

City of Alexandria, Virginia

21
6-10-03

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 5, 2003
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*
SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF THE VISITORS CENTER CONSULTANT REPORT

ISSUE: Consideration of the next steps in the Visitors Center Study process.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Receive the *Alexandria Visitors Center Report* and refer it to the City staff for coordination and further analysis, discussion and consideration by the community; and
- (2) Request that the City Manager bring recommendations concerning the establishment (or not) of a new or expanded visitors center to the City Council for public hearing and final determination before the end of 2003.

BACKGROUND: Over the past decade the City has several times considered alternative locations for its current visitors center located at 221 King Street in Ramsay House. These considerations have been based upon the widespread acknowledgment that tourism is an important element of the Alexandria economy and that Ramsay House is too small (with only a 400 square foot welcome, orientation and information area) to adequately serve tourists, as well as its tourist information room is difficult to find and utilize with the requirement of climbing many stairs, and with an entrance that is difficult for tourists to find and utilize.

In order to determine the best location for a visitors center and to define what a visitors center for the City of Alexandria should be, the City sought out, through a competitive process, experts in the area of tourism development and promotion to conduct a thorough and independent study of the needs of the City. The study was started in the fall of 2002 with a series of interviews of residential and business stakeholders, entailed substantial data gathering and analysis, and included a presentation at a Council work session on April 22 of the consultant's draft findings. The consultant has now finished its report: *Alexandria Visitors Center Report* (Attachment 1). Given the voluminous size of this report and its appendices, copies will be placed for public review in the City Clerk's Office, the Department of Planning and Zoning, at the Beatley Library, and at the offices of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association. Copies of the executive summary of the report (Attachment I) and the consultant's PowerPoint summary (Attachment II) of the report will be posted on the City's web site, as well as the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA) web site.

Report Findings

National and Local Tourism Trends: The report notes that while tourism grew in the 1990s nationally, it slowed in 2001. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, the temporary closing of National Airport, the sniper incidents, the anthrax incidents, and the periodic increased terrorist alerts have all contributed to a decline in the tourism industry in the region, as well as in Alexandria. While tourism nationally and in the region is expected to grow in the future, the growth may be slow and may be selective based upon increased competition for limited tourism dollars.

Alexandria has assets which are considered competitive. These include being in a state which has 55% of the population of the United States within 500 miles and being very attractive to cultural and heritage oriented tourists. More tourists are now choosing to drive and to take shorter, but more frequent vacations. Cultural and heritage tourism is important because this element of the tourism market is growing, has longer staying patterns, and spends more than typical tourists.

A recently completed survey of 952 visitors to the City, titled *Profile Study of the Alexandria Visitor*, found that:

- Alexandria tourists have a higher median income of \$77,000 which is substantially higher than the national average of \$48,500,
- Repeat business is evident as 62% of tourists have been to Alexandria before,
- Word-of-mouth from friends and family dominates the source for discovering Alexandria,
- Alexandria's proximity to Mt Vernon is important,
- 59% of visitors stay at least two days,
- Nine out of ten visitors give Alexandria the highest satisfaction rating allowed, and
- On a list of twelve activities that tourists to Alexandria recommend, the Visitors Center was 12th on the list with only 3% of the survey respondents listing it.

Comparables: The consultant study looked at five other jurisdictions' visitors centers. Factors reviewed included: location in relation to the tourist domain, size of facility, parking, shuttle services and purpose that the facility serves in order to understand what might work for Alexandria. These included:

- Charleston, South Carolina
- Montgomery, Alabama
- Corning, New York
- Newport, Rhode Island
- Easton, Pennsylvania

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT): In order to determine the type and location of a visitors center for the City, a SWOT analysis was undertaken to assess and evaluate the tourism market and to help develop recommendations for City Council consideration. A summary of this analysis is provided in chart form below:

Proposed Mission: Based upon the analysis of the Alexandria tourism market and its potential, as a precursor to making site and facility size recommendations, the consultant drafted a proposed mission for an Alexandria Visitors Center. This proposed mission states:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined Visitor Domain • Access to Large Regional Market • Condition of Public Environment • Unique Product • Alexandria is Attractive to the Cultural & Heritage Tourist • Tourist Satisfaction • Increasing Realization of the Value Tourism Provides the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage • Parking • Visitor and Tourism Data and Research with Respect to Day Trippers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Visitors Center • Increased Tourism Marketing • Support for Tourism • Maximize Riverfront Potential • Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with Washington, DC and Mt. Vernon • Moving Tourists Beyond Old Town • Nurture Relationship with Motorcoach Operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts Between Tourism Activities and Neighborhoods • Change • Traffic Congestion • Competition from Other Localities • Terrorism

The important conclusion that the consultant reached states “the (Alexandria Visitors) Center should orient, inform and educate visitors; prepare them for the remainder of their stay; motivate them to go out and find historic sites, and other attractions and amenities. The Center will provide an interpretative context for, or linking of, these sites, attractions and amenities, but it will not, for the most part, be a place where the stories are told of the interpretation is rendered for individual sites and attractions.” This conclusion is key as it ultimately drives the scope (size, staffing, mission, and cost), and to some degree the locational options of an Alexandria Visitors Center.

As an outcome of this conclusion, the consultant recommends that the City have a visitors center of 3,500 square feet (gross square feet), including a 1,500 square foot information and orientation area. Such a facility could serve about 1,000 visitors on a peak day, including about 75 persons at any single peak time.

Locational Analysis: In developing locational options for a visitors center, the consultant had to analyze travel patterns, the location of tourist sites, and fit that with the experience that (p. 66) “successful visitors centers are located where they are easy to find and use, both for tourists who intended to stop there first, as well as for those who come upon it in their travels and decide to stop in.” This resulted in the consultant eliminating from consideration locations outside of the tourist domain of Old Town, and then focused for site locations the King Street corridor area from the King Street Metro Station to the Potomac River. This is where the tourists are, where there is greater potential for increasing tourism, where tourists (such as those traveling between Washington D.C. and Mt. Vernon) can be easily diverted to, and therefore this makes the best location to consider in looking at visitors center site alternatives.

Report Recommendations: The report contains two classes of recommendations. The first is a set of general recommendations common to all sites (as well as the status quo option of doing nothing to change the existing Ramsay House Visitors Center). The second set of recommendations represents the site location alternatives for a new or expanded visitors center.

The general recommendations include:

- Substantially improve (or create) signage and wayfinding systems. Informational and directional signage for tourists is a critical weakness of the City. If tourists are to learn what the City has to offer, lengthen their visits, as well as visit again, making it easy to find the visitors center, City historic sites, amenities and parking is necessary.
- Mass transit-oriented tourism should be further encouraged. The DASH About is a start towards this end, but more can be done to encourage more mass transit use, expand the DASH About, as well as encourage visitors who are staying in the Washington D.C. area outside of the City to visit the City via Metrorail.
- Supplemental information opportunities such as having mini-stands or kiosks at City events such as the Red Cross Festival or the Scottish Walk can boost tourism (including promoting Alexandria as a shopping and dining destination), especially from those living in the greater Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area.
- Alternative parking programs (discounts, better signage, increased availability) should be developed in order to make parking for tourists easier than it currently is.
- Encourage greater use of motorcoaches, as well as have motorcoaches extend what is typically a short stay in the City. This would require a more active motorcoach management and expanded off-site parking for motorcoaches.

The six options, which include different siting options, presented by the consultant include:

Options 1 and 2 New Visitors Center on Upper King Street: These options would have a new facility constructed on either the King Street Metro station parking lot or on the east end of the King Street Gardens triangle park adjacent to the King

Street and Diagonal Road intersection. A center at this site would primarily serve Metrorail users and would require most tourists and tour buses to leave the primary tourist domain and go out of their way to use the visitors center.

Option 3

New Visitors Center in the Metro Station Concourse: This option would construct a visitors center at one end of the Metro station concourse or the other under the existing Metrorail platform. A center at this site would primarily serve Metrorail users and would require most tourists and tour buses to leave the primary tourist domain and go out of their way to use the visitors center.

Option 4

New Visitors Center on Market Square: This option would add a visitors center to the east side of Market Square in the area where the planters are located and over the entrance to the Market Square parking garage. It is also proposed that a open air pavilion for farmer's market and civic stage use be constructed on the other side of Market Square. Market Square is scheduled for renovation in the next few years and the construction of a new facility would need to be coordinated with it, as well as coordinated with the proposal for the location of a Martin Luther King statue on Market Square. This Market Square location option would site the visitors center in the heart of the tourist domain as well as provide a single floor visitors center. This site is in the heart of the tourist domain. The consultant believes that this location and single floor design is the strongest of all the options presented

Option 5

Ramsay House Renovation and Expansion: This option would provide a two story addition to Ramsay House over the adjoining garden area. The tourist orientation and information area would be on the first floor and tourist restrooms on the second floor. The report states that the architectural style would be respectful of the history associated with Ramsay House and the surrounding area. This site also is in the heart of the tourist domain, and represents the second strongest of all the options presented.

Option 6:

Ramsay House Status Quo or Renovation with Ancillary Welcome Space at the King Street Metro Station: This option would improve the interior of Ramsay House and add a welcome/orientation area to the King Street Metrorail station to the largely vacant ground level lobby area in the southern end of the station where the original entrance is located.

The major findings of the consultant's report were presented to Council at a work session on April 22, and then to the ACVA Board of Governors and to the Alexandria Hotel Association on May 12. For both of those meetings various civic associations and business groups (in or adjacent to where the site options were proposed), were invited, and some of these groups were able to send representatives. Further presentations to, and discussions with, these groups will need to occur over the coming months. Also an analysis of the various site options by City and ACVA staff will also need to occur. It is proposed that after there is time to conduct these analyses and to obtain

community input, that recommendations be brought back by City staff to Council before the end of 2003, with a public hearing scheduled on the recommendations.

In regard to the visitors center consultant recommendation that, regardless of the option visitors center site option chosen, a better coordinated signage and wayfinding signing program is needed in the City, staff has begun to study how other cities have developed and implemented such coordinated sign programs, as well as what a program might entail and how, and over what time period, it might be implemented. At some point before the end of 2003, either with or separate from the visitors center recommendations, staff will report its findings and make signage and wayfinding program process recommendations to Council. This report would not include a specific new sign program, but would define it, and make recommendations about whether or not, or to what degree, the City should start such a program.

FISCAL IMPACT: The various visitors center options have a wide range of costs. A new or expanded visitors center could cost (measured on an order of magnitude basis) \$1.6 million for the expansion of Ramsay House, \$2.6 million for the Market Square option, and between \$2.2 million and \$2.5 million for the upper King Street options. Ramsay House renovated and not expanded along with a welcome space in the King Street Metro station was not cost estimated, but would be the lowest cost alternative with a wide range of costs depending on how extensive the renovations and the welcome space program design were. Costing the signage and wayfinding program is difficult without defining how comprehensive and extensive such a program would be. Based upon preliminary discussions with experts in this area, an extensive signage and wayfinding program however could cost upwards to \$1.5 million. However, a less comprehensive program could cost much less. A program can also be designed in phases and implemented over a number of years, thereby reducing up-front costs.

ATTACHMENTS:

- I. Executive Summary of the *Alexandria Visitors Center Report*
- II. PowerPoint Summary of the *Alexandria Visitors Center Report*

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager

Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alexandria is a city rich in history and cultural attractions with high quality dining and shopping experiences. These attributes make it attractive to residents and tourists. Tourism plays an important role in the local economy. The City commissioned this study to determine if a new visitors center is warranted and if so where it might be located. In conducting this study a team lead by Parter International, Inc. researched local and national tourism trends, conducted and reviewed surveys, held interviews, meetings and focus groups with a cross section of stakeholders, researched comparable facilities and identified potential locations for a new visitors center.

Alexandria has significant strengths as a tourism destination with a well-defined visitor domain and access to a large regional market of visitors. The city is unique, safe and friendly with visitors showing a high level of satisfaction with their experience in Alexandria. The city is poised to take advantage of growing support for tourism, a strong existing promotional effort and potential partnerships to maintain and enhance the economic benefit associated with increased visitation.

There is strong support for a new or enhanced Visitors Center in Alexandria to provide information and orientation to the city. Such a center would encourage visitors to fully explore the sights, attractions, shops and restaurants, stay longer, spend more, return again and recommend Alexandria as a destination to others. Properly located, it would act as a staging point for tours and events and a sender to all parts of the City.

Stakeholders felt a presence in the Old Town area was important. An analysis of traffic patterns reveals that visitors arrive almost evenly from the north and south making an Old Town location the most viable. Local concerns regarding parking and traffic need to be addressed as part of a larger transportation analysis and plan. The proportion of traffic related to visitors does not significantly contribute to existing conditions. Improvements in signage and wayfinding will help visitors navigate the City more efficiently and ease some of these issues.

An analysis of the existing Ramsay House Visitors Center shows that it is insufficient to meet the current and future goal of effectively and efficiently conveying tourist information. Although thought to be an historic structure, it is in fact a reproduction building that replaced a larger structure that was heavily damaged by fire in the 1940's. In a main area of about 400 square feet, the building currently serves more than 115,000 visitors a year. The majority of these visitors arrive in a season starting in April and running through October. To properly accommodate and serve existing visitors and anticipated growth in visitation, Alexandria needs a Visitors Center of approximately 3,500 gross square feet.

The Parter Team established site criteria and reviewed potential Visitors Center scenarios with a variety of stakeholders. With input from those interviewed, the Team identified potential locations throughout the city. Each location was analyzed with respect to its positive and negative impacts on residential and commercial activities in the surrounding area, traffic patterns, parking availability, public transportation, accessibility and other factors.

A number of recommendations are made which are common to all locations. These include improvements in signage and wayfinding, exploration of changes in public bus service through special passes, extension of DASH About or free off peak service, and additional detailed parking and traffic evaluations. Motorcoach management through signage and route alterations is also recommended. Finally, creating supplemental information opportunities for festivals, events and busy days is also recommended.

Seven recommendations are made that include five potential locations. Three locations surround the King Street Metro Station. They are construction of a new facility either on the triangle formed by Diagonal, King and Daingerfield or on the Metro parking lot area or in the METRO Station Concourse. Two locations are in the heart of Old Town. They are a renovation and expansion of Ramsay House and the construction of a pair of pavilions on the planter areas of Market Square. One of these pavilions would function as the Visitors Center and the other as an open-air structure for the farmers market, events and festivals. Another option is to renovate Ramsay House and create an ancillary space associated with the King Street METRO Station. Lastly, the option exists not to make investment in physical improvements but rather to expand tourism marketing.

After thorough analysis and a series of public meetings and presentations, the Parter Team believes that the strongest options, and those with support from stakeholders, are the Ramsay House expansion and the Market Square options. The Market Square option is stronger programmatically than Ramsay House in terms of creating a positive visitor experience within the center. Both of these options serve to create a strong central presence in the visitor domain that is welcoming to visitors and conveys the quality experience associated with the City that will encourage people to stay longer, spend more and return again.



Alexandria Visitors Center Analysis

The Parter International Team

Parter International, Inc.

Powe.Jones Architects

EDAW

Gorove-Slade Associates

Gallagher & Associates

April 22, 2003



The Assignment

- The Assignment:
 - Whether New Visitors Center Warranted
 - If So, Where Should It Be Placed?



Information Gathering

- Secondary Research
 - Local / National
- Primary Research
 - Interviews
 - Site Visits
 - Surveys
 - Focus Groups
 - Client Meetings

Findings

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well-Defined Visitor Domain ■ Access to Large Regional Market ■ Condition of Public Environment ■ Unique Product ■ Alexandria is Attractive to the Cultural & Heritage Tourist ■ Tourist Satisfaction ■ Increasing Realization of the Value Tourism Provides the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Signage ■ Parking ■ Visitor and Tourism Data and Research With Respect to Day Trippers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New Visitors Center ■ Increased Tourism Marketing ■ Support for Tourism ■ Maximize Riverfront Potential ■ Partnerships ■ Partnering with Washington, DC and Mt. Vernon ■ Moving Tourists Beyond Old Town ■ Nurture Relationship with Motor Coach Operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conflicts between tourism activities and neighborhoods ■ Change ■ Traffic Congestion ■ Competition From Other Localities ■ Terrorism



Tourism & Economics

- Strong drive market
- Alexandria tourist median income
- Repeat visitors
- Satisfaction rating
- The DC visitor
- Tourism economic impact
- Motor coach impact



Proposed Visitors Center Mission

- Provide a welcoming, pleasing and fun experience designed to encourage visitors:
 - to participate in all aspects of Alexandria;
 - to visit the surrounding area of Old Town, its historic and other attractions, restaurants and shopping;
 - to visit other Alexandria area and attractions outside of primary visitor domain;
 - to stay longer in and return to Alexandria; and
 - to leave as satisfied visitors and goodwill ambassadors for Alexandria.



Proposed Visitor Center Mission

- Provide information, directions, basic visitor amenities, reservations and ticketing, and access to attractions, facilities, hotels, restaurants and entertainment.
- Act as a staging point for walking, trolley and garden tours to reduce idling time and travel time for buses in the area.
- Act as a node or pick-up/drop-off point to encourage the use of mass transit.
- Convince tourists that Alexandria cares and wants to help make their stay an interesting and pleasant one.



Comparables

- Charleston, South Carolina
- Montgomery, Alabama
- Newport, Rhode Island
- Corning, New York
- Easton, Pennsylvania
- Types of Visitors Centers
 - Information centers
 - Information and orientation centers
 - Interpretive centers



Ramsay House Analysis

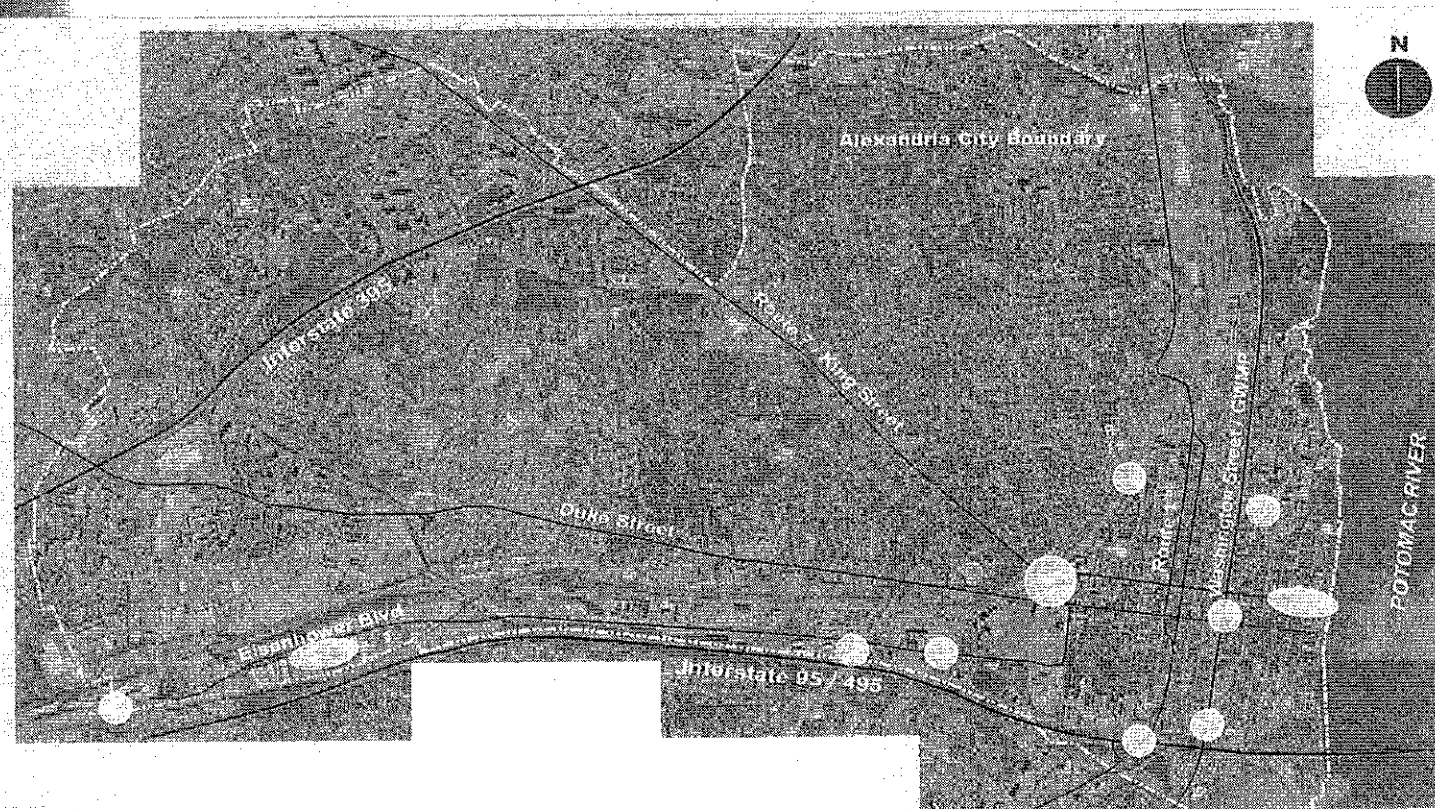
- History
- Services Offered
- Visitation & Usage
- Transportation
- Traffic & Parking
- Assessment



Site Criteria

- Relationship to tourist domain- King Street/center of Old Town
- Positive and negative impacts on residential and business neighbors
- Easy vehicular access, convenient to parking, public transportation/DASH/shuttle
- Convenience for motor coach tours
- Exterior spaces usable in fair weather for overflow and staging
- Visually accessible and identifiable for pedestrian and car traveler
- Connections and relationships to attractions, lodging, shopping & restaurants
- Public acceptance/acceptability
- Costs
- Operational issues

Locations Considered



EDAW

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS CONSIDERED

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS



Recommendations Common to All

- **Signage & Wayfinding**
 - Improvements will help manage traffic & parking, define districts & identity, reinforce the experience, create linkages
- **Public Transportation**
 - Encourage special bus passes; Extend DASH ABOUT to weekdays or free off-peak DASH
 - King Street signal synchronization & larger pull-offs to clear lane of traffic



Recommendations Common to All

■ Motor Coach Management

- Improve signage, establish designated routes
- Set aside more drop-off on Market Square, identify and mark additional parking and partnerships

■ Parking

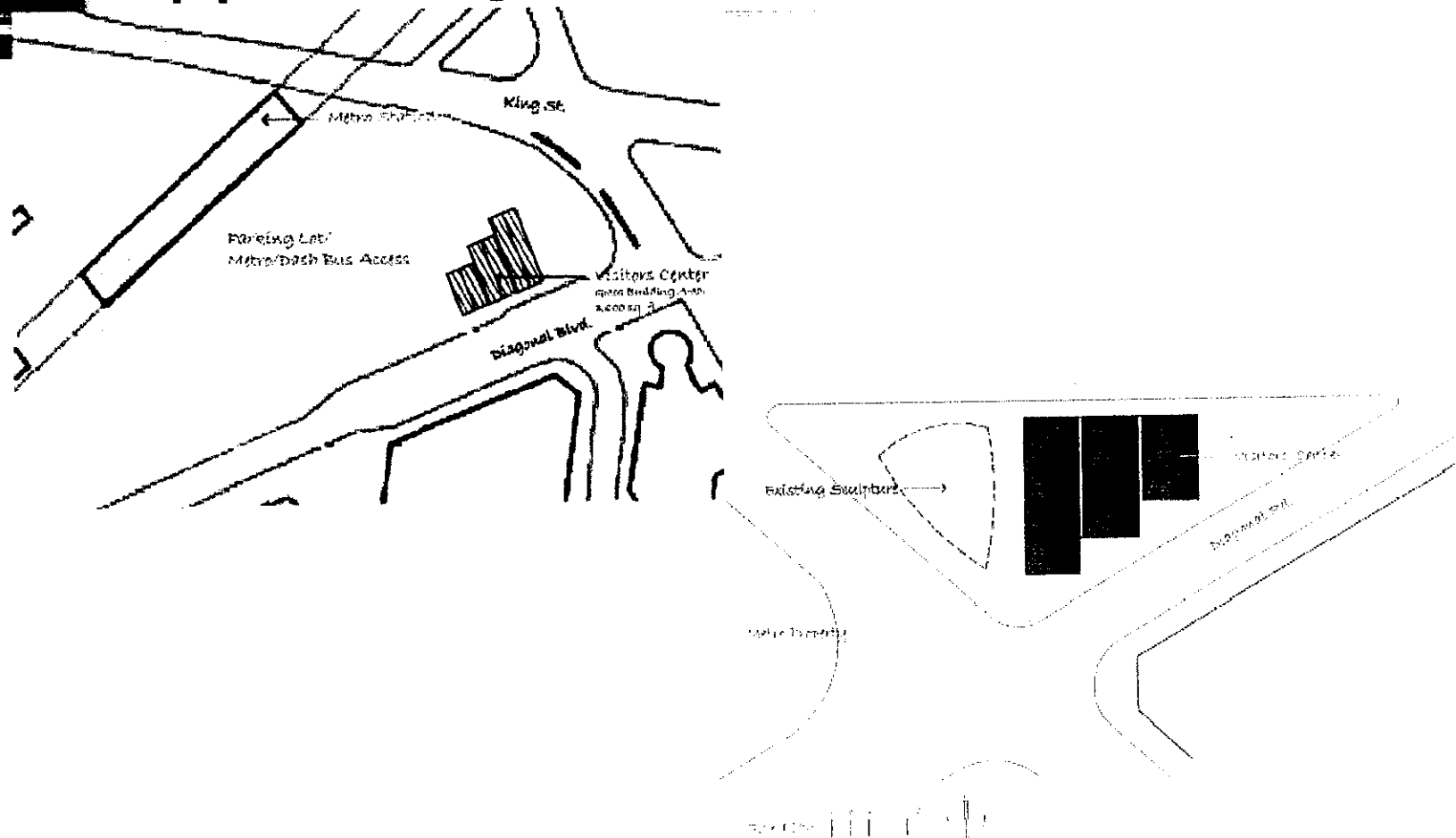
- Develop parking census, review parking regulations & explore discount rate structures



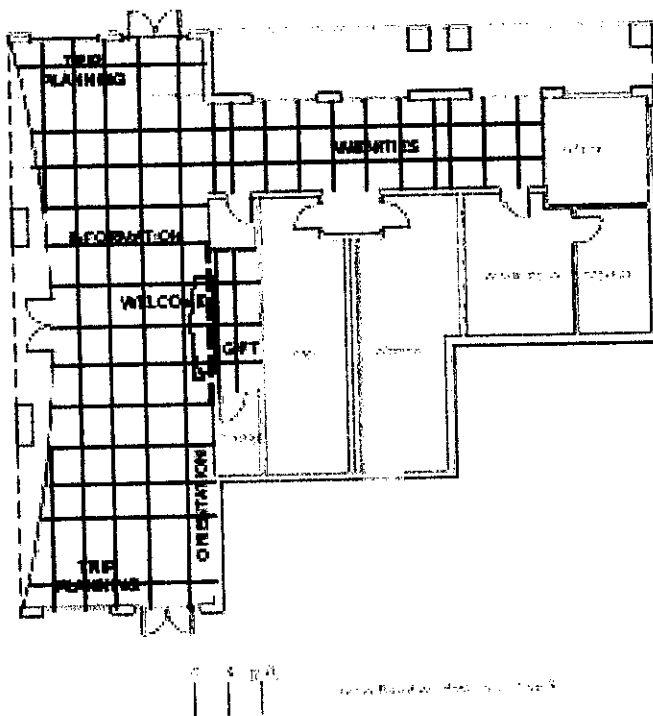
Recommended Site Alternatives

- King Street Metro Station Lot
- King Street Triangle
- King Street Metro Concourse
- Market Square
- Ramsay – Renovation & Expansion
- Ramsay – Status Quo/Renovate+Metro
- Ramsay – Status Quo – Marketing

Upper King Street Site Alternatives



Upper King Street Alternative



Ramsay House Expansion Alternative

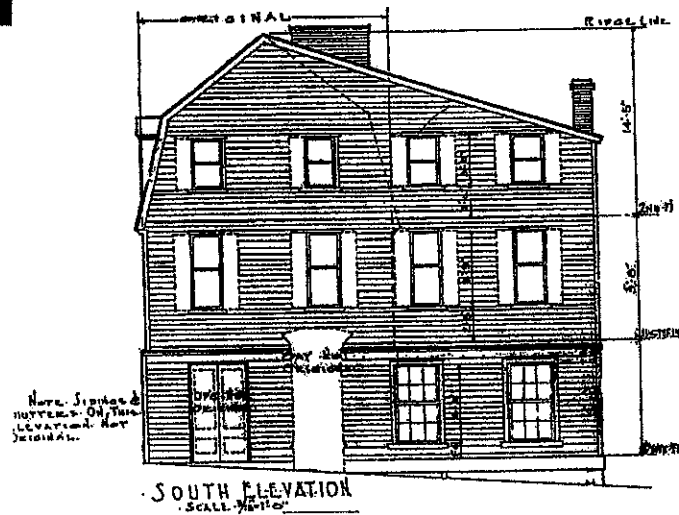
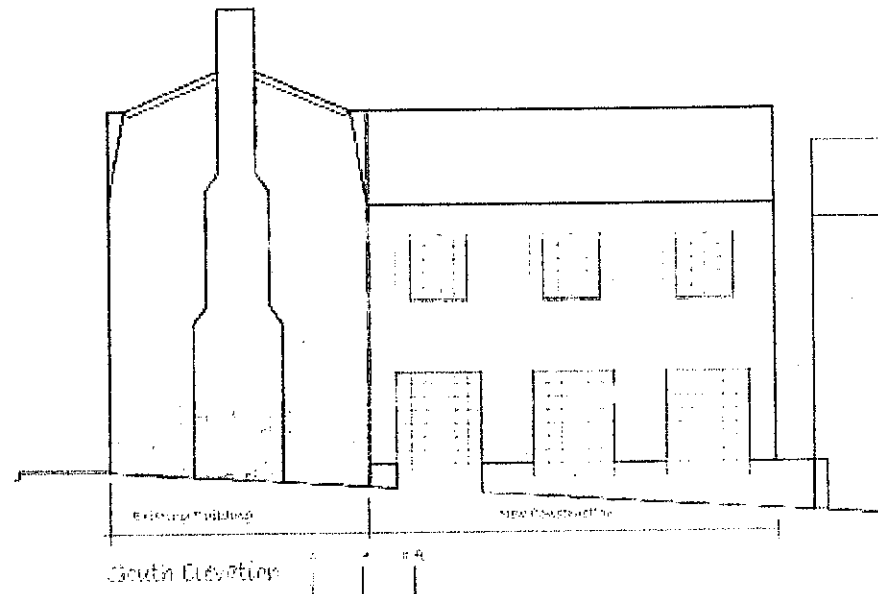
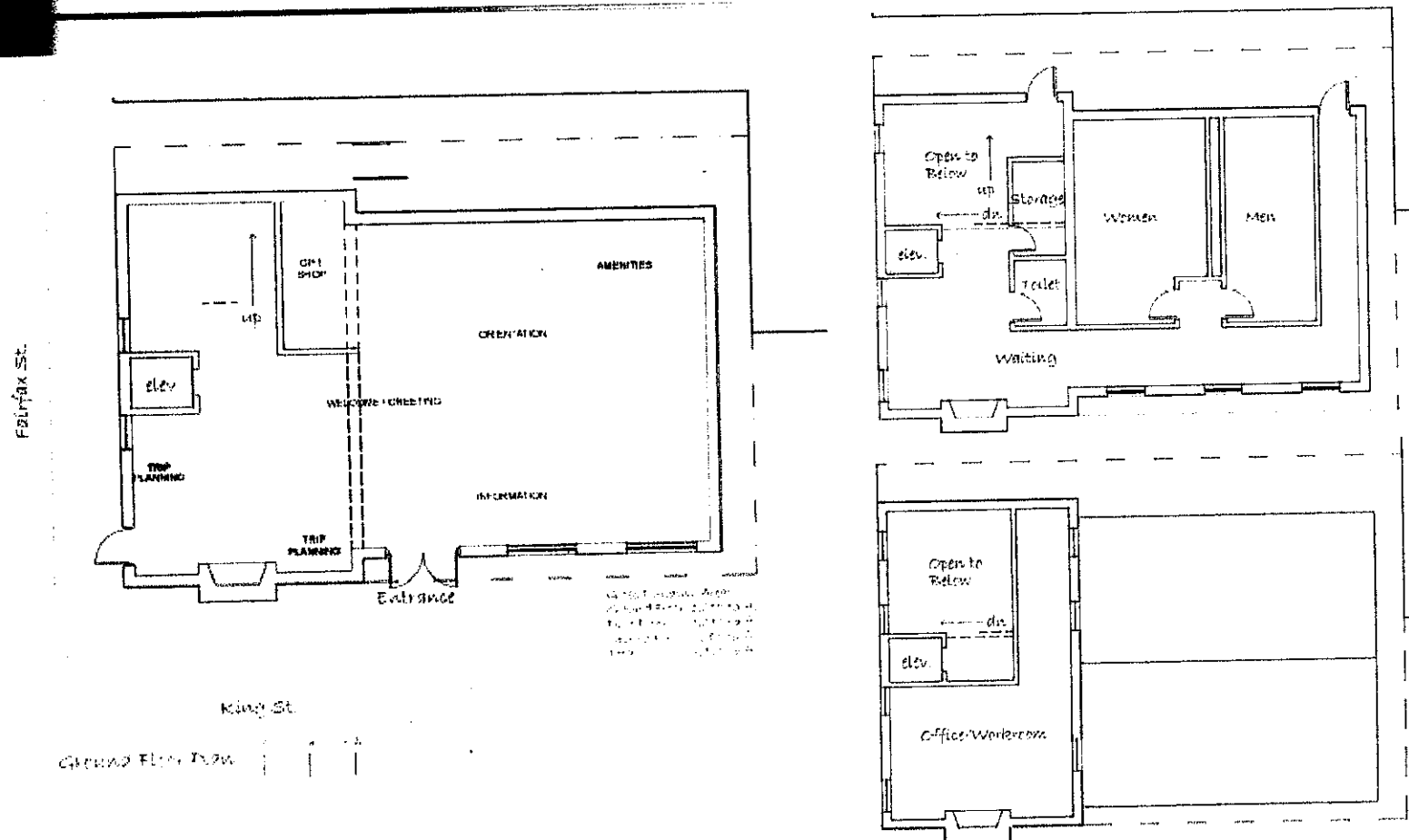


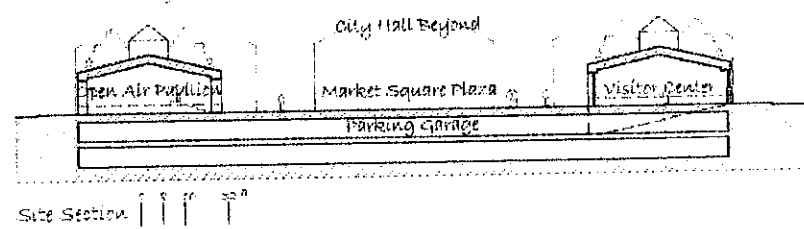
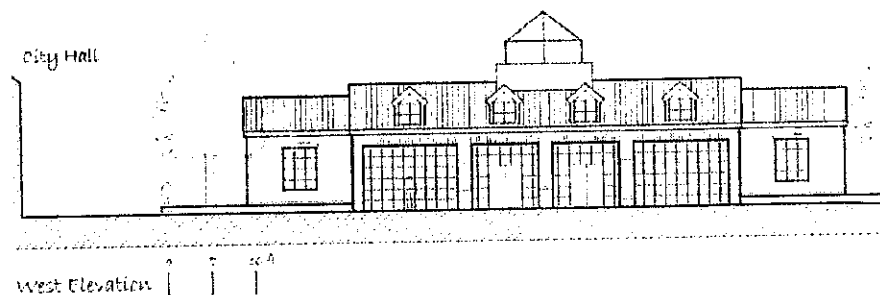
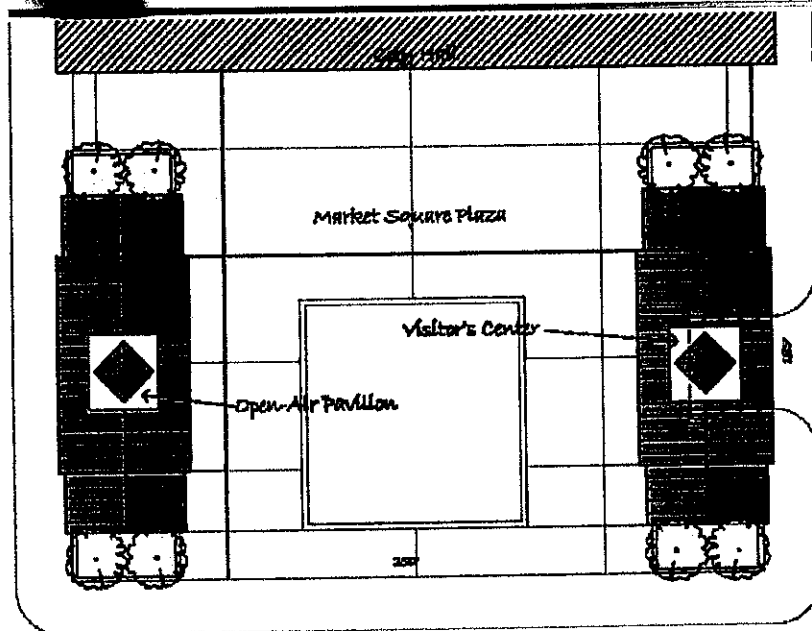
Illustration No. 2-1936 Historic American Building Survey measured drawing of the Ramsay House. The drawing indicates the original configuration of the building. A.A. Briggs, delineator. WPA under the direction of the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Designs. Source: Special Collections, Alexandria Library



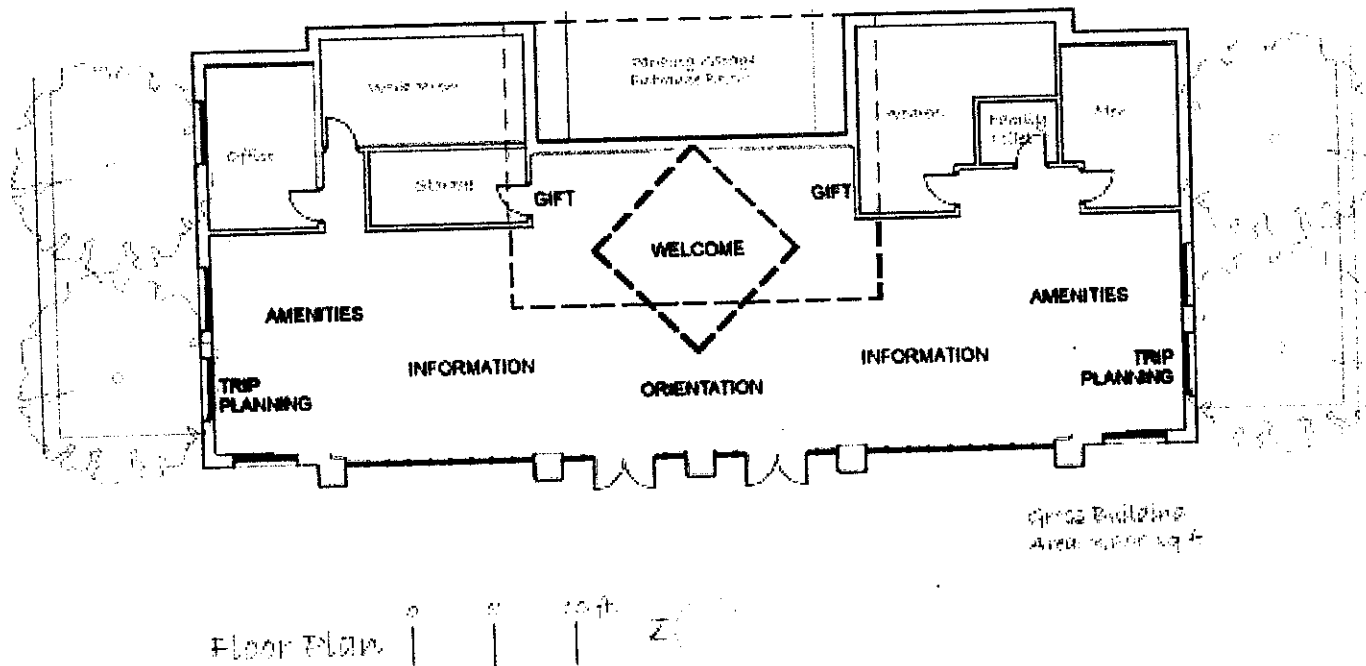
Ramsay House Expansion Alternative



Market Square Alternative



Market Square Alternative



Site Issues/Properties	Ramsay House- Existing	Ramsay House- Expanded	Market Square Pavilion	Metro Station Concourse	King St. Triangle	
SITE ISSUES						
Availability	+	+	+	-	-	+
Site Acquisition	+	+	+	-	-	+
Proximity to Attractions	+	+	+	-	-	-
Visibility	+	+	+	-	o	o
Auto Accessibility	o	o	+	+	+	o
Metro Accessibility	-	-	-	+	+	+
Motorcoach Accessibility	o	o	+	+	+	o
Pedestrian Marshalling	o	o	+	o	+	+
Impact on Neighborhood	-	o	+	+	+	+
Size Fit w/ Program	-	-	+	+	+	+
Impact on Site	+	-	+	+	-	-
VISITOR CENTER ISSUES						
Site/Building Ownership	+	+	+	-	-	+
Visitor Experience	-	o	+	o	o	+
Visitor Convenience	+	+	+	-	-	-
Availability of Bus Queuing	o	o	+	o	+	o
Tour Marshalling Space	-	o	+	+	+	+
Impact on Neighborhood	+	+	+	o	o	o
First Cost	o	o	o	o	o	o
Operational Efficiency	-	-	+	+	+	+
ADA Accessibility	-	-	+	+	+	+

P.F.

21
6-10-03

ALEXANDRIA VISITORS CENTER REPORT

MAY 30, 2003

Parter International, Inc.

