

Docket Item #6 A-C  
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2005-0002 (A)  
TEXT AMENDMENT # 2005-0002 (B)  
REZONING #2005-0003 (C)  
King Street Retail Strategy

Planning Commission Meeting  
May 3, 2005

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for: (1) an amendment to the City's Master Plan, adopting the King Street Retail Strategy as a chapter of the Master Plan; (2) enactment of Section 6-700 of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the King Street Urban Retail zone; and (3) amendments to the City of Alexandria zoning map to reflect the King Street Urban Retail zone.

**APPLICANT:** Department of Planning and Zoning

**LOCATION:** The properties adjoining King Street, generally from the intersection of King Street and Union Street westward to the intersection of King Street and Commonwealth Avenue.

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**CITY COUNCIL ACTION, MAY 14, 2005:** City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation for docket items 7 and 8, with the following amendments: (1) the King Street Outdoor Dining will be effective January 1, 2006, with the pilot program remaining in effect for rest of the year; (2) critical elements, such as sidewalk regulation standards, cleanliness and code enforcement issues, will be addressed immediately; (3) allow some type of accommodation for retailers being impacted by current outdoor dining equipment; (4) include under Storefront Guidelines the following language, "Prohibiting tinted, reflective or colored glass that restricts the pedestrian's view into ground-floor windows;" (5) include in Section 6-707 Use limitations a new subsection (E) to read: "The property owner and occupant shall maintain all building and property appurtenances located within or over the public right-of-way in a safe, clean and attractive fashion, as reasonably determined by the director;" (6) the change of the membership to include the representatives from civic associations and other organizations in and around the King Street Retail Zone; (7) a Planning Commission analysis of the Outdoor Dining Pilot program prior to final implementation and (8) staff review of the inclusion of the additional parts of King Street in one of the Historic Districts. Council requested staff review the Special Use Permit process for certain businesses (restaurants and other small businesses), eliminating the requirement of coming before Council.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, MAY 3, 2005:** On a motion by Mr. Komoroske, seconded by Ms. Fossum, the Planning Commission undertook the following actions:

- Voted 7 to 0 to approve Master Plan Amendment #2005-0002, to include the King Street Retail Strategy, with amendments dated April 22, 2005 and incorporated in the Strategy document;
- Voted 7 to 0 to recommend approval of Text Amendment #2005-0002, as amended in revised text dated April 22, 2005; and
- Voted 7 to 0 to recommend approval of Rezoning #2005-0003, to reflect the King Street Urban Retail zone.

Reason: The Planning Commission unanimously supported the King Street Retail Strategy and the King Street Urban Retail zone, with amendments to address concerns raised in the public hearing. The Commission expressed satisfaction with the Strategy process, and those Commissioners who participated as members of the King Street Advisory Committee throughout the process stated their enthusiasm for having been an integral part of the process. The Commission also expressed appreciation for the extensive outreach undertaken during the study process, and the need for more outreach to the individual businesses as implementation of the Strategy moves forward.

The amendments recommended by the Commission to the Retail Strategy and to the Urban Retail zone include the continuation of Special Use Permit reviews for new restaurants, exploration of expanded valet parking within the greater Central Business District as part of the implementation process, additional emphasis on the close relationship between King Street's commercial community and the nearby residential communities and maintaining a balance of uses, and clarification that the new King Street organization will not supplant the policy responsibilities of City boards and will aid in establishing more consistent retail hours. Additional language was added to the Waterfront chapter to emphasize that the principles and recommendations are only advisory to a future waterfront planning effort. Lastly, text clarifications were made in the Urban Retail Zone to apply storefront guidelines to renovated buildings when not inconsistent with BAR guidelines and to clarify the application of the rear stepback requirement for new construction.

The Commission had considerable discussion on the provisions related to the administrative approval of restaurants. They acknowledged that the King Street Advisory Committee also did not reach a clear consensus on the issue. Several divergent arguments were presented in the discussion including the positive aspects of using administrative standards to replace the uncertainty for small businesses in the SUP process, the potential use of administrative approvals for new businesses that replace existing restaurants, how the SUP process is the only guarantee the residents have to protect their neighborhoods and is also an important mechanism for businesses to present their views, and the pros and cons of using the consent calendar as a mechanism to streamline the approval process. The Commission concluded their discussion with overall agreement to continue reviewing all King Street restaurants through the Special Use Permit (SUP)

process at this time, with the potential to revisit the issue after it is tested in Arlandria and along Mt. Vernon Avenue.

