

# Three Decades of Smart Growth: Arlington's Urban Village



## An Overview

*Christopher Zimmerman*  
*Arlington County Board*

January 26, 2006

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## Arlington, Virginia



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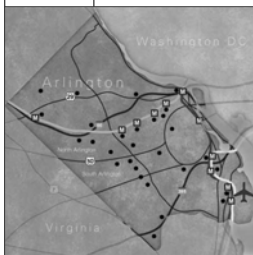
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# Arlington Today



- **Population**  
~200,000
- **Jobs**  
>200,000
- **Housing units**  
>90,000

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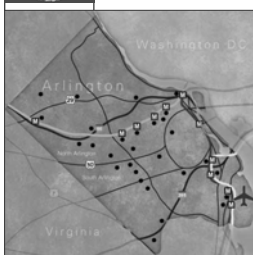
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# Arlington Today



- **Daytime population**  
is over 260,000
- **County has over 34 million sq. ft. of private office space**

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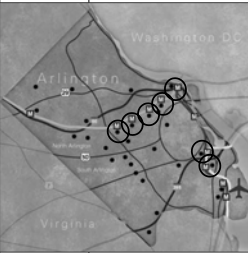
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## Arlington development -- Key role of Metro



- Transformation into economic center followed introduction of transit in late 70s
- Development in 2 Metro corridors

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## Transit in Arlington

- Key decision was re-orientation of Orange line from I-66 to Rosslyn-Ballston corridor
- Enabled creation of new downtown
- Urban village, rather than suburban development

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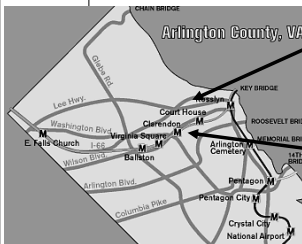
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## The R-B Corridor (Orange line)



- Instead of running on the highway up here . . .
- . . . the line was sent underground to Ballston

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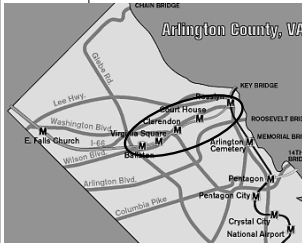
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## The R-B Corridor (Orange line)



- 5 stations
- 24 million sq. ft. of office space -- over 17 since 1980
- 24,500 housing units -- 3 1/2 times as many as in 1970

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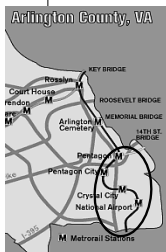
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## The Jeff Davis Corridor (Blue and Yellow lines)



- Pentagon
- Pentagon City, Crystal City
- National Airport

**12 million sq. ft. of Office space**

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## Planning Principles

### "Smart growth"

- Density confined largely to R-B and JD corridors --
- Of total commercial office (approaching 40 million sq. ft.) 92 % is in the two corridors
- Maintained low-density neighborhoods outside corridor, preserved green space

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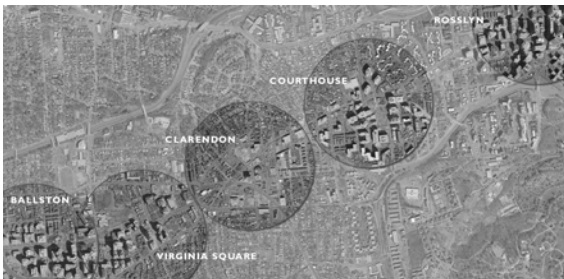
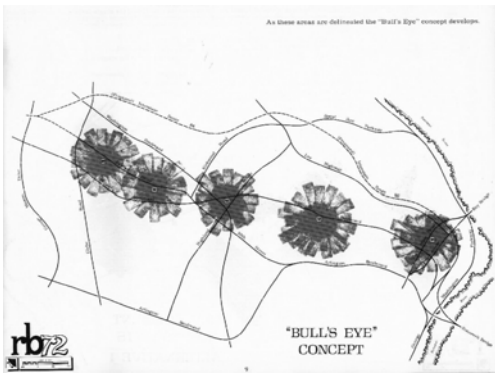
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## What Arlington Did

- Set in motion a series of planning efforts to look at the future of the county
- The major policy goals that resulted were:
  - Strive for a 50/50 tax base mix of residential and commercial
  - Strive for mixed use development with a significant level of residential
  - Preserve existing single family and garden apartments
  - Focus redevelopment within 1/4 mile of metro station entrances to encourage transit ridership

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## What Arlington Did



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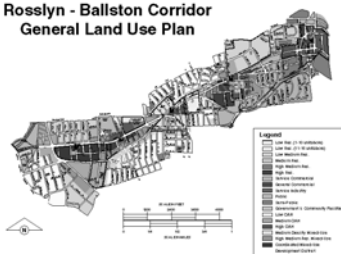
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## What Arlington Did – Tools

