much of the existing housing stock was built many years ago, and introducing new housing stock to the community would help to modernize and broaden the Town's housing offering;
- Address local and regional housing affordability challenges by providing more rental housing and smaller housing units that can be more affordable;
- Provide a more pedestrian-friendly environment, as housing in higher density places allows for more walkable, vibrant streets, with more active walking and biking lifestyles. Such density can improve sense of place for the Town, adding energy and increasing the number of people walking to stores and restaurants;
- Provide for a larger amenity base, as new residents can support more activity in the town center, including more retail, restaurant, civic and recreational amenities.

New residential development could include a diversified stock of housing, including town homes, rental apartments, condos, and senior housing.



**Breakdown of Residential Units in Vienna**

Source: Demographic Report 2013, County of Fairfax, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

\*Source: Town of Vienna 2015 Comprehensive Plan



There are numerous sites at the heart of Vienna that offer significant multifamily residential and/or mixed-use development opportunities if the town chose to pursue higher density development in this area.

Source: Schwanke.

Breakdown of Residential Units in Vienna.

Source: Town of Vienna 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

# Culture and Recreation

The W&OD Trail is a wonderful linear park that is treasured by northern Virginia bikers, joggers, walkers, and roller bladers. Vienna in many ways is the heart of the trail. Bikers who begin their ride near the Shirlington area of Arlington will pass through many wonderful natural and residential landscapes in Arlington, Falls Church, and Fairfax County, but they will not come to the center of a town or a location at the very heart of a community until they reach Vienna, where the trail arrives at the historic center of the Town, crossing the two main arteries of Vienna—Maple Avenue and Church Street—and passing by the Town Green and the historic Freeman Store and railroad station buildings.

Vienna is in a central location on the trail within the metro area, provides excellent riding in either direction for many miles, and offers a strong sense of place along the trail. Vienna should recognize its unique position and identity as it relates to the trail, and use this position to seek enhancements to both the town center and the trail within the town. There are several steps the town can take to improve the value and usefulness of the trail within the town.



The red caboose is one of many attractions at the center of the Town.  
Source: Schwanke.



## CREATE MORE PLACES AND CONNECTIONS

The Panel recommends that the Town seek to create more places and better connections along the trail, to make the trail more user friendly for residents and visitors alike. These efforts could involve the following:

- Improve access from surrounding streets and neighborhoods, including cul-de-sacs;
- Add “places” and features along the trail;
- Improve connections to the Northside Park and Wildwood Park via signage and maps that could better communicate what is in these parks;
- Create better connections to the Town Green and Freeman Store, with reduced visual separation from the trail.

## IMPROVE RECREATIONAL OFFERINGS

The town should consider working with the W&OD Park to add a variety of additional recreational offerings along the trail. These offerings could include:

- Play pods for children;
- Exercise stations for joggers and walkers to use along the way;
- Game areas, such as bocce ball, horse shoes, and other game and/or recreation facilities;
- Mountain biking trails around the edges of the city owned yard facility adjacent to the trail (and to Northside Park) at the northwestern section of the trail within the Town;
- Improved bluestone areas along the edge of the trail, which are inconsistently maintained. These areas should be adequately maintained and/or even expanded to allow joggers to use these areas, thus in essence expanding the width of the trail and creating separation between bikers and joggers.

## CREATE/ENHANCE WILDLIFE HABITATS ALONG THE TRAIL

During interviews with Town citizens, the Panel learned that a bee hive was being considered for the roof of the new community center. The trail could highlight this fact and provide additional bee habitats or, at the very least, habitat information along the trail to educate users about the role of bees in the natural and agricultural worlds.

Additional habitats—including birdhouses and bat habitats—could be added to parts of the trail with minimal efforts. Plants and or bird feeders that attract colorful birds such as Goldfinch, Cardinals, Woodpeckers, and other interesting



The historic rail station and the Freeman Store at the heart of Vienna are two of the more distinctive and historic places on the 45-mile trail.  
Source: Schwanke.



Bluestone areas along the edge of the trail should be maintained and expanded to allow joggers to use these areas.  
Source: Schwanke.



The trail has been widened near the new community center.  
Source: Schwanke.



Evergreen trees could be added in strategic locations to screen the trail from the parking and industrial areas.  
Source: Schwanke.

birds would increase the likelihood that trail users might encounter these creatures as they use the trail.

The portion of the trail just beyond Vienna's border to the northwest is full of the sound of frogs in the spring. Creating habitats for frogs within the town portion of the trail should also be considered. The town should also evaluate the possibility of restoring the underground stream — running west from Church Street — to a more natural state, which could expand the ecosystem of the trail by serving as a habitat for new wildlife.

## ADD APPROPRIATE TREES AND LANDSCAPING IN KEY LOCATIONS

Community residents interviewed by the Panel noted that the trail could be improved by adding more shade trees in key locations. While Dominion Energy does have easements along the trail that restrict the height of trees, there are opportunities for planting appropriate trees in some locations that would allow for more shade.

