



WATERFRONT VISION STATEMENT

Adopted September 19, 2007 by the Board of Directors

The constituents and civic leaders of the City of Alexandria will be meeting over the course of many months beginning in the fall of 2007 to consider a matter of historic significance to the City, and its residents and businesses: the appropriate use for portions of the City's waterfront along the Potomac River. As the organization that represents the business community in Alexandria, a community that proudly proclaims that many of its members have the privilege of both residing and working in the City, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce (the "Chamber") has adopted the following vision statement for Alexandria's waterfront.

General Vision. The Chamber urges all parties participating in the planning process to work cooperatively in engaging in a respectful dialogue, with the ultimate goal of developing a plan for Alexandria's waterfront that is attractive to view from both land and river. The Chamber's waterfront vision strikes a balance between passive green space and active attractions that are inclusive of all residents of the City and inviting to visitors from around the world. This vision incorporates moderate commercial uses that enhance economic activity and add to the City's tax base, into the context of the City's maritime heritage while preserving and improving existing parks, ensuring continuous pedestrian access along the river and creating a vital public gathering space.

Specific Components.

A. Parks and Green Space. When the City implemented its present Waterfront Plan in 1982, it revitalized the Torpedo Factory as an art center and a central focus of the waterfront and replaced other industrial uses with pastoral parkland, such as Oronoco Bay Park, Founder's Park, Waterfront Park, and other "pocket parks," where suitable. The City provided for public park-settings on the riverfront east of residential housing developments at Rivergate, Harborside and Ford's Landing. Each of these parks provide beautiful vistas of the Potomac River for picnickers, sunbathers, book readers and even more active uses such as volleyball. These parks should be preserved, and enhanced with more attractive plantings, more effective lighting, additional trash receptacles and patrolled for public safety. The Chamber supports connecting these parks with a

continuous trail along the waterfront that enables pedestrians to walk from the Mirant Plant to Jones Point Park while in view of the river. The width, composition and surroundings of such a trail may vary depending on geographic limitations and the context of existing and future structures. On newly-acquired and future-acquired, or developed, land along the waterfront, specifically the area bounded by the Potomac River on the east to the western side of Union Street and located between, and inclusive of, Robinson Terminal North and Robinson Terminal South, more active, but complementary uses should be encouraged as a means of connecting the existing parks and “drawing” pedestrians to specific destinations along the waterfront.

B. Proposed Uses/Destinations. The Chamber envisions the placement of various mixed-use components that complement the City’s existing parks and historic significance, while increasing the vibrancy of our waterfront district with both daytime and evening activities, such as a maritime museum, restaurants with outdoor/river view dining, boutique retail shops, an expanded marina with a dock suitable for visiting tall ships and comparable attractions, a boutique hotel, an amphitheatre and office/residential components, placed along the promenade that provides continuous pedestrian access along the river. New construction along this area should be no more restrictive than presently permissible under existing zoning laws and use restrictions and case-by-case settlement agreements pertaining to specific parcels arising from waterfront title litigation filed by the federal government in 1973. Where appropriate, new construction should replicate brick warehouses and the maritime ambiance. In the context of encouraging recreational boaters and other visitors with interest in the river and the City, the Chamber emphasizes the need for the City to hire a full-time harbor master, whose duties will be expanded to include coordinating near-continuous visits by tall ships and other vessels of interest. Additional activities may include historic reenactments.

C. Historic Preservation. The Chamber supports historic preservation where properties are truly of a historic value and consistent with a maritime or colonial theme. Serious consideration should be given to determine historic value and whether a building merits preservation. Where a particular improvement is not deemed worthy of preservation, its replacement should be of a scale, design and construction material that is consistent with the overall context of the waterfront plan. The Chamber envisions a comprehensive waterfront plan that, when viewed as a whole (whether by land or river), has an integrated scheme of mass, design, materials and purpose that complements historic structures and uses of the waterfront with modern amenities for public use and commercial use that serves the public.

D. Commerce. The rich maritime heritage of the City was driven in large part by commerce: goods delivered to the City’s port, carried along wharves and stored in warehouses for purchase by merchants or shipment to inland destinations. Today and in the future, the business that will bring increased commerce, and in turn tax revenue, to the City is tourism and the commodity will be boutique shoppers, diners and day-trippers seeking waterfront amenities. With the arrival of the National Harbor project to our south and the proposed creation of a water taxi service connecting the National Harbor project to various stops in the District of Columbia, Alexandria’s waterfront is

strategically located as a destination for visitors who will not require additional parking facilities.

E. Infrastructure. While many visitors will arrive via water taxi, many will still arrive by automobile. It is critical that the City adopt a comprehensive parking and transportation plan that will support both current and prospective use by residents, visitors and employees of local businesses.

The Chamber encourages the City to support an incentivized parking program for local businesses and to identify locations in the both the eastern and western grids of Old Town that may be acquired and developed for visitor parking facilities. Strong consideration should be given to encouraging parking facilities at newly developed sites, with below-ground parking preferred if feasible or above-ground parking placed in structures that are designed to blend with surrounding environs. Particular focus should be given to replacing, to the extent feasible, the amount of parking presently available at the Strand which serves both businesses and residents in that vicinity.

The Chamber endorses the use of an energy efficient, low-emission, free trolley service that will operate between the waterfront, the King Street Metro station and designated visitor parking garages, thereby reducing vehicular congestion, particularly along King Street and the waterfront.

Infrastructure planning for an enhanced waterfront relates to more than just transportation and parking. It also requires attention to public health and safety matters, such as providing adequate public restroom facilities, emergency call boxes and increased police patrols on foot, bicycle or segway to protect Alexandria's visitors and to preserve the peace for its residents. A beautification and maintenance plan for the waterfront should be adopted to allow for better plantings and trash removal and routine removal of debris from the river. The City's plans for complementary street lights, trash receptacles and benches should be expanded along the entire pedestrian trail and along King Street. The City should create consistent signage that is easy to understand, uses international symbols, and directs visitors to points of interest. To encourage maritime uses such as visiting ships, the City should adopt a comprehensive plan for dredging specified areas of the waterfront, and the City should coordinate the implementation of this plan with appropriate governmental authorities.

Finally, the Chamber recommends that the City consider creating a staff-led waterfront task force consisting of representatives of each City department, to ensure the coordinated and timely completion of projects along the waterfront required of each department.

The Chamber has taken the lead in organizing the National Harbor Collaborative, which is a small working group of civic leaders and City staff that has examined some of the infrastructure issues facing the City in anticipation of increased tourism from the National Harbor project. This is merely the first of many steps required to create a permanent plan that will evolve with the City's needs. Further planning and implementation is critical to

the successful enhancement of the City's waterfront and the preservation of the quality of life in Alexandria, particularly in these affected areas.

Conclusion. The City's waterfront is both a treasure and a resource. It should be preserved where appropriate, improved where necessary and prudent, and shared by all. With proper planning and careful balance between open space and moderate development, the City's treasure will have enhanced value, the resource will be cultivated and the general public will be served. Waterfront planning presents an opportunity to chart a course for the City that will bring economic growth and increased tax revenue from commercial, not residential, uses. These goals can be achieved while enhancing existing waterfront parks, creating a continuous promenade that weaves passive and active uses, preserving historic buildings, replacing less desirable structures with new improvements that complement brick or stone warehouses and emphasizing the City's commercial, maritime heritage in a balanced and reasonable manner that will bring pleasure to residents from across the City and visitors from throughout the world.