The Commission found the King Street Retail Strategy and the accompanying zoning changes to provide direction and guidance for the City in its efforts to achieve an economic balance and quality of life for its citizens that includes a unique and vibrant pedestrian-oriented retail area.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, APRIL 5, 2005:** Without objection, the Planning Commission closed the public hearing and deferred action on the request.

Reason: The Planning Commission felt that more time was needed to consider the request.

Speakers:

Lois Walker, 417 S. Royal Street, representing King Street Metro Enterprise Team, spoke in support of the proposal. Ms. Walker stated that she appreciates the City looking at King Street's atmosphere in the face of increased competition, and that the most important component of the proposal is for the implementation (proposed King Street Partnership).

Sherry Brown, 1600 Prince Street, spoke in support of the proposal. Ms. Brown feels that King Street's economic competitiveness is declining and that the regulatory environment is stifling. She stated that she wishes to protect King Street and enable the businesses to survive.

Larry Grossman, 1123 Powhatan Street, spoke to address several issues: that Lower King Street and the waterfront are connected and that a waterfront plan is essential; that there is not enough room for outdoor dining along King Street; that there is no strategy for the construction of public parking but there are opportunities on City lots in the 900/1000 blocks; that there is no traffic movement plan; that street lights should resemble those used along M Street in Georgetown; that Special Use Permits disadvantage some active uses over less-desirable by-right uses; and that the concept of a Business Improvement District is important.

Laurent Janowski, proprietor of La Bergerie, 218 N. Lee Street, spoke to question why new valet parking regulations are proposed only for King Street businesses and not for those on nearby streets. Mr. Janowski stated that he believes the Strategy should include a larger area than just King Street.

Sarita Schotta, 104 Prince Street, spoke to defer the proposal. Ms. Schotta stated that some residents had only recently seen the Strategy and that additionally she is very concerned about waterfront recommendations within the Strategy. Ms. Schotta stated that she wishes for a chance to review the Strategy further.

Margaret Ticer-Janowski, proprietor of La Bergerie, 218 N. Lee Street, spoke to defer the proposal. Ms. Ticer-Janowski stated that she applauds the City for having the vision to look ahead, but several areas of the Strategy should have further review, such as parking, outdoor dining, and the boundaries of the proposed zone. Ms. Ticer-Janowski stated that her business is located outside of the Strategy's study area and, while she received the January *FYI Alexandria*

article on the Strategy and notice of the community meeting, she did not have involvement in the process.

Jim Melton, 105 Harvard Street, spoke in opposition to quick service restaurants on upper King Street. Mr. Melton further stated that he believes King Street should be solely a pedestrian street and that the issue of loading/unloading from businesses needs to be addressed.

Julie Crenshaw, 816 Queen Street, spoke to defer the proposal. Ms. Crenshaw stated that she believes the Strategy was not publicized enough, and that there are too many unanswered questions to resolve at this time.

Michael Hobbs, representing the Old Town Civic Association, spoke to address several issues. Mr. Hobbs stated that the City should protect and enhance King Street's core values and that the future of King Street needs to be addressed together with its surrounding residential district. Mr. Hobbs stated that he believes over-intensification of the commercial district would not benefit residential areas and his biggest concern is that new restaurants would harm the community. Mr. Hobbs recommended that the Old Town Restaurant Policy continue and that the City not delegate authority to any quasi-public agency.

Pat Troy, resident and proprietor of Pat Troy's Ireland's Own restaurant, 111 N. Pitt Street, spoke in support of the proposal. Mr. Troy stated that he was pleased to have been part of the process and that the Strategy contains good visioning and recommendations for King Street.

Tom Osborne, resident and proprietor of Spurgeon-Lewis Antiques, 112 N. Columbus Street, questioned whether his area is included in the Strategy and whether the Strategy incorporates a new tax. Mr. Osborne stated that he believes parking is a serious problem and that more restaurants will make the situation worse. Mr. Osborne also stated that restaurant patrons are less desirable than other retail patrons who spend more money in Alexandria.

