

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: MAY 14, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON & COUNCILMAN JOHN TAYLOR  
CHAPMAN

SUBJECT: KING STREET PEDESTRIAN PLAZA

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This Spring we have celebrated the opening of the expanded Waterfront Park. Drawing thousands of people, we have fresh experience of the power of new public spaces to draw visitors, provide program space, and bring residents and visitors together. While only the “interim” park design, the transition from parking lot and aging private club to acres of new publicly-accessible open space has been positively jarring and brought new vitality to our waterfront. It has proven that there remains pent-up demand for properly programmed public spaces.

The opening of this new public space has coincided with the shared public/private investment of the King Street Initiative, which has brought new programming and resources to the corridor.

We would suggest that the time is right to build on that momentum and bring back an idea that is successful in cities in every corner of the planet.

Thirteen years ago, the City conducted a trial on four weekends of a closure to vehicles of the 100-block of King Street<sup>1</sup>. The pilot was deemed a success by an overwhelming portion of residents and visitors, but had mixed reviews from the businesses in the corridor. I believe that a new look at this concept as a permanent feature is warranted and can be beneficial to businesses, residents and visitors.

Drawing on the specific feedback received during the previous pilot, City staff is requested to return to Council with a plan to consider closure to vehicles of the unit block, 100 block and/or the 200 block of King Street. Included in this plan shall include policy options for:

- 1) Expanded outdoor dining capacity at the discretion of existing restaurants
- 2) Streetscape/pedestrian infrastructure enhancements

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<sup>1</sup> Hartmann, James K. “Evaluation of the Summer Trial Program For The Weekend Pedestrian Plaza in the 100 Block of King.” September 7, 2006.

- 3) Programming expansion, including integration with Waterfront Park and Market Square
- 4) Expanded bicycle infrastructure
- 5) Public art integration

This planning effort should be included in the Interdepartmental Work Program and should be timed to provide for implementation in the spring of 2020.

Cc: Mark Jinks, City Manager; Karl Moritz, Planning & Zoning; Alexandria Waterfront Commission; Alexandria Planning Commission; Old Town Civic Association; Old Town Business & Professional Association; VisitAlexandria; Gloria Sitton, City Clerk