

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 3, 2011

TO: CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: FAROLL HAMER, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ZONING FH

SUBJECT: GUIDE TO TEXT CHANGES FOR THE WATERFRONT SMALL AREA PLAN

Planning staff's previous memorandum to the Planning Commission contains a number of proposed revisions in response to public input. This memo provides a guide to all of the text changes so Commissioners may easily determine which ones they wish to include, or include with modification. Of course, Commissioners may have changes in addition to those that staff has recommended.

Highlighted Recommendations

- Old Dominion Boat Club Options
- The Hotel/Restaurant Policy

Recommendations Addressed in the Staff Memorandum

- Eliminate Waterfront Park building
- Rivergate observation area/Oronoco Bay Park play are location
- Sheetmetal Workers Building
- Windmill Hill Park cost added to plan's cost estimates
- Stronger history text
- Flexibility in spending funds for civic building
- Pier design flexibility
- Restaurants assumed in revenues estimates
- Hotel parking ratio

HIGHLIGHTED RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Address potential changes due to discussions with ODBC, including potential that the parking lot will not completely move but may be reconfigured or reduced to improve public access to the river and/or to Waterfront Park.** These discussions will affect the placement of the King Street pier, which could, for example, move south to be centered on Waterfront Park. Staff believes that the draft Plan's proposal for a relocated parking lot, Fitzgerald Square, the King Street Pier, and Waterfront Park is the optimal design but would also like the Plan to acknowledge that there is value to coming to an agreement with ODBC in the near term.

Staff suggests language to include in the Plan would be a new paragraph on page 62, just prior to the recommendations, which would state:

While the King Street Pier/Fitzgerald Square concept is the optimal design for this very important location on the waterfront, the Plan acknowledges the value of reaching an agreement with the ODBC that would improve public access to the Potomac River and/or Waterfront Park. Options under discussion include one which would add a public path along the river from King Street to Waterfront Park and one which widens the Strand into a public plaza between King Street and Waterfront Park. Other options may be considered.

- **Add language detailing how restaurants and hotels would be reviewed during the SUP process to determine if they have unacceptable off-site impacts.**

The language – in the form of a proposed restaurant and hotel policy – are detailed in the staff memorandum for the May 3 Planning Commission meeting. There are two updates:

1. Restaurant parking text revision: Planning Commissioners received a draft of this policy that included text that staff intended to remove before it was released. Among the factors for which restaurants will be reviewed is parking. Staff intended that the factor be described as “The availability of parking.” Staff does not recommend the additional language saying no restaurant will be approved until there is a Council-approved Parking Implementation Plan, since restaurants may be proposed that fully address parking concerns prior to the approval of the parking implementation plan.
2. The Old Town Civic Association provided the Planning Commission with suggested changes to the policy. Staff has met with OPTCA representatives and discussed its proposal and can support many of the proposed changes. Attached is an updated staff recommendation incorporating the OTCA text that staff supports as well as OTCA's proposal.

POLICY FOR RESTAURANT/HOTEL/COMMERCIAL USES

REVISED STAFF RECOMMENDATION, INCORPORATING OTCA CHANGES

The cultural and historic ambience of Old Town provide the primary attraction for visitors and for residents. Restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues, marinas and other commercial establishments along the waterfront will provide activity and destinations for residents and visitors and restaurants, allowing enjoyment of the City's Potomac River location. Such uses, however, must be sited in appropriate locations and designed in such a way to ensure that goals of the Waterfront Plan are achieved, including:

- ~~Providing activity to attract additional users to the Waterfront~~ Enhancing enjoyment of the waterfront for residents and visitors alike;
- ~~Appropriately locating active uses consonant with public open spaces, development sites, and the Potomac River; and~~ and the Potomac River; and
- ~~Maintaining compatibility with both the~~ historical and residential character of the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Restaurants, hotels, farmers' markets, retail, personal service, private recreational facilities, and marinas each require SUP approval in the Waterfront area. The SUP process is designed so that each use is reviewed and assessed for its appropriateness at a specific location and for its ability to coexist with adjacent and nearby uses without impacts to the character of the area, the plan goals as a whole, and the enjoyment of nearby property.