Powe-Jones Architects

EDAW, Inc.

Gorove/Slade Associates

Gallagher & Associates

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I. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. ASSIGNMENT

Parter International, Inc., with its team members EDAW, Gorove-Slade Associates, Gallagher & Associates and Powe.Jones Architects, was retained by the City of Alexandria, Virginia to provide an independent and objective analysis, concerning a potential new Visitors Center for the City. The resulting study and assessment is intended to conclude first, whether a new visitor center is warranted and second, if it is warranted, where it might be placed, with the least impact, on the citizens of Alexandria and the most positive influence on local tourism.

B. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Alexandria seeks to take advantage of its rich history to enhance the experience of residents and visitors and encourage them to enjoy the shopping, dining and cultural attractions of Alexandria and to reach a deeper understanding of the City. One way to accomplish this is with a new or improved Visitors Center that can encourage tourists to enhance and extend their stay, return again and act as goodwill ambassadors by telling family, friends and colleagues of their experiences in Alexandria. Visitors Centers should also be a resource for residents to plan family events, and learn more about opportunities for activities in the City.

Tourism in Alexandria has been severely affected recently by the confluence of the downturn in the economy, the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, the anthrax scare, and the sniper killings this past winter. As a result, citizens and government officials, always aware of the importance of tourism to the economic well being of Alexandria, have a heightened interest in finding ways to improve the City's competitiveness as a tourism destination.

With respect to this report, the consultant had the goal of insuring that local stakeholders were partners in the process

C. TEAM MEMBERS

Parter International, Inc. assembled a team with substantial expertise in tourism, visitor and market analysis, urban planning, public facility and visitor center planning and design, and transportation planning. Alan Parter supervised the project and the following individuals worked on various aspects of the assignment:

Parter International, Inc.: an international business-consulting firm specializing in tourism strategic planning located in New York City.

Alan S. Parter, President
William DeVane Logue, Project Manager
Providence Calderon, Associate

EDAW: an international urban planning, landscape architecture and environmental design firm with an office in Alexandria.

Paul Moyer, Principal
Amit Prothi, Associate

Gorove-Slade Associates: a transportation planning firm with offices in Alexandria and Washington, DC.

Robert Kuhns, AICP, Principal Associate & Director of Planning Services
Kerri Yap, Senior Associate

Gallagher & Associates: a firm offering museum planning, exhibition design, environmental graphics and wayfinding services based in Bethesda, Maryland.

Patrick Gallagher, Principal
Randy Anderson, Principal
Terry Healy, Principal

Powe.Jones Architects: a regional architecture and urban design practice focused on the National Capitol Region

Gregory Powe, AIA, Managing Principal
Michael D. Jones, AIA, Design Principal

D. NATIONAL & LOCAL TOURISM TRENDS

It is useful as background for the findings and recommendations of this report, to be aware of the recent trends in tourism as they relate to Alexandria.

1. The Strength of Tourism

For most of the 1990's there was impressive growth in tourism throughout the US. Through 2000 and into early 2001 projections for continued growth remained optimistic. Many US destinations were reaping the economic benefits of investing in and marketing their tourism product. Starting in 2001 the growth of tourism began to slow down, reflecting the impact of the weakened economy. Then with the tragic events of 9/11, the tourism industry was dealt a powerful blow. Air travel and the destinations that

depended upon it were hit the hardest but the repercussions were deep and widespread.

The decline in tourism hit Alexandria particularly hard because of the confluence of a number of events. The weakened economy, the 9/11 tragedy at the Pentagon, the temporary closing of Reagan National Airport, the anthrax scare, and the sniper killings all contributed to keeping potential tourists away. ACVA reports and City tax receipts clearly demonstrate the reduction in tax revenues from the hotel and restaurant industries. As a result, local residents, businesses and government have seen, first-hand, how important tourism is to the City's economy.

Predictions are that the general tourism recovery in the US will be slow and that travel is expected to remain flat. Pleasure trips are up 0.5-1% over last winter and are expected to increase 1-2% at best. The war with Iraq and the resulting concerns over terrorism in the Washington, DC area are expected to have a further dampening effect in the region. The Virginia Tourism Corporation web site reports that the national "Traveler Sentiment Index" for the 4th quarter of 2002 is down 4.5% from the 3rd quarter of 2002. The Traveler Sentiment Index measures general consumer interest in pleasure travel. From a state perspective, the Virginia Department of Taxation shows lodging sales through the 3rd quarter of 2002 to be down 1% from the same 9-month period in 2001. Nonetheless, tourism will eventually rebound and continue to be an important contribution to the regional and local economy.

2. Drive Market

On the positive side of the ledger, Alexandria's location in the middle of a large "drive market" allows for the closer to home, automobile, 1-2 day trip, which is one of the few current moderate tourism growth areas; 55% of the entire US population is within 500 miles of Virginia. Weekend travel and short trips, which became more common in the last decade, continue to grow in popularity. Recent national statistics concerning overnight stays reflect this trend.

The percentages of tourists nationally that stay overnight are:

No nights.....	17%
1-2 nights.....	38%
3-6 nights.....	31%
7 or more nights.....	14%

3. Cultural & Heritage Tourism

In addition, Alexandria is attractive to one of the faster growing segments of the tourism market, cultural and heritage tourists. This category of tourist now represents one out of five of all US person trips. Furthermore, the trips of this type of tourist last longer, and the cultural/heritage tourist spends more, and more often includes a stay at a hotel.

4. ACVA Research

As stated in the Request for Proposals, Alexandria attracts approximately 1.5 million visitors a year. The Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association (ACVA) commissioned a Visitor Profile Study in 2002. Conducted by NFO Plog Research, Wave 1 covered the period March – August 2002; and Wave 2 covered the period September 2002 – February 2003. There was a relatively small participation in this survey, which was distributed to tourists through hotels and attractions. A total of 952 questionnaires were returned.

Some of the findings are:

- Alexandria tourists have a higher median income than the national average – \$77,000 vs. \$48,500
- Only 14% travel with children vs. the national average of 37%
- There is considerable repeat business: 62% have been to Alexandria before.
- Word-of-mouth from friends and family dominates as the source for discovering Alexandria as a tourist destination – 42-52% of the tourists, depending upon category, first heard about Alexandria that way.
- Only 3-4% overnight tourists learned about Alexandria through advertisements, while 12% of the day-trippers were introduced to Alexandria by advertising.
- Approximately 1 out of 14 visitors viewed the web site prior to their trip
- Alexandria's proximity to Mt. Vernon and Washington, DC is a big influence, especially with first-time visitors
- 59% of the visitors stay for at least two days
- On a list of 12 activities that tourists to Alexandria recommend, the Visitor Center was 12th, with only 3% recommending it.
- **Nine out of 10 visitors give Alexandria the highest satisfaction rating allowed.**

5. Travel Planning – National Trends

The use of the Internet for travel planning has expanded dramatically in the United States and elsewhere and needs to become an increasingly important part of every destinations tourism marketing efforts. In 1997 in the United States – 12 million people went online to help plan their trips. In only five years, by 2002, the number had increased to 64 million. 39 million of these actually made tourism related bookings on line with the following booking data:

77% booked airline tickets
57% booked accommodations
25% booked cultural events
21% booked travel packages
30% reported spending more than \$2,500 in the past year on travel booked online

II. METHODOLOGY

II. METHODOLOGY

A. SCOPE

The scope of work for this assignment delineated four main responsibilities:

- Gather information relating to the need for, interest in, and potential use of a new Visitors Center
- Develop mission and program options for the Visitors Center
- Identify and analyze potential sites
- Make recommendations

The Parter International Team began its work in September 2002 at a City Hall meeting with Alexandria officials involved with the Visitor Center assignment. There was a discussion of the goals and objectives and the protocols and procedures to follow. The participants considered who should be interviewed for the study, what information was needed and where it could be found, and the type of questions that should be asked in the interviews.

It was the responsibility of the consultant to collect information from both primary and secondary sources.

1. Secondary Research

The Parter International team first gathered and reviewed material from existing sources. This included reports and studies, attendance figures, maps, marketing materials, government regulations, etc. The considerable number of materials reviewed appears in Appendix A, Reference Materials. In addition, we researched numerous web sites that were relevant to this assignment.

2. Primary Research

Primary research conducted for the report included interviews, site visits, surveys, and focus groups.

a. Interviews

A key ingredient in the preparation of this study was the conducting of numerous in depth, personal interviews and meetings with individuals who had first hand knowledge and insights of tourism related matters in Alexandria and competing destinations.

i. Locals

More than 40 meetings or interview sessions were conducted with more than 30 locals. The group consisted of government officials, civic leaders, private sector businesspeople, agency and association representatives, members of the hospitality industry and staff of tourist attractions. The individuals who were interviewed were

chosen because we had identified them as people who were: knowledgeable about the attractions; tourism marketing and promotional efforts; the organizations involved in Alexandria tourism; political and civic issues; and visitor center issues. The interviews ranged from the Mayor to cab drivers and hotel concierges. In order to obtain frank and forthright information, we advised those interviewed that the information and opinions provided to us would not be individually attributed. A list of the individuals interviewed, and the dates of the interviews is set forth in Appendix B. It should be noted that attempts were made to speak with other individuals as well, but because of the short time frame we were unable to schedule certain interviews.

ii. Comparables

The Parter International Team identified a number of visitor centers in other cities for comparative purposes. We reviewed our files and records, prior consultations, and visits to Visitor Centers across the country. An Internet search was performed to update information and note changes in the marketing of visitor center facilities and services in recent years.

From these efforts, cities were selected as appropriate comparables, based on a variety of criteria and characteristics that would inform decision-making for Alexandria including: older historic areas; the relationship to the visitor domain; similar missions; use of local trolley and bus services to aid visitors; a mix of family and group tour visitors; and other aspects such as size, recent opening, or satellite facilities. The cities identified include Corning, New York; Charleston, South Carolina; Montgomery, Alabama; Newport, Rhode Island; and Easton, Pennsylvania.

Once the cities were identified, the managers and others involved in the operation or development of these facilities were interviewed by telephone concerning the location, development, services, operation, costs, visitation and transportation issues related to the visitor centers. The list of people interviewed in the comparable locations referred to above is found in Appendix C.

b. Site Visits

Members of the Parter International Team visited a variety of tourism related sites and traveled throughout the City. We visited attractions, walked and drove through and around the visitor domain, and went to all the potential visitor center locations recommended by interviewees, and others that our team members determined might have potential. We visited many of the sites numerous times to obtain a thorough understanding of Alexandria's tourism product and infrastructure, and to determine the strengths and weaknesses of sites as potential locations for a new Visitors Center.

At the initiation of the project several team members entered Alexandria from the perspective of a visitor using the main routes and methods apparent on travel maps and guides and according to highway, METRO and other directional signage. We noted the general characteristics of these routes. Routes were traveled in our personal cars and occasionally by taxi and public transportation.

From our personal knowledge, information available on the Internet and information provided in the course of interviews, we confirmed the core visitor domain and its relationship to routes and attractions. The team then considered potential visitor center locations with respect to site criteria and toured the sites by car and, for most sites, also on foot. In each instance we observed the site itself, the general context, the surrounding neighborhood, and the travel access points for the site.

As information evolved and our understanding deepened about how, where and why visitors come to Alexandria and about the issues raised by the civic and business communities, we reached conclusions about the suitability of various general locations. These are recorded below in our findings and recommendations.

c. Surveys

There are three different surveys, which have been used to help us understand the tourism environment in Alexandria. The ACVA Plog study referred to earlier in the National & Local Trends section helped us understand the tourists who visit Alexandria. The Parter International Team developed the other two surveys.

i. Bus Survey

The Parter International team developed a four page, 46-question survey directed at Bus Tour Operators in the region. It is attached as Appendix D. The objective was to learn which bus companies are bringing groups to Alexandria, what routes they are taking and where they are parking, their thoughts and ideas about the current or proposed visitor center, and who their patrons are and what they do in Alexandria. A goal of this survey was to collect information relating to one of the citizenry's major concerns, bus and auto traffic in residential areas.

The survey was mailed from December 23-26, 2002 to more than 330 bus companies, together with a stamped envelope addressed to Parter International, Inc. As follow-up to the mailing 60 bus and tour companies who were identified as companies most likely to take groups to Alexandria were called on the phone. As a result of the phone calls and mailing we received 41 responses to the questionnaire. An Excel spreadsheet matrix was prepared with the answers to the various questions to illustrate the findings. The conclusions arrived at from this survey have been used in the

preparation of various sections of this report – from the SWOT analysis, to the transportation analysis, to the economic impact analysis. A list of the bus survey's key findings appears in Appendix E.

ii. Attractions

At the Parter International team's request, ACVA mailed a brief survey, drafted by Parter International, to more than 20 attractions to gather information on attendance and revenue. A copy of the Attractions Survey is attached as Appendix F. The rate of return for this survey was disappointing. Given the level and nature of the response, the usefulness of the information is limited. The information that we obtained from the responses has been incorporated into the general findings and SWOT analysis.

d. Focus Groups

In an attempt to obtain stakeholder participation and involvement and to gain further insights, the consultant conducted two focus groups. The meetings took place January 29th and 30th, 2003 at City Hall. The groups, both of which consisted of approximately 12 individuals, received a presentation from the consultants and then discussed the issues relevant to the group. The strengths and weaknesses of various site scenarios were discussed. Attached, as Appendix G, is the Agenda for the Focus Group Meetings, a list of participants for each meeting, and a copy of the slide presentation. The opinions expressed and the ideas offered by the focus group participants proved very helpful to the consultants and many of them have been incorporated into this report.

3. Regular Meetings with Local Government Officials

An important part of the process was the regular meetings between the consultants and the local government officials. These meetings, which took place at a minimum of once a month, provided an opportunity for discussion of the team's findings and recommendations and allowed the officials to react and provide direction. Most often the discussions were based on documents prepared for the meetings by the consultants. Questions were answered, ideas were discussed and debated, and future activities were clarified.

On April 22, 2003, the consultants made a presentation at a working session of the Alexandria City Council. On May 12, 2003, a similar presentation work session with the Boards of ACVA and the Alexandria Hotel Association was also held. At both meetings other interested members of the public and city staff attended.

SWOT ANALYSIS – SUMMARY (explanatory text follows)

<i>STRENGTHS</i>	<i>WEAKNESSES</i>	<i>OPPORTUNITIES</i>	<i>THREATS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-Defined Visitor Domain • Access to Large Regional Market • Condition of Public Environment • Unique Product • Alexandria is Attractive to the Cultural & Heritage Tourist • Tourist Satisfaction • Increasing Realization of the Value Tourism Provides the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor and Tourism Data and Research with Respect to Day-Trippers • Signage • Parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Visitors Center • Increased Tourism Marketing • Support for Tourism • Maximize Riverfront Potential • Partnerships • Partnering with Washington, DC and Mt. Vernon • Moving Tourists Beyond Old Town • Nurture Relationship with Motorcoach Operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts between tourism activities and residential neighborhoods • Change • Traffic Congestion • Terrorism • Competition from Other Localities

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III. SWOT ANALYSIS

III. SWOT ANALYSIS -- Discussion

In order to appreciate the impact of a Visitors Center on Alexandria and to determine the type and location of the building housing such a facility, it is essential to understand the overall, local, tourism milieu. By assessing and evaluating the tourism attractions, infrastructure, marketing, competitive destinations, governmental support, organizational capability, and civic attitudes, we are better able to understand the environment that affects our recommendations.

The analysis that follows is organized as a "SWOT" (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Assessment. Its purpose is to highlight those issues that help describe the tourism situation in Alexandria and most directly impact the decisions that need to be made.

All aspects of the information gathering; reviewing materials, site visits, surveys, and especially the interviews and focus groups provided us with the background necessary to arrive at the conclusions set forth in the SWOT Assessment.

A. STRENGTHS

- **Well-Defined Visitor Domain**

The center of gravity or focal point of tourism in Alexandria is to be found within the area generally bordered by Duke, Queen, and Washington Streets and the Potomac River. This is the primary Visitor Domain and comprises parts of Old Town. The Visitor Domain is the area where the concentration and critical mass of tourism product and visitation occur within a city or destination area. It is the area in which the city should invest scarce resources to assure that the area works effectively for local residents and visitors alike. While Alexandria has a number of visitor districts which possess popular attractions, restaurants, hotels and shops, the vast majority of the tourists spend the bulk of their time in the Visitor Domain area of "Old Town" and it is Old Town that potential tourists think of or are referred to when considering Alexandria as a tourist destination.

- **Access to Large Regional Market**

Alexandria's location in the larger Mid-Atlantic region, with its population of approximately 50 million people, provides a substantial drive time market. In addition, its proximity to Washington, DC and its easy accessibility from DC by Metro provides for sizeable visitation that is neither automobile nor bus dependent. *This excellent location and generally good access to the City in general and the Visitor Domain in particular is counterbalanced by limited directional signage and relatively poor highlighting of the availability of parking.*

- **Condition of Public Environment**

One of the most important factors in the ability of city destinations to attract tourists is the perception that potential tourists have of its safety and cleanliness. Alexandria scores high marks on both these categories.

- **Unique Product**

Possessing a unique tourism product is, for a destination, an extremely valuable and highly unusual occurrence. Alexandria's Old Town, with its original, not replica, architecture and historic sites in close proximity to one another and to a wide variety of restaurants and shopping, will continue to make it a destination that can distinguish itself from the pack. It is an especially good pedestrian experience.

- **Alexandria is Attractive to the Cultural & Heritage Tourist**

Cultural and heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry with over 91 million cultural pleasure trips taken by US residents annually. In addition the cultural & heritage traveler tends to spend more than other tourists. Alexandria's attractions and its image are attractive to and popular with cultural & heritage tourists.

- **Tourist Satisfaction**

The recent ALVA Plog Survey concluded that 9 out of 10 visitors give Alexandria the highest satisfaction rating. This means that Alexandria delivers on its tourist's expectations, which is critical in attracting tourists by "word of mouth" the most important and least expensive source of tourism promotion. Of equal importance is that the high satisfaction rating is a major reason Alexandria is able to attract the important return visitor.

- **Increasing Realization of the Value Tourism Provides the City**

While the past two years have been hard on Alexandria tourism, it has resulted in a far greater understanding by the local residents, businesses and government of the economic and image value of tourism to their city. This is certain to help ensure tourism's greater support, success, and sustainability. This is already expressing itself in the local government's interest and support for assisting the local tourism industry and in the general appreciation expressed for the work of the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association.

B. WEAKNESSES

- **Visitor and Tourism Data and Research – With Respect to Day- Trippers**

The Alexandria day-tripper visitor is not well understood. The little bit that we know from Alexandria research is that we don't know very much about the day-trip visitor, what he/she wants or expects or what the real impacts of

tourism are. There is limited knowledge of who is coming, why they are coming, how they are coming, and what induces them to return. Improved knowledge of this type of visitor is essential if Alexandria is to fine tune its product, provide an outstanding experience for its visitor, and make informed marketing decisions. The importance of increasing tourism to Alexandria has reached the stage where greater investment in appropriate research needs to be made.

- **Signage**

Both thematic or attraction-specific signage and wayfinding signage in Alexandria need to be improved. Currently thematic and attraction-specific signage provides insufficient information on the breadth of cultural and heritage offerings in the city. There is not enough interpretive signage and what exists is too cryptic. Signs are also lacking for certain attractions. As a result, tourists don't always know what sites might interest them, and the tourists' time is shorter than it could be with better signage.

Access to Alexandria is quite good for both automobile and public transportation. The weakness lies in the dearth and consistency of effective vehicular and pedestrian directional or wayfinding signage. Tourists need to know the best routes to attractions and parking, and how far (miles, portions of miles, or blocks) a particular destination is from its present position.

- **Parking**

Local residents and businesses complain about the lack of convenient parking in and around the Visitor Domain. One might then assume (although we were unable to find research or data on the issue beyond an extremely small sampling in the Plog study) that tourists also have this complaint. One could also assume that visitors who are thwarted in finding easily accessible parking are impacted by strict on-street regulation and enforcement of short-term parking and may, as a result, leave Alexandria with negative feelings. We also found by personal observation that parking at individual attractions, whether in the Visitor Domain or elsewhere in Alexandria, is often inconvenient and as a result is limiting visitation by bus groups and may also be affecting tourists coming by auto.

C. OPPORTUNITIES

- **New Visitors Center**

Ramsay House, the current Visitors Center, does not adequately service the traveler to Alexandria or encourage and educate the tourist to partake in the many offerings available in the city. It is not particularly welcoming or inviting and in its current state it is not user friendly. Improving, or possibly

relocating the Visitors Center, would be beneficial to the tourism efforts of the city.

- **Increased Tourism Marketing**

The marketing landscape is littered with failed companies, products and destinations that were unable or unwilling to provide adequate and consistent promotional funding. There are few products that have proven to be consistently successful over a long period of time that were insufficiently or erratically funded. Destination marketing is becoming more and more spirited. In order to compete successfully, it is essential that Alexandria commit to a tourism-marketing program with both resources and continuity that will achieve awareness among its target audience of potential visitors. Alexandria is on the right track; ACVA's budget, much of which is devoted to marketing, increased from \$400,000 to \$1.6 million over the past few years. Understanding the appropriate target audiences and analyzing the marketing effectiveness through research together with competitive funding leads will help ensure the marketing effectiveness.

- **Support for Tourism**

There is a high level of frustration that tourism to Alexandria has been so adversely affected by events out of its control. Stakeholders in Alexandria want to see activity relating to the tourism industry because they have come to realize its positive impact on the economic well being of the city. There is a strong desire for well-conceived activity that will help bring tourists to Alexandria, but not harm the quality of life for the residents.

- **Maximize Riverfront Potential**

The Potomac River has historically been an important resource for Alexandria and has the potential to be a critical ingredient in the revitalization of the city's tourism product. The Torpedo Factory and the river cruises can act as an important anchor for the area but more must be done with the shoreline and vacant buildings at the foot of King Street. With thoughtful strategic urban planning, this location can be a key component of tourism development while at the same time improving the image of the city and the quality of life for the local residents. While the Torpedo Factory facility is a well utilized facility, the adjacent Food Court is an under utilized asset.

- **Partnerships**

Tourism is regional, it is not affected by city or state borders. Cooperation among institutions and marketing organizations can achieve economies of scale, can present a unified front (i.e. branding), and can expand the type and quantity of product offerings to be marketed, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the city to a wider traveling public. ACVA has begun to try

to develop these relationships but there is considerable room for increased cooperation.

- **Partnering with Washington DC and Mt. Vernon**

Since they share so many visitors, Washington, DC and Alexandria should be finding ways to partner in a more vigorous manner. ACVA has been a leader in this area but Washington, DC needs to recognize the importance of partnering with its neighbors. Joint ticketing, joint programming, transportation linkages, cooperative marketing campaigns, sharing best practices, and increased networking are but a few ways to cooperate that should continue to be pursued.

- **Moving Tourists Beyond Old Town**

While Old Town is a well-known attraction and a magnet for the tourist to Alexandria, little is known about the attractions in Alexandria beyond this Visitor Domain. Efforts need to be made to inform tourists of these attractions (such as Mt. Vernon Avenue), develop linkages from Old Town, and assist the tourist in accessing these attractions.

- **Nurture Relationship with Motorcoach Tours**

Day-trippers and overnight tours can have a valuable economic impact on tourism to Alexandria. Efforts need to be made to reach out to, educate, and assist motorcoach operators. Clearly defined parking and drop off areas, services for bus drivers and improved communications will help attract more tours and also help control the impact on the neighborhoods.

D. THREATS

- **Conflicts between Tourism Activities and Residential Neighborhoods**

The issues related to tourism development can be quite controversial, especially in areas where there is little room for physical growth. In Alexandria, where community involvement is the norm, it is essential that all decisions be made with sensitivity and that the stakeholders be part of the process of change. Tourism development, when done successfully, has as positive an impact on local residents as well as the visiting tourist.

- **Change**

The travel and tourism industry is one of rapid change. New destinations are invented or discovered, and new products proliferate on an ever-escalating basis. It is important to marry the historic and traditional approach of a heritage destination such as Old Town with new initiatives. Alexandria must

be sure in terms of tourism development to live up to its own description in the ACVA web site: "Alexandria is unique – an historic place that keeps pace with the modern world." The development of the Torpedo Factory is a good example of creative growth. With a number of vacant buildings at Union and King, a weak Visitor Center, and the underutilization of the shoreline, it is imperative that Alexandria be organizationally equipped to embrace and manage change in its travel and tourism industry.

- **Traffic Congestion**

Residents complain about rush hour and tourism related traffic congestion in Alexandria. Traffic is indeed a major issue and concern in Alexandria and throughout Northern Virginia. Observing King Street between the King Street Metro Station and City Hall, a corridor that has potential for increased tourism related development, confirms that traffic movement can be slow enough to adversely impact tourism. Travelers on weekends searching for on-street parking add to congestion on King Street. Expansion of bus stops, review of parking garage rates and hours, and other remedies need to be studied.

- **Terrorism**

The threat of terrorism, or the perceived threat of it by tourists, in Washington DC will continue to adversely impact tourism to Alexandria.

- **Competition from Other Localities**

Tourism destinations throughout the world are devoting funds to new and enhanced product and marketing. To remain competitive, Alexandria must devote new ideas and resources to its tourism related activities.

IV. ADDITIONAL GENERAL FINDINGS

IV. ADDITIONAL GENERAL FINDINGS

While primary findings have been incorporated in the SWOT analysis in the preceding section, there are a number of additional observations and general findings of which the reader should be aware in understanding the recommendations made in this report.

- ACVA statistics, our bus tour survey, the attractions survey, and our interviews all confirm that in the vast majority of cases Alexandria is not the primary destination but a secondary destination to Washington, DC.
- The typical Alexandria visitor is very similar to the typical Mt. Vernon visitor and the trips are often combined.
- The Washington, DC visitor offers one of the larger potential markets for increasing Alexandria tourism for visits to and/or hotel stays in Alexandria.
- Residents recognize that tourism is critical to the economic well being of Alexandria but at the same time they feel inconvenienced by it. Their major concern is traffic congestion.
- Alexandria stakeholders believe that an improved Visitors Center is important to the tourist experience and image of Alexandria.
- There is a realization that to serve the Alexandria tourist, it is important that a Visitors Center or visitor services physically be located in the Visitor Domain.
- A number of stakeholders believe that locating a Visitors Center outside of Old Town will resolve parking and congestion issues for the Old Town area.
- The bus survey indicates that motorcoach companies are not currently using the Ramsay House visitor center as a resource.
- The majority of motorcoach tours stop in Alexandria for three hours or less. (Therefore, it is essential to ensure that as much time as possible is spent in visitor activities to obtain the maximum economic impact.)
- ACVA's efforts and leadership are appreciated and respected by Alexandria stakeholders.
- The ACVA budget has been increased from \$450k in 1999 to \$1.6 million in 2002.
- There has been a consistent marketing campaign, the "Fun Side of the Potomac", since 1997.
- The proportional increase in traffic related to tourism is modest compared to other sources of traffic in spite of the fact that a high percentage of visitors arrive by car. (There are a number of reasons for this. Most visitors arrive on weekends and holidays and those traveling on weekdays have the flexibility to avoid commute times.)
- With more than 130 civic organizations in the City, the level of civic and political involvement on tourism and development is higher than in most other municipalities.
- It is the general consensus of those involved in Alexandria tourism promotions and development that the Commonwealth of Virginia is not now and will not in the near future be a tourism funding source for Alexandria.

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V. COMPARABLES

V. COMPARABLES

Visitors Centers staffs in five other municipalities were interviewed to provide insight and comparative information for purposes of this study. These five Visitors Centers are briefly described below. A chart comparing various features and operation issues follows.

A. CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Charleston Visitors Center is housed in a renovated train warehouse. The Center is a few blocks from the intersection of the two main highways into the City. Signage to the Center is very clear. The Visitor Center acts as the gateway to the historic area of Charleston. Adjacent to the Center is a large parking garage and a covered bus shed. Motorcoach tour buses are strictly limited from the historic area. Shuttle services take visitors from the Visitors Center into the historic area.

The Visitors Center has approximately 13,000 square feet of public space and serves about 1 million people per year. Staff reports that it becomes crowded at times. A shaded porch with signs in multiple languages welcomes visitors. On entry a greeter personalizes the welcome. A diorama set under glass in the floor depicts the peninsula portion of the city. Overhead graphics show images of the waterfront, currently and in the colonial era. Restrooms are off this entry space. The next space contains maps, guides, brochures and electronic kiosks and a nine- screen video wall showing a 3-minute video on a day in the life of Charleston. In the next room is a seating area, cueing space and visitor services desk where staff at six windows answer questions, plan trips/itineraries, and sell maps, tours and tickets. Another set of restrooms is available and then a replica Charleston House serves as a setting for displays and craft demonstrations. A sales area sells shirts and souvenirs and tickets to a 20-minute presentation "Forever Charleston."

The City owns and operates the building, sales area and theater presentation. The CVB operates the service desk. Staff for both the City and CVB is a mix of volunteers and paid staff. Sales revenue from commissions at the service desk average \$40-50,000 annually. The Visitors Center and bus shed are rented for festivals and events. (See Exhibit 1, which follows for floor plan.)

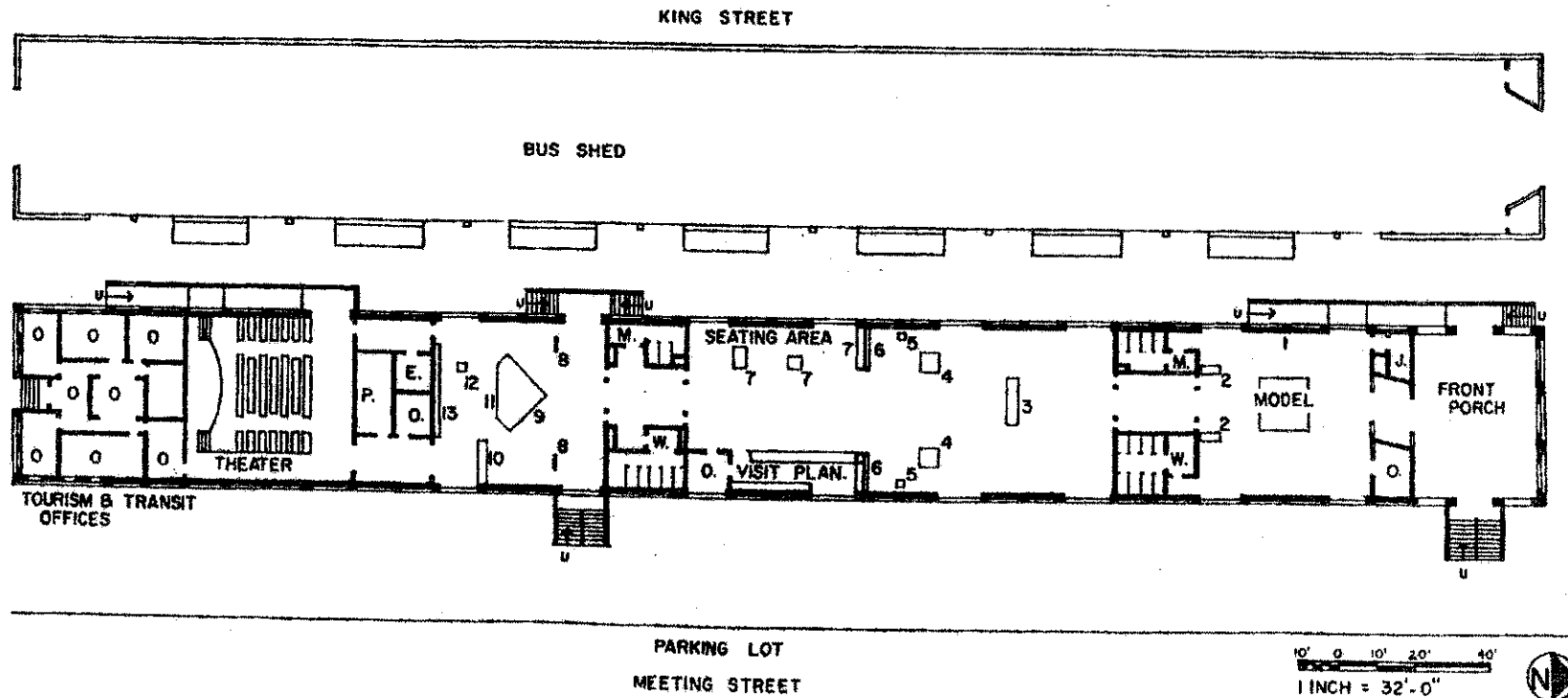
B. MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

The Montgomery, Alabama Visitors Center is housed in the former railroad station in the heart of Montgomery. The Center contains approximately 4,000 square feet of public space plus a small gift shop and a theater with benches for 70 people. A small museum for Maxwell Air Force Base is entered from the center. Office space is rented elsewhere in the building. Signage on the interstate clearly directs travelers to the Visitors Center. There is a parking lot adjacent to the building and a garage deck is being built. Spaces for 4-8 buses are available

Charleston

VISITOR CENTER

375 Meeting Street • Charleston, South Carolina 29403 • (803) 724-7474 • FAX (803) 720-3999



- I. MAINTENANCE CLOSET
- O. OFFICE
- M. MEN'S RESTROOM
- W. WOMEN'S RESTROOM
- E. ELECTRICAL ROOM
- P. 'FOREVER CHARLESTON' PROJECTION BOOTH
- U. UP

- 8. CITY MAP W/PARKING LOT INFORMATION
- 9. REPLICA OF SINGLE HOUSE PORCH
- 10. 'FOREVER CHARLESTON' DISPLAY COUNTER
- 11. STEREOSCOPE VIEWS
- 12. CAROLOPOLIS AWARD CASE
- 13. CHARLESTON THEN & NOW PHOTOS

- 1. BATIK WALL HANGING OF CHARLESTON COASTLINE
- 2. SCENES OF CHARLESTON
- 3. WELCOME WALL PRESENTATION
- 4. VISITOR MAP & GUIDES KIOSK
- 5. COMPUTER, KIOSKS & TELEPHONES
- 6. BROCHURE RACKS
- 7. CHARLESTON MUSEUM DISPLAY CASES

nearby. The attractions in the area are well suited for pick-up and drop-off of buses at their sites. Two trolley routes stop near the Visitors Center and circulate through downtown to most attractions.

Visitors may enter from either side of the building. An information desk is in the center of the space, with literature racks on either side of the desk. Panels, displays and electronic kiosks are themed to historical periods (Civil War, Reconstruction, Civil Rights), historical attractions (memorials, downtown, governors mansion), and visitor interests (lodging, dining, entertainment, shopping, etc.). There are trip planning workstations and interactive areas. Many attractions in the area are free. A formal ticketing and reservations system is not in place but staff will make calls to assist visitors.

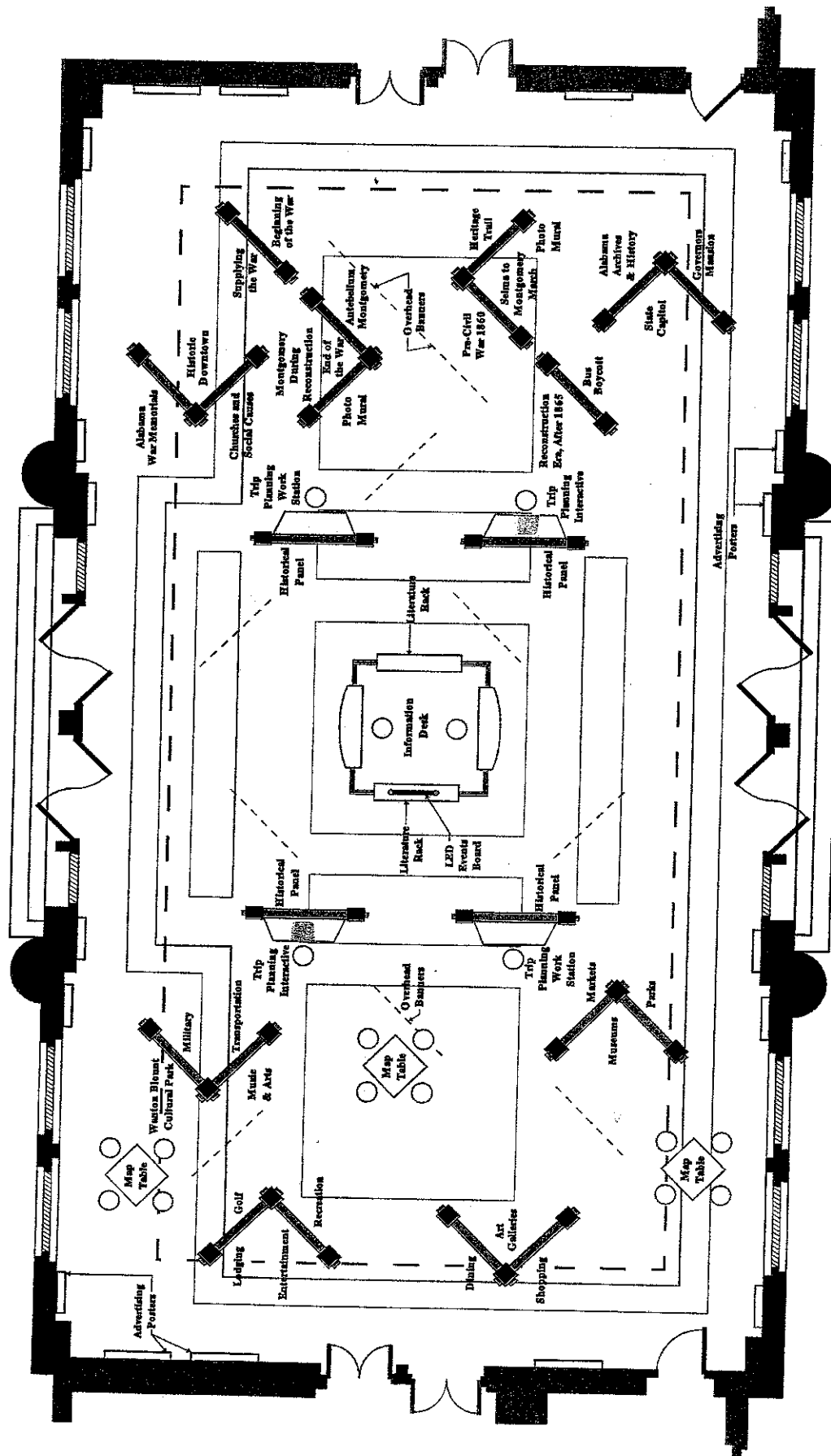
Annual visitation is approximately 40-50,000 people. A staff of 12, both full and part time assists visitors. Four are on duty at one time. The Visitors Center, and a train shed, may be rented for events and functions. (See Exhibit 2, which follows for floor plan.)

C. CORNING, NEW YORK

The Corning, New York Visitors Center is located on Corning's Main Street about three miles from the interstate. It is in the middle of town in a renovated historic hotel building and occupies approximately 1,700 square feet. The building has a capacity of 100 but starts to feel crowded at about 70 people. In 2001, 65,000 people stopped at the center and in 2002, there were 55,000 who stopped at the center. The Internet site attracts about 20,000 user sessions per month. The space is open with a desk in the center staffed by 2-3 people. The staff assists with questions and planning and sells tickets through Ticketmaster. There is seating available and displays and exhibits show pictures, artifacts, models and information on Corning and artwork from a local gallery. Two large wall maps at different scales show the area. They are the same maps that are available in the Visitor Guide. The main attraction in the area is the Corning Glassworks and Museum and the Rockwell Museum.

A forty-minute walking tour leaves from the Center and costs \$5. A shuttle with a 15-minute loop circulates through town. A sales area sells t-shirts, mugs, glass medallions, and souvenirs. A visitor services representative meets buses down the street. Parking is available on street with a two-hour limit and a garage behind the Center offers parking for \$2 per day. A shuttle bus service runs from town to the museums and drops off and picks up visitors along the way.

The Visitors Center was developed as part of a consensus building and planning process related to the Glassworks Museum and other development in the region.



Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

Visitor Center Floor Plan - Montgomery Alabama Chamber of Commerce
 Salsinger & Associates

Additional visitor services representatives assist visitors by strolling around town during the busiest days and at two portable satellite booths under umbrellas. Overall visitation to Newport is estimated at 3 million with 1 million of those visitors reportedly using the center. Approximately 15% of visitors arrive by motorcoach.

Panels, murals, maps and displays orient visitors to the area and show attractions and places of interest. Special events are showcased in the center through a "Made in Newport" program that changes on a weekly basis. Staff assists with questions and sells tickets for transportation and attractions. A reservation phone line is available and a store sells gifts and souvenirs.

A trolley service circulates every 20 minutes. Passes are available for the day for \$5. Parking at the garage next door is discounted with a trolley pass.

E. EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Visitors Center at Two Rivers Landing is at the heart of a revitalized downtown and in the same building as the Crayola Factory Museum and the National Canal Museum, which is part of the National Heritage Corridor. The Visitors Center is approximately 3,000 square feet and was designed in 1996. It acts as the Visitors Center for the National Heritage Corridor and the Easton area. The Canal Museum and Crayola Factory receive about 350,000 visitors per year and most pass through the Visitors Center on the first floor to reach these paid attractions on the second through fourth floors.

The Visitors Center contains exhibits and dioramas. A model of Easton is set under plexiglass in the floor, video screens show attractions and a calendar of events is being developed, literature and maps are available and displays and artifacts focus on the local college, immigrant history, and the industrial and transportation history of the area. Much of the literature and maps promote attractions and sites in the area. The Visitors Center is staffed in the busy summer months and a trolley replica booth has additional staff and information outside during the summer.

A shuttle bus takes people out to a canal boat tour priced in combination with the museums at \$16 for an adult and \$14 for a child. Horse and buggy rides are available. A garage with 500 spaces is nearby at the rate of \$2 per hour with a daily maximum of \$10.

