ISSUE:  Conceptual Approval of Phase 1 of the Wayfinding Program

APPLICANT:  City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

LOCATION:  Old and Historic District

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:  Staff recommends that the BAR approve Phase 1 of the citywide Wayfinding Program in concept as submitted. Staff further recommends that BAR postpone a decision on programming the retail component of the pedestrian mini-kiosks pending further study.
I. ISSUE:

**Conceptual Approval of Phase 1 Signs**

Staff is asking that BAR consider conceptual approval of the Phase 1 Wayfinding signs. Signs proposed for Phase 1 are limited to pedestrian and parking signs in Old Town. Once BAR has made a decision on these signs, Planning Commission will consider them for approval on April 7 and then City Council will determine whether to fund Phase 1 in the CIP on April 27. If desired, the Board will have the opportunity to refine portions of the Phase 1 program prior to final production of the Citywide Wayfinding program Design Guidelines Manual in the fall.

Conceptual approval of Phase 1 signs means that the BAR approves the:
- General function and program of each type of sign;
- General location, distribution and quantity of signs;
- General message and content of signs; and
- Overall general design.

Below is a detailed list of the Phase 1 sign types for which approval is requested. Attachment 1 provides color photographs depicting the proposed signs in context and Attachment 2 indicates proposed Phase 1 sign locations.

**Phase 1 Sign Types**

1. Parking Lot Identity Sign for Structured Garages (Qty. 6)
   - Purpose: to identify parking garages within the district
   - Mounted to building façades with brackets
   - Illumination is recommended
   - New signs will replace existing signs one for one
   - Panel is approximately 6'6"H x 3'3"W

2. Parking Lot Identity Sign for Surface Lots (Qty. 5)
   - Purpose: to identify parking garages within the district
   - Mounted to freestanding poles
   - Illumination is recommended
   - New signs will replace existing signs one for one
   - Panel is approximately 6'H x 3'3"W

3. Parking Trailblazer Sign (vertical) (Qty. 50)
   - Purpose: to lead visitors efficiently from main roads to parking lots
   - Mounted to existing light poles throughout the district
   - New signs will replace existing signs one for one
   - Small vertical panel is approximately 32"H x 18"W (although the sizes of existing parking trailblazer signs vary widely, this is slightly smaller on average than the existing signs)
4. Parking Trailblazer Sign (horizontal) (Qty. 20)
   - Purpose: to lead visitors efficiently from main roads to parking lots
   - mounted to existing signal crossarms throughout the district
   - new signs will replace existing signs one for one
   - larger horizontal panel is approximately 18"H x 5'6-1/2"W (although the sizes of
     existing parking trailblazer signs vary widely, this is larger on average than the
     existing parking signs on the signal cross arms)

5. Pedestrian Directional Pointer for non-street grid areas (Qty. 5)
   - Purpose: to direct pedestrians at confusing points of entry such as the Metro
     Station and Waterfront where it can be helpful to “lead by the nose.”
   - mounted to new posts approximately 12’ tall
   - these are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing signs)
   - the arrow shaped pointer panels are approximately 22"H x 3'W; Post: 6"sq. x
     12'H

6. Freestanding Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 2)
   - Purpose: to provide comprehensive information to pedestrians regarding
     attractions, orientation, events and Alexandria history in large plaza-type areas
     such as Market Square
   - The first two kiosks implemented in Phase 1 will be located in Market Square and
     at the Metro Station (the interim kiosk at the Waterfront will remain)
   - Illumination is recommended
   - Large four-sided rectangular box is approximately 11'H x 3'W and contains four
     pedestrian information display panels measuring approximately 6'6"H x 3'W
   - Proposing a stone (or similar) base and a metal roof
   - The kiosks are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing
     signs)

7. Wall Mounted Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 6)
   - Purpose: to provide initial orientation to visitors exiting parking garages on foot
   - Mounted on exterior walls of garages (new buildings only)
   - The visitor panels are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing
     existing)
   - The panel is approximately 6'6"H x 3'W

