

TYSONS CORNER URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



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Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2010, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (the Board) amended the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) for the Tysons Corner Urban Center. The amendment incorporated significant changes to the Plan intended to encourage and guide the continuing growth of one of Fairfax County's key communities. In concert with changes to the Plan, the county's Zoning Ordinance was amended to create a new zoning district, the Planned Tysons Urban District (PTC), as a means to assist in implementing the Plan. These actions build upon the economic success of Tysons evidenced in its transformation into a vast suburban center from its agricultural origins in the 1960s.

The twenty-first century brings with it the challenge of providing space for a growing population and economic base. Fairfax County's proximity to Washington DC, and the County's many desirable amenities, including an excellent school system and a highly educated and trained work force, combine to make it a highly desirable place to live, work, and play. As the economic engine for Fairfax County, Tysons is the ideal place to apply smart growth principles to new development so that the County can sustainably accommodate future growth. For Tysons to grow successfully and responsibly, under-utilized and impervious land area will need to be reused, optimized, and enhanced in a sustainable way. New elements such as complete streets, urban parks, and innovative architecture will also be created.

The new vision for Tysons calls for future development to follow Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles, particularly around the four new Metro Rail stations. TOD principles prescribe establishing the areas of highest density closest to the transit stations, in concert with encouraging mixed use development in order to achieve greater sustainability and

balance between land use and transportation. Focusing greater density in the TOD areas, establishing rigorous urban design standards, and environmental stewardship recommendations, while adhering to proven land use principles, will transform Tysons into a new vibrant and sustainable urban center for Fairfax County.



1.1 What is Urban Design?

Urban design is the discipline that guides the appearance, arrangement, and function of elements in the physical environment, with particular emphasis on public spaces. An urban environment is comprised of many components including streets, blocks, open spaces, pedestrian areas and buildings.

Urban infill development and redevelopment present different design challenges than those experienced by rural or suburban “green field” development. Transforming a highly functioning suburban development into a more efficient, sustainable, pedestrian focused and transit-oriented city will be a great urban design challenge. Higher population and building densities, increased building heights, varied adjacent land uses and limited open space require thoughtful building placement, architectural definition, and articulation of the public realm.

The urban design concepts and principles as set forth in the following chapters provide guidance for the evolving built environment in Tysons, and how it will shape the public domain.



Opposite: Tyson Corner skyline, 2011

Top Right: Highline, New York City, Image: robinandrose, flickr.com

Bottom Right: New York City skyline, Image: www.fxowle.com

1.2 Intent and Purpose of the Urban Design Guidelines

The purpose of the Urban Design Guidelines (the Guidelines) is to elaborate on the Urban Design Recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. These Guidelines adhere to the following Urban Design Principles:

- Enhance Regional Identity
- Establish a Sense of Place
- Improve Connectivity
- Design Sustainable Environments
- Respect Surrounding Neighborhoods
- Create a New Destination for the Arts

The following chapters provide detailed information regarding the urban design elements mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan such as streetscape layout, hardscape elements, planting strategies, building mass and architectural form.

As the home to several Fortune 500 headquarters and many other high profile companies, Tysons has gained a national and international reputation for excellence. The Urban Design Recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and the following Guidelines call for the built environment to be designed as a reflection of the above mentioned principles. It is the intent of the Guidelines to encourage outstanding, creative, and innovative design for the urban form in Tysons.

Because there is little historic or iconic architectural precedent to draw from for the new urban form in Tysons, it is expected that Tysons' identity will emerge over time. For this reason, the Guidelines emphasize high

quality urban design concepts while allowing for flexibility. This flexibility is intended to encourage distinct character in each district and neighborhood. Additionally, as Tysons develops the Guidelines will be revised as needed to reflect the developing sense of place.

These Guidelines do not regulate or dictate a particular architectural style for Tysons. Rather, it is envisioned that designers, planners, developers, and the community will create a place of the highest quality where each building and public space will be a reflection of the community in which it is located. The Guidelines offer general direction and reinforce continuity from which a diversity of design will emerge.

The Guidelines are intended to provide flexibility in their implementation. Alternative, but comparable, design strategies may be considered if such design solutions result from the unique circumstances of a particular site. The Guidelines recognize that a wide variety of conditions exist in Tysons and flexibility is necessary, so long as the outcome furthers the implementation of the vision set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.



