

Barrett Library Black History Museum



Kate Waller Barrett

The Alexandria Library's Kate Waller Barrett Branch (2 blocks north, 1 block east) and the Alexandria Black History Museum (6 blocks north) have an unusual shared history. The library building was constructed in 1938 and named for Dr. Kate Waller Barrett, a noted Alexandria resident and national social activist. But at the time of its construction, public facilities in Alexandria were segregated and African Americans, whose taxes helped to support the library, were not permitted to use the new facility.

The following year, decades before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, 26 year-old Alexandria attorney Samuel Wilbur Tucker organized a small group of African American men to participate in what is believed to be the first "sit-down" demonstration in the United States. On August 21, 1939, five young, well dressed African American men entered the library and requested library cards. When their requests were denied, they each took a book from the stacks, sat down and started to read. The men participating in the quiet, non-violent demonstration were soon arrested, but as police removed them from the building, Tucker had cleverly arranged for press photographers to be on the sidewalk outside, thereby assuring national coverage.



Alexandria Black History Museum

As a result of these actions, the city built the segregated and clearly unequal, Robert H. Robinson Library in 1940. This small building now forms the historic anchor of the Alexandria Black History Museum. Since 1985, the museum has presented exhibitions and programs relating to African American culture, the history of the African Diaspora and the significant role that African Americans have always played in the history and development of Alexandria. The museum continues to be a vital force for equality in Alexandria, and well-known authors, performers, and civil rights activists routinely participate in museum programs. The Alexandria Library and Alexandria Black History Museum continue to serve a diverse Alexandria community, and are vibrant public resources highlighting the city's cultural landscape.

↔ Shopping 🛍️

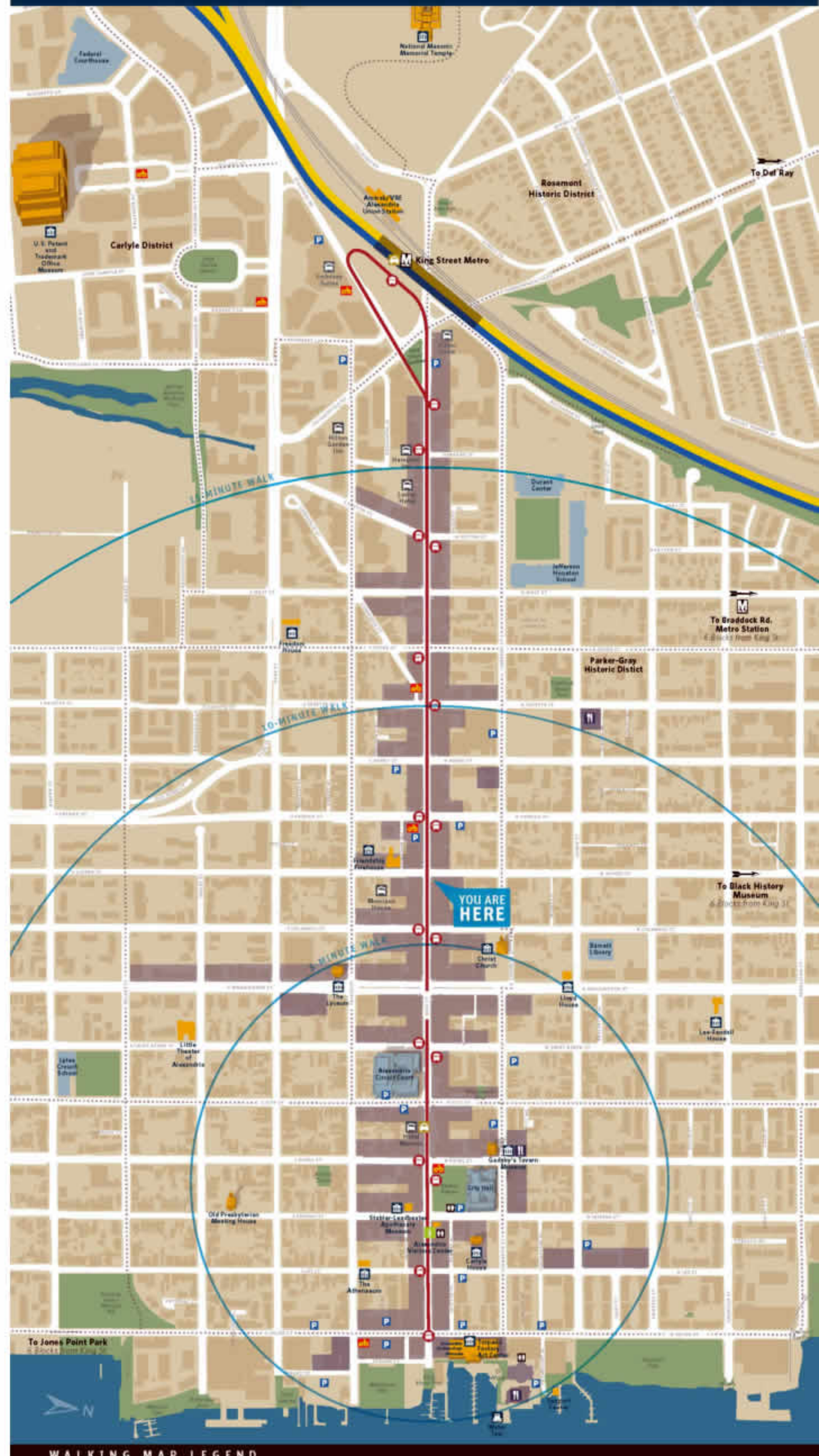
← Dining 🍴

← Friendship 🏛️
Firehouse

→ Black History 🏛️
Museum
6 BLOCKS

↪️ Waterfront 🚢
9 BLOCKS

↑ King Street 🚇
9 BLOCKS



WALKING MAP LEGEND

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| 📍 Information | 🅑 Public Parking | 🏛️ Museum | 🏠 Shopping & Dining | 🌳 Park | 🏞️ Public Parks |
| 🚏 King Street Trolley Stop | 🚕 Taxi Stand | 🏠 Lodging | 🚴 Bike Route | 🏰 Attraction | 👤 Visitor Attraction |
| 🚇 MetroRail Station | 🚖 Water Taxi | 🚲 Capital Bikeshare | 🚶 5-minute walk (1/4 Mile) | 🏛️ Civic | 🏛️ Civic Destination |