



## **Field Trip to New York City**

August 5, 2009

Feedback Session

### **Moderator:**

John Komoroske, Chair of Planning Commission

- Thanked Staff for putting this event together
- It was good to see successful parks and open space.
- Would like to see some of these ideas scaled for the Alexandria Waterfront
- Bryant Park had 20-somethings. There is no place in Alexandria for 20-somethings.
- Planning Commission plans to have a work session this fall focused on integrating public art in to the planning process.
- Invited everyone to share things they liked, things they'd like to see in Alexandria

### **Feedback:**

1. Judy Noritake, Parks and Recreation Commission
  - In the NYC Parks, there were a series of active recreational uses such as chess tables, bocce ball and other small games
  - If there are things for people to do in the open spaces, people will come to participate
  - Dog agility training at the parks
  - Most of what the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission desires at the Alexandria Waterfront was seen in NYC. More small active uses.
2. Peter Pennington, Waterfront Committee
  - The stretch of South Street to the South Street Seaport has activity that pulls you to the water's edge. The activity along King Street dies about 40 feet short of the waterfront. Like South Street, the activity along King Street should pull you all the way to the water.
3. Kay Meade, Citizen
  - Impressed by the cleanliness of Bryant Park



4. Larry Robinson, Planning Commission
  - Visiting the NYC areas provided many good ideas for Alexandria
  - Surprised by the labor intensity of maintaining the parks in NYC. For example, the amount of staff at Bryant Park (60 people for a 6 acre park) and the cost of maintaining the High Line.
  - Concerned that Alexandria does not have the critical mass to generate the funding necessary to maintain the parks to the same level.
  - Learned from Jerome Barth of Bryant Park Corporation new ways to fund some of the ideas in Alexandria. Funding the plan is going to be the main issue as we move forward.
  - One issue in Alexandria is that people move to the City with the suburban attitude that green space is just part of the view.
  
5. John von Senden, Old and Historic District Board of Architectural Review
  - Battery Park has the blessing and curse that there was no historic framework. Alexandria has a history.
  - Impressed by the simplicity of materials that were used in NYC. They provided a unifying sense while each space in the park had their own unique functions.
  - NYC does not have the capabilities for waterfront activities such as kayaking and small craft marinas like Alexandria.
  
6. Susan Pettey, Waterfront Committee
  - Envious of the scale of the NYC waterfront. Alexandria has a smaller waterfront
  - Liked that the NYC parks and open spaces have public bathrooms. That would be a huge improvement at the Alexandria Waterfront.
  - Question of people coming to the park to dwell versus passing through.
  - The NYC parks shown how important programming is to entice people to use the parks.
  
7. Bud Hart, Citizen
  - The most remarkable feature of all the open spaces visited in NYC was there were children. The programming had many activities for children. In Alexandria, there are not a lot of places to bring children along the waterfront.
  - Thought it was interesting that Bryant Park measures success by the number of people who use the park. What are the measures of success for Oronoco, Windmill Hill and Waterfront parks?



8. Mary Lyman, Planning Commission
  - At Battery Park City, really liked uninterrupted path along the waterfront, continuous open space, continuity of materials, small spaces in different areas of the park.
  - Liked that there were places to eat along the waterfront in Battery Park City.
  
9. Donna Fossum, Planning Commission
  - In NYC, there is a desire to get people to come to the parks and dwell, so they provide many things for people to do in their parks. In Alexandria, we need to reevaluate and rethink our philosophy on the purpose of our open spaces, as most of our parks are designed to be “looked at” or “passively appreciated”, not to be “actively used” like those in NYC.
  - In Bryant Park was impressed by the use of wireless internet technology that allows people to work in the parks.
  - Liked that there were small activities, such as bocce ball and ping-pong. In Alexandria, we should consider where there should be small activities.
  - In general, in Alexandria we should think of going up instead of out, such as the field we saw on top of the building on the way to NYC. Landmark would be a great opportunity to include open spaces on top of buildings.
  - Battery Park City was a good example of using the water for activities. The Alexandria Waterfront Plan should look at water-based activities.
  
