


City of Alexandria

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 7, 2022
TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER 
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TORPEDO FACTORY ARTS IMPLEMENTATION

This memo provides an update to City Council regarding recent actions taken by staff at the Torpedo Factory Art Center as well as anticipated next steps.

On December 14, 2021, City Council adopted a set of principles (Attachment 1) to revitalize the Torpedo Factory Art Center (“Art Center”). Council directed staff to proceed with the following objectives:

1. Establishment of a Stakeholder Task Force to provide feedback and input on a coherent approach to expanded Vibrancy and Sustainability.
2. Exploration of creating a public entity to consolidate governance of the Art Center with Alexandria’s artistic real estate assets in Old Town North.

1. Stakeholder Task Force

As part of the continued revitalization efforts of the Art Center, staff have been working to establish the timeline and the roles and responsibilities of a stakeholder task force, charged with helping develop a coherent approach to vibrancy and sustainability in alignment with the principles adopted by City Council at their meeting on December 14, 2021.

The City Manager will create and appoint a task force comprised of individuals from various Art Center stakeholder groups and organizations, as shown on the attached list (Attachment 2). These individuals will be nominated by the respective organizations where applicable or will apply through an open application process. The Task Force’s charge (Attachment 3) is to provide input and feedback regarding expanded vibrancy for the Art Center. In addition, the Task Force will guide a broader community engagement process around this charge of work.

Staff will engage a third-party facilitator to work with the Task Force throughout the process to develop their recommendations for the City Manager. Additional consultant support is being obtained to support these visioning exercises.

This process will begin with the appointment of the Task Force in Spring of 2022. Additional milestones are identified in the Project Timeline (Attachment 4).

2. Role of a Separate Public Entity

As part of their work in developing a governance model for the Old Town North Arts and Cultural District, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) is working with the City Manager's Office to explore the possibility of a) an expanded role of this separate public entity in the ongoing governance of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, and b) the expansion of the Arts and Cultural District to include the Art Center facility for the purposes of branding/marketing and coordinating space management. This effort will include a review of various successful governance models for similar types of community elements.

AEDP and City staff anticipate having findings and recommendations to share with City Council by end of calendar year 2022.

Progress on implementation of the Action Plan for Vibrancy and Sustainability

At its December 14, 2021 meeting, City Council reaffirmed its support for the Action Plan for Vibrancy and Sustainability. The Office of the Arts has continued the implementation of the Action Plan's Core Strategic Directions with the following physical changes:

- The move of the Printmakers Studio to the first floor completed in Fall of 2021.
- Converting a third-floor space to a publicly rentable space (expected to be completed in Spring, 2022).

Staff is also proceeding with a re-jurying process for all the studio spaces, being phased in over the next three years. The re-jurying announcement was provided to all current resident artists in February 2022.

Additionally, Art Center staff are working in a facilitated team approach with Art Center artists and additional stakeholders to update the Operating Rules and Procedures which govern the day-to-day operations of studios. This effort began in March 2022 with a focus on facility and studio operating hours. In addition to addressing needed updates to internal procedures, this effort is aimed at building stronger relationships between artists and staff.

Staff will keep City Council informed of the progress on these multiple steps. If you have any questions, please contact Deputy City Manager Emily Baker.

Attachments:

1. Principles from December 14, 2021 Legislative Meeting
2. Stakeholder List
3. Task Force Charge of Work
4. Project Timeline

cc: Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager
Julian Gonsalves, Assistant City Manager for Public-Private Partnerships
Terry Suehr, Director, Project Implementation

James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Stephanie Landrum, President & CEO Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Attachment 2: Torpedo Factory Art Center Stakeholder Task Force

As identified below, stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations who are invested in and/or affected by the future of the Torpedo Factory Art Center and whose input has a direct impact on the success of the project. The group will consist of up to 20 members representing the following organizations:

City Commissions (one representative from each Commission = 4 representatives):

Arts Commission
Waterfront Commission
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC)
Archaeology Commission

Art Center (internal) (= 6 representatives):

Current Art Center Leasing Artists (2 representatives)
Torpedo Factory Artist Association
The Art League
Torpedo Factory Galleries (1 representative)
Torpedo Factory Post Grad Participant (1 representative)

Community (external) (= 7 representatives)

Old Town Civic Association
Old Town Business Association
Old Town North Alliance
Alexandria Arts Alliance
Visit Alexandria Board
At Large (2)

Regional Arts Professionals (up to 3 representatives)

Attachment 3: Task Force Charge of Work

The City Manager is establishing a Stakeholder Task Force to develop a future forward vision. Stakeholders shall be defined as: A person, group, or organization that has interest or concern in the Torpedo Factory Art Center and can be affected by the recommendations or outcomes of the process. The role and responsibilities of the Task Force engaged for this process will include:

- Develop a coherent and comprehensive approach expanded Vibrancy and Sustainability.
- Develop ideas to broaden the scope of artistic expression and improve the diversity of artists in the Art Center.
- Guide a community engagement process to solicit input and feedback on the work of the Task Force.
- Ensure process integrity and that all stakeholder voices are heard and considered.
- Use the process as an opportunity to increase engagement of Art Center neighbors, non-Art Center artists, and residents in how the Art Center could benefit the community even further.

The Task Force will work with a facilitator, staff, and consultants throughout the process and make a recommendation to the City Manager based on this Charge of Work.

Attachment 4: Project Timeline

| Focus Area | Calendar Year 2022 | | | | Calendar Year 2023 | | | |
|--|--------------------|----|----|----|--------------------|----|------------|--------|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Prepare Preliminary Plan of Action | █ | | | | | | | |
| Action Plan for Vibrancy & Sustainability | | | | | | | | |
| First Floor Updates | █ | | | | | | | |
| Upfit Third Floor Flex Space | █ | █ | | | | | | |
| Update Operating Rules | █ | █ | | | | | | |
| <i>Rejuring Process</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Group A | █ | █ | █ | | | | | |
| Group B | | | | | █ | | | |
| Group C | | | | | | | | -----> |
| Role of Separate Public Entity | | | | | | | | |
| Governance Options Analysis | | █ | █ | █ | | | | |
| Provide Due Diligence Recommendations | | | | | █ | | | |
| Establish Framework | | | | | | | <i>TBD</i> | |
| Stakeholder Engagement | | | | | | | | |
| Draft Task Force Charter and Present Plan of Action | █ | | | | | | | |
| Appoint Task Force Members | | █ | | | | | | |
| Task Force Visioning Exercise | | | █ | █ | █ | | | |
| Community Engagement Process for input and feedback | | | | █ | █ | | | |
| Task Force Vision Recommendations | | | | | | █ | | |