8. Pedestrian Mini Kiosk (Qty. 20)
   - Purpose: to provide periodic orientation and visitor information to visitors along
     pedestrian corridors such as King Street as a supplement to the comprehensive
     information found at the large freestanding visitor kiosks
   - Mini-kiosks are small four-sided rectangular “boxes” that would be wrapped
     around existing light poles.
   - The interchangeable panels are approximately 36"H x 12"W
• The kiosks are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing signs)
• To address the expressed desire by businesses off King Street for more visibility, Staff has explored three options for the programming of the mini-kiosks, ranging from detailed inclusion of the names of businesses off-King Street, to a more generic listing of amenities with the focus instead on historic attractions. The options are:
  - **Option A:** List each business; locate kiosks 2 per intersection
  - **Option B:** List businesses by category such as “Antiques,” “Café’s” etc; locate kiosks 2 per intersection
  - **Option C:** Do not list businesses on the kiosks, only historic attractions and use symbols to indicate visitor amenities such as shopping and dining. This option would be supplemented with a permanent A-frame program coordinated in design with the Wayfinding Program; kiosks located at periodic intervals on King Street.

• **Staff recommends that BAR postpone a decision on how or whether to include the retail component of the pedestrian mini-kiosks pending further study that will include a trial of the A-frame program during the summer months. As outlined above, the options will result in different quantities of signs and sign locations, and therefore additional time is warranted to review the options. Staff is asking the BAR to approve the concept of the mini-kiosks as a Wayfinding element, but not resolve the retail component, as detailed in Attachment 1.**

9. Old Town District Gateway (Qty. 0)
• The Phase 1 CIP request originally submitted to City Council included funding for 2 Old Town district gateway signs. Staff is **not** asking BAR to review or approve these signs at this stage. Staff will recommend that City Council remove these signs from the Phase 1 funding request as the signs have not been fully developed and reviewed. District gateway signs will be incorporated into later phases of the program.

A primary design goal of the Wayfinding system is to marry its unique design to a sound, cost-efficient maintenance strategy. All sign panels in the Wayfinding system will be made of painted aluminum sheets with UV and graffiti resistant coating and applied with cut vinyl reflective lettering. Posts and sign supports are painted metal of simple, sturdy construction and lasting quality, consistent with existing metal posts in the district. Staff has worked with Sasaki and Transportation & Environmental Services to develop a system that is cost effective, attractive and easily maintained.

II. BACKGROUND:

**Why is a Wayfinding Program Needed?**
A study undertaken by the City several years ago to evaluate the need for a new visitors’ center concluded that a major weakness is an ineffective and inadequate sign program to direct persons around the City, including informational and directional signs for visitors, tourists, residents, and business travelers. For example, there are currently no pedestrian signs in Old Town directing visitors to historic attractions. The proposed system will fill critical gaps in the current signage.

The study clearly indicated that in order to orient and inform visitors and residents, motivate them to visit historic sites, and make navigation of the City easier, a coordinated signage and wayfinding program was needed. With increased regional competition for retail, restaurant, and tourism dollars, this is a key economic development project recommended by the Economic Sustainability Task Force and supported by City Council with the allocation of CIP funding for planning the system. It should also be noted that with the advent of National Harbor, and the expectation of more development there and on the Washington waterfront, it is expected that King Street will experience a continued increase in visitors. The water taxi and the trolley are both responses to increased level of tourism and the Wayfinding program is a strategic way of managing this increase in a positive way for the City. As regards the Old Town commercial district in particular, the City’s retail advisor also cited implementation of the proposed Wayfinding system as an essential element in maintaining the economic vitality of the commercial district.

The intent of the coordinated sign and wayfinding program is to provide for the comprehensive design of a signage, wayfinding and identity system that will project a consistent image for the entire City, reduce clutter, fill critical gaps in signage, promote walking and mass transit, and be sustainable as well as expandable.

