

Waterfront Plan Work Group *Report*



December 20, 2011

Waterfront Plan Work Group

Christopher Ballard

Bert Ely

Melinda Lyle

Elliot Rhodeside

Nathan Macek

David Olinger

Lt. Gen Bob Wood

Councilman Paul Smedberg

Foreword

This report represents the work of the Alexandria Waterfront Plan Work Group. It is neither a consensus report nor an approval of the draft Waterfront Small Area Plan. It is also not an alternate plan. In its review of the assumptions and assertions within the Waterfront Small Area Plan, we, the Waterfront Plan Work Group, provided a critical check on behalf of City Council on the key assumptions and plan assertions underpinning the draft Waterfront Small Area Plan. The findings and recommendations within this report reflect a thorough review of the draft Waterfront Small Area Plan in order to identify areas of consensus, agreement and disagreement, shortcomings, and methods to narrow differences and balance competing goals amongst the various interests. Where gaps were identified, we suggested remedies. This report intends to better inform public debate, City Council deliberations, and ultimately, decisions crucial to adoption and implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan in this historic area of Alexandria.

This report is not a product of City staff or consultants, but instead reflects the voice of private citizens concerned about the welfare and future of one of Alexandria's vital resources, its waterfront. Diverse viewpoints added to the strength of this review. The report contains detailed findings that resulted from written comment, public discussion, and Waterfront Plan Work Group deliberation surrounding common vision, contentious issues, and suggestions for improving the Waterfront Small Area Plan. These findings are intended to characterize the various viewpoints and insights in a narrative format that reframes the discussion away from the polarizing debates that preceded the formation of the Waterfront Plan Work Group. The findings are careful to highlight the diverse viewpoints represented by Waterfront Plan Work Group members. In addition, our individual comments on Waterfront Small Area Plan recommendations are recorded and identified by members.

We believe our work has been valuable and useful to the citizens. We have provided a constructive public review of a plan that needed this assessment because the intended and unintended outcomes of potential actions have significant ramifications on our National Historic Landmark waterfront. Not all sides can be satisfied, but the net results of our efforts are findings and recommendations with the potential, if adopted, to significantly improve the Waterfront Small Area Plan. Furthermore, we have offered many suggestions regarding implementation, which provide a fresh approach to achieving the City's vision for the public and private spaces that comprise our waterfront.

We welcome public review and debate of our findings. The reader is encouraged to go beyond the executive summary to better understand the sentiments and insights of a diverse and talented group of citizens who provided constructive input on a variety of plan areas. We urge the City Council to seriously consider the findings and deliberations contained in this report and ultimately take action. The Waterfront Plan Work Group stands ready to answer questions from the public and City Council in order to clarify or emphasize our findings.

The Waterfront Plan Work Group acknowledges the assistance and support of City Staff throughout this Plan review which was important for us to complete our charter and report to City Council.

Introduction

Alexandria's waterfront is a public treasure - the lynchpin to the City's founding, its storied past, and its vibrant future. The City's relationship to the Potomac River spans centuries of remarkable history, from Native American settlements, through the earliest days of our nation, across years of conflict and peace, to today's evolving uses. Much of the City's identity, both past and present, is bound to the commerce, the transit, and the activities along this shoreline. Historic events, great American leaders, tragic episodes, and great celebration all passed through this public space.

Change along this waterfront has been no less constant than the varied pace and tempo of activity. No one date, or one period captures the sweep of history, visitors, and residents that transited these docks or trod these streets. What remains in the streets and structures of Alexandria's Old Town, its waterfront and the trace where river meets shore, are the echoes and evidence of our history. Preserving this history while adapting to the needs of the modern day is a challenge worthy of our very best efforts and continued vigilance.

With this in mind, in 2009 the City of Alexandria embarked on developing a Waterfront Small Area Plan for the first time in a generation. A draft of the Waterfront Small Area Plan was released in winter 2011 after two years of staff development, public comment, and City review. It proposed a vision for change, with key elements including an arts walk featuring public and performing arts, historical preservation and interpretation, flood mitigation, and enhanced parks and public spaces. The draft Waterfront Small Area Plan also proposed increased commercial utilization and additional density. There was disagreement in the community, however, over the scale and scope of change in this sensitive area of our City. Additionally, questions regarding funding, alternatives, traffic, parking, and environmental impacts needed clarification and resolution in plan details. In summer of 2011, when the draft Waterfront Small Area Plan was presented for consideration by the Alexandria City Council, the Council sought additional feedback from the community and chartered the Waterfront Plan Work Group to examine these issues and return with recommendations.

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Waterfront Plan Work Group.

Executive Summary

Creation of the Work Group and Organization

Establishment of the Waterfront Plan Work Group (Work Group) and completion of its charge has been a four step process: (1) creation of the Work Group and identifying an approach for achieving its charge; (2) execution of the work plan; (3) generation of the Work Group's findings and report; and (4) delivery of the report to City Council.

Work Group Charge

The Work Group was established in late June 2011 by City Council resolution 2467 as an 8-member body including a non-voting member of the City Council to serve as convener, representatives of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee and Old Town Civic Association, and five at-large members with professional backgrounds in urban design, planning, and landscape and architecture. The resolution was clear that the Work Group was not to develop a new plan but, instead, assume the following charge, reporting back to the Council in fall 2011:

- identify elements of the Waterfront Small Area Plan (Plan) for which there is agreement;
- within each subject area of the Plan, identify and attempt to better define elements of the Plan where there remains disagreement;
- clarify positions, balance competing goals, and recommend alternative approaches to resolve differences;
- categorize outstanding issues to be addressed by action now or in Plan implementation; and
- deliver findings and recommendations that enable Council resolution on the Plan.

