



City Hall
Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Waterfront Committee
Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314



Statement to Alexandria Planning Commission
Public Hearing on Draft Waterfront Small Area Plan
April 5, 2011

My name is Nathan Macek. I am the chair of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee, which was established by City Council to address issues relating to private and commercial uses of the waterfront. Tonight, I will address my Committee's comments on the Waterfront Plan.

We believe a new Plan is necessary to guide future development and civic investments. We have long advocated for development and enactment of a new Plan, and believe it is essential to establish guidelines for future development before any specific projects are proposed. Today's Waterfront does not meet its full potential to serve residents or improve the City's economy. Existing infrastructure is aging and needs to be revitalized for the area to be competitive with neighboring waterfronts. A Waterfront Plan will assist in addressing these shortcomings.

The draft Plan will renew the Alexandria Waterfront. It accomplishes several key objectives urged by stakeholders:

- Creating a continuous pedestrian pathway along waterfront;
- Sensitively integrating nuisance flood mitigation measures;
- Incorporating the Alexandria Waterfront Public Art Proposal and the Alexandria Waterfront History Plan; and
- Balancing new areas of economic vitality with quiet places for contemplating the water.

Moreover, its design concepts are generally compatible with the historic tenor of Old Town and the City's long heritage of maritime and commercial waterfront activity. It has the "look and feel" of the best of what's already here, and would continue to differentiate Alexandria's waterfront and the Old Town business district from others in the region.

The Waterfront Committee believes that there are several key issues to resolve before this Plan is adopted, which we have outlined in a letter to the Department of Planning and Zoning. Tonight, let me touch on four of these points.

Regarding **Parking**, we urge the City to begin immediate implementation of the recommendations of this chapter—including wayfinding, valet parking, and shuttle services to maximize existing capacity—coupled with enhanced parking enforcement. A pilot program will mitigate existing parking issues and provide a model for implementation of the full plan. We support the creation of a Parking Implementation Committee to accomplish this objective.

Regarding **Redevelopment**, the challenge is to carefully balance residential, commercial, and visitor-oriented Waterfront development, including civic and cultural attractions. Too much residential development may give the Waterfront the feel of being a private area primarily for residents, while too

much office or commercial development may leave the area vacant at night. We request clarification regarding controls over the design quality of redevelopment sites, and recommend that the City link increased density with enhanced control over design quality.

Regarding the **Waterfront Park Building**, we urge consideration of alternate options, including a green roof with additional open space; a home for cultural institutions; targeted retail; or a smaller restaurant. We note that as written, the draft plan still incorporates the large-format restaurant building originally proposed for this site.

Finally, regarding **Windmill Hill Park**, implementation of the plan adopted by the City in 2004 is not addressed. We request that funds for improvements to Windmill Hill Park be fully incorporated into the Waterfront Plan's implementation chapter.

These recommendations will improve the comprehensiveness and completeness of the overall Plan, and we look forward to collaborating with the Planning Commission, City staff, and our fellow stakeholders to address these points.