

Alexandria's Waterfront Plan Work Group
Plan of Action
August 10, 2011

Alexandria's City Council recognized that the Alexandria City Waterfront is an invaluable resource, rich in history, art, open spaces, views, recreation, culture, and boating. It established a Work Group to assist the City of Alexandria achieve a Waterfront that is welcoming to and for the benefit of all City residents and visitors and be compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Vision of the Waterfront Plan Work Group:

To help the City of Alexandria achieve a vibrant waterfront that celebrates our historical and cultural legacy, expands and supports public uses, yet retains and preserves the special charm and ambiance of our community for future generations.

Assigned Tasks from the City Council

- Provide recommendations to City Council regarding alternatives for the Waterfront Area Small Area Plan
- Explore alternatives regarding the three development sites, the land use and density thereon, including by right development, the addition of hotels, and the possibility of additional parks and museums or other cultural venues, with exploration of costs/benefits and funding sources
- Clarify positions on outstanding issues
- Recommend steps to narrow differences, if possible, between various stakeholder positions on key issues
- Balance competing goals considering neighborhood impacts, citywide public interests (such as recreation, art, and history), commercial interests, and implementation
- Categorize outstanding issues into those to be addressed by the plan and those that are best addressed during plan implementation

Implied Tasks from the City Council

- Understand all relevant facts and assumptions regarding the City's waterfront planning process and the plan itself
- Assemble and review necessary sources and expertise to facilitate the Work Group's understanding of essential zoning, policy, legal, financial, environmental, and regulatory elements impacting waterfront planning
- Identify and, if possible, incorporate best practices, industry standards, and special and available expertise regarding waterfront development
- Meet with stakeholders to understand their positions
- Review and assess plan development process, plan products and references
- Evaluate plan conclusions and recommendations against stated goals and success criteria

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- Recommend changes to the Waterfront Plan and plan processes

Mission

Evaluate the Waterfront Small Area Plan and alternatives, recommend changes if needed, and propose steps that strengthen stakeholder acceptance and facilitate city implementation of the plan

Charter for Action

As a Work Group we need to take actions to:

- Understand the planning process and the resulting plan
- Understand the alternatives
- Understand the issues
- Assess the plan and its alternatives against objective criteria
- Identify plan strengths and shortcomings
- Identify changes to strengthen plan, achieve balance and narrow differences
- Submit recommendations to the City Council

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Phase I – Background and references review *## Meetings??*

- Understand all relevant facts and assumptions regarding the City's waterfront planning process and the plan itself
- Assemble and review necessary sources and expertise to build the Work Group's understanding of essential zoning, policy, legal, financial, environmental, and regulatory elements impacting waterfront planning
- Identify and, if possible, evaluate best practices, industry standards, and special and available expertise regarding waterfront development

Phase II – Stakeholder Engagements *## Meetings??*

- Meet with stakeholders to understand their positions
- Clarify positions on outstanding issues

Phase III – Plans Assessment *## Meetings?? (2 each on 4 Alternatives)*

- Review and assess plan development process, plan products and references
- Explore alternatives regarding the three development sites, the land use and density thereon, including by right development, the addition of hotels, and the

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- possibility of additional parks and museums or other cultural venues, with exploration of costs/benefits and funding sources
- Evaluate plan conclusions and recommendations against stated goals and success criteria

Phase IV – Preparation and Presentation of Recommendations *## Meetings??*

- Recommend changes to the Waterfront Plan and plan processes
- Recommend steps to narrow differences, if possible, between various stakeholder positions on key issues
- Balance competing goals considering neighborhood impacts, citywide public interests (such as recreation, art, and history), commercial interests, and implementation
- Categorize outstanding issues into those to be addressed by the plan and those that are best addressed during plan implementation

Appendixes:

Appendix 1 – WPWG Working Calendar

Supplemental Material

Supplement 1 – Community Goals and Objectives Criteria

Supplement 2 - 10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination

Supplement 3 - 9 Steps to Creating a Great Waterfront

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Appendix 1 – WPWG Working Calendar

