



Urban Design Plan Framework

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URBAN DESIGN - PLAN FRAMEWORK



Creating North Potomac Yard as a great place will involve the collective experience of architecture, public spaces, public art, urban design, and landscape design. An exclusive focus on density and land use will not result in a high quality cohesive urban community or an enduring sustainable place that will bring lasting value to the City. The combination of innovative and high-quality architecture, environmentally sustainable elements and great public and private spaces will create attractive places to live - places that will express the culture and tradition of Alexandria, while also enabling this area to be an effective long-term economic engine for the City.

It is crucial that as projects proceed, buildings, open space and the public realm be held to the highest standards of quality, ensuring that all of the redevelopment provides amenities and economic value for the City. Quality begets quality.

A. Urban Design Framework

The urban design framework plan (Figure 3.1) provides the basic structure for an interconnected series of streets, blocks, and parks. The required street grid is based on Alexandria's historical pattern of pedestrian-scale blocks, with expected variations in the street grid pattern at the Metrorail station and Crescent Gateway Park to create a distinctive and memorable street pattern at these visually prominent locations. The Metrorail station serves as a focal design element for Metro Square neighborhood. The framework streets will connect to existing streets within the rest of Potomac Yard, Potomac Yard Arlington, and align neighborhoods to the west. The Plan recommends the North Potomac Yard Urban Design Standards and Guidelines to augment the urban design elements of the Plan.

"If buildings are beautiful, higher density compounds that beauty. Conversely, if buildings are ugly, then higher density compounds that ugliness"

