

COMMUNITY MEETING #5 SUMMARY

Monday, February 9th, 2015 | 7:00 – 9:00 pm | Beatley Central Library

1 Staff Presentation

Karl Moritz, Acting Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning, initiated the community meeting by welcoming participants and City Council members. Mr. Moritz also discussed meeting goals, the timeline and schedule for drafting the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan, plan implementation strategies, and ways to give additional feedback. Valerie Berstene, an urban designer from the consultant team SmithGroupJJR, followed by summarizing the outcomes of the past four community meetings (the summaries from each of these meetings can be found [here](#)).

After, Merrill St. Leger-Demian, the lead planner and urban designer from the consultant team SmithGroupJJR, discussed the draft concept plan resulting from the fourth community meeting and AlexEngage feedback. Ms. St. Leger-Demian described elements of a “Great Street” and the various land uses in the draft plan including retail, office, civic, institutional, mixed use, residential, flex space, green fingers, and the multimodal bridge options. She continued on to discuss how the refined land use concept plan was derived by layering the plan elements of nodes, existing streets, future streets and connections, parks and green fingers, blocks, land uses, and heights.

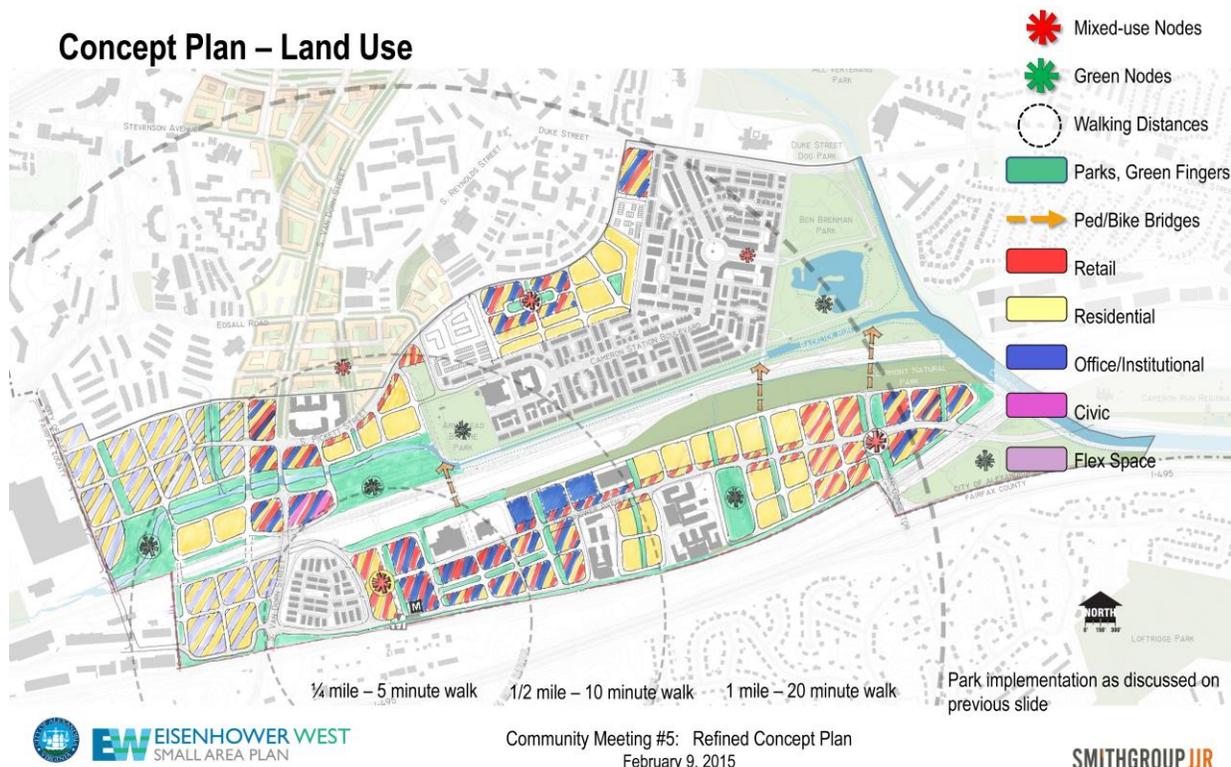


Figure 1: Refined concept plan presented at the meeting.

Questions/Comments

The following questions and comments were brought up after the presentation.