Alexandria's Waterfront Workgroup Calendar **August** As of August 10, 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 WPWG Meeting	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 WPWG Meeting	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

Alexandria's Waterfront Workgroup Calendar **September** As of August 10, 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 Labor Day	6	7 WPWG Meeting	8	9	10
11	12	13 City Council Leg Mtng	14	15	16	17 Public Hearing
18	19	20	21 WPWG Meeting	22	23	24
25	26	27 City Council Leg Mtng	28	29 Rosh Hashanah	30	1

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October

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5 WPWG Meeting	6	7	8 Yom Kippur
9	10 Columbus Day	11 City Council Leg Mtng	12 WPWG Meeting ?	13	14	15 Public Hearing
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25 City Council Leg Mtng	26 WPWG Meeting ?	27	28	29

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November

As of August 10, 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 City Council Leg Mtng	10	11 Veteran's Day	12 Public Hearing
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 City Council Leg Mtng	23	24 Thanksgiving	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

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December

As of August 10, 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 City Council Leg Mtng	14	15	16	17 Public Hearing
18	19	20 Hanukkah	21	22	23	24
25 Christmas	26	27	28	29	30	31

Potential Critical Dates:

ACTION

DATE

Phase I – Complete Background and References Review

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Phase II – Complete Stakeholders Engagement

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Phase III – Complete Plans Assessment

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Phase IV – Complete Preparation and Review of Recommendations

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Presentation of Initial Findings and Recommendations to City Council

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Presentation of Final Findings and Recommendations to City Council

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Supplement 1 - Community Goals and Objectives (Extract from Draft Waterfront SAP – February 1, 2011)

Based on the vision reflected in the Activity Map for the waterfront, and community input during various Early Outreach Activities, the following Goals and Objectives were developed. These Goals and Objectives shaped the Concept Plan:

1. Authentic:

- Create a unique waterfront identity that is grounded in the City's history.
- Celebrate and honor the broad history and culture of the Alexandria Waterfront from, from prehistory to now.
- Respect the scale and fine grain of Old Town.
- Protect identified historic resources, archaeological resources, and cultural resources, including buildings and sites.
- Adaptively reuse identified historic buildings.

2. Connected:

- Increase and improve access to the public spaces of the Waterfront.
- Pedestrian connectivity along the Waterfront should be continuous.
- Create continuous pedestrian access along the entire Waterfront.
- Provide continuous north-south bicycle access.
- Enhance visual cues and sight lines for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles on all grid streets and alleys and increase accessibility for pedestrians, bicycles and, as appropriate, vehicles.
- Create connections to the Waterfront from Metro stations.
- Increase the capacity for access to Alexandria by boat.
- Encourage commuting and leisure travel by boat between Alexandria and other regional waterfront destinations.

3. Inclusive:

- The Waterfront, is and should continue to be, a citywide resource to be enjoyed by all Alexandrians. Ensure public access to the entire Waterfront.
- Provide a variety of activities for people of all ages and cultures.
- Link the Waterfront to Alexandria neighborhoods.

4. Dynamic:

- Maintain a living, active Waterfront that is a destination that attracts all Alexandrians and visitors and should be integral to the visitor experience in

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Alexandria.

- Expand services and activities for visitors.
- Increase the use, frequency, and effectiveness of public spaces for gatherings and events. Emphasize art and history in each new initiative along the Waterfront.
- Utilize art and history as a unifying element.
- Strengthen the reputation of the area as a regional and national visitor destination by adding uses that complement existing retail, office and tourist attractions.

5. Variety:

- Provide a variety of uses, themes, activities, and experiences along Waterfront.
- Create a diverse scale of spaces along the Waterfront. Offer activities and features that delight a diverse range of visitors.
- Provide a range of shoreline treatments and types that offer diverse ways to interact with the water.

6. Manageable:

- Improve the Waterfront's vehicular and pedestrian circulation and parking.
- Minimize pedestrian and vehicle conflicts.
- Increase way-finding for residents and visitors.
- Maximize underutilized parking opportunities elsewhere in Old Town.
- Promote use of designated pick-up and drop-off areas for motorcoaches.