Ellen Pickering, 103 Roberts Lane, stated that she attended the Strategy's community meetings and ideas such as promoting residential units on the upper floors would be beneficial to King Street. She also stated she believes it good that the waterfront was a component of the Strategy. Ms. Pickering questioned how the open space requirements would be applied and cautioned that any outdoor dining would need strict standards.

Wayne Neale, architect representing John Yaglenski, owner of 120 S. Peyton Street, spoke to request that his client's properties (bordering King Street) be included in the proposed King Street Urban Retail zone to allow these properties to have additional residential density. Mr. Neale also questioned the effect terracing buildings would have on small sites.

Poul Hertel, 1217 Michigan Court, stated that he believes there are some good components to the Strategy and expressed his opinion that the plan caters to restaurant interests on lower King Street. He further stated that administrative approvals will make conditions easier for restaurants to locate

in this area. Mr. Hertel expressed his opposition to the creation of a Business Improvement District.

Mary Longacre, 101 N. West Street, stated that she was unaware that the Strategy was in the process of being finalized and that she believes the proposal does not address the community. Ms. Longacre stated that shoppers have no commitment to the community and that the Strategy should focus on a broader area.

Brian Selfe, representing DSF/Long, owner of 1516-1600 King Street, spoke in support of the proposal. Mr. Selfe indicated that he had attended numerous meetings and has made sure that his current development proposal conforms to the Strategy.

MPA #2005-0002  
TA #2005-0002  
REZ #2005-0003  
King Street Retail Strategy

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission, on its own motion, initiate and recommend approval of the following:

- Amendment to the City's Master Plan, adopting the *King Street Retail Strategy* as a chapter of the Master Plan;
- Enactment of Section 6-700 of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the King Street Urban Retail zone; and
- Amendment to the City of Alexandria zoning map to reflect the King Street Urban Retail zone.

BACKGROUND:

King Street is Alexandria's most renowned street. Its mile-long stretch through Old Town contains an atmosphere unequaled elsewhere in the Washington region. Combining history, notable architecture and an exciting retail climate, King Street is a gem for the City of Alexandria, and both residents and businesspeople want it to remain the region's premier historic main street.

The Department of Planning & Zoning has examined King Street over the past year from many different aspects – with the goal of developing strategies that can help King Street's retail sector maintain its competitive edge. The *King Street Retail Strategy* has resulted from this course of action; from its beginning in late 2003, the *Strategy* has incorporated considerable input from a 27-member Advisory Committee, area businesspeople and nearby residents. In addition to the many Advisory Committee meetings, several community meetings have been held to solicit input from the broader community. The recommendations that have emerged are strategies that will benefit not just properties on King Street, but the greater community as well.

As a predominantly retail-oriented street, King Street is subject to competition from other areas. Recent years have seen a surge in popularity of pedestrian-oriented retail centers – ranging from Georgetown's M Street to the newer lifestyle center developments in Arlington County, such as those in the Clarendon and Shirlington areas. These developments have generated new competition for King Street's retail sector, meaning that in order to stay competitive in the regional marketplace, King Street must carefully plan for its future to keep what is cherished about its history as well as to define and undertake actions to remain a regional attraction for years to come.

Within this competitive environment, a plan for King Street's future is necessary. Although currently King Street is in a very strong retail market position, the purpose of this planning process has been to ensure that King Street's market position stays strong. Given King Street's importance to the Alexandria in terms of history, public perception and quality of life, its continued retail and economic vitality is of great importance the City.

KING STREET RETAIL STRATEGY:

The *King Street Retail Strategy* is not a "plan" in the traditional sense. Addressing the forces that are influencing King Street's future, this *Strategy* identifies physical, governmental, economic and management recommendations to help assure that King Street will remain a vital, thriving commercial area and the preeminent historical "Main Street" in the region.

