


## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 9, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTIONS ESTABLISHING THE POTOMAC YARD PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP AND THE POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION FEASIBILITY WORK GROUP

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**ISSUE:** The establishment of two groups to study and advise on Small Area Plan amendments for Potomac Yard, and to analyze technical issues related to a potential new Metrorail station in Potomac Yard.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Approve the resolution (Attachment I) establishing the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group as discussed below; and
- (2) Approve the resolution (Attachment II) establishing the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group as discussed below.

**BACKGROUND:** As a result of Potomac Yard development discussions last spring related to the transfer of 765,000 square feet of office space from Landbay J and Landbay L to Landbay H, pending discussion on Landbay L, as well as the stated desire by the owners of Landbay F (the Potomac Yard Retail Center) to redevelop that big box retail strip center into a mixed use development, it was determined that a Small Area Plan planning process was necessary in order to be able to look at the Potomac Yard area in a comprehensive manner. Also, as part of those discussions last spring, consideration is also being given to establishing a new Metrorail station in Potomac Yard; however, substantial technical and financial analyses need to be undertaken to know if the construction of such a station is feasible. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) staff estimate the cost of constructing such a station (assuming a surface station constructed on the Potomac Yard land reserved for such a station) roughly at \$75 million to \$100 million in today's construction dollars.

As a result of both the Potomac Yard area planning process and Metrorail station study needs, it is recommended that two groups be created to assist in the land use and Metrorail study processes. The proposed Metrorail station study group has its origins in a proposal developed by Council Members Krupicka, Smedberg and Wilson.

Staff and subject matter consultants will provide background information to both study groups and facilitate their discussions of issues and evaluation of options over a series of meetings. The Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group will function in an advisory role to City staff on density, retail, height, design, traffic, layout, amenities and other planning aspects of the Potomac Yard area. The Metrorail Station Work Group will be a separate group from the Planning Advisory Group, and will analyze technical construction and financial issues. Staff anticipates very limited overlap between the two groups, and it will be coordinated by joint staffing and the planned overlap of one member between the two groups.

The Planning Advisory Group is anticipated to meet over the next 12 to 18 months, with the objective of bringing a proposed amended Small Area Plan for the Potomac Yard area to the Planning Commission and City Council by December 2009. It is anticipated that the findings of the Metrorail Station feasibility studies will be submitted in time to be incorporated in the Small Area Plan for Potomac Yard, before that Plan draft is finalized for submission to the Planning Commission and City Council.

**A. Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group:**

The mission of the Planning Advisory Group will be to build on previous planning efforts, regulatory actions, and the existing neighborhood context to:

- Identify and study the issues, challenges and opportunities presented by the redevelopment of Potomac Yard.
- Bring community values, knowledge and ideas into the process of creating a plan that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the area in ways that provide lasting benefit to the local community and the City as a whole.
- Based on the members' interests, local knowledge, values and ideas, advise the staff on options for the future of the planning area, and assist the staff in developing policy recommendations in the variety of subject areas required for a plan.
- Weigh the desirability of a new Metrorail station against the impacts of the density needed to support it.
- Keep the public informed about the plan, advising groups they represent of the progress of the plan and issues raised that are of interest to the group.

It is recommended that the Planning Advisory Group consist of 15 members, and be structured similar to the Landmark/Van Dorn Advisory Group. Members would be drawn from among the following groups: residents of surrounding neighborhoods; members of the business community, including the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP); the Alexandria City Public Schools; the Potomac Yard property owners; and the Planning Commission. Planning and Zoning is currently accepting nominations for planning advisory group members, with the goal of creating a diverse group, bringing varying perspectives to the dialogue. It is proposed that the City Manager appoint the 15 members from among the nominations to create a group that best reflects a broad range of interests and viewpoints. Planning Advisory Group meetings

will be open to the public so that all interested parties can participate, and written materials and presentations provided to this group will be posted on the City's website.

The Planning Advisory Group will receive staff and consultant briefings and will participate in interactive problem-solving sessions at their meetings. The program will begin with identification of issues and opportunities by the Planning Advisory Group, and information sessions on development economics, retail, urban amenities, affordable housing, urban design, transportation, economic sustainability, and other topics that may be identified by the group. The Planning Advisory Group will then identify options, and finally provide guidance and advice to staff, as the proposed Small Area Plan amendment for Potomac Yard is developed.