7. Sustainable:

- Ensure that the Waterfront is able to sustain itself economically, environmentally, and operationally.
- Create revenue, initiate new partners, and leverage other resources that can be applied for enhancing and maintaining public open space and other public infrastructure.
- Maximize the utilization of existing resources.
- Generate sufficient net new tax revenue from new Waterfront economic activities to pay for Waterfront capital improvements and ongoing parks and facilities maintenance.
- Identify opportunities for satellite public facilities to provide onsite Waterfront maintenance, security and emergency services.
- Protect the existing amount of open space and, if possible, expand it.
- Ensure that Waterfront development presents Alexandria as an Eco-City.
- Integrate and activate natural systems and processes throughout Waterfront.
- Identify opportunities for environmental education features.
- Use innovative and creative ideas for flood protection.

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- Improve public health (including mental health) through opportunities for active living.
- Allow historic character & scale to influence new development opportunities.

8. Compatible:

- Ensure that future development in the Waterfront should respect the existing residential neighborhoods.
- Protect existing residential neighborhoods from excessive noise and traffic.
- Offer activities and features that delight a diverse range of visitors.
- Meet the needs of residents for open space, recreation and outdoor dining.

9. Permeable:

- Enhance vistas of the water from surrounding areas and of the Waterfront from the river.
- Create overlooks with views to the water and to the City.
- Explore piers, especially where east-west streets meet the river.
- Preserve and enhance view corridors to the water, including historic streets and alleys.
- Create a system of visual elements to draw people to the water.

10. Creative:

- Be bold, visionary, realistic, informative and offer surprises along the way.
- Offer a variety of locations where the public can become engaged with each other, art, artists and history.
- Offer participatory opportunities for people of all ages.
- Use art and history to tell the unique story of people and experiences.
- Provide flexible spaces that could be used for multiple activities.
- Make the Waterfront an example of design excellence.

Supplement 2 - 10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination

Source: Project for Public Spaces – www.pps.org

1. Surrounding Buildings Enhance Public Space

Any building on the waterfront should boost activity in the public spaces around it. Ideally, there should be a mix of uses, with seamless interaction between inside and outdoors. High-rise towers that lack any public uses on the ground floor are noticeably out of place along rivers, lakes and ocean fronts. They usually create a wall that physically and psychologically cuts off the waterfront from surrounding neighborhoods.

2. Limits are Placed on Residential Development

Great waterfronts are not dominated by residential development. Why? Because these are places that are full of people, day and night. They are the sites of festivals, markets, fireworks displays, concerts, spontaneous celebrations and other high-energy gatherings. A high concentration of residential development undermines the diversity of waterfront use and creates pressure to prevent nighttime activity from flourishing.

3. Activities go on Round-the-Clock and Throughout the Year

Waterfronts that thrive year-round will reap substantial community and economic benefits. Rain or cold is no reason for a waterfront to sit empty. Creative programming can take rainy and winter weather into account, and smart use of amenities can provide protection from inclement weather. Likewise, people enjoy being by the water at night if appropriate lighting and special events make them feel welcome and safe.

4. Flexible Design Fosters Adaptability

Successful waterfronts must adapt to many changes that bring different users at

different times. Programming and management are helpful in serving diverse audiences, but flexibility must also be built into the design of the place. Instead of a permanent stage, for example, which is well-used in the summer but not the winter, a retractable or temporary stage could be used. Likewise, it is important to have on-site storage for movable chairs, tables, umbrellas, and games so they can be used at a moment's notice.

5. Creative Amenities Boost Everyone's Enjoyment

The best waterfronts feature amenities that increase people's comfort and enjoyment. A bench or waste receptacle in just the right location makes a surprising difference in how people choose to use a place. Lighting strengthens a square's identity and can draw attention to specific activities, pathways or entrances. Public art is a great magnet for children of all ages to come together. Whether temporary or permanent, amenities help establish a convivial setting for social interaction.