The Council resolution establishing the Work Group is included in Appendix A.

Work Group Membership

In July the Mayor appointed persons to the five at-large positions and the Waterfront Committee and Old Town Civic Association selected representatives. There was no elected chair of the Work Group. Members include:

- Councilman Paul Smedberg as convener
- Christopher Ballard, member at-large and Principal at McWilliams/Ballard
- Bert Ely, member at-large and Principal, Ely and Company
- Mindy Lyle, member at-large and Vice President Client Development, Haley & Aldrich, Inc.
- Nathan Macek, Chair, Alexandria Waterfront Committee
- David Olinger, Board Member, Old Town Civic Association
- Elliot Rhodeside, member at-large and Principal, Rhodeside & Harwell
- Lt. Gen. (Retired) Bob Wood, member at-large and Principal, Star Strategies Group

Organizational Priorities

At its first meeting, the Work Group developed organizational priorities including:

- establishing a meeting calendar;
- establishing an approach to its charge, i.e., developing a work plan, with key topical areas to be covered at each meeting; and
- establishing a Plan vision.

Work sessions included 15 meetings: 12 morning meetings and three evening meetings held in Del Ray, the West End and City Hall.

The work plan centered around four key tasks:

- establish the Work Group plan statements to help evaluate the Plan;
- review existing Plan recommendations against the Work Group plan statements and develop additional recommendations as necessary;
- determine findings; and
- develop, review, and approve the report.

A copy of the schedule, identifying dates, times, locations and work plan related tasks for each meeting is included in Appendix A.

Execution of the Work Plan

To guide its work plan, the Work Group developed and approved a Plan vision statement that it augmented with the Plan’s existing ten goals and objectives (included in Appendix B).

Vision Statement: *A vibrant waterfront that celebrates our historic and cultural legacy, expands and supports public uses, yet retains and preserves the special charm and ambiance of our community for future generations.*

Specifically, it is:

- authentic
- connected
- inclusive
- dynamic
- varied
- manageable
- sustainable
- compatible
- permeable
- creative

During several meetings, the Work Group developed plan statements to guide evaluation subject areas within the Plan requiring clarification and further resolution. These included:

- Public Realm – General
- Foot of King Street
- Parks and Public Space
- Marina and Piers
- Arts and History
- Flood Mitigation
- Parking
- Traffic and Circulation
- Private Realm
- Environment
- Implementation and Funding

The next step was to evaluate the Work Group plan statements against the Plan recommendations to identify where they aligned and resolve any existing gaps. Where a recommendation was found to be duplicative or unnecessary, the Work Group recommended eliminating it. Where a recommendation was found to be unclear, the Work Group recommended clarifying language. Where there was agreement that an issue or opportunity was not covered fully or at all, the Work Group recommended augmenting the existing recommendation or developed a new one.

Appendix C contains each Work Group plan statement by topic area, as well as a matrix summarizing this assessment for each existing and Work Group-proposed recommendation in the Plan.

Staff-written memoranda written in response to Work Group member discussion and questions are provided in Appendix D.

Report Organization

The results of the Work Group’s analysis as contained in this report are presented by subject area. In most cases, there is a general finding that captures the overall assessment reflective of Work Group discussion and written comments, followed by bulleted specific findings and suggested modifications to Plan recommendations and/or new recommendations. This is followed by the Work Group plan statement and specific review of each Plan recommendation. This review includes details on discussion of these recommendations offered during Work Group meetings, as well as an accounting of written comments submitted by Work Group members.

Throughout the subsequent chapters of this report, where a plan statement is quoted, it has been italicized. Strikethrough and underlined text reflects recommended deletions and additions to Plan recommendations by the Work Group.

Throughout the report, there is frequent reference to the following terms. To aid the reader, we provide a definition of these key terms here:

- **Consensus** – Reflects the Work Group’s unanimous agreement on a given subject matter considered as part of its deliberations.
- **General Agreement** – Reflects agreement by a majority of Work Group members on a given subject matter considered as part of the Work Group’s deliberations.

- **Finding** – An outcome achieved by the Work Group through consensus or general agreement on a given subject matter considered as part of its deliberations.
- **Plan Statements** – Principles adopted by the Work Group to guide its evaluation of Plan Recommendations.
- **Plan Recommendations** – Recommendations contained within the Draft Waterfront Plan designed to promote goals and objectives outlined for the waterfront.

Work Group Findings

The key findings of the Work Group by subject area are as follows:

Public Realm – General

The Work Group supports recommendations to achieve a minimum width of waterfront public space of 50 feet or more and supports compliance, to the greatest degree possible, with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and Alexandria’s Eco-City Charter. The Work Group takes the position that the waterfront should have a holistic design vision that unites the City’s waterfront public spaces with a design plan that is authentic and unique to Alexandria, which stems from Old Town’s historic character and 18th century street grid. Features throughout the waterfront area should be welcoming to residents, visitors, and their families, and accessible to people with limited mobility and other physical impairments. The Work Group made a number of clarifying amendments to Plan recommendations and suggested removing recommendations that address issues that are outside the Plan area.