- Vince Graham

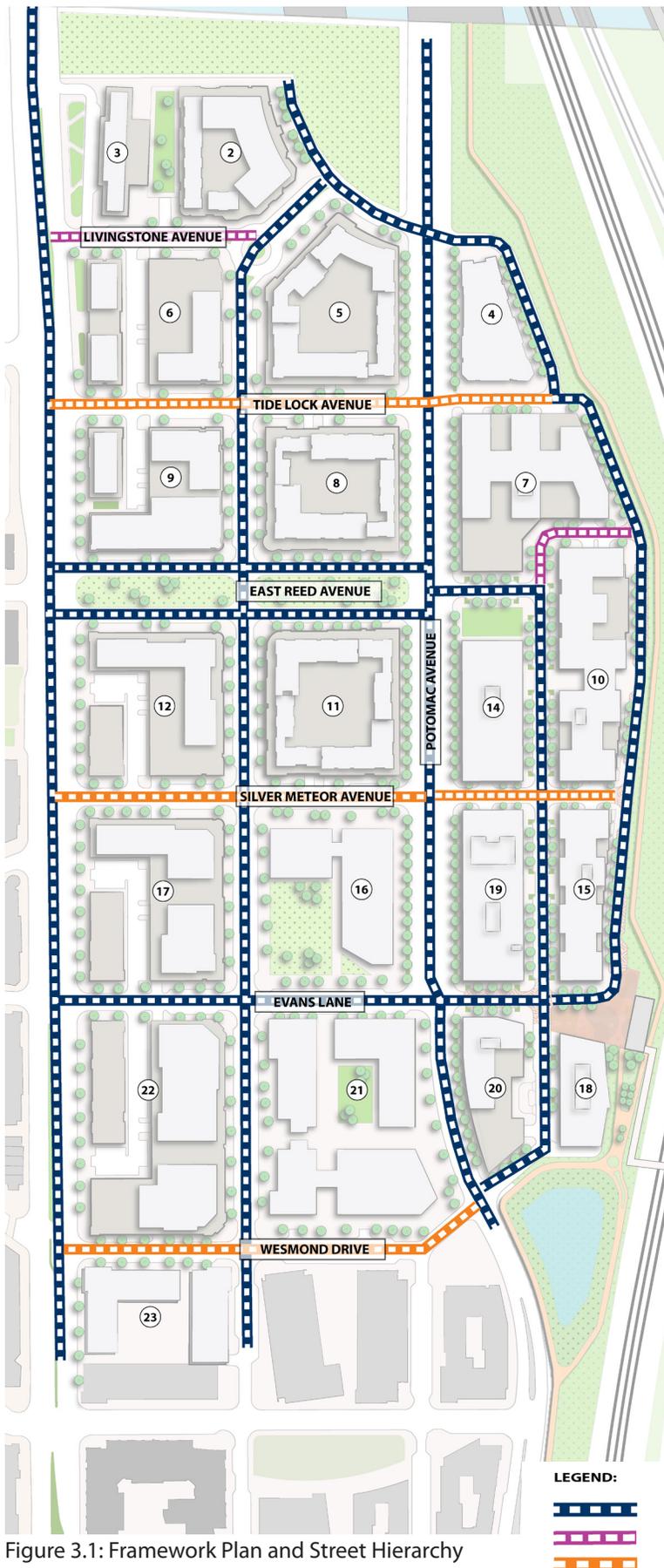


Figure 3.1: Framework Plan and Street Hierarchy

B. Street Hierarchy

A street hierarchy based on the function identifies prominent streets and streets for parking and service access (Figure 3.1). "A" streets are the most prominent streets; "B" streets connect "A" and "C" streets and provide general pedestrian and vehicular circulation for the neighborhoods. "C" streets provide a means of access and service entries to parking. The Design Guidelines may provide for service entries on "B" streets when buildings have no alley or "C" street frontage. The streets vary in width depending on their function, hierarchy and scale of adjacent buildings. The required width of the streets and sidewalks capture the characteristics of great urban streets. All streets will be designed to favor the pedestrian and keep the vehicle at low speeds. All streets will also be designed to be consistent with the City's Complete Street Design Guidelines.

The Plan also recommends that portions of the roads adjacent to Potomac Yard Park and the Metro station be designed as shared streets, intended to prioritize the pedestrian and provide a more seamless transition from the open space and the adjoining streets. Shared streets are also intended to have design elements such as pavers to differentiate from other streets within North Potomac Yard, and encourage slower traffic to maximize safety adjacent to Potomac Yard Park and Metro Plaza.

C. Creation of Three Distinct Urban Neighborhoods

A defining element of the City is its distinct neighborhoods, such as Old Town, Del Ray, Northeast, Lynhaven, Rosemont, and Parker-Gray. The City also includes numerous emerging or transitioning neighborhoods such as Carlyle, Eisenhower East, and Landmark/Van Dorn. The differences in identity, character, and scale of the various communities complement each other and contribute to the richness of the urban experience of the City. Consistent with the City's urban tradition of a series of interconnected, distinctive neighborhoods, the Plan requires three unique and identifiable neighborhoods (Figure 3.2).

- Metro Square Neighborhood
- Market Neighborhood
- Crescent Gateway Neighborhood