- Will the proposed densities create canyons of shadows in the plan area? Ms. St. Leger-Demian described how building heights could be modulated to taper or step down closer to the street to provide more light and air along the street and green fingers.
- Will straightening Eisenhower Avenue create additional traffic issues along Van Dorn Street and the proposed multimodal bridge? Staff stated that this will be studied in the coming months to determine its feasibility.
- What is the current population of people that live in the plan area and how will it grow? The current population is 4,970 people. How the plan area grows depends in part on how the area is planned. Household numbers, population estimates, and land use projections are forthcoming and part of the following testing and analysis phase.
- The multimodal bridge alignment should consider cut-through traffic impacts to neighborhoods and parks. More information on what the bridge will look like is needed.

2 Keypad Polling Group Exercise

After describing the draft concept land use plan, Mr. Moritz began a large group exercise with meeting participants focused on gaining feedback on the draft plan. Participants were asked a series of questions on how the draft plan achieves the draft goals of the plan presented at previous meetings. The draft plan goals are described below:

Goal 1: Economic Development

Eisenhower West will be an integral part of the City's Eisenhower Valley economic engine in which economic development and employment opportunities are maintained and promoted by capitalizing on the Van Dorn Metro Station, proximity to the Capital Beltway, and the opportunity provided by the presence of large land holdings.

Goal 2: Land Use

Eisenhower West will have a vibrant mix of uses achieved through phased implementation, including a mix of residential and employment opportunities and are able to co-exist with industrial uses remaining in the area long-term.

Goal 3: Transit Focus

Eisenhower West will be a transit-oriented community, with focused density around transit nodes and corridors.

Goal 4: Circulation & Connectivity

Eisenhower West will have safe, efficient, and linked pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular mobility thereby providing better access citywide to the future amenities of the area.

Goal 5: Pedestrian Friendly

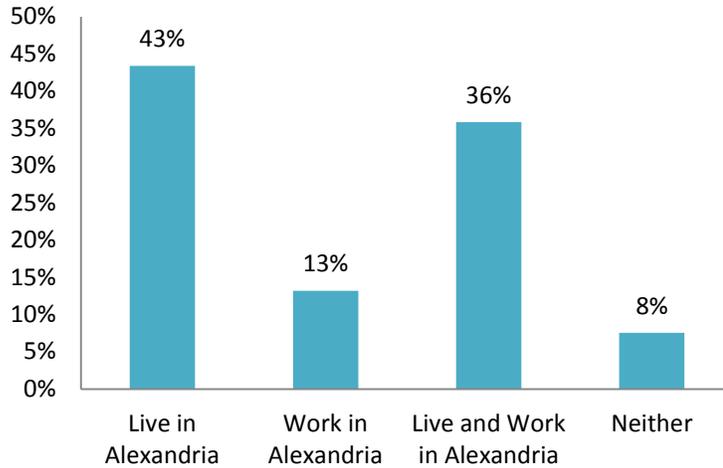
Eisenhower West will be more pedestrian-friendly by humanizing Van Dorn Street, Pickett Street, and Eisenhower Avenue so that they become safer for pedestrians and more attractive to residents and shoppers.

Goal 6: Parks, Open Space, & Recreational Opportunities

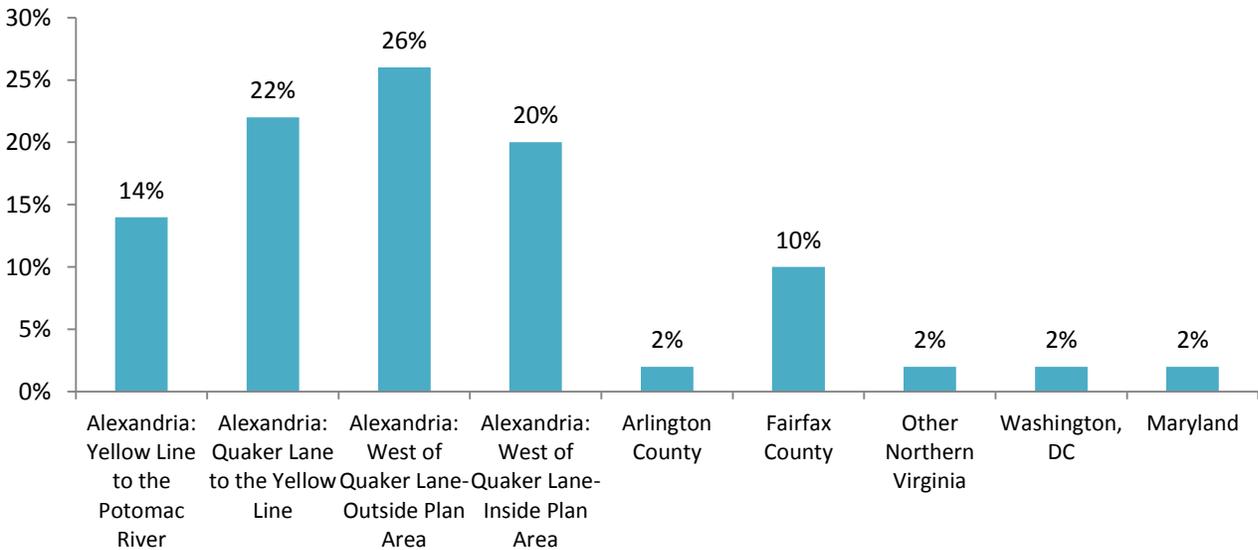
Eisenhower West will have a connected, accessible, and identifiable park and open space system that serves the citywide recreational needs.