- The Work Group strongly discourages the use of eminent domain to accomplish the recommendations of the Plan. Nothing in the Work Group report should offer rationale for eminent domain action. The Work Group recommends negotiation with private property owners as the preferred land acquisition strategy. This is consistent with a desire to protect private property rights at all development sites along the entire waterfront.
- The Work Group expressed consensus that the Alexandria waterfront should have a “world-class” design. This term implies a specific design plan and characteristics of design that have not yet been fully determined during the planning phase. The Plan as it exists now is conceptual and provides a design framework defined more by characteristics and recommended examples as opposed to a unifying vision that achieves requisite “world-class” design. The development of a design plan, one of the early-stage implementation actions, can remedy this shortcoming. Such development should seriously consider methods and incentives that invite and incorporate the very best design perspectives from as broad an array of participants as possible.
- Much attention has been paid to how the waterfront appears to visitors arriving by land. It is equally important to examine the waterfront’s face to river—its beauty, its variety, its

attraction. A growing number of visitors will approach Alexandria from the water, including water taxis, pleasure craft, and other vessels. The waterfront can also provide an appealing face for the City to air travelers and motorists on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Therefore, care should be taken in design plans to project the waterfront's identity from all perspectives.

Foot of King Street

The Work Group supports a significant public space at the foot of King Street that acts as a gateway and functions as a focal point for pedestrian-related activities. This public space should function as a hub to orient visitors and connect King Street, Old Town, and the history of the waterfront with today's maritime activities including the water taxi, commercial boats, historic vessels, and private pleasure boats. Ongoing negotiations with the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) regarding property issues should encourage innovative planning and implementation in this key area of the waterfront. To facilitate this vision, the Work Group recommends pursuing the elimination of the existing parking lot and determination of viable parking alternatives through negotiations with the ODBC—and not through eminent domain actions. Regardless of these negotiations, the City should proceed with developing this public space, incorporating the unit block of King Street and King Street Park. An important element of this recommendation is the closure of the unit block of King Street to traffic. This public space should be top quality and must be designed to complement any eventual property agreements in this area. The Work Group supports a new commercial pier in the vicinity of King Street with facilities to support water taxis, a historic ship, and public access to the waterfront.

Parks and Public Spaces

Alexandria's waterfront parks and public spaces have the potential to be an asset for our City, the region, and the nation. The Work Group believes the parks and public spaces of the waterfront should be considered an integrated system and should have a holistic design vision that is respectful of our history and achieves a high standard of style, architecture, and artistry. Our historic waterfront has a story that needs to be told and experienced with facilities, activities, and services that support both passive and active uses. Improved maintenance is an absolute must; at present, resources are insufficient to maintain a waterfront of which we can all be proud. Management and maintenance of parks and public spaces must be improved. This unique public space is both a tidal wetland and a restricted protective area linked to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Environmental requirements, the goals of the City's Eco-Charter, and flood mitigation measures must be accomplished without limiting public access and enjoyment. New park space along The Strand, from Waterfront Park to Wolfe Street, must be constructed, celebrated, and enjoyed early in implementation as a major addition to a newly vibrant waterfront and a clear signal to the community of the importance of public amenities.

- Management and maintenance of waterfront parks and public spaces must be a priority of the City, particularly as the City implements the Plan. Maintenance practices should change immediately to signal to the public that focus and attention will be paid to the impending and significant public investment to Alexandria's waterfront. There should be ready access to

equipment but having park operations and support facilities proximate to the waterfront should not sacrifice valuable property.

- In order to stage a variety of activities in the vibrant waterfront public spaces, support infrastructure must be enhanced. Such things as power to support audio, video, lighting, and vendor requirements or seating, stages, and platform supports should be incorporated into any park improvements.
- Planning and programming of activities in the parks and public spaces is an important responsibility that requires a more creative approach if the City intends to foster a waterfront that remains fresh and vibrant. City staff should renew its approach to support programming along an integrated waterfront. It should solicit public input and develop an annual program of creative and innovative activities and events sponsored by the City, non-profits, citizens, and other organizations. Staff should review its current procedures and make necessary changes to ensure it has the ability to coordinate the increased activities envisioned on the waterfront (e.g., pre-event organization, insurance, advertisement, site support, execution, and clean-up).

Marina, Piers and Shoreline

The Work Group supports the intent of the Plan to create a more natural, inviting, and environmentally sound shoreline. There should be equal attention paid to activities along the waterfront as well as from water to land. There should be a comprehensive approach to boating. City marina facilities should be improved to support existing and expanded commercial vessel operations north of King Street, including tour boats, dinner cruises, and excursions. To retain integrity with Alexandria's maritime heritage, the Work Group recommends that the ability to dock large vessels be retained. To minimize dredging expenses, consider docking large shallow-draft vessels at Robinson Terminal North while maintaining the option of docking deep-draft vessels at Robinson Terminal South. The pleasure boat marina should be a modern and well-maintained and located so as to avoid conflicts with commercial vessels. The marina should be a self-sufficient enterprise and accommodate both lease slip holders and day trippers. Finally, while a public boat launch for trailered vessels should not be located in Old Town, launch sites for canoes, kayaks, and other self-propelled watercraft are encouraged near Rivergate Park and Windmill Hill Park, in addition to the new launch in Jones Point Park.

