

Strategic Planning Process

Goal 1

October 22, 2009

I'm Janice Magnuson and I represent the Alexandria Archaeological Commission. My top three development and economic development priorities draw from the first objective of the current Strategic Plan adopted by City Council January 21, 2006. Ensure that New Development, Redevelopment, and Infill Development are compatible with the Character and the scale of Alexandria neighborhoods, its Natural Environment and its Historic Resources. Any development or Economic plan must be sensitive to the context of each neighborhood. And Alexandria is composed of many varied neighborhoods, each as valuable as another.

Studies have shown that heritage visitors stay longer and spend more than other visitors. Let's encourage them to stay even longer. As we approach the 150th anniversary of the Civil War what is the City doing to promote it and how is the City seeking grant money? I will be attending the second meeting of the sesquicentennial planning group this Saturday, and maybe that question will be answered. We seem to focus on the colonial era, while failing to recognize the many people whose ancestors passed through

Alexandria between 1861 and 1865. Research letters and recollections from those people. Alexandria was an occupied city during those years. We should explain the effect that had on the residents and the Northern soldiers who were part of an occupying army. It would be a focus available to no other city in the South.

Two or three years ago the City sponsored a preservation conference discussing the value of history and the benefits of preservation. Mayor Riley from Charleston, SC spoke on the proven value of tourism. It is the quality of life and historic ambiance that makes Alexandria a city appreciated by visitors as well as residents.

How should the City measure success? I don't know how to quantify that. Should it be increased sales taxes, the number of people riding the free trolley, parking meter revenue? A measure of success should include a completed Alexandria Historic Preservation Management Plan and survey of historic buildings. It should certainly include promoting the fact that an artist from our Torpedo Factory was selected to design this years White House Christmas ornament. Last night I was at the Torpedo Factory and saw by the gift shop, kind of tucked away, one of the ornaments. Let's promote this! How many cities can showcase an artist receiving such recognition?

The City should promote financial and tax breaks for “green” development. Planning and Code Enforcement staff who are in contact with businesses and homeowners can inform them of the tax write offs available though donating windows, doors, that old, usable, but wrong color bathtub to the Habitat for Humanity store on Route 1. And it keeps things out of the landfills.

We are a city with a long history that must be protected. We cannot have a repeat of the redevelopment from the 1960s when buildings around this very City Hall were demolished just because they were old and their value was not recognized.

In conclusion, I was reminded of our long history this morning when I attended training to serve as an Election Officer November 3. We were told that we were continuing in a tradition of citizens who serve, going back to that first election for the man from Mount Vernon.

Please remember that Alexandria is much more then a place to shop and dine in a building that is old.