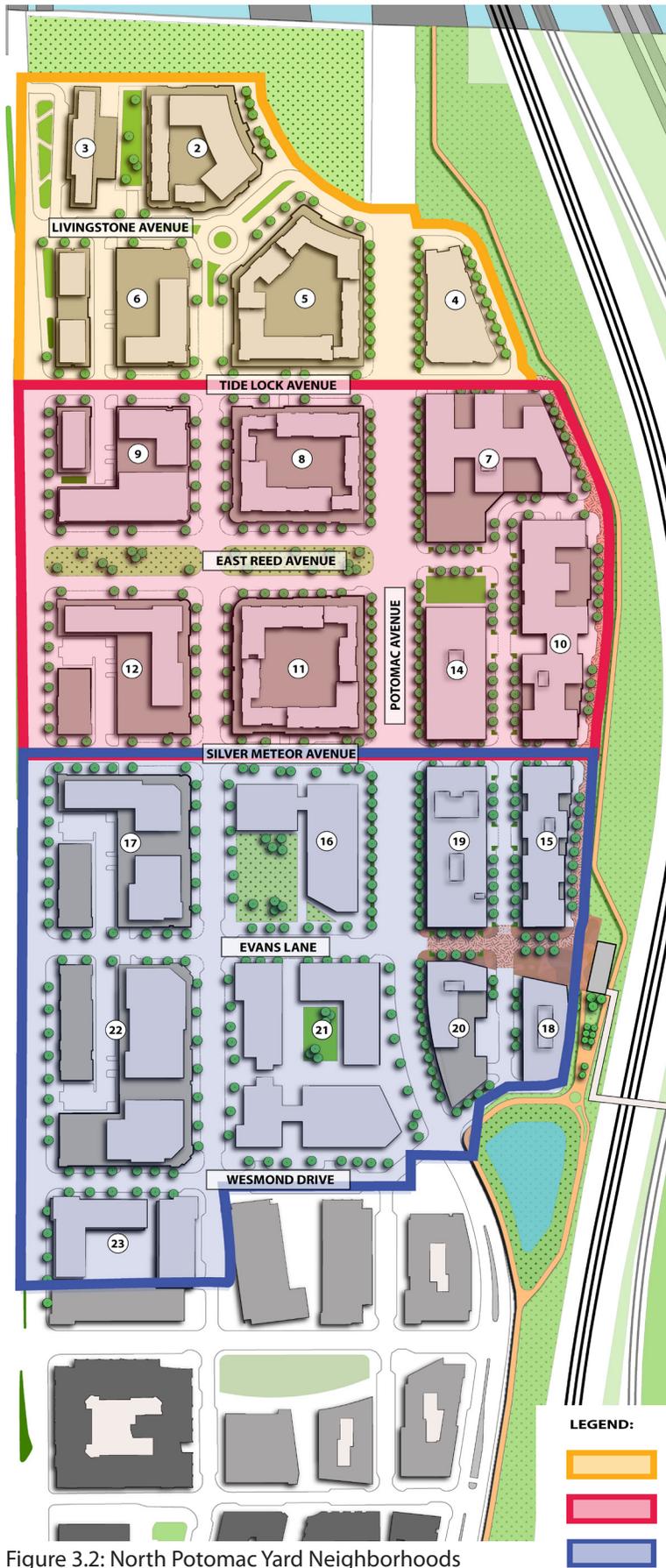


Figure 3.2: North Potomac Yard Neighborhoods



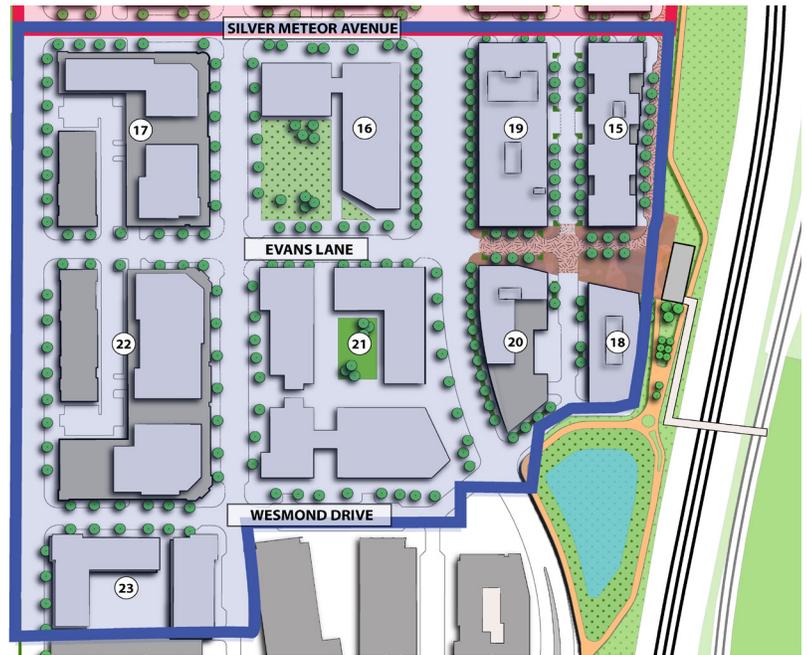


Figure 3.2a: The Metro Square Neighborhood

The Metro Square Neighborhood

This neighborhood is the transit hub of North Potomac Yard, where the Metrorail station, dedicated high-capacity Metroway, local and regional bus services, and bike lanes will converge. Two important public spaces define the character of the neighborhood, including Metro Plaza and Metro Square Park. These open spaces are discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 4: Land Uses*. The neighborhood is characterized by a mix of uses, but will be predominantly office with ground floor retail. In addition, uses such as entertainment and/or live performance arts are encouraged. An entertainment district could provide a unique identity for this neighborhood and would differentiate this new town center from others in the region. The entertainment and theater uses can utilize the office parking during the evening hours, and add evening activity within the neighborhood.





Figure 2b: The Market Neighborhood

The Market Neighborhood

This neighborhood is the heart of North Potomac Yard, where a significant amount of retail and restaurants will create an exciting regional destination. This neighborhood is where large format retailers may be located (see Analysis of Market Conditions in Appendix 2). This neighborhood will provide the greatest mix of uses, offering a range of housing and office uses above the ground floor retail uses near the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. One of the blocks may include an internal pedestrian walkway/ connection.

