



Boutiques, Bistros and Banks: Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

**Presentation to the
Arlington County Board
by the
Arlington Economic Development Commission**

August 26, 2010

Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

Retail Task Force

- Formed in August 2008 by EDC
- Tasked to review Arlington's retail policies and make recommendations to the EDC
- Diverse group of real estate management, leasing, development and design professionals from EDC and community
- Consulted with industry experts re: existing retail, new markets, placemaking, and new development
- Examined issues related to supply and demand, mix, use, street activation, development of new space and business support

Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

Research Method

Overview & Framework	Data and discussion of Arlington's retail environment & issues
Topic: Market Potential	Expert: Scott Krugman, National Retail Federation
Topic: Existing Retail	Retail Focus Group; Experts: Alex Topchy (Marvelous Market), Cristina Amoruso (DC Dept of Small & Local Business Development)
Topic: Cool Places	Experts: Mariela Alfonzo (Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech), Emily Cassell (Arlington Convention & Visitors Service)
Topic: New Development	Experts: David Kitchens (Cooper Carry Architects), Chris Netter (Saul Centers), John Asadoorian (Asadoorian Retail Solutions)
Recommendations & Report	Task Force  EDC  County Board

Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

Fast Facts About Retail in Arlington

- Arlington has more than 2,200 businesses in retail space; 61% are retail shops.
- 2/3 of Arlington retailers are local or independent businesses
- Restaurants dominate (573), followed by apparel (181) & food/beverage stores (135).
- 60% of stores are in a retail center or strip, but nearly 25% occupy the first floors of residential or office properties.
- 35% of Arlington's retail is outside of the major submarkets.
- The median asking retail rent in Arlington is \$38.59 but ranges from \$36.50 in Virginia Square to \$55 in Pentagon City.
- Retail vacancy is 6%.

Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

Successful Retail is...

Convenient

- Can't be anywhere & everywhere
- Needs concentrations & massing to work
- Must be easily accessible
- Must have ample parking

Activating

- Creates vibrant & welcoming streets
- Promotes community interaction
- Includes entertainment, convenience, education & civic uses
- Operates during daytime, evening & weekend hours

Appealing

- Must be interesting & attractive
- May be “messy” (via signage, storefronts, facades, etc.)
- Has no one “right mix”
- Always changing in response to demand

Sustainable

- Demand exists beyond immediate area
- Business owners know the market
- Accommodates new trends & interim uses
- Business owners have “renaissance skills”

Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

Recommendation #1: Rethink & Revise Policies for Retail

- **Issue:**

Arlington's current policies were developed with good intentions, but they are outdated and inconsistent with the dynamic nature of retail.

- **Recommendation:**

Rethink and Revise Policies for Retail

- **Implementation Steps:**

1. Retail Action Plan
2. Retail Attraction and Marketing Plans
3. Retail-Specific Elements of the Zoning Ordinance
4. Retail-Specific Signage

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Recommendation #2:

Use a Wide Range of Approaches to Enliven the Street

- **Issue:**

While Arlington has long recognized the importance of activating its streets, there are a wide range of approaches to doing so beyond traditional retail.

- **Recommendation:**

Use a Wide Range of Approaches to Enliven the Street

- **Implementation Steps:**

1. Separate first floor design from the 4.1 Process
2. Alternative & temporary uses in first floor space
3. Commercial activity in the public realm
4. Ample parking, retail associations & wayfinding

Recommendations for Successful Retail in Arlington

Recommendation #3:

Dedicate Staff Resources to Provide Retail Support

- **Issue:**

Retail tends to be a secondary component in primary residential or office projects, and as a result there is no staff expert to advocate for the retail, nor for the needs of the retailers themselves.

- **Recommendation:**

Dedicate Staff Resources to Provide Retail Support

- **Implementation Steps:**

1. Retail Staff Team to provide expertise to streamline the 4.1 process
2. Retail Advisor position to advocate for the needs of business owners and provide retail education to County staff, commissions, County Board, etc.

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Recommendation #4: Offer Retail-Specific Small Business Assistance

- **Issue:**

Business owners must have “renaissance skills” to be successful; lacking these skills, businesses may have trouble achieving “credit worthiness” and leasing newly built space.

- **Recommendation:**

Offer Retail-Specific Small Business Assistance

- **Implementation Steps:**

1. Retail Incubator to help retailers improve “renaissance skills”
2. Retail Advisor position to provide direct assistance to retailers and business owners