

## WEBA QUESTIONNAIRE

Andrew Macdonald (I) Mayoral Candidate

AndrewMacdonaldforMayor.com

1. As far as public transportation goes in each location, I support bus, Metro, and perhaps new BRT systems in the appropriate places. I support the expansion of bike trails and walking and making things more pedestrian friendly. I support more residential and retail mixed-use development around the underutilized metro areas in the Eisenhower Valley. I also would implement a coordinated system in the West End, linking Landmark Mall, Beauregard, and the Duke Street corridors together, as well as with Eisenhower Van Dorn.

As far as private transportation solutions, we need to focus mainly on trying to improve public transit options and encouraging development that is near the retail centers in both place to minimize the need for people to use their cars. I recognize, however, that we will never be able to eliminate car use, and we will have to think about improving parking, way finding, and traffic management strategies for roads, such as signalization. I am generally NOT in favor of widening roads or adding more roads. However, I recognize that the Eisenhower valley has a land-locked quality that requires careful planning, but it should not happen to the detriment of other neighborhoods.

It is clear that we need to work with the business community to evaluate this issue more. This should be part of the discussion in the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan, and of course in redevelopment planning for the Landmark Mall.

Overall, we need to avoid “isolated islands of commerce” like Landmark Mall, Fox Chase Mall, Bradlees Shopping Mall etc. and instead work toward connectivity so the many current and future residents of apartments/condos/townhouses can shop without always having to use a car. On Van Dorn and Beauregard, expand buses to the Pentagon during non-Rush Hour for convenience so users don’t have to take the DASH bus, which takes a much longer time to go downtown, via King St. or Braddock stations.

What is the time frame for these transportation concepts to be implemented? As soon as possible, but only after careful planning and input from the community.

2. The City of Alexandria and the Eisenhower Partnership has conducted a number of studies looking at these issues. Of course Alexandria AEDP is involved in trying to

promote the City's business interests. I think we may need to reconfigure the entire effort to create a more strategic planning effort in general in the City to attract.

Attracting new business begins with good planning, whether in the Beauregard area or along Eisenhower Avenue, or along Landmark. First, we need to define more clearly what kind of development we want in a given area. In other words, do we want more residential growth near metros and so on, so that shoppers have a chance to utilize local businesses? I think that we need to invest, perhaps using business improvement districts, or TIF (Tax Increment Financing), to implement parks, bike trails, streetscape, signage, transportation, that will attract good mixed-use development to the area, which in turn is likely to attract more business, and create more economic opportunities for business.

I think we need to develop long-term strategies for each of the parts of town that you are concerned about, starting with good small area plans, and progressing to a specific infrastructure implementation plan, that will lay the foundation for development. The bottom line is that we can do more to create a sense of place and community in the areas in question, we will have a much better chance of attracting small businesses and large organizations like the National Science Foundation, which wants to locate in the Eisenhower Valley. I believe that allowing BRAC -133 to move to the Mark Winkler Center was not in the best interest of the City from a long-range planning perspective.

I think we should make sure to preserve areas along the Eisenhower Valley where there will be industrial uses, too. We should look at what we can do to convert some of the larger industrial use sites into other uses (for example, Virginia Paving, Covanta). In turn, this will attract businesses that are more consistent with a modern retail environment.

Perhaps we should survey residents in the 20 to 35-age range to determine their needs. We should focus business development on smaller stores that target niche markets, rather than mega stores, like Best Buy or Harris Teeter. This might mean developing things like a pet care facility, for those young people with pets; a wedding planning office (this is the right age group); an adventure travel bureau, for those with incomes, interest and vacation time; and assortment of restaurants, with adequate parking, to serve both families and those diners with more up-market tastes. Also consider leasing agreements to bring in providers of federal services like passport office so they wouldn't have to go to downtown DC; or city services, like driver's license renewals, payment of taxes, securing various permits etc. so they don't have to go to Old Town.

Time frame: We need to start to identify the locations that could be improved or rehabilitated now and begin landscaping, road improvements, and perhaps even

create special Business Improvement Districts, as well as begin transportation planning in a transparent way to include those who live and work in the area.

3. I believe we should complete the planning process and master plan for the Eisenhower Valley as soon as possible. We have some of the ingredients already in terms of some of the Small Area Plans, including Beauregard and Eisenhower East, and the Industrial Use study for Eisenhower West. Clearly, we need to now focus on the aspects of Economic Development in these areas.

4. Despite many hours of meetings on the Beauregard Small Area Plan the concerns of local residents were often ignored. The community wants revenue-generating commercial and retail endeavors, not just a glut of condos and townhouses. Shirlington is a good role model for incorporating a first-rate theater and library, with diverse array of small stores, dining choices and needs-based opportunities for one-stop shopping. They want to see the natural environment protected, land set aside for schools and parks and a transportation plan that is cost effective and well thought out.