Participants responded to the questions using individual keypads. After each question was asked, the results were displayed in the presentation through the bar charts shown below. Participants were also asked to further explain their answers on a corresponding worksheet. Comments from the worksheets and subsequent input via email are summarized below and organized by the questions asked during the polling exercise.

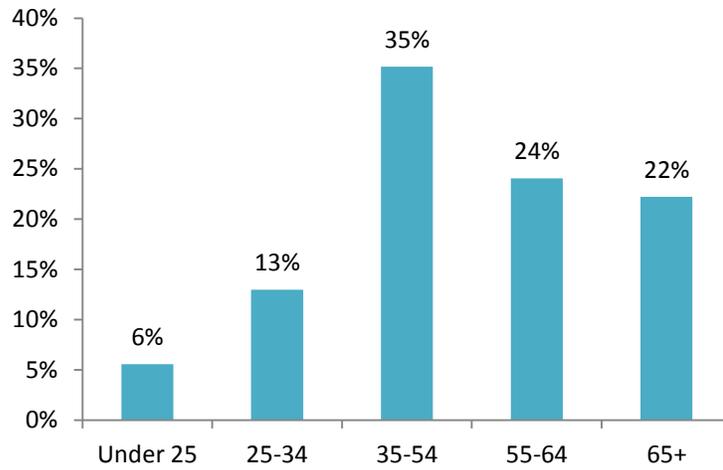
1a) Do you live, work, both, or neither in Alexandria?



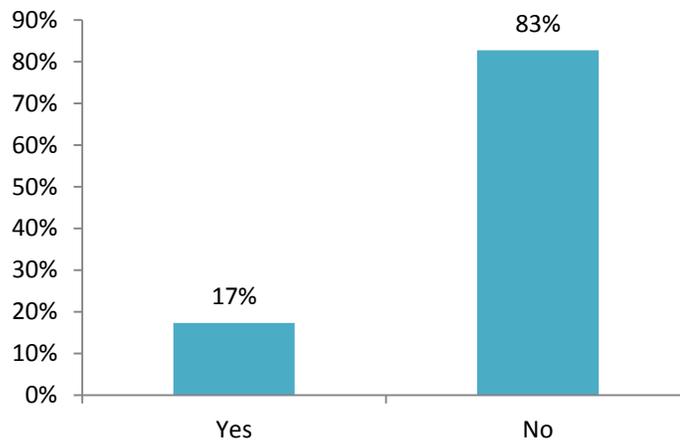
1b) Where do you live?



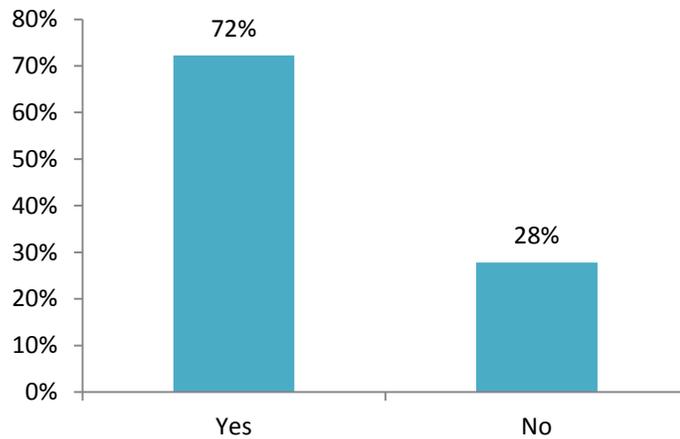
1c) How old are you?