In addition, evergreen trees could also be added in strategic locations, especially to the north and west of Ayr Hill Avenue, to screen the trail from the parking and industrial areas along this section.

## ADD WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

Trail users that arrive at Maple Avenue, Church Street, or Ayr Hill Avenue will find interesting buildings and places to explore, including the Freeman Store, the Town Green, the train station, and the caboose, all of which are directly adjacent to the trail. With the addition of signage, trail users may also be drawn to other amenities and businesses nearby that are not strictly on the trail.

Wayfinding signage can be used to improve access and sense of place by advertising amenities in the Town near the trail, which could in turn boost the economy of the town center areas. While signage on the trail itself will require Park approval, there are areas near sidewalks and street crossings and in parks where the town could place signage on town property. Signs could have maps on one side and stories on the other. This signage should highlight features such as:

- Map of the town
- Parks
- Cultural landmarks
- Town history
- Vienna town branding
- Trailheads

- Bike racks
- Parking
- Restaurants, coffee shops, bake shops, ice cream shops, and other food services
- Bike shops
- Interesting retail that bikers and walkers may find of interest

## PUBLIC ART

The trail can also serve as a showcase area for public art, to promote the history and culture of Vienna and the W&OD trail. The mural across from the train station is an excellent example of public art. Additional art can be created via the following:

- Artistic Benches
- Sculptures
- Interpretive kiosks or murals

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In improving cultural and recreational offerings along the trail, community engagement can be very important, both in garnering support for the trail and in maintaining the trail in a cost-effective manner. Community engagement efforts could involve any or all of the following:

- Leverage partnerships with FOWOD, garden clubs, schools, Historic Vienna, and other community organizations
- Promote youth trail engagement with schools, scout troops, and youth groups
- Connect the community center to the trail with programming that starts on the trail
- Develop history walks with Historic Vienna
- Encourage garden club plantings and educational events
- Hold trail clean-up days
- Develop special events, such as “Senior Strut” walks



One of several historical signs along the trail in the Town.  
Source: Schwanke.



An example of how a bench can become a work of art.  
Source: Bench:<http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/streetscape-elements/street-furniture-overview/public-art/>.



The railroad mural at the heart of Vienna is a great example of how art can reinforce place.  
Source: Schwanke.

# Trail Design, Access, Parking, and Safety

Safety, access, and parking are all important issues that should be addressed in improving trail design and trail integration with the town.



Signage that emphasizes the multiuse nature of the trail can improve safety.

Source: [http://www.safetrailscoalition.org/?page\\_id=77](http://www.safetrailscoalition.org/?page_id=77).

## IMPROVE SAFETY FOR TRAIL USERS

Safety was a major topic of concern during the Panel's interviews with town residents. Problems that were highlighted included aggressive bikers, bike/pedestrian conflicts, joggers with limited hearing due to headphones, and dangerous street crossings. Several solutions to improve trail safety that should be explored—and that are discussed in greater detail later in this report—include the following:

- Slow traffic through signage and design cues;
- Separate bike and walking lanes;
- Improve crossings at Maple Ave., Church St., and Ayr Hill Ave.;
- Simplify signage to promote safe trail usage;
- Install fixed lighting.

In addition, to promote future safety, the town should consider designating or adding bike riding practice areas to the community center near the trail, to promote trail riding safety among beginning riders, riders who often do not know the rules of the road like adults.

As part of its analysis of access and parking, the Panel made several recommendations for improvements at key intersections.

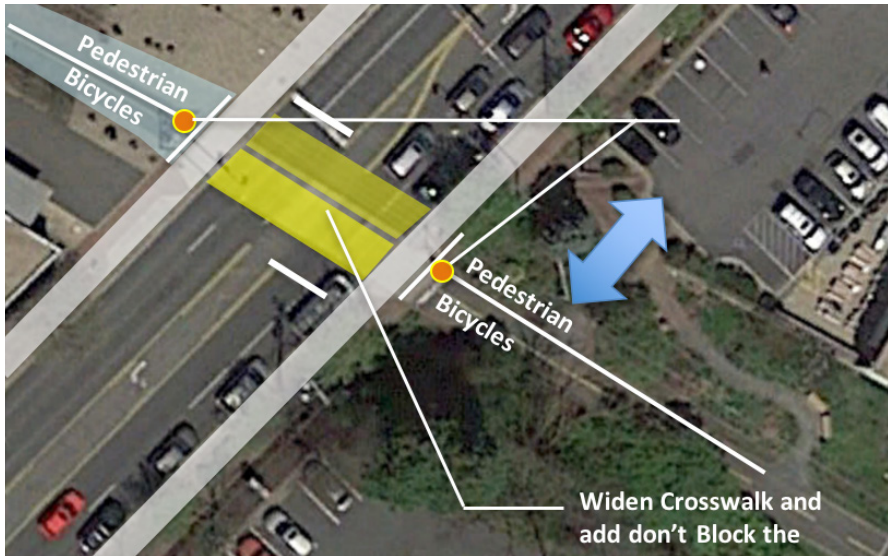
## MAPLE AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

- Widen the trail area near the intersection to provide a safer and more comfortable waiting area for trail users;



Better lighting can improve safety at night. An interesting example can be found in Poland, where paving material is synthetic, solar-powered, and stays lit for ten hours overnight.