- Alexandria is a maritime City and must retain its heritage. The City must make key decisions about future marina facilities: their location, improved infrastructure and amenities, supporting services, and the mix of public and private operations. The end goal is a marina that is economically viable and better serves the boating public and lures maritime visitors to Alexandria, yet is compatible with its neighbors and is compatible with the historic fabric of Old Town. The separation of commercial and pleasure boat activity is a vital first step in future planning for existing and expanded waterfront activities.

- Boating is an activity that is integral to the waterfront and boating needs should be addressed in a holistic and comprehensive way. Future engineering and design should address how to accommodate these needs in the right locations.

Art and History

Art and history must be fundamental to the design and development of the Alexandria waterfront. The Plan calls for an Art Walk and artistic finishes along the entire waterfront. The depiction of Alexandria’s living history will be equally emphasized. The art and history recommendations found in the **Alexandria Waterfront Public Art Proposal** and the **Alexandria Waterfront History Plan** form a strong basis for actions. A similar plan for arts and history programming should be developed and could be equally useful. The central role envisioned for art and history across the entire waterfront is not matched by a sufficient or assured funding strategy in the Plan. The cost of maintenance and staging of art and history elements should be better specified within the Plan. The function and illustrative design of “cultural anchor(s)” needs to be further described to guide implementation and desirable growth—the discussion of cultural anchors in the History Plan is a good model.

- A cultural hub must provide more than historical wayfinding. It should tell the story of Alexandria’s seaport history in a way that is not conveyed by existing City museums. Consider coupling a seaport historical center of reasonable size with appropriate commercial activity such as a café, gallery, small auditorium, or museum shop to help sustain the facility. Along The Strand, a cultural hub could be located at the The Beachcomber’s Restaurant site or share a structure with the civic center and park maintenance facility proposed for this area. Another potential location for a cultural hub is West’s Point.
- The Work Group endorses several additional art and history Plan recommendations as follows:
 - *First and foremost, the City should take proactive measures to retain, enhance, and strongly promote existing cultural institutions on the Alexandria waterfront as the Plan is implemented, including the Seaport Foundation, the Art League, the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, the Torpedo Factory Art Center, and others.*
 - *As the Plan is implemented, the City should take proactive measures to attract new cultural institutions on the Alexandria waterfront that complement its history and existing cultural institutions.*
 - *Funding by the Plan for art and history should reflect the importance of these elements to the overall Plan.*
 - *West’s Point represents the origins of Alexandria and was the site of much of the City’s early seaport history. Therefore, this historic wharf should emphasize significant activities that occurred here, such as tobacco shipment, the transit of military forces, Fishtown, railroads, and the gasworks. This may be accomplished through multiple*

approaches, including: interpretive artwork, text, and signage; sculpture; historically inspired building design; rail linkage; and landscaping. West's Point could also be a good location for a maritime museum and the docking of an historic ship.

Flood Mitigation

The Work Group agrees that the next phase of the flood mitigation project should be a more detailed design and engineering study of the proposed strategies to determine a feasible and cost-effective way forward. A benefit cost assessment would be crucial at this stage. The Work Group is concerned about the proposal to elevate the unit block of King Street and the nearby Strand and suggests that the next phase of study address those concerns. The significant public space and pedestrian focus at the foot of King Street will be a significant investment for the City that warrants a sound flood mitigation plan.

- It is important to reduce the impact of flooding. The impact of frequent nuisance flooding (up to 6.0 feet above sea level) may be reduced through mitigation measures. Flood mitigation should be implemented in a way that is compatible with the historic character of Old Town and demonstrates real return on public investment. We believe the concept to elevate the foot of King Street has serious design and engineering issues. We recommend that detailed engineering studies be completed to refine flood mitigation concepts to achieve a more feasible and cost effective alternative in this area. We note that these improvements will not prevent the effects of more severe flooding that will still occur, but encourage mitigation of routine nuisance flooding if cost effective.
- The Work Group suggests including the following new Plan recommendation: *The next phase of the design and engineering of the comprehensive strategy to mitigate flooding should take into consideration: drainage impacts on existing buildings, storm sewers, vehicle and pedestrian access issues, and visual and historic character. Consider impacts of nuisance flooding along the entire waterfront within this comprehensive strategy.*

Parking

The Work Group emphasizes the importance of immediate implementation of the parking recommendations of the Plan, including guidelines for new commercial development, increased waterfront activity, and provisions protecting residential parking. The Work Group modified language to clarify that all new parking is to be on site below grade. This is acknowledged to be a difficult design requirement, but is vital to protecting public access and the beauty of the waterfront. Relief from this requirement as the waterfront develops should not be permitted. Work Group members suggest adding a recommendation to use pricing to incentivize use of parking spaces away from the waterfront and to encourage use of garages. The Work Group also strengthened language related to valet parking and to the time periods when garage parking is available to the general public.

- The City should begin immediate implementation of the parking recommendations contained in the Plan's Transportation, Circulation, and Parking chapter and the **Old Town Area Parking**

Study. We believe that parking is a problem in the vicinity of the waterfront today, with limited potential increase for growth in capacity. Within the Plan, parking at redevelopment sites will be accommodated on site below grade, and surface parking lots are discouraged. Due to the cost and challenge of this approach, any increase in parking will be small. Any parking beyond what is required at development sites will be constrained and provide very few additional spaces to the public. In addition, some existing surface parking will be displaced, and the City should account for this in implementation of the Plan. Therefore, the parking management concepts outlined in this chapter—which include wayfinding, valet parking, shuttle services, and pricing—must begin to be tested and should be proven to ensure effective measures are present to guide implementation of the Plan. Another possible approach is to limit development, and thereby attendant parking demands. Implementation should include a rigorous assessment plan with specific performance metrics to ensure goals and objectives are being achieved.