Organization of the Guidelines

Chapters 2 and 3 of the Guidelines follow the format of the Urban Design section of the Tysons Comprehensive Plan by focusing on the Pedestrian Realm. Chapter 2 elaborates on the Pedestrian Realm Framework described in the Comprehensive Plan and introduces the Pedestrian Plan Hierarchy. Chapter 3 focuses on the details within the pedestrian realm, describes design concepts, and provides specific suggestions for streetscape furnishing, signage, and public art.

Chapter 4 provides details regarding Building and Site Design. These include recommendations regarding building massing, parking design and signature sites.

Chapter 5 provides recommendations regarding signage in Tysons.

Chapter 6 elaborates on the urban design elements related to Urban Parks in Tysons.

Chapter 7 focuses on interim conditions and the 'in between' spaces that may occur as Tysons redevelops. The emphasis is on maintaining design continuity and connectivity as the built form changes from suburban office parks to a walkable city.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 provide supplemental information to assist in the design process. Section 8 contains a listing of Resources, Section 9, a Glossary, and Section 10 two appendices which provide the Urban Park Evaluation Checklist and the Urban Design Checklist.

Opposite: Citygarden, St. Louis, MO. Designer: Nelson, Byrd, Woltz, Image: Hedrich Blessing Photographers

Right: Metrorail under construction in Tysons East

Updating the Guidelines

The Guidelines are expected to evolve over time. As Tysons and its neighborhoods develop and change, the Guidelines should be amended to respond to the changing conditions. At the same time, new technologies and other innovations may provide opportunities which should be reflected in updated versions of the Guidelines.

The amendment of these Guidelines is expected to be an administrative process, undertaken by County staff in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. More significant policy changes, however, may require additional consideration, including input from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.



1.4 Using the Urban Design Guidelines

How to Use this Document:

This document should be used by citizens, developers, designers, Fairfax County staff, the Fairfax County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors when either proposing, designing or reviewing development in Tysons.

The Guidelines apply to all properties within Tysons that are seeking to develop in accordance with the redevelopment options in the Comprehensive Plan and should be referred to when preparing zoning and site plan submissions. As a result, the Guidelines will be implemented in differing ways based upon the property's status.

The Guidelines are intended to offer direction, but are not a substitute for the codes and ordinance provisions associated with the permitting and entitlement processes. All applicable requirements and regulations established by the proffers, Zoning Ordinance, the Building Code, the Public Facilities Manual, as well as all applicable state or federal statutes must be satisfied.



Recommended Initial Steps with the Development Review Process:

