

Docket Item #9A-B
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2006-0003 (A)
REZONING #2006-0001 (B)
OLD AND HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT
BOUNDARIES

Planning Commission Meeting
April 4, 2006

ISSUE: A) Consideration of a request to amend the City's Master Plan, adopting new boundaries for the Old and Historic Alexandria District, and
B) an amendment to the City of Alexandria zoning map to reflect the new boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

APPLICANT: Department of Planning and Zoning

LOCATION: 1500, 1502, 1504, 1506, 1508, 1510, 1512, 1514, 1516, 1518, 1520, 1522, 1524, 1600, 1602, 1604, 1606, 1608, 1610, 1612, 1614 King Street, 101, 103, 105 S. Peyton, and 1602, 1604 DeChantal Street

ZONE: KR/King Street Urban Retail
OCH/Office Commercial High

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, APRIL 22, 2006: City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, APRIL 4, 2006: On a motion by Mr. Dunn, seconded by Mr. Robinson, the Planning Commission voted to adopt the resolution amending the City's Master Plan, and recommended approval of the amendment to the zoning map. The motion carried on a vote of 6 to 0. Mr. Leibach was absent.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis.

Speakers:

Ellen Pickering spoke in support of the amendment.

Boyd Walker spoke in support of the amendment.

Michael Hobbs, representing the Old Town Civic Association, spoke in support of the amendment and read his written statement into the record.

SITE GRAPHIC
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2005, Planning and Zoning staff presented to the City Council an update on historic preservation issues, including a work plan to review and research the possible expansion of the historic districts. The primary consideration for proposing an expansion of the Old and Historic Alexandria District (OHAD) in this area is the desire to protect and preserve historic structures. The first phase of the proposed expansion is an area along the 1500 and 1600 blocks of Upper King Street. Staff decided at this phase not to include the remainder of the blocks along Upper King Street to the King Street Metro station which contain almost exclusively late 20th and early 21st century commercial and retail structures.

Ten buildings are included in the study area, representing the variety of building forms and styles in Alexandria from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The structures in this area are predominantly commercial and retail in use, though many served originally as residences in the earlier part of the twentieth century. All of the buildings in this survey area are at least fifty years old, with 1520, 1522, and 1524 King Street already listed on the Inventory of 100-Year Old Buildings. The Master Plan Amendment and rezoning will recommend removing 1520, 1522, and 1524 King Street from the 100-Year Old Building List as part of their inclusion in the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Other significant buildings include the Coca Cola Bottling Plant, a circa 1911 rowhouse and store, a 1930s commercial building, and a fine example of “Washington style” townhouses at 1604-1614 King Street. The remainder of the block is comprised of modern office and commercial buildings that do not qualify in terms of age, history, or architectural merit for inclusion in the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

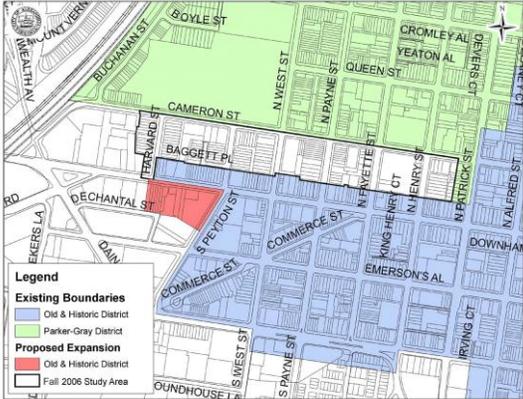
II. DISCUSSION

Staff has researched and documented the history of properties in the 1500 and 1600 blocks of King Street which contain structures that are consistent in age, architectural integrity and historic significance with properties currently located within the district. The building known as 1520, 1522, and 1524 King Street is certified as 100-Year Old Building and is already protected under local historic district regulations. The extension of the historic district protection to these additional structures will maintain and enhance the visual attractiveness, cohesion, and human scale of this highly visible and significant corridor.

