

City of Alexandria, Virginia

2-10-04

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE GATEWAY INITIATIVE LANDSCAPE PROGRAM TO IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF MAJOR ENTRANCES TO THE CITY

ISSUE: Gateway initiative landscape program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Gateway Initiative to upgrade, starting with the spring of 2004, the portals at 15 major entrances to the City through landscaping; and
- (2) Allocate \$41,000 from Contingent Reserves to the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities for FY 2004 costs for materials, bed preparation, installation and maintenance of the gateways.

DISCUSSION: Over the past three months as Council has been working on its visioning process, Council members have articulated a desire to improve the appearance of the City's entryways. Also, during this time period Council has discussed and took actions on the Visitors Center report, which recommended improving the City's signage and appearance as a way of better marketing the City to tourists, as well as to residents of the Washington, D.C. area. Following these discussions, and with spring soon approaching, staff proposes that a Gateway program be initiated to revitalize and improve the major entrances to the City. Renovation of the landscaping at our portal signs provides the City with a quick, feasible, cost effective visible enhancement initiative that can be accomplished starting in the spring of 2004. This landscaping will enhance 15 gateway entrance areas in the City, creating a better sense of identity, continuity, and community when entering Alexandria.

Alexandria in the past was a leader in this region in creating landscaped gateways with unique "welcome" signage (which was copied by some neighboring jurisdictions). However, over the last fifteen years many of the gateway areas have not received needed attention and resources. In order to reverse this situation and to quickly improve the City's gateways, we propose that the existing gateway sign design be maintained and that the entryways be improved by landscaping which can be installed, maintained and watered by contract services starting this spring. While over the next few years the City might decide to change its entryway signage, or the location of

some of the gateways, by acting now with a fairly low up-front investment, and by using mostly existing sites (12 out of 15 are existing), these visual improvements that tens of thousands of motorists and tourists see daily can be in place starting this spring. This initiative follows our Washington Street median improvements (Cameron to Prince medians) implemented in FY 2003, which significantly upgraded the median landscaping in a key commercial area of the City.

In response to the goal to create a more unified and identifiable character at major entrances to the City, the gateway initiative was developed for Council consideration with the following landscaping elements at 15 major entrances to the City:

- To create a sense of continuity by using several of the same plant types which are used at Market Square and Founders Park at the entrance areas which surround the existing City portal signs;
- To use flowering trees to frame the existing signs to create an interesting backdrop;
- To create a framework of evergreen material to encircle plant material that will have four seasons of color;
- To simplify the design by creating a strong sense of presence entering Alexandria and;
- To ensure maintenance and retention of a more manicured appearance.

FISCAL IMPACT: This initiative has a fiscal impact of \$41,000 for the materials, installation and maintenance of the program during the first year (FY 2004). The maintenance for the second year (FY 2005) and beyond is estimated at \$25,000. FY 2004 funding for the materials, installation and any maintenance through the remainder of this fiscal year is proposed to be allocated from Contingent Reserves, which will be transferred to the Recreation Department. The maintenance costs for the second year would be included in the Proposed FY 2005 Operating Budget if Council approves this Gateway Initiative.