- a. We have already adopted a Beauregard Small Area Plan, but we have not adopted the rezoning that must accompany it. I personally feel that there are significant problems with the plan that were identified by numerous community stakeholder members and groups that must be resolved before we move forward with this plan. I think the Beauregard planning process was rushed and the result is that we do not have the best plan we could have, nor do we have the kind of community support that we need and should have before approving such a plan. This is not in the best interest of the community, either, given the close relationship that exists between the neighborhoods and business. I support sitting down with the community and revising the plan immediately.
- b. The City has not done nearly enough to encourage redevelopment of Landmark Mall. We are always waiting for the major landowners in the area to get together to begin the process. They in turn seem always to be waiting for market forces to change. We need to sit down with them and with groups like WEBA to get moving. This is an area where we can increase density significantly in ways that will improve the economic well being of the City and the business community of the West End. As mayor, I will make this a top priority and be much more

involved in promoting this sort of redevelopment activity, in concert with community and business concerns.

**Landmark Mall**---instead of resembling Death Valley, it needs a shot of vitality to appeal to a mix of ages, incomes and interest. What about a skating rink like they use in Ballston? Or a dramatic theater like they used near Pentagon City, when Arena was being renovated? Or a movie theater that would show cartoons on Saturdays for the kids, Art Films on weekends, and foreign films with subtitles during the week, as well as main movies? Transit to and from there needs to be vastly improved.

C. We should complete the Eisenhower West planning process as soon as possible. There are two studies, an industrial and use study plan for the western part of the valley, as well as a study conducted by the Eisenhower Partnership and the Urban Land Institute, which can form the basis for the small area plan and the planning process. Studies by the Urban Land Institute showed we need to begin implementing a variety of community improvements in the valley that will encourage redevelopment by creating a better sense of place and making the valley more livable and community centered.

In other words, I think there are things we can start to do before we have fully fleshed out the Eisenhower West small area plan in place. In fact, I think that part of one of the problems in the City is that we spend an enormous amount of time coming up with plans but not implementing them. We need to focus more clearly on pieces of plans and studies that will set the stage for reasonable, smart development that will set Alexandria apart from its neighboring jurisdictions and create a unique identity and ensure that when development does arrive, that we have established a real sense of place.

**Eisenhower Corridor**---the City seriously veered away from its original plan that the focus should be on revenue-generating commercial and retail properties. And then they let the marketplace dictate too much of the end result. With a Metro stop at either end of this long street, you have good access and you can have a regular run by a circulator bus or a trolley to make shopping there easier.

5. We can do more to market existing businesses using groups like the Alexandria Conventions and Visitors Association (ACVA); we can look at revising some of the business taxes to be more friendly to businesses; we should work more closely with the business community and business groups to get feedback to understand more

clearly how the City can help them run a business in Alexandria; we can adopt recommendations from the Economic Sustainability Study regarding the perception that Alexandria is not friendly enough to businesses to find out how to change that perception. We can also implement some of the shorter-term improvements in terms of transportation, signage, and landscaping that will help businesses.

We should make sure that we are promoting the unique identity of Alexandria, and make sure that the businesses have their own identity in Alexandria. Again, we may want to establish some business improvement districts to allocate additional funds to work with the business communities to work with businesses in Eisenhower and the West End.

We should make every effort to make the Eisenhower area “small business” friendly. As a West End acquaintance mentioned to me, it is interesting that Del Ray (which used to be less business-friendly) has evolved at its own pace, with little City Hall intervention, into a lively, desirable spot. I believe mostly due to the perseverance of several independent, small business owners.

Too much of the City fund for promotion and signage goes to Old Town or Del Ray, while the West End is constantly ignored by the Planning Staff. The same thing happens with the Chamber of Commerce and the Alexandria Office of Tourism, which leave off the many West End restaurants on their brochures. The Washington Suites’ local dining and shopping guide focuses on Old Town, not the West End. The same is true for the Hilton, the Marriott, and several others.

6. The taxes raised by any development site should to go benefit the entire city. Having said that, I think we can and must provide additional financing to promote development in individual parts of the city.

7. We need to make the Eisenhower Valley a more attractive place to locate through careful infrastructure and community planning. We have two underutilized metro stations in the valley, which is clearly a positive benefit. I think that without improvements to infrastructure and to community planning we will have trouble attracting organizations and businesses like the National Science Foundation (NSF). Businesses like the NSF will come to Alexandria if we can show that we have a real long-term vision and plan in place for the Eisenhower Valley.

The City is making a concerted effort to encourage them to relocate near one of these two metros. I don’t know what other specific things we can do, beyond highlighting our unique attributes as a town and getting the business community to provide them with a

building that is world class and energy efficient, and that we have a long-term vision for the Valley. The Center for Naval Analysis near the BRAC building is moving back to Arlington because they were so dissatisfied with the planning process that led to BRAC.

8. My answer to that is that anything we can do to develop a strategic plan for the development of the west end of the Valley to make it more of a community will help promote the Victory Center. I think we need a more concerted effort in the business groups in the City, perhaps a reorganization of the various business groups, such as Eisenhower Partnership and AEDP to promote the redevelopment of these areas. Without a greater understanding of what has been done to attract business to the Victory Center, it is hard to provide tangible solutions. I would return the question to you: What tangible solutions do you recommend? If elected mayor, that is what I will be asking you.

a. I cannot specify when the first tenant will occupy the Victory Center. I would like to see that happen as soon as possible.

9. I will have my signs down 3 days after I'm elected mayor on Nov. 6. (I'm sure everyone will pitch in to help me.)

10. As a native Alexandrian, former Vice Mayor and business owner, I will bring fresh ideas to bear on the problems of economic development in Alexandria.

SIGNED BY Andrew Macdonald

Andrew Macdonald for Mayor

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