The Small Area Plan for the adjacent area of Old Town states the City's policy that the fragile balance between the residential and commercial areas "must be preserved if both are to remain strong and if the ambience of Old Town is to be preserved. Further, the commercial areas contain a mix of activities that is unique within the metropolitan area, and that mix needs to be protected if the character of Old Town is to be preserved."

The Old Town Small Area Plan (and the King Street Retail Strategy by reference) includes the City's policy with regard to restaurants, establishing guidelines to assist in SUP decision-making. The Old Town Restaurant Policy requires that Council review each restaurant application for its impacts on noise, late night hours, alcohol, parking, litter and the balance of retail and restaurant uses. A similar approach should be taken to protect the Waterfront, King Street and the nearby residential areas as to future uses and SUP review.

WATERFRONT RESTAURANT/HOTEL POLICY

Each SUP for a restaurant, hotel, entertainment, or other commercial use on the Waterfront must be reviewed, and appropriate findings made, according to the following guidelines:

1. City Council shall not approve an SUP for a use on the Waterfront unless it finds that the use does not create significant negative impacts on the vitality and character of King Street or the character and enjoyment of nearby residential neighborhoods
2. City Council shall consider the cumulative effect of the proposal and the number of already established uses in the ~~immediate-nearby~~ area.
3. In the case of an expansion or other intensification, the entire operation shall be taken into account in determining the impact on King Street and nearby residential neighborhoods.
4. In making its determination, City Council shall consider the following factors as applied to the proposed use:
 - a. Restaurant
 - i. The potential for undue congestion of pedestrians or vehicles;
 - ii. The extent to which the use is open in the late night hours and situated so as to potentially disturb residential areas;
 - iii. The extent to which alcohol consumption will predominate over food consumption and situated so as to potentially disturb residential areas;
 - iv. The availability of parking;
 - v. The predicted extent of litter generated;
 - vi. The potential for loud or otherwise inappropriate noise; and
 - vii. The extent to which other restaurants already exist in the same ~~location~~ area. Restaurant uses should not be ~~collocated~~ grouped in such a way located in such proximity as to detract from the character and authenticity of the Waterfront by creating a monoculture similar to a food court or “restaurant row” environment.
 - b. Hotel
 - i. The potential for undue congestion of pedestrians or vehicles;
 - ii. The type and size of hotel, and whether it is designed to attract ~~large conventions, or banquets, or other functions (such as trade shows);~~
 - iii. The ability of the hotel to accommodate, and screen all of its service needs on site, including loading and delivery operations.
 - iv. Parking for visitors, customers and employees must be provided on site. Although the Plan anticipates low parking ratios, the applied ratio must be consistent with industry standards.
 - v. Parking garages must be operated so that they are open to the public at least at peak times.
 - vi. A restaurant within a hotel that is open to the public shall be the subject of a separate SUP and the same requirements as other restaurants.
 - vii. The location of the hotel and whether it's layout is designed to produce the least impact on nearby residential areas and on the lower King Street area.
 - c. Other commercial uses: Factors from the above lists shall be applied as relevant to the specific SUP under consideration.

POLICY FOR RESTAURANT/HOTEL/COMMERCIAL USES

Proposed OTCA edits

The cultural and historic ambience of Old Town provide the primary attraction for visitors and for residents. Restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues, marinas and other commercial establishments along the waterfront will provide activity and destinations for residents and visitors and restaurants, allowing enjoyment of the City's Potomac River location. Such uses, however, must be sited in appropriate locations and designed in such a way to ensure that goals of the Waterfront Plan are achieved, including:

- Providing activity to attract additional users to the Waterfront Enhancing enjoyment of the waterfront for residents and visitors alike;
- Appropriately locating active uses consonant with public open spaces, development sites, and the Potomac River; and
and the Potomac River; and
- Maintaining compatibility with both the historical and residential character of the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Restaurants, hotels, farmers' markets, retail, personal service, private recreational facilities, and marinas each require SUP approval in the Waterfront area. The SUP process is designed so that each use is reviewed and assessed for its appropriateness at a specific location and for its ability to coexist with adjacent and nearby uses without impacts to the character of the area, the plan goals as a whole, and the enjoyment of nearby property.

The Small Area Plan for the adjacent area of Old Town states the City's policy that the fragile balance between the residential and commercial areas "must be preserved if both are to remain strong and if the ambience of Old Town is to be preserved. Further, the commercial areas contain a mix of activities that is unique within the metropolitan area, and that mix needs to be protected if the character of Old Town is to be preserved."