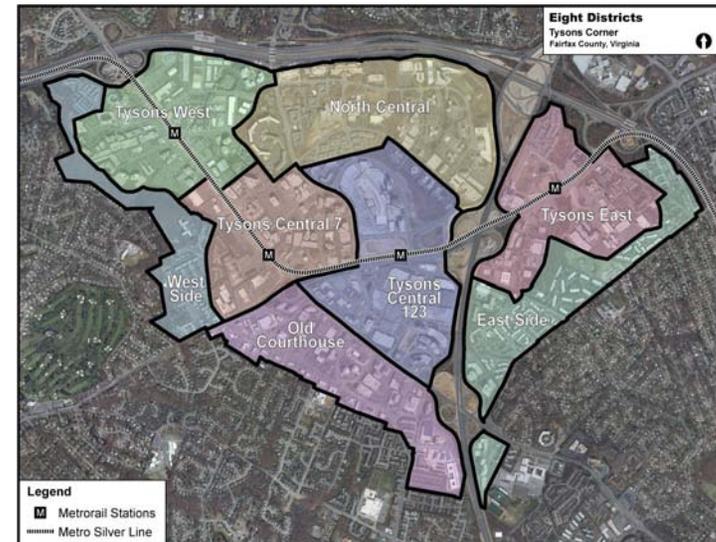
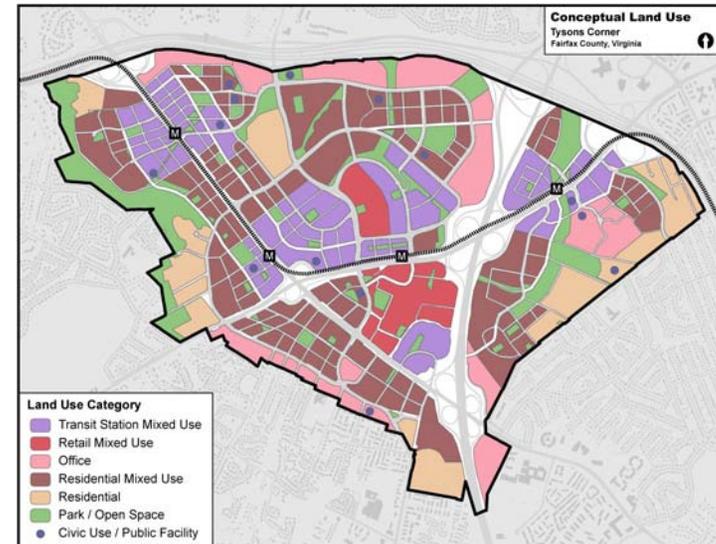
1. Use the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance to clarify what type and scale of development is appropriate in a given area.
2. Schedule an appointment with the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) staff to discuss the application and receive preliminary information about how to proceed.
3. Use the Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Design Standards for Tysons Corner Urban Center (see Chapter 8, Resources) from the Fairfax County Department of Transportation to understand the design standards for Tysons.
4. Use these Guidelines to understand specific urban design recommendations for the pedestrian realm and site and building design.
5. Early in the schematic design stage, make an appointment with DPZ staff for a pre-application meeting to receive preliminary comments on roadway design, site layout and vision.
6. Begin the design process and development of the Conceptual Development Plan (CDP) by incorporating guidance from the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and these Guidelines to create an urban street grid, appropriately dimensioned and designed streetscape, and well-located, high-functioning parks and open spaces.
7. Create a pedestrian hierarchy plan based on the recommendations in these Guidelines and existing conditions.
8. Site buildings according to the height guidance in the Comprehensive Plan and the Site Design and Building Massing recommendations in these Guidelines and the Comprehensive Plan.
9. Develop a conceptual utility strategy which addresses the placement of service lines and vaults without compromising the functionality and aesthetics of the public realm. At the same time, consider sustainable development strategies which address energy use, stormwater, and other resources, consistent with the guidance in the Comprehensive Plan. Integrate site design and building design to accommodate these elements.
10. Create building articulation, fenestration, and other details based on the guidance in Chapter 4 of these Guidelines that will create an inviting, dynamic pedestrian realm.
11. Address and incorporate other site specific issues, such as public facilities and art.

1.5 Location and Context

Tysons is located in northeastern Fairfax County and encompasses approximately 2,100 acres. Tysons is located halfway between downtown Washington D.C. and Dulles International Airport at the confluence of Interstate 495 (the Capital Beltway), the Dulles Airport Access and Toll Road, Route 7, and Route 123. It is bounded on the southeastern side by Magarity Road, on the southwestern side by commercial development along Gallows and Old Courthouse Roads and by Old Courthouse Stream Branch. It is bounded on the north by the Dulles Airport Access and Toll Road.