10. Lisa Schumaier, Citizen
  - Liked the transition of the small art park into the kid play area in Battery Park City.
  - The parks had plenty of shade areas. Alexandria parks could be made better if there were more shade areas. The Alexandria marina needs more shade as well.
  - Like the idea of wireless internet in Bryant Park. In Alexandria, there should be consideration for expanding wireless Alexandria to places along the waterfront.
  
11. Amy Slack, Traffic and Parking Board
  - Like consistency between all the parks in NYC, such as lighting and paving.
  - Like the promenade with sun and activity, but there were also quiet areas with shade.
  - Amazed by all the children’s play areas even in small areas. For example, the children’s play area in the median on the way to South Street Seaport



- In all the NYC parks, there was consideration to seating areas in relation to trees and shade.
- Plenty of functional art, such as the art in the railing at Battery Park City
- All the parks had consistent signage.
- Battery Park City had structure views along the park that draws people to the waterfront. They were focal points.
- Impressed by the color and texture of the landscaping and hardscaping in the NYC parks.
- The railing along the waterfront in Battery Park City was low enough that if you are sitting on the bench, you can see over the rail.

#### 12. Delaine Campbell, Citizen

- Having a plan is good, but we need to keep in mind that we cannot implement everything all at once.
- In Alexandria, would be nice to see more shade and seating in the shade along the waterfront.
- In NYC, there were many simple revenue producers, such as food kiosk. It would also be nice to have more space for outdoor dining and food kiosks at places like Market Square or behind the Torpedo Factory. They can produce revenue.

#### 13. Crystal Watters, Citizen

- Liked that each park we saw in NYC was a different experience.
- In Battery Park City liked the aesthetics, built environment, the feel between the different areas. Like the fact that NYC sees the Park as evolving and adapting and is willing to change things that don't work.
- The South Street Seaport was too commercial and I do not want to see quite that in Alexandria.
- Liked the adaptive reuse of the High Line.
- Bryant Park: the emphasis on parks for people and not just visual green space. Was amazed at the labor intensity.
- Perhaps Alexandria should think about private management of some of the open spaces.
- There is housing on the waterfront in Alexandria, which leads to attitudes that the waterfront is private space. How do we make the waterfront feel more public?



14. Pat Miller, Commission for the Arts

- Enjoyed the incorporation of art into the parks' design in NYC.
- The children's play area in Battery Park City with the bronze statutes was very well done and all the Field Trip attendees were smiling while walking through that area.
- Battery Park City has so many small stages in different nooks and crannies in the park which allows for programmed and impromptu performances.
- The signage in the High Line was positive. For example "Keep it wild on the path" versus a traditional "Stay off the grass".
- Art is going to be a vital part of the Alexandria Waterfront Plan.

15. Ari Belmonte, Citizen

- We visited very successful parks in NYC. It appears that they all adapted to who we are now and they will evolve as the community evolves.
- Saw some good design and furniture that is lacking in Alexandria.
- Really liked the movable tables and chairs in Bryant Park
- In Alexandria, we need to adapt the waterfront to the way we live

16. Linda Hafer, Waterfront Committee

- If providing means for recreational activities as we observed at Battery Park, consider including some games that may have been enjoyed by children in the past [e.g., hoops & sticks], to reference our "historic" brand/identity.
- We want to celebrate the *authentic history* that we are so lucky to have here, but that doesn't require that every new construction or work of art should be a faux historic building, or a replica of something that might have been created three centuries ago. We're living in the 21st century, and the old and the new can coexist and be complementary—and can even emphasize the uniqueness of the truly historic.

17. Matthew Harwood, Commission for the Arts

- The integration of public art into the design of New York's waterfront helps make a visitor's experience to the parks multi-dimensional and diverse. A variety of activity areas are woven together yet defined by their juxtaposition to artworks, creating a unique sense of place.
- The public art at Battery Park City ranges from the hallowed to the profane. Artworks are placed at the terminus of intersecting streets, giving visitors a memorable visual reference to where they enter or exit the park.