Source: <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/polands-solar-powered-bike-path-glows-bright-blue-night>.



An aerial view of the intersection of Maple Avenue and the W&OD Trail, with proposed improvements. Source: ULI Washington.

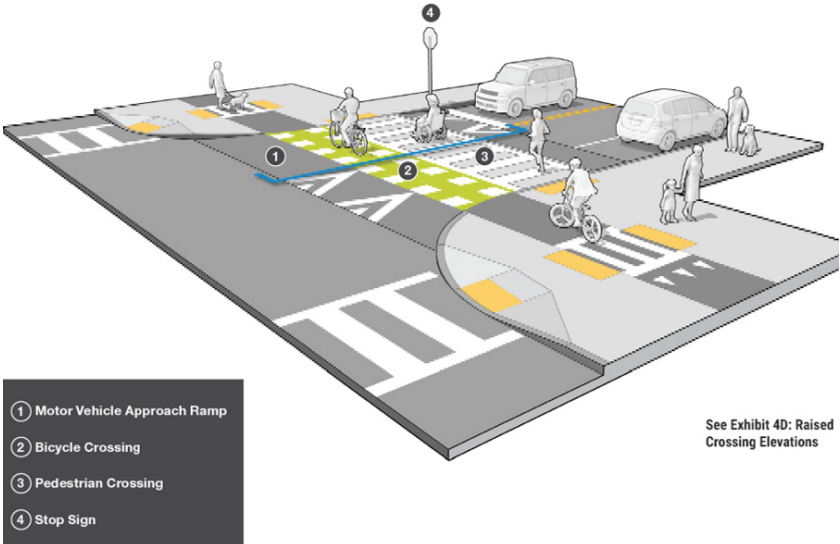
- Add a second walk activation button on the east side of Maple back from the street, behind the sidewalk, so that bikers and children do not accidentally drift into the street;
- Create distinct pedestrian areas and bicycle areas at crossings;
- Improve signal timing so that trail users are less likely to cross illegally;
- Strengthen the connection to the Whole Foods store to enhance this key location along the trail. Currently many trail users are unaware that a Whole Foods store is there or that there is an eating area with seating that overlooks the trail.

CHURCH STREET IMPROVEMENTS

- Provide safe access to this commercial area from the trail;
- Separate pedestrian and bike crossing at the intersection;
- Improve visibility for both trail users and vehicles by removing some of the trees along the trail at the corner near the Freeman Store;



The signal button the east side of Maple should be moved back from the street to increase pedestrian safety. Source: Schwanke.



Rendering of possible improvements to the trail crossing at Church Street. Source: [https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/8/docs/SBLG/Chapter4\\_Intersections.pdf](https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/8/docs/SBLG/Chapter4_Intersections.pdf).



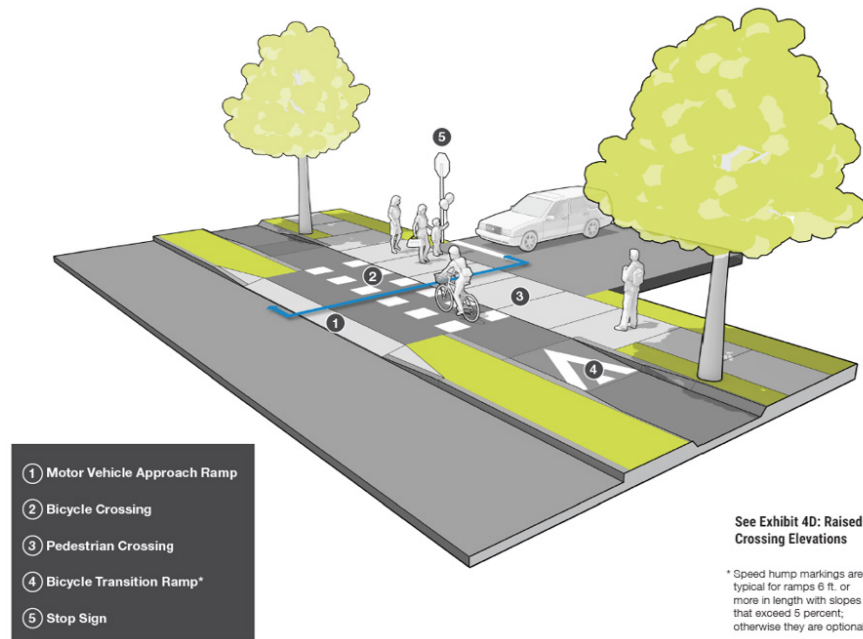
The trail crossing at Ayr Hill Avenue, where several stop signs and cross walks create some confusion.  
Source: Schwanke.

Rendering of possible improvements to the trail crossing at Ayr Hill Avenue.  
Source: [https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/8/docs/SBLG/Chapter4\\_Intersections.pdf](https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/8/docs/SBLG/Chapter4_Intersections.pdf).