**Community and City Review (Process and Outreach)**

The current Wayfinding program was initiated in late 2007 with the selection of the design firm Sasaki and Associates to develop a citywide sign system. Sasaki first performed analysis of existing conditions, destinations and routes, and then initiated multiple phases of programming and design development in partnership with the City. A City established Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), composed of a broad mix of civic, historic, business, and institutional interests citywide, has met over the course of the last year to develop a program and design compatible with the City as a whole as well as its unique districts. Over nine meetings and two virtual surveys, the SAG resolved issues of messaging, content, program, color, scale, shape and overall character that were then shared and refined in three community meetings and in partnership with the City. The SAG will continue to meet in order to finalize the design and complete the program.

The City Working Group (CWG), composed of representatives from Planning and Zoning (including Historic Preservation Staff), Transportation & Environmental Services, Office of Historic Alexandria, General Services, and Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, reviewed and refined the program in partnership with the consultant team and feedback from the SAG and the community. In addition, Staff has also presented the Wayfinding program to the Federation of Civic Associations, the Board of Old Town
Civic Association, and the Beautification Commission, all in March 2009. The Phase 1 Concept Plan before you incorporates comments from all of the above City Departments and civic organizations.

Work sessions were held in January 2009 to update City Council, Planning Commission and both Boards of Architectural Review (BAR) on the progress to date. At that time City Council requested that the BAR review and approve the proposed Wayfinding program prior to approval by Planning Commission and prior to a funding decision from City Council in April. Although section 9-103 of the Zoning Ordinance exempts the signs from BAR review since they are considered City-installed signs in “furtherance of governmental responsibilities,” the City would like the BAR to review and approve the program to ensure that it is in keeping with the historic character of Old Town. City Staff held second and third work sessions with the Old and Historic District BAR on February 18 (joint with the Parker-Gray BAR) and March 18 in order to review and refine the signs proposed for a Phase 1 implementation of the program.

**Phasing**

Because of fiscal constraints, Staff has proposed a limited Phase 1 implementation of the program focused exclusively on pedestrian and parking signs in Old Town most directly related to tourism and economic development. City Council will consider CIP funding for Phase 1 on April 27. The remainder of the citywide system will be funded through the CIP in subsequent years and implemented in phases throughout the rest of the City in a cohesive and strategic manner.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

**Compatibility with Historic District**

The proposed Wayfinding signs are in conformance with existing sign guidelines. As mentioned previously, representatives from the Office of Historic Alexandria, Archaeology and Historic Preservation serve on the City Working Group to review and comment on the design and programming of the system and ensure that the design is informed by and compatible with the City’s rich architectural history. In addition, members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group representing the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission and the National Park Service provided input on color, scale and form that shaped the current design.

At the outset of the program, the consultant team was directed to develop a system of signs that would be compatible with the City’s historic districts and also be flexible enough to complement the City as a whole. Within Old Town, it is important that the design reflect the nature of Old Town as a historic district, a residential neighborhood and a commercial district. Staff believes that the proposed system strikes an appropriate balance that complements all three. The current collection of mismatched signs, missing
links and visual clutter will be replaced with an appropriately scaled, cohesive, streamlined and attractive system.

While the overall look and feel of the system has been established, Sasaki will work with the CWG, SAG and the BAR to continue to refine aspects of the design such as size, color and illumination to ensure that the system as a whole is sensitive to and does not detract from the existing historic character of Old Town.