King Street has evolved over the years from the main street of a seaport community to a regional commercial corridor and Alexandria's signature tourist attraction. The transformation of King Street has been incremental and ongoing, and continues today as sections of the street are revitalized with infill development, restoration and new commercial life. King Street has always evolved according to changing markets and economics, while at the same time preserving its history and culture. The *King Street Retail Strategy* is part of a tradition of looking forward while preserving the past.

While King Street is alive and well, its future is by no means assured. For King Street to maintain its edge as a desirable retail district, it must create and follow through with a common vision of the area's continued retail success. That vision and the steps that must be taken to achieve it form the core of the *King Street Retail Strategy*.

### ***The Vision for King Street***

The Vision for King Street is one that looks forward and enhances the existing environment to ensure an attractive, vital retail destination serving local residents and visitors alike. It is an historic retail district that is easy to get to – by car or by public transit – and is easy to navigate once here. The traditional character of King Street will always be maintained, and visitors will be welcomed as they arrive. New residential units will have connections to King Street's retail life as well as to adjacent residential areas. From the waterfront to the Metro Station, King Street will offer a unique and pleasant retail experience, unlike anywhere else in the Washington region. To ensure this vision is achieved, King Street will have a dedicated, full-time organization to manage day-to-day demands of maintaining and promoting it as a thriving retail street.

The key to King Street is its "streetscape," comprised of the physical attributes, the lively activity along the sidewalks and the public open space. The elements of the streetscape include the handsome brick sidewalks; the regularly placed street trees and other landscaping; the street furniture in the form of benches, street lights and bicycle racks; the graphics that identify and direct activities; the street itself; and the buildings and displays along the street and in the shops and continuous row of show windows. All of the above elements work together to create the people-oriented, vibrant pedestrian-friendly place that is so essential to King Street's success.



### ***Guiding Principles***

The Vision for a future King Street is expressed in this *Strategy* through a series of Guiding Principles that outline what is desirable in the physical improvements and operational management of King Street. The Guiding Principles are organized into the following themes:

- \_ Urban Design
- \_ Land Use
- \_ Parking
- \_ Transit
- \_ Waterfront
- \_ Strategic Implementation

The *Strategy* also provides Planning Recommendations that outline the initiatives needed to achieve the intent of the Guiding Principles. The recommendations in this *Strategy* are predicated on the creation of some form of management partnership between the community and the City to manage the implementation of the strategies and the King Street operations.

### **Urban Design**

People come to King Street by choice – attracted by the Street’s unique offerings and ambiance. Thus, urban design is vital to maintaining King Street as a desirable destination. The *Strategy* examines ways to maintain a world-class retail atmosphere, such as recommended standards for the streetscape, sidewalk furniture and retail storefronts. This includes:

**Developing standards and guidelines for the King Street sidewalk.** These would include paving standards, landscaping standards, tree planting standards and increasing the lighting level on along the sidewalk.

**Establishing public sitting areas,** or “respite areas,” at approximately three-block intervals along the length of King Street. Benches, directories and maps, along with landscaping where appropriate, will significantly add to the attractiveness and functionality of the street for pedestrians.

**Updating standards for street furniture,** street infrastructure (traffic signals, parking meters, trash cans, etc.), and transit shelters. Remove outdated items as necessary and replace with items conforming to the new standards.

**Creating a comprehensive graphics program** incorporating signs, banners, identity monuments, directories, parking location signs and other signs. Such a program will better enable visitors to find streets, businesses, parking opportunities and historic sites.

Land Use Strategy

The land use strategy builds upon the historic character of King Street and seeks to strengthen King Street as a retail market and activity center for residents, visitors and workers alike. The key recommendations focus on the Street as a vital retail environment, with a balanced mix of retail, residential and office uses, a more flexible regulatory environment, development guidelines to ensure that new development is compatible with the form of the street and storefront guidelines to enhance the streetscape experience. The land use strategy is both strategic – targeted at the specific needs of King Street – and more flexible than the current zoning along King Street. Specific principles focus on:

**Creating and maintaining a vital retail environment**, by encouraging continuous retail uses along the street and active uses, such as outdoor dining, in support of market conditions and the pedestrian experience. A mixture of both office and residential uses are encouraged on the upper floors, with the office uses providing daytime patrons for the retail and restaurant businesses, and the residential uses providing additional market demand, 16-hour activity and lights on the street in the evening.