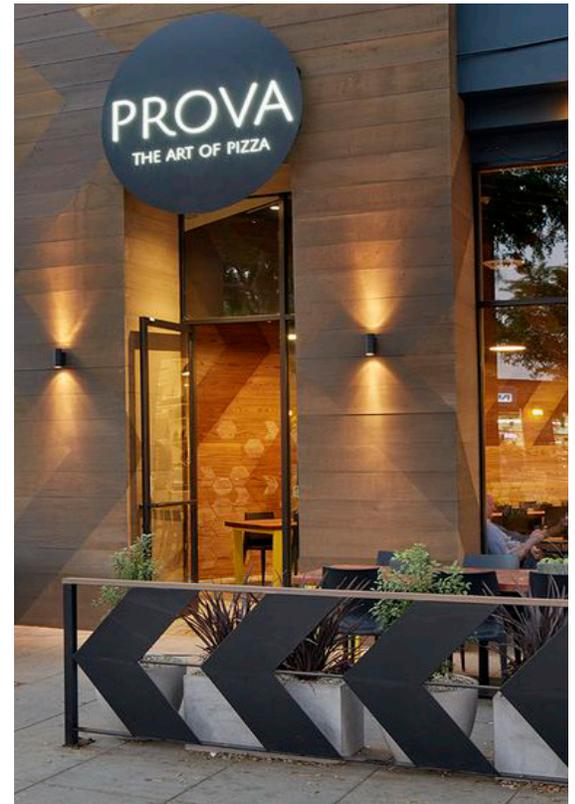
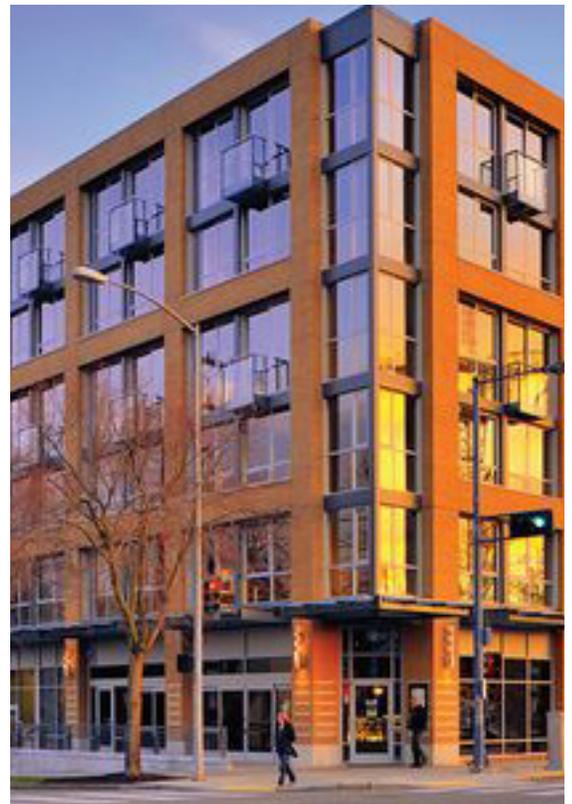
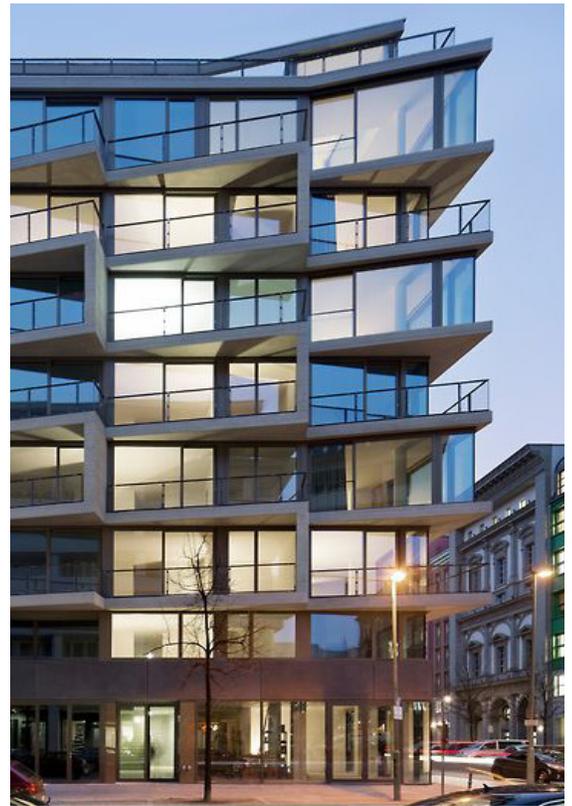




Figure 3.2c: Crescent Gateway Neighborhood

Crescent Gateway Neighborhood

Located in the northern portion of the site at the gateway to the City, this neighborhood primarily consists of residential uses, with other uses such as a hotel and a possible school. The neighborhood will be defined by its Crescent Park and will take advantage of the adjacent Four Mile Run and parks. The Crescent Park creates a residential address for the adjoining larger scale residential buildings. Buildings in this neighborhood are situated to enjoy views of the Potomac River and the Washington, D.C. skyline. A signature element of the neighborhood will be the required curved building facades adjacent to Crescent Park. Taller buildings are located within the central portion of the neighborhood and step down in height to the existing smaller-scale neighborhoods to the west and the George Washington Memorial Parkway to the east.