Sign Clutter

Several groups, including the BAR, have expressed concern about the existing sign clutter along King Street and about the number of Wayfinding signs proposed. In order to further clarify the issue of additional sign clutter, Staff has undertaken a detailed inventory of the existing signage on King Street. This is summarized in Attachment 4. The survey identified 359 signs along King Street between the waterfront and Metro Station. Of these, 66% are regulatory signs. Although not part of the Wayfinding program, Planning & Zoning Staff propose to review the regulatory signs with T&ES to investigate opportunities to consolidate and eliminate signs, especially those defining parking restrictions. In addition, there are 121 banners, all of which the Wayfinding program proposes to remove. The existing Dash and Trolley stop signs are frequently combined on one pole and will not be affected by the new Wayfinding sign program. The visitor information or “thistle” signs will be replaced by the vehicular directionals and, as far as they are currently used for pedestrian orientation (in the absence of any other visitor attraction signs), they would be supplanted by the proposed mini-kiosks.

Phase 1 Sign Replacement/Removal Detail:
The current white/green or blue/white parking directional signs will be replaced generally on a one-for-one basis by the proposed parking directional signs. Along King Street, there are currently nine horizontal signs attached to signal crossarms and seven vertical signs attached to upright posts that will be replaced one-for-one by the new signs. The remaining Phase 1 parking directional signs will be at other locations throughout Old Town. When the consultant team completes its analysis, they may determine that some signs are unnecessary or that new signs are required to complete the system.

The existing blue/white pedestrian (“x blocks to the Metro”) orientation signs and the brown/white “shops” and “more shops” signs will be removed and replaced by the mini-kiosks. There are currently 27 of these signs along King Street. Phase 1 proposes installing 20 mini-kiosks. Under mini-kiosk Option C, this would be the final number of kiosks installed, to be supplemented by A-frames at the discretion of business owners. As a point of reference, there are currently 18 A-frame permits issued under the temporary pilot program, with the potential of up to 60 A-frames. Under options A or B, 12 additional mini-kiosks would eventually be required to complete the system, for a total of 32 mini-kiosks on King Street.

The numerical impact of the above Phase 1 signs on the King Street corridor is shown in Attachment 2. The existing 16 parking directionals and 27 pedestrian orientation and
“more shops” signs (combined total of 43 signs) will be replaced by 34 new signs (parking directional signs and mini-kiosks). This is a 20% reduction in these sign categories.

An additional element of Phase 1 is the large kiosks and pedestrian pointers. These are entirely new signs, which will be located in large plaza areas at the Metro Station, Market Square and the Waterfront. These locations are generally less sensitive to the impact of sign clutter then the King Street corridor.

**BAR Future Review of Wayfinding Program**

After approving Phase 1 in concept (April 2009), the BAR will be involved in the final design refinement and review of the details of each Phase 1 sign type in Old Town. The final design refinement process will take place between May and September 2009. In particular, Staff will seek BAR input on Phase 1 sign details such as method of illumination for large kiosks and parking identity signs, as well as other minor design refinements.

During this same review period, the BAR will be asked to review and provide input on the designs for the remaining sign types in the citywide sign program. The remaining sign types proposed for Old Town are:

- Vehicular Directionals
- Destination ID Signs (Civic, Park, Historic Attraction)
- Heritage-Interpretive signs
- Bicycle trail signs (off road only)
- City Gateways
- District Gateways

Along with the BAR, Staff will review the remaining designs with the SAG, CWG, and civic groups. Based on all of the input received, Sasaki will develop the *Citywide Wayfinding Program Design Guidelines Manual*, a document that will guide sign design, messaging, fabrication and installation over the course of implementation of the system. Final review and production of the document is anticipated for September, followed by BAR and Planning Commission public hearings tentatively set for October. Approval of the Citywide Wayfinding Program Design Guidelines Manual will mean that design of the overall program is complete. After the manual has been approved, and prior to installation of any signs in Old Town, the BAR will have the opportunity to review the following:

- Specific sign placement in Old Town (which pole, how high, etc.)
- Specific sign size within pre-set size options. (Some Old Town locations may have a range of pre-determined size options specified by the design manual and the Board can recommend the appropriate size).