- Other possible approaches include:
 - limiting development, and thereby reducing attendant parking demands; and
 - using City funds to construct additional public parking in the waterfront area in conjunction with commercial redevelopment.

Traffic and Circulation

A vibrant waterfront, by its very nature, will generate increased activity. Additional activity is highly desirable, but the attendant traffic impacts must be managed with clear foresight to prevent harmful impacts to the unique historic character and livability of Old Town. Because of its constrained capacity, the street network near the waterfront can only accept a small amount of additional traffic. Therefore, the Work Group recommends that the City conduct a study of traffic and circulation along the Union Street corridor and adjacent Old Town streets, including how it functions for users of all modes of travel, prior to the approval of redevelopment in the Plan area. This study should offer recommendations and insights to help manage any projected increase in traffic congestion at the river along Union Street and within the proximate street grid. The Work Group also made amendments to the traffic and circulation recommendations so that they conform to positions taken by the Work Group in other areas – for example, revising references to Fitzgerald Square and the foot of King Street. The Work Group supports proactive measures to reduce or eliminate conflicts between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, e.g., routing, enforcement, and engineering. The Work Group also supports exploration of additional short-distance transit options to improve access to and movement along the waterfront. The effect of these transit options should be to enhance, not hurt, businesses along the routes.

- Union Street traffic impacts must be understood. The Work Group strongly recommends that the City complete a transportation management study along the Union Street corridor and adjacent Old Town streets. The Work Group envisions that Union Street will be a pedestrian-friendly corridor with additional street-level retail south of King Street and near Robinson Terminal North. The Work Group anticipates new pedestrian activities within a pedestrian zone

at the end of King Street, which is already a congested intersection. At the same time, additional development in the vicinity of the waterfront will create new demands on the transportation network, including increased vehicular traffic; commercial deliveries; bicycles; taxis, motor coaches, and shuttle buses; and parking. With these new demands and anticipated requirements and a finite capacity of the existing traffic grid, and the City needs to use innovative methods to manage and control this finite capacity, including through the Special Use Permit (SUP) process, to help mitigate the impacts on the community. A Union Street transportation management study will provide the data and planning guidance necessary to alleviate transportation impacts, and should be completed prior to approval of any new development on the waterfront. Some in the Work Group feel that this is so critical that Plan adoption should not proceed before this study is completed.

Private Realm

Work Group members broadly acknowledged that mixed-use, commercial development was likely and desirable and environmental concerns must be addressed. There is consensus among Work Group members that given the high value of waterfront land, by-right development is unlikely and undesirable. By amending the Development Goals and Guidelines for each development site (Robinson Terminal North, Robinson Terminal South, and the Cummings-Turner Block) the Work Group seeks to make Plan language more flexible and less prescriptive, to encourage mixed-use commercial activities, to favor active and welcoming ground-floor uses such as retail and cultural use, and to control residential use and design to ensure its compatibility with the anticipated activity and increased public access desired along the waterfront. In addition, specific recommendations are offered regarding the Policy for Restaurant/Hotel/Commercial Uses to mitigate negative impacts of development. There was extensive discussion regarding the scale, size, and nature of development. Environmental expectations are emphasized.

- There is clear agreement on the need to balance development with high quality open space while preserving the historic nature of Old Town. Private contributions supporting public uses, waterfront infrastructure, and quality public spaces (including arts, history, and recreational elements) are important expectations of developers. Environmental amenities, particularly added green space as a priority amenity, should be prominent features of development sites, above and beyond the minimum required. In all cases, ground-floor uses should primarily serve the public and complement activities envisioned for public spaces. Cultural uses (museums, galleries, classrooms, performance venues, etc.) should be specifically encouraged to anchor development, support activity, and facilitate a variety of attractions. Programming these uses, along with promoting well-designed commercial activities, can help disperse visitors and density up and down the waterfront to ease congestion. Residential development should be significantly controlled so as not to inhibit public access and enjoyment of activities in adjacent public space. Townhomes, in particular, seemed inconsistent with this objective. For any development proposal, it is important to assess, account for, and, if necessary, mitigate the different externalities (e.g., traffic and circulation, parking, noise, odors, etc.) associated with added density at each development site.

- There is fundamental disagreement over the scale, size, and nature of development as it impacts the historic fabric of Old Town and the appropriate representation of the historic waterfront. This issue is not development versus no development, but instead involves the difference in density between settlement agreements with Robison Terminal Warehouse Corporation and the 1992 Alexandria Master Plan that serves as the basis for the W-1 zoning. A secondary issue involves the number and size of hotels as a permitted use. There are two primary sentiments expressed regarding this disagreement.