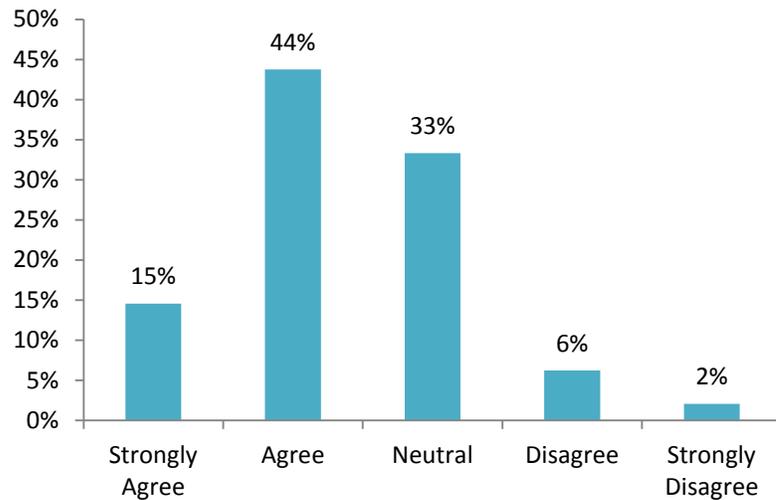
1d) Are any members of your household 18 year or younger?



1e) Have you attended previous Eisenhower West Small Area Plan meetings?

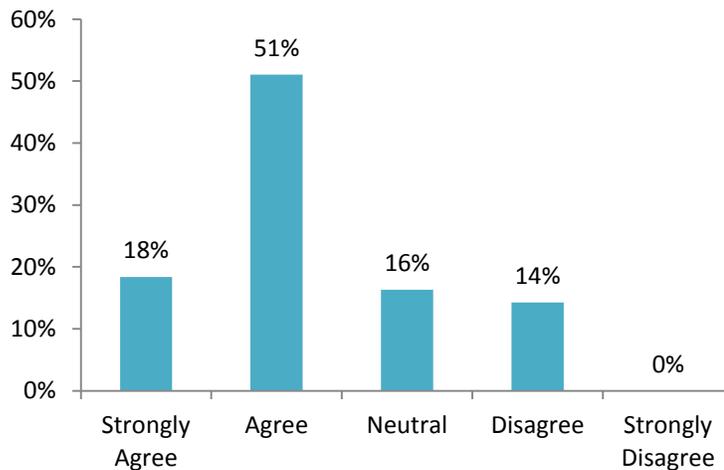


2) The refined concept plan achieves the goal of making Eisenhower West a place where economic development and employment opportunities are maintained and promoted. Do you agree?



- 59% of participants strongly agreed or agreed, however more analysis needs to be completed on number of businesses, new employment opportunities, maintained jobs, new flex spaces, and composition of flex employers/entities.
- The importance of an interim plan (10 years from now, 20 years from now), similar to Potomac Yard, was noted. Particularly given the current lack of demand for office, the plan may not be realized for a long time.
- The plan should demonstrate how it relates to and influences Eisenhower East.

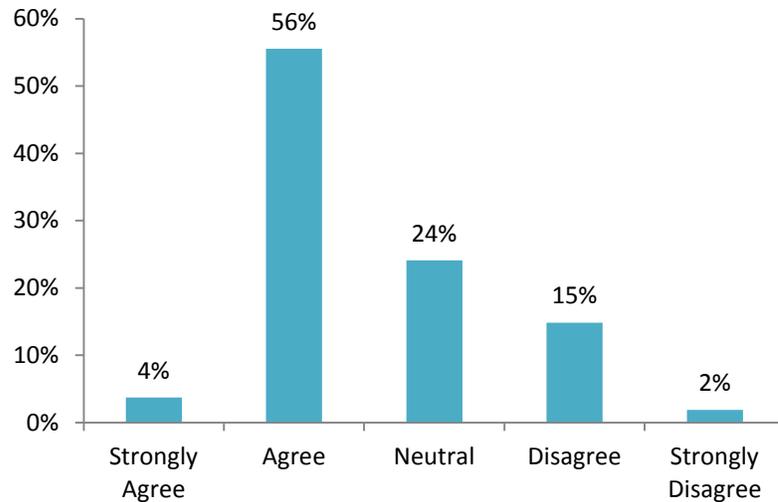
3) The refined concept plan takes advantage of the Van Dorn Metro Station and the proximity to the Capital Beltway.