In addition to protecting the historical and architectural value of these properties, expanding the boundaries of the historic district along Upper King Street conforms with the goals and recommendations set forth in the *King Street Retail Strategy*. The King Street planning process, through its extensive community involvement, has provided a long term vision for King Street. The *Strategy*, approved by City Council in June 2005, provides an overall market, design, land

use, parking, and transit framework for the area, and identifies appropriate types of uses and levels of development. The *Strategy* is designed to direct the future development of King Street through a set of guiding principles. The *Strategy* also specifically identifies the buildings at 1520, 1522, 1524, and 1604-1614 King Street as buildings that should be retained.

A. Description of Boundary Changes: The proposed boundary change affects the area beginning at the southwest corner of King and Peyton Streets, extending west along King Street ending at the western property line of 1614 King Street, then extending south to DeChantal Street, then east to Peyton Street including the entire property, with parking lot, known as 1500 King Street, and 101-105 S. Peyton Street.



The specific properties affected in this area are:
1500-1524 King Street
1600-1614 King Street
101-105 South Peyton
1602-1604 DeChantal Street.

The boundary expansion would encompass 10 separate structures, a parking lot, and 5 vacant parcels.

B. History of Project Area: See the attached background history.

III. EFFECT OF BOUNDARY CHANGES

The properties under consideration are largely occupied by commercial, retail and office uses. The proposed district expansion will not affect the use of these spaces, and will bring with it many advantages, since inclusion in the historic district ensures that there will be continuity and predictability in urban design. Property owners will be required to apply to the OHAD Board of Architectural Review for any external changes to their buildings visible from a public right-of-way, including changes in signs for their retail tenants. This standard is already being met on the north side of King Street, the east side of South Peyton Street, and at 1520-1524 King Street. Those properties are already included in the OHAD, or are included in the 100-Year Old Building List. Tenants have not been adversely affected by the OHAD regulations and BAR review standards. The variety and quality of their storefronts are a testament to the high standards the District seeks to encourage.

As part of the expansion, the building at 1520, 1522, and 1524 King Street will be removed from the 100-Year Old Building List, and placed within the boundaries of the District. It has been the City's longstanding policy to remove 100-Year Old Buildings from the designated list when they become part of one of the City's local historic districts. This avoids redundancy in the historic designation and review process. The building will still be afforded all the same protections as part of the historic district that it had as a designated 100-Year Old Building.



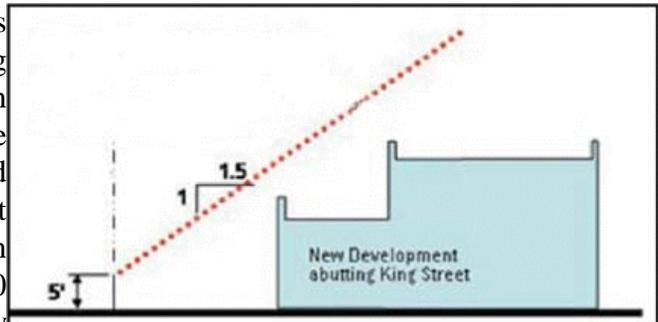
There is no proposed change to the underlying zoning of the parcels in the area, which is primarily King Street Urban Retail (KR), with the exception of two small parcels on DeChantal Street zoned Office Commercial High (OCH). Staff is not recommending a change in the allowable height of the area, which will remain at 77–82 feet as designated by the King Street Metro Station Height District.

IV. ISSUE OF WHETHER TO EXPAND HEIGHT DISTRICT

The City of Alexandria's Zoning Ordinance divides the City into 6 height districts which are as follows: No. 1 - Old and Historic Alexandria Height District, No. 2 - Parker-Gray Height District, No. 3 - Potomac River Vicinity Height District, No. 4 - Old Town North Height District, No. 5 - King Street Metro Station Height District, and No. 6 - that portion of the City not named in the foregoing named height districts. Specific requirements for the height districts are listed in Section 6-400 of the City's Zoning Ordinance. The height districts regulate not only building heights, but building setback relationships, purview over rooftop mechanical reviews, height of church steeples, and radio and television transmission structures.