Visitors Center	Size/Visitation	Staffing & Costs	Shuttle/Bus Services	Parking
Charleston, South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13,000 Square feet • 1 million visitors/year • Near highways at entrance to historic area • Opened approx 1989 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVB 5 full time, 21 part time & 6 volunteers; City approx. 9 fulltime • CVB operating expense \$500,000 • City maintains building, operates film and gift shop, handles rentals 	Special trolley-like service (\$1 fare) available to visitor center, 7 days a week, 6 AM to 12 AM. One day DASH pass is available (\$3). Other passes, including three-day passes (\$7) and thirty-one-day passes (\$22) are also available. All passes can be purchased at the Visitors Center.	<p>One hour of free parking available when one-day DASH pass is turned in to parking attendant. Parking is limited in historic Charleston.</p> <p>Parking for motorcoaches. Motorcoaches limited access to peninsula.</p>
Montgomery, Alabama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,000 square feet plus theater and gift area • 40-50,000 visitors/year • Center of historic downtown • Opened 2001/2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 staff full and part time • Annual operating cost and development cost are being updated 	Replica trolleys are available to provide supplemental public transportation services for tourists. One-day passes are available for \$1 or \$0.25 per route on each boarding. Two routes circulate the downtown area at 20-minute intervals between 9 AM and 6 PM Monday through Saturday. Passes can be purchased at the Visitor Center. During seasonal declines, only one vehicle circulates with one vehicle providing 40-minute service intervals. Other fixed route service is available at a \$1 fare.	Public parking is primarily available at parking meters downtown, however, parking garages are planned and under construction to address deficiencies in parking downtown. A new intermodal transit center is funded and planned for construction within the next 2 years. The building will be a transfer center for the transit system and accommodate buses and 500 – 800 parking spaces.
Corning, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,700 Square feet • 55-65,000 visitors/year • Middle of 5 block main street about 3 miles from interstate • Opened 2001 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 full-time equivalent staff plus additional volunteers • Annual operating cost \$160,000 (\$95,000 labor) • CVB share of development cost \$220,000 for FFE, soft costs and space renovation) 	Limited fixed route bus service is available: six buses.	On-street metered spaces available. Garage parking \$2/day

Newport, Rhode Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,000 square feet of public space • 1,000,000 visitors/ year • In historic area • Opened 1988 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 full time and 15 part time employees (20 additional employees at CVB) • Operating expense \$600,000 	From Memorial Day to Columbus Day, the local transit system enhances its regular service with trolley service offering all day passes for individuals (\$5) and families (\$10). Buses and trolleys are available at the Visitors Center.	<p>All day parking at Visitors Center is available for \$1 when riding public transportation. One half hour of free parking is available with validation between hours of 9 AM-5 PM at adjacent public parking garage.</p> <p>Loading zone for motorcoaches, 15 spaces nearby.</p>
Easton, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,000 square feet of public space • Approximately 350,000 visitors/ year • Located as entrance to major attraction • Opened in 1996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Full-time equivalent in season, self service in off-season • Labor costs under \$10,000/year • Initial exhibit expense \$300,000 refurbished several times since 	Regular fixed route bus services available at \$1.35 per trip. Day passes available at \$2 per day.	Parking is available for fee at municipal parking garage across from center. On street metered parking is also available.
Alexandria, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 square feet of public space plus restrooms • 115,000 visitors/ year • In historic area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 full time and 13 part-time staff • CVB operating expense approximately \$117,000 plus city maintenance of building 	Regular daily bus routes available. Fares are \$1 or \$0.25 with transfer from Metrorail. On weekends there is free shuttle bus services (<i>DASH About</i>) to/from visitor center and Metrorail station.	On street 2 hours parking with and without meters within 5 minute walking distance of visitor center. Off street public parking available at 10 locations within a 5-minute walking distance. Some offer discounted rates on weekends.

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VI. VISITORS CENTER

VI. VISITORS CENTER

In addition to gathering general tourism and transportation information, the Parter Team, gathered information about the existing Ramsay House Visitors Center and about the need for an enhanced or new Visitors Center in Alexandria. The Team made no assumptions about appropriate locations for the Visitors Center at an early stage in information gathering. City leadership indicated no preference as to either general or specific locations.

Determining an appropriate site is dependent on a variety of factors including the nature and strength of the Visitor Domain, types of visitors and their preferred activities, visitors' modes of transportation, the geographic and access characteristics of the area, and the desired goals and mission of the Visitor Center.

A. ALEXANDRIA OVERVIEW

1. Land Use / Visitor Attractions

The City of Alexandria is generally bounded by I-395 on the north, I-495 on the south and the Potomac River on the east. The main commercial portions of the City are along the two major highways, and along the major corridors - Route 1, King Street, Duke Street and Washington Street. The residential development occurs throughout the City, in some cases closely integrated with the commercial uses such as in Old Town or along Mt Vernon Avenue and in others as separate subdivisions. The Visitor Attractions are focused primarily in the eastern half of the City with many of them in the Old Town area (see Exhibit 3).

Based on information from the Funsided.com website and site reconnaissance, we have identified twenty-two key attractions in the City of Alexandria and three key attractions south of the City. As shown on Exhibit 3, the attractions are focused east of the Metrorail line with only two noted west of the Metrorail line (George Washington Masonic Temple and Fort Ward Park).

2. The King Street Corridor

As noted in the previous section, the King Street Corridor in Old Town is one of the major commercial corridors within Alexandria. In addition this corridor links the King Street Metro Station with the Alexandria waterfront and has a strong and generally continuous commercial frontage between these two anchors. In many ways, King Street is the pedestrian oriented "main street" of Old Town.

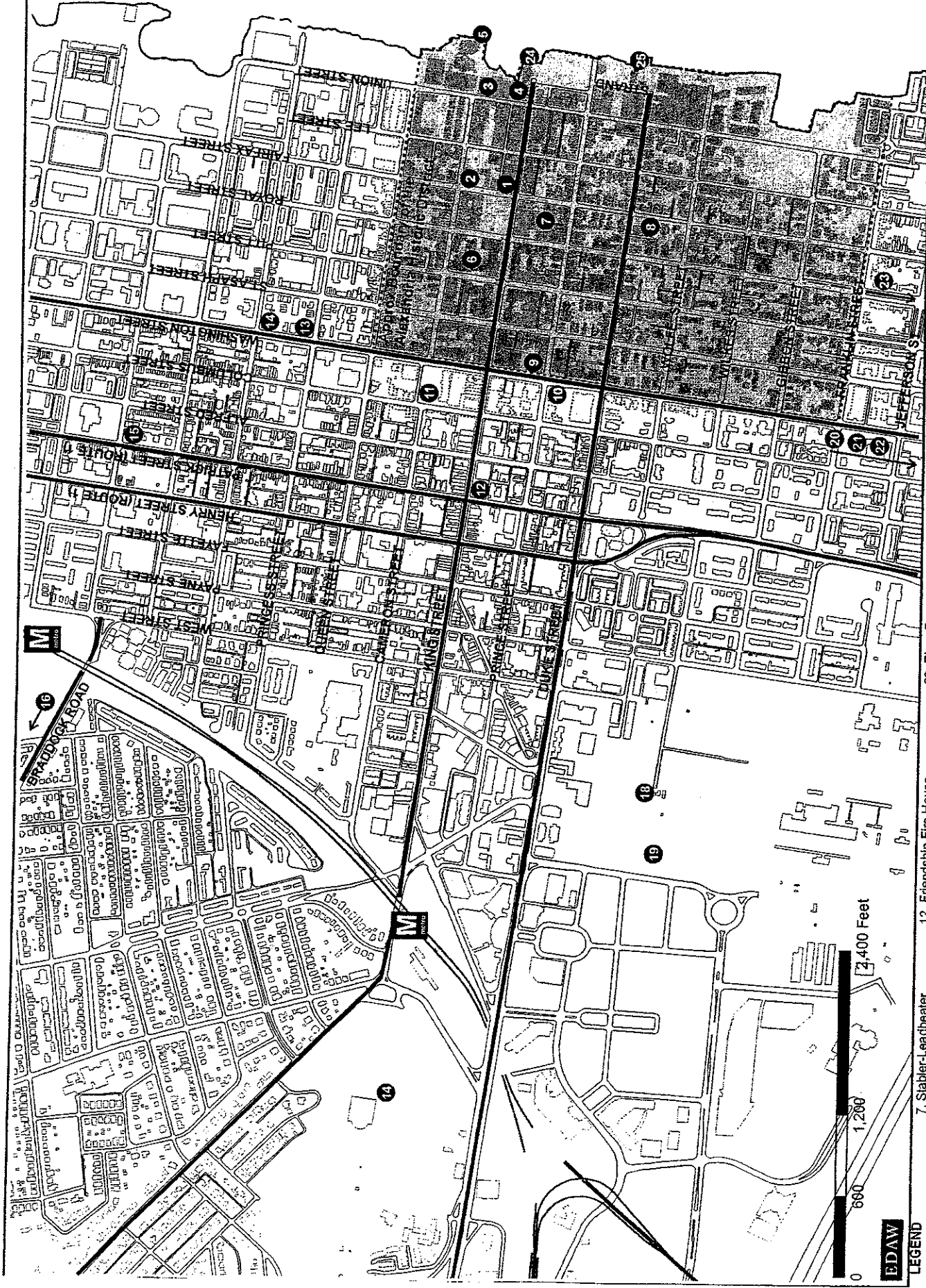


POTOMAC RIVER

ALEXANDRIA ATTRACTIONS

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS



- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ramsay House | 12. Friendship Fire House | 20. River Farm |
| 2. Carlyle House | 13. Lee-Fendall House | 21. Gunston Hall Plantation |
| 3. Archaeology Museum | 14. Boyhood home of Robert E. Lee | 22. Mount Vernon Estates |
| 4. Torpedo Factory | 15. Black History Resource Center | 23. Jones Point Park |
| 5. Alex. Seaport Center | 16. Fort Ward Park | 24. Potomac Riverboat Company |
| 6. Gadsby's Tavern | 17. "Appomattox" | 25. Potomac Party Cruises |
| | 18. Lyceum | |
| | 19. African American Heritage Park | |

The street can be defined into a lower and upper portion –generally defined as the areas east and west of Washington Street. The lower portion of King Street (east of Washington Street) includes the current Ramsay House and Market Square. This portion has a continuous commercial edge except in the area around Market Square, where some of the buildings do not maintain the consistent building edge. West of Washington Street, the commercial edge is generally maintained most of the way to King Street Metro Station.

This street environment creates a lively pedestrian experience that is attractive to visitors and encourages them to explore this Old Town commercial corridor. In addition, metro riders are more likely to walk down King Street due to its continuous and active commercial environment.

3. Traffic and Transportation

There are several modes of transportation available to visitors of Old Town Alexandria. These include personal vehicles, Metrorail, buses (DASH and tour), and bicycles. The general findings related to these existing transportation systems are described below.

i. Personal Vehicles

Information from the 1995 American Travel Survey reflects the general travel patterns of visitors to Alexandria, including the mode of transportation used. With this information, the direction by which visitors using personal vehicles arrive to Old Town was estimated. It was concluded that approximately 47% arrive via the north, 52% arrive via the south and 1% arrive via the west. Therefore, the primary travel routes include Route 1 and the George Washington Parkway (Washington Street). Once visitors arrive in Old Town, they generally either circulate on King Street and adjacent streets to find on-street parking or go to an off-street parking location near the site(s) they would like to visit.

ii. Metrorail

The King Street Metro station is located about 10 blocks west of Washington Street and has the most riders of the stations in the area including the Braddock Road, Van Dorn and Eisenhower Avenue stations. It is also the closest to the historic Old Town district. Therefore, it is the Metro station most likely to be used by visitors. While there is no data separating tourist ridership from total ridership at the Metro stations, there is a direct correlation between ridership at the King Street station and the tourist activity in Old Town. Visitors arriving on the Metro either walk east on King Street, take a taxi or take the DASH bus to their destinations.

iii. DASH Bus System, *DASH About* System and Metrobuses

The DASH bus system is a convenient and affordable method of transportation throughout Alexandria. The route for the City and the Old Town area are shown as Appendix H. The roads in Old Town that have

DASH service are King Street, Duke Street, Washington Street, Royal Street, and Fairfax Street. Service is available during weekdays and weekends for \$1 each way; a transfer costs \$0.25.

The *DASH About* weekend shuttle provides free service Friday night, Saturday and Sunday (hours based on time of year). The route is from the King Street Metro station to Market Square. The average wait time for service is 9-12 minutes and on average cuts the average combined wait and travel time to 20 minutes or about half of that for other Metrobus services. (See Appendix J for chart of wait times.)

Metrobus is another convenient way to get to Old Town from the King Street Metro station. The 28A and 28B Metrobuses go between King Street and Fairfax Street during both weekdays and weekends. The cost is a flat rate of \$1.10. The average wait and travel time varies from 24-42 minutes depending on time and day of week.

Currently there is not adequate pullover space along the curb in many locations for the buses to pull over and load/unload. As a result, the buses sometimes block the traffic flow when they stop at bus stops.

iv. **Motorcoach Operators.** A survey was conducted of the motorcoach operators currently visiting Alexandria. The statements below reflect the responses that were returned:

- DC is the primary destination and Old Town is the secondary destination.
- The majority of the motorcoach tours enter and exit the City by either the GW Parkway or Route 1.
- The majority of the motorcoaches park at Mt. Vernon, Potomac Yards, Potowmack Landing, and north of Founders Park and are parked there for 2-3 hours.
- Some of the operators feel that the streets are very narrow and make bus operations difficult.

There are designated bus loading/unloading areas on King Street adjacent to City Hall; on King Street, west of Washington Street; on Prince Street east of Patrick Street; and on Duke Street, west of Washington Street. Long-term parking is located at Potowmack Landing off the GW Parkway and adjacent to the Robinson Terminal on Union Street, north of Founders Park.

v. **Bicycles**

Old Town has several major and minor bicycle and multi-use trails. The Mt. Vernon trail is on Union Street and passes the Torpedo Factory. This is a major multi-use facility that connects to other regional trails to the north and extends to Mt. Vernon to the south. There are several on-road bike routes including on Pitt Street, Cameron Street and Prince Street.

vi. Pedestrians

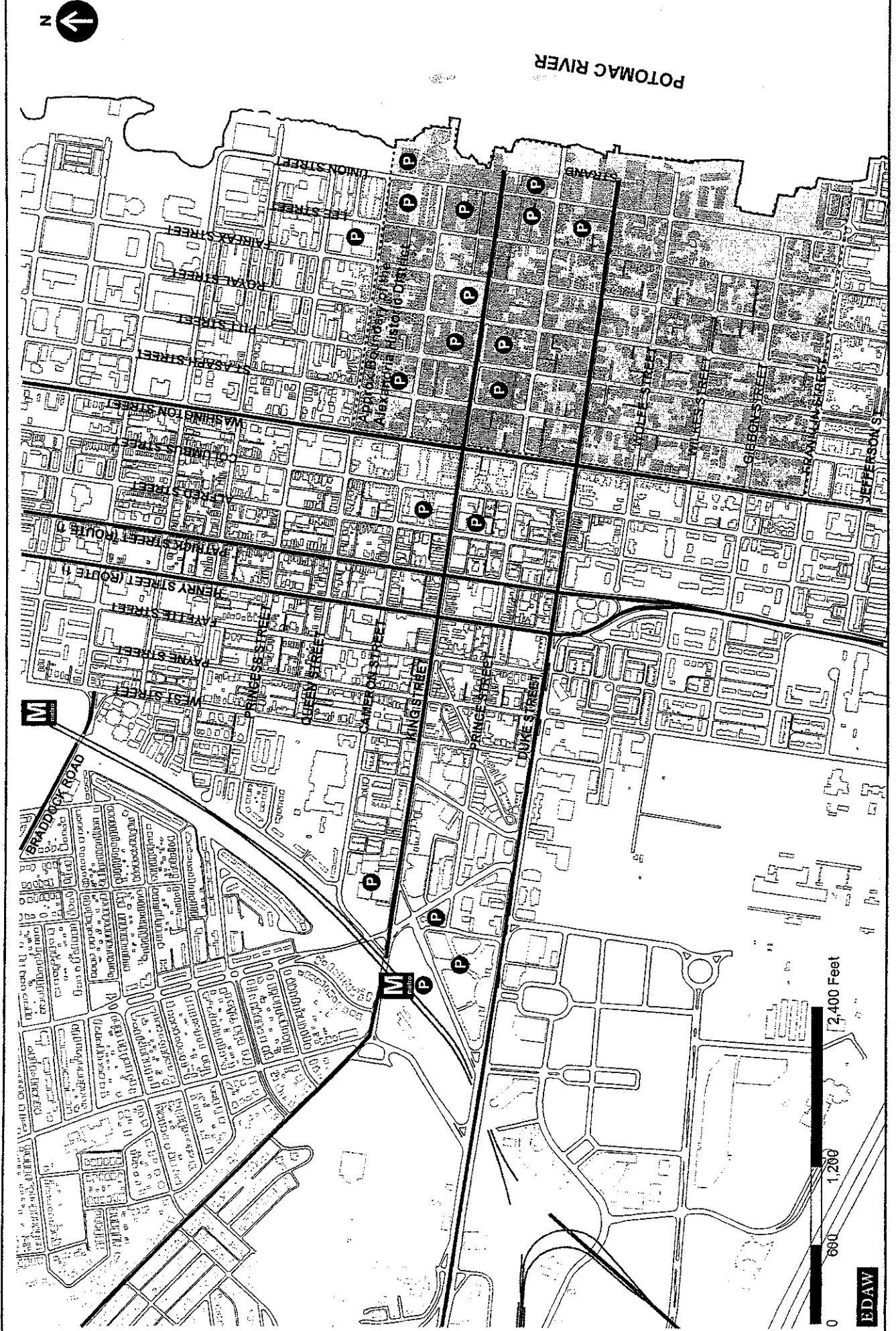
Old Town is a community where walking is encouraged. In general, the sidewalks along the major roads are in good condition, there are crosswalks at intersections and countdown pedestrian signals at signalized intersections. There are some locations where handicapped accessibility is poor. In those locations, the sidewalks either have obstructions such as trees or trashcans that narrow the effective walkway width, the pavement is in poor condition or the grade is steep. One such location is on King Street east of Fairfax Street. The grade is fairly steep on the block between Fairfax Street and Lee Street where the Ramsay House is located. Currently, the handicapped access to the Ramsay House is on Fairfax Street because of the steep grade, and those individuals only have access to the second level of the house.

4. Parking

There are on-street and off-street parking opportunities in Old Town. The on-street opportunities are predominantly metered spaces and can be used at any time of the day. Many visitors try to find a metered space before they park in a public lot or garage. The metered spaces in Old Town are almost fully occupied during the middays and evenings of weekdays and weekends. As a result, there is significant recirculation on King Street and blocks adjacent to it as motorists try to find spaces, adding to the already congested conditions. The City of Alexandria web site under "Visitor Information" (http://ci.alexandria.va.us/sitenav/tour_hist.html) indicates that the Ramsay House Visitors Center provides non-Alexandria residents free 24-hour parking proclamations at 2-hour metered spaces.

There is very little current information available regarding parking facilities in Old Town. The information that is available from the city is a list of the public parking facilities and includes locations, hours of operation, and fees. This list is included in Appendix J. The City also has recently issued a "where to park" map of Old Town, but getting that information to tourists before they get to Old Town is problematic.

PARKING AREAS **CITY OF ALEXANDRIA** **VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS**



There are several off-street parking lots and garages that are available to the general public. There are two surface lots. The first is at the corner of North St. Asaph Street and Cameron Street and includes 56 spaces. The second is a metered lot at 920 King Street that includes 19 spaces. The remaining facilities are garages. The majority of them are located east of Route 1 towards the waterfront. Most of these facilities are open during both the weekdays and weekends.

There are only four major garages west of Route 1 and two of them are closed on the weekends. WMATA has a short-term metered lot at the King Street Metro station that is open every day of the week. This is well utilized, but not completely occupied, during peak tourism months. Detailed information regarding the number, type and location of parking spaces in Old Town is not currently available from the City but the City plans in the near future to develop a parking space inventory.

5. Signage/Wayfinding (City-wide)

Signage and wayfinding signs are located around the City along major roadway corridors and throughout the local roadway network near tourist sites. Signs on approaches to the city from the neighboring jurisdictions generally conform to national standards. These same standards are relevant for use by the City.

A list and assessment of directional signage in Alexandria is found in Appendix K. In summary, while signage is ample, in some cases it is confusing or hard to read. Lettering on wayfinding signs is in some cases too small. Some of the street signs are fading. There are few directional signs to Old Town and the Visitors Center. Major improvements in signage need to be considered to improve traffic flow, decrease congestion, and to make the visitor's experience of driving to Alexandria as stress-free as possible.

i. National Standards

According to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (the MUTCD¹), Guide Signs include signs that show route designations, destinations, directions, distance, services, points of interest or other geographical, recreational, or cultural information. Guide signs are differentiated from regulatory signs (those that represent traffic laws or regulations) and warning signs (those that warn of a situation that might not be readily apparent).

Some of the more relevant signs for directing tourists utilizing conventional roadways² in Alexandria include:

¹ Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Millennium Edition – American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and AASHTO, 2001. The Manual or MUTCD is incorporated by reference in the Code of Federal Regulations and is approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the national standard for any street, highway or bicycle trail open to public travel.

² Conventional roadways exclude low-volume roadways in rural areas and freeways and expressways.

- Route Signs (with Auxiliary Signs and/or Trailblazer Signs)
- General Information Signs (white on green background)
- Destination and Distance Signs (white on green background)
- Street Name Signs (white on green background)
- Parking Area Signs (green on white background)
- Road User Services (white on blue background)
- Recreational or Cultural Information (white on brown or green backgrounds)

General information signs are used to identify political boundaries such as city limits, stream names, elevations, landmarks, and similar items of geographical interest. Except for jurisdictional logos, scenic by-way logos, and Adopt-a-Highway signs, general information signs have white legends and borders on green rectangular-shaped backgrounds.

On approaches from the south along the Beltway, Route 1 and the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the guide signs have brown backgrounds when related to Mount Vernon and other historical, cultural and recreational sites. The signs have blue backgrounds when they direct the motorists to services. Crossing the Woodrow Wilson Bridge into Virginia, the motorist is presented with a large blue Visitor Information sign directing travelers to northbound Route 1. A brown sign for Mt. Vernon directs travelers to the Church Street ramp. Other examples of color differences are found at the Route 1 interchange with the Beltway. A green sign notes the location of the city/county jurisdiction change (traveling northbound into the City) and a brown sign for Beltway travelers notes both Old Town Alexandria and Mt. Vernon destinations. These color standards are designed to give consistency and overall familiarity and convenience to the motorist and traveler. The brown and blue signs stand out from the directional green and regulatory signs for quick reference of the traveling public. Other than an occasional regulatory sign, nearly all signs along the GW Parkway between Mount Vernon and the City are either on blue or brown backgrounds and aid in presenting this area as a National Park corridor. Similar color coordination in signing is presented north of the City along the Parkway beside Potomac River waterfront, Daingerfield Island and Reagan National Airport.

B. VISITORS CENTER ISSUES

Before a site, building plan or exhibit program is considered, one needs to determine what is to be accomplished in a Visitors Center and what potential limitations may exist. Visitors Centers are found in small towns, large cities, at parks and historic sites, in the heart of activity and at the entrance of wilderness areas, park or Visitor Domains. The choice of location closely matches the core functions of the Visitors Center designed to meet the needs of the visitors to that destination and its unique characteristics.

Everyone is familiar with Visitors Centers. The Parter Team, over the past 25 years, has visited literally hundreds of such facilities around the world. Yet people often assume that all Visitors Centers perform the same functions. In fact, the location of successful Visitors Centers is dependent on the nature of the visitor, the Visitor Domain and the mission of the center. Except in specific circumstances noted below, Visitors Centers are generally not attractions or destinations in their own right. Rather they enhance and guide the visitor experience.

Coupled with effective marketing, wayfinding and signage an effective Visitors Center improves the visitor experience. Like a good host a Visitors Center and its operating organization should anticipate the visit and be concerned that the visit be a success.

1. Visitors Centers Relationship to Visitor Domains

Visitors Centers typically are found:

- On a major travel route and are associated with a rest stop and food concession area;
- At an entry point or gateway that controls access to the Visitor Domain;
- In the Visitor Domain adjacent to a high pedestrian traffic area or parking associated with a major attraction.

In other words, the location is selected to take advantage of the existing or likely presence of the visitor. It is either in the Visitor Domain or acting as its gateway.

In order to best assist the visitor, a center should be the first step or early in a visitor experience at the destination. To be most effective and used, it should then provide easy and convenient access to the domain. Where the geography or nature of the experience allows Visitors Centers to be located at the entrance to the Visitor Domain and intercept visitors on their arrival, there is significant opportunity to influence and control how visitors proceed – routes, travel methods and what the visitor sees. In effect they are senders into the Visitor Domain or interpreters of the experience. For most urban areas the geography does not cooperate. In most instances, urban Visitors Centers are

at the heart of the domain. These centers use an existing strength, the Visitor Domain, as leverage to send people to the surrounding area.

2. Key Characteristics

In the last decade numerous Visitors Centers have been developed or refurbished. Following the example of European visitors centers, many have added more services including reservation services, ticketing and travel planning. American visitors have come to expect better information and more services, a map and a brochure no longer suffice. Successful Visitors Centers share certain characteristics, including:

- Well-informed, friendly people to provide services.
- Well organized information displayed in a variety of manners to assist in decision-making.

- Concierge services such as reservations, trip planning and ticketing.
- Clean and accessible bathrooms.
- Retail and refreshment services.

3. Types of Visitors Centers

To hold market share in tough times and play any role in economic stimulus in good times, one needs to keep in mind that the most important element is the attraction itself, the beauty of Alexandria, the things to do and places to see. A successful Visitors Center becomes a clearinghouse of destinations and attractions, visitor services, special tours, visitor orientation and a departure point. The Visitors Center serves not only to orient, inform, and motivate the visitors to the various attractions and amenities that are known, but also to direct them to something new and unique.

To clarify and give context for what follows, we distinguish several types of Visitor Centers. The three general types of centers described vary in the depth and breadth of the information and experience. These include:

i. Information Centers

This type of center has the limited purpose of providing information about attractions, events, and accommodations in a city, state or region. Convention and visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce or state departments of tourism usually operate these facilities.

The predominant method of conveying information is through maps, racks of brochures and a staff representative. Occasionally a few static displays (often assembled by staff) intended to convey an overview of the history, geography or attractions in the area is present. More are adding Internet connections. Brochures are typically organized by activity type (shopping, dining, sports, theme parks, etc.). The information conveyed tends to be in response to specific questions of the visitor without significant impact on how the visitor understands the destination. This is often because these centers address a very broad geographic area or dense urban area. Typically examples of this type of information centers are found along the major interstates, in major metropolitan areas such as the center at the old Chicago Water Tower in downtown Chicago or in small towns. The City's Ramsay House Visitor Center would be categorized with this group. On average a visitor might spend two to ten minutes in this type of center.

ii. Information and Orientation Centers

These centers not only provide basic tourist information but also use displays and exhibits and other organizing or thematic techniques to orient, inform and educate the visitor to an attraction or Visitor Domain. This helps guide the flow and timing of visitors within the domain and helps them prioritize and sequence their visit. In addition, these centers help visitors understand more and think differently about the domain. In this way visitors are encouraged to do and see more within the domain and enticed to broaden their thinking *beyond* their preconceived notion or first impression about the domain. Thus

the visitor is more likely to explore other areas of a city or region or to consider returning in a different season or to visit new places.

The information is conveyed through panels, dioramas, slides, movies or audio-visual displays and other exhibits. Information and orientation centers often use a theme or story to convey the message that provides an interpretive context, assists in decision-making and organizing a visit to an area and *encourages visitors to expand or focus their itinerary* as appropriate. Some visitors might remain in such a center for just a few minutes and others will spend from 10 to a little more than 20 minutes in this type of center. These centers assist visitors in understanding what they are about to see or do without substituting for the experience itself. In addition they offer services including reservations, ticketing, trip planning. Most have a sales and gift area and some sell refreshments with a limited offering of food.

They seek to complement not compete with the Visitor Domain. Examples of these centers include Charleston, South Carolina and Montgomery, Alabama discussed below and the Independence Visitor Center in Philadelphia. The Corning, New York and Easton, Pennsylvania Visitors Centers are modest examples of this.

iii. Interpretive Centers

An interpretive center does all of the things mentioned above but adds interpretation through a central theme or story that gives a greater depth of understanding about the place, attraction or event. These centers tend to be a destination or experience in and of themselves. They are part of the experience that comprises the Visitor Domain. Larger and more in-depth displays, artifacts, dioramas, and audio-visual experiences entice the visitor to fully explore the center.

Typically an interpretive center substitutes for a portion of the experience in the domain when visitors are unable to fully experience a destination (e.g. places that are too fragile, dangerous or inaccessible because of limitations at the primary destination for visitors such as the White House Visitor Center or the Mt. St. Helen Visitor Center) or prepare a visitor for the unique experience at the destination (e.g., first person interpretation/living history museums such as Colonial Williamsburg). Often the interpretive center acts as a ticketing site providing access to a destination. A typical visitor may spend from 30 minutes to several hours in an interpretive center.

4. Recommended Type of Visitors Center for Alexandria

In the course of interviews and based on the needs and resources, the apparent stakeholder consensus, and our recommendation, is that Alexandria should have a Visitors Center that provides information and orientation functions (ii. above) – the second type listed above. This is an extension beyond the current offering in Ramsay House.

5. Stakeholder Articulated Visitors Center Goals

The interviewees for this study freely expressed opinions and goals for a new or improved Visitors Center. These included, to:

- Provide a welcoming and pleasing introduction to Alexandria through personal services: Offer maps, directions, and brochures.
- Orient and inform visitors about the things to do and places to visit, stay and eat in Alexandria and then send the tourists out to enjoy those places. (Many said that the center should not be a destination in its own right.)
- Improve the visitor and Visitor Center experience on the day of the visit.
- Sell tickets to events and attractions.
- Make reservations for hotels, restaurants and travel.
- Increase the number of tourists and their spending in Alexandria.
- Encourage tourists to extend their stay and return to Alexandria.
- Control/reduce/redirect bus and car traffic associated with tourism in the Old Town area and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Provide parking for cars and buses.
- Act as a staging point for walking, trolley and bus tours.
- Have a facility competitive with other similar cities.
- Encourage the use of public transit.
- Capture more visitors who travel from the District by Metro.
- Act as a link for transit between Metro, DASH buses, water taxis and a possible Mt. Vernon shuttle.
- Act as an economic stimulus for the area surrounding the center.
- Attract drivers off Interstate Routes 95 and 495 to visit Alexandria.

6. The Viability/Reality of Resolving Traffic as a Goal

While many of these goals speak to the services and function that occur in a Visitor Center others seek to address issues outside the center. As noted earlier, the concern about traffic and buses expressed by residents and business is real and deeply held. For residents, traffic congestion is an inconvenience in their daily lives and impacts the quality of life, especially in Old Town. For businesses, the inconvenience of congestion and parking for customers impacts on the mood, quality of the shopping and dining experience and the potential for repeat business.

With additional development in the Eisenhower Valley corridor, the West End and the Carlyle/Patent and Trademark Campus either occurring or likely, many are concerned about increased volumes of traffic.

This presents the classic dilemma in locating a Visitors Center. The accepted wisdom is to locate Visitors Centers where the visitors are - in the center of

the Visitor Domain. This encourages walk-in use, enhances the experience and makes the visit as pleasant as possible. It is the efficient way to reach as many people as possible.

In Alexandria those whose primary concern was traffic expressed a desire to intercept visitors in their cars and buses before they entered Old Town, encourage them to park at a remote location and shuttle in, or to have a distributed concept where there would be numerous visitor orientation sites throughout Alexandria.

While the Parter Team is concerned about traffic and the quality of the experience in Old Town for residents and visitors alike, it is our conclusion that the level of visitor related traffic is not significant in comparison to overall traffic. In addition, the bulk of visitors arrive either on weekends when office workers and government employees are generally not in Old Town and using the parking or on weekdays during non-peak hours. Further, many visitors staying overnight are parking in hotel lots not used by local residents.

The City of Alexandria's ongoing transportation and policy program is addressing some of the traffic flow and timing, parking, wayfinding and signage issues. Any study should also factor tourism related traffic into calculations. However, the goal of having a Visitor Center solve the problem of congestion simply through its location away from Old Town is not a realistic goal. For example, tourist traffic is probably just 2% of city traffic flow on Washington Street. Also, attempts at diverting tourist traffic toward the Visitor Domain of Old Town would not be successful.

7. Proposed Mission

The sentiment expressed in interviews is that an Alexandria Visitor Center should not be an attraction in its own right. Rather it should bring people in, get them excited and send them out to experience all that Alexandria has to offer.

Based on the interviews and the experience of the consultants a proposed mission for the center recommended by the Parter team is as follows:

Provide a welcoming, pleasing and fun experience designed to encourage visitors to:

- Participate in all aspects of Alexandria;
- Visit the surrounding area of Old Town, its historic and other attractions, restaurants and shopping;
- Visit other Alexandria areas and attractions such as Potomac West, Mount Vernon Avenue, Duke Street and the Eisenhower Valley;
- Stay longer in and return to Alexandria; and
- Leave as satisfied visitors and goodwill ambassadors for Alexandria.
- Provide information, directions, basic visitor amenities, reservations and ticketing, and access to attractions, facilities, hotels, restaurants

and entertainment.

- Act as a staging point for walking, trolley and garden tours to reduce idling time and travel time for buses in the area.
- Act as a node or pick-up/drop-off point to encourage the use of public transportation.

As reflected in the above mission, the Visitors Center should orient, inform and educate visitors; prepare them for the remainder of their stay; and motivate them to go out and find the historic sites, other attractions and amenities. The Center will provide an interpretive context for, or linking of, these sites, attractions and amenities, but it will not, for the most part, be a place where the stories are told or the interpretation is rendered for individual sites and attractions.

VII. RAMSAY HOUSE ANALYSIS

VII. RAMSAY HOUSE ANALYSIS

A. SITE HISTORY AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

The Ramsay House is located at 221 King Street at the intersection with Fairfax Street and across from Market Square. The house is believed by many to be the oldest house in Old Town Alexandria. However, it was originally constructed at the close of the 17th century at another location and then moved to its current site in the mid 18th century. Over time, it is thought to have been a residence, cigar factory, antique shop, apartments, tearoom and reportedly a brothel. In 1942 the house was extensively damaged by fire and almost destroyed. After many struggles it was reconstructed in the 1950's. The resulting building is a reproduction design of a Williamsburg style house, similar in size to, and reutilizing very limited materials from the original house that previously stood on its site, and is therefore technically inconsequential in many ways to the original Ramsay House. In 1999 the Alexandria Historical Society Chronicled the reconstruction of Ramsay House in The Alexandria Chronicle (Vol. VII, No. 1,2). In it the author Peter Smith states (p.29)

"While the intention may have been the laudable goal of 'restoring' the building in the mid-1940's, by the time the project reached fruition in 1955 and 1956, it was an all new building that tried to give the impression of a late eighteenth century house."

The report also notes that the garden is a "fanciful creation that does not attempt to claim historical precedents." In fact, the garden was full of buildings in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the 20th century the garden included the expanded Ramsay House (see following exhibit).

It is a three-story house, with the basement level accessible from King Street; its main level, one story above the street, is accessible through a side yard garden and porch; and an upper level is accessible only by a single internal residential staircase. Each floor has one principal room, approximately 20 feet square in size, with a second room north of this, approximately 12 feet by 20 feet in dimension, separated from the main room by a residential-scaled stairway and partition. The total building area is less than 700 square feet per level, for a total building area of approximately 2,000 square feet. Much of this space is devoted to circulation. At one point the building had an addition that nearly doubled its size and covered much of the garden.

Its King Street entrance provides access to what feels like a basement vestibule where restrooms are located. A narrow turning stairway leads from this level to the main level. To enter the main level of the house directly, one climbs stairs from King Street into a garden, terraced at two levels, climbs a further flight of stairs to a front porch, then finally enters into the main room.

This room is the only welcome, orientation and information space. It is only some 400 square feet in total area, with a counter opposite the front door, and the side room used for storage and administrative space. The upper level is only used for administrative, staff and storage space. The main garden entrance is poorly identified by signage that occurs much above eye level, and the change in grade off of King Street segregates it from the pedestrian main street. The main level is not ADA accessible and its basement entrance is not in full compliance.

Ramsay House and ACVA staff like the location because it is in the center of the historic district, adjacent to Market Square (and its public parking garages) and near the water, both of which act as easy reference points in giving directions. Merchants like the location in their midst. As noted elsewhere, access for motorcoach tours is limited as the building is not clearly identified from the drop off and pick up point on Market Square. Staff reports that visitors comment on the difficulty of finding Ramsay House and confusion about where to park.

B. SERVICES OFFERED AT RAMSAY HOUSE

Due to the size, circulation pattern and design, visitors must rely on staff for almost all information needs. Display space and sales space is very limited. Typically visitors make brief inquiries concerning restaurants, parking, historical information, hotel and accommodations information. A frequent topic for foreign visitors, and increasingly for others, are requests for reservations and bookings for a stay in town or the next leg of the journey.

Staff also provides a limited number of parking meter passes for visitors. Several walking tours originate at the center daily in the morning with an afternoon tour on weekends. Other tours originate there on weekends and self-guided tours are offered with a brochure. Two staff members are always present with additional staff added on busier days and hours. Staff also answers the 800-phone number and has recently assumed responsibility for processing fulfillment requests.

A very small gift area produces some revenue. More items could be made available but space limitations prohibit this. The space is very limited for purposes of displaying information and services. There is no Internet connection or email access for visitors or staff. Access for visitors with physical limitations or disabilities is difficult.

C. VISITATION AND USAGE

The Parter Team analyzed the visitation trends at the Ramsay House Visitor Center. With information provided by Ramsay House Staff we were able to compile data concerning seasonal, monthly and daily patterns. The patterns show the seasonal pattern of an increase beginning in April, peaking in July and slowing decreasing through October. Fridays and weekends are the busier days with 450-600 visitors. The seasonal patterns parallel those seen in other destinations of a similar character or in close proximity to Alexandria including Washington, DC and places such as Newport, Rhode Island. ACVA leadership believes that the actual visitation at Ramsay House may be higher than that

indicated in the summary. This underreporting is assumed because staff has been instructed to give a priority to serving visitors over maintaining an accurate count. Nonetheless, the data serves as a benchmark for the future and provides useful information that relates to capacity, design, staffing needs and other issues relating to a potential new Visitor Center.

Annual visitation to Ramsay House has been relatively flat at 115,000. We believe that this relates to both general economic trends but also the difficulty of identifying Ramsay House as a Visitor Center compounded by signage, way finding and accessibility issues. It is interesting to note that that records from the City, cable television and other utilities reportedly indicate turnover in rental property at the rate of approximately 30% annually. One clear implication of this is that many residents are in fact visitors from an informational standpoint.

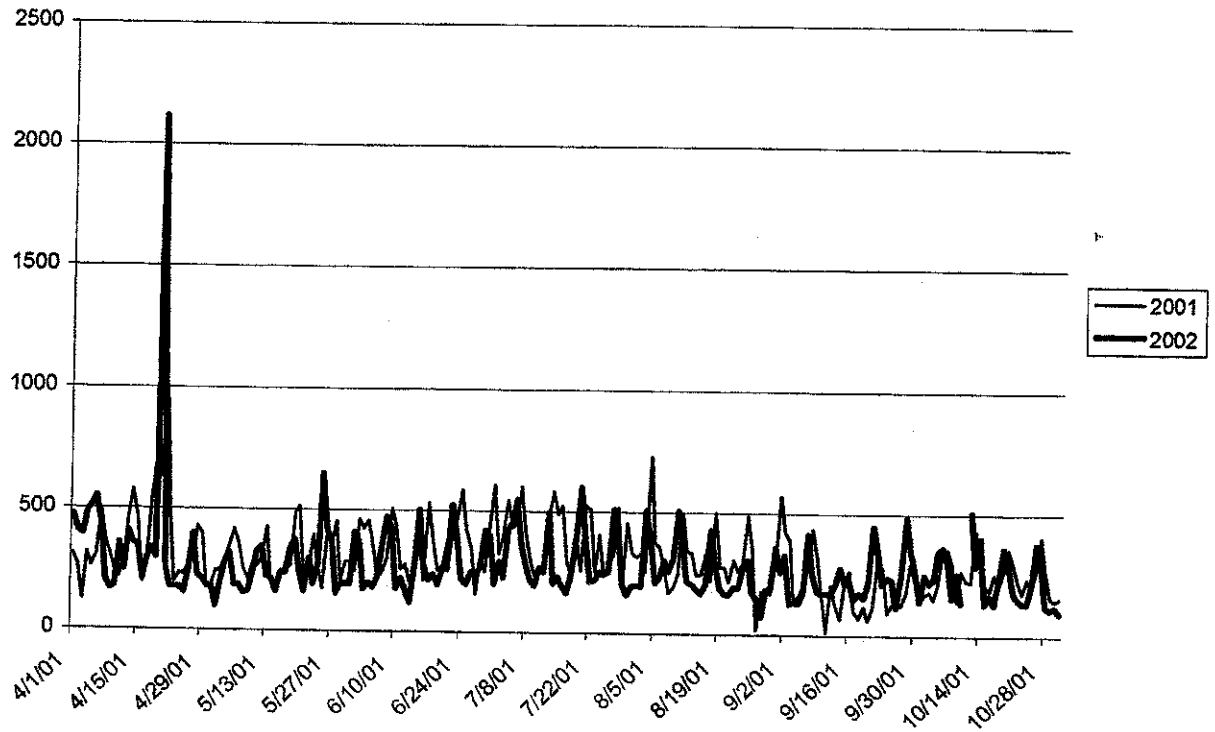
D. TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS WITH RESPECT TO RAMSAY HOUSE

The evaluation of the Ramsay House is the base condition by which the recommended options will be compared. This evaluation includes the following issues:

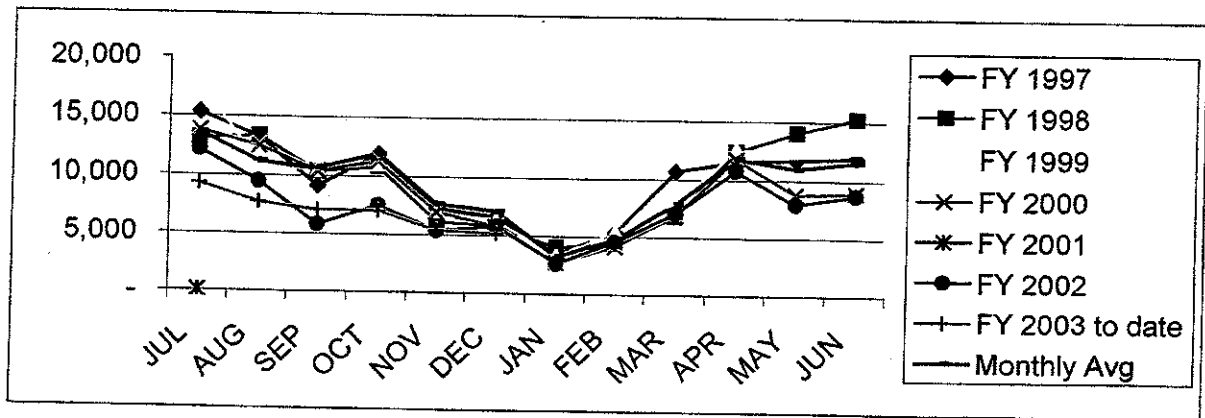
- Mode split, or the modes of travel that are used.
- Parking, on and off-street.
- Traffic volumes.
- Vehicular circulation and access.
- Pedestrian access.
- Bus circulation and access.