On one side, the additional density and uses proposed in the Plan—including hotels—are found to be modest and necessary to promote an enlivened and commercially viable waterfront that facilitates private investment in the public spaces envisioned by the Plan. Private and public realm Plan recommendations, as modified by the Work Group, are thought to be sufficient to address the attendant external impacts of development. The proposed number of hotels and hotel rooms is supported as long as the Development Goals and Guidelines are stringently applied. Adopting the uses proposed in changes to W-1 zoning and allowing the density specified in the settlement agreements provides a greater degree of certainty to the planning process as it potentially mitigates the likelihood of litigation by property owners. These proposed changes also provide revenues to fund implementation of the plan in a timely fashion.

Alternatively, the other side feels that the zoning specified by the 1992 Master Plan remains appropriate and legally defensible, based on City staff explanations. The City's calculations show that this Plan can be funded over an acceptable timeframe without hotels and with no change in W-1 zoning. Density and developmental rights, coupled with the Work Group's recommended amendments to Plan Developmental Goals and Guidelines, are entirely adequate to achieve the amenities necessary for a vibrant waterfront and there is no need to change the W-1 zoning. Substantial development can and will take place under existing zoning and further increases will only add to the strains placed on the already fragile surrounding neighborhood. Hotels are not entirely ruled out, in this opposing view, as an allowable mixed use development if W-1 zoning was changed to allow this specific use without an accompanying increase in density. But, the number of proposed hotels (3) and their impact and on traffic congestion and the historical fabric of Old Town in this area makes the hotel alternative extremely undesirable or outright unacceptable. The economic viability and appropriateness of hotels, particularly the proposed limit of 450 rooms, is challenged due to misgivings expressed in developer input and serious physical shortcomings of the sites (e.g. distance from Metro, additional traffic congestion and parking impacts). Given the critical nature of revenues from hotel developments to support the finances of this plan, over-emphasis of this one commercial solution—when compared to other commercial uses—could create a long-term fiscal shortfall in revenues needed to help implement the Plan if the number of hotels and rooms was not market viable.

- A central issue regarding the private realm is a proposed change in W-1 zoning. Such a change would amend the 1992 City of Alexandria Master Plan and as such must be carefully considered

since it could potentially establish precedence for similar changes or cause unintended consequences in other parts of the City. The specific changes proposed concern the addition of hotels, deletion of a small number of uses, specific references to Development Goals and Guidelines proposed for the Plan, and a change in permitted heights for consistency across City plans. Likely development, whether under existing or amended W-1 zoning, would in almost all instances seek a SUP from the City. This is an important control on any development, particularly to ensure public amenities are secured and appropriate guidelines are applied for design, construction, and operation of developments. It should be noted that hotels could potentially be allowed without an increase in density through simple amendment of the special uses permitted in the W-1 zone.

- Commercial development in the W1 zone falls entirely within the Resource Protection Area (RPA) of the Chesapeake River watershed. As such, the provisions of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and the City’s own zoning provisions implementing this Act are especially relevant. Increases in impervious surfaces, storm water runoff, and overall density pose challenges to the City in its compliance with ever more restrictive standards for pollution control and environmental remediation. As indicated in the Work Group suggested changes to the Developmental Goals and Guidelines, expectations of developers regarding environmental amenities (e.g. catchment and runoff control, green practices, buffer zones, etc.) must go beyond the minimums expected. The City must exercise leadership in its environmental stewardship over the City’s waterfront as well as strong management.
- Members discussed the Plan’s proposed Policy for Restaurant/Hotel/Commercial Uses:
 - The Work Group acknowledges a public desire for additional dining options along the waterfront. It is important that new waterfront restaurants be considered within the context of the high number of existing King Street and Old Town restaurants in this historic area. Although there was discussion of whether to limit the sum total of waterfront-area restaurants to a particular square footage to prevent oversaturation of restaurants and the related negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods, there are no recommended changes to the proposed policy. However, the consensus of the Work Group is to avoid a food court or “restaurant row” atmosphere while potentially allowing new options.
 - Although there is no consensus on the need for hotels, the Work Group expresses general agreement in support of this policy. The Work Group recommends a modification to better reflect meeting room sizes appropriate for the size of the hotel without an arbitrary capacity limit of 50 persons. This modification is intended to be more flexible with this constraint, but the intent remains to be consistent with the Planning Commission’s desire to prevent convention-sized meeting space. In similar discussions about the number of hotel rooms, some members felt that the 150 room limit per hotel at three sites (450 rooms total) was equally arbitrary and suggested adjusting the limit downward to mitigate impacts from hotels. The hotel study supporting the Plan did not address the question of the minimum number of rooms

necessary for a hotel to be market viable in this area. There is no agreement to change the recommended number of no more than 3 hotels of 150 rooms each (450 rooms total), with no more than one hotel at each of the three development sites. Narrative text in the implementation section of the Plan needs to be made consistent with the three hotel limit by eliminating references to a second hotel on the Cummings-Turner block.

- The Development Goals and Guidelines for the Robinson Terminal North, Robinson Terminal South, and Cummings-Turner properties contained in the Plan are intended to be additive to the requirements specified in City planning documents. Current City planning documents contain insufficient guidelines to achieve the vision of the Plan. The Work Group's suggested modifications to the guidelines and recommendations of the Plan provide important amplifying language to ensure the public's goals for architecture and site design, land use, historic preservation, public art, public spaces, and other public benefits are met.

Implementation and Funding

The Work Group recommends that that implementation of the Plan begin soon after adoption and include development of a design plan, introduction of new activities, and completion of a signature project in public spaces in the core area. Implementation plans require further development and can benefit from management changes within City government augmented by public involvement through a body charged with Plan implementation and waterfront oversight. An early activity will to develop a design plan to ensure a high quality look and feel for waterfront public and private spaces.

