

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 9, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF DRAFT WATERFRONT PLANNING PROCESS STRUCTURE FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION

ISSUE: Waterfront Plan planning process.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive this report concerning the draft Waterfront Plan planning process, discuss it at Council's January 27 work session, and schedule the attached Waterfront Plan Planning Process Resolution (Attachment III) for adoption at Council's February 10 legislative meeting.

BACKGROUND:

A. The Plan Area: The Waterfront Plan will cover the area from Jones Point in the south to Daingerfield Island in the north and, approximately, by Union Street (south of Queen Street) and Fairfax Street (north of Queen Street) up to the Mirant Plant and then out to the George Washington Memorial Parkway to the northern boundary of Daingerfield Island.

B. Stakeholder Interviews: As a first step in this process, the City employed Kramer & Associates to interview a wide range of stakeholders in the City. In total, 64 stakeholders were interviewed, representing varied, broad interests across the City. These included the Mayor and City Council, as well as members of the Waterfront Committee, City boards and commissions, citizen associations, as well as other groups, business interests, arts groups and water-based interests.

The purpose of these stakeholder interviews was to:

- Inform stakeholders throughout the Waterfront area and beyond that the City would soon be initiating the Waterfront Master Planning process.
- Obtain input from the stakeholders regarding their vision, expectations and suggestions for the Waterfront 20 to 25 years into the future.

- Learn about obstacles the stakeholders foresee to achieving their vision and about current and future issues that should be addressed as the Plan is prepared.
- Gather information regarding how public outreach and involvement should be built into the planning process.

Some of the key messages relating to the planning process that came out of the stakeholder interviews were:

- City officials must exert *strong leadership*, and not let a few people control the dialogue and dictate the process.
- There must be significant and *meaningful public involvement* in the process, although there are varying ideas as to the specific process that should be followed.
- The Waterfront process must not drag on and must be accomplished within a *specific timeframe*.
- This is our shot to *get this right*, and we cannot afford to miss this once in a generation opportunity.
- The Waterfront is a *City-wide resource* and no one person, group or community should claim it as their own.
- The Waterfront Plan should *serve City residents* as a first priority and then visitors from outside the City.
- City agencies must communicate and *work together* along with State and Federal agencies to create and then implement a Waterfront Plan.

C. Preferred Public Process: The passionate and high level of interest in this important plan for the City has highlighted the need to have a public process that is as inclusive as possible. To achieve that goal for the Waterfront Plan, it is recommended that the City hold a series of open public meetings, rather than have an appointed advisory group. In addition, the Planning Commission will play an active role in guiding the process.

The initial series of public meetings will be informational in nature. They will include presentations to highlight national and international examples of successful waterfronts; tours of the Alexandria Waterfront on foot and by boat; a description of existing conditions and associated opportunities and constraints; a public forum to allow interested persons or groups to present their ideas for the Waterfront Plan; and at least one tour of a waterfront in another city. Public meetings will be designed not only to be informational, but also participative and broadly inclusive in obtaining public input. This will be followed by a series of visioning workshops with the community with the intention of developing a set of goals, values, principles and options for the Waterfront Plan.

Based on this input, a draft plan will be prepared, following which there will be a formal public comment period. Those comments will be analyzed by the consultants and staff and presented to Planning Commission and City Council with recommendations for proposed changes to the draft plan. The plan will then be redrafted and released for a second public comment period. These comments will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council, along with further recommendations for changes to the plan. Final changes to the plan will then be completed and presented to Planning Commission and City Council for approval and adoption.

The public process will commence in February 2009, and it is staff's goal that the process described above will take about twelve months.

D. Plan Goals: The stakeholder interviews already undertaken have provided City staff with an overview of the perceived opportunities, issues and challenges to be addressed in planning for the Waterfront area. An internal City staff work session was held in early November to enable City departments to contribute their ideas at an early stage of the planning process. Staff will also be working with the Waterfront Committee to gain their insight into the opportunities and challenges for the plan, as they represent various interests and have a good working knowledge of operational and other issues at the Waterfront. Information will be presented to City Council at a work session before its January 27 legislative meeting, which will include discussion of the draft City's broad goals (Attachment II) for the Waterfront Plan. A resolution (Attachment III) setting out the process will be presented to City Council for adoption at its legislative meeting on February 10. The initial draft goals will be discussed and finalized as part of the public process.

