



**VOLUME II**  
**DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES**  
**RICHMOND HIGHWAY**

MARCH 2020

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Image Credit: MVA Architects

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

- 1A Overview of the Two Volumes of the Design Guidelines**
- 1B Purpose and Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan**
- 1C Applicable Area**
- 1D Structure of the Richmond Highway District Design Guidelines**
- 1E Flexibility in Applying Design Guidelines**
- 1F Future Amendments**

## 1A OVERVIEW OF THE TWO VOLUMES OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Urban Design Guidelines for Fairfax County's Commercial Revitalization Districts/Areas (CRDs/CRAs) are contained in two documents, collectively referred to as the "*Design Guidelines*."

- **Volume I: Urban Design Guidelines for Fairfax County's Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas (Volume I)** contains urban design principles and strategies that are applicable generally to all of the CRDs and CRAs.
- **Volume II: District Design Guidelines (Volume II or District Guidelines)** contains urban design guidelines that are tailored specifically for each CRD or CRA.

The two volumes of the *Design Guidelines* should be used together to inform design decisions. There may be instances where guidance provided in *Volume II* may elaborate on or contradict material provided in *Volume I*. In such instances, the guidance in *Volume II* supersedes the guidance in *Volume I*.

## 1B PURPOSE AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The *Design Guidelines* serve as companion documents to the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan describes desired land uses and levels of intensity of development and provides general guidance on built form and open space. The *Design Guidelines* provide detailed guidance regarding the desired character of the built environment, including site design, building massing, and the treatment of interim conditions; are used to inform the design of components of the public realm such as streetscapes, plazas, parks, and landscaped areas; and are a complement to the Comprehensive Plan for use by citizens, developers, landowners, designers, Fairfax County staff, the Fairfax County Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors when either planning, designing, proposing, or reviewing development proposals.

## 1C APPLICABLE AREA

The Richmond Highway *District Guidelines* apply to development proposals for all properties located within the Richmond Highway area. The Richmond Highway area is defined as the geographic area encompassing the following: all six of the Richmond Highway Community Business Centers (CBCs), all six of the Suburban Neighborhood Areas (SNAs), and Land Units R & Q of the Huntington Transit Station Area (TSA). There is a zoning overlay district called the Commercial Revitalization District (CRD) that is mostly analogous with the CBCs, with some minor differences. Graphic 1 depicts the boundaries of the Richmond Highway area's CBCs, SNAs, and CRDs, as well as Land-Units R & Q of the Huntington TSA.

The CBCs are planned for the greatest densities and a wide range of uses in the Richmond Highway area. These densities and uses will be supported with new transit options, including nine Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations and, longer-term, two Metrorail stations. The SNAs are lower in density and generally include a mix of residential and neighborhood-serving retail uses. The Huntington TSA Land Units R & Q are planned primarily for higher intensity residential development and community-serving retail uses.

**This volume applies to all properties in the Richmond Highway area, regardless of whether it is in a CBC, CRD, SNA or land-units R&Q of the Huntington TSA.**