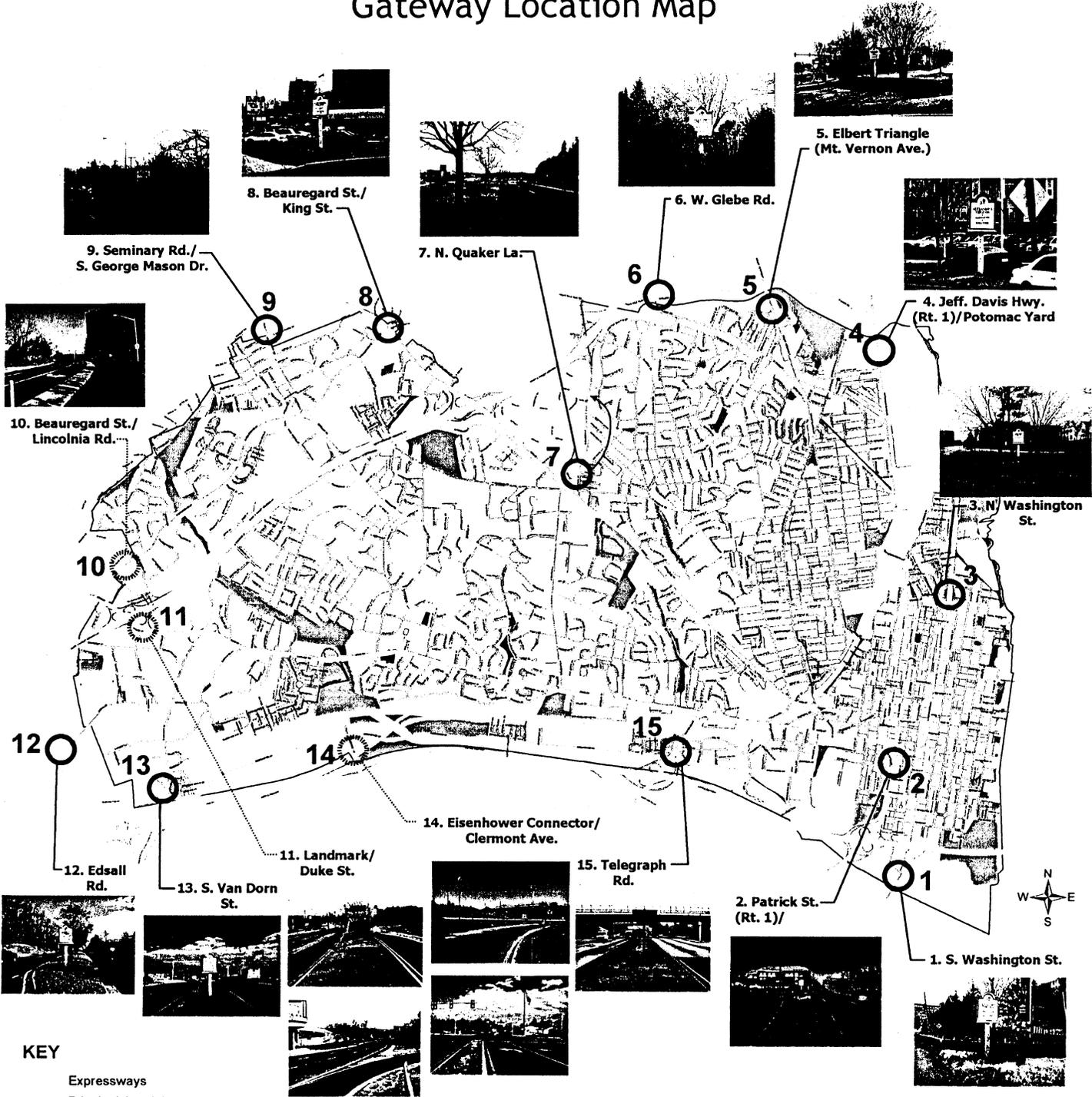
ATTACHMENTS:

1. City of Alexandria Gateway Initiative - Gateway Location Map
2. City of Alexandria Gateway Initiative - Photos
3. Example Layouts of proposed landscaping for Gateway sites

STAFF:

Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Kirk Kincannon, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Aimee Vosper, Supervisor Landscape Architect, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
John Buckler, Division Chief, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

City of Alexandria Gateway Initiative Gateway Location Map



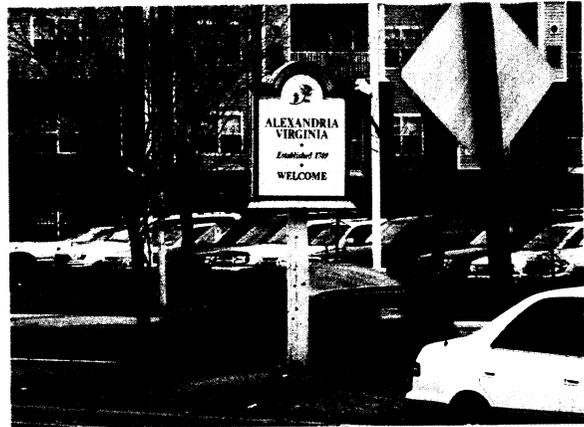
- KEY**
- Expressways
 - Principal Arterials
 - Open Space/Parks
 - Existing Gateways
 - Proposed Gateways