**Balancing the mix of residential and commercial development in new construction and redevelopment**, by equalizing the bulk, parking and other development requirements for both residential and commercial construction to make residential a more attractive King Street use and a more competitive market choice. Currently, the regulatory structure favors commercial development over residential, and the *Strategy* recommends zoning changes to eliminate the favoritism among the uses by eliminating the frontage and yard requirements for residential, modifying the open space to a per unit measure, providing only one FAR requirement irrespective of use, and modifying the parking requirement for residential use.

**Providing more flexibility for certain uses**, by initiating an administrative review process for active uses such as smaller full-service restaurants in specific locations and outdoor dining. Valet parking for individual businesses is encouraged through the administrative review process to help ease parking problems.

**Guiding the quality of new development and retail storefronts**, through the recommendation of specific design guidelines. The *Strategy* recommends specific guidelines for building height and bulk for new development and redevelopment on properties located outside the historic district to ensure consistency with the existing development context. Storefront guidelines for new and renovated buildings are detailed to ensure the vitality of the retail and to add interest and richness to the visual experience along the Street.

The *King Street Retail Strategy* recommends enacting a new King Street Urban Retail zone along the length of King Street in Old Town to implement the land use recommendations and to help ensure that the Street remains an active, pedestrian-oriented retail street where residents, visitors and workers will be encouraged to frequent. While staff recommends enactment of this zone, some concerns have been raised relating to certain aspects of the proposed zone.

### Parking

Old Town retail businesses and patrons frequently cite parking as a major concern; the *Strategy* realizes that to have a healthy retail environment, customers need to be able to get to their destinations efficiently and without hassles. During the planning process, businesses, employees and on-street customers were surveyed to determine these groups' overall perceptions of parking in the area. Additionally, a 'turnover' study was conducted to examine on-street and off-street parking availability. These studies have found that while there is a general perception that parking in Old Town is extremely limited, there are significant parking resources that are currently underutilized. For example, there is notable capacity in off-street garages even at peak retail times – in some cases the garages may be closed, but the salient point is that the capacity exists. The *Strategy* suggests ways to make parking more efficient by better utilizing the parking resources that currently exist by:

**Working with private garage owners** to permit or encourage more public parking, specifically in garages that are currently closed to the public during peak retail and restaurant hours.

**Improving parking signage** through a coordinated wayfinding signage program.

**Coordinating a program to provide improved information** for customers, employees and visitors about the available parking supply, rates, etc. This would include a printed brochure and an easy-to-navigate website, as well as reinstating a validated parking program similar to 'Park Alexandria' program initiated by the Chamber of Commerce in the 1990s.

**Simplifying the approval process for valet parking** by making the approval an administrative review rather than a special use permit – with specific standards to minimize potential impacts.

**Developing parking policies** to further support employee use of off-street parking and continuing efforts to expand the current parking supply through consideration of proposals to build additional off-street parking capacity that would be available to the public.

### Transit

Public transportation in Old Town can bring retail customers and employees to King Street while reducing the need for parking resources. A survey conducted as part of the *Retail Strategy* indicated that nearly one-quarter of King Street-area employees arrive at work by means other than driving – this greatly helps to take cars off the street and also to free up parking spaces for other retail customers. DASH has also made great strides recently with the PTO shuttle and the Dash About shuttle, both enabling retail customers to come to King Street without driving. The *Strategy* suggests ways to make public transportation even more responsive to King Street customers' needs.

**New shuttle service** tailored specifically to King Street should be considered following the completion of DASH's current comprehensive operations analysis. Such a shuttle could be more frequent than the existing shuttle services, and can appeal to visitors, as well as increase Metrorail and VRE ridership for employees who would rely on the shuttle to get to the rail stations.

**Potential funding sources** for transit initiatives should be explored in depth.

**Multimodal initiatives** such as bicycle rental facilities and water taxi services, aimed at providing efficient and convenient transportation to people on or along King Street, should be explored.