- Defined the corridor on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP)
- Adopted unique designations, specifying higher densities, mixed uses based on development goals

Rosslyn - Ballston Corridor  
General Land Use Plan



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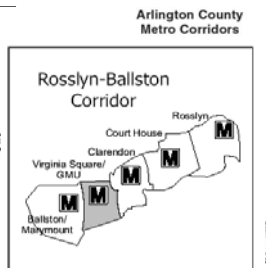
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## What Arlington Did – Tools

- Then developed **sector plans** for each Metro station, focused on an area approximately 1/4 mile from the station
- Give detailed guidance on County expectations for development



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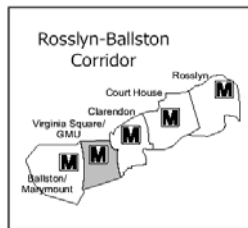
## What Arlington Did – Tools

### Virginia Square Sector Plan November 2002



Arlington, Virginia

Reprinted from the Staff 11/02/02



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## What Arlington

- The sector plans identify
  - Desired public improvements
  - Location for retail
  - Urban design standards
  - Public infrastructure needs
  - Open space, streetscape standards
- They are intended to tell landowners, developers and residents what the future of the station area will be and how individual parcels can be redeveloped



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## What Arlington Did – Tools

### Aside: The Virginia Context

- Limitations on local authority
- “Dillon’s Rule”
- Property Rights

And now back to our show . . .

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## What Arlington Did – Tools

- GLUP, sector plans for Metro corridors indicate County’s willingness to rezone for higher density
- In response to development proposals, county will rezone for higher density use shown on GLUP
- Lower (pre-existing) zoning remains in place until proposal receives County Board approval of a special exception **site plan**

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## What Arlington Did – Tools

- The site plan allows significantly higher density & height than underlying zoning (1.5 - 3.8, 55 ft - 153 ft)
- Site plan is approved only if:
  - It complies with the standards of the zoning ordinance,
  - Is in compliance with the mix required by the GLUP
  - Provides the features called for in the sector plan for the area - including public improvements

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## What Arlington Did – Tools

- Property owner always maintains underlying by-right zoning until they implement approved site plan
- The zoning categories for site plans actually have lower base rights than the existing zoning
- Since owner requests rezoning reduced rights is not an issue

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## The Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor

Before & After



## ROSSLYN



*... Then*



*& Now...*

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## ROSSLYN



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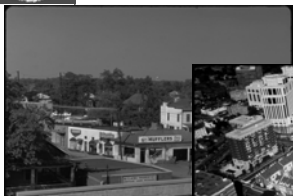
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## COURT HOUSE



