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**STATEMENT TO COUNCIL ON THE WEST END PRINCIPLES  
SEPTEMBER 15, 2007**

Mr. Mayor, Members of Council, and your new member -- our friend, the Honorable Justin aka "Landslide" Wilson.

My name is Jack Sullivan. I am here today representing the Seminary Hill Association and its Taskforce on Landmark/Van Dorn. With me is Joanne Lepanto, the current President of Seminary Hill and a member of the Taskforce.

We are here to introduce you to what we call the West End Citizen Principles. I have provided a copy to each of you at your place.

We have developed the Principles in response to the challenge that we all face in the rehabilitation and re-generation of the Landmark Shopping Mall and the properties under consideration on Van Dorn Street south of the shopping center.

As you read and reflect on our manifesto you will recognize that we are very much in line with the recent report of the Mayor's Economic Sustainability Working Group. The Working Group report emphasizes that development and redevelopment of non-residential areas in Alexandria should result in substantial economic returns to the city. Seminary Hill starts from the same premise.

We applaud you, Mr. Mayor, for your leadership in dealing with the problem of Landmark. The reduction in revenues from what once was a thriving retail center constitutes a major challenge. Your stated opinion that General Growth Properties should forthwith move ahead with redeveloping the site -- or sell the property to people who will -- mirrors our view.

We also support the actions of our new Planning Director, Ms. Hamer, to seek modification of the draft small area plan for Landmark/Van Dorn. Seminary Hill stands ready to assist her staff and the Council in moving the process forward as rapidly as possible. We endorse her idea of a joint city-citizen-owner group sitting down to work out a viable new plan by early next year.

Time does not permit me to go through the Principles today -- or to describe in detail their application to the Landmark/Van Dorn area. Members of our Taskforce are available to meet with you or other interested individuals or groups to discuss the Principles. Vice Mayor Pepper already has given us an opportunity to present them to a group of West End association leaders and we very much appreciate her interest and leadership.

All of us, and I include Seminary Hill, have been much too patient -- even passive -- for the past four years, expecting concrete plans from the owners of Landmark -- plans that still are not forthcoming. Time is running out. We join the Council and City Staff in seeking to define the future direction of this important area -- and to do it soon.

Thank you for your attention. Ms. Lepanto and I will be happy to answer questions.

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## **WEST END CITIZEN PRINCIPLES**

1. Full citizen input is essential to the adoption and success of any small area plan. The Alexandria Goals for 2004-2009 by Council state explicitly that "The Development Process Encourages Community Participation." Participation is a requirement, not an option.
2. The economic impact to the City of development or re-development of commercial, retail or industrial areas must be a paramount consideration. The effect on tax revenues, infrastructure costs, and recurring costs (schools, safety, fire protection, etc. ) are key elements of economic impact.
3. Residential development should be a use secondary to development or redevelopment of commercial, retail or industrial areas, but a necessary part of adding a local market component for retail business uses.
4. Improving traffic and transport for the affected area must be a paramount value and consideration in any development or redevelopment plan. Mass transit modalities must be in operation as new development occurs. Any increased density should be "earned" by contributions to traffic mitigation and transit.
5. Because new development or redevelopment generates additional trips, owners should contribute to public transportation on a continuing basis to mitigate effects and costs. (The cash box pays for only one-fourth of transit cost; 3/4ths is city subsidy.)
6. Affordable housing, while a laudable citywide goal, should not be a major reason for increasing densities on parcels to be redeveloped. Affordable housing should be an integral part, but only a part, of mixed use development .

### **Application of the West End Citizen Principles to the Landmark/Van Dorn Plan:**

1. In sharp contrast to crafting the 1992 small area plan for the locale, citizen input into this Landmark/Van Dorn planning process has been minimal and virtually none has occurred in the past few months. Rather, the proposed plan has been created almost entirely by City Staff with inputs from consultants and landowners.
2. To date no economic impact studies have been done regarding the plan for Landmark/Van Dorn. The proposed plan appears to be going in a direction exactly opposite to the recent recommendations of the Mayor's

Economic Sustainability Workgroup. The Workgroup has declared that: All development is NOT created equal -- commercial is roughly twice as profitable to the City as residential. Before going forward on Landmark/Van Dorn, economic impact studies are needed urgently.

The real property tax, sales tax, and other revenue implications of the proposed plan must be addressed by careful economic analysis. The abandonment of Landmark as a major retail center meeting the shopping needs of citizens of the City is not likely to be replaced in the City by other properties. The sales tax revenue previously generated by Landmark should not be forfeited without major governmental efforts to retain it or its equivalent as a commercial revenue generator, thereby making a balancing contribution and taking some burden from the City's residential property tax base.

Landmark is strategically located on the western boundary of Alexandria, adjacent to a major transportation artery. Its commercial advantages should be enhanced, not subordinated.

3. The cost of Improving traffic and transportation for Landmark/Van Dorn must be paid for with substantial contributions from owners -- and on a sustained basis -- not just by the City. (The Director of TE&S has estimated just the infrastructure costs at \$80 million if the proposed Plan is to be realized.) Conscious efforts should be made to resist turning the Van Dorn corridor into a conduit for peak hour through traffic.

4. Affordable housing appears to be the rationale driving this Plan and the idea of giving additional densities to developers. The affordable housing consultants on Landmark/Varn Dorn state in their report that "good opportunities" exist to advance affordable housing in the area within current FARs. We agree, noting that some 80% of the housing in the West End is rental, most of it affordable by City standards on income eligibility.

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