D. Gateways and Vistas

Similar to Old Town and South Potomac Yard, most east-west streets visually terminate into the Potomac River or linear park except within the Metro Square Neighborhood where the street terminates at the Metro station pavilion and plaza.

Throughout the development, buildings will visually reinforce prominent vistas along Route 1, Potomac Avenue and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The scale, character, elements and orientation of new buildings are required to highlight the designated gateways and vistas. Signature facades and gateway elements draw attention to specific points of interest and mark the location of entries and places for each of the neighborhoods serving (Figure 3.3). The Plan recommends variety in building massing, design, height, and distinctive building tops for taller buildings.

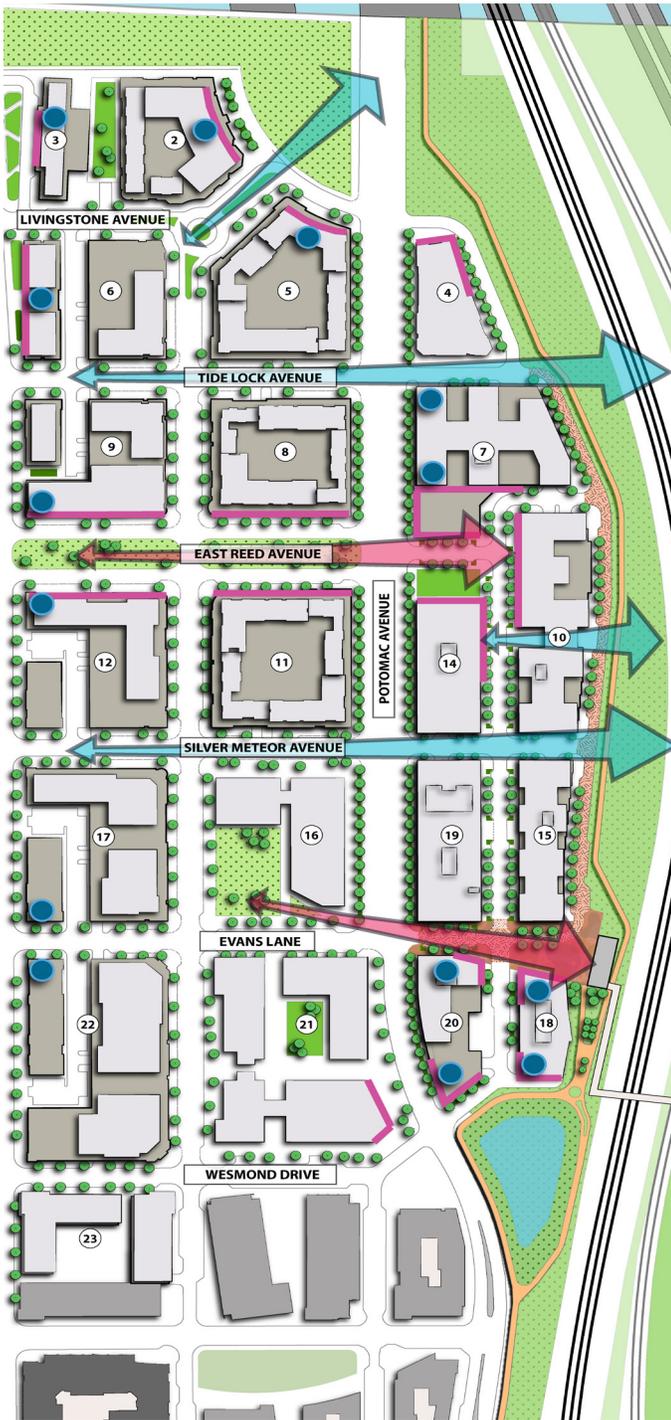
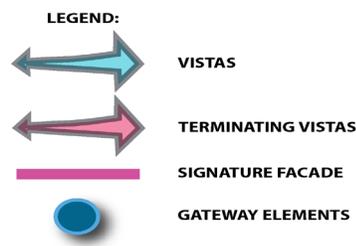


Figure 3.3: Gateways and Vistas



E. Urban and Building Form

The urban form (Figure 3.4) is based on the best of Alexandria's design elements such as pedestrian scale at the street level while creating distinctive urban buildings and forms. The buildings are intended to be contemporary, exhibit design excellence, and reinforce the public realm and character of each neighborhood. The higher density, mixed-use buildings in some of the neighborhoods will provide the urban density necessary to activate retail and restaurants as well as reinforce a sense of place, urban life, and vitality for Potomac Yard.