Costs of waterfront public improvements should be considered a significant investment from which Alexandria can expect to generate City-wide returns. The Plan will entail significant public costs, and financial calculations that account for projected revenues and expenses over time must be further refined. The recovery of those costs is dependent on the timing and scale of waterfront development. With or without a change in zoning, projected costs of implementing this Plan can be recovered, though the recovery period would vary based on the nature of development. If the waterfront is to be considered an integrated space with a variety of venues and activities, the Work Group recommends that have its own budget identity within the City's Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program. Opportunities exist to fund improvements, maintenance, and activities through public and private funding, and the City should strengthen current process and take new steps to secure such funding. Funding priorities as reflected in the draft Plan do not reflect in allocation of public funds the priority accorded to art and history.

- A variety of plans, engineering, and design studies are required to turn the concepts expressed in the Plan into a Plan ready for implementation. These include:
 - Assessment of Pilot Parking Program;
 - Union Street Transportation Management Plan;
 - Detailed Design Plan;
 - Flood Mitigation Engineering Study;

- Pedestrian Flow and Safety Study;
 - Marina Redevelopment Study, including engineering of piers and wharves;
 - Environmental Assessment within an overall waterfront design and engineering plan; and
 - A GenOn Small Area Plan.
- The assumed implementation period for the draft Plan is a 15- to 25-year period. In the near-term, it will be important for the City to demonstrate a commitment to implementing the Plan soon after adoption. The Work Group recommends that initial investments and activities be focused in key public spaces proposed by the Plan, including the foot of King Street, Waterfront Park, or new park space along The Strand. These are prominent locations near the heart of the City's waterfront and developments here can signal an exciting new phase for Alexandria's waterfront. However, it is crucial that this Plan be considered with a long-term perspective in mind. In addition, the phasing of implementation must be clarified through a work plan that clearly demarcates requirements and the timeline for execution to guide public expectations and keep the City on task.
 - Development, policy changes, budget allocations, management focus, and adopted practices must seek not only to implement but also to sustain the vision of this waterfront for generations. We urge the City to review its economic model for supporting activities along the waterfront. Some facilities, like the Torpedo Factory Art Center, are highly successful. Others, like the Food Pavilion, are not. This is where proactive steps must be taken to reinforce success and avoid failure.
 - The draft Plan presents illustrative concepts of how waterfront public spaces and private development could be constructed. It serves as a design framework, but not a design plan since pieces are not integrated to present a clear design identity characteristic along the entire waterfront. The development of a design plan should be addressed early in the implementation stage. This must involve public input and City support and could involve a professional design competition, request for proposals, or a similar approach to prompt the highest degree of expert involvement and innovation. The design plan must reflect high design standards to ensure that the waterfront ages gracefully and remains consistent with the historic setting of Old Town.
 - Management is critical. Current management of the waterfront is fractured across several City departments, with responsibility for varying aspects of its maintenance and operations. We recommend appointment of a senior director within City government to lead implementation of the Plan, determine priorities, and be held accountable for integrated management of the waterfront, coordination of the activities of City agencies, public entities, and commercial interests, and achievement of the Plan vision. The activities of this office need to be specifically resourced by the City. This senior director should be tasked with preparing and defending an integrated budget for waterfront needs. Other responsibilities may include: coordination of operation of the marina, programming, maintenance of parks and public space, security, facilities maintenance, budget and funds administration, and planning of future needs.

- Public oversight is critical. The City should designate a public body to act in concert with the duties and responsibilities of the senior director charged by the City to manage the waterfront. This body would provide the public input critical to achieving successful implementation of the plan in accordance with the public interest and within the City's capabilities and resources. This could be a new body, but care must be taken to avoid unnecessary duplication of existing function with existing bodies like the Waterfront Committee. One option is to re-charter the existing Waterfront Committee as a Waterfront Commission and review and revise its membership and function. Another option is to establish a separate Waterfront Plan Implementation Task Force charged with overseeing implementation of the Plan, which would eventually transfer its responsibilities to a Waterfront Commission when implementation is substantially completed. Consideration should be given to ensuring a voice for residents proximate to waterfront development and civic improvements.
- The Plan contains cost estimates to implement its various features. Additional engineering studies and assessments executed as part of implementation will further refine these numbers. Similarly, the revenue streams from the variety of potential waterfront activities are estimated based on representative uses. With or without changes in zoning, adequate revenues are projected to meet projected costs, although the time period for amortizing costs is longer without rezoning. Regardless of alternatives, Plan phasing, and the mix of uses (and the attendant revenues generated), it is essential that the significant costs of improvements are addressed, but do not create an undue financial burden on the City. If properly implemented, investment in the City's waterfront can significantly increase City revenues from a variety of sources (lodging, meals, and retail sales taxes). This investment benefits all of Alexandria. From this perspective, City funding of waterfront improvements should be highly prioritized and compete well within the City's Capital Improvement Program.
- Although art and history are critical elements of the draft Plan, specific dedicated public funding anticipated within the Plan is relatively small. The draft Plan projects private funding for the vast majority of history and arts amenities. For such important features within the waterfront vision, funding streams must be more certain. Dedicated funding for these waterfront amenities from public and private sources needs City emphasis and support throughout implementation. One likely source is developer contributions, which will play a significant role in funding public amenities at and adjacent to development sites. In addition, creation of non-profit entities dedicated to supporting the waterfront and its activities should be encouraged and, within legal limits, enabled by the City. Good examples like the Founders Park Community Association and cooperative arrangements similar to this can also complement the City role. A third potential funding source is grant funding from federal, state, and non-profit organizations. Capturing grant funds will likely require dedicated effort by both City staff and volunteers, with Council approval. Grant activities should be managed by the senior director within City government charged with Plan coordination and execution.