- 69% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the plan does focus on the Metro station.
- A few participants noted that the plan did not focus as strongly on the Beltway or Van Dorn Street.
- Some participants expressed a concern regarding increased traffic from the straightening of Eisenhower Avenue just east of Van Dorn Street.

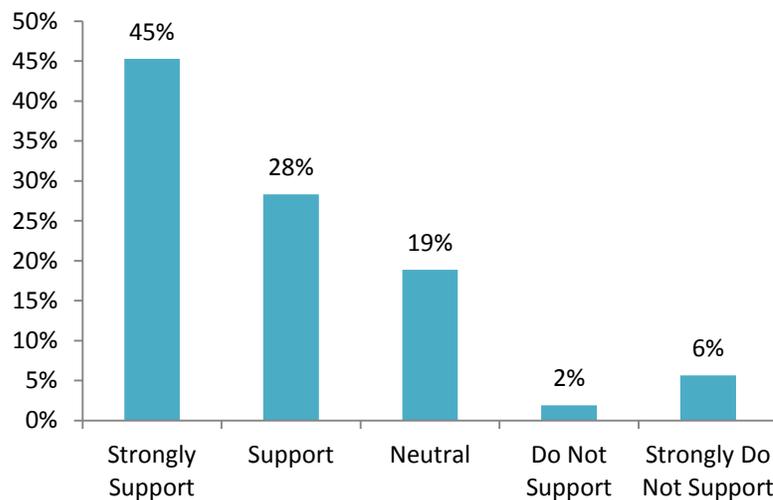
- Participants noted that accessible, multimodal transit is important, not just cars. The plan should look at protected bike lanes, shuttle buses, and additional metro bus service.
- New developments should provide reasonable resident parking prices.

4) The land uses shown generally represent the right mix of housing, retail, and employment.



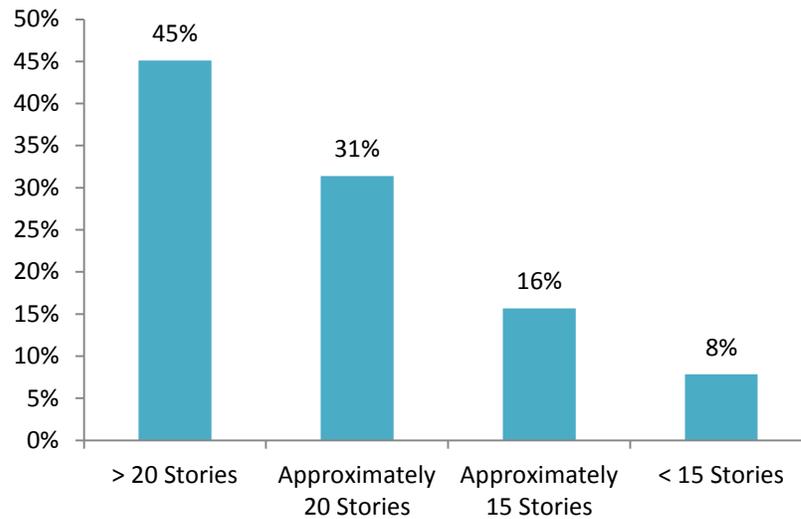
- 60% of participants agreed that the land use mix was appropriate for the plan area and reflective of what they desired.
- Some participants thought that the draft plan was lacking in employment options and had too much residential.
- Additional ideas also resulted from the meeting, such as an overlay district to allow big box retail and an indoor recreation or aquatic facility along Eisenhower Avenue.

5) How strongly do you support pursuing the concept of mixed residential and flex space west of Van Dorn Street presented tonight?



