

April 21, 2009

City Hall
321 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Honorable Mayor, Members of City Council, and City Manager:

The Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association welcomes the opportunity to participate in the waterfront planning process. The waterfront is a community asset that should be used to enhance the quality of life for all citizens, both as a recreational resource and as an economic tool that attracts both residents and visitors and encourages spending.

Creating a world-class waterfront in Alexandria provides a unique and unprecedented opportunity to create infrastructure that would greatly enhance the success of Alexandria's hotels, restaurants, shops and attractions; increasing the tourism industry's financial support of the tax base.

A more vibrant waterfront can increase the value of the existing tourism by providing more spending opportunities while providing entertainment opportunities for residents, neighbors, and tourists.

The ACVA's priorities are (not in any specific order):

- **ORIENTATION AND INTERPRETATION:** We support the interpretation of the waterfront as an historic seaport. The design should be consistent with the Alexandria's core brand element — historic ambience — while being inviting, lively and fun. It is critical that the waterfront include orientation to the city, interpretation of its history, and service to visitors using the marina. The adaptive re-use of historic buildings should be considered.
- **DOCKING CAPACITY:** Increasing the City's capacity to receive visitors by boat is ACVA's top priority. The capacity for both commercial and transient boat slips should be significantly increased. The success of the Alexandria-National Harbor Water Taxi, which carried 100,000 passengers during its first season, is a barometer of the tremendous opportunity that exists as waterfronts develop and mature in DC and at National Harbor. Plans should include attractive, safe, and prominent boarding experiences for commercial vessels.
- **CONNECTIVITY TO KING STREET:** The design of the waterfront should be gracefully integrated with the King Street corridor to optimize commercial development opportunities from the "river to the rails."

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Potomac Riverboat Company

Alexandria Hotel Association



- **MULTIMODAL ACCESS:** A transportation plan should be developed that looks beyond parking for private vehicles. The waterfront plan should encourage the use of the King Street Trolley and should integrate multi-passenger commercial vehicles and taxis for loading and unloading.
- **TORPEDO FACTORY ART CENTER:** Serious consideration should be given to enhancing the façade of the Torpedo Factory Art Center and dramatically changing the Food Court Pavilion to transform the buildings into the jewels of the waterfront. They must become centers of activity – cultural and economic – that connect Old Town and the waterfront, rather than dividing them.
- **RESTAURANT AND ATTRACTION DEVELOPMENT:** Recognizing the limited resources available for development on land, we encourage the creative use of the waterway to expand waterfront dining opportunities and perhaps develop paid attractions, performing arts venues and other cultural activities.

In the short term, we encourage the City to reevaluate operations at the marina to ensure that the cost to dock and other policies support subsequent visitor spending. We also encourage the City to take short-term action to ensure the security of the Marina and provide service to boaters that is consistent with regional marina's that successfully attract shoppers and diners arriving by boat.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the ACVA, I thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to actively participating in the planning process.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Hall
Chair, ACVA

Copy: Faroll Hamer
Director, Planning & Zoning