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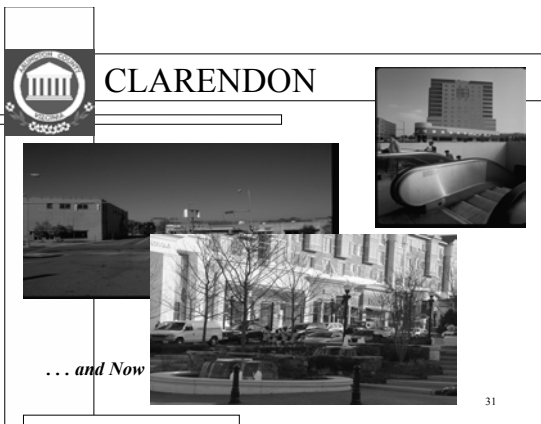
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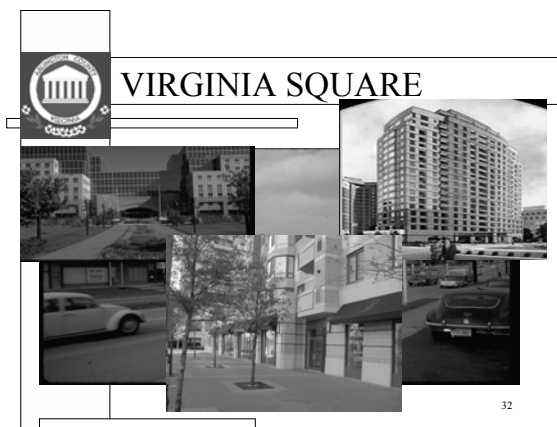
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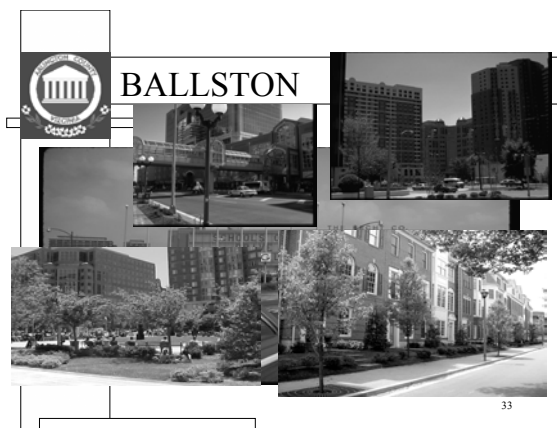
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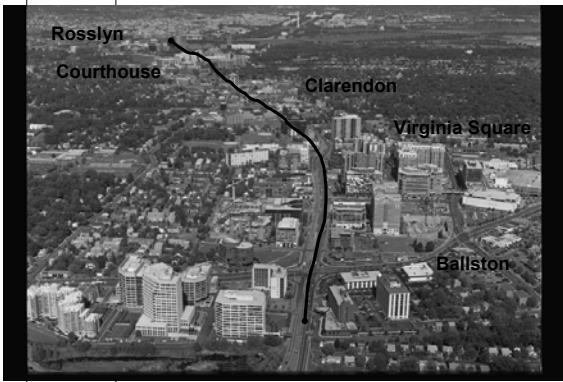
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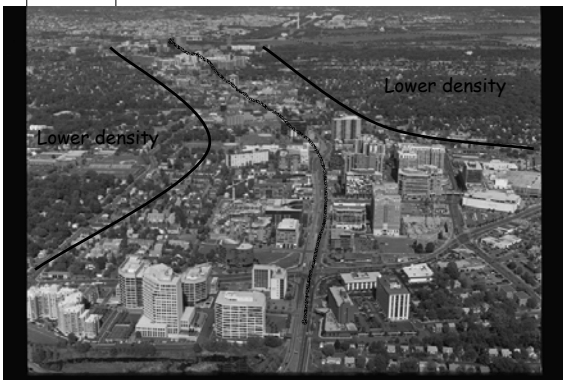
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## Assessing Our Success



## Mixed-use Development

- *People live there:* Station areas include more than 30,000 residential units – and rising
- *People shop there:* 4.6 million sq. ft. of retail (mostly street-level)
- *People work there:* Today Arlington has more office space than downtown  
... Dallas ... Pittsburgh ... Denver ...

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## R-B Corridor Development

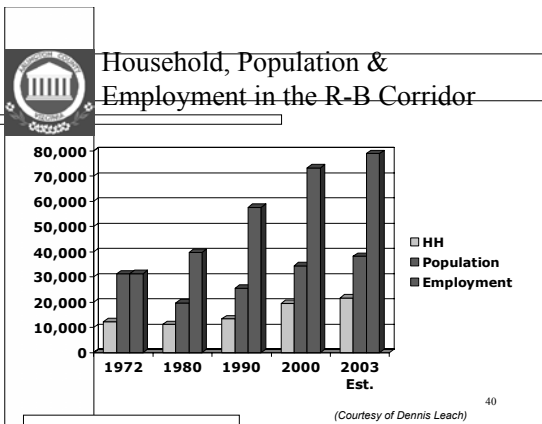
### 1970

- Office  
**4,168,033**
- Residential  
**6,036 UNITS**
- % Residential to office  
**36%**

### 2001

- Office  
**19,793,263**
- Residential  
**21,813 UNITS**
- % Residential to office  
**43%**

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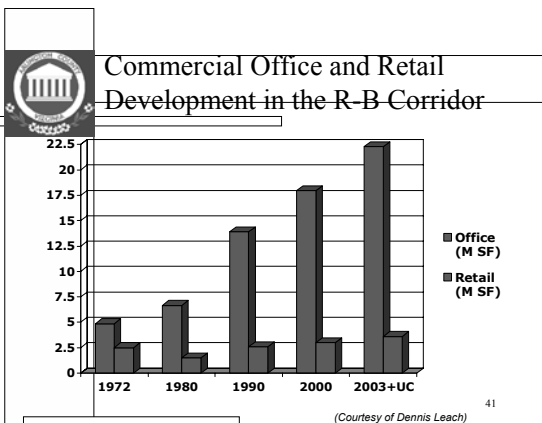
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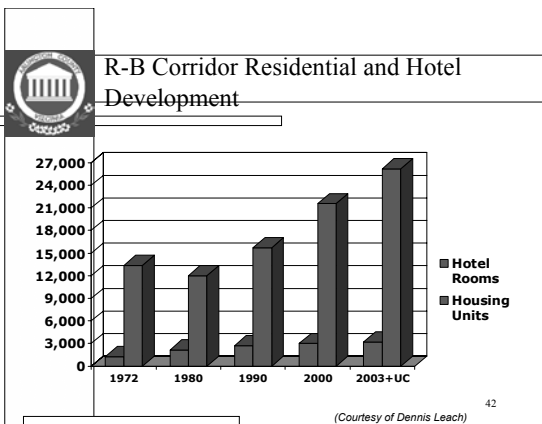
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## Market Demand