**National Park Service review**
The National Park Service (NPS) has a representative on the SAG and the proposed program has been reviewed by additional NPS staff. City Staff has and will continue to work with NPS to ensure they have ample opportunity to review the program -- specifically those elements of the system proposed for and visible from Washington Street. In terms of Phase 1 sign types, NPS has expressed concern regarding the overall quantity of signs and the potential that they would detract from historic buildings. Staff is scheduling a meeting with NPS to present the data and analysis showing that there would not be a net increase of signs on Washington Street and that the proposed signs would replace existing signs but in a more cohesive, attractive and strategic manner. In addition, NPS has expressed concern regarding the scale of vehicular signs on Washington Street. Although these signs are not part of the Phase 1 proposal, Staff will share with NPS the sign reduction study that Sasaki performed for King Street vehicular signs in an effort to strike the appropriate balance between efficient function of the sign and not detracting from the scale and historic character of the corridor. Sasaki will also study the proposed content of the signs to determine if any additional size efficiencies can be achieved. At that time, Staff will also provide NPS with specific sign locations and dimensions for review.

Lastly, NPS has expressed an objection to the Gateway designs as currently proposed. The design is still very much in the development phase and Staff will provide the consultant with NPS input to take into consideration while further developing the design. NPS prefers the more traditional Park Service stone (or brick) wall with the City’s name.

Parking Zones

Sasaki proposed the parking zones as a means for businesses to be able to assist visitors in advance (through the web, brochures, etc.) and direct them to the parking district within Old Town in which their business is located. This proposal stemmed from a recommendation in the 2005 King Street Retail study, which also stated that the districts would be an effective way of positively “branding” areas along King Street for the businesses and restaurants. This proposal has received mixed reviews from the community, BAR and Staff. The zones may be confusing, especially to tourists, and may alienate business owners who don’t like the nomenclature of the zones. Staff will ask the Stakeholder Advisory Group and BAR to weigh in with final recommendations over the course of the summer (prior to completion of the sign manual) as to whether or not to include the parking zones in the program.

Pedestrian Mini-Kiosks

As stated previously, Staff has developed three options with regards to the programming and message content of the pedestrian mini-kiosks. The programming of the kiosks has ramifications on the frequency of these signs on King Street as well as the A-frame program. Staff recommends postponing a decision on the retail component of the programming of the mini-kiosks until fall 2009. At the same time, Staff recommends that funding for the mini-kiosks be maintained in the CIP request, pending a final decision on programming.
April 1, 2009

Illumination

Staff is not asking the BAR to make a determination on illumination of signs at this stage in their review. Illumination is a detail that will be reviewed further over the course of the summer in development of the Sign Design Guidelines Manual. Of the Phase 1 signs, Sasaki has recommended that the Freestanding Visitor Kiosk and the Parking Lot Identity signs be illuminated. Their initial recommendation is that the parking lot ID signs be externally illuminated and that the kiosks be internally illuminated. Staff will provide the BAR with further detail on these recommendations for review. Staff has received BAR’s initial recommendation that both sign elements be illuminated externally and has asked Sasaki to review the options. Sasaki will also provide precedent images of both types of lighting for freestanding kiosks in order to provide some comparison. In either case, this is an issue that will be resolved after conceptual approval of Phase 1 and prior to public hearing of the Design Guidelines Manual.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the BAR approve Phase 1 (Concept) of the Wayfinding Program and work with Staff to provide input on developing detailed design guidelines for Phase 1 and the remainder of the sign family. Further, Staff recommends that BAR postpone a decision on the retail component of the pedestrian mini-kiosk signs until fall 2009.