E. Planning Consultant: The City has selected Alexandria-based and nationally-recognized EDAW as the planning consultants to lead this process. EDAW has international experience in waterfront planning, as well as local knowledge and capability, which will provide the creative expertise and leadership needed to help facilitate the production of a unique and stimulating vision for Alexandria's Waterfront. Major waterfront projects include, the Port of Los Angeles, Liverpool, England and Taiyuan, Bengbu and Kunshna in China. More locally, EDAW has worked on plans for redeveloping the downtown and waterfront in Wilmington, NC, the North Shore Riverfront Park in Pittsburgh and the Tidal Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. In Alexandria, EDAW prepared the 1983 Design Guidelines for the Waterfront, the Jones Point Park Plan and numerous other projects in the City. EDAW are also consultants for the World Trade Center Memorial project.

F. Communications: A link on the home page of the City's web site is currently being developed exclusively for the Waterfront Plan. Information regarding the schedule, upcoming meetings, past meeting materials, fact sheets, newsletters and links to other relevant information, will be posted on the web site and constantly updated.

Staff are also considering utilizing podcasts and the use of cable broadcasts to capture some of the proposed public meetings/tours so that the information reaches as wide an audience as possible. There will also be regular updates on the process via press releases.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment I: Waterfront Plan Study Area Map

Attachment II: Initial Draft Waterfront Plan Goals

Attachment III: Resolution to establish the public participation process for the Waterfront Plan

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning

Karl Mortiz, Deputy Director, Strategic and Long Range Planning

Kathleen Beeton, Division Chief, Neighborhood Planning and Community Development

Andrea Barlow, Principal Planner, Neighborhood Planning and Community Development



INITIAL DRAFT WATERFRONT PLAN GOALS (as of January 9, 2009)

The City's goals for the Waterfront Plan are:

Creative: The Waterfront Plan should be bold, visionary and realistic.

Inclusive: The Waterfront is and should continue to be a Citywide resource to be enjoyed by all Alexandrians

Dynamic: The Waterfront should be a destination that attracts all Alexandrians as well as visitors and should be integral to the visitor experience in Alexandria.

Connected: Access to the Waterfront should be increased and improved. Pedestrian connectivity along the Waterfront should be continuous.

Authentic: The Waterfront should have a unique identity that is grounded in the City's historic authenticity.

Variety: There should be a variety of themes, activities and experiences along the Waterfront.

Manageable: The Waterfront's vehicular and pedestrian circulation and parking should be improved.

Sustainable: The Waterfront should be able to sustain itself both economically and environmentally.

Compatible: Future development in the Waterfront should respect the existing residential neighborhoods.

Permeable: Vistas of the water from surrounding areas should be enhanced. Vistas of the Waterfront from the river should be enhanced.

D R A F T

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, the revitalization of the Alexandria Waterfront is important to the quality of life as well as the economic and social health of Alexandria as a whole, and

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to establish a public participation process for the planning of the Alexandria Waterfront that is open, fair and broadly inclusive and facilitates the preparation of a plan for the area that takes advantage of limited opportunities presented by redevelopment and provides long-term benefits to residents and businesses in Alexandria as a whole,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA THAT:

1. There is hereby established a broadly inclusive public planning process for the Alexandria Waterfront Plan.
2. All meetings held to discuss the Waterfront Plan will be open to all members of the public, including all residents and businesses of Alexandria.
3. A series of meetings will be held, to include:
 - a. Informational meetings to identify existing conditions, study other nationally and internationally successful waterfronts, and identify potential opportunities and constraints;
 - b. Interactive meetings to enable interested parties and groups to share their ideas for the Waterfront Plan;
 - c. A series of community workshops to establish goals, values, principles and options for the Waterfront plan; and
 - d. Walking and boat tours of Alexandria Waterfront and at least one waterfront in another city.
4. The Planning Commission will play an active role in guiding the planning process.
5. Administrative and technical support for these public meetings will be provided primarily by the Department of Planning and Zoning staff, supplemented by a consultant team and staff other City departments and agencies.
6. Staff shall endeavor to present its findings recommendations to the Planning Commission and the City Council in twelve months.