- Office rents command a premium over suburban locations in the region
- Office occupancy rates have outperformed most business locations in the last two business cycles
- Residential demand is very strong across a number of housing types
- Retail vacancy rates are low and supply is expanding

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## Fiscal Impacts

- The R-B Corridor produces almost one-third of the County's real estate tax revenue
- The 7 station sectors in the 2 corridors - constituting one-tenth or less of the County's land area - produce **more than half of County tax revenue**
- Arlington enjoys the lowest tax burden in the Washington Metropolitan area

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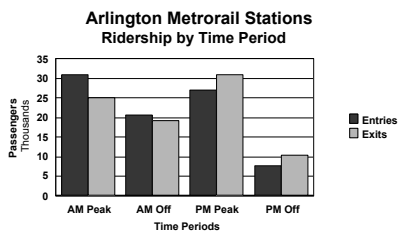
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## TOD Impacts



Balanced development -- balanced ridership

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## Benefits of TOD

- **Getting to work – transit use**

- National avg: 4.7 %
- Fairfax County: 7.3 %
- Arlington: 23.3%

*And, those who walk to work are double the national avg, 5 times Fairfax*

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## Benefits of TOD

- **Car ownership (*vehicles per household*)**

- Nationally, almost 90% have a car; 55% have 2 or more
- In Fairfax, 96% have at least one; two-thirds have 2 or more
- Arlington: 12% have zero cars; less than 40% have 2 or more

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## Benefits of TOD

- **Numbers are more dramatic in Arlington's Metro corridors**

- Car ownership: 17.9% have zero cars, while less than 25% have 2 or more
- Getting to work: Less than half drive
  - 39.3% use transit
  - 10.5% walk or bike
  - 2.3 work at home

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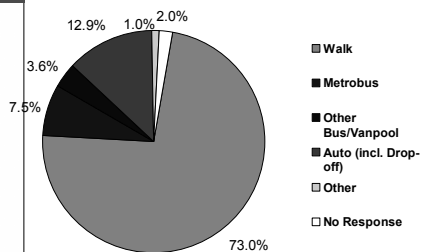
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### Metrorail Access at 5 R-B Corridor Stations - 39,500 Daily Boardings



(Courtesy of Dennis Leach)

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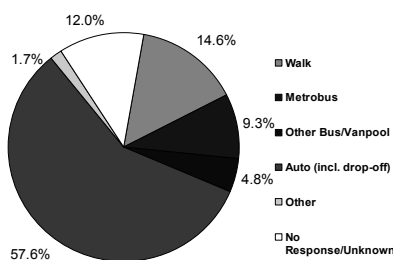
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### Metrorail Access at 4 Suburban Orange Line Stations - 29,250 Daily Boardings



(Courtesy of Dennis Leach)

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### Transportation System Performance

- Despite growth in corridors, and throughout region, traffic growth in corridors has been modest
- Major increases on the interstates (I-66 and I-395) due to regional and local factors
- Stable to modest increases of traffic on most arterial streets
- Stable to modest increases in traffic on residential streets

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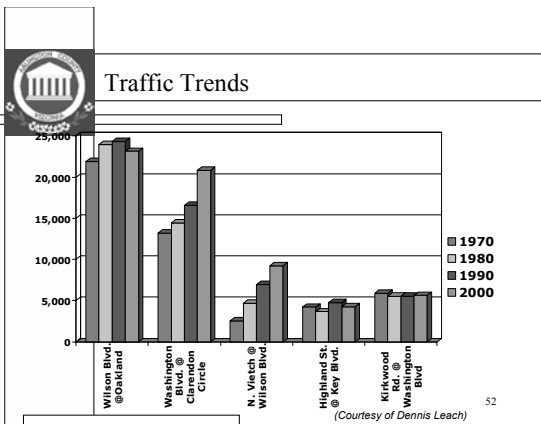
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**EPA 2002 --  
First National Award  
for Smart Growth**

**NATIONAL AWARD FOR  
Smart Growth  
ACHIEVEMENT**

Overall Excellence  
in Smart Growth  
**Winner**

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**Assessing Our Success**

**Not to mention --**

- League of American Bicyclists -- Bicycle Friendly Community designation
- APTA -- Outstanding Public Transportation System Award (for ART)
- American Podiatric Association -- Best Walking City in America
- Sports Illustrated - NRPA -- Sportstown for Virginia

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**Thank you**



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