



Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

January 2, 2025

Mr. James Parajon
City Manager
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Waterfront Small Area Plan Implementation and Flood Mitigation

Dear Jim,

The City of Alexandria Waterfront Commission was established on April 14, 2012. One of our principal missions is advising City Council on the Waterfront Small Area Plan (“The Plan”) and its implementation. One of the central components of the Plan is completion of public realm improvements to the Waterfront, including flood mitigation. Alexandria's Waterfront continues to be a significant and popular central gathering place for residents, workers, and visitors.

To achieve the desired outcome and potential of the City of Alexandria Waterfront, the OLIN plan was commissioned to study what was needed to those desired outcomes. There were approximately five desired outcomes. However, chief among those outcomes were:

- Create a variety of outdoor spaces for the community to use, including a continuous pedestrian promenade
- Integrate flood mitigation infrastructure into the design
- Park improvements

The Commission gives immense thanks to Matt Landes (and team) for their tireless work educating Alexandria residents and guests regarding flood mitigation and the tools to address it. On December 11, 2024, the Waterfront Commission took up discussion regarding the location of Pump Station (size and dimension are still in the planning phase) to address flooding in the Waterfront area.

The location presented by the City for the Pump Station is Waterfront Park, with two options for situating the station within the park: along the Prince Street side or the Strand Street side.

Summary of Recommendations

Two votes taken at the Commission meeting resulted in these primary recommendations:

- Between the two location options within Waterfront Park, the Prince Street side is preferred. In this scenario, the Commission requests the evaluation of moving the Pump Station further to the east to preserve an unobstructed view north along Strand Street, from south of Prince Street.
- There is considerable support on the Commission for an expedited further evaluation of acquiring and developing the private property at 1 Prince Street. The City should evaluate the cost-benefit of the incremental cost of the project, the preservation of public green space for civic use and the benefit to the activation of Strand Street.

Location Within Waterfront Park: Preference for Prince Street Side

The Waterfront Commission voted in support of locating Pump Station along Prince Street, out of the two presented options of a location within the park. In this scenario, Commissioners would additionally like the City to investigate positioning the Prince Street side location further east to preserve a clear view north along Strand Street, from south of Prince Street.

In support of a Prince Street side location, Commission members spoke about the secondary but important goal of a Pump Station in Waterfront Park, which is to maximize the opportunity to improve and expand park amenities. A built-in stage for live performances is an appealing addition to improve the experience and appeal for using the park for events and festivals. Historically the stage for the Portside Festival and the City's Jazz Fest (and formerly the Memorial Day Jazz Festival) were positioned along the Prince Street side. This ensures the best experience for attendees, so they do not have their backs to the incredible views of the water (one of the City's best assets) and so that the sun (rising east, setting west) does not unpleasantly shine directly into the eyes of attendees or performers.

Additionally, we understand there is movement to turn a portion of Strand Street along Waterfront Park into a pedestrian area. Having the building along Prince would preserve views of the river from Strand Street, preclude a potentially impaired pedestrian zone in this section of the Strand and encourage redevelopment of the park side of these existing structures to help activate the park, while preserving water views of the private buildings across Strand Street to the west.

In further design development for Waterfront Park, we want to emphasize the need to develop and present comprehensive, cohesive designs that include both the south section of Waterfront Park (currently in discussion) and the newer section of Waterfront Park to the north. It is all one park and should be treated as such.

Location at Private Property at 1 Prince Street

A majority of Commission members and residents at the virtual meeting feel strongly that, although the City has already evaluated the possibility of acquiring and redeveloping the private property at 1 Prince Street, that it should be reconsidered. The Commission feels this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve and improve the experience of Waterfront Park and the waterfront area as a whole, for multiple future generations.

The City should conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the incremental cost of the project, the preservation of public green space for civic and archaeological use and the benefit to activation of Strand Street. A majority of Commissioners feel placing the Pump Station at 1 Prince Street instead of Waterfront Park would be consistent with the Waterfront Plan passed in 2014.

Matt Landes presented a report on the evaluation of alternative Pump Station locations to the Commission on October 15, 2024. The option of the private property at 1 Prince Street was deemed not feasible due to high acquisition costs; the added costs of investigation, mitigation and construction; potential vibration damage to adjacent structures; extended shutdown of S. Union Street for construction; construction risk undesirable to the progressive design-builder; and the significant schedule delay which extends the negative impact of flooding on businesses in the area.

Despite this evaluation and conclusion, the majority of Commissioners strongly feel this alternative location should be reevaluated in light of the multigenerational impact of the location of the Pump Station and is worth an increased financial investment by the City. This reexamination should be done on an expedited basis due to the ramifications of additional costs associated with delaying progress on the project and due to the ongoing flooding impacts to area businesses.

Conclusion

The Commission thanks the City Manager for strongly considering our recommendations. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical project.

Sincerely,

Lebaron K Reid

Lebaron K. Reid, Chair
Waterfront Commission

cc: Honorable Mayor & Members of the Alexandria City Council
Waterfront Commission members
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
Jack Browand, Acting Director and Staff Liaison to the Parks & Recreation Commission
Rami Chehade, P.E., Acting Director, Project Implementation
Matthew Landes, Portfolio Manager, Department of Project Implementation

Signature: 
Lebaron Reid (Jan 3, 2025 17:59 EST)

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