### Waterfront

A waterfront planning process is recommended to identify a common vision for the City's riverfront. King Street begins at the waterfront, which in the future can serve as an anchor and a destination for both residents and visitors. It is recommended that such a planning process for the waterfront include comprehensive master planning and design elements and take into account transportation and parking issues, market support and a thorough implementation strategy. Further, the waterfront can be linked by trails to other areas in order to create a true regional amenity that would be extremely beneficial to King Street's retail sector.

### Marketing

It is vital for the planning process to understand marketing and economic issues pertaining to King Street's retail sector, specifically what types of stores customers seek to patronize and how to best market King Street's attributes in an increasingly competitive regional framework. To most accurately gauge these issues, an intercept survey was conducted of King Street customers, and economic data were examined to determine the current and potential marketability of King Street's

retail sector. The *Strategy* examines retail trends and consumer profiles and issues recommendations on targeted marketing strategies:

**Maintain the business mix** along King Street to keep the area an interesting destination from a consumer's standpoint. The *Strategy* recommends recruiting and attracting retail businesses that complement the street's unique retail offerings and where possible fill niches in the marketplace for which there is demand. Such sectors include entertainment offerings, as well as various retail and convenience goods.

**Build upon Alexandria's established reputation as an arts and cultural hub** by promoting various aspects of the arts, such as hosting art competitions, shows and festivals, and by increasing the visibility of public art along King Street.

**Promote King Street and its retailers** through a common market approach, such as a web site offering maps, parking/transit tips, photographs and descriptions of individual businesses.

### Implementation

Recommendations in the *Strategy* will only be effective if they are met with a coordinated implementation plan. The *Strategy* recommends the creation of an organization to coordinate these actions. In addition, the *Strategy* suggests consideration of various funding mechanisms to address the needs of King Street that fall beyond the City government's ability to provide services. Specific recommendations include:

**Establishing a public/private entity** charged with implementing and sustaining the vision for King Street as expressed in this *Strategy*. This entity is called the King Street Partnership in the *Strategy*, and is recommended to involve all stakeholders, including property owners, businesspeople, representatives of civic groups and representatives of City government. The Partnership would serve a vital role in coordinating activities pertaining to King Street's future.

**Work to establish a self-sustaining funding mechanism** that will enable a number of the recommendations from the *King Street Retail Strategy* to be implemented. This effort could explore strategies such as a Business Improvement District (BID) and/or a funding mechanism that is financed through dues paid by members of an organization.

### LAND USE AND ZONING ACTIONS:

In order to incorporate the *King Street Retail Strategy* within the City's Master Plan and to implement the zoning recommendations of the *Strategy*, the following actions are necessary:

Amendment to the City’s Master Plan, adopting the *King Street Retail Strategy* as a chapter of the Master Plan.

The *King Street Retail Strategy* contains recommendations covering a broad range of topics all related to ensure the future health and vitality of King Street’s retail sector.

In general, the *Strategy* sets forth a Vision for King Street that looks forward and emphasizes an attractive, vital pedestrian place serving local residents and visitors alike. King Street will remain the historical, cultural and retail/commercial focus of Alexandria – an inviting, active street that builds upon the traditional small town planning and historic architectural character with its close relationship between the residential and commercial communities.

This Vision is advanced through recommendations summarized above, ranging from urban design suggestions to a full land use strategy to transportation recommendations, marketing initiatives and a strategy for implementation. These recommendations have arisen following considerable input from members of the business community and residential community and represent a clear understanding as to Alexandrians’ desired future for this renowned Street.

The adoption of the *King Street Retail Strategy* as a chapter of the City’s Master Plan is a major step forward in recognizing the unique attributes and extensive contribution that King Street’s retail sector makes towards the overall quality of life in Alexandria.

Enactment of Section 6-700 of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the King Street Urban Retail zone.

King Street is regarded as one of the region’s most notable streets, due to its historic nature and its continued charm. The current zoning regulations (mostly CD and OCH), however, do not provide a framework to ensure that the active streetscape and the character of new development will continue to be compatible with the Vision for King Street expressed during the *Retail Strategy*’s planning process.