- Add a speed table, similar to a hump but flat on top, to slow traffic, with defined pedestrian and bike zones.

### AYR HILL AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

- Separate pedestrian and bike crossings;
- Improve visibility of bicycles and vehicles;
- Add a speed table to define pedestrian and bike zones.



### PARKING CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several parking-related challenges that should be addressed in the core area. In general, there is a parking shortage in and around the core area and the commercial corridor. According to a 2016 Town of Vienna survey, 27% of survey respondents were dissatisfied with parking in the commercial corridor.

Along the trail, a significant amount of parking abuts the trail itself, and much of this is unsightly, especially the car storage parking used by several industrial business along the northwest portion of the trail. Much of this parking involves “Grandfathered” month-to-month leases within the W&OD Park ROW. To address these and other parking issues, the town should prepare a parking study, prepare a management plan, and increase the parking supply.

**Prepare a parking study of the town center.** The study should include an inventory of existing parking supply; an analysis of parking utilization, by time of day and day of week; a parking demand analysis, including walking distances; and identification of areas with unmet parking demand or oversupply of parking – deficits and surpluses.



Parking is located within the Park right of way at the center of the town and in many other areas of the town.

Source: Schwanke.

**Consider parking management strategies.** The Town should explore opportunities for shared parking beyond informal agreements now in place, and should develop a district approach to determining parcel level parking. The Town should also consider charging for parking in high demand locations, and parking for employees or other low turnover parking should be provided for in areas further from the town center to free up parking in the core area. In short, the town should establish a coordinated approach to parking management for the town center.

**Increase parking supply.** There is a shortage of parking in the town center area, and the town should seek to increase parking supply. Strategies to increase parking could involve restriping lots to increase efficiency, formalizing informal parking areas to create more efficient parking lot designs, making street modifications to allow angled parking (e.g., along Dominion Road), and implementing structured parking based as an overall development strategy.



Leased parking areas in the trail right of way in the industrial zone.

Source: Schwanke.

# Designing the Heart

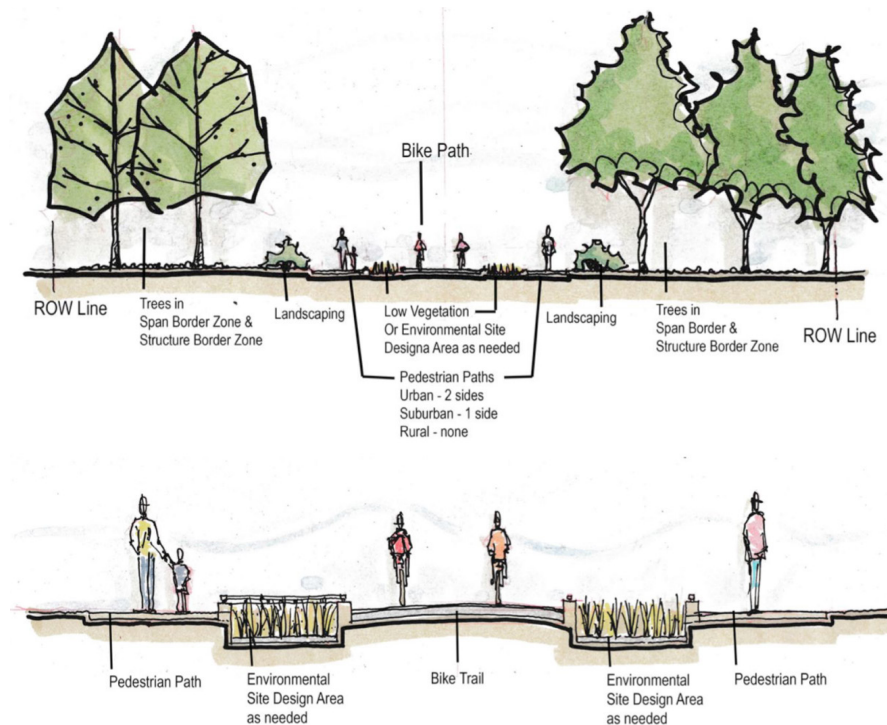


The Town should seek to establish rural, suburban, and urban character areas along the trail.  
Source ULI Washington.

Vienna is the heart of the W&OD Trail, and the trail is at the heart of Vienna. There are many great assets in the center of Vienna, but the land uses and urban design in the town near the trail are not all that they could be. Panelists made the following recommendations:

## ESTABLISH A HIERARCHY FOR THE TRAIL

The Town should seek to establish a representative hierarchy for the trail, using a “transect-mentality” approach, creating a rural to urban character along the trail as one moves from the edges of the town toward the center; this



Cross section renderings of urban and suburban trail sections.  
Source: ULI Washington.



should be achieved through both design and signage. These transect areas should exemplify rural (green, outside town limits), suburban (yellow), and urban (red, town center) transect themes and characteristics. Moreover, from the trail use perspective, the closer that trail users get to the town center, the slower they should be moving.

## IMPROVE CONNECTIONS TO THE TOWN

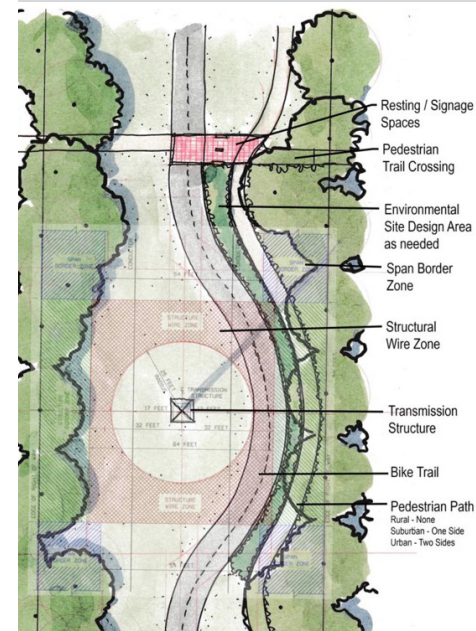
The town should seek to better connect the trail to the town, both physically and visually. One means to achieve this is to improve the intersection between the trail and the town green and other public spaces; the trail is closed off near the town green, with no feeling of openness between the two. Another could involve exploring opportunities to connect the trail to the neighborhoods at cul-de-sacs and other streets, and formalize the informal trail access from the residential cul-de-sacs.

The Town should also develop and adopt a town-wide bike plan, and implement a complete streets concept for the town generally, providing for safe access and usage for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair users, motorists and transit riders, of all ages and abilities. The complete streets concept can also be applied directly to the trail, but without the cars and transit issues. Improvement plans could also seek to connect Locust Street to the elementary school. In general, the Town should seek to increase pedestrian usage throughout the town center area.

## IMPROVE THE TRAIL LANDSCAPE AND ADD TREES

Town planners should work with Dominion Energy and NOVA Parks to make improvements to the landscaping along the trail, including the addition of appropriate trees. Planners should reference the *Memorandum of Understanding Between Dominion Virginia Power And Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority To Establish Vegetation Management Guidelines For The W&OD Trail*, from April 2005. This memorandum does allow for large shade trees—in the Span Border Zone and the Structure Border Zone—so long as tree size and placement conforms with the guidelines in the memorandum. Trees can add much needed shade in these zones.

The landscape could also benefit by the provision of pedestrian gathering places in suburban and urban areas as well as environmental site design (ESD) areas, as needed, to handle stormwater management and drainage issues. The Town should give special attention to the unused ROW along Dominion Road, which could be put to better use.



Large shade trees are allowed along the trail – in the Span Border Zone and the Structure Border Zone – so long as tree size and placement conforms with established guidelines.  
Source: ULI Washington.



The current trail design does not provide good open entry and views into the Town Green at mid-block between Maple and Church, nor at the corner of Church near the Freeman Store. These views and connections should be improved.  
Source: Schwanke.

## IMPROVE VIEWS OF THE TOWN GREEN AND FREEMAN STORE

The current trail design provides good open entry and views into the Town Green from the trail at Maple Avenue; this is a great example of how the trail and the Town Green act as one place. However, if one proceeds further on the trail toward Church Street, dense planting along the trail between Maple Avenue and Church Street forms a wall that completely separates the trail from the Town Green along this one central block. This wall of trees continues all the way to the Church Street intersection, where heavy foliage and trees obscure views of the Freeman Store as well, one of the town's most distinct and historic places; many bikers passing through this intersection likely do not see the Freeman Store at all.

The Panel recommends that the Town view the trail property and the Town Green as one place and seek to maximize connections and views between these adjacent parks. Separation of these areas results in a lost opportunity to showcase the center of Vienna and its character and history. The Panel recommends that the Town retain the taller trees along this stretch and remove much of the understory, thus visually connecting the two spaces and creating a "manicured" forest with open under-story to provide visual links between the trail and the Town Green. In this way, the trail can support the Town Green, a point of pride for the town and an asset that the town has invested in heavily.

A more robust connection between the Whole Foods and the trail should be considered.  
Source: Schwanke.



## CONCEPT PLAN

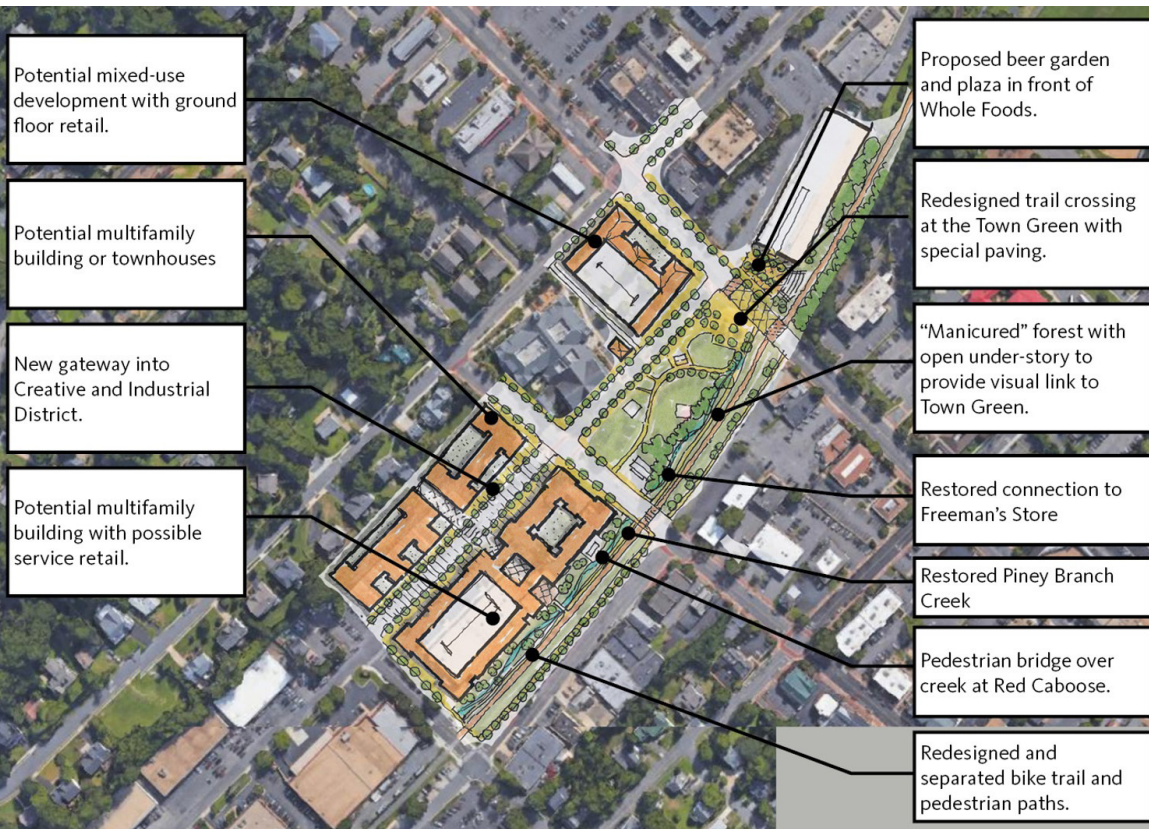
The town should develop a specific area plan for the several blocks surrounding the trail area between Locust Street and Ayr Hill Avenue, including the possible addition of multifamily and/or mixed-use development, with ground floor retail and office/multifamily residential above, including up to five floors of residential. The addition of these uses could enliven and activate the area, and bring more retail and restaurant businesses to the town center, strengthening the sense of place for the heart of the Town.

In addition, the town should consider the following potential core area land use and development improvements:

- A new gateway into the creative and industrial district;
- A more robust connection between the Whole Foods and the trail, possibly including a beer garden and plaza in front of the Whole Foods;
- A redesigned trail crossing at the Town Green, with special paving;
- A restored Piney Branch Creek between Church Street and Ayr Hill Road;
- Redesigned and separated bike and pedestrian trails in the core area.



Improved connections between the Town and the trail will boost economic and pedestrian activity in the center of town, enriching the heart of the community.  
Source: Schwanke.



The town should develop a specific area plan for the several blocks surrounding the trail area between Locust Street and Ayr Hill Avenue, including the addition of multifamily and/or mixed-use development.  
Source: ULI Washington.

# Implementation

To begin the process of creating an improved trail and town center for Vienna, the Panel recommends that the Town take the following initial steps to move forward with the themes and recommendations outlined above:

- Join the NOVA Parks board as a recognized municipal member, rather than relying on Fairfax County to represent the Town's interests;
- Foster more excitement in the town regarding biking; strengthen bike planning and bike culture across the entire town of Vienna. The W&OD park is an excellent tool for economic development for the town center;
- Introduce dedicated wayfinding and signage to the trail, especially to attract trail users to businesses and other areas of the town;
- Conduct a detailed zoning and parking analysis along the entire trail, with a focus on "trail dependent" uses, such as the industrial that depends on the parking leases on trail property, and "trail enhanced" uses, such as restaurants;
- Prepare a Civic Design Plan (sector plan) which at a minimum includes all public properties in the Vienna town center, including the Northside Property Yard. The Town needs a better strategy for leveraging public property resources, including the trail, to enhance and benefit surrounding land and properties;
- Establish direct design coordination and agreements with NOVA Parks and Dominion Power to all for the addition of trees, plantings, sidewalks, trail connections, public gathering places, Environmental Site Design, and selective pruning and vegetation removal to open up site lines and vistas where desired to integrate the trail into the community;
- Make strategic investments to prioritize safety at all road crossings, and grow shared parking capacity;
- Search for a variety of funding sources (federal, state, foundation, private and NOVA Parks) to finance many of the improvements mentioned above. Funding for safety and environmental restoration projects will likely be where funding is more readily available.



Panel chair Uwe Brandes and the Panel present their findings to a group of Town leaders and citizens. Source: Schwanke.

# Conclusion

The Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park is an increasingly important recreational, environmental, and transportation asset for Northern Virginia and the Town of Vienna. It is used for many purposes by many individuals, and with additional planning and investment could become an even more valuable park asset for the region.