RAMSAY HOUSE TRENDS

Daily Trends



Seasonal Trends



The information used in our evaluation includes:

- Tour bus operators survey conducted in 2002.
- August 2002 issue of *DC UPDATE*.
- 2001 VDOT Average Daily Traffic Report.
- 1997 Alexandria Visitor study commissioned by ACVA (telephone survey).
- 1996 Mount Vernon Visitor Studies Program.
- Gorove/Slade Associates files.

For a full analysis with charts is attached as an Appendix H

The mode split calculation used the 1997 Alexandria Visitor study adjusted to account for the *DASH About* service. Based on an average July Saturday (2001-2002) *Dash About* ridership is 1,604 persons and tourists are 30% of the riders (Oct. 2001 DASH survey) or a total of 481 persons. We will assume that 120 people, 25% of tourist riders, go to Ramsay House. We also will assume an average July Saturday at Ramsay House of 548 people. The *DASH About* percentage of Visitor Center visitation would be 22%. (Note: In order to be conservative, the *DASH About* mode split was rounded down to 20% because some visitors prefer to walk.)

The survey of tour bus operators gathered information on their use of Ramsay House. Of the 15 respondents answering this question, ten never use it, four rarely use it, and only one uses it frequently. Because there is tour bus parking across the street from the Ramsay House, it is likely that approximately 5% of the passengers use the Visitors Center.

Another mode is the Potomac Riverboat Company. There are approximately 80,000 tourists per year that either leave Alexandria by Water, or are brought to Alexandria by water (such as from Georgetown). Assuming that there is an even split in arrivals and departures and that there are 1,500,000 visitors to Alexandria every year, approximately 2% arrive by water.

1. Parking

There are 10 off-street parking facilities within a 5-minute walking distance of Ramsay House. There is no recent study available as to the variables related to occupancy or utilization of these facilities. However, field observations indicated that the garages are used mostly during the weekday working hours, and there are vacancies on the weekends. The majority of these facilities are open evenings and weekends. A number of these are the City owned garages or lots in the Visitors Domain.

There are a large number of on-street spaces near Ramsay House. Most are metered two-hour spaces, which are well utilized. Motorists generally have to circulate from block to block to find an open space. Ramsay House provides a limited number of 24-hour passes for visitors to use these metered spaces.

2. Traffic volumes

Using information from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Traffic Engineering Division and based on the mode split calculation, we estimate that approximately 329 persons, or 165 vehicles, visit the Visitors Center by car on the peak weekend days of July. It is estimated that 52% of visitors arrive from the south, 47% from the north and 1% from the west.

The VDOT study shows that average weekend traffic is 167,000 vehicles on the main access roads to Alexandria. If we assume the visitation pattern at Ramsay House on a summer weekend is reflective of the overall pattern of visitation and further assume that *all* visitors (rather than the 60% mode split above) come by their personal vehicle *visitor traffic would account for slightly more than 2% of the total traffic volume* on the access roads.

3. Vehicular Circulation and Access

Vehicular circulation is poor due to the signing and wayfinding system currently in place. In general, the road network in the area is straightforward and most of the roads are two-way, making the area easy to navigate. Vehicular access is good because there are many places to park, especially during the peak tourism days on the weekends. However, because of the pricing structure of garages in Old Town many people choose to circulate for on-street parking rather than using a garage. We recommend the City government analyze use of its public garages during weekends and consider further reduced rates and/or special parking offers for tourists.

4. Pedestrian Access

As discussed earlier, the Ramsay House Visitors Center does not have good pedestrian access to its entrances. The sidewalks are generally in good condition and free of obstructions. There are crosswalks at the adjacent intersection with countdown pedestrian signals.

5. Bus Circulation and Access

DASH About takes riders from the King Street Metro station to City Hall on King Street. It is a convenient drop-off point for the Ramsay House. There is also a DASH bus stop adjacent to the entrance to the Ramsay House Garden from Fairfax Street. While the *DASH About* system has a headway of 15-minutes, there are other DASH buses and Metro buses that will take passengers to and from the King Street Metro station. Both are relatively inexpensive and just as convenient as *DASH About* buses. With adequate marketing, visitors will have the knowledge to choose which bus to take.

Difficulties with the bus service on King Street relate to traffic congestion. Many *DASH About* customers believe that the service from King Street Metro station to City Hall is very slow because the buses get caught in traffic. Some customers

even mentioned they could walk just as fast. (See Appendix I for average wait times.) Motorists attempting to park in the on-street spaces also delay bus service. Buses do not have large enough loading/unloading areas along the curb, therefore, they stop in a moving lane of traffic, increasing congestion and vehicle delays.

The loading/unloading area on King Street in front of City Hall as currently marked can accommodate one to two buses. Discharging of passengers takes approximately 10-15 minutes. If a bus is already at the loading area and a second bus turns from Fairfax Street, it is not able to straighten out and completely pull up against the curb. However, if the bus were coming from the east on King Street, it would be able to pull behind the bus without blocking traffic.

Adequate pull-off areas should be created on the curb. We recommend that the entire curb front at Market Square be reserved for tour buses, or possibly just during the peak tourist season. In this configuration it could accommodate four buses.

Tour bus parking is currently available on Union Street, north of Oronoco Street, at Potowmack Landing and at the Robinson Terminal. These places accommodate 3-4 buses. In the past, buses could also use the area under the Woodrow Wilson Bridge at Jones Point Park and at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Security concerns have eliminated the use under the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The use of the George Washington Masonic Memorial, where six or more buses could park is a location that should be reconsidered for use, but that will take new negotiating on the City's part with the owners of that site.

E. IMPLICATIONS FOR SPACE NEEDS

On busier weekends common through the spring and early summer, Ramsay House serves approximately 500 people a day on a regular basis. As mentioned above, visitors gather information and interact with staff in a mere 400 square feet. A general rule of thumb for public spaces is that there should be an average of at least 15 square feet per person. Without any changes in the existing space, this means that just over 20 visitors could fit in Ramsay House at one time. The circulation patterns and layout make this an uncomfortable and inefficient experience for visitors and mean that Ramsay House is already undersized. On most occasions is that visitors enter, ask one or two questions and leave within one or two minutes. The ability to learn information is restricted by the visitor's access to a staff member with adequate time to engage them in conversation. There is also very limited display space, which also reduces how much a visitor can learn about the City while at the Visitors Center. The result is that many visitors leave not having learned enough to influence their visit significantly beyond their current expectations. If motorcoach tours were encouraged to use the center for their 50 passengers, it would overwhelm the existing center.

This raises the question of what might be required of a renovated or new facility.

As noted at the outset of this report, the information does not exist to make precise predictions concerning increases in visitation. However, even working with only current tourism statistics concerning visitation we believe that the length of stay and repeat visitation can be increased. We are confident that better signage and way finding, improved marketing and better connections with public transit and motorcoach drop-off and pick-up could result in an increased level of usage.

In making assumptions about size, we assumed that the Visitors Center should be able to accommodate a group from a motorcoach tour and that it should be able to comfortably accommodate almost twice the number of visitors for the busier season weekends. This would mean about 1000 visitors on a given day. (This design capacity is meant to address the average during peak season, not to accommodate the peak busiest days of the year. To design for the absolute peak days would create an oversized and underutilized facility.) Most Visitor Centers experience peak volumes during several hours in the morning or late afternoon. Anecdotal reports from Ramsay House staff indicate that Alexandria is no different. We therefore calculate the potential public space need as follows:

Total daily visitation x percent peak hour / dwell time=Persons at one time (PAT)

$$\begin{array}{rcll} 1,000 & \times 30\% & / .25 \text{ hour} & = 75 \text{ PAT} \\ 75 \text{ PAT} \times 15 \text{ square feet per person} & = & 1125 \text{ square feet} & \end{array}$$

With the addition of circulation space and other public functional spaces such as restrooms, entry/lobby, etc., the total public space needed is approximately 1,500 to 2,000 net square feet. An overall calculation of estimated spaces may be found in Exhibit 6

This estimate of public space requirements then must be augmented with additional areas: reception and retail, restrooms, staff administrative and break space, storage, circulation and net to gross increases for partitions, structures and mechanical equipment. The resulting estimate is approximately 3,500 total gross square feet to accommodate the program needs of the desired functions. Should the City choose to move forward with a new Visitors

Powe . Jones . Architects PC

Preliminary Space Program

Alexandria Visitor's Center

June 2, 2003

Space Name	No. Occupants	Area/Occupant	Area (SF)	Comments
Orientation				
Information	75	15	1,125	25% of peak hour
Reception	2	25	50	
Retail	-	50	50	
Food Service			-	Seating, servery, storage not included
Circulation (20%)			245	
Services				
Lobby/Waiting	15	12	180	
Women's Toilet			255	
Men's Toilet			175	
Private Toilet			50	
Food Service			-	
Circulation (20%)			132	
Administrative				
Office	1	150	150	
Work Room		150	150	
Break Room		50	50	
Storage		100	100	
Circulation (20%)			90	
Subtotal				
			2,802	
Net to Gross Area Increase		25%	701	Partitions, structure, equipment
TOTAL AREA			3,503	

Center this estimate may be refined based on development of the full exhibit program, adjustments in desired length of stay in the center and constraints related to particular sites.

F. ASSESSMENT OF RAMSAY HOUSE AS CURRENTLY CONFIGURED

The size and design of Ramsay House are inadequate to effectively welcome and orient visitors to Old Town, despite its well-located King Street and Fairfax Street corner site, directly across the street from Market Square and City Hall. Its garden, though perceived as an amenity to King Street by many, is not well developed, interrupts the character of King Street's charming storefronts at sidewalk's edge, and was not present as a garden in much of the 18th and later centuries.. In our judgment, Ramsay House cannot effectively be renovated, without an addition, to enhance its ability to serve Alexandria's visitors, because its size and relationship with King Street cannot fundamentally be resolved.

As noted earlier in this report, in the early 1900's, the original house, similar in size to the current Ramsay House but quite different in architectural character, was doubled in size by expanding into what is now part of the garden. A study of a Visitor Center replicating this limited early 20th century configuration still is inadequate in size, character and relationship to King Street to significantly enhance the Visitor Center function, though it preserves some of the garden. The total site, (assuming required three feet wide side yard setbacks, which may or may not be required depending on design and code requirements) is required to approximate to the program of areas required to effectively serve as a Visitor Center.

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VIII. SITE OPTIONS STUDIED

VIII. SITE OPTIONS STUDIED

The process for determining which site options to recommend was to: determine the site criteria to consider, obtain suggestions from and review locations suggested in interviews by stakeholders, compile additional locations as a result of consultant team sites visits, delineate the functional spaces necessary for the type of Visitors Center desired by Alexandria, develop scenarios for client consideration, and then finally narrow to the recommended location options.

A. SITE CRITERIA

Using the proposed mission, estimated public space needs and preliminary information concerning travel patterns and methods, the Parter Team developed criteria for use in evaluating and comparing potential locations for a Visitor Center on a citywide basis and then on a site-specific basis.

- Relationship to tourist domain- King street/center of Old Town
- Positive and negative impacts on residential and business neighbors
- Easy vehicular access
- Convenient to parking, public transportation/DASH/shuttle
- Convenience for motorcoach tours
- Exterior spaces usable in fair weather for overflow and staging
- Visually accessible and identifiable for pedestrian and car traveler
 - Identity
 - Ease of way finding and signage
 - Graphics interior and exterior
- Topography impacts on pedestrian and vehicular/bus access, building costs, etc.
- Connections and relationships to
 - Attractions
 - Lodging
 - Shopping and Restaurants
- Long term flexibility in space to accommodate changes in visitor needs (or alternative uses if City-owned property)
- ADA accessibility
- Public acceptance/acceptability
- Costs
 - Development
 - Construction
 - Renovation
 - Lease
 - Exhibits
 - Furniture, fixtures and equipment
 - Operational issues
 - Maintenance
 - Staffing

B. LOCATIONS SUGGESTED BY STAKEHOLDERS

During the course of interviews with a cross-section of Alexandria stakeholders

and from a prior ACVA 1999 analysis associated with the Union Station proposed Visitor Center, a number of locations were suggested as options for a new or satellite Visitor Center. The Callahan Road site adjacent to the Amtrak Union Station became available at a time when ACVA and the VRE commuter rail organization were seeking administrative office space. This created a design need for a large structure. In addition, the vehicular access roads are gateways to residential areas. This combination of factors and other ancillary issues created serious neighborhood opposition. Interviewees unanimously agreed that at a minimum a Visitor Center presence should be maintained (i.e. east of the railroad tracks) and that a Visitors Center should be associated with commercial and tourist development to be easily accessible and avoid negative impacts on residential areas.

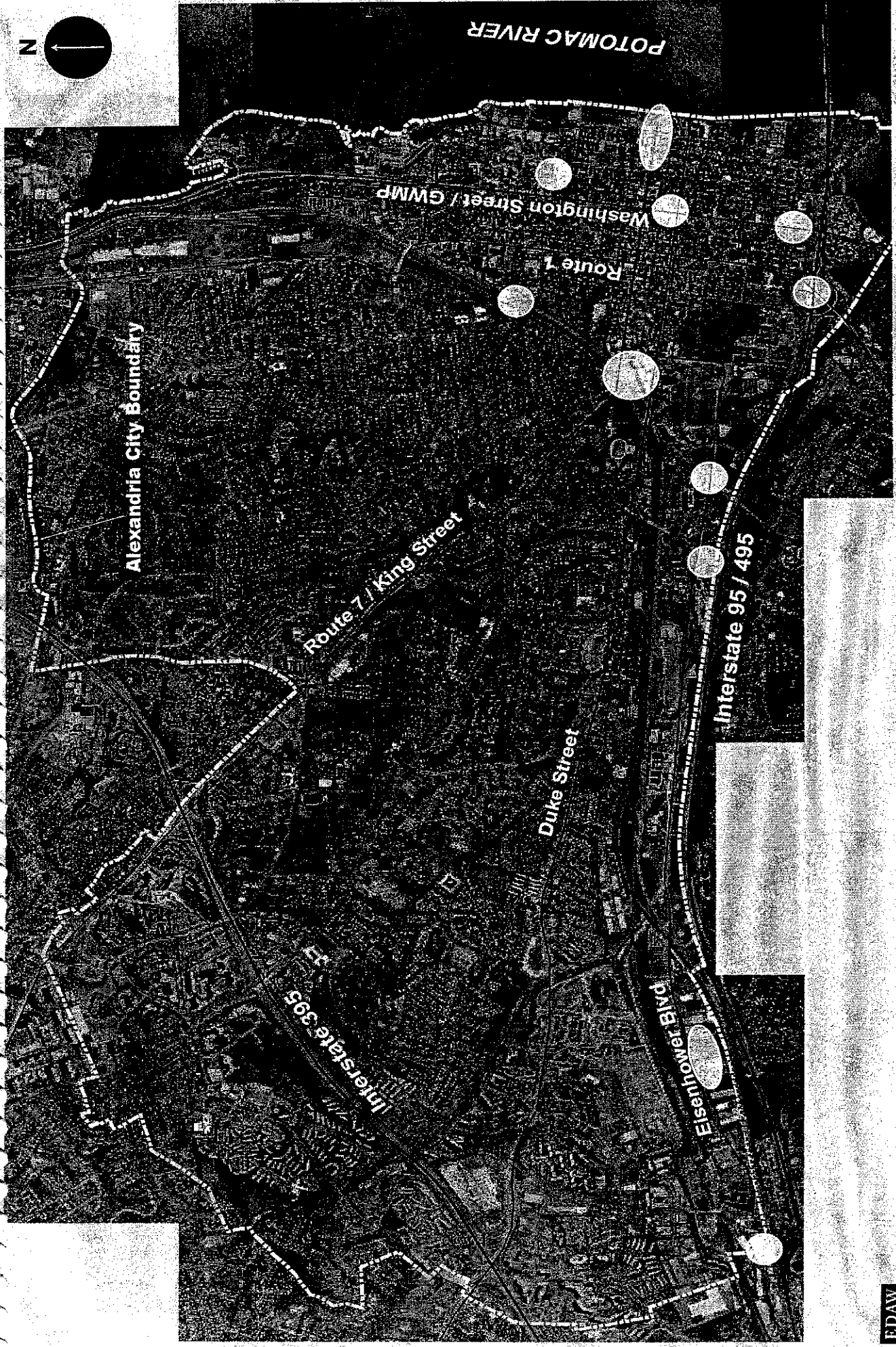
Below, without comment or editing, are location options considered:

1. Lower King Street/Waterfront/Old Town Area

- Ramsay House in its current configuration, refurbished or expanded
- Foot of King Street – including numbers 6, 100, 101
- Storefronts/hotels around Market Square area
- City Hall Lobby
- Market Square
- Waterfront Food Court
- Leased space in Tavern Square
- 100 block of North Lee
- 10 Prince Street
- The Lyceum
- New Construction on the waterfront or actually over the water
- Metro Bus Shed on North Pitt and Pendleton
- Old Dominion Boat Club

2. Upper King Street/King Street Metro-Union Station Area

- Union Station Site on Callahan Road
- King Street Metro Station lot
- Triangular park at King Street and Diagonal Road
- King Street Metro Station Concourse
- Hotels/storefronts surrounding King Street Metro lot on Diagonal Road
- Various leased spaces on Duke Street including the addresses/buildings at 1725 and 1800 Duke Street.



POTENTIAL LOCATIONS CONSIDERED

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS

3. Other Locations

- Time Life Building
- Eisenhower Metro area
- Braddock Road Metro Area
- Eisenhower Valley
- Southern end of Washington Street
- Interchanges of the Beltway at Eisenhower Connector (Exit 3A), Telegraph Road (Exit 2) or Route 1 (Exit 1)
- Scattered electronic kiosks
- Information booths at airports, Union Station in DC, or various other locations in DC
- Space within Mt. Vernon's planned visitor facilities
- A regional Visitors Center in association with others

C. SPECTRUM OF VISITOR CENTER SCENARIOS

With the goal of engaging City, ACVA leadership and representative stakeholders in a dialogue concerning the range of possible options, the Parter Team drafted a variety of scenarios. The purpose of these scenarios was not to put forth specific proposals. Rather it was to stimulate dialogue and discussion about the full range of options so that more informed decision-making may occur. Each scenario was reviewed in relation to the Team's analysis of the overall issues and transportation patterns for the city, in comparison to site criteria, with respect to the proposed mission of the Visitor Center and elements of successful Visitor Centers.

Scenarios

The scenarios as developed in November of 2002 in the early stages of this study were as follows:

Scenario 1: Status quo

The Ramsay House Visitors Center remains as the only location. Modest upgrades are made to the interior, the display and information presentations are redesigned to make maximum use of existing first floor space. Signage, street and traffic improvements are initiated to ease car parking and minimize the negative impacts of buses. Possibly a site is found for bus parking outside the area with "trolley" to Visitors Center. Funds that would have been used for another facility are used for promotional marketing.

Scenario 2: Alternative Site in Old Town

Ramsay House is given an alternative use and a larger, more accessible location is leased or acquired in the heart of Old Town for use as a Visitors Center.

Scenario 3: Ramsay House or Alternative & Kiosks

Ramsay House remains in use or an alternative Old Town site is obtained. Electronic kiosks, some staffed on special events and high visitation days, at key intercept points such as the Metro Stations, highway exits, hotels, Waterfront/Torpedo Factory, and Reagan National and Dulles Airports. At certain sites (i.e., airports) more substantial information could replace kiosks.

Scenario 4: Expand and Enhance Ramsay House

The Ramsay House Visitors Center remains as the only location. The space is reconfigured and expanded in keeping with the surrounding area. The expansion takes place through an addition in the courtyard area and allows for improved access for people with physical disabilities. Signage, street and traffic improvements as above.

Scenario 5: A New Perimeter Location and Ramsay House or A Waterfront Satellite Remains

Ramsay House remains or an alternative Old Town site such as a waterfront location is obtained and is used as a satellite and Ramsay is closed. A new location is leased or acquired as the main Visitors Center on the perimeter of Old Town. Buses are encouraged to drop off and pick-up, and perhaps park, at this location. The location has or is adjacent to adequate parking for visitors by car and may be adjacent to Metrorail service. DASH About or trolley service is used to shuttle visitors throughout Old Town and to and from the Visitors Center.

Scenario 6: A New Waterfront Visitor Center

A new Visitors Center is constructed on or over the waterfront accessible by car, bus, boat and foot. The Center combines aspects of the Alexandria story (such as those told in the Lyceum and Archeology Museum) and acts as both an attraction that tells the story and as a sender to other sites and attractions. Kiosks and DASH About/trolley service assist and distribute visitors throughout the City.

D. WHY SITES WERE ELIMINATED

Over the next several months these scenarios were analyzed and with minor modifications presented to the focus groups in January 2003. Based on our experience and knowledge, surveys, feedback from stakeholders, City officials and the AVCA leadership, we arrived at several conclusions.

1. Bus travelers

First, as noted above, Alexandria is a secondary destination to Mt. Vernon and Washington for a partial day visit of 2-3 hours. They are, therefore, approaching primarily from the north and south headed for Old Town and the Market Square/Waterfront area. Motorcoach operators place a premium on the time in the destination. This creates the issue of diverting them from their ultimate destination and the time lost for their patrons to transfer and transit time to a shuttle service from a remote location. This means that to serve any of the

motorcoach group tour markets a perimeter location beyond the perimeter of Old Town to the north and south and west of the King Street metro area is unlikely to be used because it will take time away from short visits. On longer prearranged visits, visitors are dropped at the destination and the tour guide needs to do a final reconciliation for tickets and accommodations with staff at a center. This requires easy and immediate access to a Visitors Center.

2. Auto Travelers

The auto traveler tends to head to the heart of the Visitor Domain. Unless there is a geographic means of intercepting the visitor, similar to that found in Charleston, South Carolina, visitors will tend to by-pass the Visitor Center in favor of going straight to the first location they wish to visit.

3. Public Transit Travelers

The King Street Metro stop is the closest and most convenient to the Visitor Domain. To maximize the access to this group a Visitor Center logically must be on the King Street corridor, preferably at one end or the other connected by a shuttle service.

4. Operational Issues

ACVA leadership has indicated that sufficient budgetary resources are not in place to staff and maintain dual locations, therefore, a permanently staffed main and satellite center were eliminated as serious options. An alternative to a second location would be electronic kiosks. To be effective, electronic kiosks need to be in high traffic areas in easy view, well maintained and frequently updated. Non-web-enabled systems require development of specialized software. Given the historic nature of much of Old Town, electronic kiosks would need to be carefully placed (such as inside the King Street Metro station) or screened.

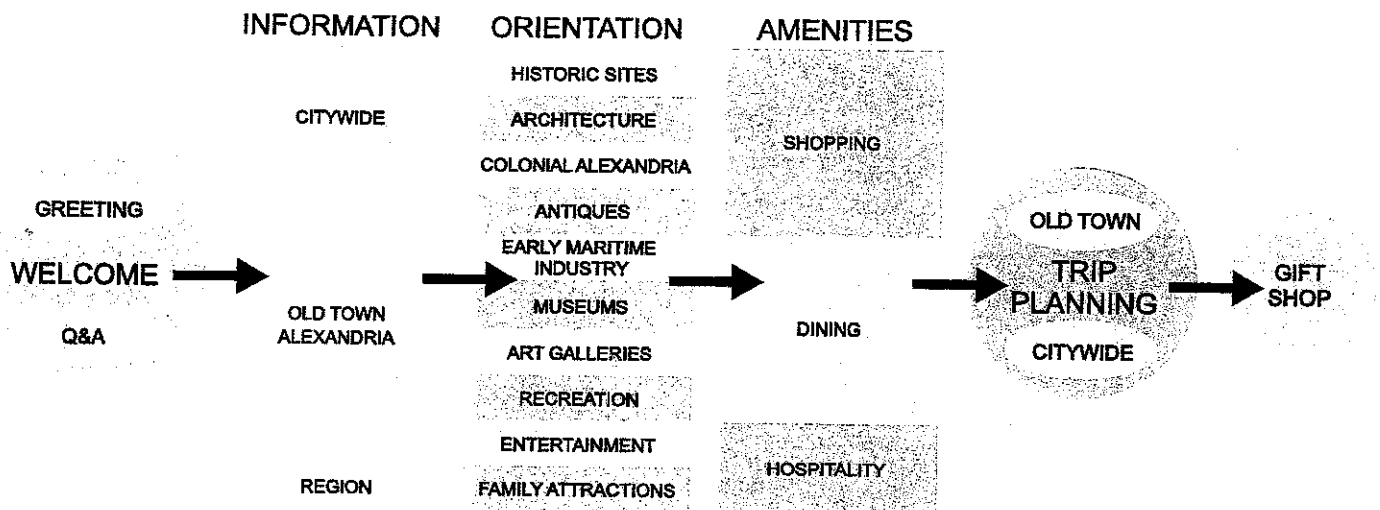
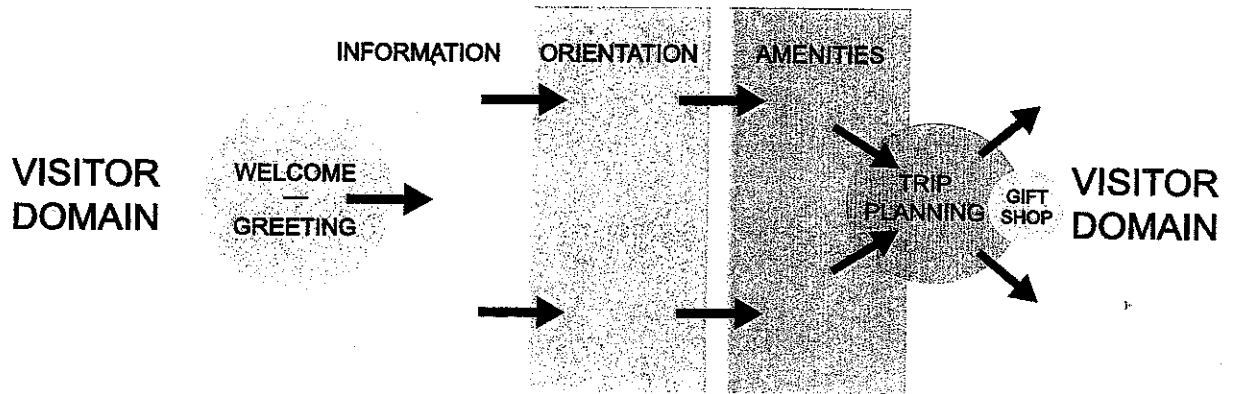
E. VISITOR CENTER FUNCTIONAL SPACES

(The following page has Visitors Center space use examples for Alexandria)

1. Entering Alexandria

The visitor experience starts as early as the time the visitor hears from a friend, sees an advertisement, visits a website, calls for information or consults a travel guide. It starts as late as when they first enter Alexandria. From the first moments on entering the City, impressions are made and visitors make decisions based on their most immediate needs. Rather, the center should serve to enhance other attractions and activities.³ Through information, exhibits and displays, personal service and ambience, it should be a place to become oriented to and motivated to experience Old Town, the surrounding Alexandria area, and attractions and amenities throughout the City. The Center should provide the

³ The exception to this would be if the center were linked to an attraction element in a larger space that combines a destination with the center. This might include the functions performed at the Lyceum or Archeology museum. However, these options do not appear feasible.



introduction, interpretive context, and mechanisms for staging and sequencing a visit, or multiple visits, to Alexandria.

What follows is a sense of the flow of the desired visitor experience around and in a Visitors Center. A Visitor Center must be easily understood and accessible.⁴ This derives in part from the proximity to parking and bus drop-off and pick-up and visibility to those arriving on foot from dispersed parking, area hotels, and public transit. Its purpose must be easily identifiable.

2. Pedestrian Approach

When a visitor approaches the center on foot there should be adequate space for small and large groups to assemble, wait and converse out of the flow of pedestrian traffic. This is aided if there are structures, sculpture, or other environmental features as simple as a flagpole or banner that offer a marker where someone can say, "Let's meet next to the ____." This helps large groups stage and lets smaller groups split up with agreed rendezvous times later in the day. Market Square now performs this function for many visitors. Some information should be available or visible from the exterior for visitors who arrive at a time when the center is closed or on the occasional days when it may be too crowded inside.

3. Decompression and Transitional Space

Once inside, typically the first need of visitors is for space to decompress or transition from a travel frame of reference to a visit/vacation frame of reference. This is accomplished spatially and also emotionally with friendly staff greeting and assisting to direct visitors to areas to satisfy their most immediately expressed needs and with welcoming architecture. Locations of restrooms, telephones, seating to rest and water fountains should be immediately identifiable. While the porch and garden at Ramsay House are gracious in appearance, the elevations are difficult for many visitors and convey the sense of a private residence. A person in a wheelchair (or one who cannot climb stairs) cannot access the main information area of Ramsay House. Staff does an excellent job of greeting those who enter but physical limitations concerning the restrooms and water fountain make for an awkward initial experience.

4. Information and Orientation Space

Next, most visitors want to address their essential informational needs through space devoted to orientation and information. Basic questions should be answered such as: Where are the attractions? When are they open? Which ones need tickets or have an entrance fee? Where are the maps? How to I get to a certain place? Which restaurants might I enjoy? Where can I buy a certain item? Is there a place to get a snack or drink while we decide what to do?

Much of the above information will be conveyed by personal contact with Center staff, as well as through pictorial or iconographic signage, displays, electronic

⁴ "Accessible" is intended to include signage, advertising and visual cues starting at some distance from the Center for those arriving by road, rail and air, as well as in promotional and descriptive material intended to reach potential/prospective visitors in their homes or businesses before their trip

and other communications media. LED, video or even a simple chalk blackboard can also convey daily events, starting tours, hours of operation, costs and safety information.

This orientation area would first introduce visitors to the context and geography of:

- Old Town Alexandria
- The City
- The Region

Through the use of further zones in the Visitors Center the visitor will be presented with exhibits and displays that help decision-making concerning:

- Historic Sites
- Architecture
- Colonial Alexandria
- Early Maritime Industry
- African-American Cultural Sites
- Alexandria and the Civil War
- Post WWII Alexandria
- Antiques
- Art Galleries
- Museums
- Recreation
- Entertainment
- Family Attraction

Within this some exhibits would categorize information in a City Amenities Area that would include:

- Gift Shopping
- Shopping
- Dining Facilities
- Hospitality
- Entertainment
- Services

A large screen video monitor could be part of the Center and could run a video that provides an overview of Alexandria, its history, and seasonal events. This visual connection encourages visitors to think about amending their itinerary and creates an awareness of the variety of things to do and what occurs at different times of the year. New technology allows visual media to be easily and inexpensively edited. It also permits changes based on immediate needs, for example a basic program may have three variations; a two-minute, four-minute and seven-minute loop. On very busy days the short programs may be utilized at a moments notice to reduce congestion and crowding through a shorter dwell time. Alternatively with a few computer keystrokes or the push of a button the visitor could call up images or additional information or a special introduction for

a school or motorcoach group could be run.

A video could also be made available on the ACVA website or to hotels to show on their internal network or shown in their lobby.

With proper marketing and coordination with motorcoach tours, event organizers, and walking tours, the interior area should be spacious enough to absorb, stage and disperse a tour or school group as well as acting as meeting and staging spaces for smaller walking groups and individuals. If full-day or overnight group tours are expected, staff will need an area to reconcile ticketing, reservations and accommodations for the group.

Center staff needs enhanced desk space and access to computers and the Internet to assist with travel services for ticketing for attractions, transportation, events and tours; and reservations for accommodations, restaurants, airlines and trains.

Either a separate area of woven throughout should be elements that are interesting to and at an appropriate height for children. These will engage their interest while parents plan and speak with staff.

5. Trip Planning

A small area for trip planning would further the mission of the center. Here visitors would be able to create individualized itineraries, find local and regional transportation information and otherwise plan their stay with the help of staff and perhaps through computer generated triptychs and itineraries. The area should contain visual references points that will orient visitors. In this space small groups will be able to work and plan their visit, perhaps with blank maps.

6. Sales Area

A sales area for books, appropriate souvenirs and visitor convenience items acts not only as a convenience to visitors and an opportunity to extend the Alexandria brand identity but also provides modest revenue to assist in underwriting operating expenses. Almost no Visitors Center is self-supporting off of sales and rental revenue, but these sources do offer an opportunity to offset some costs. Their goal is to enhance the visitor experience, thereby retaining and increasing tax revenues associated with tourism spending.

7. Support Space

In addition to these public spaces, "backroom" functions will also need to be accommodated. These include:

- Administrative space for supervisor, staff, copier, mail fulfillment.
- Storage space for brochures, maps, sales items, etc.
- Area for staff to store personal items, eat lunch and take breaks.

ACVA currently has administrative space and thus no space beyond that needed for Visitor Center staff is needed within the Visitor Center.

F. OTHER ISSUES

Several interviewees suggested that there should be limited food and refreshment for sustenance, to meet decompression needs and to help people relax while planning or while transitioning on arrival or departure. For reasons of cleanliness, not wanting to compete with local restaurants and other food establishments, and not wanting to increase the length of stay in the center, AVCA leadership feels that anything beyond the simple vending of refreshments that currently occurs would be inappropriate.

In designing and operating a Visitor Center, the City and ACVA may wish to consider additional means of animating the center and its surrounding area. This includes use of the space for alternative or supplemental uses in quiet seasons or off hours. This might include the use for receptions and community events in the evening or for displaying school artwork, special Alexandria exhibits or other features that would engage and assist the Alexandria community in the quiet months when there are a limited number of visitors.

With the substantial increase in mobile technology including, laptops, cell phones, and personal digital assistants, the City and ACVA may wish to consider implementing infrared and WiFi technology. The use of infrared would allow visitors to download walking tours and directions directly into handheld devices. The use of WiFi would encourage visitors and locals to congregate in public space around the center resulting in a livelier feel to the surrounding area.

G. RELATED ISSUES

The development of a Visitors Center can never be considered in a vacuum. There are always supporting and conflicting considerations unrelated to the tourism or even economic development decision. The current and future financial environment relates directly to the ability to first sell the idea of a Visitors Center and then build it. Education, security, transportation, and other infrastructure and economic development projects will compete for City resources. As a result, timing often is a factor that becomes an important part of the equation. The time required for design, planning and approvals, and construction is an ingredient that will impact how such a project is received by the community.

We have also found in previous assignments that it is particularly important to have one or more powerful advocates. No matter how well a project such as this matches the goals and objectives of the City, it is necessary to have an advocate or advocates to keep the issue before the appropriate authorities and to convincingly explain the value such a Visitors Center would bring to Alexandria.

H. CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING RAMSAY HOUSE

The Parter Team found that there are no "perfect" sites for a Visitor Center in Alexandria. Every choice has considerable compromises. In many respects the Market Square location of Ramsay House is optimal. However, the Ramsay House as currently configured has serious limitations in the ability to positively influence the visitor experience and make a good impression.

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IX. VISITOR CENTER RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

IX. VISITOR CENTER RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

A. LIST OF RECOMMENDED SITES

As described earlier, we analyzed many potential locations for a Visitors Center. Our recommendations relate to two areas: The Upper King Street area at or to the east of the Metro station; and The Market Square area in Old Town.

Within these two areas there are the following seven options for five sites:

1. New Visitors Center at the King Street Metro Station Parking Lot
2. New Visitors Center at King Street/Diagonal Road Intersection
3. New Visitors Center in the Metro Station concourse
4. New Visitor Center on Market Square
5. Ramsay House Renovation and Expansion
6. Ramsay House status quo or renovation with ancillary welcome space at the King Street Metro Station
7. Ramsay House status quo with expanded marketing and partnerships



POTOMAC RIVER



RECOMMENDED SITES

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS

1. King Street Metro Station Parking Lot
2. King Street/Diagonal Road Intersection
3. Metro Station Concourse
4. Ramsay House
5. Market Square

EDAW
LEGEND

B. SUMMARY OF FACTORS IN NARROWING SITE OPTIONS

After consultation with stakeholders and the City, we prioritized the site criteria. As noted earlier, successful Visitors Centers are located where they are easy to find and use, both for tourists who intended to stop there first, as well as for those who come upon it in their travels and decide to stop in.

The majority of sites were eliminated because they did not meet the mission and site criteria. Others were eliminated because they:

- Are not near intersections of main tourist and travel routes
- Other more productive uses of the property existed
- The opportunity cost through rent or development is too high
- The site would draw more traffic into residential areas rather than away from them
- No available unloading/loading for bus or car parking.

All of these factors caused the Team to eliminate potential locations outside of Old Town and on the main routes from north and south and west.

The remaining sites concentrated along the King Street corridor and Old Town as viable areas for consideration. Acknowledging that there is no perfect site, among those that remained, the primary issues are:

- **Maximizing the Management of Motorcoaches and their use of the Visitors Center.** Motorcoach tour operators operate on tight schedules and will by-pass facilities that are not located very close to what they want their patrons to see. With visits lasting an average of 2-3 hours inter-modal transfers become difficult. However, motorcoach visitors present a genuine opportunity to introduce tourists to Alexandria and encourage longer stays in hotels on future visits without adding significant numbers of personal vehicles.
- **Minimizing Traffic Congestion.** Stakeholders expressed concern about traffic and congestion while recognizing the importance of tourism. The Parter Team is sensitive to these issues and believes that measures can be taken and design solutions found that alleviate and improve the overall situation for residents and tourists.
- **Providing extra capacity through use of exterior spaces.** We also paid particular attention to pedestrian access, cueing and marshalling space outside of the center. Attention was paid to potential negative impacts on residential areas. Other issues including operational efficiencies, staffing questions and impact on the surrounding site were taken into consideration.

- **Meeting visitor expectations and properly conveying the image and quality of Alexandria.** Visitors have come to expect a certain level of information and service at Visitors Centers. This requires more space than currently exists at Ramsay House.
- **Servicing the Tourist.** Providing a location as convenient to the tourist as possible.

C. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMON TO ALL LOCATIONS:

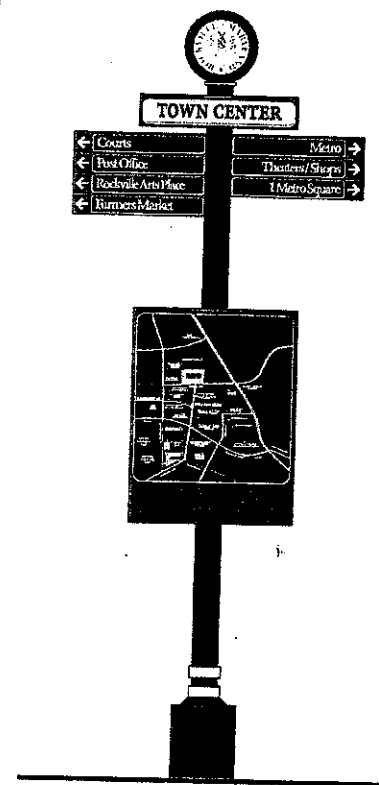
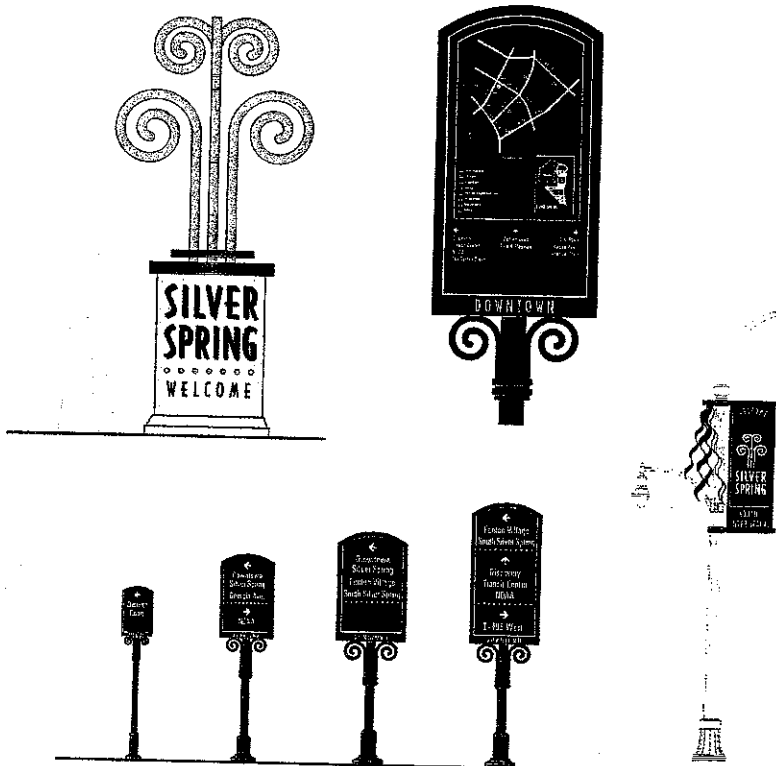
1. Signage & Wayfinding

Common to all of these options are improvements in signage, wayfinding and traffic and parking management that should ease car parking for visitors, managing motorcoaches, minimizing negative impacts on residential areas and business districts. This will assist visitors and residents alike by moving more pedestrian and vehicular traffic easily through the city. We recommend that a comprehensive signage and wayfinding system be established, specifically create a unified image and common vocabulary for understanding the City by:

- Helping define the physical boundaries of the city and its districts consistent with an overall theme. This will help create a sense of place and offers opportunity for community partnerships.
- Identifying landmarks and amenities within the city and within the Historic District. These include tourist destinations, restaurants, retail, parking, and transportation centers.
- Informing and directing visitors concerning points of interest and reinforcing the experience of being in the Historic District.
- Including a "network" of information elements that interpret significant points of interest, which can be historically or thematically related, for the visitor; educate them, and encourage them to continue along the "network".
- Create a consistent identity while remaining flexible enough to accommodate future growth and change.