The height limit in the Old and Historic Alexandria Height District is 50 feet. The boundaries of the OHAD Height District are not required to correspond exactly with the boundaries of the OHAD itself. This issue of corresponding district boundaries was addressed the last time that the OHAD was extended along North Washington Street (see REZ #2000-0007). The previous district expansion extended a half block in each direction so that the entire depth of each block facing Washington Street was included within the Old and Historic Alexandria District. The approved boundary change extended the district border to St. Asaph Street on the east, North Columbus Street on the west, and also included two properties on Montgomery Street, and one property on Wythe Street. In that instance, the Board of Architectural Review, Planning Commission, and City Council voted to allow the existing building heights to be grandfathered as part of the OHAD expansion, and did not recommend limiting heights to 50 feet. The permissible heights along Washington Street remained at 50 feet, and the allowable heights for new construction on the other streets also remained the same at 66 feet.

The properties under consideration in this proposal are currently located in the King Street Metro Station Height District, which restricts heights to 77-82 feet. Given the taller heights of the buildings already located on the block, and the fact that recent development projects both approved and in review would exceed a newly imposed 50 foot limit, staff does not want to effectively downzone this area by lowering permissible heights. Staff believes that buildings in excess of 50 feet, but still below the 82 feet allowed in the current height district, can be designed in a manner that is compatible with the historic structures on King Street, while also providing an appropriate visual transition to the larger modern buildings already on the block. The King Street/Eisenhower Avenue Small Area Plan also limits the heights of buildings along King Street to 50 feet at the street. The plan states that additional height must be set back from the street wall. Other regulations on height in this area are set forth in the King Street Urban Retail Zone. Portions of that zoning text regulate mass, scale, and building setbacks for new construction. These restrictions would remain and would be augmented by site plan review and design review by the BAR in order to address compatibility and urban design issues. Therefore, in making its recommendation to extend the boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, staff recommends that permissible heights not be changed, and that the properties remain in the King Street Metro Station Height District.



V. PUBLIC OUTREACH

In preparation for the Planning Commission hearing on this proposal, staff sent letters to each property owner within the boundary expansion on February 16, 2006. The letter stated that the Planning and Zoning Department was undertaking the proposed district expansion, and that staff would like to meet to discuss the impacts and benefits of inclusion in the OHAD. Staff was able to meet with each property owner, or designated representative, in early March. Questions mostly concerned the procedures for BAR review, and whether the District expansion would alter a property's underlying zone.

Staff also scheduled a public forum on the proposed district expansion that took place March 8, 2006 in City Hall. Notice was posted on the City's website, and invitations were sent to interested civic associations, business organizations, and the City's group of preservation partners. Staff gave a powerpoint presentation discussing the history of Upper King Street, and the benefits that district expansion presented for City property owners and residents. Approximately twenty citizens were in attendance.

VI. COMMENTS FROM BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

The OHAD Board of Architectural Review discussed this item at its March 15, 2006 public hearing. The Board voted unanimously to support the staff recommendation to expand the District.

VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of the expansion of the Old and Historic Alexandria District as described in the boundary description and illustrated in the map.

In order to implement the recommendation, the following changes in existing documents are required:

- King Street/Eisenhower Avenue Metro Station Small Area Plan, page 77:
 - Text should be revised to state:
Heights east of Peyton Street and on the north side of King Street in the Old and Historic Alexandria District are limited to 50 feet.
 - Map of revised OHAD boundaries should be included.
- The City Zoning Map should be revised to show the revised boundaries of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

Staff recommends that the height limits stated in the King Street Metro Station Height District remain the same for this area.

STAFF: Eileen P. Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Hal Phipps, Chief, Land Use Services;
Lee Webb, Manager, Historic Preservation Section;
Rebecca Ballo, Urban Planner II.

Attachment: History of Project Area