City of Alexandria Gateway Initiative Photos

1. S. Washington St.



4. Jefferson Davis Hwy. (Rt. 1)



2. Patrick St. (Rt.1)



5. Elbert Triangle (Mt. Vernon Ave.)



3. N. Washington St.



6. W. Glebe Rd.



City of Alexandria Gateway Initiative Photos

7. N. Quaker La.



10. Beauregard St./Lincolnia Rd. (Proposed)



8. Beauregard St./King St.



11. Landmark Mall/Duke St. (Proposed)



9. S. George Mason Dr.

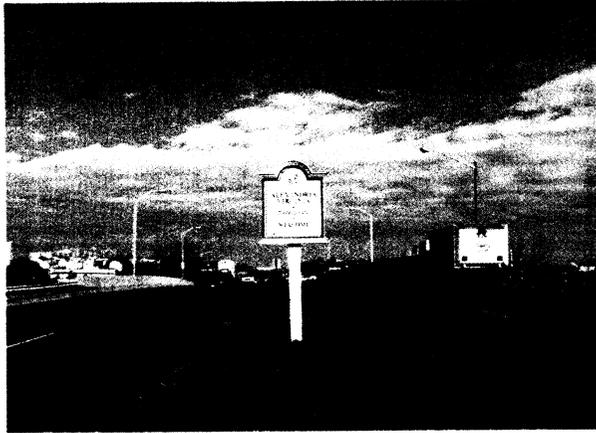


12. Edsall Rd.



City of Alexandria Gateway Initiative Photos

13. S. Van Dorn St.

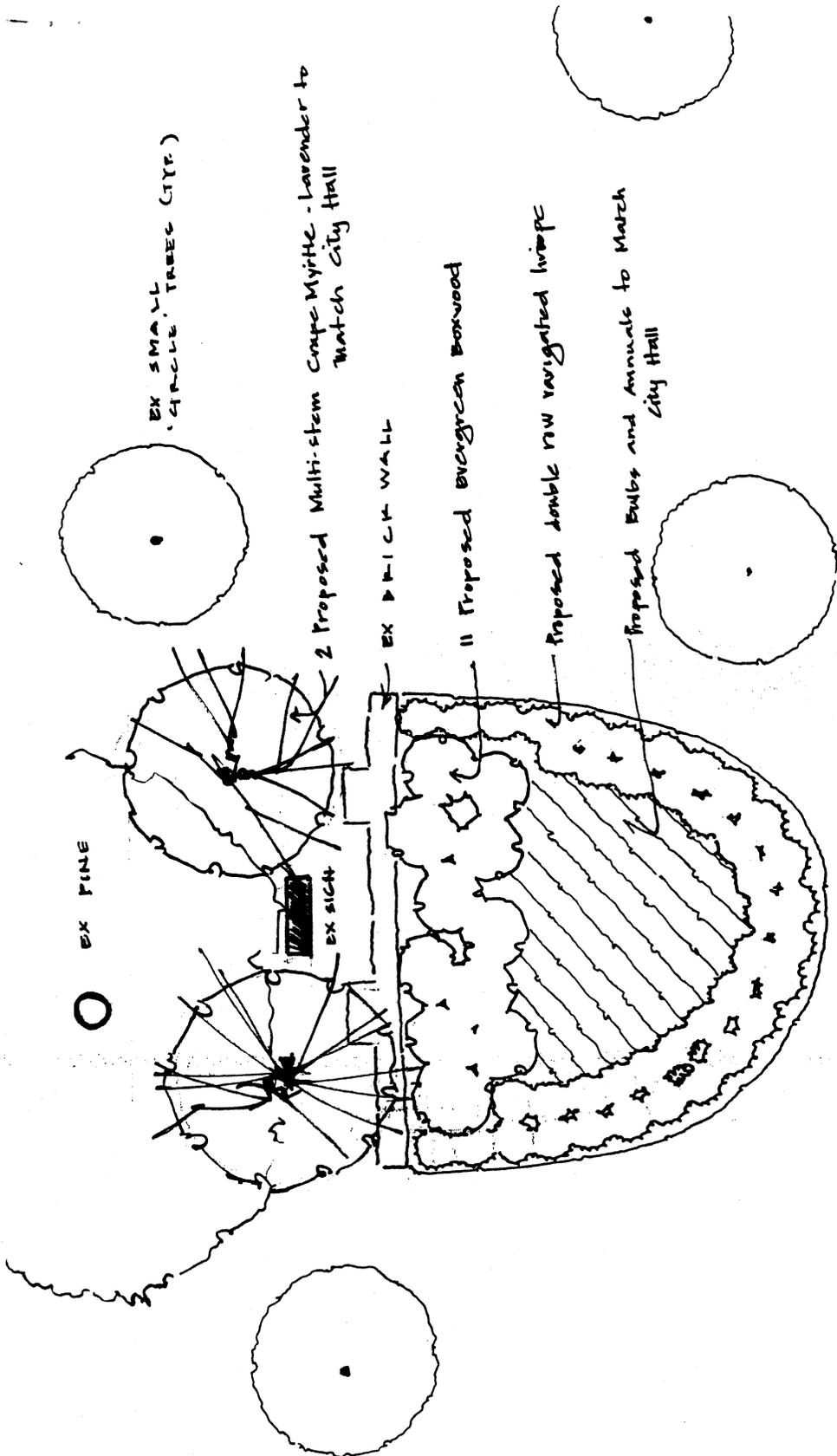


14. Eisenhower Connector/Clermont Ave. (Proposed)



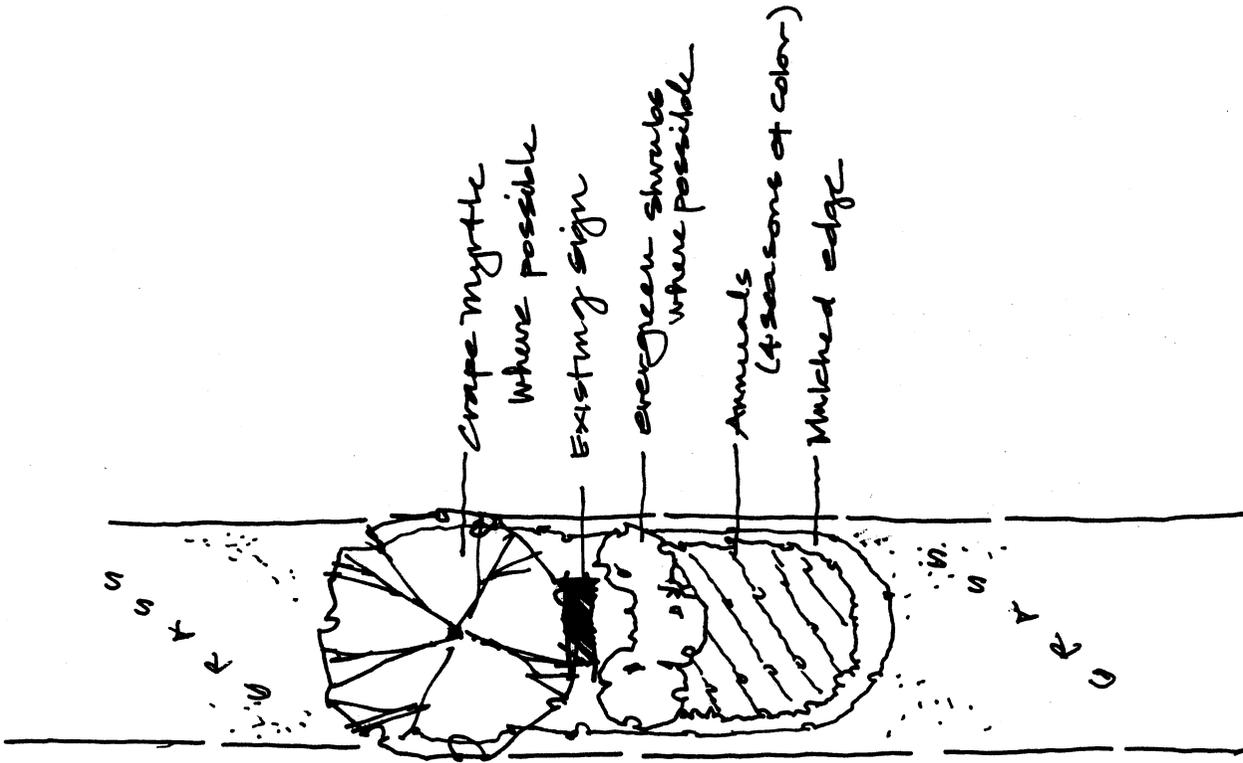
15. Telegraph Rd.





NORTH WASHINGTON PORTAL

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PROPOSED LANDSCAPE LAYOUT