A new zone, the King Street Urban Retail zone, has been created to recognize the street’s unique quality and mission, and its importance to the City as a whole. It is proposed to replace the existing zoning regulations for those properties abutting King Street from the street’s intersection with Union Street near the waterfront to the intersection with Commonwealth Avenue near the Metro station. The purpose of this new zone is to ensure that King Street remains an active, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented retail environment that both supports economic activity and protects adjoining residential areas. This zone will provide for greater street-level active uses, development standards that ensure new development will fit in with the overall character of the street and that are similar for residential and commercial buildings, and more flexible administrative review of certain uses.

In order to enhance the long term vitality of the street, the new zone:

- encourages and strengthens the role of retail and other active uses on the ground floor of buildings;
- eliminates disincentives for new residential development such as traditional yard and setback requirements, and lowers parking requirements and modifies FAR regulations so they are consistent for residential and commercial development;
- provides more flexibility for desired uses, such as restaurants, outdoor dining and valet parking, by allowing administrative approvals subject to standards instead of a special use permit; and
- refines the requirements for new development so it will be compatible with nearby existing buildings and the historic street.

### *Permitted and Special Uses*

The uses permitted in the new King Street zone emphasize retail and other active uses on the ground floor, street level portion of buildings, so as to add to the active, pedestrian environment, to strengthen the existing retail uses and to enhance the opportunity for additional retail businesses. To accomplish this, the listed uses in the zone have been reassessed and reconfigured. Several uses have been eliminated from the existing zones because they are inappropriate on King Street and have never been located there, such as cemeteries, nursing homes and drive through facilities.

Uses are separated into two categories based on where they will be located – either in the first 50 feet of building on the ground floor – or anywhere else. Ground floor uses, the most important for the vitality of the street, are limited principally to retail uses and personal service uses, including banks, limited to 30 feet of frontage. By special use permit, additional uses are allowed on the ground floor of buildings, as in the current zoning, including health clubs, theaters, bakeries and hotels. Also, by special permit, personal service uses and lobbies, with more than 30 feet of frontage, may be allowed.

Other uses, such as offices and residential, are permitted behind the 50-foot depth on the ground floor and on the upper floors of buildings. Because they do not provide activity or add to the pedestrian environment to the same extent that retail uses do, office uses will no longer be allowed on the ground floor of buildings along the King Street frontage.

All existing uses are allowed to continue indefinitely, except that automobile sales lots have been made nonconforming uses.

*Administrative uses*

The new King Street zone permits

- restaurants west of Washington Street, limited to 60 seats;
- outdoor dining, limited to 20 seats;
- and valet parking,

subject to standards, by administrative permit instead of by special use permit. The new zone includes both general and use-specific standards, all of which are modeled on those previously adopted by City Council for Arlandria and Mount Vernon Avenue.

The standards were initially derived from the list of standard conditions adopted by City Council as part of the special use permit process, and are the same ones used in special use permits approved by Council. They include requirements to police the property and adjacent rights-of-way for litter, to complete the Crime Prevention work with the Alexandria Police Department, to store trash and garbage properly, to require employees who drive to work to park off-street, to participate in any Park Alexandria-type parking program that may be formed and to encourage the use of public transportation by posting information about routes and the locations where fare passes are sold.

The use-specific conditions are included to address the possible impacts of a particular use. For example, limitations on restaurants include the number of seats, both indoors and outdoors, the hours of operation and alcohol sales to ensure that the restaurant does not adversely impact its residential and commercial neighbors.

Notice of a pending administrative permit application will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the City, posted on the subject property and given to nearby civic and business associations. The application will be reviewed by the director of planning to determine whether a special use permit should be required. Similarly, if an applicant is unwilling to comply with the administrative standards, for example, if the applicant proposes a restaurant larger than 60 seats, or one that will stay open later than the standard hours, the applicant may file an application for a special use permit and go through the normal public hearing process.

The goal of the administrative uses is to allow new business development on King Street to open more quickly than if they were required to obtain special use permit approval, while having standards in place to protect the community. Staff believes the standards will minimize potential impacts on adjacent neighborhoods and that this approach, with its flexibility, should be tried to support and to strengthen the business district and make it attractive to new business investment.



The proposed removal of SUP requirements for restaurants west of Washington Street has elicited concern among some neighbors and civic associations. There has long been a sentiment that restaurants “drive out” other retailers by virtue of being able to afford higher rents, and that the SUP process helps to keep more of a balance between retailers and restaurants. The concern is that without SUPs, restaurants will proliferate undesirably – both affecting the overall business mix and also creating additional demand for parking resources.