- The Work Group suggests the following new Plan recommendation: The ~~application of net additional City revenues generated by redevelopment of the waterfront should generally be dedicated~~ applied to waterfront-area amenities, including parks, programming, and other public uses. The City should prepare an annual waterfront capital and operations budget, and the annual funding should be sufficient for timely implementation of the Plan and annual expenditures should generally be no less than the net annual revenues generated from redevelopment. The City should estimate and track new revenues generated by increased activities along the waterfront (e.g., hotel and restaurant taxes, property taxes, etc.) and these estimates can help the City explain and rationalize the investment cost made along the waterfront. In adopting this Plan recommendation, the Work Group notes that formally dedicated or partitioned funding may not provide the flexibility Council requires to manage the City. Further, funding may not be sufficient within this notional “lockbox” to fund the Plan and achieve the investments necessary to achieve a vibrant waterfront. The Work Group notes that better geographic identification of capital expenditures not only along the waterfront, but also in other sections of the City would better inform the public and help facilitate comparative analysis of investments by the City.

Environmental Issues

Environmental issues are especially important to the Plan specifically because most of the waterfront lies in the RPA and the Resource Management Area of the Chesapeake Bay. The City intends to be a leader in environmental stewardship and has developed and embraced an Eco-City Charter. It promotes environmental considerations through its zoning requirements, policies, and public proclamations. The waterfront is a key area to demonstrate achievement of the highest environmental standards. Promoting the health of the river and protecting the health of citizens through action in this area is a vital act of leadership and an important requirement. The Work Group recommends that environmental impacts be addressed as part of Plan implementation.

- There was discussion over whether an integrated environmental assessment should be completed for the Plan as a whole, or whether individual assessments as development occurred would suffice. The Work Group notes the difficulty of completing a comprehensive assessment of the Plan given the conceptual nature of proposed developments, but it remains important to look forward and identify environmental requirements and potential impacts as implementation of the Plan proceeds. The Work Group recommends that the City address environmental issues for the waterfront as a whole as an explicit element of the waterfront-wide design and engineering plan. In addition, the City should consider the environmental impacts of any City improvement or private redevelopment on the waterfront to address the goals and objectives of the Eco-City charter and capture every opportunity to meet or exceed these requirements.
- Green space is a natural defense against flooding and helps to naturally cleanse storm water runoff into the Potomac River. This is best accomplished through increased parkland, natural shorelines, and limits on impervious surfaces. The Work Group supports the Plan

recommendations and Development Goals and Guidelines that accomplish these objectives. Portions of the Robinson Terminal properties represent potential open space opportunities and remediation sites along the river, especially those areas with contaminated soil.

Conclusion

The discussions of the Work Group yielded a diverse set of viewpoints and insights that are summarized as findings in the report. These findings apply regardless of the alternatives identified in the Plan. The alternatives presented in the Plan differed, in particular, on degree of density, open space, commercial activities, and public uses. Each alternative had different impacts on the City's zoning. It remains for City Council to understand where agreement generally exists, the range of alternatives defined by Plan variables, the evaluation criteria to be used, and then decide how best to proceed. Summarized below are the areas of general agreement (though not necessarily consensus), key Plan variables (AKA, areas of disagreement), and evaluation criteria for both the public and private realms of the Plan area.

	Public Realm	Private Realm
Areas of General Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality parks and public spaces • Maintaining seaport heritage • Promoting and funding art and history • Retaining/attracting new cultural institutions • Prominence of public space at foot of King St. • Improved, economically viable marina • Managing nuisance flooding • Ensuring public oversight and involvement • Integrated management of the waterfront • Enhanced programming and activities • Quality of design • Need for early, prominent public investment in waterfront core area • Adequate funding for improvements • Discrete budgeting for waterfront • Exceed environmental standards • Areas for additional study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessment of pilot parking program ○ Union St. transportation management plan ○ Detailed design plan ○ Flood mitigation engineering study ○ Pedestrian flow and safety study ○ Marina redevelopment study, including engineering of piers and wharves ○ Environmental assessment within overall waterfront design and engineering plan ○ GenOn Small Area Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced, mixed-use development • Quality of design • High environmental standards • Protecting private landowner rights, including avoidance of eminent domain • SUP anticipated for all development • Allowing 66' height west of Union St. at RTN • Mitigating impacts of hotels and restaurants • Ensuring public oversight and involvement • Contributions for public amenities • Exceed environmental standards
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of pedestrian focus • Degree of public and private funding • Quantity and quality of public amenities, including public space, art and history, etc. • Allocation of waterfront and non-waterfront area revenue to fund civic improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of usage (% hotel; % retail, etc.) • Quality of development • Allowable density • Private funding of public amenities
Evaluation Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public benefits • Public costs • Public acceptance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External impacts • Market viability • Developer contributions for public amenities • Net tax revenue