For Vienna itself, the trail is also a central green spine and a defining public realm, especially where it intersects with the main streets of Maple Avenue and Church Street at the center of the Town. The recommended improvements outlined above, especially those relating to these main intersections, will strengthen the character of the Town and reinforce its sense of place as a distinct and unique community within northern Virginia. These improvements will also strengthen the trail as whole, better defining Vienna as a central place and destination at the heart of the trail.

# Panelists

## Uwe Brandes CHAIR

Georgetown University  
Washington, DC

Uwe S. Brandes has over 20 years of experience in the planning, design and construction of new buildings, public infrastructure and the urban landscape. He is the founding Executive Director of the Masters Program in Urban and Regional Planning at Georgetown University.

Mr. Brandes served as Senior Vice President at the Urban Land Institute (ULI) where he directed research and global programs on climate change and sustainable urban development. He is author and executive editor of several major projects for ULI, including *The City in 2050*, *What's Next? Real Estate in the New Economy* and *Getting Ahead of Change*. He created ULI's Climate Change Land Use and Energy (CLUE) initiative and was instrumental in forming the ULI Greenprint Center for Building Performance, ULI's dedicated market research on buildings and energy.

Prior to ULI, Uwe was Director of Capital Projects and Planning for the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation where he directed the urban design of several hallmark projects in the nation's capital, including the new U.S. Department of Transportation, the Capper Carrolsburg project, the Washington Nationals ballpark and the Yards Park and Diamond Teague Park along the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C. He oversaw the rezoning of hundreds of acres of waterfront lands as well as the largest transfer of land between the United States and the District of Columbia since the establishment of home rule.

Mr. Brandes has lectured widely on urban design and public space topics. He serves on the board of several non-profit organizations, including the Landscape Architecture Foundation and EcoDistricts.

## Daniel Anderton

Dewberry

Germantown, MD

Dan Anderton has served in the region for more than 30 years and has been directly involved in the creation of communities with services in all aspects of Land Use Planning and Physical Planning including: comprehensive and master planning, urban and mixed- 2 use planning, site planning, redevelopment planning, affordable housing, re-zoning, subdivision planning, Small Town Revitalization & Landscape Architecture. He has proven project management experience in the applicability of planning, zoning, subdivision and Landscape Architecture. He also has extensive experience with local and state government development review processes and effective working relationships with local and state agencies, boards, commissions and public officials in multiple jurisdictions.

Mr. Anderton has a goal to create communities that are comfortable, sustainable and inclusive to a wide demographic of residents and business owners while also being marketable for either public or private developers. He takes care to ensure that a conceptual design's integrity and density is maintained through the planning process. By carefully planning FAR and densities, providing for a mix of diverse building and product types and phasing, and by incorporating traditional and neo-traditional styles, community developments are poised to capture the needs of the market and a wide cross section of prospective renters, buyers, and shop owners.

Mr. Anderton has been involved with, and completed, hundreds of projects involving direct interaction with citizens, developers, planning boards, County Councils, Mayors, public utilities, State Highway officials, and other involved parties. The juggling of everyone's interests throughout the completion of a plan or project is extremely important. The desire being to make it through the design and planning process with the majority of stakeholders feeling as though they have succeeded in having their personal vision incorporated into the community.

Mr. Anderton graduated with a Bachelors of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning from Utah State University in 1983 and with a Masters of Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois in 1985. Mr. Anderton is currently employed by Dewberry, a national planning, engineering, and architectural firm, and is responsible for Community Planning & Urban Design within the company. He has worked for architects, engineers, landscape architects, and horticulturalists throughout his career giving him a unique and holistic perspective of community planning and urban design.

## Allison Anolik

Louis Berger, Inc.  
Washington, DC

Allison Anolik is an Environmental Planner and Geographic Information Systems Specialist in the Planning and Economics Practice of Louis Berger, Inc. Allison has 11 years of experience with both public and private sector clients encompassing a broad range of disciplines, including environmental planning, transportation planning, spatial analysis, land use analyses, and urban planning. During her 5 year tenure at Louis Berger, Allison has assumed a leading role in guiding clients such as the National Park Service (NPS), General Services Administration (GSA), and Department of Defense (DoD) through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) regulatory processes. Recently, Allison served as a project manager for a complex and high profile GSA project incorporating site evaluation and selection, NEPA and NHPA compliance, traffic and transit modeling, and urban design. She is currently advising the NPS on future visitor uses and property acquisition strategy for three new land units to be added to the Vicksburg National Military Park, authorized in the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, and is assisting the Fairfax County Park Authority to complete the environmental review process for the proposed Langley Fork Park Land Exchange.

Prior to joining Louis Berger, Allison worked for Atkins (formerly PBS&J) in support of DoD Real Property Master Plans; and as a flood hazard analyst for Dewberry and Davis. She holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in Geography from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia and is working towards a Masters of Geographic and Cartographic Science at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

## Steven P. Hubert

Buchanan Partners  
Gaithersburg, MD

Steven P. Hubert has been a builder/developer of office, industrial and mixed-use projects in the Washington Metropolitan Area since 1981. Prior to joining Buchanan Partners, Mr. Hubert was a principal in the InterGate Company, which developed over 4,000 acres of commercial, industrial, and residential land in Northern Virginia. He is a former President of Glen Construction Company, founded by his father, Whitie Hubert, in 1959.