The basic bulk and form of buildings will be governed by the block-specific Development Summary (Table X), Maximum Building Heights (Figure X), and Minimum Building Heights (Figure X) found in Chapter 4: Land Use. Collectively, these standards will ensure that appropriate densities are maintained and that buildings will create an urban street wall from which the streets and open spaces will be defined and framed. Densities and building heights are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4: Land Use. The North Potomac Yard Design Standards and Guidelines address urban and building form elements such as building stepbacks, variation in heights, and form.

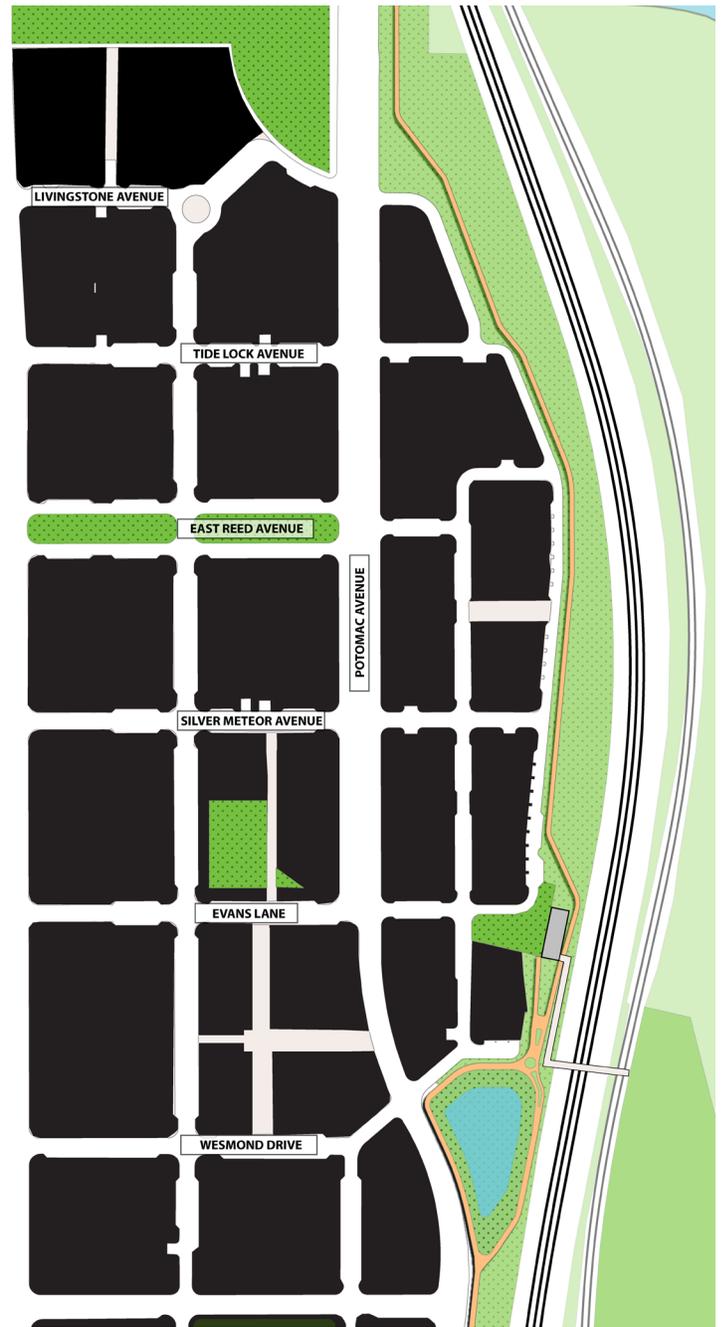


Figure 3.4: Urban and Building Form



F. Flexible Metrorail Zone

The location of the Metrorail station and access points have been established, and the Metrorail Station access pavilion is one of the primary and central components that has driven the function and design for the area around the Metrorail station.