The proposed zoning requirements are mindful of these concerns. Removal of SUP requirements would apply only to the area west of Washington Street, regarded as more suitable for new restaurants because the area is less congested during peak restaurant hours and has a substantial customer base of both residents and office workers. Additionally, administrative approvals would only apply to smaller restaurants (under 60 seats) and would not apply to “fast food” restaurants. Restaurants that do not meet these requirements would still need to go through the full SUP process.

### ***Parking***

One of the hurdles for residential development on the limited land in Old Town has been the parking requirement, especially when compared to the exemptions from parking to which commercial buildings are typically entitled. Therefore, the new King Street zone changes the requirement for apartments from between 1.3 and 2.2 spaces per unit, depending on the number of bedrooms, to just one parking space for each apartment. While still requiring parking, the lower requirement recognizes the practical limitations in Old Town and seeks to balance the rules between residential and commercial development.

### ***Accessory Apartments***

Under the existing CD zoning, a maximum of four apartment dwelling units are currently permitted on the upper floors above commercial or retail uses as accessory uses. In order to encourage the provision of residential uses above first floor commercial uses and a balanced mix of uses, the new zone allows up to eight units on the upper floors.

### ***Development and Building Requirements***

The new King Street zone attempts to refine those building and development requirements of the existing CD and OCH zones that are appropriate to King Street, by adding building form standards where they assist in achieving buildings compatible with the Old Town context, eliminating those more traditional requirements that are unnecessary for King Street’s built and historic context and eliminating the disincentives for residential development. Specifically, the following changes are part of the new zone:

Yards, Setbacks and Lot Size: The extensive yard, frontage and lot size requirements for residential uses have been eliminated.

Open Space: Instead of the traditional 40% open space requirement that could be located exclusively on rooftops in both the CD and the OCH zones, the new zone requires an amount of open space at a ratio of 150 square feet for each dwelling unit – and a qualitatively significant part of that space must be at ground level. (In the recent development example of a project in the 1500 block of King Street, a building with 26,344 square feet of land and 65 residential units is being designed with a ground floor courtyard with public access from King Street. This project complies with the new zoning regulation.)

Floor Area Ratio/FAR: A significant disincentive for residential development is the existing difference in maximum FARs between commercial (2.5 FAR) and residential development (1.25 FAR) in the CD zone. In order to balance the incentives for both types of development, the new King Street zone permits up to a 2.5 FAR for residential development for CD properties. In both cases, an SUP is required for the maximum amount of FAR. The new King Street zone makes no other changes in the FAR rules for CD or OCH properties.

Height: The new zone makes no change as to permitted height limits on King Street. Currently, the height limit ranges from 50 feet for CD properties and up to 77/82 feet for OCH properties in the King Street Metro Height District.

Building Form: The new King Street zone adds two important features to the quality and form of any new buildings on King Street:

- in order to better protect smaller buildings to the rear of new buildings on King Street, the rear of any building will have to conform to a 1.5 to 1.0 diagonal plane measured from the rear property line; and
- in order to best accommodate quality retail on the ground floor of new buildings, the new zone requires that ground floor space be 14 feet tall, and storefront windows be provided.

### ***King Street Retail Strategy***

The new zone requires that any request for an SUP for increased density or height must follow the guidelines of the *King Street Retail Strategy*.

### ***Use Limitations***

These paragraphs, clarifying certain seldom used provisions of the zoning ordinance, are carried forward from the existing CD and OCH zones.

MPA #2005-0002  
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REZ #2005-0003  
King Street Retail Strategy

Amendments to the City of Alexandria zoning map to reflect the King Street Urban Retail zone.

The King Street Urban Retail zone is proposed to replace the existing zoning regulations for those properties abutting King Street from the street's intersection with Union Street near the waterfront to the intersection with Commonwealth Avenue near the Metro station. (see attached map) This area contains nearly 300 parcels along the length of the Street, including approximately 29 acres of land and approximately 3 million square feet of built space.

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**REPORT ATTACHMENTS**  
**AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE**