

**DOCKET ITEM #8**  
**Street Name Case #2009-0001**  
**Potomac Yard Street Names**

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<b>Project Name:</b> Potomac Yard Street Names	<b>Planning Commission Hearing:</b>	February 3, 2009
<b>Proposal:</b> Consideration of a request to name the thoroughfare that has informally been known as Main Street and South Main Street as "Old Canal Street"; and to designate names for five new proposed streets within Landbays I and J of the Potomac Yard development.		
<b>Applicant:</b> City of Alexandria, Department of Planning and Zoning		
<b>Staff Recommendation: APPROVAL</b>		
<b>Staff Reviewers: Patricia Escher, AICP, and Colleen Rafferty</b>		
<b><u>PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:</u></b>		

**NOTE:** Due to the deferral of Landbays I and J from the January docket, the Planning Commission did not act on several street name designations for Street Name Case #2008-0001. Similarly, the new Main Street name was not acted on by Planning Commission at the January 6, 2009 hearing. Staff is bringing back these items for discussion. This report is for the remaining street names designation including the following: Old Canal Street, Bluemont Avenue, Conoy Street, McKenzie Avenue, Annie Rose Avenue, and Diamond Avenue.

Street Name Case #2009-0001  
POTOMAC YARD STREET NAMES

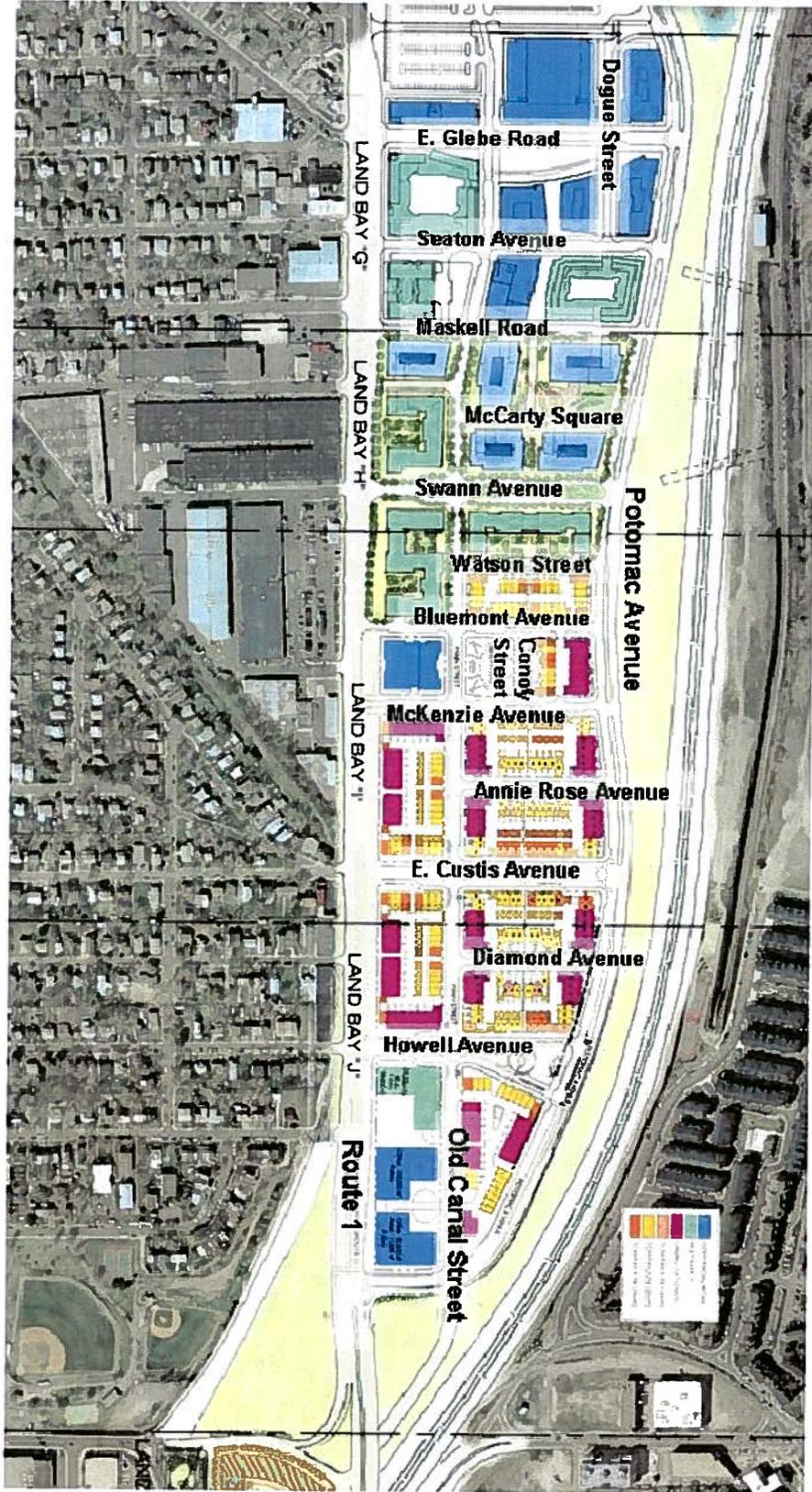


Figure 1. Proposed Street Names for Potomac Yard

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### ***A. Recommendation***

Staff is requesting that the Planning Commission officially designate six streets within the Potomac Yard Coordinated Development District (CDD). Typically street names are approved as part of individual development cases; however one of the streets to be named is major thoroughfare that traverses several different landbays. Therefore the requests are consolidated within this report for clarity. These names received community input and City staff review to ensure historical accuracy and avoidance of duplication.

Staff is recommending that:

- Main Street and South Main Street be officially designated as Old Canal Street;
- Five other streets within Landbays I and J be named with the following designations:
  1. Landbay I Street 4 be designated as Bluemont Avenue;
  2. Landbay I Street 5 be designated as Conoy Street;
  3. Landbay I Street 6 be designated as McKenzie Avenue;
  4. Landbay I Street 7 be designated as Annie Rose Avenue; and
  5. Landbay J Street 8 be designated as Diamond Avenue.

### ***B. Summary of Issues***

#### **Main Street**

During the approval of Potomac Yard (CDD#99-01), the name “Main Street” was consistently referred to when discussing the major north/south street that runs parallel to Route 1 (Jefferson Davis Highway). However, this street name was not officially adopted by the Planning Commission.

Throughout the on-going discussions with the community about various aspects of the Potomac Yard development, it became clear that the term “Main Street” for this neighborhood street was not really an appropriate choice. King Street has served as the City’s historic “Main Street” bringing visitors and residents to the City and its historic Old Town. While the City has grown and has several key transit corridors, King Street still serves the City as its historic “Main Street”. The name of Old Canal Street was chosen because of the historic importance of the Alexandria Canal which closely approximates the current location of the thoroughfare that has been known as Main Street. The Alexandria Canal was a significant resource to the City in the mid to late 1800s and is directly connected to the history of the area now known as Potomac Yard.

Staff requests that the Planning Commission officially name Main Street and South Main Street as Old Canal Street. (DSP#2005-0044 and DSP#2005-0039).

**Proposed Streets in Landbays I and J**

In addition to formally naming Old Canal Street, staff requests that the Planning Commission adopt the recommended names for the newly proposed streets in Landbays I and J (DSUP#2008-0022). There are a total of five new streets; four in Landbay I, and one in Landbay J.

**II. BACKGROUND**

**A. *Potomac Yard Street Grid***

The street grid is a fundamental component of the creation of neighborhoods in Potomac Yard, providing north-south and east-west connections. The streets link Potomac Yard to existing surrounding neighborhoods which were previously disconnected due to the immense size and industrial nature of the historic rail facility.

The approved CDD street grid of Potomac Yard consists of three major arterial streets, Route 1, “Main Street” or the proposed Old Canal Street and Potomac Avenue that run north and south and other smaller local streets that run both north/south and east/west. The majority of these streets run east/west providing connection from Potomac Avenue and Route 1.

Potomac Avenue and Route 1 are the primary north-south arterials which serve the Yard. Route 1 forms the western border of the Yard, while Potomac Avenue is the eastern border spanning from the Route 1 Bridge and potentially through Landbay F and into Arlington County. The avenue is located adjacent to the Potomac Yard Linear Park and is envisioned to be a boulevard with a park-like character; with a landscaped median and two travel lanes in either direction.

Old Canal Street, in contrast, is designed to be the spine of the neighborhoods and serve as a traditional “main street.” It is scaled for neighborhood functions and pedestrian activities, with wide sidewalks, street trees, retail uses, on-street parking, and a variety of building heights and façade types. The northern portion of the street begins at the Potomac Yard Retail Center and continues south; ending approximately 675 feet from Braddock Road. After its intersection with Potomac Avenue, the street was informally called South Main Street. In addition to providing a safe and pleasant pedestrian experience, the street is intended to supplement Route 1 and Potomac Avenue as a transit corridor between the Potomac Yard neighborhoods and the Braddock Road Metrorail Station.

The local streets create a sense of place and form the identity of each neighborhood. Depending on the location, the streets within Landbays I & J are designed to showcase different architectural building styles and unique neighborhood attributes. For instance, the residential streets closer to Main Street/Old Canal Street include grand, higher-end townhouses, while the residential streets nearer the finger parks may have Victorian or Craftsman style homes.

Their design creates walkable neighborhoods with short block distances, wide sidewalks and on-street parking to buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic. The street layout incorporates a well thought out urban design that provides an enjoyable pedestrian environment and a navigable street grid.

The proposed streets' design facilitates vehicular movement of local traffic by using the traditional street grid which provides the driver with various travel route options. With the exception of two of the six proposed streets, all travel east-west, intersecting with either with Route 1, Main Street/Old Canal Street, or Potomac Avenue. The other two streets are oriented north-south. The local streets' designs vary from a typical residential street, with wide sidewalks, street trees and narrow travel lanes to one-way streets adjacent to parks.

## **B. Street Names**

While the design, character, and nomenclature of the streets were outlined in the CDD concept plan and the Potomac Yard Urban Design Guidelines, the specific street names were not formally adopted by Planning Commission. As the CDD is a more conceptual phase, it has generally been thought to be more appropriate to name the streets when the definitive design, site layout, and street grid were finalized. This procedure was followed during the approval process of Landbay H and partial I in October 2006 and the resulting street names of Maskell Street, McCarty Square, Watson Street, and Van Valkenburgh Lane were adopted (ST#2006-0001 and DSUP#2004-0048).

During the aforementioned approval process, staff developed a street name classification system for future street names in Potomac Yard. Streets were classified as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Potomac Yard Street Name Classification**

<b>Street Orientation</b>	<b>Naming Criteria</b>
East – West Streets	General site history Potomac Yard railroad/transportation history Alexandria African-American history
North – South Streets	Alexandria Native-American history Relevant Potomac Yard History

The remainder of the staff report proposes and provides brief justifications for the street names Old Canal Street and the public/private streets in Landbays I and J.

## **III. PROPOSAL**

The following proposed street names were derived from historical research conducted by the Office of Historic Alexandria. City Departments reviewed the names to eliminate possible duplication of existing street names within the City, as well as for originality and context. Although design review boards do not preside over the naming of streets, the Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee was also informed of the possible street names.

The resulting street designations are historically significant to Potomac Yard and the City, and they comply with Title 5, Chapter 2 Section 64 of the City Code that specifies criteria for designating street nomenclature.

**A. *Main Body of Potomac Yard***

***Old Canal Street (Main Street)(Street # 1)***

Main Street correlates to the historic location of the Alexandria Canal; as the canal flowed in this general location. The canal's role was an important component in Alexandria's commercial viability by providing access to the Potomac River from 1843 to 1886. Products were shipped to and from Alexandria via the canal and included such items as fish, salt, plaster, lumber, wheat, corn, whiskey, corn meal, flour, and coal from the Maryland mines. These shipments sustained the local community and businesses; improving the overall quality of life by providing basic goods.

The new commercial development and town center proposed along the Main Street is expected to contribute to Alexandria's commercial growth as did the Alexandria's Canal so long ago. It is because of the historical significance and the canal's original location that staff recommends the street be named Old Canal Street.

**B. *Landbays I and J***

Potomac Yard has a system in place with criteria by which street names are to be assigned, such as rail yard history, recognition of prominent African American or Native American residents, or other historical documentation unique to the Yard and City. The layout of the proposed residential streets in Landbays I and J lends itself to utilizing this system.

***Landbay I - Bluemont Avenue (Street #2)***

Bluemont Branch was a component of the Southern Railway route from Bluemont, Virginia, to Washington, D.C. This portion of railroad is now a part of Route 66. Southern Railway is a combination of approximately 150 railroad companies that serve the east coast. The Southern Railway was the right-of-way used for Potomac Yard.

***Landbay I - Conoy Street (Street #3)***

The Conoy Native Americans, or Piscataway, were an additional Algonquian tribe that lived in permanent villages throughout the Potomac region. The language they spoke was similar to that spoken by the Powhattan Native Americans.

***Landbay I - McKenzie Avenue (Street #4)***

Lewis McKenzie helped form and served as president of the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad. He served on City Council and as Mayor in Alexandria. He later was elected to Congress. In the tradition of early railroading, McKenzie was also the name of the first locomotive, an eight-wheeler, of the AL&H, which arrived from Massachusetts on Oct 12, 1858. The steam locomotive operated on the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad.

**Landbay I - Annie Rose Avenue (Street #5)**

Annie Beatrice Bailey Rose was the African American woman who founded the Alexandria Commission on Aging, the Alexandria Black History Resource Center, and the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage. Her father was enslaved at the Franklin and Armfield Slave Pen on Duke Street.

**Landbay J - Diamond Avenue (Street #6)**

A diamond is a special track configuration that allows two railroad tracks to cross each other at grade. Numerous diamonds were used in Potomac Yard to accommodate the amount of track necessary for trains to switch cars in the rail yard.

**Other Names Internally Considered**

While staff recommends the above referenced street names because of their historical significance and appropriateness, below are some of the other names that were reviewed. Staff does not recommend the names below due to similarities with existing street designations and generalities in historical significance.

**Main Street Considerations**

- **Center Street.** Center Street correlates to the placement of the street within the development of the Yard.
- **Mainline Avenue.** Mainline Avenue relates to the railroad history of the yard. The location of Main Street, as well as Potomac Yard itself, was the main line for the railroads.

**Residential Street Considerations**

- **Goliath Avenue.** Goliath Avenue relates to the railroad history. The locomotive *Goliath* was built at the Smith and Perkins Foundry on the 400 block of South Union Street in 1856 and was used on the Pennsylvania Railroad.
- **Caboose Avenue.** This name also relates to railroad history.
- **Howson Avenue.** This name relates to the history of City. Robert Howson was the original 1669 Virginia Land Patent holder from King of England Land Grant. This name was considered as a possible designation for a residential street.

## **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends **approval** of the street names Old Canal Street, Bluemont Avenue, Conoy Street, McKenzie Avenue, Annie Rose Avenue, and Diamond Avenue.

**STAFF:** Faroll Hamer Director, Planning and Zoning;  
Gwen Wright, Chief, Development;  
Patricia Escher, AICP, Principal Planner; and  
Colleen Rafferty, Urban Planner.