V. ATTACHMENTS:

1. Phase 1 sign set: images of proposed signs in Old Town context
2. Map of Phase 1 Signs in the King Street Corridor
3. King Street sign inventory and matrix demonstrating the number of signs to be replaced/removed by the Wayfinding program
4. Stakeholder Advisory Group membership
City of Alexandria

Wayfinding Program

Phase 1 Sign Set

1 April 2009
Vehicular | Public Parking: Identification

Parking Lot Identity Sign for Structured Garages (Qty. 6)

Parking Lot Identity Sign for Surface Lots (Qty. 5)
Vehicular  Public Parking: Trailblazers

Parking Trailblazer Sign (horizontal) (Qty. 20)

Parking Trailblazer Sign (vertical) (Qty. 50)
Pedestrian "Pointer" Directionals

- Carlyle: 15 min walk
- King Street: 20 min walk to Waterfront
- Old Town: 2 min walk to King Street, 20 min walk to King Street Metro
- Waterfront

PD.1 Pedestrian Directional Pointer
Pedestrian Directional "Pointer"

Pedestrian Directional Pointer for non-street grid areas (Qty. 5)
Located at confusing points of entry (King St. Metro, Water Taxi dock, etc)
where it is helpful to "lead by the nose"
Freestanding Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 2)

Conceptual Sketches - 3D study
Pedestrian

Wall Mounted Kiosk

Wall Mounted Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 6)
Pedestrian Mini kiosk (Qty. 20)
**Phase 1 Installation**
Wayfinding Elements

**King Street Corridor**

- **PK.1/2 Parking ID: Lots and Structures**
- **PK.3a Parking Trailblazer: Large**
  (not all shown on plan, est. qty 220)
- **PK.3b Parking Trailblazer: Small**
  (not all shown on plan, est. qty 50)
- **PD.1 Pedestrian Directional Pointer**
- **PD.2 Pedestrian Directional Mini-Kiosk**
- **IK.1 Visitor Kiosk Freestanding**
- **K.1 Visitor Kiosk Wall-mounted**
## Signs on King Street to be replaced/removed by Wayfinding program

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<th>&quot;Shops/More Shops&quot; (brown/white)</th>
<th>Parking Directional (white/green)</th>
<th>Visitor Information (Thistle Signs)</th>
<th>Trolley Stop</th>
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<td>121</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Double-sided; one per block on alternating sides of street
- None west of St Asaphs
- 9 on traffic signal mast-arms; 7 on upright poles.
- None west of Henry
- Double-sided
- Double-sided
- e.g. Adopt-a-block, other directionals
- Some damaged

---

### Notes:
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- Double-sided
- Double-sided
- e.g. Adopt-a-block, other directionals
- Some damaged
### Signs on King Street to be Replaced/Removed by Phase 1 of Wayfinding program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KING STREET</th>
<th>(A) Pedestrian Orientation (blue/white)</th>
<th>(B) &quot;Shops/More Shops&quot; (brown/white)</th>
<th>(C) Parking Directional (white/green)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>(A) and (B) replaced by Mini Kiosks</th>
<th>(C) replaced by new parking directionals</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit block</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>100 block</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>200 block</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>300 block</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
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<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Double-sided; one per block on alternating sides of street, None west of St Asaphs, 9 on traffic signal mast-arms; 7 on upright poles.
City of Alexandria
Wayfinding Program

Stakeholder Advisory Group Membership

Wendy Albert, West End Business Association
Chuck Benagh, Commission on Persons with Disabilities
Kate Barrett, National Park Service
Christy Blake, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Stephanie Brown, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association
James Buck, Ebenezer Baptist Church
Felix Oliver, Eisenhower Partnership
Joe Egerton, Arts Afire
Bill Harris, Commission on Aging
Mark Benedict, Federation of Civic Associations
Stacy Langsdale, Alexandria Ped/Bike Association
Cindy McCartney, Alexandria Retailers Off King Street
Pat Miller, Commission for the Arts
David Martin, Chamber of Commerce
Michael McBride, WMATA
Sandy Modell, DASH
Amy Slack, Federation of Civic Associations
Ellen Stanton, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
Wilson Thompson, Queen Street Area Business Association
Jennifer Walker, Del Ray Business Association
Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet, Federation of Civic Associations
John Varghese, Westin Hotel
Tara Zimnick-Calico, Torpedo Factory Art Center

Staff:
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www.alexandriava.gov/wayfinding