



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Masonic Drive Commons

By:

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Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority (GAEDA)

Goals:

- Become a catalyst for the resurgence of Downtown Residential living
- Provide retail space for niche businesses, specialty shops and community shopping
- Bring a new energy to the downtown CBD

Objectives:

- Provide an additional sixty residential units to the downtown landscape
- Create a critical mass of retail space for small businesses in a mixed use residential environment
- Residential living creates foot-traffic, foot-traffic creates activity, and activity creates energy.

Residential Vision:

- Housing that is not just livable but may be used as workspace for home based businesses.
- Residential/living lofts which further assists small business in developing and growing.
- Soft lofts, which are a new construction with many of the characteristics of traditional loft spaces.
- A mixed-use community integrated into the center of the city.
- Mixed income community merging diverse economic levels of the community

Retail Vision:

- Numerous retail shops created on the perimeter of the development in addition to retail in the court area.
- The facades of the new retail will match the surrounding area's architecture

Pedestrian Traffic in the Masonic Drive Commons:

"We are surrounded by modern inventions designed to keep us from walking. Our environment seems to be telling us that walking is something we should avoid. In fact, walking is good for you. It is an everyday activity that you can transform into a regular exercise program to help develop and maintain fitness." (American Heart Association) In the Masonic Drive Commons, the proposal is built on pedestrian circulation. The walking experience must be pleasurable if people are to select walking over driving. People are usually willing to walk longer distances if they are provided with a continuous and pleasurable experience. Understanding and respecting the human scale is vital at all levels of design in form, layout, and streetscape characteristics. The Masonic Drive Commons pedestrianism will be designed in terms of:

- Providing services, facilities and jobs within walking distance
- Create a network of pedestrian paths
- Assure continuity to improve the pedestrian experience
- Appropriately size and locate crosswalks and depressed curbs
- Provide ground texture
- Provide appropriate sidewalk widths
- Properly proportion the pedestrian realm
- Insure proper treatment of sidewalk edges

- Provide pedestrian scaled lighting and other street furniture like benches and trash receptacles
- Provide proper signage
- Provide bicycle paths

Conclusion:

Doing it right today and tomorrow means shattering the rules of yesterday, especially the rules of city planning, transportation and downtown residential development that persist today. The places that have become most exciting have done so most often, despite conventional plans, with modest public investment and through the catalytic efforts of creative citizens. When the rules of the excessive visions and overblown plans have been broken or ignored, new life, excitement, and the out of the ordinary occur. New life spreads to adjacent areas where the cycle can repeat itself organically. The urban fabric is renewed. The Masonic Drive Commons is intended to be the embryo of Alexandria's metamorphosis.