**B. Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group:**

The mission of the Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group would be to analyze the financial tools, risks and fiscal impacts of funding the Metrorail station, to examine concept refinement and constructability of a new Metrorail station, to review construction costs, and to evaluate potential ridership.

This Work Group is proposed to include the following representatives: two members of Council, one representative from the Planning Commission, one representative from the Transportation Commission, and one representative from the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group.

The Council representatives are proposed to be appointed by the Mayor, and the other representatives are proposed to be appointed by the chairs of the respective groups listed above.

The Work Group would receive staff and consultant briefings on the Metrorail Station feasibility studies, as those studies progress. The Work Group will review options and priorities, and ensure necessary technical questions regarding funding, concept refinement, ridership and constructability are answered.

**C. Staff Support and Schedule:**

Planning and Zoning staff will provide coordinating support to both groups. The Planning Advisory Group will be supplemented by a consultant team and staff from other departments including in particular Transportation and Environmental Services; Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; and Housing. For the Metrorail Station Work Group, the technical staff support will be provided by the City Manager's Office and the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, with coordination by the Department of Planning and Zoning. The staff of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority will also assist, as will outside technical consultants.

To maximize coordination and communication between the two groups, the same Planning and Zoning staff will be assigned to support both groups, and a representative of the Planning Advisory Group is proposed to sit on the Metrorail Station Work Group.

The Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group is expected to meet monthly beginning in October, and about every six weeks beginning January 2009 through December 2009.

It is anticipated that the findings of the Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group will be submitted in time to be reflected in the proposed Potomac Yard Small Area Plan amendments, and staff's objective is to take the Plan to the Planning Commission and City Council by December 2009.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Attachment I: Resolution to establish the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group.
- Attachment II: Resolution to establish the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group.

**STAFF:**

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning  
Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services  
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, Strategic and Long Range Planning  
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Urban Design  
Tom Culpepper, Deputy Director, Transportation  
Valerie Peterson, Principal Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, the redevelopment of Potomac Yard area is important to the quality of life, as well as the economic and social health of Alexandria as a whole, and to the immediately surrounding areas in particular, and

WHEREAS, the City wishes to gain the advice of community members representing a variety of interests in the preparation of a proposed plan for redevelopment of the area, which takes advantage of opportunities presented by redevelopment, and which provides long-term benefits to residents and businesses in the Potomac Yard area, and to Alexandria as a whole,

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

1. There is hereby established a Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group.
2. The Planning Advisory Group will consist of 15 members. Members will be drawn from among the following groups: residents of surrounding neighborhoods; property owners; members of the business community, including the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP); the Alexandria City Public Schools; the property owners; and a member of the Planning Commission.
3. The functions of the Planning Advisory Group shall be to:
  - a. Identify and study the issues, challenges and opportunities presented by the redevelopment of Potomac Yard.
  - b. Bring community values, knowledge and ideas into the process of creating a plan that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the area in ways that provide lasting benefit to the local community and the City as a whole.
  - c. Based on the members' interests, local knowledge, values and ideas, advise City staff on options for the future of the planning area, and assist staff in developing policy recommendations in the variety of subject areas required for a plan.
  - d. Weigh the desirability of a new Metrorail station in comparison to the impacts of the density needed to support it.
  - e. Keep the public informed about the Potomac Yard planning processes and issues, advising groups the members represent of the progress of the plan and issues raised that are of interest.
4. Planning and Zoning staff will provide support to the Planning Advisory Group, and be supplemented by a consultant team and staff from other departments.
5. Staff shall endeavor to present the final draft of the Potomac Yard Plan, to include the findings of the Metrorail Station Work Group, to the Planning Commission and the City Council by December 2009.
6. The City Manager shall appoint the members of this Planning Advisory Group.

ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

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JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON CMC CITY CLERK

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, the consideration of a potential new Metrorail station in Potomac Yard is important to the economic and social health of Alexandria as a whole and to the immediately surrounding area in particular, and

WHEREAS, City Council wishes to ensure a thorough technical analysis of the feasibility of a potential new Metrorail station, with full coordination with other City efforts,

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

1. There is hereby established a Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group.
2. The Metrorail Station Work Group will include the following representatives: two members of Council, one representative from the Planning Commission, one representative from the Transportation Commission, and one representative from the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group.
3. The functions of the Metrorail Station Work Group shall be to:
  - a. Analyze the financial tools, fiscal impact and risks of funding the Metrorail Station;
  - b. Examine concept refinement, costs and constructability of a new Metrorail Station; and
  - c. Evaluate ridership estimates.
4. Staff technical support will be provided by the City Manager's Office and the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, with coordination by the Department of Planning and Zoning.
5. Staff shall endeavor to present the final draft of the Potomac Yard Plan, including the findings of the Metrorail Station Work Group, to the Planning Commission and the City Council by December 2009.
6. The Council representatives of the Metrorail Station Work Group shall be appointed by the Mayor, and the other Work Group representatives shall be appointed by the chairs of those groups to be represented.

ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

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JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON CMC CITY CLERK



**RESOLUTION NO. 2297**

**WHEREAS**, the redevelopment of Potomac Yard area is important to the quality of life, as well as the economic and social health of Alexandria as a whole, and to the immediately surrounding areas in particular; and

**WHEREAS**, the City wishes to gain the advice of community members representing a variety of interests in the preparation of a proposed plan for redevelopment of the area, which takes advantage of opportunities presented by redevelopment, and which provides long-term benefits to residents and businesses in the Potomac Yard area, and to Alexandria as a whole;


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

1. There is hereby established a Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group.
2. The Planning Advisory Group will consist of 15 to 20 members. Members will be drawn from among the following groups: residents of surrounding neighborhoods; the property owners; members of the business community, including the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP); the Alexandria City Public Schools; representatives of interest groups such as affordable housing, transportation, the environment, and others; and a member of the Planning Commission.
3. The functions of the Planning Advisory Group shall be to:
  - a. Identify and study the issues, challenges and opportunities presented by the redevelopment of Potomac Yard.
  - b. Bring community values, knowledge and ideas into the process of creating a plan that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the area in ways that provide lasting benefit to the local community and the City as a whole.
  - c. Based on the members' interests, local knowledge, values and ideas, advise City staff on options for the future of the planning area, and assist staff in developing policy recommendations in the variety of subject areas required for a plan.
  - d. Weigh the desirability of a new Metrorail station in comparison to the impacts of the density needed to support it.
  - e. Keep the public informed about the Potomac Yard planning processes and issues, advising groups the members represent of the progress of the plan and issues raised that are of interest.
4. Planning and Zoning staff will provide support to the Planning Advisory Group, and be supplemented by a consultant team and staff from other departments.
5. Staff shall endeavor to present the final draft of the Potomac Yard Plan, to include the findings of the Metrorail Station Work Group, to the Planning Commission and the City Council by December 2009.

6. The City Manager shall appoint the members of this Planning Advisory Group.

ADOPTED: October 14, 2008

This resolution was amended by City Council on October 18, 2008.

  
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WILLIAM D. EUILLE                      MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
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Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC      City Clerk

RESOLUTION NO. 2298

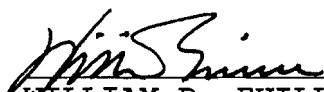
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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA THAT:

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2. The Metrorail Station Work Group will include the following representatives: two members of Council, one representative from the Planning Commission, one representative from the Transportation Commission, and one representative from the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group.
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  - a. Analyze the financial tools, fiscal impact and risks of funding the Metrorail Station.
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  - c. Evaluate ridership estimates.
4. Staff technical support will be provided by the City Manager's Office and the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, with coordination by the Department of Planning and Zoning.
5. Staff shall endeavor to present the final draft of the Potomac Yard Plan, including the findings of the Metrorail Station Work Group, to the Planning Commission and the City Council by December 2009.
6. The Council representatives of the Metrorail Station Work Group shall be appointed by the Mayor, and the other Work Group representatives shall be appointed by the chairs of those groups to be represented.

ADOPTED: October 14, 2008

  
WILLIAM D. EUILLE MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC City Clerk