The Plan recommends that the streets that contain the Metroway will need to be designed with as narrow a cross-section as possible, while still accommodating transit, to ensure that these streets do not create a visual or physical barrier for the neighborhoods within Potomac Yard or adjoining neighborhoods that will need to access the retail and Metrorail Station. See Chapter 6 Transportation, for a more detailed description of Potomac Avenue and the conceptual alignment of the Metroway.

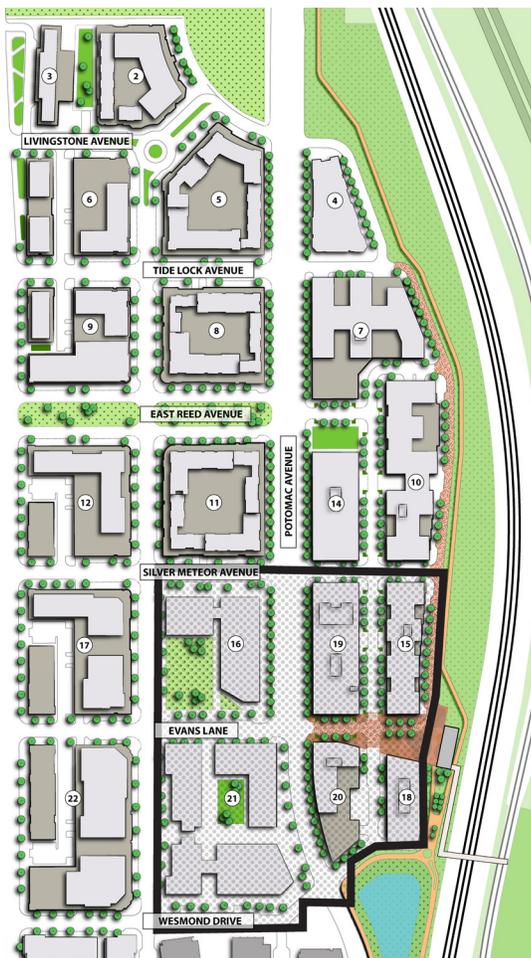


Figure 3.5: Flexible Metrorail Zone

The Flexible Metrorail Zone (Figure 3.5) is envisioned as an urban place centered around the Metrorail station, Metro Plaza, Metro Square Park, and adjacent buildings. Key goals of the Flexible Metrorail Zone include:

- Creation of an urban Metrorail station which primarily serves pedestrians and not automobiles;
- Maximization of the accessibility of the Metrorail station and high-capacity transitway route and stations;
- Emphasis on connectivity to the Metrorail station and high-capacity transitway stations,
- Maximization of building height and office density, and memorable building forms in the vicinity of the Metrorail station;
- Provision of a centrally-located, well-defined urban park;
- Potomac Avenue will connect to the planned street network to the north and south;
- Inclusion of a visual terminus for Evans Lane at Metro Plaza; and
- Provision of a meaningful connection to Potomac Yard Park.

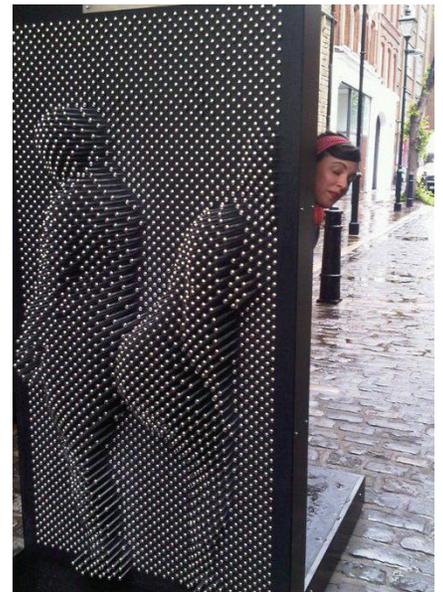
Refer to recommendation 3.2 for the specific requirements within the Flexible Metrorail Zone.



Figure 3.5a: Flexible Metrorail Zone

G. Public Art and History

Public art and historical interpretation help define a community, create a sense of place, celebrate the site's unique history, reinforce a design theme, engage and inspire the public, and add beauty to space that will be enjoyed for generations to come. Consideration should be given to the integration of public art and historical references, interpretation, and educational opportunities. The public art element of the Plan will need to be consistent with any city-wide public art funding policy and/or as required through the development review process. The Plan recommends a Public Art and History Interpretive Plan to integrate public art and history in a comprehensive way throughout the plan area.



Urban Design Recommendations

Framework Streets and Blocks

1. Require the streets and blocks depicted in the Framework Plan (Figure 3.1) to be constructed as part of any redevelopment and dedicated to the City.