ADOPTED: _____
Date

WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON CMC CITY CLERK

19
1-13-09

ECO-CITY ALEXANDRIA

(Consistent with City Council's 2015 Strategic Plan)

Phase I Environmental Action Plan

Council Legislative Session
January 13, 2009



City of Alexandria

Eco-City Alexandria Project Progress to Date

January – December 2007

- Green-Ventory
- Compendium of Model Sustainability Practices

January – December 2008

- Eco-City Café - March
- Eco-City Summit - May
- **Eco-City Charter Adoption – June**
- Environmental Action Plan Open House - November
- Phase I Environmental Action Plan - December



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Development of Environmental Action Plan July 2008 – June 2009

Phase I (Fall 2008)

- Identified key priorities among City existing plans and operations that are consistent with the Eco-City Charter
- Includes readily implementable program enhancements
- Actions items feasible under the City's 2010 and 2011 budgetary constraints and available resources
- Held a EPC Open House on November 17 to seek public input on Phase I Environmental Action Plan

Phase II (Spring 2009)

- Draft Phase II of the Environmental Action Plan
- Hold an Environmental Action Plan Café
- City Council consideration and adoption of Phase II Environmental Action Plan



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EPC Response to Public Comments

- EPC considered and responded to 133 comments received at and following the Open House (Attachment 3)
- In response to public comments, the EPC:
 - Changed the Emerging Threats principle to Climate Change and Other Emerging Threats and moved this principle to the front of the Plan
 - Language was added in several sections emphasizing climate change, reuse in the solid waste section, the use perennial and native plants, historic preservation and public education and outreach.



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Phase I Environmental Action Plan

- A very ambitious and aggressive plan having 41 goals and 139 action steps
- The Action Items are organized by the guiding principles adopted in Eco-City Charter
- 65 action steps are being done or planned through the present FY2009 budget
- A spreadsheet version of the Phase I EAP is being developed to keep track of progress
- City Council adoption of Phase I EAP does not signify a fiscal commitment to implement each and every action in this action plan



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Phase I EAP – Highlights

- The City will enhance its Green Building Program for private developments
- A Green Building Forum is going to be held January 28, 2009 at the George Washington Masonic Memorial
- Hiring an additional staff person to work on environmental education and outreach on Eco-City objectives is a priority
- Complete emissions inventory and develop a Climate Action Plan for the City
- Develop an Energy Master Plan
- Encourage the adoption of more energy efficient technologies and practices by the City, its residents, and businesses



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Phase I EAP – Highlights

- The City will lead by example in the areas of green building, energy conservation, air and water quality, and climate change
- Ensure that Small Area Plans, as well as new development and redevelopment projects, are consistent with the Eco-City Charter
- Promote citizen involvement in and awareness of water quality and resources issues, particularly with regard to regulatory requirements of MS4
- Consideration and adoption of Urban Forestry Plan
- Educate individuals and organizations on the availability of transportation alternatives that will reduce dependency on single occupancy vehicles



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Phase I EAP – Highlights

- Encourage the development of a Green Taxi fleet by setting tight miles per gallon standards for new vehicles
- Establish and promote green building standards for new commercial residential development. Use nationally recognized criteria, such as those of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or equivalent in establishing such standards
- Promote respiratory health and improve indoor air quality in both new and existing residences
- Provide education and outreach to local businesses and related organizations to help achieve environmental goals and promote green jobs within the city



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Next Steps

Development of Phase II Environmental Action Plan

- Draft Phase II Environmental Action Plan issued for public comments at Alexandria Earth Day on April 25, 2009
- Final Draft Phase II EAP approved by the EPC on May 18, 2009
- Final Draft Phase II EAP received by City Council on June 9, 2009
- Council Public Hearing and possible adoption of Phase II EAP on June 13, 2009



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Acknowledgements

- The Environmental Policy Commission has worked extremely hard throughout this Eco-City Alexandria initiative
- Virginia Tech professors and graduate students provide expertise, research, leadership and excellent partnership
- City staff from departments throughout the City have committed significant time and effort to assist the EPC and Virginia Tech in this initiative



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Thank you