During his time as a Partner with Buchanan Partners, Mr. Hubert has developed numerous market leading projects across asset classes throughout Metropolitan Washington. Recent projects include: The Kingsley in Old Town Alexandria, a 175 unit LEED certified apartment building with a 50,000 square foot Harris Teeter grocery store on a 66,000 sf site; BerkleyNet Center at Innovation, a 72,000



square foot build to suit for a wholly owned subsidiary of a Fortune 500 Insurance Company. Mr. Hubert is active in all aspects of a project's completion, and applies his design and construction management expertise to all of Buchanan Partners' projects.

Mr. Hubert is also a Founding Member of Buchanan Ventures, and has invested venture capital in several startup firms such as Fiberight, LLC, ManageurID, Alexander Arms, and Intelligent Endoscopy.

Mr. Hubert is active in the Urban Land Institute and NAIOP Northern Virginia. He earned his B.S. from Colorado State University in 1980. He is an avid cyclist, and is also the managing member of Tarara Winery, a 475 acre vineyard in Loudoun County, Virginia.

## Paul Moyer

VHB

Vienna, VA

Paul Moyer's extensive planning background and knowledge of the national capital region help VHB expand its planning practice throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, and bolsters the firm's ability to offer more comprehensive services to its federal, municipal, and private clients. Paul has worked on award-winning planning projects for federal, county/municipal, and private clients across the Mid-Atlantic as well as throughout the eastern U.S. His 25-year career has included master planning, environmental planning, and community planning, as well as extensive experience leading consensus-building processes. Mr. Moyer has collaborated with VHB previously in Virginia on projects including the Laurel Hill Master Plan and Sportsplex in Fairfax, the Reuse Plan for the Naval Radio Transmitter Facility in Suffolk, and the Capital One Headquarters project in Richmond.

## Dean Schwanke

Schwanke Consulting and Communications

Arlington, VA

Dean Schwanke is a principal with Schwanke Consulting and Communications, a small real estate consulting and communications firm. Prior to this, he served as Senior Vice President, Case Studies and Publications at the Urban Land Institute. In this role, he oversaw the development of ULI case studies, textbooks, and other publications. Prior to this he was Senior Vice President and Executive Director of the ULI Center for Capital Markets and Real Estate, which he planned and launched within ULI in 2009; his work in this position involved the management and development of the Emerging Trends in Real Estate publications, the ULI Real Estate Consensus Forecast, and several real estate capital markets conferences.

Over the past 30+ years he has directed the development of over 90 books and reports (including Emerging Trends from 2004-2012), and has personally authored or coauthored numerous publications, including Mixed-Use Development: Nine Case Studies of Complex Projects (2016); Small-Scale Development (2016); Multifamily Housing Development (2016); Mixed-Use Development Handbook (2003); Place Making: Developing Town Centers, Main Streets, and Urban Villages (2002); and the Resort Development Handbook (1997). He has organized numerous conferences, served on many ULI advisory services assignments, and made over 100 presentations on a variety of topics, including emerging trends, place making, mixed-use development, retail development, and real estate capital markets.

He holds a BA degree from the University of Wisconsin--Madison and a master of planning degree from the University of Virginia.

## Renan Snowden

Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District  
Washington, DC

Renan Snowden is the Vice President of Planning and Development at the Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District in Washington, DC. Renan manages the BID's economic development, research, transportation, and public art programs. In addition to the BID, Renan brings experience from the DC Office of Planning, Montgomery County Parks, and the U.S. Senate. Renan's work focuses on creative placemaking and the arts as a catalyst for economic and community development. In 2017, Renan successfully implemented a public art project with the U.S. Navy to mount historic Navy photographs in the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood. In 2012, Renan co-authored "Revitalizing Neighborhoods Through Temporary Urbanism" in Public Sector Digest magazine.

Renan is active in the Urban Land Institute. She is the vice-chair of the Young Leaders Group's Education Committee and serves on the Young Leaders Group Steering Committee. Renan was recently selected to participate in the 2017-2018 Class of ULI Washington's Regional Land Use Leadership Institute.

Renan holds a M.A. in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.

## Neil Sullivan

Gensler

Washington, DC

Neil is a sought-after planner and landscape architect with deep experience in high-profile, complex assignments that require expert leadership. Working both locally and around the globe, Neil has partnered with diverse municipalities and private clients on downtown revitalizations, new commercial corridors, and vibrant urban waterfronts. He is dedicated to striking a balance between the built environment and ecological systems, and has become increasingly involved in the sustainable planning field—shaping his approach to urban planning and transit-oriented development.

Widely recognized for the forward-looking leadership he brings to his work, Neil regularly speaks on the urban environment and its relationship to a community's long-term success.



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