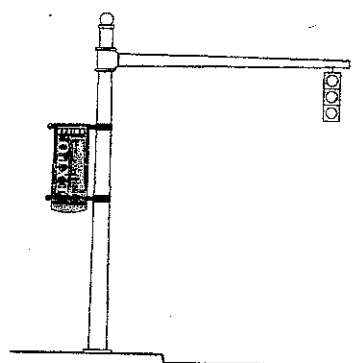
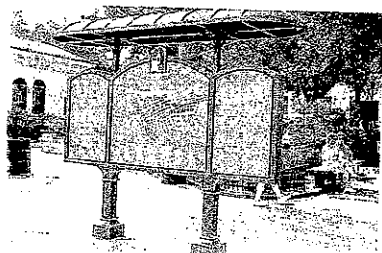
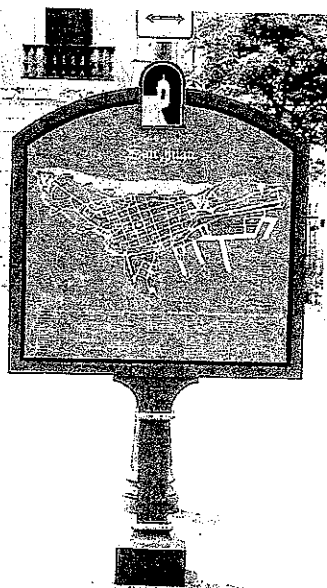
The next page has signage examples from four cities.

Downtown Silver Spring



Rockville Town Center

Old City of San Juan



Historic Montgomery Master Plan

2. Public Transportation Recommendation

i. Encourage the use of special bus passes

A DASH PASS is available for unlimited rides on all DASH routes for \$25 per month. DASH does not have its own Day Pass but honors the Regional One Day Pass (\$2.50) and a number of other transit systems passes. DASH does offer a DASH Regional Bus Transfer to bus riders that is good for up to four hours on other DASH routes and return trips. The Regional Day Pass can be purchased upon boarding the bus. It is recommended that DASH develop a DASH Day Pass or the Regional Day Pass be sold at the Visitor Center and discounted parking rates be provided at City-operated lots by visitors holding a day pass. This arrangement would encourage less automobile travel within the historic areas of the city and more use of the public transportation services, including DASH or *DASH About*.

ii. Provide *DASH About* service on weekdays

The *DASH About* service has been successfully implemented to provide free shuttle service from the King Street Metrorail Station and the King Street Corridor up to Fairfax Street. This service carries 1600 persons on an average Saturday in July. During this high tourist season it is recommended that the *DASH About* service also be provided on weekdays.

iii. Provide free off peak DASH service along King Street

Another option for encouraging tourism and use of public transportation includes the discounting of off-peak fares on DASH routes between the King Street Metrorail Station and Fairfax Street near the Visitor Center. Base fares on the DASH system begin at \$1.00. The service currently costs \$0.25 with a transfer from Metrorail for eastbound King Street routes (\$1.00 without the transfer). Ridership is low during these off-peak times with approximately 25 passengers riding per hour between the King Street Metrorail Station and Market Square. This means that there is excess capacity that could be utilized. Considerations for instituting a free-fare during the off-peak raise two key system concerns: (1) preferential treatment of the King Street corridor and (2) DASH driver confusion regarding which riders are using only the King Street corridor of the fixed route. These concerns could be allayed with free-fares throughout the system during off-peak periods. The DASH system does not have records regarding the off-peak ridership; therefore the lost revenue cost of such an alternative has not been estimated. The option might prove to be a popular option with riders but may be cost prohibitive. (However, it should be explored.) Alternatively, day passes available from the Visitors Center could encourage more frequent bus use for both off-peak and peak times.

iv. Improvements to transit travel speeds on King Street

Further evaluation of measures to increase travel speeds, including removal of on street parking (at peak commuting times or permanently), dedication of pull-off stops, improved signal synchronization or preferential treatment is recommended. If on-street parking is removed, consideration should be given to providing alternative off-street metered spaces such as the lot on King Street west of Alfred. The economic and business consequences of the removal of parking should be carefully considered before any action is taken.

v. Conduct traffic and parking evaluations

Further detailed evaluation of all parking within a 5-minute walk from the center, monitoring of parking accumulation during weekdays and weekends, and exploration of opportunities to expand supply of off street parking, hours of on street parking and weekend discount rates for off-street parking. This study can be done in conjunction with a wayfinding and signage study.

3. Create Supplemental Information Opportunities.

Also common to all options is the recommendation that in addition to the Visitors Center, ACVA have easily transportable carts or mini-stands to place at key locations on the busiest days. Locations might be on the waterfront on busy weekends or in a park or other location during an event or festival. This will be an aid to visitors, residents and businesses and, depending on the proximity of the Visitors Center, on a given day would have the flexibility to either encourage visitors to use the center or answer basic questions guiding people on a tight schedule to attractions, shops and restaurants. A test run of this concept could start as early as the Red Cross Festival, Civil War Re-enactment or Arts Festival, all scheduled for this summer and fall.

4. Some Presence Should Remain in Old Town

There was strong consensus among stakeholders that some presence should remain in the heart of Old Town. If one of the Upper King Street options is selected, ACVA and the City will need to determine the nature of that presence.

5. Encouraging Motorcoaches to Alleviate Auto Traffic

A well-designed Visitors Center that is built on an information/orientation model may serve to attract more tour buses to the area. It also may lead to an increase in the amount of time spent in Alexandria. Instead of Alexandria being the secondary destination where tour buses spend two to three hours before going to Washington, DC or Mt. Vernon, Alexandria itself could become the principal destination. This would increase the number of visitors to the Old Town area without an increase in personal vehicles. Furthermore, tour bus clientele may choose to return to Alexandria for a longer visit on the basis of what they learn at the Visitor Center.

Motorcoach Management

Motorcoaches can drop off riders along King Street at Market Square and within a block of the current Ramsay House Visitor Center. Many locations throughout the city have signs indicating either no buses or no bus idling. Washington Street and Route 1 are the primary routes serving tour buses traveling into, through and out of the city. Buses traveling between Washington and Mt. Vernon travel along Washington Street. Those buses originating or destined to the south use the one-way pair of Franklin Street/Gibbon Street.

Buses destined to the neighboring attractions near the existing Visitors Center are not provided with clear signage. Northbound travelers on Washington Street are faced with a Visitor Center sign at King Street to make a right turn, a nearly impossible task for a bus.

Recommended travel routes for tour buses are displayed in Appendix L and summarized as follows:

- The routes oriented to the Ramsay House/Market Square area have buses coming from the south turning off of Washington Street at Prince Street and traveling 3 blocks to Royal Street. Once reaching Royal Street the buses can use the block surrounding City Hall and Market Square to circulate. Pickup and discharge can occur on King Street and Royal Street if additional space is needed. Buses arriving from the north can be directed to turn off of Washington Street at Wythe Street where a painted left-turn lane is designated. Four blocks in from Washington Street, buses would then turn right onto Fairfax Street and travel down to King Street at the Ramsay House/Market Square. The outbound route follows Royal Street to Cameron Street where either a right or left turn can be made onto Washington Street.
- For the Visitors Center alternatives in the vicinity of the King Street METRO Station, the primary access to/from the interstate (Capital Beltway) should be via the Telegraph Road interchange. Buses coming from Telegraph Road would be directed to make a left at Callahan Drive, a right at King Street and either a right on Daingerfield Road or continuation on King Street. Buses could either discharge/pickup along Diagonal Road or King Street depending upon which visitor center option is considered. Tours from the north on Washington Street would be directed to make a right-turn from Washington onto Cameron and then travel down Cameron to the METRO Station at Cameron and King. Departing buses would primarily be directed to make either (1) a right turn from Diagonal Road onto Duke Street and then to Telegraph Road or (2) travel east along King Street to a left onto Patrick Street, a right onto Queen Street and a left to Washington Street northbound. A left from Daingerfield Road to Prince Street will also route buses to Washington Street for a right turn if they are heading south to Mount Vernon.

There is a continuing need to identify more long-term parking locations for tour buses. Currently 3 – 4 buses can park along Union Street in designated areas immediately north of Founders Park. Other possible sites to consider: on-street frontage beside surface lot at Cameron and St. Asaph, on-street frontage around WMATA bus garage along Pendleton Street, on-site/off-street spaces at Washington Masonic Memorial (reconsideration) and parking adjacent to movie theaters (e.g., Hoyts Potomac Yard, AMC Hoffman) and churches having weekday parking demands significantly lower than weekends.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS DESCRIBED

A full analysis of each option is presented in the next section.

Options 1 and 2 – New Visitors Center at Upper King Street

As noted earlier the King Street Metro Station Parking Lot and the triangle at the King Street/Diagonal Road Intersection are two sites recommended for a Visitors Center. These sites offer the opportunity for a pavilion of approximately 3,600 square feet in total area with landscaped area and outdoor staging space surrounding them. The mixed nature of architectural styles surrounding this area allows for a variety of design styles while keeping the functionality of the building apparent to users. The WMATA lot offers space for short-term visitor parking associated with the center and for motorcoach tour buses to load/unload and stage. At the King Street/Diagonal Road site, a synergy between the sculpture and artwork and a Visitors Center would need to be worked out.

Option 3 – New Visitors Center in the King Street Metro Station Concourse

The concourse under the King Street Metrorail station provides an area for construction whose architectural presence would largely be determined by the existing station structure.

Option 4 – New Visitors Center on Market Square

The areas now covered by planters and plants have degraded and are scheduled for major renovation. These areas present an opportunity to create a Visitors Center of about 3,500 square feet. Appropriately scaled, these provide immediate access to visitor parking in the underground garage, staging spaces and existing bus drop-off and pick-up spaces.

Option 5 – Ramsay House Renovation and Expansion

Expanding Ramsay House over the adjoining garden space offers the opportunity for a building of approximately 3,910 gross square feet. The architectural style would be respectful of the history associated with Ramsay House and the surrounding area while

clearly differentiating that it is not part of the original structure. Improved linkages with staging spaces on Market Square could be encouraged.

**Option 6 – Ramsay House Status Quo or Renovation with
Ancillary Welcome Space at the King Street Metro Station**

If one of the Upper King Street locations is not selected, we strongly recommend that ACVA negotiate to place static displays and orientation maps for Alexandria within the “free” area of the King Street Metrorail station space. On key weekends and for special events, ACVA could staff this area as an additional visitor service and friendly greeting to those arriving by Metro.

A more active use of the “free” space within the King Street Metrorail station has been previously raised as a possibility in the 1999 study by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority titled “King Street Station Pedestrian Access Study.” Ancillary welcome space would be a much more active use of what is now a large vacant space that one enters at the main (and until recently the only) Metro Station entrance.

Option 7 – Ramsay House Status Quo with Expanded Marketing and Partnerships

The options presented above focus on the physical aspects of enhancing the visitor center function for the city of Alexandria. Another option is minor renovations, physical upgrades and improved exhibits to Ramsay House, coupled with the Metro station displays. This would result in modest capital outlays. The difference between what the City might anticipate spending on a new visitor center and the cost of the enhancements could be devoted to increased long-term marketing and development of partnerships to expand overall visitation to Alexandria.

X. DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS

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A. INTRODUCTION

In this section the recommended site areas are analyzed with regard to their context, relationship to the Visitor Domain, building and exhibit concepts, and transportation and parking implications. A comparative summary of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the sites is provided.

B. UPPER KING STREET OPTIONS

1. Background Information on Upper King Street and Surrounding Area

This Upper King Street area is characterized by newer commercial development associated with the Metro area and the Carlyle development. This area is distinctly urban, but does not have a distinct central plaza, major park or major gathering place. In addition, the development around King Street Metro is slightly denser (taller) than what is found in the traditional Old Town area. Developing a Visitor Center in this part of Alexandria would "introduce" tourists and visitors to an area of Alexandria that has a slightly different character than the historic Old Town. This could have a benefit in expanding the Visitor Domain, but could also delay visitors from reaching their primary destination in Alexandria, which is historic Old Town.

The Triangle Park site is located along King Street at the intersection with Daingerfield and Diagonal Roads. The park is highly visible and is considered by some as a gateway into Old Town. Immediately surrounding this site are several larger commercial buildings that include office space and retail along the first floor.

The Metro Parking site is located along Diagonal Road and is highly visible from surrounding roads and the Metro station. Immediately surrounding the property are commercial buildings along the east including office space, a hotel and retail along the first floor. West of the site is the King Street Metro Station.

2. Relationship to Tourist Domain

This area is well situated within the transit systems of Alexandria. It is served by Metrorail, Metrobus and the DASH service with the King Street Metro Station and the bus transit node that occurs along with the Metrorail.

The Upper King Street area is near only a few visitor and tourist attractions, most notably the George Washington Masonic Temple. The focus of visitor attractions is further east towards the waterfront.

While this area does not have many visitor attractions, it has seen a significant amount of revitalization in the last 5 -10 years. There are a number of hotels serving the Old Town and Washington Area located here including the Hilton and Alexandria Embassy Suites and the new Marriott. In addition, there are several major developments recently completed or underway including Carlyle, the Patent and

Trademark Office, and the AMC Hoffman Center Movie Theater. These new developments have given or will give this area a new sense of vitality.

3. **Impacts on Surrounding Area**

Construction of a building on either of these sites would change the character of the site and would potentially attract additional people. The Triangle Park would take this area from solely park use to a combined use as a Visitors Center and park (with the hat sculpture remaining). Placing a building in the plaza area that is currently seen as "open space" and artwork may raise concerns. Also, with the "hat" and its ivy, a Visitors Center would be difficult to see from the King Street Metro Station. However, the areas immediately surrounding the sites are commercial and the direct visual impact from most residences would be minimal. Improved wayfinding and signage would help to limit inadvertent driving by buses and cars through the surrounding residential streets.

Traffic patterns would be affected by the removal of some traffic and buses from the Historic District. The placement of the visitor center on upper King Street could strengthen the King Street corridor from a retail perspective. This location is more central for directing visitors to emerging tourist areas other than Old Town such as Carlyle and Mt. Vernon Avenue. The convenience of these sites to the Metro allows for a better tie-in to marketing efforts, drawing visitors from Washington DC via the Metro.

4. **Site Constraints and Benefits**

The Triangle site is owned by the City, and the Metro parking lot is owned and operated by WMATA. Selection of the Metro parking lot would alter the configuration of parking but we do not believe a significant number of spaces, if any, would have to be lost. In the past the site had been proposed for a sizable mixed-use development. WMATA may raise concerns about the limited Visitors Center function jeopardizing future plans for full development. Should future development occur it is possible that it would obscure the visibility of a center located here.

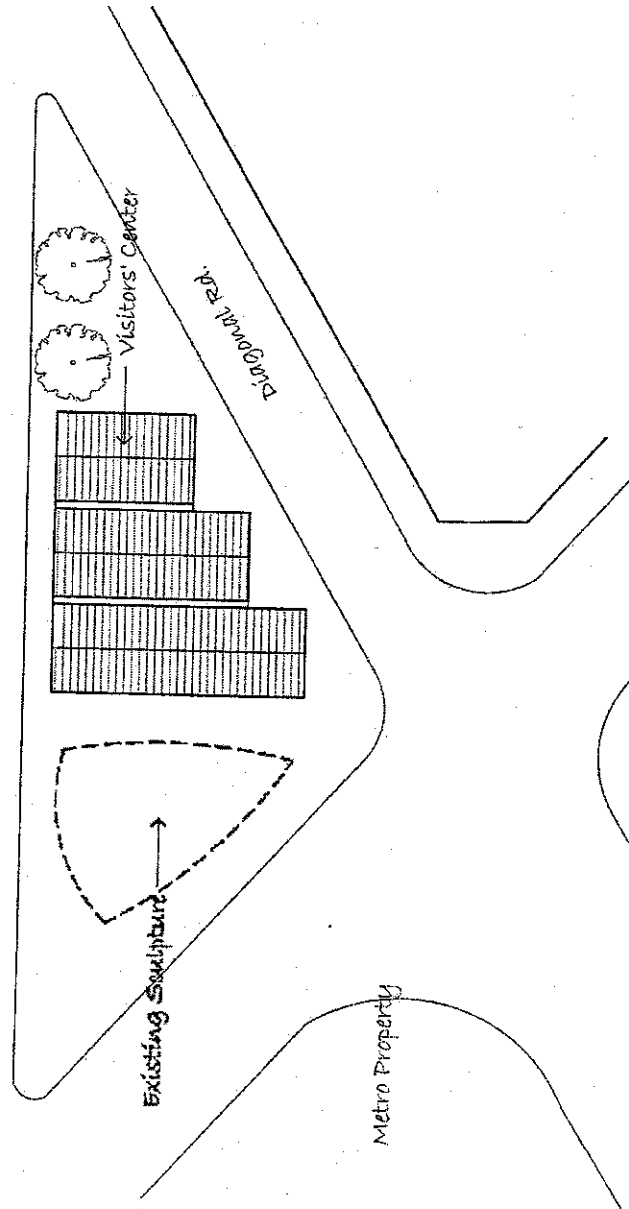
A building sufficient to accommodate the Visitors Center would occupy approximately 3,600 square feet. The Triangle site is generally flat with a total site area of 15,850 square feet. The Metro site is sloping with the high portion of the site in the southwest and the lower portion in the northeast. The Metro parking site is a total of 6,075 square feet. From a topographical perspective neither of these sites presents limitations from a construction, pedestrian or vehicular perspective.

i. **Key Constraints of the Triangle site include**

- Construction would be viewed as losing open space
- The lack of space for parking or lay-bys around or within the site
- Existing artwork and any Visitors Center would need to be compatible
- Need to cross busy street to utilize

- ii. **Key Benefits of the Triangle Site include the following**
 - Visible to motorists, buses and public transit riders
 - Level lot ready for construction
 - Owned by City
 - Near Metro station
 - At end of DASH loop and well situated near mass transit location
 - Appropriately sized for building in park setting
 - Some surface parking adjacent
- iii. **Key Constraints of the Metro Parking Lot site include the following**
 - Construction on this site would be viewed as losing open space
 - Requires WMATA agreement
- iv. **Key Benefits of the Metro Parking Lot include the following**
 - Visibility
 - Well situated near mass transit location
 - Near Metro station
 - At end of DASH loop
 - Some surface parking adjacent
- v. **Key Constraints of the Metro Concourse site include the following**
 - Poor visibility, particularly if parking site is developed
 - Limited parking adjacent
 - Requires WMATA agreement
- vi. **Key Benefits of the Metro Concourse site include the following**
 - Adjacent to bus terminus
 - Convenient to visitors arriving by Metro
 - At end of DASH loop
 - Some parking adjacent (at least for now)
 - Site underutilized and may be more available than open sites

King St.

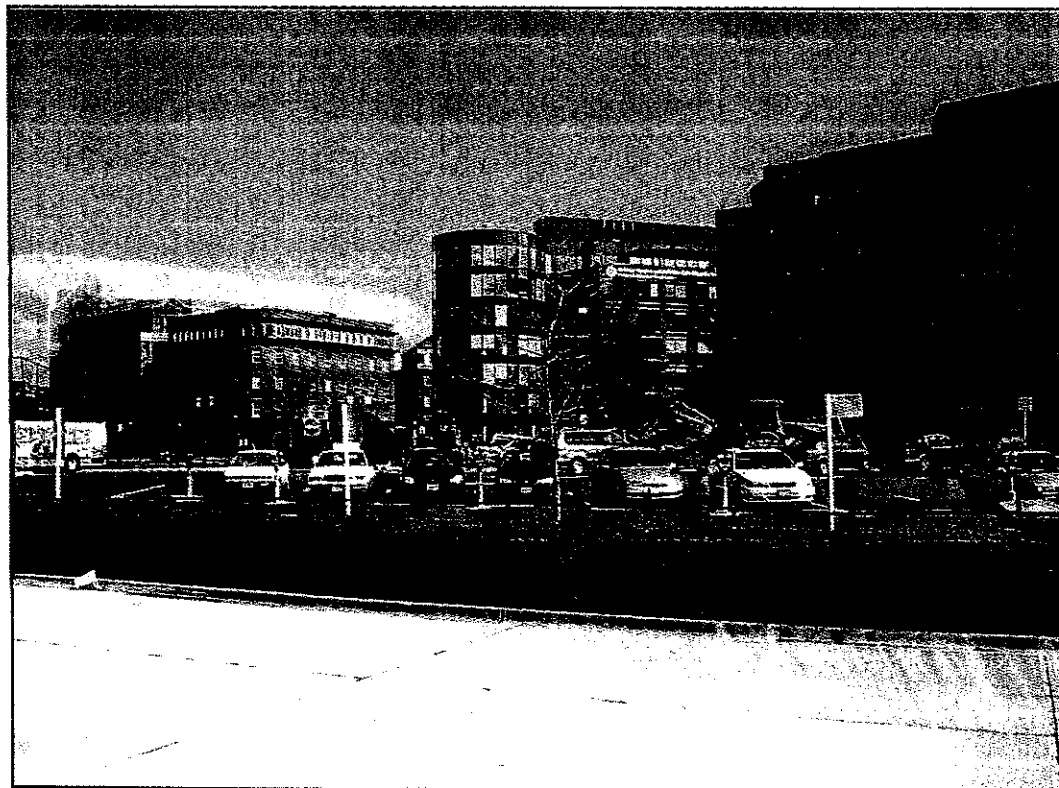


Site Plan 0 8 16 32 ft.

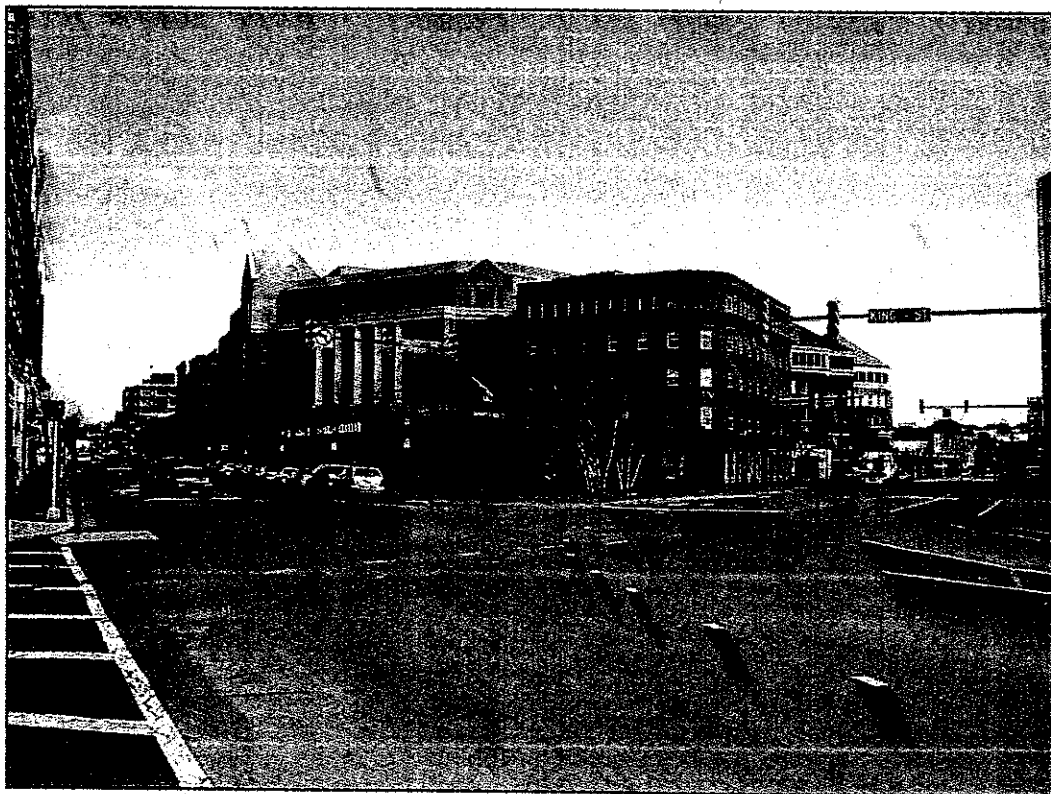
Alexandria Visitors Center
King St. Triangle/Metro Site

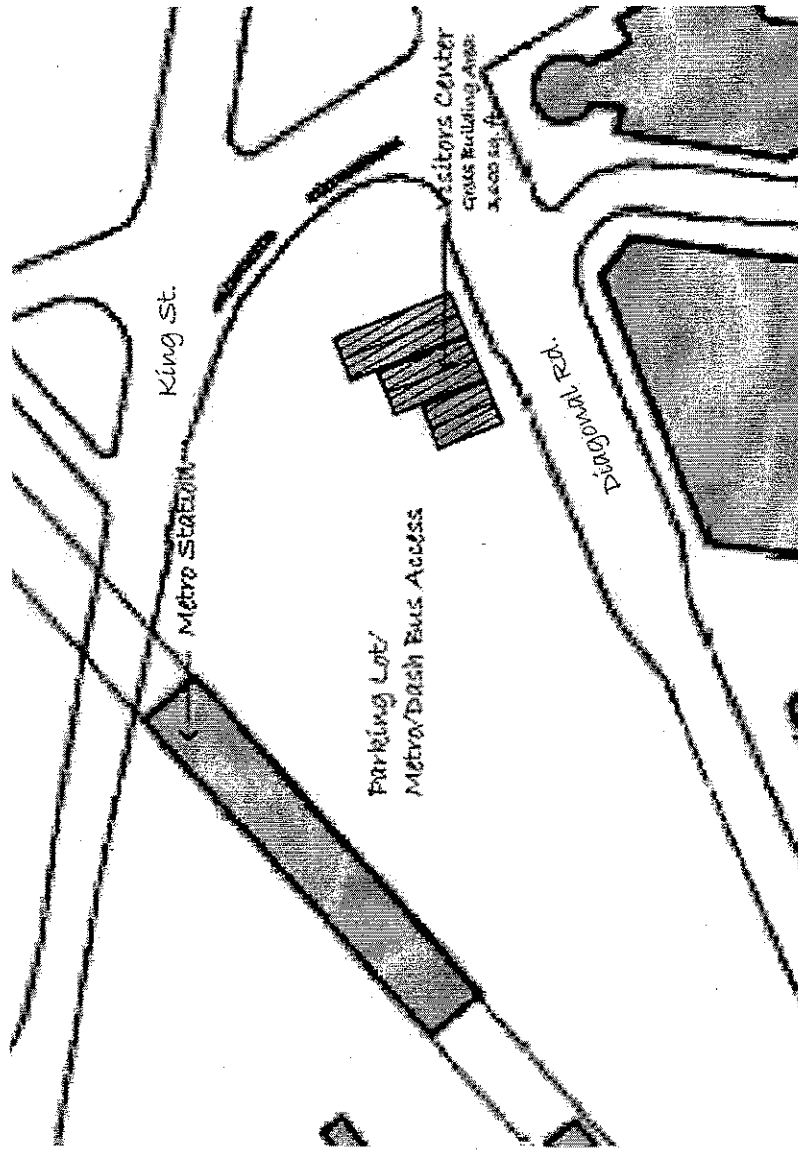
Powe Jones Architects

Metro Parking Lot



Triangle Site

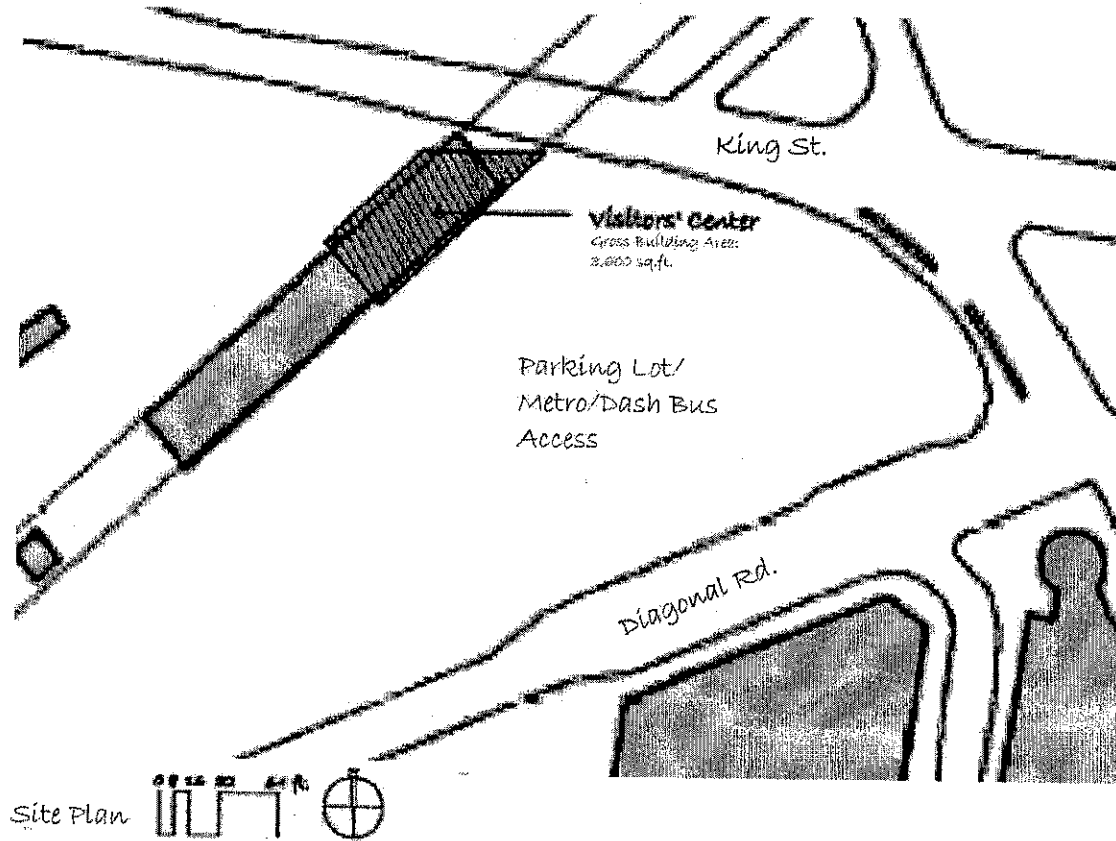




Site Plan

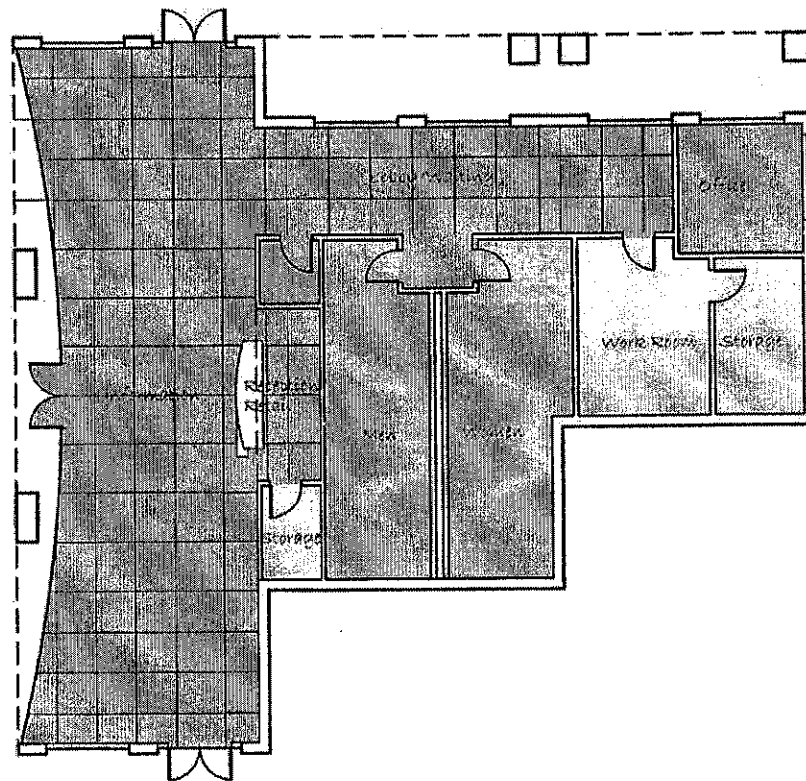
Alexandria Visitors Center
Metro Parking Lot Site

Powe, Jones, Architects PC



Alexandria Visitors Center
Metro Concourse Site

Powe . Jones . Architects . PC

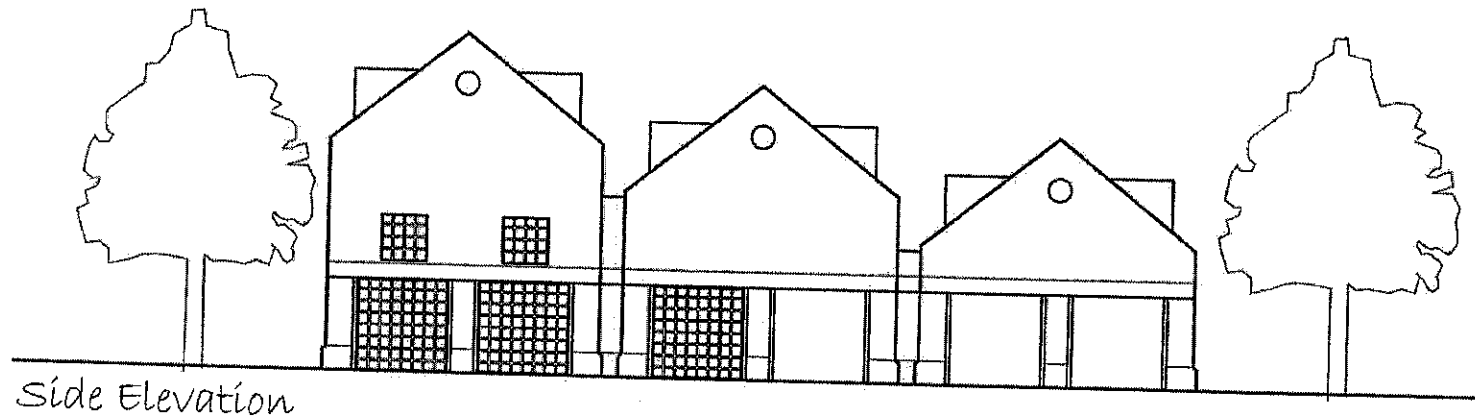


Floor Plan

Gross Building Area: 3,600 sq. ft.

Alexandria Visitors Center
King St. Triangle/Metro Site

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Alexandria Visitors Center
King St. Triangle/Metro Site

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5. Program Options

a. Building

The prototypical plans illustrate the area necessary to accommodate the Visitor Center for the proposed mission. The team was not engaged to develop a final plan or design a building, hence the same illustrative plan is shown for both the Metro Lot or Triangle sites.

i. Metro Parking Lot

There is space fronting along Diagonal Road, on the WMATA property, on the landscaped area immediately west of the bus and car entrance, which can be reconfigured to accommodate a Visitors Center without affecting the number of bus and taxi spaces and losing at most a few parking spaces. The site allows for a welcoming entrance greeting visitors from both the Metro and Diagonal Road sides with good visual access and a building that can be designed to clearly identify its function.

ii. Triangle Park

Triangle Park, currently the site of sculptural elements, is of sufficient size to easily accommodate a Visitor Center, with the potential to retain sculptural elements on the site. It is more distant from the Metro than the WMATA locations and is not as easily accessible via foot, car or bus. As with the Parking Lot site this location presents the opportunity to design an identifiable and welcoming building.

iii. Metro Station Concourse

This area is directly under the Metro train tracks, fronting on the south side of King Street, directly as you exit the ground floor outdoor north Metro entrance. Further analysis of this space in relation to Metrorail's needs for circulation, safety and other issues will be necessary to assure sufficient space to house a Visitor Center. This site would be the least intrusive on any future developments in the area and has immediate linkage to those arriving via Metro, trains and buses. However, it has the least visibility and should future development occur on the WMATA parking lot area, it could be completely obscured from view. (This concourse option for a full Visitor's Center should not be confused with the ancillary visitors orientation space use option discussed in Section IX.D6 for the area inside the main entrance to the Metrorail station.

6. Exhibit Program concept

i. Introduction

As with the architectural diagrams, the same overall exhibit concept is applied to all locations. Differences in the layout of space due to site issues vary the delivery of the program and perhaps the depth of treatment of some aspects. These are noted in the schematic diagrams for the various sites.

ii. Concept

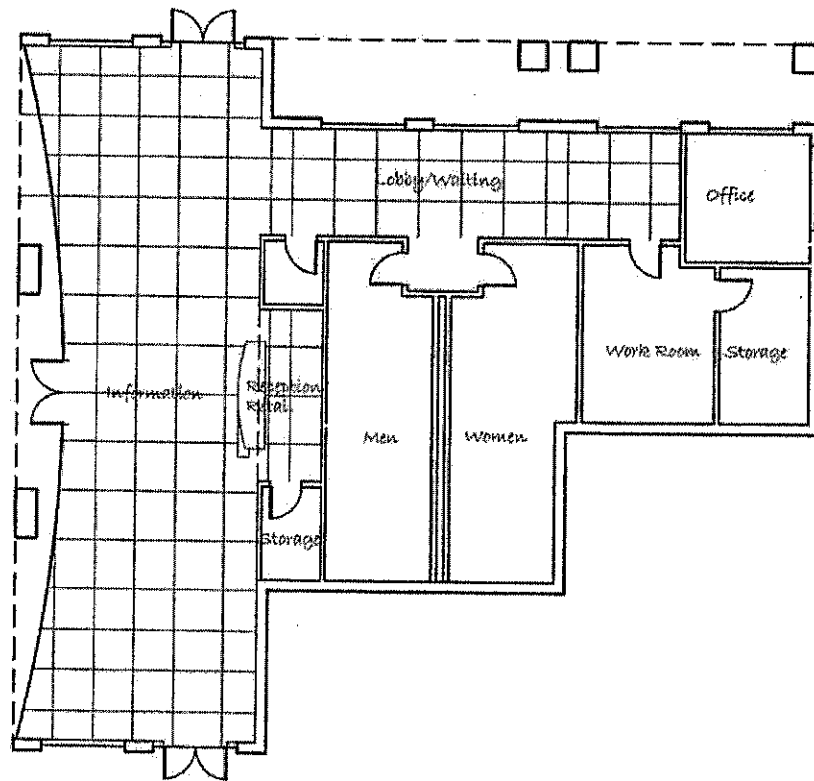
The functional spaces necessary to appropriately accommodate the visitor are described above.

The Visitors Center will be positioned as a central information unit in the City. The typical visitor needs to be educated about where to go and what to see. The Visitors Center will provide trip-planning capabilities, mapping and sample itineraries that will prompt the visitor to go to multiple places, some of which they may not have considered prior to entering the Center.

The Visitors Center should be separated into zones that will provide multiple layers of information. The information desk is the first point where a visitor is greeted, questions can be answered, and itineraries can be determined. The staff person who can provide knowledge about the city and its destinations is extremely important.

This information desk and surrounding area will feature general information about the city illustrating its importance to history, maritime industry, post WWII development, and activities as well as the current and future planning of the city and surrounding areas.

The main zone of the Visitors Center is an interpretive area in which the larger themes and stories of the City of Alexandria are defined and information and interpretation related to these themes is provided. The displays will also provide information about the attractions, and tours relating to the themes. Through graphics, artifacts, and documents, the displays will immerse the visitor in the city's story. The panels and related themes include museums, historic sites, art galleries, antiques and crafts, Colonial Alexandria, early maritime industry, African-American cultural sites, shopping, accommodations, dining, entertainment and services. Visitors will not feel that they *have* seen and done Alexandria based on their experience in the Visitors Center, rather that they *want to* go out and discover in greater depth what is depicted.



Floor Plan



Gross Building Area: 3,600 sq. ft.

Major destinations would be anchors to other lesser known destinations and would be highlighted to form a connection with the visitor. In this way visitors start to feel the proximity of one place of interest to the next and are encouraged to extend their visit in both time and place.

Trip planning is the last information zone and could include computer interactives with touch screen monitors with access to the city web site and links to other attractions. These stations are important because the web site includes a vast amount of information regarding the attractions and amenities that are provided in the city. Furthermore, if a visitor has contacted the web site prior to the visit and wants further information, the visitor will be comfortable with the programming and mapping of the site. This commonality also works the other way, first being introduced to the site at the Visitor Center, and then contacting the site after the visit.

As a future consideration, a system should be established that would reflect back on the Visitors Center at the various destinations that are being promoted. The main approach of the development of the program for the Visitors Center is inside to outside. The system also has to promote from outside to inside encouraging additional visitation to all sites and amenities. This is another reason that the web site is important, as it further enhances the visitor's relationship with the city outside its boundaries.