2. Metrorail Zone

The final configuration of the streets, blocks, buildings, and open space shall be subject to the following:

- a. An approximately 0.70-acre shaped Metro Plaza shall be provided adjacent to the Metrorail Station and in the general shape and configuration as generally depicted in Figure 3.5a.
- b. An approximately 0.70-acre square-shaped park shall be centrally located within the Flexible Metrorail Zone on either Block 16 or 21 as generally depicted in 3.5a. Final location of Metro Square Park will be determined during Phase II.
- c. Parks shall be framed by streets, buildings, and uses that activate the parks/open spaces.
- d. Potomac Avenue shall align and connect to the Potomac Avenue right-of-way south of Landbay-F and to the final alignment of the Potomac Avenue right-of-way to the north of the Flexible Metrorail Zone.
- e. The overall nature of Potomac Avenue shall be maintained.
- f. The shape of the buildings in plan and form within the Flexible Metrorail Zone shall create distinct and memorable three-dimensional forms.
- g. Buildings surrounding the Metro Square Park shall be required to provide a primary entrance facing the approximately 0.70-acre park.
- h. Buildings on Potomac Avenue shall be designed to frame and activate Potomac Avenue.
- i. Buildings will be required to have more than one entrance and/or through lobbies for buildings with multiple street frontages.
- j. Pedestrian bridge(s) within the Flexible Metrorail Zone that access the Metrorail station shall be fully integrated into the design for the Metrorail station building and adjacent open spaces.
- k. The alignment of Potomac Avenue shall be such that the Potomac Yard Park is continuous.
- l. Development blocks east of Potomac Avenue shall be of sufficient size for market-acceptable building floor plates.
- m. The blocks and buildings shall be subject to the minimum height and density

provisions and other applicable zoning provisions, design guidelines, and the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan.

- n. The streets and buildings shall be configured to accommodate transit and transit stations.
 - o. The streets shall be configured to provide a fine-grained interconnected street grid network and spacing consistent with and connecting to streets outside the Flexible Metrorail Zone.
 - p. Evans Lane will connect from Route 1 to Potomac Avenue.
3. Require the street hierarchy to define space and differentiate the character of streets and neighborhoods (Figure XX).
 4. Require streets to emphasize pedestrians and bicyclists.
 5. Allow for internal pedestrian connections and alleys within the blocks.
 6. Improve and enhance the Route 1 frontage with streetscape improvements, buildings, and landscaping
 7. Require street design to adhere to the City's Complete Street Design Guidelines.

Creation of Three Distinct Urban Neighborhoods

8. The parks and open spaces depicted in the Framework Plan shall be required within each neighborhood as a defining element of each neighborhood (Figure 3).
9. Create three distinctive and unique neighborhoods. Encourage the use of history as inspiration for the design of the open space, public realm, and buildings. Encourage the use of public art to establish distinct neighborhood identities and create unifying themes for the neighborhoods.
10. Encourage a mix of innovative building typologies within each neighborhood.
11. The Metrorail station shall serve as a focal design element for the Metro Square Neighborhood.
12. Explore the possibility of providing cultural and civic uses to reinforce the character of each neighborhood.
13. Incorporate distinctive wayfinding signage throughout North Potomac Yard that orients pedestrians, cyclists, and auto users to prominent sites and locations within and around the Plan area.

Gateways and Vistas

14. Require variety in building massing, design, and height.
15. Use heights and variety in heights, building materials, orientation, and dimensions to create distinctive building tops for taller buildings.
16. Provide distinctive building forms and architecture at the designated gateway locations

Urban and Building Form

17. Balance the aesthetic and functional criteria of sustainable design.
18. Create an urban building scale and relationship between buildings, streets and open spaces that ensure urban relationships of the buildings and sidewalk, and maximizes walkability and the use of transit.
19. Require any building with government tenants or tenants who require security measures to meet the vision, applicable provisions of the Master Plan and North Potomac Yard Design Standards.
20. Adhere to the North Potomac Yard Urban Design Standards to implement the vision of the Plan.

Public Art and History

21. Require the submission of a Public Art & History Interpretive Plan for North Potomac Yard and explore relationships between public art and the history of the site.
22. Integrate small and large-scale public art which considers the history of the site, as well as thematic, artistic, and cultural ideas into new development and the public realm, including the following areas: trails, transit infrastructure, open spaces, buildings, site furnishings, lighting, gateways, and wayfinding.