6. Access Made Easy by Boat, Bike and Foot

Waterfronts flourish when they can be accessed by means other than private vehicles. In Sydney, Stockholm, Venice, Helsinki, and Hong Kong, people head to the waterfront via boat as much as by land. You can dramatically enhance the character and experience of a waterfront when it is easily reached in ways other than driving. Access by foot and bike are a crucial element of the transportation mix, which is why many of the most beloved are crowned by pedestrian promenades and bike lanes. People feel more at ease when not overwhelmed by traffic and parking lots, creating a climate that fosters a full breadth of waterfront activity. Where streets are absolutely necessary for commercial deliveries, or access to retail or marine uses, they should be designed to minimize their impact on pedestrian safety and enjoyment, and always be closed for events and festivals.

7. Local Identity is Showcased

The greatest waterfront destinations are found in cities that truly orient themselves to

the water. Venice and Stockholm are defined by their waterfronts, and residents and visitors alike naturally gravitate there. Making the most of local identity, history and culture stimulates widespread interest in the waterfront and creates a unique sense of place. Frequent opportunities to appreciate local art, music and theatre helps draw a community together around the waterfront.

8. The Water Itself Draws Attention

The water itself is the greatest asset of any waterfront, and should become the centerpiece for programming and activities. This can include traditional marine uses such as a ferry terminal or fishing port, which helps preserve a place's identity. Additional activities may include water-taxis, boat tours, restaurants or bars on anchored boats, fishing, rock skipping, floating pools, kayaking and swimming. Many of these activities not only attract users to waterfront but also generate interest among onlookers. Embracing the natural uses of a waterfront leads to thematic programming such as boat festivals, fish markets, bait and tackle shops, and performances on floating stages.

9. Iconic Buildings Serve a Variety of Functions

Iconic, attention-grabbing buildings that reflect a human scale and do not detract from the surrounding context can be a boon to the waterfront, so long as they serve a variety of functions. On a recent weekend morning in Stockholm, the busiest building along the waterfront was, surprisingly, the [City Hall](#). Surrounded by a plaza, park, and courtyards, this landmark shares its slice of the waterfront with a pier where boats embark on waterfront tours. Clearly, this City Hall (where the Nobel Prize banquet is held each December) is more than a one-dimensional icon, it is also a good neighbor exhibiting a strong sense of place. Today's iconic buildings should strive to achieve the same flexibility and public-spirited presence.

10. Good Management Maintains Community Vision

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Management is essential to ensure that a successful waterfront stays that way. Cities could adopt the model of the Business Improvement Districts (BID) that have been successful in restoring and maintaining the vitality of many downtowns and commercial districts. A "WID" could forge partnerships between city agencies, property owners, waterfront businesses and community organizations in the surrounding district, so that waterfront programming—such as temporary exhibits of local artists or music performances— gives the place a unique character. Such an organization would be very helpful in sustaining a diverse variety of activities and events throughout the year and implementing programs that can be used to generate revenue that benefits the waterfront as a whole.

Supplement 3 - 9 Steps to Creating a Great Waterfront

Source: Project for Public Spaces – www.pps.org

1. Look First at the Public Space

In planning a waterfront development, city officials or a developer should begin by envisioning a network of well-connected, multi-use public spaces that fit with the community's shared goals. By orienting waterfront revitalization around public spaces, new construction will enhance the quality of existing destinations and result in a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

While streets may be appropriate on some waterfronts, pedestrian connections should be given top priority, making large parking lots and auto-oriented development out of the question.

2. Make Sure Public Goals are the Primary Objective

Waterfronts everywhere are too valuable to simply allow developers to dictate what happens there. . This is not to say that private development is unwelcome and should be discouraged – on the contrary, it is often necessary to the future of a healthy waterfront. But the best solutions for revamping waterfronts put public goals first, not private short-term financial objective . As long as redevelopment plans adhere to the notion that the waterfront is an inherently public asset, it will be relatively easy to follow the rest of the steps here. Community engagement – and, ultimately, local ownership and pride – depend on this basic premise.