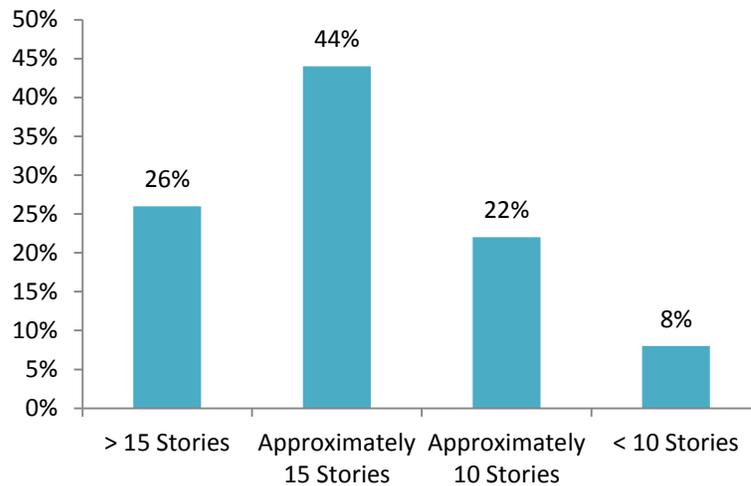
- 73% of participants support further pursuing the idea of mixed residential and flex space, noting that it was important to preserve non-traditional jobs.
- Some participants wanted more clarification of what kinds of uses are included in flex space.
- One example to research is Campbell Avenue in Shirlington, Virginia.

6) As presented earlier, participants at Community Meeting #2 expressed a preference for high-rise buildings within ¼-mile of the Van Dorn Metro Station. Do you prefer greater than 20 stories, approximately 20 stories, approximately 15 stories, or less than 15 stories?



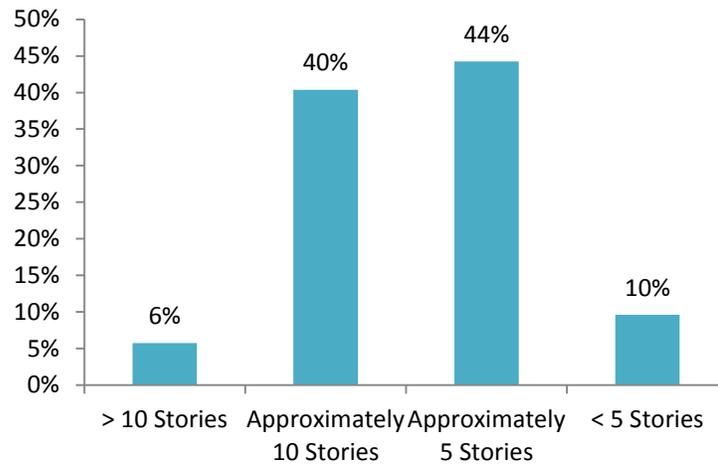
- 76% of participants liked the idea of 20 stories or greater at the Metro Station, if the market can support it.

7) As presented earlier, participants at Community Meeting #2 expressed a preference for mid-to-high-rise buildings within ¼-mile to a ½-mile of the Van Dorn Metro Station. Do you prefer great than 15 stories, approximately 15 stories, approximately 10 stories, or less than 10 stories?



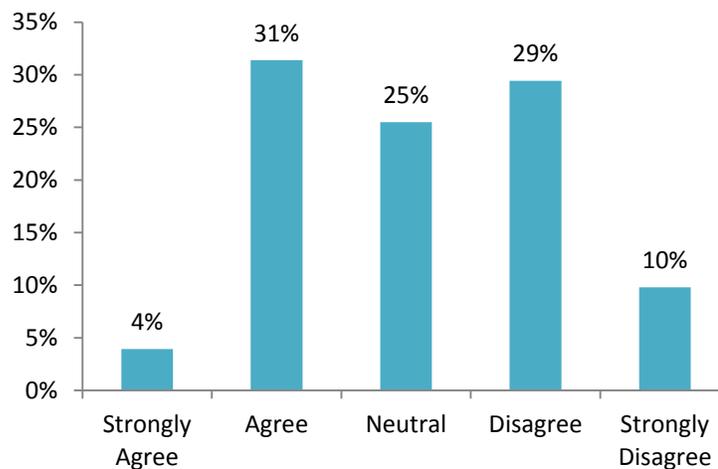
- 70% of participants agreed with around 15 stories within a ¼-mile to a ½-mile from the Metro Station.
- Generally, participants noted the buildings should decrease in height further away from the Metro Station.

8) As presented earlier, participants at Community Meeting #2 expressed a preference for mid-rise buildings beyond ½-mile of the Van Dorn Metro Station. Do you prefer greater than 10 stories, approximately 10 stories, approximately 5 stories, or less than 5 stories?