It is important that the Visitors Center is not only known as a start to the visitor experience but also as a continuation and conclusion of that experience. The Center should promote Alexandria and its attractions and amenities for future visits. If someone comes through on a tour and only has three hours, they should know, for the future, that there is more to Alexandria. If a businessperson has an hour and visits the Center, their interest should be sparked for a return visit with family and friends. If visitors came to the Center while visiting friends or relatives, they could determine field trips and discover the uniqueness of the area and its various attractions with their friends and relatives. Visitors should be able to learn about special promotions, packages and events in the future and purchase tickets or make reservations in advance.

7. Transportation

Because this location is near the King Street Metro Station instead of near City Hall and the waterfront, there are several major differences with the Ramsay House and Market Square sites:

- Located further from attractions.
- Located closer to the Metro station.
- Located further from major routes into Old Town.
- Less available parking.

While visitation is assumed to be the same, the waterfront is approximately 17 blocks away, making it unlikely that visitors arriving by water will use the Center. Given 1,000 visitors, we estimate that 630 people will use personal vehicles. With two people per vehicle, this would mean 315 vehicles. In addition, 320 would use the Metro bus and 50 would come by motorcoach. Given 2,000 visitors, 1,260 people would use personal vehicles (630 vehicles total), 640 would come by Metro and 100 by motorcoach.

i. Parking

There are four private parking garages within a 5-minute walking distance of the upper King Street sites. Only two of these are open during the weekend. There is also a metered WMATA lot that can be used 7 days a week. However, it is currently well utilized during peak weekend days but there are some available spaces. It is recommended that the garage facilities that are not open or have limited hours, be encouraged to open or extend their hours at least during the peak tourist months of the year. There would then be more parking available on the weekends in off-street facilities than what currently exists today. There are on-street parking spaces that are generally more available than those on lower King Street. There is generally some circulating the motorists will do in order to find any on-street spaces, but this circulating, although harder to do, given circulation limitations, should take less time than trying to find an on-street space farther east.

ii. Traffic volumes

To arrive at these locations, the vehicles traveling northbound on Route 1 would need to turn left onto King Street, which is not allowed. Therefore, we recommend that, through signing, those vehicles should be diverted to Telegraph Road and then use Duke Street and Diagonal to access parking.

The same methodology was used in this analysis as the existing Ramsay House analysis. The only difference is we assumed the northbound traffic would be split between Telegraph Road and Washington Street. (See the Appendix H for a breakdown by route.) Relative to the overall traffic volumes we do not anticipate the visitor center having a noticeable impact.

iii. Vehicular Circulation and Access

Signing is important in the Upper King Street area because many of the key streets are not on a grid system and the network is more confusing.

If additional parking is made available near the Visitors Center and a clear wayfinding system is implemented, then the Upper King Street option has adequate access. However, in order to get to most of the attractions, visitors in personal vehicles are going to have to drive down to the lower King Street area, or be encouraged by staff at the Visitor Center and parking rate fee structures around the center to take a *DASH About* bus. The WMATA lot has some

additional capacity and two of the garages in the area could be opened on weekends. Encouragement of use of the *DASH About* for use of the King Street corridor through a mix of riding and walking would assist merchants along King Street.

iv. Pedestrian Access

Pedestrians can walk to the upper King Street sites. There is a crosswalk at the intersection of Diagonal Road and Daingerfield Road that has a countdown pedestrian signal. There are also safe crosswalks from the parking facilities. The sidewalks are in good condition and do not have any major obstructions. The Visitors Center information area would be on one floor to make it ADA accessible.

Because it is about 12-13 blocks west of Market Square and the majority of attractions, upper King Street is inconvenient for pedestrians. They should be encouraged to combine walking and the *DASH About* bus to Old Town to stimulate shopping and dining along King Street.

v. Bus Circulation and Access

King Street Metro Station, where the *DASH About* bus picks up and drops off visitors, is across the street from the King Street Triangle site. The congestion on King Street is likely to remain a problem and cause delays for the *DASH About* buses unless better pull-offs are established.

Motorcoaches may be able to use the King Street Metro parking area off of Diagonal Road. It may be possible to take advantage of the WMATA bus facility to load and unload. This would have to be discussed with and approved by WMATA. Another alternative is dedicating curb space on Diagonal Road for loading/unloading, at least during the peak months. It is expected that the majority of the tour buses coming to the Visitors Center will be turning onto King Street from Washington Street. Coming from the east, the most convenient loading/unloading area will be on Diagonal, directly west of the WMATA parking driveway. Motorcoach tour buses are less likely to use this location away from the water, the Torpedo Factory and other prime attractions due to lost time to inter-modal transfers.

8. Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates

These and subsequent cost estimates do not include site acquisition costs, fees, furnishings and Owner's soft costs.

King Street Triangle

Building 3,600 GSF @ \$250	\$ 900,000
Site Work/Utilities 11,000 GSF \$25	\$ 275,000
Total building site related cost	\$1,175,000

Exhibit Hard Cost

Exhibit Fabrication and Installation	\$ 577,200
AV Equipment and Installation	\$ 80,000
Total Hard Cost	\$ 657,200

Soft Cost

Exhibition Design and Development	\$ 131,440
AV/Interactive Development and Production	\$ 220,000
Content Research and Development	\$ 66,000
Total Soft Cost	\$ 417,400

Total cost for Option **\$2,249,600**

Metro Parking Lot

Building 3,600 GSF @ \$250	\$ 900,000
Site Work/Utilities 20,000 GSF \$25	\$ 500,000
Total building site related cost	\$1,400,000

Exhibit Hard Cost

Exhibit Fabrication and Installation	\$ 577,200
AV Equipment and Installation	\$ 80,000
Total Hard Cost	\$ 657,200

Soft Cost

Exhibition Design and Development	\$ 131,440
AV/Interactive Development and Production	\$ 220,000
Content Research and Development	\$ 66,000
Total Soft Cost	\$ 417,400

Total cost for Option **\$2,474,600**

Metro Station Concourse

Building 3,600 GSF @ \$320	\$1,152,000
Site Work/Utilities	\$ 200,000
Total building site related cost	\$1,352,000

Exhibit Hard Cost

Exhibit Fabrication and Installation	\$ 577,200
AV Equipment and Installation	\$ 80,000
Total Hard Cost	\$ 657,200

Soft Cost

Exhibition Design and Development	\$ 131,440
AV/Interactive Development and Production	\$ 220,000
Content Research and Development	\$ 66,000
Total Soft Cost	\$ 417,400

Total cost for Option **\$2,426,600**

C. RAMSAY HOUSE AND MARKET SQUARE SITE OPTIONS

1. Background Information on Ramsay House and Market Square and Surrounding Area

These sites are located within a commercial and governmental district of Old Town. The residential areas of Old Town generally do not face on King Street but rather occur on the blocks adjacent to King Street, so there is some separation between the visitor center and residents.

Across Fairfax Street from the Ramsay House is Market Square, which serves as the "central square" for Old Town. This open space would provide a "front yard" for either the Ramsay House or a Market Square Visitors Center and allows for significant amount of spill over and staging space for visitors. There are bus spaces on Fairfax Street used by motorcoach tours to drop off and pick up tourists at Market Square. A Visitors Center at the Market Square location should help increase the number of motorcoach tourists using the center. The visual connection to motorcoaches also allows for staff to monitor their presence and provide drivers with information about parking areas and travel routes thereby avoiding the use of inappropriate streets and neighborhoods.

The location of the Ramsay House offers more challenges. The corner site is oriented in such a way that the building appears to face Market Square and Fairfax Street, yet the entrance to the building is along King Street. In addition the topography is steep along King Street as it falls toward the river, which gives the appearance of King Street being a side or back entrance.

Another key element of the immediate surroundings is the small garden that exists along King Street. This garden acts as a break in the consistent street wall along other portions of King Street. The garden provides a more formal entrance into the building. The layout of the garden tends to separate it from the street and does not encourage visitors to use the garden.

The immediate context of Market Square includes City Hall on the north side, larger commercial buildings along the west and southern sides and the existing Ramsay House and several other smaller historic commercial buildings along the east side. Along three sides of the Market Square are King, Fairfax and Royals Streets. The other positive aspect of this site is the bus lay-bys along King Street and Fairfax Street.

Market Square is built as an on-grade plaza. Below the plaza is a public city- owned parking deck that provides convenient parking to this part of King Street. The garage surface has a design load of 450 pounds per square foot. A one-story building has an average load of 150 pounds per square foot. The existing requirements of the garage would need to be taken into consideration, such as stairways, elevators, and airshafts.

2. Relationship to Visitor Domain

The Ramsay House and Market Square are well situated within the Visitor Domain and near most of the Old Town attractions and activities. One key element regarding this location is its relationship to a key two-block section of King Street that stretches from Fairfax Street to Union Street. This section contains a large number of restaurants and shops that are oriented towards Old Town visitors. Near the end of King Street at the waterfront is the Torpedo Factory, which is another key visitor attraction. Also nearby are the water taxi services that have shown growth in recent years. Encouraging the use of water taxis, especially in conjunction with the DASH and *DASH About* services will reduce traffic and parking impacts. The only minor difference is that the Market Square option would allow visitors parking at the City Hall garage or arriving by motorcoach to enter the building without crossing any streets.

This relationship between the Ramsay House and Market Square and the Torpedo Factory / Waterfront provides an excellent opportunity for visitors to park at the City-owned parking garage under City Hall or be dropped off by a bus at the corner of King and Fairfax Streets, visit the Visitor Center and then walk down the hill to the river, visiting a number of attractions along the way. This relationship helps contribute to the pedestrian traffic and business activity along King Street.

One drawback to this location is that there are fewer hotel accommodations in this portion of Old Town. The Holiday Inn and Morrison House provide some of the few hotel facilities in the heart of Old Town. Most of the larger Hotel Facilities are located nearer King Street Metro and at the north end of Old Town where larger sites have been available for the development of hotel facilities.

3. Impacts on the Surrounding Area

i. Continued Use of Ramsay House Without an Addition

To continue to use the Ramsay House without any additions would not cause any significant new impacts on the community. With better signage and wayfinding and continued marketing combined with modifications to the building, there would be some increase in use, but considering the amount of activity that already occurs in this area, this would not have much of an impact on the surrounding area. Any increase

is likely to be offset by visitors finding their destination and parking more easily and therefore exiting the circulation pattern.

ii. Ramsay House Expanded

If Ramsay House were expanded to include development on the current garden courtyard, the new Visitor Center would likely have a larger volume of visitors and the physical appearance of the Visitor Center would be different from the current environment. This addition would eliminate the break in the street wall and would reduce the amount of garden space that exists along King Street. This change to the street edge and loss of what is now "open space" would not be without controversy. However, such a change would be more consistent with the existing streetscape along King Street.

The Ramsay House site slopes from west to east with a total change in elevation of approximately 3 feet. The slope of the property creates a situation in which the building is entered one floor up along Fairfax Street and at the lowest level from King Street. This change in level causes complications in traffic flow within the building and separates functions that are best left adjacent such as the main orientation area and the restrooms or storage space and retail/brochure display space. The expanded Ramsay House would be approximately 3900 gross square feet with 1610 on the ground floor, 1610 on the second floor and 680 on the third floor. The Ramsay House site including the building and garden area is a total of 2050 square feet or .05 acre.

iii. Market Square

Developing a Visitor Center on Market Square would animate Market Square at times other than during planned events such as farmer's market and summer concerts. The Visitors Center would attract people throughout the week and weekend and potentially increase visitation to this area of Old Town, but considering the amount of activity that already occurs in this area, this change in volume would not have a noticeable impact on the surrounding area.

Construction of a building on Market Square would have to be sensitive to the surrounding historic fabric and would have to go through an extensive review and approval process. Placing buildings in the plaza area that is currently seen as "open space" for the community would likely raise some concerns with some residents of Alexandria. It should be noted that we have been advised that the City has been planning to

rebuild Market Square as the square planters no longer provide a protective seal over the parking garage underneath them. This project will require the removal of existing trees and the replanting of new ones as the planters need to be relined. The introduction of well-designed pavilions (one for a Visitors Center and one as a new air pavilion that can replace the stage) flanking the open plaza area can actually enhance the scale, character and use of the plaza, particularly if the fountain were reconfigured as part of the plaza design. They would also have the effect of lessening the gap along Market Square and act as a bridge between the portions of King Street to the east and west of the Square.

Market Square is an on-structure plaza area and therefore is generally flat. Due to the parking garage there is a slight grade change from the sidewalk to the plaza. Each pavilion is 3,500 gross square feet, smaller than the existing planters. Market Square is a total of 48,000 square feet, which is larger than Rockefeller Plaza in New York City.

Since federal funds helped finance the development of the current Market Square, the placement of a Visitors Center on Market Square will need to be consistent with any federal requirements that still may be outstanding.

In addition, there has been a Martin Luther King Memorial group working on a site for a statue of Dr. King. They have recommended it be on Market Square. It will be a seated figure on a bench or ledge. As such, it does not prevent the Visitors Center option on Market Square but any Visitors Center would need to be complimentary to the design and site of the proposed statue.

4. Site Constraints and Benefits

Key Constraints for the Ramsay House site include

- The existing building and historic character of the building
- The lack of space for parking or lay bys within the site
- Entrance is less welcoming
- Sloping topography

Key Benefits for the Ramsay House site include

- Within Visitor Domain
- Adjacent Market Square provides significant amount of spillover and staging space for the Visitors Center

Alexandria Visitor's Center Report

- Well situated for waterfront retail and restaurants
- The site is in City ownership and control
- This is the center of Old Town, close to waterfront, on King Street

Key Constraints of the Market Square site include the following

- Buildings will need to be sensitive to the historic character of surrounding buildings
- Not near many hotels

Key Benefits of the Market Square site include the following

- The Visitor Center pavilions can enhance the plaza character, scale and activity
- Tour bus drop off is immediately adjacent to this location
- Visitor parking is immediately under the building
- The site is in City ownership and control
- The plaza is scheduled for renovation due to its aging condition, planned improvements can be coordinated with Visitors Center work
- This is the center of Old Town, close to waterfront, on King Street
- A flexible site that can be configured to maximize its effectiveness and efficiency as a Visitors Center
- The Visitors Center pavilions can be used to enhance Alexandria residents' amenities in Old Town in a convenient location (restrooms, event information, etc.)
- Provides significant amount of spillover and staging space for the Visitors Center within Visitor Domain

5. Program Options and Development

i. Building

a. Expanded Ramsay House Option

As detailed in the analysis of Ramsay House, an addition to the existing house, occupying the entire existing garden site, would be required. An expansion, which would occupy the entire site not occupied by the existing house, (except for a 3-foot setback from the north and east neighbors) would provide sufficient building area for a simple welcoming and orientation center program. The addition would be approximately 30 feet by 30 feet, with its ground floor oriented toward and at the level of King Street. Its ground floor could be open in expression, similar to the storefront

architecture along King Street, albeit smaller than desirable on the ground floor for desired public information functions. The diagrams show the main orientation is on the ground floor with restrooms on the second floor. The third floor would be used for secondary support and staff spaces. Thus, the existing Ramsay House site would continue to capitalize on its King Street location. It can utilize the nearby Market Square for bus drop-off and tour staging areas, and tourists in automobiles can continue to park in the parking garage under Market Square.

The addition should be appropriately respectful of Ramsay House and the lower King Street brick architectural character and scale, contrasting with the existing house sufficiently to express itself as a new addition to an older house similar to other house additions in Alexandria. Preservation principles encourage additions to existing buildings to not replicate the historic buildings, but rather respect their scale and character while being more of an expression of their own time. The ground floor of the addition should capture the open storefront character of the King Street shops.

b. Market Square Pavilion Option

Market Square, which stretches the full block from Fairfax to Royal Streets, fronting on King Street, serves as the forecourt to City Hall and its "town square," programmed with community and tourist outdoor activities. Its design currently includes major raised planters on both sides of the square, planted with trees, with a very large bench-height square fountain at its center. The City reports that the plaza and its planters are in need of major renovation due to deteriorating hardscape and softscape conditions with its age.

The renovation of Market Square presents an opportunity to replace a portion of the eastern planter bed flanking the Square with a low shed-roof pavilion (with an appearance much like the market sheds which were located on the original Market Square) to serve as a visitor center, with a mirror image, open-air pavilion flanking the western edge of the square to be used to shelter the farmers market and other outdoor activities. A performance stage should be integrated into the open western pavilion, oriented toward the plaza. If properly scaled and detailed, these pavilions could enhance the character of the plaza without reducing any of its useable outdoor area. One option to consider would be scaling down the fountain and replacing it with flush surface water jets and drains and a sculptural element which could animate the space,

attract visitors of all types and make the fountain virtually invisible in the winter months.

6. Exhibit Concept Program

The conceptual program for exhibits would remain the same in this option but would be more limited due to the space constraints associated with the Ramsay House site.

7. Transportation

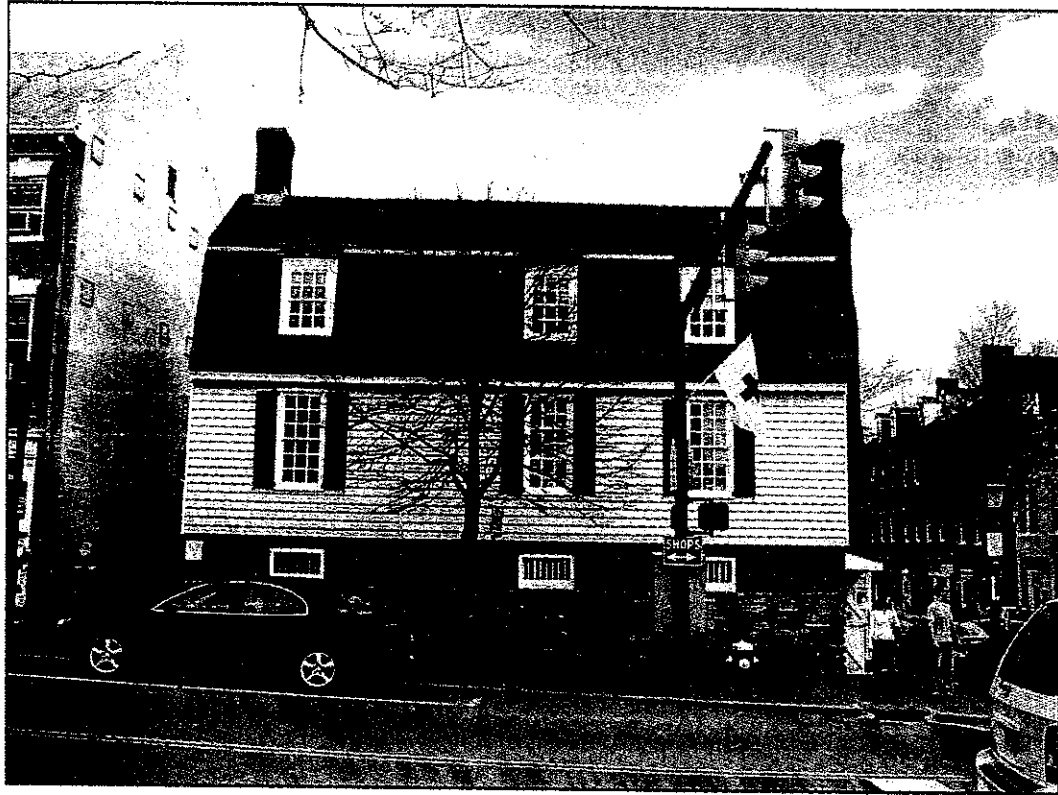
Recommendations concerning parking and motorcoach management are made in prior sections as is our conclusion concerning the level of tourism related traffic in relation to overall traffic.

i. Expanded Ramsay House

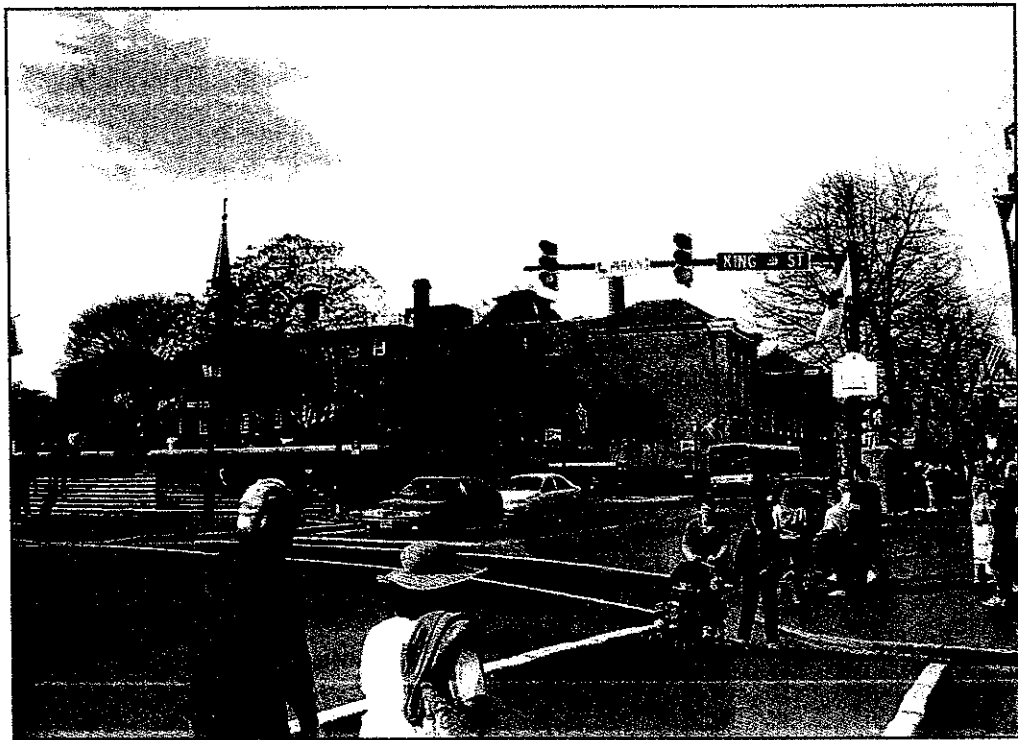
If the Ramsay House were expanded, visitation would increase and there would be far better and equal pedestrian access for physically disabled individuals. Currently, approximately 548 visitors use the Ramsay House during a peak weekend day in July. If it were expanded, it could serve anywhere from 1,000 visitors arriving in 285 personal vehicles, to 2,000 visitors arriving in 570 personal vehicles during a peak weekend day. Tour bus visitation percentage would likely increase from 5% to as much as 10%.

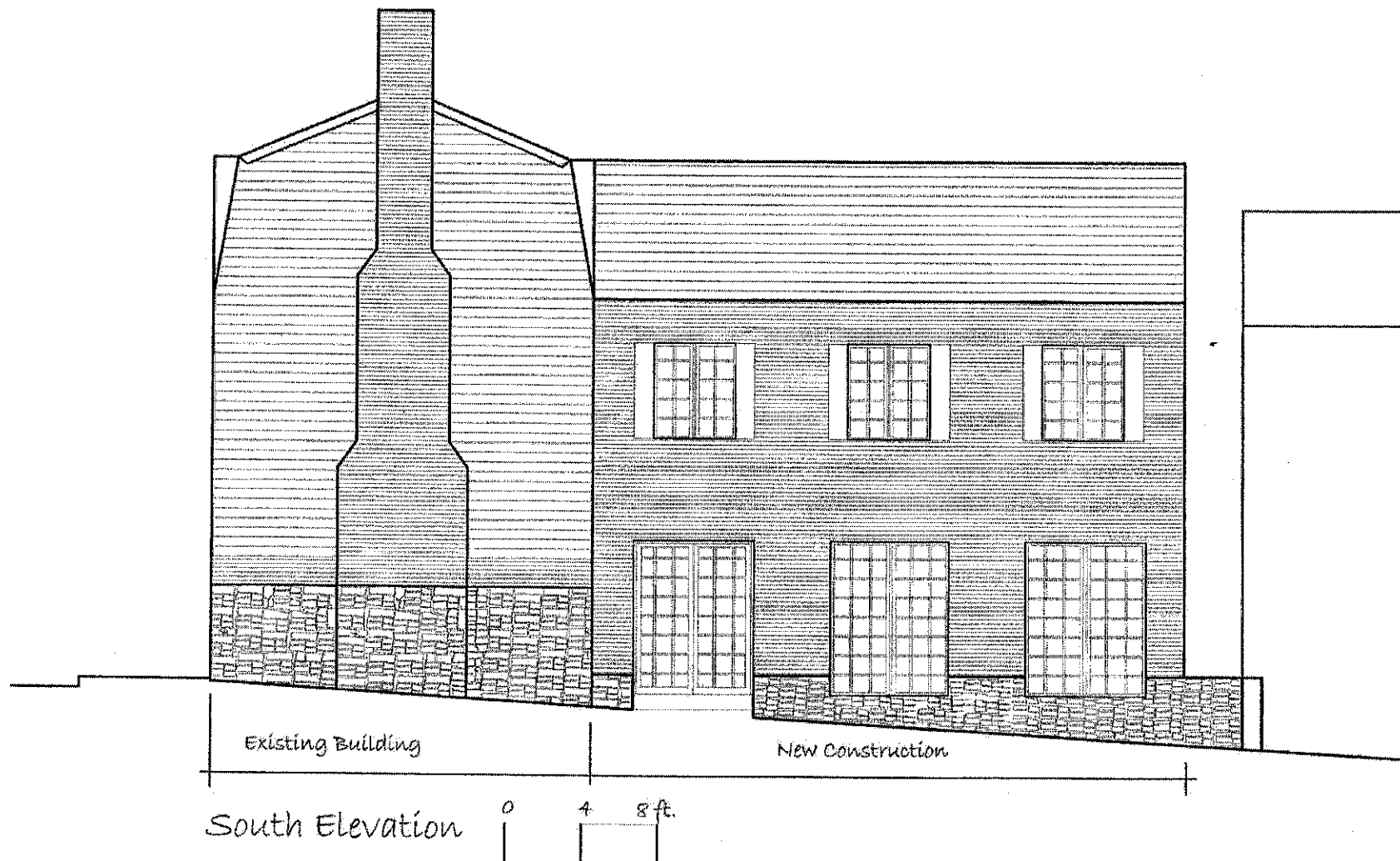
The George Washington Masonic Memorial is an excellent attraction and resource for the City. However, negotiations with the owners of the site and the adjacent neighborhoods would need to occur. In addition, given concerns about bus weight and wear and tear, the owners of the site may request City financial assistance in rebuilding the parking lot. There are very few large areas near Old Town to park buses. There may be an opportunity to limit the number of buses parked at that location to minimize any effects on the neighborhood north of the Memorial. Bus operators should be made aware of the parking opportunities and the preferred parking locations for different time periods of the day. In addition, the City may want to evaluate the feasibility of designating on-street parking beside the surface parking lot at the corner of Cameron and North St. Asaph Streets.

Ramsay House

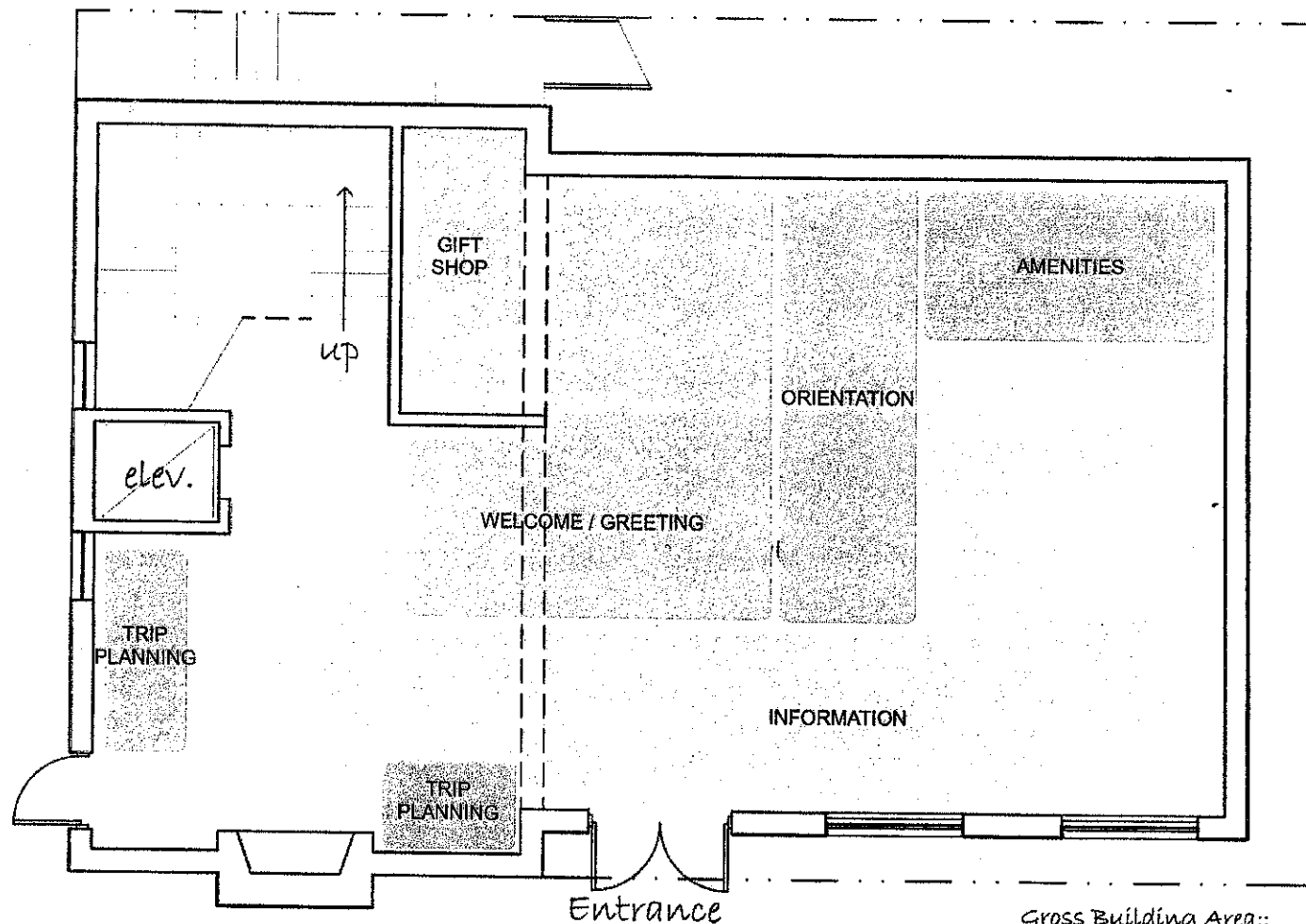


Market Square





Fairfax St.



Gross Building Area::
Ground Floor 1,610 sq.ft.
First Floor 1,610 sq.ft.
Second Floor 680 sq.ft.
Total 3,900 sq.ft.

King St.

Ground Floor Plan

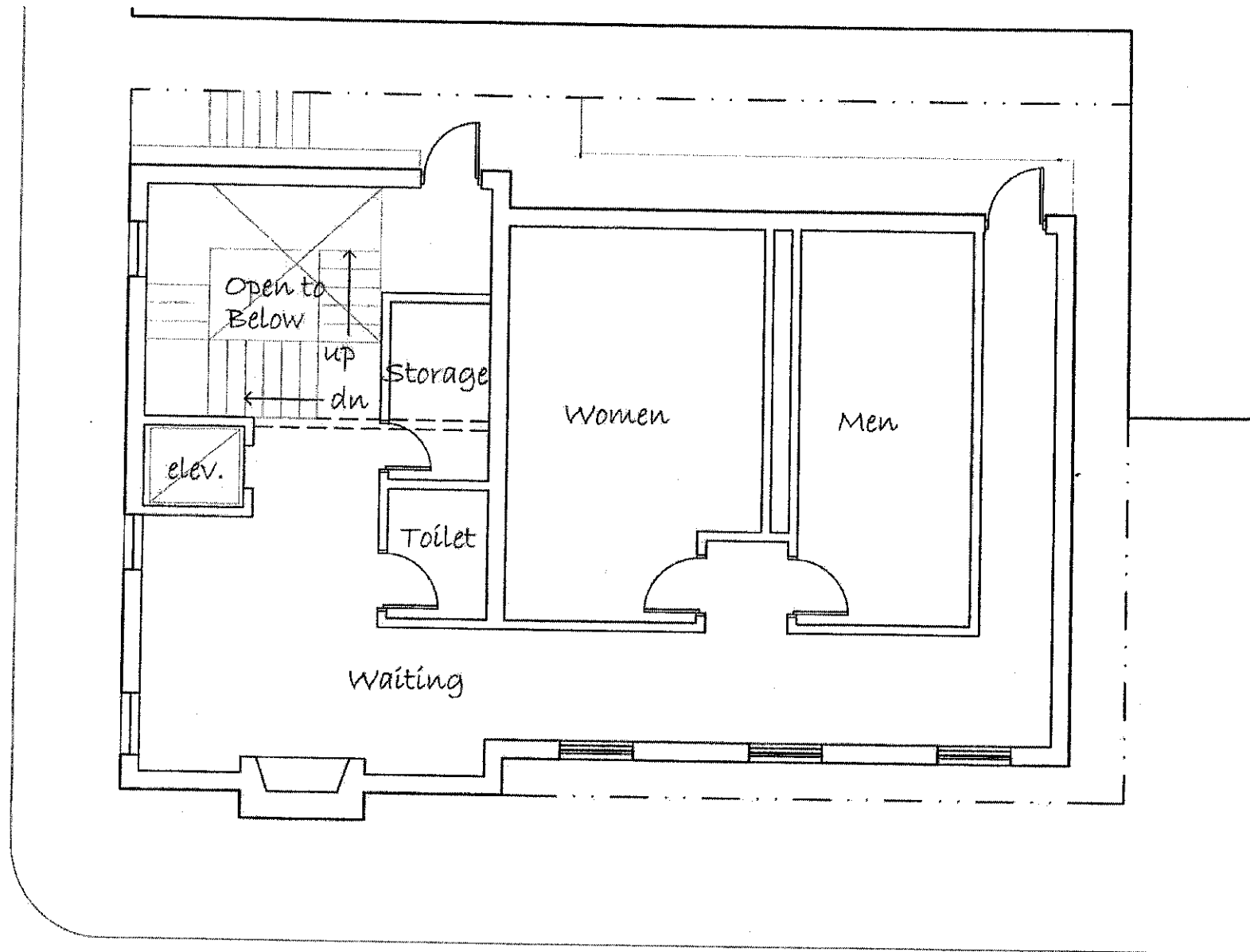
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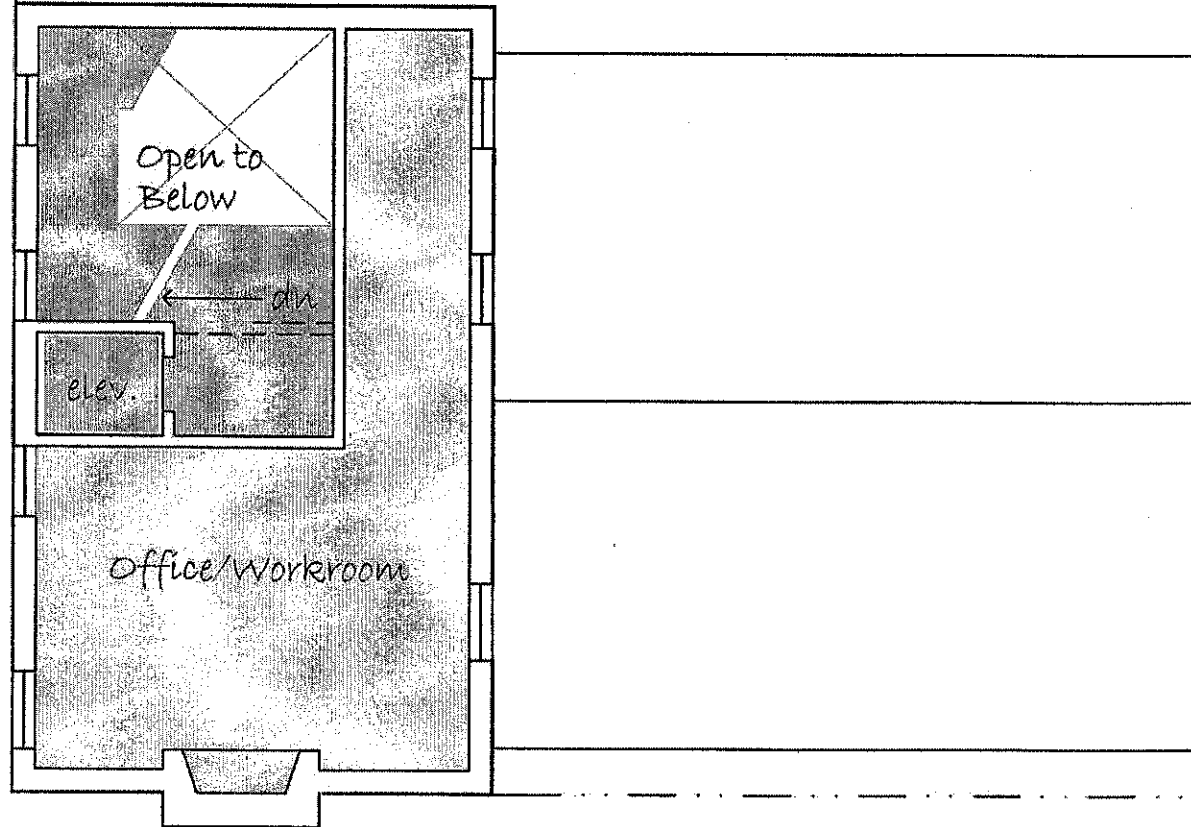
Alexandria Visitors' Center

Ramsay House Site

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Fairfax St.



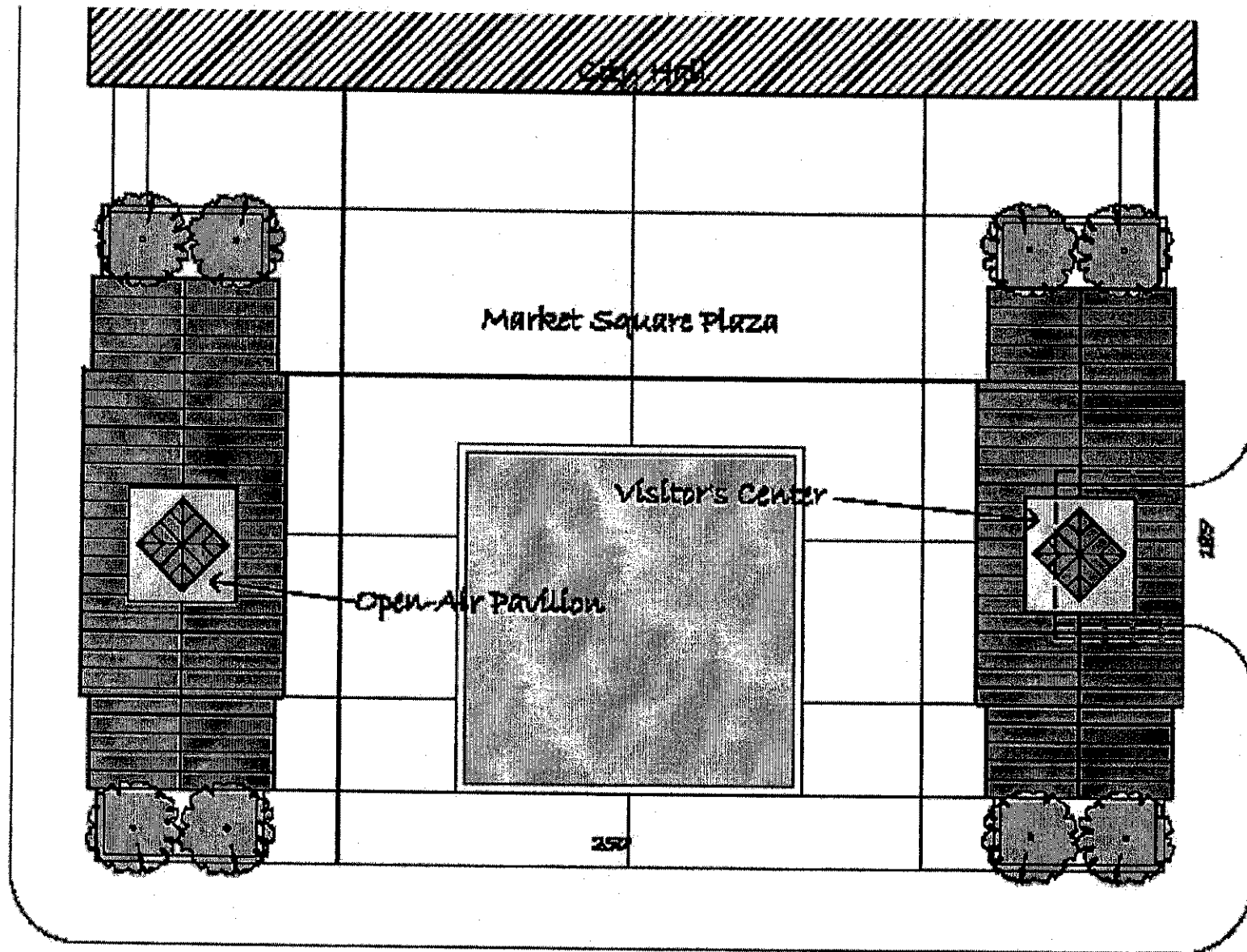
King St.