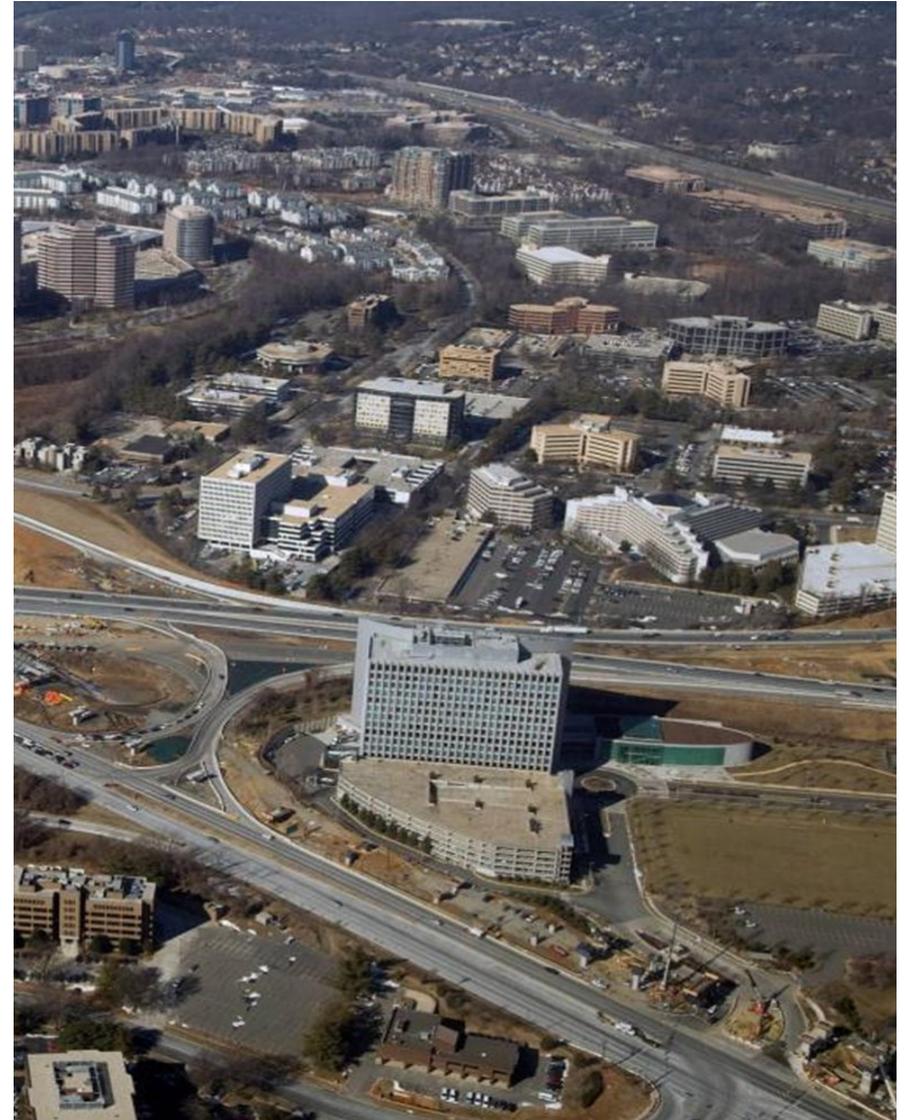
Tysons has the highest topographic elevations in Fairfax County and lies in the watershed for the Chesapeake Bay. Local riparian areas include Scotts Run and the Old Courthouse Spring Branch. Currently, it is estimated that there is 20 percent tree canopy cover in Tysons, most of which is in the existing Scotts Run and Old Courthouse Stream Valleys.

Tysons' neighbors include the residential communities of McLean, Vienna and Falls Church.



1.6 History of Development in Tysons

The last 60 years have witnessed remarkable growth and change throughout the Tysons area. In 1950, Tysons was the site of a general store at the crossroads of Routes 123 and 7, and much of the surrounding area consisted of dairy farms. The Tysons of 2011 has increased in land area and density to accommodate one quarter of Fairfax County's office space. In the 1960s, suburban office and retail development boomed in Tysons following the construction of the Capital Beltway and the Dulles Airport Access Road.



Opposite Top: Conceptual Land Use, Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan

Opposite Bottom: Eight Districts from the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan

Above Left: Tysons Corner, Image: Fairfax County Library Archives

Above Right: Tysons Aerial, Image: Fairfax County EDA

1.6 History of Development in Tysons

Major planning studies and Comprehensive Plan amendments in 1975, 1978, 1990, and 1994 sought to evolve planning guidance for the continued growth in Tysons. With the certainty of four new Metrorail stations under construction in Tysons and a subsequent influx of development proposals in 2004, the Board established the Tysons Land Use Task Force for the purpose of recommending updates to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. In 2008, after extensive study and public outreach, the Task Force presented its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. County staff and the Planning Commission were tasked with drafting the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to achieve the Task Force's vision for Tysons.

The future vision for Tysons is that of a high-density city that has dynamic walkable streets, an iconic skyline and quality public spaces. The Tysons Corner Urban Design Guidelines is a document that builds on the Comprehensive Plan recommendations to guide developers, staff and the Board towards implementing the next steps in creating the urban form in Tysons.





Opposite Top: Gannett, USA Today building, Tysons Corner, VA, Image: Fairfax Underground

Opposite Bottom: Mitre and Northrop Grumman, Tysons Corner, VA

Above: Capital One, Tysons Corner, VA