**1D STRUCTURE OF THE RICHMOND HIGHWAY DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES**

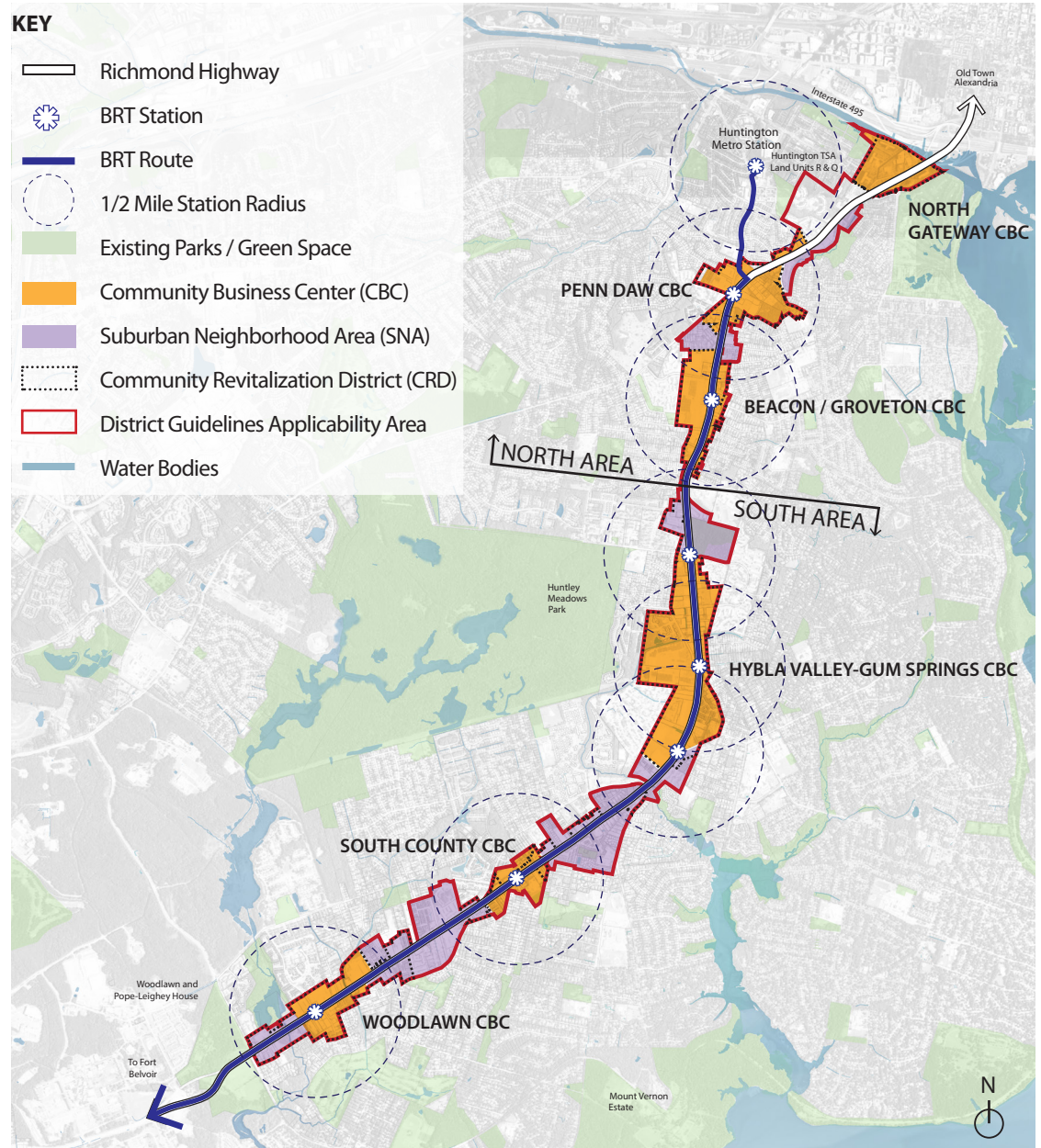
The *District Guidelines* for the Richmond Highway area are organized into seven chapters. This chapter, **Chapter 1**, introduces the *District Guidelines* and explains how and where they should be applied. **Chapter 2** presents the vision and urban design framework for the entire Richmond Highway area. **Chapter 3** provides urban design guidance for major public realm features, including streetscape paving and furnishings, trees, linear parks, and stormwater management facilities. **Chapter 4** contains building design recommendations. **Chapter 5** contains recommendations specific to the Richmond Highway Transit Boulevard<sup>1</sup> streetscape and frontage. **Chapter 6** provides CBC-specific guidance for urban design elements that shape and reinforce the unique character of each CBC. Finally, **Chapter 7** addresses uses that require special design considerations (such as drive-through uses, service stations, large retail sales establishments, landscaping and screening between uses, and interim streets).

In Chapters 3 through 7, topical sections are organized as follows:

- **Design Principles:** summarize each urban design element, defines the goals to be achieved, and explains the purpose of each element, as well as the desired conditions needed to successfully achieve its intent.
- **Design Strategies:** provide concepts, schemes, dimensions, and details to articulate a means to implement the ideas contained in the Design Principles. In some instances, additional Design Features and Implementation Strategies are included to supplement the design strategies.
- **Suggested Specifications:** include suggested products with model numbers, sizes, colors, and installation recommendations to illustrate the intended appearance and quality for certain design elements (see Chapter 3).
- **References:** within the topical sections, references are made to related sections of the *Volume 1* guidelines, along with other relevant guidelines, standards, and resources.

<sup>1</sup> In this document, the terms “Richmond Highway Transit Boulevard” and “Richmond Highway” are used interchangeably.

**GRAPHIC 1: RICHMOND HIGHWAY AREA CBCs, SNAs AND CRDs**



## 1E FLEXIBILITY IN APPLYING DESIGN GUIDELINES

Flexibility and agility in zoning and development review is necessary to respond to evolving development trends and technologies. The content in this document is designed to be applied as guidelines rather than as “one size fits all” requirements. The *District Guidelines* are meant to offer design guidance only, with flexibility in how a design element may be realized, provided the intent can be achieved. Thus, the *District Guidelines* are not prescriptive; architectural style, specific street furnishings, plant species, and paver types are not dictated. The suggested palette allows for flexibility and innovation.

The *District Guidelines* are not a substitute for the codes and ordinance provisions associated with the development review process. However, the County’s Public Facilities Manual (PFM) does permit the recommendations in the *District Guidelines* to substitute for the PFM standards (Fairfax County PFM 2-1100).

There will be instances where the urban design and streetscape recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and the *Design Guidelines* cannot be accommodated in the manner envisioned, even with reasonable adjustment and flexibility. Where pre-existing site constraints are present, where infill or expansion of buildings or other existing features limit the ability of a development to satisfy the urban design recommendations, or when modifications to the streetscape guidelines are necessary to conform to applicable County and/or Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) requirements, variations may be permitted. Modifications or alternative strategies should be provided on the Development Plan in written or graphic form. An explanation of how the modification or alternative meets the intent of the Guidelines may be requested.

## 1F FUTURE AMENDMENTS

As the Richmond Highway area develops and evolves, the *District Guidelines* may need to be amended to respond to those changing conditions. In addition, new products, materials, and technologies, along with maintenance challenges and innovations, may provide opportunities for different design strategies. These changes should be reflected in updated versions of the *District Guidelines*.



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