2nd Floor Plan



Alexandria Visitors Center
Ramsay House Site

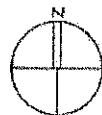
Powe . Jones . Architects PC



Site Plan

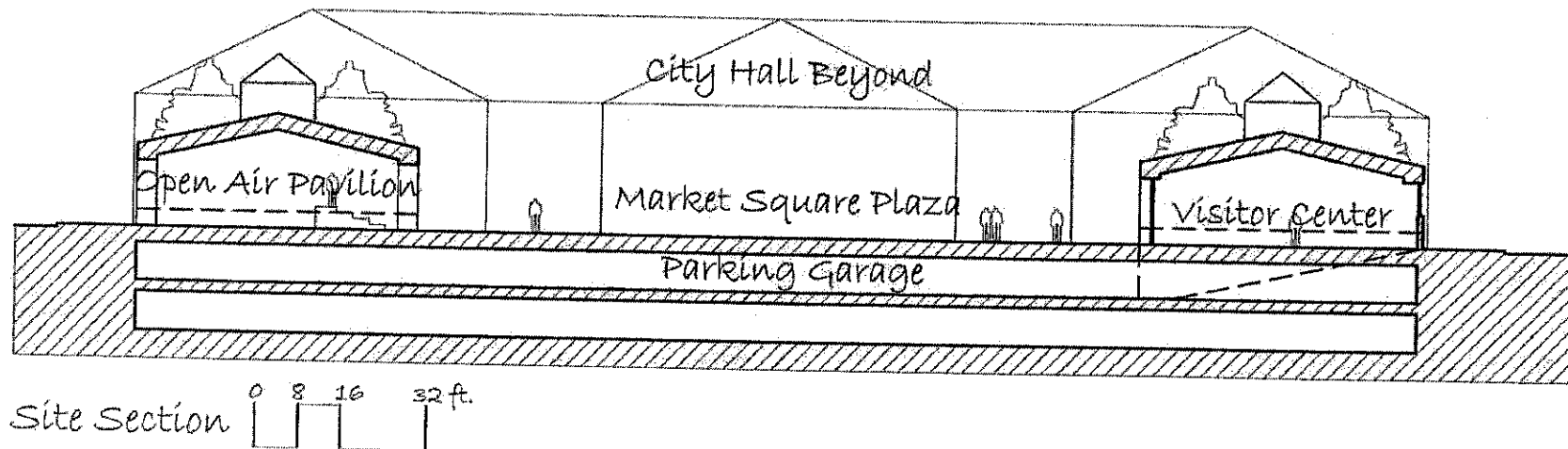
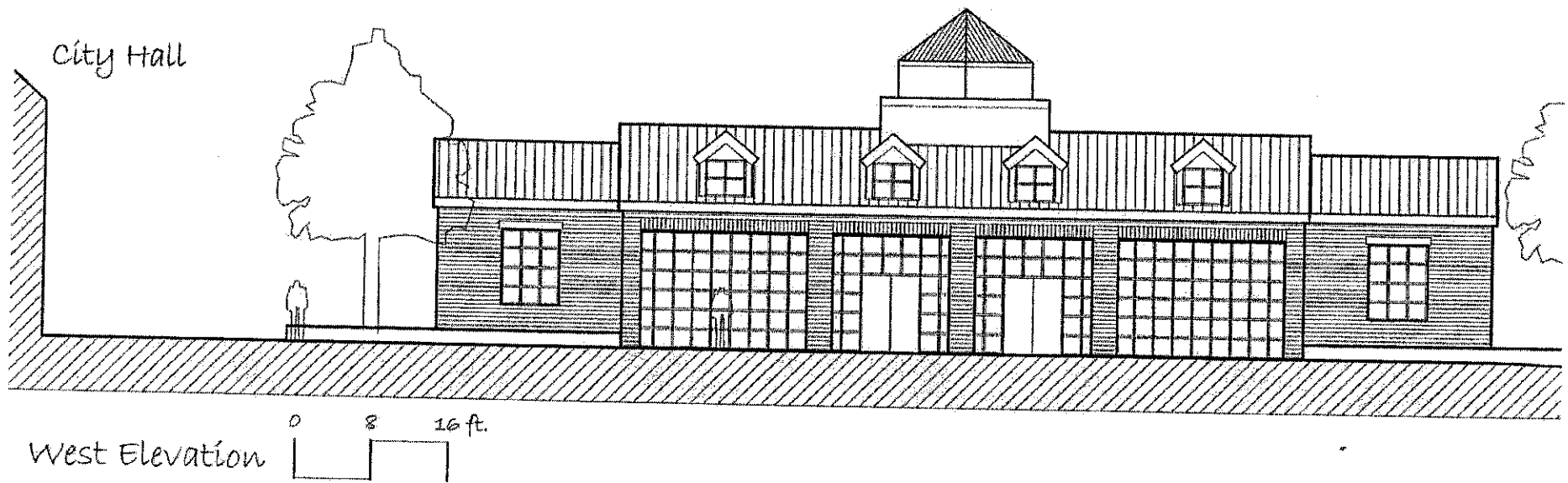
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King St.



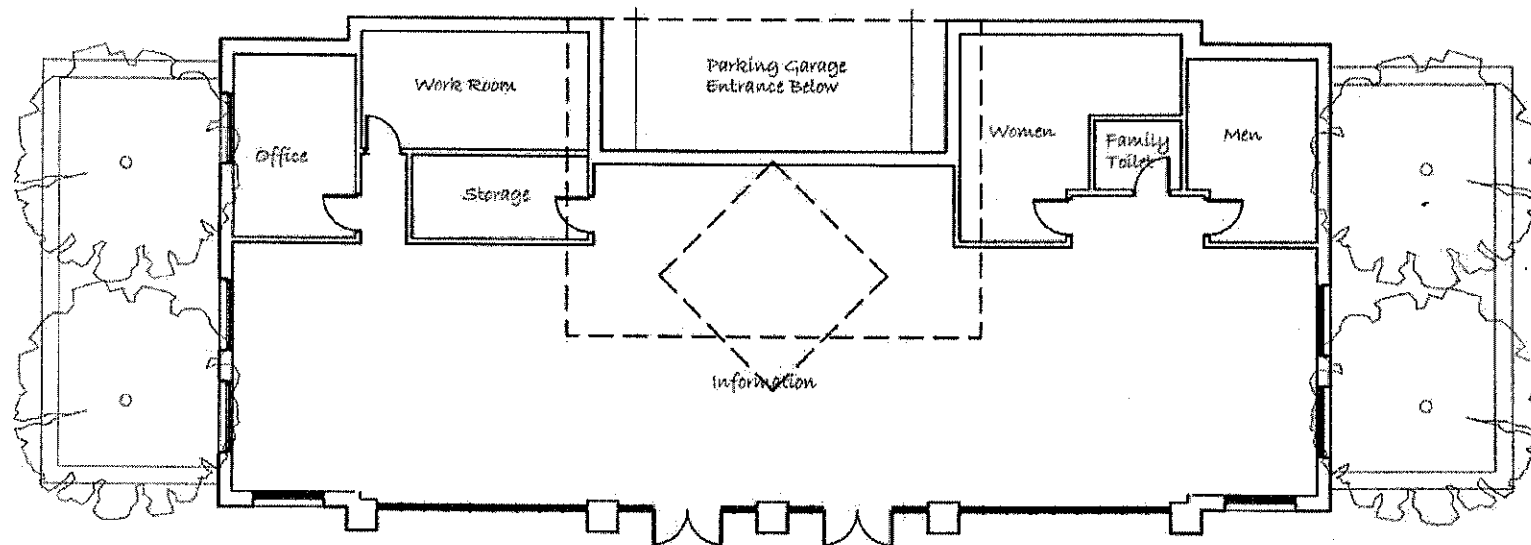
Alexandria Visitors Center
Market Square Site

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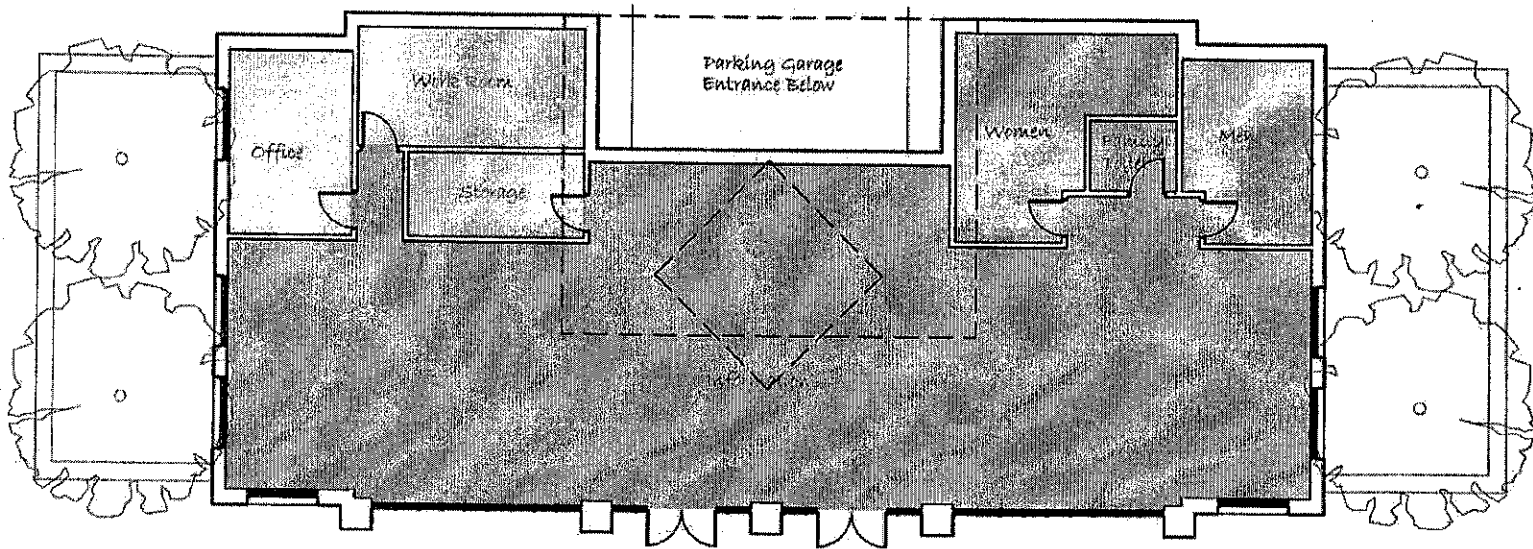
Alexandria Visitors Center
Market Square Site

Powe . Jones . Architects PC



Gross Building
Area: 3,600 sq.ft.





Gross Building
Area: 3,600 sq. ft.

Floor Plan 0 8 16 ft. Z ⊕

Alexandria Visitors Center
Market Square Site

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ii. Market Square

The evaluation of the Market Square option is the same as the Expanded Ramsay House evaluation, however, there is better pedestrian access and bus access.

Visitation to a Market Square site is assumed to be similar to that of the Expanded Ramsay House option. There is a tour bus loading/unloading area adjacent to the Market Square site, therefore, it is more likely that visitors would use the Visitors Center because there would be no streets to cross.

In terms of pedestrian access, Market Square is on a relatively even grade. At present, handicapped access is from Royal Street, opposite from where the site of the one-level Visitors Center. There are crosswalks at both Royal Street and Fairfax Street on King Street with adequate crossing time.

8. Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates

Ramsay House Expanded

Building Existing 2,040 GSF @ \$125	\$ 255,000
Building Addition 1,860 GSF @ 250	\$ 465,000
Site Work/Utilities 11,000 GSF \$25	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
Total building site related cost	\$ 745,000

Exhibit Hard Cost

Exhibit Fabrication and Installation	\$ 403,800
AV Equipment and Installation	<u>\$ 60,000</u>
Total Hard Cost	\$ 463,800

Soft Cost

Exhibition Design and Development	\$ 92,760
AV/Interactive Development and Production	\$ 200,000
Content Research and Development	<u>\$ 58,000</u>
Total Soft Cost	\$ 350,760

Total cost for Option	\$1,559,560
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Market Square Option

Alexandria Visitor's Center Report

Building 3,600 GSF @ \$250	\$ 900,000
Open pavilion 3,600 GSF @ \$130	\$ 468,000
Total building site related cost⁵	\$1,368,000
Exhibit Hard Cost	
Exhibit Fabrication and Installation	\$ 691,200
AV Equipment and Installation	\$ 100,000
Total Hard Cost	\$ 791,200
Soft Cost	
Exhibition Design and Development	\$ 158,240
AV/Interactive Development and Production	\$ 240,000
Content Research and Development	\$ 80,000
Total Soft Cost	\$ 478,240
Total cost for Option	\$2,637,440

⁵ Additional work on the plaza not related to the Visitors Center and pavilion is estimated to be \$1,446,000. See Appendix for details.

Alexandria Visitor Center, Alexandria, VA
Alternative Sites Analysis

Site Issues/Properties	Ramsay House- Existing	Ramsay House- Expanded	Market Square Pavilion	Metro Station	Metro Greenspace	King St. Triangle
SITE ISSUES						
Availability	+	+	+	-	-	-
Site Acquisition	+	+	+	-	-	+
Ease of Approvals	+	o	o	-	-	-
Proximity to Attractions	+	+	+	-	-	-
Visibility	+	+	+	-	o	o
Auto Accessibility	o	o	+	+	+	o
Metro Accessibility	-	-	-	+	+	o
Bus Accessibility	o	o	+	+	+	+
Pedestrian Marshalling	-	-	o	o	o	o
Impact on Neighborhood	-	o	+	+	+	+
Size Fit w/ Program	-	-	+	+	+	+
Impact on Site	+	-	+	+	-	-
VISITOR CENTER ISSUES						
Site/Building Ownership	+	+	+	-	-	-
Visitor Experience	-	o	+	o	o	+
Visitor Convenience	-	+	+	-	-	-
Implementation Issues	+	-	-	-	-	-
Impact on Existing Property	+	-	o	+	-	-
Availability of Bus Queuing	-	o	+	+	+	+
Tour Marshalling Space	-	o	+	+	+	+
Impact on Neighborhood	+	+	+	o	-	-
First Cost	o	o	o	o	o	o
Operational Efficiency	-	-	+	+	+	+
ADA Accessibility	-	+	+	+	+	+

Legend

Positive Impact	+
Neutral Impact	o
Negative Impact	-

Alexandria Visitor's Center Report

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XI. POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

XI. POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

Over the years ACVA has studied the tourists who come to Alexandria and prepared annual reports measuring the economic impact of its overnight visitors. Although there is less statistical information regarding day-trippers, both the overnight and day-trippers come to Alexandria for its historic ambience, to relax and enjoy the restaurants and stroll the streets. The tourists expect, and receive, a quaint, easily walkable, seaport city with unique shops, historic ambience, and as the advertising promotes, FUN.

The latest ACVA statistics for Fiscal Year 2002 are:

Spending	Dollars	Local Taxes	Taxes Rec'd
Lodging (20.4%)	\$86,7455,085.71	5.25%	\$4,554,117.00
Meals (28.3%)	120,337,545.38	3%	\$3,610,126.36
Public Transport (17.4%)	73,988,455.46		
Auto Transport (16.1%)	68,460,582.35	1%	\$ 684,605.82
General Retail (9.8%)	41,671,658.82	1%	\$ 416,716.59
Admission/Recreation (8%)	34,017,680.67		
Total	\$425,221,008.40		\$9,265,565.77
\$1 per room night tax			768,296.00
Total direct taxes collected for overnight visitors			\$10,033,861.77

These figures are estimates based on the overnight visitors to Alexandria. Day-trippers or those staying with friends and relatives are not included.

% spending is based on Virginia Tourism Corporation figures.

There is less knowledge of day-trippers because there has been limited ability to track them. ACVA does know that tour busses regularly visit Alexandria. The American Bus Association in a recent six-month survey of motorcoach operators, local travel businesses, overnight tour passengers, and single day charter passengers to three destinations, Washington, D.C., Lancaster, PA, and New York City found that:

- A visit by a one-day motorcoach group leaves from \$2,536 to \$4,563 in a destination's economy.
- The average number of day passengers per bus ranged from 39.1 to 45.7
- Of the gross dollars spent on the tours, approximately 43.7 to 63.9% remain in the destination's economy
- The average price for a one-day tour is \$74.34, with an additional \$22.69 spent on local meals, retail, transportation and attractions.

Alexandria Visitor's Center Report

- In Washington D.C. 23.4% of the 21 million annual visitors arrive by motorcoach

A new Visitors Center in Alexandria, of the types that we are recommending, will provide *more* tourist orientation services than are currently provided in Ramsay House. It will also provide *better* tourist orientation service to the tourist. The educational and promotional materials will be presented in a more tourist-friendly manner, in a state-of-the-art facility, with increased square footage for better flow and displays, allowing for better accessed information for additional sights and destinations.

It is anticipated that the Visitor Center will be only one component, albeit a critical one, of a multi-faceted, integrated effort to increase tourism to Alexandria. Improved signage, local transportation, parking and increased marketing are also anticipated to be part of the effort to make Alexandria more tourist-friendly and to make tourists more aware of the City's quality and variety of activities.

The additional services offered by a new Visitors Center are expected to reinforce ACVA's tourism marketing efforts, once visitors are in Alexandria. The importance of these additional services is significant. Visitors will be:

- More likely to go to and use the Visitors Center
- Obtain more information in a more enjoyable way about the city and regional historical, cultural and recreational points of interest.
- Be directed more effectively to the City's lodging, restaurants and retail operations
- Visit more sites
- Extend their visits
- Have a higher probability of returning to visit in the future

A more enjoyable experience will have a secondary benefit of generating more positive testimonials and word-of-mouth recognition for visiting Alexandria.

The improved level and quality of services delivery resulting from a new Visitors Center (supported by the other efforts to improve the tourist experience mentioned above) will lead to the Visitors Centers main economic impact: increased tourism via longer lengths of stay, more repeat visits, and greater tourist spending per day if the attraction visited/visitor/day ratio is increased.

It is difficult to predict the exact economic impact because:

- We are talking about the future and there is no direct historical data to analyze to draw inferences about future spending.

ALEXANDRIA REPORT – CONCLUSIONS

- A study of comparable Visitors Centers indicates that direct expenditures resulting from the existence of a Visitors Center (except gift shop and ticket sales at the centers) have not been identified
- It is virtually impossible to isolate the effects of the Visitors Center from all other efforts on increasing tourism, because of both data problems inherent in separating multiple causes and the fact that people themselves often don't know the exact factors, in a mix of similar factors, that drove their decision making.

An analysis conducted in October, 2001 to attempt to determine the potential economic impact of the Independence Visitor Center in Philadelphia which was scheduled for opening in November, 2001, recognized the difficulty in accurately predicting the economic impact of the opening of a new Visitors Center. The method chosen was, determine what the economic impact would be if tourism, defined in their study as the number of overnight and day visits to the region, were to increase by one percent following the opening of the Visitors Center. While it is conceivable that the Visitors Center economic impact on Alexandria tourism could be much greater, if that same 1% method was used for Alexandria, the result would be - in relation to overnight visitors (this does not include the economic impact of day-trippers who are expected to be substantially impacted by the Visitors Center):

Annual increases of:

- 79 new tourism related jobs
- \$4.25 million in tourist spending
- \$100,338 in local taxes

It is important to note that in addition to direct economic benefits there are indirect tangible and intangible benefits associated with improved Visitors Center operations.

- Increased local pride
- Improved quality of life for local residents
- Import substitution – locals spend more locally than otherwise would have been
- Bolstering the City's role as a center for historical and cultural tourism
- Having Alexandria known for being tourist-friendly in relation to competitive destinations
- Enhanced opportunities for local schools and other children's educational programs

It should also be noted that there are some revenue-generating activities that could help offset the operating and capital costs of the new visitors center. Commercial sponsorships, advertising, membership dues, gift shop and ticket and reservation sales revenues, and potential revenues from hotel or other tax revenues are possible revenue sources. Even under the best of circumstances, however, these revenues will not cover debt service and operating costs. While public sector resources will be necessary, we believe the direct and

Alexandria Visitor's Center Report

indirect benefits to Alexandria will cause a net positive economic benefit to the public. Given the impact on local tourism by all the events mentioned earlier in this report, the Visitors Center's role in restoring and growing Alexandria's tourism activity takes on even more importance.

XII. CONCLUSIONS

XII. CONCLUSIONS

VISITORS CENTER

- A new or expanded Visitors Center will help stimulate tourism in Alexandria and enhance the visitor experience.
- The most effective location for the Visitors Center is in the primary Visitor Domain.
- Alexandria's Visitor Center should be an Information & Orientation Center.
- The Visitors Center, to be effective, should be a minimum of 3,500 sq. ft.
- The Visitors Center's functional spaces should include: decompression and transitional space; information and orientation space; trip planning facility; sales area; rest rooms; support space; and infrared and Wi Fi technology.
- The best site that the consultants recommend is a new Visitors Center at Market Square. The next best site is Ramsay House.

BUSES, MOTORCOACHES & PARKING

- Entire curb front at King St. at Market Square should be reserved for bus and motor-coach loading during peak months. Improved signage should lessen standing and encourage removed parking for motorcoaches
- On King St. DASH stops at each bus area between the Metro and Market Square should be lengthened so that buses can pull fully out of the lane of travel.
- The city should conduct a baseline study of on and off-street parking and encourage openings and rate structures on weekends to lessen circulation of motorists looking for on-street spaces.

SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

- Regardless of whether or not a new or expanded Visitors Center is agreed to, a comprehensive signage and wayfinding system should be established with a unified image, common vocabulary. The goals should be:
 - i. Providing better information to visitors of where sites to be visited are
 - ii. Helping pedestrians find sites and key areas such as the Metrorail station

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

REFERENCE MATERIALS

A: Marketing/Promotional Literature

- 2002 Official Visitors Guide: Alexandria, Virginia - The Fun Side of the Potomac
- A Guide to Historic Alexandria 2nd edition - William Seale
- This Week in Historic Alexandria, Oct. 1-7, 2002 - Office of Historic Alexandria
- Gray Line City Map
- Boat Tours 2002 Schedule
- Greater Washington - 2002 Regional Report - Greater Washington Initiative
- Economic Connections - Alexandria Economic Development Partnership - Fall 2002
- Wired and Ready for the 21st Century - High Technology Opportunities in Alexandria, Virginia
- Excellence in Learning, Success for Life: Alexandria City Schools - Alexandria Education Partnership
- Alexandria Economic Development Partnership fact sheets:
 - Potomac West: Make it your business
 - Alexandria, Virginia: A Community Profile
 - Open for Business: Retail Opportunities in Alexandria, Virginia
 - Strategic Alliances: "Partners in Economic Development" - list of partners
 - Local Economic Indicators - Sept. 2002
 - City of Alexandria, Virginia: ACORN Area Profile
 - City of Alexandria, Virginia: FY July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003
 - Comparative Cost Report: Alexandria, Virginia, Washington, DC and New York City - July 2002
 - A World of Opportunities Await you in Alexandria, Virginia
 - Alexandria Industrial Development Authority: "Key to Industrial Revenue Bond Financing"
 - Enterprise Zone
 - Finance Department Research & Development Policy
 - Business Assistance Program
 - Higher Education Institutions
 - Alexandria Major Employers - Aug. 2002
 - Alexandria Associations Listing - Aug. 2002
 - Alexandria Technology Companies Listing - Aug. 2002
 - Alexandria Manufacturing Companies - July 2001
 - GSA Owned and Leased Properties
- Alexandria Guide - Sept./Oct. 2002
- Street Map of Alexandria, Virginia
- Metro Pocket Guide
- Don't Like Traffic? Then Don't Drive. You have alternatives.

- Free! Dash About: The Fun Side of the Potomac
- Alexandria, Virginia: The Fun Side of the Potomac - 2002 Official Visitors Guide
- Alexandria, Virginia: Meeting Planners Guide
- Alexandria Commercial Real Estate Supplement, The Washington Business Journal, June 2001
- Business Resource Directory: Guide to Establishing a Business in the City of Alexandria, Virginia 2001
- Put Your Company's Name on the Map - Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
- Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. flyers:
 - Seaport Summer Sounds
 - Alexandria, Virginia: An Historic Celebration!
- A Remarkable and Courageous Journey: A Guide to Alexandria's African American History
- Funside.com
- "Ramsey House, The Saga of Saving and Reconstructing," by Peter H. Smith, PhD, *Alexandria Chronicle*, Commemorative Issue, Winter/Spring, 1998/99, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2

B: Statistical Information

Visitation, Revenue & Donations FY 2001 & FY 2002 Comparison

Living with Success: Managing Residential Life and Tourism in Historic Communities - Report of a Forum convened by Historic Annapolis Foundation, Nov. 16-17, 1995

Selected Profile Data on Historic Districts in Six Cities: Alexandria, Annapolis, Charleston, Newport, San Antonio and Savannah - Historic Annapolis Foundation

Report from Torpedo Factory Art Center Working Group - June 1994

Board Annual Planning Session - Oct. 16, 2000

2000 Airport User Survey - Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

Interviewees for Visitors Center Study

Proposed Meeting Agenda and Schedule - Parter International Team and City of Alexandria - Sept. 12, 2002

Revised Scope of Work and Timetable - Aug. 16, 2002

FY 2003 Approved Tax Rates for Major Revenue Sources - City Managers Office

Memo: Jo Anne Mitchell to Mark Jinks re: New Visitor Center - Jan. 29, 2001

Memo: Jo Anne Mitchell to ACVA Board of Governors re: Councilman Speck's Request [concerning issue of new visitor center study] - March 8, 2001

Jo Anne Mitchell to handwritten notes re: RFP

Visitor Center Location Chart - Feb. 1999

Fact Sheet: Proposed Alexandria Visitors Center - Aug. 24, 1999

TDI [Wash., DC] Proposal for Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn.
- Mar. 17, 2000

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Visitors Center Statistics 1996 vs. 1997

Docket - City Council of Alexandria, VA, Special Meeting - Feb. 28, 2001

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Visitor Center Survey - Oct. 1, 1998

Alexandria, Virginia - Annual Report 2001

"Alexandria officials tap Parter for tourism study," Washington Business Journal -
Sept. 20-26, 2002

E-mail: Jo Anne Mitchell to Parter International re: Economic Impact Figures -
July 30, 2002

Tourism Statistics - www.funside.com/just_the_facts3.asp

Fax: Mark Jinks - Discussion Points agenda for conference call July 30, 2002

Fax: Executive Summary: Alexandria Convention and Visitors Assn. Telephone
Surveys July 1997 - Bill Logue

Parter International proposal for Visitor Center Analysis - fee and cost estimate

List of Interviewees for Visitors Center Study

Alan Parter handwritten notes

Economic Impact Figures: FY 2002 [July '01 - June '02], FY 2001, FY 2000, FY
1997-2000

ACVA Voting Board Members - list

ACVA Ex-Officio Board Members - list

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. By-Laws 2000 - approved Apr. 10, 2000

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Profit & Loss Budget Overview - July
2000 through June 2001; July 2001 through June 2002

Strategic Planning Session Summary - Oct. 12, 1997

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Strategic Planning Session - Sept. 22,
1997

Memo: Jo Anne Mitchell to ACVA Board of Governors re: Strategic Planning
Session - Sept. 18, 1997

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Business Plan - FY 1999-2001

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Business Plan - FY 2000-2003

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Marketing Plan - FY 2002-2003

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Board of Governors Annual Planning Meeting - Oct. 16, 2000

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. FY 2002 Budget Proposal
Comparison charts [Greater Washington]

Hotel Occupancy with Region

Hotel's ADR with Region

Revenue per available Room with Region

Performance Measures: 1999-2002

Group Tour Operators list (600+)

Virginia Tourism Corp. - www.vatc.org

Alexandria Visitor: 1997 Study Commissioned by ACVA [telephone survey]

Virginia Travel 2002: Current Indicators

Hotel map

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Aug. 2002 Monthly Report

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Balance Sheet as of Aug. 31, 2002

Memo: Philip Sunderland to Mayor and City Council re: Visitors Center Study - Sept. 17, 2002

Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Hotel Report

Alexandria Gazette Packet articles and "Letters to the Editor"

RFP Process May Determine Future of Station - David G. Speck - Dec. 7, 2000

City Will Now Own Union Station - Carla Branch - Nov. 30, 2000

Visitors Center Project Ill-Conceived - Alan Rudd - Sept. 9, 1999

New Visitors Center Planned - Amber Robinson - July 29, 1999

GIS data - City of Alexandria

C: Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn.

- ◆ Board Annual Planning Session - Oct. 16, 2000
- ◆ ACVA Voting Board Members - list
- ◆ ACVA Ex-Officio Board Members - list
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. By-Laws 2000 - approved Apr. 10, 2000
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Profit & Loss Budget Overview - July 2000 through June 2001; July 2001 through June 2002
- ◆ Strategic Planning Session Summary - Oct. 12, 1997
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Strategic Planning Session - Sept. 22, 1997

- ◆ Memo: Jo Anne Mitchell to ACVA Board of Governors re: Strategic Planning Session – Sept. 18, 1997
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Business Plan – FY 1999-2001
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Business Plan – FY 2000-2003
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Marketing Plan – FY 2002-2003
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. Board of Governors Annual Planning Meeting – Oct. 16, 2000
- ◆ Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn. FY 2002 Budget Proposal
- ◆ Group Tour Operators list (600+)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW LIST

Interviewees for Visitors Center Study

Mike Anderson
Owner
Mango Mike's Restaurant
4580 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22304
(703) 823-1166
10/15/02

Stephanie Brown
Director of Marketing
Mount Vernon Estate
P.O. Box 110
Mt. Vernon, VA 22121
(703) 799-8605
10/17/02

Mayor Kerry Donley
301 King Street, Room 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 531-2949
11/7/02

Ann Dorman
Owner/President
Meetings and Events of Distinction
2724 Kenwood Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22302
(703) 998-5614
9/20/02

Councilwoman Claire Eberwein
301 King Street, Room 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4500
10/25/02

Jean Federico
Director
Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria
405 Cameron Street, 3rd Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4554
10/3/02

Rolando Gonzales
Co-President
Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations
4914 Gardner Drive
Alexandria, VA 22304
(703) 750-2800
10/17/02

Charlotte Hall
Old Town Business Association
c/o Potomac Riverboat Company
205 The Strand
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-0580
10/2/02

Randall Kell
CEO
The Mark Winkler Company
4900 Seminary Road, Suite 900
Alexandria, VA 22311
(703) 998-0400
10/17/02

Marguerite Lang
President
Rosemont Citizens Association
14 W. Rosemont Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22301
(703) 684-6534
10/2/02

Lorraine Lloyd
Director of Sales
Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn.
421 King Street - Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4200 x209
9/20/02

Nance Mazzola
ACVA Staff
Ramsay House
221 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-5005
10/3/02

Carolyn Merck
President
Old Town Civic Association
324 North Royal Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 549-5506
10/7/02

Pat Miller
President
Potomac West Business Association
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Alexandria, VA 22301
(202) 785-5920
10/18/02

Jo Anne Mitchell
Executive Director
Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn.
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(703) 838-4200 x202
9/20/02, 2/11/03

Tom Morr
Greater Washington Initiative
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Washington, D.C. 20036
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B. Hudson Riehle
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10/3/02

Paula Riley
Executive Director
Alexandria Economic Development
Partnership
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Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 739-3820
10/2/02

Councilman David Speck
301 King Street, Room 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 739-4501
10/2/02

Philip Sunderland
City Manager
301 King Street, Room 3500
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4300
10/17/02

Bryan Thompson
President
Alexandria Hotel Association
2151 Jamieson Avenue, #1205
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 370-1000
9/20/02

Mark Treadaway
Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority
1 Aviation Circle, MA-4
Washington, D.C. 20001
(703) 417-8774
10/3/02

Karen Versch
Sales Manager
Alexandria Convention & Visitors Assn.
421 King Street – Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4200 x211
9/20/02

Mark Jinks
Assistant City Manager
Office of the City Manager
City Hall
301 King Street, Suite 3500
Alexandria, VA 22314-3211
(703) 838-4300
11/7/02, 1/10/03, 1/13/03, 1/17/03, 1/30/03

Barbara Ross
Deputy Director
Dept. of Planning & Zoning
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4666
11/7/02, 1/30/03, 1/13/03

Randy Julian
Julian Tours
1500 N. Beauregard St.
Alexandria, VA 22311
(703) 379-5030
1/27/03

Focus Groups
1/29/03, 1/30/03

Susan Rush
Deputy Planning Director
Historic Preservation Section
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3/11/03

Peter H. Smith
Principal Staff
Historic Preservation Section
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10/3/02

APPENDIX C

COMPARABLES MATRIX

Comparison of Visitor Center

Visitor Center	Size/Visitation	Staffing & Costs	Shuttle/Bus Services	Parking
Charleston, South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13,000 Square feet 1 million visitors/ year Near highways at entrance to historic area Opened approx 1989 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X full time staff Y part time staff Annual operating cost approximately XX Development cost unknown 	<p>Special trolley-like service (\$1 fare) available to visitor center, 7 days a week, 6 AM to 12 AM. One day DASH pass is available (\$3). Other passes, including three day passes (\$7) and thirty-one day passes (\$22) are also available. All passes can be purchased at the visitors center.</p>	<p>One hour of free parking available when one-day DASH pass is turned in to parking attendant. Parking is limited in historic Charleston.</p> <p>Parking for motor coaches. Motor coaches limited access to peninsula.</p>
Montgomery, Alabama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4,000 square feet plus theater and gift area 40-50,000 visitors/year Center of historic downtown Opened 2001/2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 staff full and part time Annual operating cost XX Development cost XX 	<p>Replica trolleys are available to provide supplemental public transportation services for tourists. One-day passes are available for \$1 or \$0.25 per route on each boarding. Two routes circulate the downtown area at 20-minute intervals between 9 AM and 6 PM Monday through Saturday. Passes can be purchased at the visitor center. During seasonal declines, only one vehicle circulates with one vehicle providing 40-minute service intervals. Other fixed route service is available at a \$1 fare.</p> <p>Limited fixed route bus service is available: six buses.</p>	<p>Public parking is primarily available at parking meters downtown, however, parking garages are planned and under construction to address deficiencies in parking downtown. A new intermodal transit center is funded and planned for construction within the next 2 years. The building will be a transfer center for the transit system and accommodate buses and 500 - 800 parking spaces.</p>
Corning, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,700 Square feet 55-65,000 visitors/year Middle of 5 block main street about 3 miles from interstate Opened 2001 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 full-time equivalent staff plus additional volunteers Annual operating cost \$160,000 (\$95,000 labor) CVB share of development cost \$220,000 for FFE, soft costs and space renovation) 		<p>On-street metered spaces available. Garage parking \$2/day</p>

Comparison of Visitor Center

Newport, Rhode Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,000 square feet of public space • 1,000,000 visitors/year • In historic area • Opened 1988 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 full time and 15 part time employees (20 additional employees at CVB) • Operating expense \$600,000 	<p>From Memorial Day to Columbus Day, the local transit system enhances its regular service with trolley service offering all day passes for individuals (\$5) and families (\$10). Buses and trolleys are available at the visitors center.</p>	<p>All day parking at visitors center is available for \$1 when riding public transportation. One half hour of free parking is available with validation between hours of 9 AM-5 PM at adjacent public parking garage.</p> <p>Loading zone for motor coaches, 15 spaces nearby.</p>
Easton, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,000 square feet of public space • Approximately 350,000 visitors/ year • Located as entrance to major attraction • Opened in 1996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Full-time equivalent in season, self service in off-season • Labor costs under \$10,000/year • Initial exhibit expense \$300,000 refurbished several times since 	<p>Regular fixed route bus services available at \$1.35 per trip. Day passes available at \$2 per day.</p>	<p>Parking is available for fee at municipal parking garage across from center. On street metered parking is also available.</p>
Alexandria, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 square feet of public space plus restrooms • 115,000 visitors/ year • In historic area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 full time and 13 part-time staff • Operating expense approximately \$117,000 	<p>Regular daily bus routes available. Fares are \$1 or \$0.25 with transfer from Metrorail. On weekends there is free shuttle bus services (DASH About) to/from visitor center and Metrorail station.</p>	<p>On street 2 hours parking with and without meters within 5 minute walking distance of visitor center. Off street public parking available at 10 locations within a 5-minute walking distance. Some offer discounted rates on weekends.</p>

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE- 4 PP

DRAFT

November 15, 2002

Name
Title
Business Name
Address
City/State

Dear Name:

The City of Alexandria has engaged Parter International, Inc. to conduct an independent impartial study concerning the feasibility and economic impact of a new visitors center and to identify potential sites. Parter International is gathering visitation and economic impact information and we would like your assistance.

Enclosed is a brief questionnaire we hope you will complete and return directly to Parter International on a **confidential** basis. We believe that the information should be readily at hand, and it should take only a few minutes to complete. We hope that you will return the questionnaire on or before _____.

Please feel free to contact, Bill Logue (860) 521-9122 with any questions or comments you may have.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne Mitchell
Executive Director
Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association

DRAFT

Please complete the following Confidential Questionnaire and return it directly to Parter International, Inc. 6 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017 or fax it to us at (212) 370-3390.

Please provide information in as much detail as possible and feel free to attach additional pages.

Business Name: _____
Contact for follow-up,
Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

1. Number of Annual Visitors:
- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| 1999 | _____ |
| 2000 | _____ |
| 2001 | _____ |
| 2002 to date | _____ |

Please attach a breakdown of visitation, if available, by season, month, weekend and weekday.

2. How long does the average visitor stay at your location? _____
3. What is your maximum capacity? _____ at one time _____ per hour _____ per day
4. How do your visitors arrive in Alexandria?
Car _____ %
Public transit _____ % (e.g. Metro)
Group tour _____ %
School Group _____ %
Other _____ % Please specify _____
5. How many parking facilities do you have: bus spaces? _____ car spaces? _____
6. Do you charge a fee for admittance? Yes _____ No _____
If yes what are they? \$ _____ adult \$ _____ child \$ _____ senior \$ _____ group

Annual gross revenue from entrance/participation fee:

1999 \$	_____
2000 \$	_____
2001 \$	_____
To date 2002 \$	_____

Annual gross revenue from gift shop and other sales:

1999 \$	_____
2000 \$	_____
2001 \$	_____
To date 2002 \$	_____

7. Total number of paid full time equivalent employees _____
8. Are you aware whether your visitors are day trippers or overnight visitors to the region?
If so, _____ % Day trippers; _____ % Overnight visitors

Questionnaire for Bus Tour Operators

Parter International, Inc. has been retained by the **City of Alexandria, Virginia** to research whether a new Visitors Center should be built. The tour bus industry is particularly important to Alexandria and it wants to know about your needs and activities in order to improve the opportunities for tour bus operators in Alexandria.

We would appreciate it if you would complete this brief questionnaire. It should take you at the most 5-10 minutes. We appreciate your assistance. If your answer to Question 1 is no, please answer Question 2 and return this questionnaire. Thank you.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it back by January 15, 2003 to: Parter International, Inc., 6 East 43rd Street, Suite 2100, New York, NY 10017-4609 or fax it to (212) 867-1069. If you have any questions, please call Providence Calderon at (800) 867-1701.

I. Tours to Alexandria, Virginia

1. Do you conduct bus tours to Alexandria? Yes _____ No _____
2. If no, what are the reasons you do not conduct tours to Alexandria?

3. If yes, for how many years have you been conducting tours to Alexandria?
Less than 1 year _____ 1-3 years _____ 3-5 years _____ 5+ years _____
4. How many tours do you conduct each year?
None _____ 1-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11-15 _____ 16-25 _____ 25+ _____
5. How frequently do you conduct tours to Alexandria?
Times per week _____ Times per month _____ As Requested _____
Holidays/ special events only _____
6. What time of day and days of the week do you arrive in Alexandria?
Monday - Friday:
Morning 8-11am _____ Afternoon 12 - 4pm _____ Evening 5-8pm _____
Saturday- Sunday:
Morning 8-11am _____ Afternoon 12 - 4pm _____ Evening 5-8pm _____
7. What determines the time of day you arrive in Alexandria?

8. On day trips how long does the tour group stay in Alexandria on average?
Less than 1 hour _____ 1-3 hours _____ 3-6 hours _____ 6+ hours _____
9. How many people come on an average tour?
1 - 10 _____ 11-20 _____ 21-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 50+ _____

Alexandria, VA Visitors Center

10. Do you have any overnight trips to Alexandria? Yes _____ No _____
11. If yes, how often do you have overnight trips to Alexandria?
Times per week _____ Times per month _____ As requested _____
12. If yes, where does the tour group stay?

13. Please rank the following seasons by demand for tours (with 1 being the highest demand and 4 being the lowest demand).
Spring _____ Summer _____ Fall _____ Winter _____
14. Does your destination in Alexandria include visits outside of Old Town?
Yes _____ No _____
15. Does Old Town offer the type and quantity of restaurants to attract tour groups during lunch time? Yes _____ No _____
16. Please list three areas or attractions you visit when you are in Alexandria?

II. Routes

1. When you visit Alexandria, is it your primary or secondary destination?
Primary Destination _____ Secondary Destination _____
2. If Alexandria is your secondary destination, what is the primary tour destination?

3. By what route do your buses enter the City of Alexandria?

4. By what route do your buses leave the City of Alexandria?

5. Where do you come from when you visit Alexandria?
From another destination? (Please name it.) _____
From the home of the tour group? Yes _____ No _____ Other? _____
6. Where do you go after your visit to Alexandria?

7. Do you travel along the Parkway between Mount Vernon and Washington, D.C.?
Yes _____ No _____
8. Where does the bus park while it is in Alexandria?

Alexandria, VA Visitors Center

9. How long does the bus park there? _____
10. Do the streets and infrastructure in Alexandria present any difficulties to your tour vehicle operations?
Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please specify below.

11. Where are customers dropped off and picked up?

12. Are customers dropped off along with tour guides or are they left to explore alone?
Tour guides _____ Explore alone _____ Both situations _____

III. Visitors Center

1. Please rate your level of awareness of the Ramsay House Visitors Center, located at Market Square in Alexandria (Please circle one number with five being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest.)
1 2 3 4 5
2. How often do you currently use the Ramsay House Visitors Center during your tours?
Each time _____ Often _____ Frequently _____ Rarely _____ Never _____
3. If you do use the Ramsay House, for what purposes? (Please check all that apply.)
Collect information _____ Rest stop _____ Plan tourists' visit _____
Meeting place _____ Other _____
4. How would you rate the Ramsay House Visitors Center? (Please circle one number with 5 being the highest rating and 1 being the lowest.)
1 2 3 4 5
5. Please list any comments, complaints or concerns you have about Ramsay House.