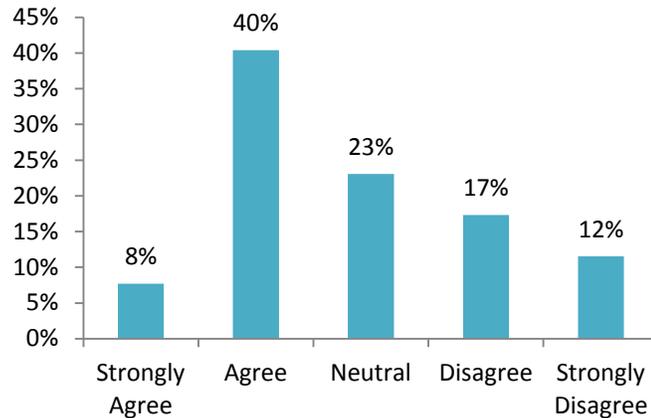
- 84% of participants preferred five to ten stories furthest away from the metro Station.
- One participant noted that density should not be at the expense of a walkable, multifunctional community.

9) The proposed street framework promotes the desired connectivity of Goal 4.



- A spread of participants agreed, were neutral, or disagreed that the framework showed the desired connectivity for the plan area.
- Concerns were expressed about the traffic implications of straightening Eisenhower Avenue. Further analysis at key intersections throughout the plan area is needed.
- Some participants stated that protected bike lanes along Eisenhower Avenue should be included in the plan.
- Additional north-south connections might be needed and should be explored.
- Traffic issues along Van Dorn Street should be addressed more holistically through the City, Fairfax County, and VDOT.
- A road parallel to Eisenhower Avenue near the City’s southern border should be analyzed, perhaps as a bypass road for trucks heading to and from Covanta.

10) The green spaces and green fingers shown provide the desired pedestrian-friendly green connections and open space network.



- 63% of participants agreed or were neutral about the green spaces and green fingers presented.
- Some participants thought that green space had been nicely considered throughout the planning process and incorporated existing open space and stream corridors well.
- Some participants thought too much park land was shown and might not be necessary.
- More definition of what the green fingers entail was needed. Multiple pedestrian bridges (north-south), bike trails along Backlick Run, and protected bike lanes are essential to connecting the open spaces.
- Larger parks in combination with smaller pocket parks are better than green fingers—quality over quantity.
- Strengthening the green corridor along Backlick Run and Clermont Natural Area into a linear park would centralize open space, provide connectivity, establish a buffer from the railroad tracks, and integrate with existing open space.
- Widening the green finger near the Clermont Natural Area could provide open space for Victory Center employees and also highlight the history of the site through cultural opportunities.
- More information is needed on the open space standard, dimensions of proposed green space, and implementation/maintenance strategies.

3 General Feedback

After the group exercise was complete, Mr. Moritz welcomed general comments, questions, and explanations of why and how participants made their selections. The following summarizes the main points of the group discussion.

- Transportation:
 - The transit focus, beyond Van Dorn Metro station, needs more emphasis in the draft plan. The plan should explore strategies to reduce traffic and increase transit.
 - Consider the relationship between people and cars—as the population increases, cars will increase, too.
 - Free and low cost parking is needed for retail to survive, learn from Carlyle.
 - The Farrington Avenue connection needs to be explored further.
 - Consider using more urban-friendly bike/pedestrian design guidelines, such as ASHTO.

- More information (elevations, sections) on the multimodal bridge and what it looks like.
- Parking assumptions will take into account the citywide parking study currently underway.
- Include protected bike lanes on Eisenhower as a buffer to create pedestrian-friendly streets and provide bike facilities.
- Bike paths and trails should be prioritized over plaza spaces.
- Green Space & Green Fingers:
 - Does the City have funding to buy land for parks? The next step is to prioritize wants and needs and determine if the City has funding or identify revenue sources.
 - Developers should be allowed to decide where to place the green space on their property.
 - Green fingers are a key part in making the area desirable, but they will come at a cost.
 - Green spaces are important in preventing canyons between taller buildings.
 - Research public-private partnerships to fund parks, such as the [Enrichmond Foundation](#).
- Community Facilities:
 - Services like schools, police, and fire are needed if the plan area is going to grow.
 - The results of the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan will give direction on schools in the plan area.
 - Consider co-location of recreation, educational, and art facilities.

4 Next Steps

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Moritz highlighted next steps including upcoming Steering Committee meetings, Planning Commission and City Council work sessions in March, analysis work and drafting of the plan in the spring before presenting it for feedback at Community Meeting #6 in July.