3. Build on Existing Assets & Context

After establishing the public spaces and public goals, begin the public visioning process with the existing assets and surrounding context. Start with the historical form and function of the site to foster a locally grounded identity by channeling former vibrancy into a variety of uses. Existing industrial uses should be preserved when compatible with

human activity on the waterfront. Surrounding neighborhoods should be integrated into the waterfront to strengthen connectivity between destinations. And new development should embrace its waterfront context with appropriate orientation and usages.

4. Create a Shared Community Vision

Unlike a master plan, a community visioning process does not lock a project into a prescribed solution. It is a citizen-driven initiative that outlines a set of goals—ideals to strive for—that set the stage for people to think boldly, make breakthroughs, and achieve new possibilities for their waterfront. Because a vision is adaptable and can be implemented gradually, starting with small experiments, it often becomes more powerful through time as public enthusiasm for making bold changes gains support.

5. Create Multiple-use Destinations by Tapping the Power of 10

Through decades of work, PPS has found that the most effective way to propel a visioning process is to set a goal of creating ten great destinations along a waterfront, an idea we call the “Power of Ten.” This focus on destinations, rather than “open space” or parks, enables a genuine community-led process to take root. Residents, businesses, community organizations and other stakeholders all join in to help identify the key destinations and then define the uses and activities they want to see at each place.

After using the Power of 10 to create great destinations throughout a waterfront, the same principle should be applied at each destination to come up with a list of ten activities for that spot. A wealth of things to do broadens the appeal of the destination, encouraging round-the-clock use.

6. Connect Destinations Along the Waterfront

Destinations should be connected to one another and incorporated into a vision for the waterfront as a whole. A waterfront that is continuously walkable with a variety of activities along the way will successfully link destinations, allowing the appeal of each one to strengthen the place as a whole..

Creating these seamless connections is a fascinating challenge that involves mixing uses (such as housing, recreation, entertainment and retail) and mixing partners (such as public institutions and local business owners). Another key element is attracting people to the waterfront on foot or bike, rather than just in their cars.

Parks or esplanades should not serve as the whole purpose of the entire waterfront. Too much passive, one-dimensional open space puts a damper on the inherent vibrancy of waterfronts, as evident in many spots throughout Toronto, New York City and Vancouver, — cities that have relied too heavily on “greening” their waterfronts without including other public activities that draw people for different reasons at different times. The world’s best waterfronts use parks as connective tissue, using them to link other high-profile destinations together. Helsinki, Stockholm, Sydney, and Baltimore have successfully employed this strategy.

7. Maximize Opportunities for Public Access

It is essential that the waterfront be accessible for everyone to the greatest extent possible. Here too, the goal of continuity is of paramount importance. Waterfronts with continuous public access are much more popular than those where public space is interrupted. Even small stretches where the waterfront is unavailable to people greatly diminish the experience. California’s Balboa Island, located off the coast of Newport Beach, makes its entire shoreline accessible to the public instead of giving waterfront property owners sole rights of use.

Access also means that people can actually interact with the water in numerous ways—from swimming and fishing, to picnicking dockside and feeding the ducks. If it is not possible to actually dip their hands in the water, people should have access to another type of water nearby—such as a fountain, spray play area or a swimming pool that floats next to the shore.

8. Balance Environmental Benefits with Human Needs

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While a wide variety of uses can flourish on a waterfront, many successful destinations embrace their natural surroundings by creating a close connection between human and natural needs. Marine biologists and environmentalists today promote the restoration of natural shorelines — at least where marine uses do not dominate — and advocate replacing crumbling bulkheads with natural vegetation that will improve water quality, and revive fish and wildlife habitat. But this natural restoration should not preclude human use. Boardwalks, interpretive displays, and even more active uses such as playgrounds and picnic areas can be incorporated into the shoreline design without sacrificing environmental benefits.

9. Start Small to Make Big Changes

Good public spaces don't happen overnight, and no one has all the answers about improving a place right at the outset. Placemaking is about doing more than planning. Many great plans get bogged down because they are too big, too expensive, and simply take too long to happen. Short-term actions, like planting flowers, can be a good way not only to test ideas, but to also give people the confidence that change is occurring — and that their ideas matter.

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