6. Would a new Visitors Center be helpful to you and your business? (Please circle one number with 5 being very helpful and 1 being not helpful at all.)
1 2 3 4 5
7. What amenities would be useful to you or your customers? (Please check all that apply.)
Restroom facilities _____ Dining area _____ Internet access _____
Hotel/Restaurant Reservation Service _____ Ticket sales _____ Other amenities _____
8. What location would be most convenient for your purposes?
Union Station site on Callahan Rd _____ Market Square _____ Telegraph Rd. _____
Eisenhower Metro Area _____ King St Metro Station _____ The Waterfront _____

Alexandria, VA Visitors Center

9. Please list any ideas you may have for the location of a new Visitors Center.

IV. Tour Specifics

If you can provide us with any data regarding the demographics of your customers, kindly answer those questions for which you have information.

1. What is the median age range of your customers?
< 18 _____ 18-25 _____ 26-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55 _____ >55 _____
2. What types of organizations, groups do you serve? (Please check all that apply.)
School groups _____ Office groups _____ Senior Citizens _____ Special Interest _____
History tours _____ Professional Groups _____ Other _____
3. What percentage of the customers that you book on Alexandria bus tours are first time customers? _____ Repeat customers? _____
4. How long does a customer usually stay in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area?
Day trip only _____ Overnight _____ 2-3 Days _____ 3+ Days _____
5. Please indicate the percentage of your customers visiting Alexandria who reside in the following areas
Virginia _____% Mid-Atlantic States _____% North-Eastern States _____%
Other US States _____% Foreign Countries _____%
6. Do you conduct tours in languages other than English? If yes, please list those languages below.

7. What is the total amount of money, on average, that each of your customers spends in Alexandria (food, retail items, etc.) \$ _____
8. Do customers express interest in spending more time in Alexandria?
Yes _____ No _____
9. What changes could be made to encourage tours to Alexandria?

Your name	_____	Organization	_____
Address	_____	City/State	_____
Telephone	_____	Fax Number	_____
E-mail	_____		

Your feedback is important to us. Thank you for your time in assisting us with our plans for determining the best possible Visitors Center for Alexandria.

APPENDIX E

BUS SURVEY MATRIX

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Section 1																													
Respondent	Question #1	Yes	No	Question #2	Reasons	Question #3	Less than 1 year	1 - 3 years	3 - 5 years	5+ years	Question #4	None	1 - 5 times a year	6 - 10 times a year	11 - 15 times a year	16 - 25 times a year	25+ times a year	Question #5	Times per week	Times per month	Holidays/Special Events only	As requested	Question #6	Mon-Fri: Morning 8-11am	Mon-Fri: Afternoon 12-4pm	Mon-Fri.: Evening 5-8pm	Sat-Sun.: Morning 8-11am	Sat-Sun.: Afternoon 12-4pm	Sat-Sun. Evening: 5-8pm
Elite Coach		X								X			X									X			X	X		X	X
Morgan Coach Lines		X								X												X			X	X		X	
Julian Tours		X								X						X						X			X			X	
Starr Tours		X						X					X				X							X	X			X	X
Shortway Charters & Tours		X						X					X									X							
										X						X						X							
Ellen's Travel		X							X				X									X						X	
									X				X									X						X	
Scenic America		X							X								X					X		X	X		X	X	
Bieber Tourways		X							X								X					X		X	X		X	X	
Collette Travel		X								X			X									X				X		X	
Baer		X								X			X				X					X			X	X		X	X
										X			X									X		X			X		

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Respondent	Question #1	Yes	No	Question #2	Reasons	Question #3	Less than 1 year	1 - 3 years	3 - 5 years	5+ years	Question #4	None	1 - 5 times a year	6 - 10 times a year	11 - 15 times a year	16 - 25 times a year	25+ times a year	Question #5	Times per week	Times per month	Holidays/Special Events only	As requested	Question #6	Mon-Fri: Morning 8-11am	Mon-Fri: Afternoon 12- 4pm	Mon-Fri.: Evening 5-8pm	Sat-Sun.: Morning 8-11am	Sat-Sun.: Afternoon 12-4pm	Sat-Sun. Evening: 5-8pm
Anderson Travel		X								X						X				1		X					X		
4 Seasons Tours		X								X			X											X	X				
Fullington Tours		X								X			X																
US Tours		X								X					X							X							X
All American Tours		X								X						X						X			X			X	
Colonial Pathways		X								X			X									X		X			X		
Cavalier Coach		X								X			X									X		X				X	
Ameritours		X								X				X								X		X	X		X	X	X
Martz Gray Line of Washington		X								X							X		7						X	X		X	X

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
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Questionnaire Results
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Tour Bus Operator
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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Respondent	Question #7	What determines arrival?	Question #8	Less than 1 hour	1-3 hours	3-6 hours	6+ hours	Question #9	1-10 people	11-20 people	21-30 people	31-40 people	41-50 people	50+ people	Question #10	Yes	No	Question #11	Times per week	Times per month	As requested	Question #12	Where do you stay?	Question #13	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Anderson Travel		itinerary			X								X			X			1				Hiltonk, Mark Center		1	2	3	4
4 Seasons Tours		Wolfrap schedule				X						X					X						McLean Hilton			1		
Fullington Tours		itinerary														X				X			Embassy Suites		1			
US Tours		depends				X							X			X				X					1	1	3	4
All American Tours		itinerary; type of group				X								X			X								1			4
Colonial Pathways		the rest of the day's itinerary			X							X					X								1	3	2	4
Cavalier Coach		group			X								X				X								1	3	2	4
Ameritours					X									X			X								1	2	3	4
Martz Gray Line of Washington		tour itinerary or charter client request			X								X			X				X			per client request		1	3	2	4

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

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Tour Bus Operator
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Questionnaire Results
Section I

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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Respondent	Question #14 Yes	No	Question #15 Yes	No	Question #16 Areas or attractions you visit in Alexandria	Comments
Elite Coach					Gadsby's, Potomac Cruise, George Washington Masonic Nat'l Memorial	
Morgan Coach Lines	X			X	eat in Washington	
Julian Tours				X	more food emporiums needed	
Starr Tours		X	X		use only Gadsby's	
Shortway Charters & Tours					dinner cruise, Old Town, dinner Theater, museums	
Ellen's Travel	X				cruise; HQ masonry	
Scenic America		X		X	Old Town, Dandy Boat; sometimes visit Masonic Temple	
Bieber Tourways	X		X		Old Town, Mt. Vernon, Wolftrap	
Collette Travel	X				dinner theater	
Baer						

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Respondent	Question #14	Yes	No	Question #15	Yes	No	Question #16	Areas or attractions you visit in Alexandria	Comments
Anderson Travel			X		X			Gadsby's Tavern, Ghost tours	
4 Seasons Tours		X			X			costume guide, shops tour	did Nina Wandy once - never again; Odyssey much better boat tour
Fullington Tours			X					Old Town, Masonic Memorial	
US Tours		X						whales, Old Town, West End Dinner Theatre	
All American Tours		X			X			Potomac Mills, Mt. Vernon, Wolftrap, shopping, Air Force base	#5: combined w/ DC/cherry blossom; #10: too difficult; not enough for school group
Colonial Pathways		X			X			Gadsby's, Old Town, Torpedo Factory	
Cavalier Coach			X		X				
Ameritours		X				X		Mt. Vernon, Cedar Knoll, Crystal Food Court, West End Dinner Theatre	
Martz Gray Line of Washington		X				X		Christ Church, Mt. Vernon, Old Town	

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Respondent	Question #14		Question #15		Question #16		Areas or attractions you visit in Alexandria	Comments
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Tidewater Tours								bus companies go where destination companies tell them
Colonial Connections								doesn't know attractions; no ideas of what Alexandria has to offer
Cross Roads		X		X				
Abbott Bus		X					Old Town, Dandy Boat Tours	problem with parking in Alexandria
Thomas Tours							Gadsby's	
Trombly Bus Lines								
Chesapeake Trails Bus Co.								
Anon.-Prov., R.I.								

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section I

Respondent	Question #14 Yes No	Question #15 Yes No	Question #16 Areas or attractions you visit in Alexandria	Comments
Hendricks Tours				
Hudson Bus Lines				
Strong Corp.				
Fullington Auto Bus				
Zona Tours				
Harrisburg				
Greensburg				
Pittsburgh				
Creative Tours				
New Castle				
Hunter Motor Coach				
Acco Bus Service				
A.S. Tours				

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

Respondent	Question #1	Primary Destination	Secondary Destination	Question #2	Question #3	Route to enter Alexandria	Question #4	Route to exit Alexandria	Question #5	Where do you come from?	Yes	No	Other	Question #6	Where do you after your visit?
Elite Coach			X	Wash., DC						Ephrata/ Lancaster, PA	X				Washington, DC; Mt. Vernon
Morgan Coach Lines			X	Wash., DC											home
Julian Tours			X	Wash., DC		all	all			everywhere					DC, Arlington, Mt. Vernon
Starr Tours			X	Wash., DC							X				home
Shortway Charters & Tours			X	Wash., DC		395		395		Wash., DC		X			home
Ellen's Travel			X	Wash., DC						Wash., DC					home
Scenic America			X	Mt. Vernon, around DC		Parkway (Wash. St.)		Parkway (Wash. St.)		Wash., DC	X				Mt. Vernon or Appomattox
Bieber Tourways			X	DC		495		495		Berks County- Allentown	X				back to DC or home
Collette Travel			X	DC, Crystal City		fly to DC or NY, bus to Alexandria				DC, NY; global (sell int'l tours)		X			depends on itinerary
Baer			X	DC		GW Pkwy North		GW Pkwy North			X				home

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

Respondent	Question #1	Primary Destination	Secondary Destination	Question #2	Question #3	Route to enter Alexandria	Question #4	Route to exit Alexandria	Question #5	Where do you come from?	Yes	No	Other	Question #6	Where do you after your visit?
Anderson Travel			X	DC		270		270		DC					home
4 Seasons Tours			X	DC						depends					lunch, shop
Fullington Tours			X	DC											
US Tours			X	DC						DC					back to DC
All American Tours			X	DC		81 and cut across 66									depends on group
Colonial Pathways		X									X				into DC or home
Cavalier Coach			X	DC							X				Mt. Vernon
Ameritours			X	DC		Route 1, 95		Route 1, 95		all over					DC, Baltimore or Williamsburg
Martz Gray Line of Washington			X	DC		G/W Pkwy		G/W Pkwy		DC					DC
Gregg Bus Service		X				I-95		I-95		Wilmington, Philadelphia	X				home

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Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

Respondent	Question #7	Yes	No	Question #8	Layover location for tour vehicles	Question #9	How long?	Question #10	Yes	No	Specify	Question #11	Drop off/ pick up	Question #12	Tour guides	Explore alone	Both situations	Comments
Elite Coach		X			Designated areas		several hours				Parking areas are out of the way; access can be difficult		Designated spots				X	
Morgan Coach Lines		X											hotel				X	
Julian Tours		X					2-3 hrs		X		given that Alexandria would not be what it is w/o narrow streets		Washington St., Waterfront				X	
Starr Tours																		
Shortway Charters & Tours		X			hotel; Jeff Davis Shopping Mall				X		not conducive to bus parking		hotel				X	
Ellen's Travel		X																
Scenic America		X			Robinson Terminal		2-3 hrs		X		hard to negotiate, esp. only one place to drop off at end of Kerry St.						X	
Bieber Tourways		X															X	
Collette Travel		X							X									guides and drivers make individual route decisions, depending on traffic
Baer					designated bus park					X			Designated drop off and pick-up				X	

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

Respondent	Question #7	Yes	No	Question #8	Layover location for tour vehicles	Question #9	How long?	Question #10	Yes	No	Specify	Question #11	Drop off/ pick up	Question #12	Tour guides	Explore alone	Both situations	Comments
Anderson Travel		X								X			depends where tour is going				X	retail - tour guide
4 Seasons Tours		X								X					X			
Fullington Tours																	X	
US Tours		X			drive through only, or park at dinner theater				X		not much parking; streets narrow					X		
All American Tours		X							X		Mt. Vernon better parking and setup		varies		X			#8: can't park
Colonial Pathways		X											depends on itinerary		X			
Cavalier Coach			X		where we find parking		differs								X			
Ameritours		X			where we find parking		1-2 hrs			X			King Street				X	
Martz Gray Line of Washington		X			Mt. Vernon, Christ Church		2 hrs			X	as a local operator, we know which areas to avoid		at attractions: Mt. Vernon, Christ Church				X	
Gregg Bus Service			X		Mt. Vernon area and hotels		afternoons						Mt. Vernon, dock areas, Market Square				X	

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section II

Respondent	Question #7 Yes No	Layover location for tour vehicles	How long?	Specify	Drop off/ pick up	Tour guides Explore alone Both situations	Comments
Voyage Bus Lines	X	designated parking along Front St. (Warehouse area)	2-3 hrs	X	depends on destination	X	
Rottweiler Bus Corp.		depends on site being visited		X	pre-determined location	X	
Buckingham Bus Co.	X	designated bus parking	5-6 hrs	X	narrow	X	
Woodlawn Motor Coach	X	up by the Electric Company	2-3 hrs	X	some streets are very small	X	#10: it would be helpful to publish street maps for motor coaches
Leprechaun Lines / TLC Tours							
Collette Vacations							
Brecksville Road Transit							
Kaleidoscope Adventures							
Tidewater Tours							
Colonial Connections	X						

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section III

Respondent	Question #1					Question #2					Question #3					Question #4					Question #5					Comments	Question #6								
	1	2	3	4	5	Each time	Often	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Collect information	Rest stop	Plan tourist's visit	Meeting place	Other	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5										
Elite Coach			X							X																									
Morgan Coach Lines	X									X																									
Julian Tours		X							X		X			X					X																
Starr Tours	X																																		
Shortway Charters & Tours	X									X																									
Ellen's Travel	X																																		
Scenic America		X								X																									
Bieber Tourways	X									X																									
Collette Travel	X									X																									
Baer	X																																		
Anderson Travel	X																																		
4 Seasons Tours	X																																		
Fullington Tours	X																																		
US Tours	X																																		
All American Tours																																			

#2: not well marked; never been in (driver, guide and manager for 22 years)

another name would be familiar

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section III

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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section III

Respondent	Question #1					Question #2	Each time	Often	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Question #3	Collect information	Rest stop	Plan tourist's visit	Meeting place	Other	Question #4					Question #5	Comments	Question #5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5													1	2	3	4	5								
Anon.-Prov., R.I.																														
Hendricks Tours																														
Hudson Bus Lines																														
Strong Corp.																														
Fullington Auto Bus																														

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section III

Respondent	Question #7	Restroom facilities	Dining area	Internet access	Hotel/Rest. Reservation	Ticket sales	Other amenities	Question #8	Union Station site	Market Square	Telegraph Rd.	Eisenhower Metro area	King St. Metro	The Waterfront	Question #9	List ideas for location of a new Visitors Center	Comments
Elite Coach		X	X														
Morgan Coach Lines			X														
Julian Tours		X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X			
Starr Tours																	
Shortway Charters & Tours		X	X				X										
Ellen's Travel																	
Scenic America		X	X		X									X		1) Water front if possible park off Union; 2) Callahan, would give hub to work from; one reason they don't stop more often; need bus parking for loading and drop off; Eisenhower wide open; King St. too far from Old Town	
Bieber Tourways			X				X							X			
Collette Travel		X															#7: tour planning, guiding service
Baer		X	X	X	X									X			
Anderson Travel		X	X			X							X				
4 Seasons Tours		X					X										#7: need video of Alexandria
Fullington Tours		X			X		X										#7: literature, coordinator for hotels
US Tours		X					X							X			#7: water fountain
All American Tours		X			X						X						parking is main difficulty; needs to be close to activity; avoid Alexandria due to parking

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Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section III

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Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section III

[illegible]

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section IV

[illegible]

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section IV

Respondent	Question #1						Question #2							Question #3		Question #4		Question #5				Question #6					Which Languages?
	<18 years old	18-25 years old	26-35 years old	36-45 years old	46-55 years old	>55 years old	School groups	Office groups	Senior citizens	Special interest	History tours	Professional Groups	Other	First Time Customers	Repeat Customers	Day trip only	Overnight	2-3 days	3+ days	Virginia	Mid-Atlantic States	North-eastern States	Other US States	Foreign countries	Languages		
Brecksville Road Transit																											
Kaleidoscope Adventures																											
Tidewater Tours																											
Colonial Connections	X						X							90	10			X			100						
Abbott Bus					X				X					40	60	X				95			5		NO		
Thomas Tours	X				X		X		X								X										
Trombly Bus Lines																											
Chesapeake Trails Bus Co.																											
Anon.-Prov., R.I.																											
Hendricks Tours			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X						X						whatever the need is			
Hudson Bus Lines																											
Strong Corp.																											
Fullington Auto Bus					X		X	X	X		X	X				X											

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section IV

Respondent	Question #7	Amount Spent	Question #8	Yes	No	Question #9	Changes Recommended	Comments
Elite Coach					X			
Morgan Coach Lines					X			
Julian Tours		\$200 overnight, \$50/day		X			bigger CNB budget, more cooperation among Metro Wash., DC CVB's, more hotel rooms, visitor center	
Starr Tours								
Shortway Charters & Tours		\$20/day; \$150-200 overnight			X			
Ellen's Travel					X			
Scenic America				X			design bus routes	restaurants good for adults, but not for students
Bieber Tourways		\$50			X		advertising by CV Bureau; newspaper ads, articles in travel sections	
Collette Travel					X		accommodation rates too high for overnight; restaurants too high and difficult	
Baer		varies		X			just be bus friendly	
Anderson Travel		\$20-50			X		#5: NW-PA and NE-Ohio	catalog of attractions and restaurants
4 Seasons Tours		\$60			X		Visitors Center with video - a good video with no advertising, history, culture, development of city	
Fullington Tours		\$20-30			X			expensive hotels are more for upscale senior groups, not for kids; tend to bypass Alexandria; there is a need to make people more aware of what there is to see
US Tours		\$50-75		X			more meal and entertainment options	#5: wholesale tour - all over States & Canada

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section IV

Respondent	Question #7	Amount Spent	Question #8	Yes	No	Question #9	Changes Recommended	Comments
All American Tours		\$10					parking pickup/drop; ease entrance to Arlington Cemetery; need help with traffic; Mt. Vernon does parking and people movement better	
Colonial Pathways		\$50			X		friendly staff at an 800# with complete info. On step-on guides, meals, tour sites; knowledgeable people are VITAL!	
Cavalier Coach					X			
Ameritours		\$7-10			X			
Martz Gray Line of Washington				X			bus parking continues to be a concern	
Gregg Bus Service								
Voyage Bus Lines		\$50-100			X			
Rottweiler Bus Corp.					X			
Motor Transportation								
Buckingham Bus Co.								
Woodlawn Motor Coach		\$100		X			better parking for motor coaches	
Leprechaun Lines / TLC Tours								
Collette Vacations								

Alexandria, Virginia
Tour Bus Operator
Questionnaire Results
Section IV

Respondent	Question #7	Amount Spent	Question #8	Yes	No	Question #9	Changes Recommended	Comments
Brecksville Road Transit								
Kaleidoscope Adventures								
Tidewater Tours								
Colonial Connections					X			primarily school tours from NC; sometimes guides from DC take tour to Old Town; often a "drive through"
Abbott Bus		\$70			X		bus parking needs improvement	
Thomas Tours								might visit Alexandria if going to Mt. Vernon or if groups had more time
Trombly Bus Lines								
Chesapeake Trails Bus Co.								
Anon.-Prov., R.I.								
Hendricks Tours								
Hudson Bus Lines								
Strong Corp.								we have decided to limit our tours
Fullington Auto Bus								

APPENDIX G

AGENDA FOR FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

FOCUS GROUPS
Proposed Agenda
Alexandria Visitor Center Feasibility Analysis
January 29 and 30, 2003

- I. Introduction (10 minutes)
 - Assignment
 - Parter Team
 - Data Collection to Date
 - Interviews
 - Surveys (Attractions, Bus)
 - Ramsay House visitation
 - Comparable cities
 - National and Local Tourism Trends (PLOG, et. al)
- II. Preview to Location Recommendations (15 minutes)
 - Visitor Center Mission and Ancillary Goals
 - Visitor Center Functions, Services and Estimated Space Needs
 - Location Option Scenarios
 - Related Issues, including:
 - Budget
 - Timing
 - Policy Considerations (business and civic concerns, other city priorities, advocates)
- III. Description of Four Draft Options (15 minutes)
 - Upper King Street Area
 - Ramsay House Renovation and Expansion – with or without Upper King Street Satellite
 - Alternative Old Town Sites
 - Waterfront /Food court
 - Lower King Street block
 - Other
 - Minor changes to Ramsay House plus partnership locations (airports, Mt. Vernon, DC, Virginia highway sites, Metro, etc.)
 - Fund devoted to tourism marketing rather than to new or renovated Visitor Center
- IV. Discussion of Site Options (80 minutes)
 - Key questions:
 - Based on the information provided in our introduction
 - What are the strengths of each option?
 - What are the weaknesses of each option?
 - Are there other factors that should be considered?

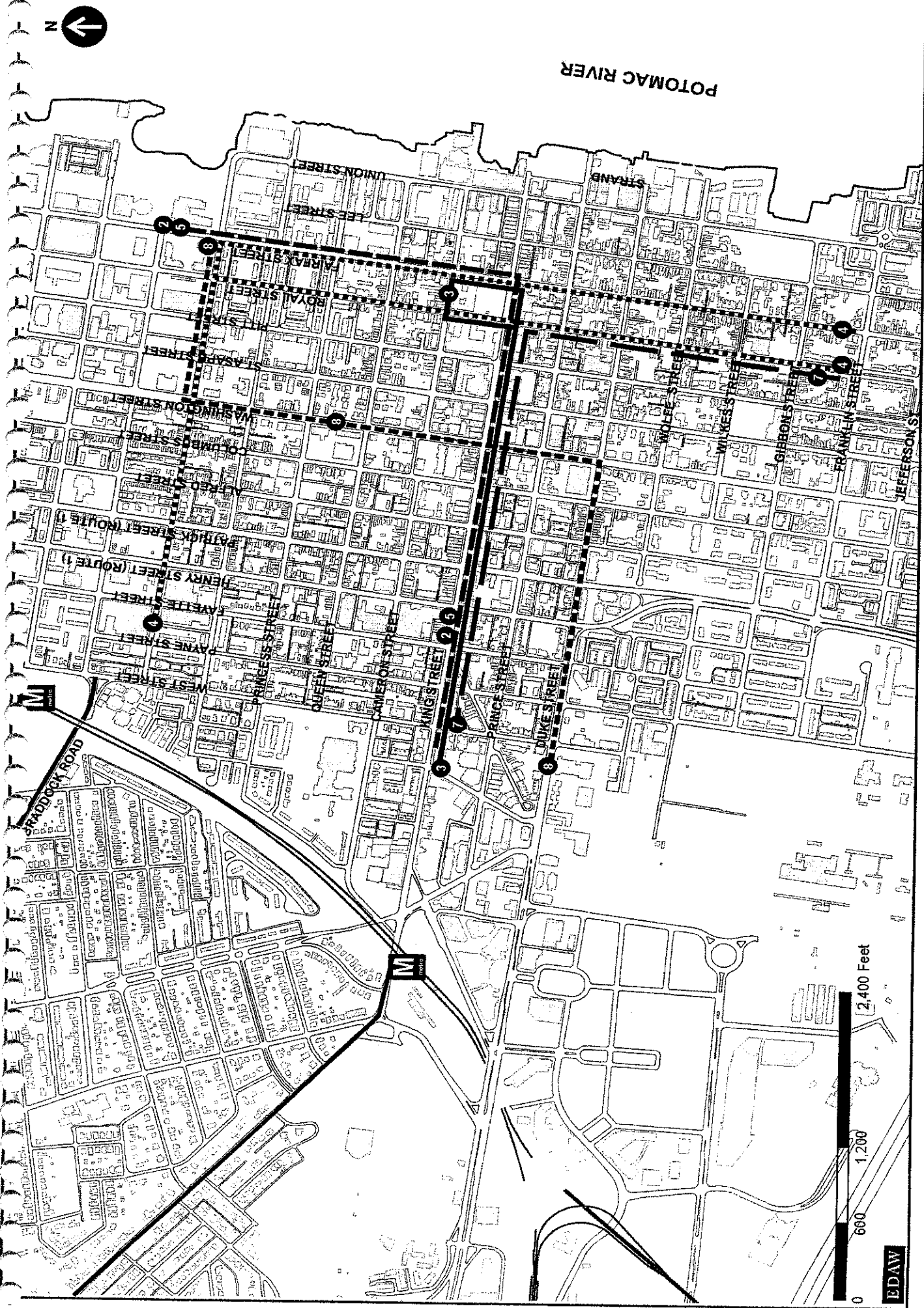
APPENDIX H

DASH ROUTE

DASH ROUTES

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

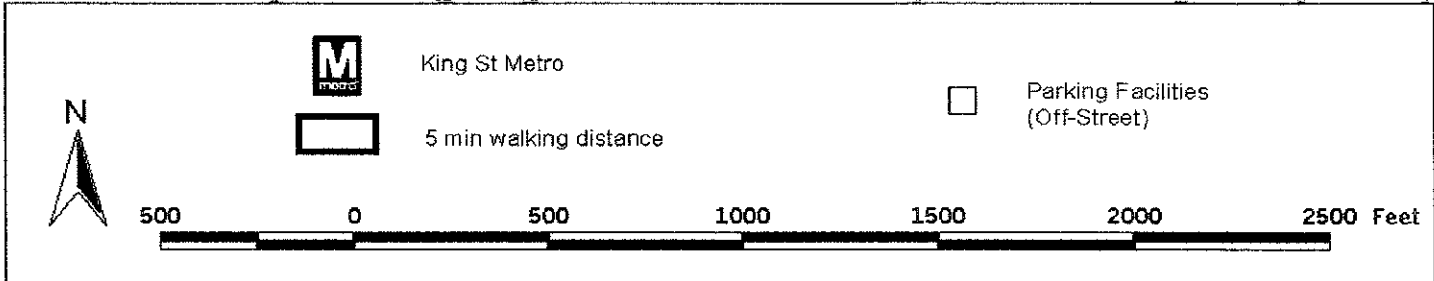
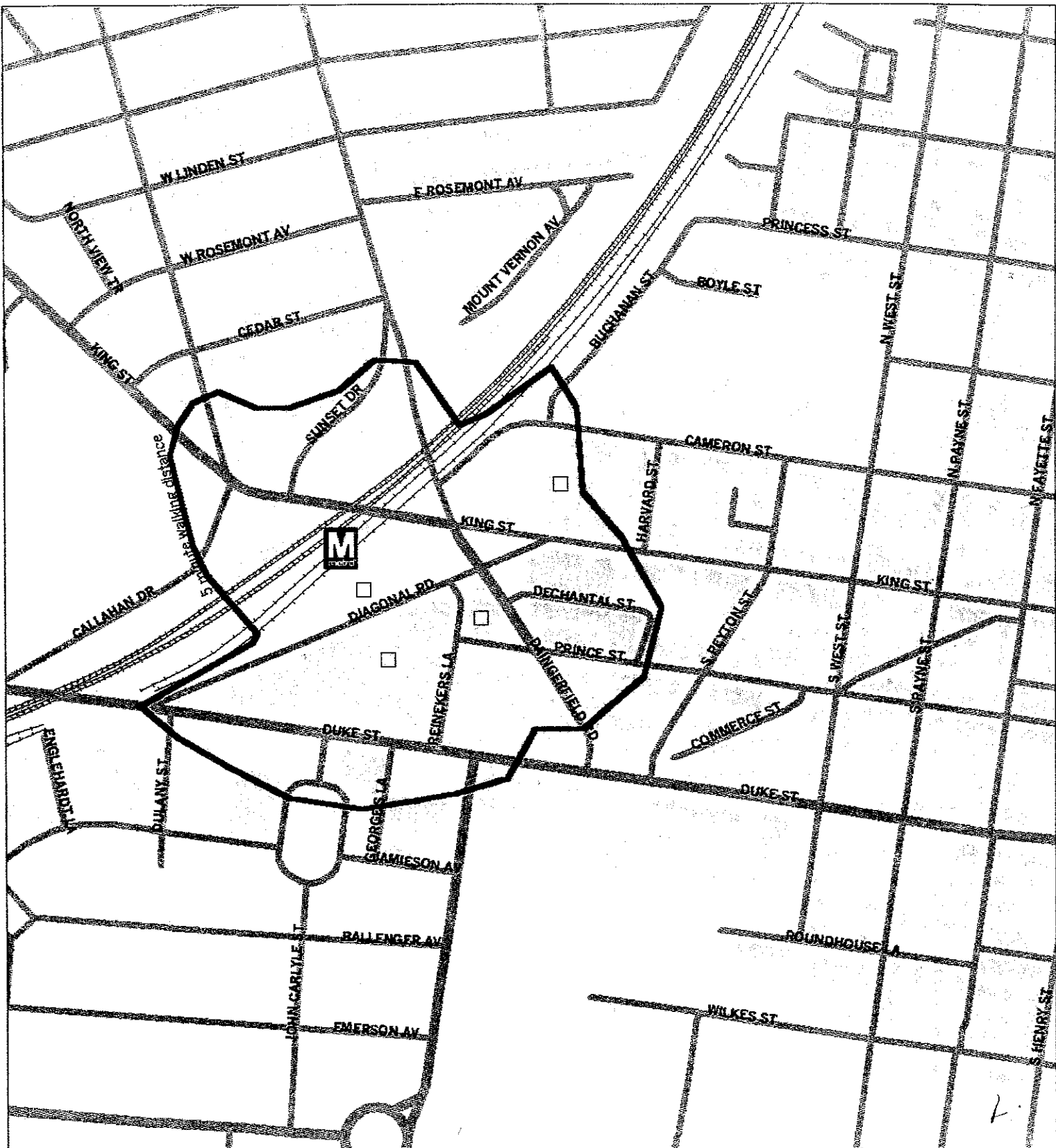
VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS



APPENDIX I DASH WAIT TIMES

Route Name	Headway	Average Wait Time for Next Bus	Average Travel Time (King Street Station to Visitor Center)	Total Travel Time (Wait Time + Travel Time)
Weekday - Peak				
A.T. 2	24 min	12 min	12 min	24 min
A.T. 5	28 min	14 min	11 min	25 min
Weekday - Off-Peak				
A.T. 2	30 min	15 min	11 min	26 min
A.T. 5	30 min	15 min	10 min	25 min
Weekday - Evening				
A.T. 2	43 min	22 min	10 min	32 min
A.T. 5	46 min	23 min	8 min	31 min
Dash About Shuttle	15 min (Fri 7pm-12am)	8 min	9 min	17 min
Saturday				
A.T. 2	56 min	28 min	12 min	40 min
A.T. 5	33 min	17 min	12 min	29 min
Dash About Shuttle	15 min (10am-12am)	8 min	12 min	20 min
Sunday				
A.T. 2	58 min	29 min	12 min	41 min
A.T. 5	59 min	30 min	12 min	42 min
Dash About Shuttle	15 min (11am-10pm)	8 min	12 min	20 min

APPENDIX J PARKING FACILITIES LIST





APPENDIX K

LIST AND ASSESSMENT OF DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Assessment of Directional Signage

The assessment of directional signage in Alexandria, as related to visitor and tourism needs, addresses the availability and location of signage and consistency (or standardization) and clarity of presentation.

i. Route Signs

- Route signs for individual Interstate and US Routes are located along major routes in the City.
- Most Route signs meet MUTCD standards.
- Dimensions of lettering/symbols vary.
- A number of Route 400 (Washington Street) signs are faded and have lost retroreflectivity. Variations in the Route 400 signs are prevalent.

ii. Street Name Signs

Street Name Signs are available at intersecting streets.

Most street name signs have white lettering on a green background. White lettering on a blue background is in place along King Street between King Street METRO Station and the waterfront; there is a mix of white on green and white on blue signs in vicinity of METRO Station. Some street name signs are fading and lettering is becoming difficult to read.

iii. General Information Signs, Destination and Distance Signs

- These signs are prolific throughout the City in providing travelers with information regarding place or upcoming destinations.
- Signs have consistent white lettering on green background.

iv. Recreational or Cultural Information Signs

- Signs vary throughout the City (e.g., National Cemetery sign is white on green, African American Museum sign is white on brown, Visitors Center is customized way-finding signage of red/green lettering on cream background and Visitor Information sign at Beltway is white on blue.)
- Welcome (gateway) sign and way-finding sign have coordinated design.
- Way-finding signs sometimes have arrows and sometimes text (e.g., turn right)
- Way-finding signs are primarily attached to signal mast-arm poles. Along King Street, flags on signal poles block way-finding signs.
- Lettering on way-finding signs is small (especially difficult to read quickly for sites with long names, e.g. Black History Museum ...)
- Southbound Washington Street way-finding sign for Visitors Center moves

from the right side to the left side and back to the right side of the two-way street.

v. Parking Signs

- Directional signage to parking areas in historic areas is prevalent but in need of upgrades in placement, presentation and maintenance.
- Several different shapes of rectangular parking signs are utilized in directing travelers to parking areas. Sometimes the signs are on signal mast-arms, sometime on the mast-arm poles and sometimes on lamp-posts.
- Occasionally, off-street parking areas have privately designed signs with a large P.
- Arrows frequently are placed on the wrong side of the rectangle. So from a distance a driver would be expecting to turn in the direction of the arrow corresponding with the side of the sign the arrow is placed.

vi. Road User Services (white on blue background)

- Road user signs are not found often in the City. An occasional blue sign is found directing motorists to clinics, police stations, etc.
- Signs with white legends on blue backgrounds are found along King Street between the METRO station and the waterfront. However, these are not necessarily signs directing travelers to road services.
- Approaches from the south and north on the Parkway differentiate between recreational (cultural) locations and service (restrooms, gas stations, etc.) with brown and blue backgrounds, respectively. Roadway services are not generally identified to the traveler.
- The DASH Bus Stop signs have blue backgrounds and are the most frequently observed signs with blue backgrounds.

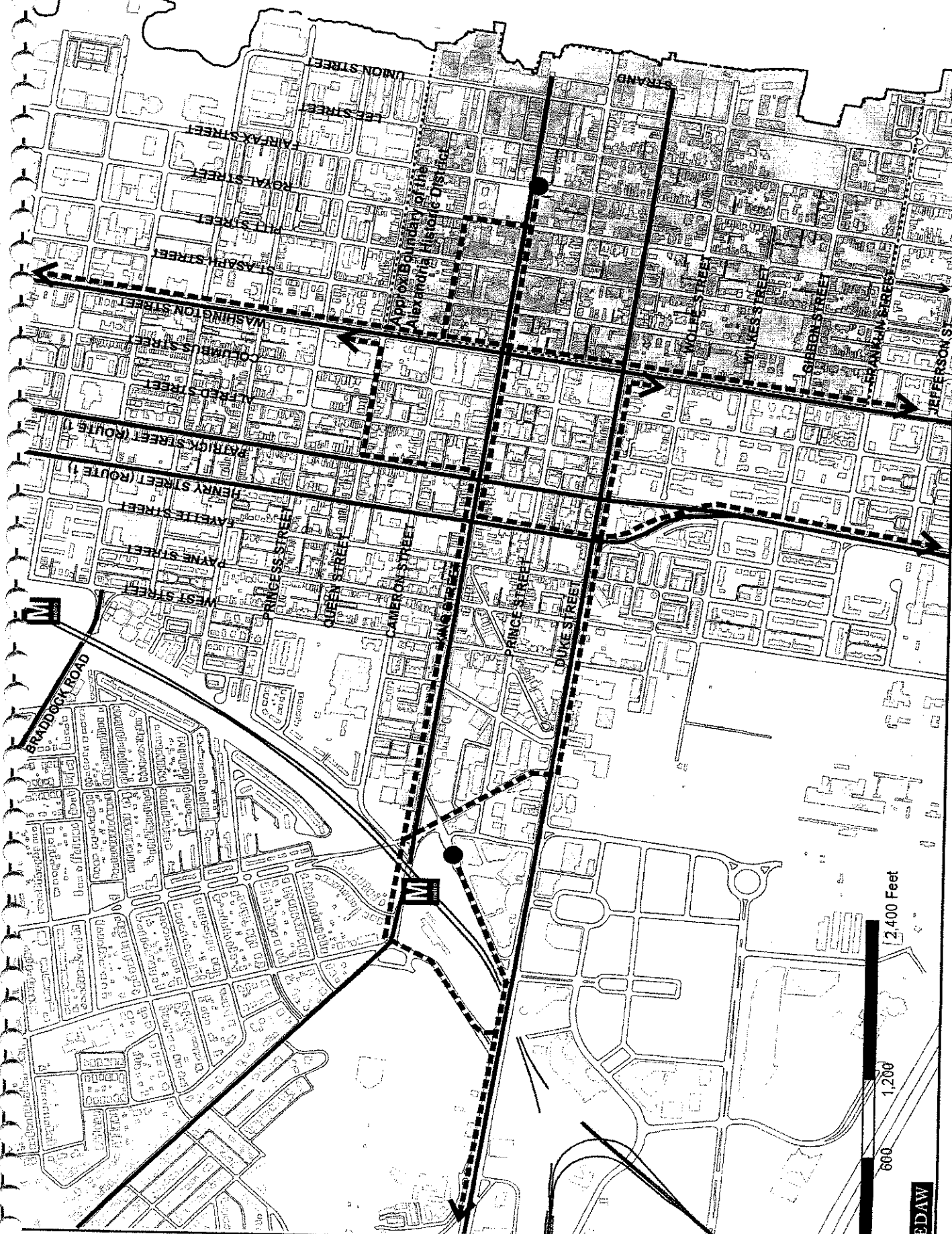
vii. Pedestrian Signage

Throughout the section of Old Town near the waterfront there are a number of maps provided for the pedestrian. These maps are posted on sign-posts near the Visitors Center and the Torpedo Factory and display key locations of interest. Most other signage is presented for both the motorist and the pedestrian.

APPENDIX L

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL ROUTES FOR TOUR BUSES

POTOMAC RIVER

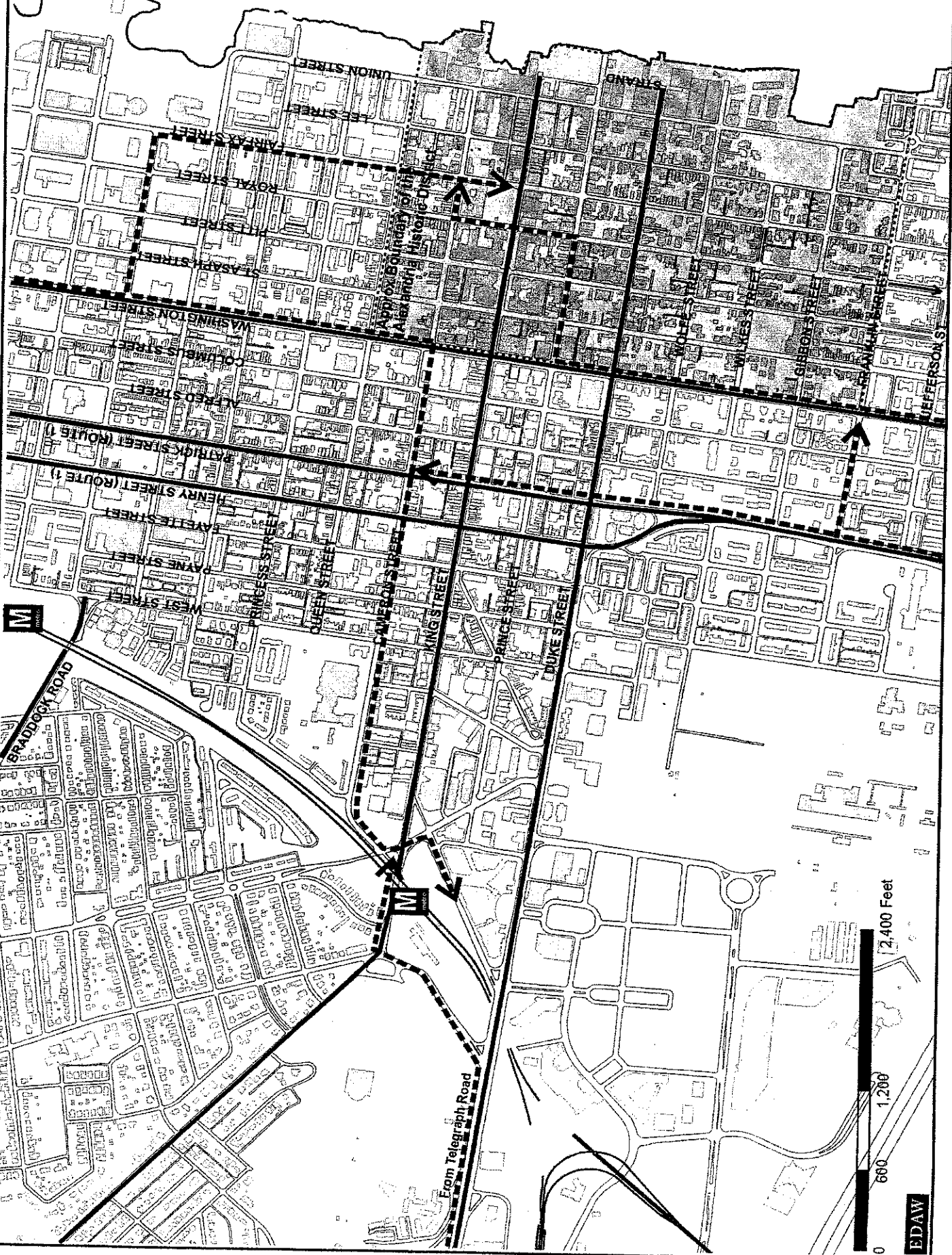


OUTBOUND TOUR BUS ROUTES

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS



POTOMAC RIVER



INBOUND TOUR BUS ROUTES

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VISITOR CENTER

EDAW