The Old Town Small Area Plan (and the King Street Retail Strategy by reference) includes the City's policy with regard to restaurants, establishing guidelines to assist in SUP decision-making. The Old Town Restaurant Policy requires that Council review each restaurant application for its impacts on noise, late night hours, alcohol, parking, litter and the balance of retail and restaurant uses. A similar approach should be taken to protect the Waterfront, King Street and the nearby residential areas as to future uses and SUP review.

WATERFRONT RESTAURANT/HOTEL POLICY

Each SUP for a restaurant, hotel, entertainment, or other commercial use on the Waterfront must be reviewed, and appropriate findings made, according to the following guidelines:

1. City Council shall not approve an SUP for a use on the Waterfront unless it finds that the use does not create significant negative impacts on the vitality and character of King Street or the character and enjoyment of nearby residential neighborhoods
2. City Council shall consider the cumulative effect of the proposal and the number of already established uses in the ~~immediate~~-nearby area.
3. In the case of an expansion or other intensification, the entire operation shall be taken into account in determining the impact on King Street and nearby residential neighborhoods.
4. In making its determination, City Council shall consider the following factors as applied to the proposed use:
 - a. Restaurant
 - i. The potential for undue congestion of pedestrians or vehicles;
 - ii. The extent to which the use is open in the late night hours and situated so as to potentially disturb residential areas;
 - iii. The extent to which alcohol consumption will predominate over food ~~consumption and situated so as to potentially disturb residential areas~~ the number of bar seats, if any, and the standing areas in the vicinity of bars;
 - iv. ~~The availability of~~ extent to which off-street parking will be provided for the restaurant's patrons and employees;
 - v. The predicted extent of litter generated;
 - vi. The potential for loud or otherwise inappropriate noise; and
 - vii. The extent to which other restaurants already exist in the same ~~location~~ area. Restaurant uses should not be ~~collocated~~ grouped in such a way located in such proximity as to detract from the character and authenticity of the Waterfront by creating a monoculture similar to a food court or "restaurant row" environment.
 - b. Hotel
 - i. The potential for undue congestion of pedestrians or vehicles;
 - ii. The type and size of hotel, and whether it is designed to attract ~~large conventions, or banquets, or other functions (such as trade shows);~~
 - iii. The ability of the hotel to accommodate, and screen all of its service needs on site, including loading and delivery operations.
 - iv. Parking for visitors, customers and employees must be provided on site. Although the Plan anticipates low parking ratios, the applied ratio must be consistent with industry standards.
 - v. Parking garages must be operated so that ~~X percentage~~ a substantial proportion of spaces ~~they are open and dedicated for public use to the public~~ at least at peak times.
 - vi. A restaurant within a hotel that is open to the public shall be the subject of a separate SUP with its own parking plan.
 - vii. The location of the hotel and whether its layout is designed to produce the least impact on nearby residential areas and on the lower King Street area.
 - c. Other commercial uses: Factors from the above lists shall be applied as relevant to the specific SUP under consideration.

d. Standards: City Council shall adopt ~~size limits and space~~ standards (including size limits and space standards) for the application of these factors, and criteria to measure the degree to which the standards are met.

ADDRESSED IN THE STAFF MEMORANDUM

- **Eliminate the Waterfront Park restaurant building and add language supporting an active park through other means (page 66).**

Delete recommendation 3.71 and add to recommendation 3.72:

Implement a redesigned Waterfront Park to include a new landscaped lawn framed by the existing willow oaks and new tree plantings. ~~which create shaded areas that could serve as reading rooms or contain other small scale activities such as outdoor ping pong or billiards. Moveable tables and chairs should be incorporated into the design of the park.~~ Encourage the active enjoyment of Waterfront Park with elements such as:

- *Food and other carts, tables and chairs, small scale recreation activities, and programming of events, displays or performances providing entertainment, culture, history and the arts.*
- *Kiosks and other temporary or seasonal structures serving as outdoor cafes, unique retail (such as made in Alexandria items), cultural or history-themed displays.*
- *An open-air market structure or pergola, suitable for farmer's markets, art shows, and the like, possibly glass enclosed in winter to support ice skating and other winter recreation activities.*
- *A new public pier, which will serve both to bring park users out onto the water as well as a location for water taxis and other boats to bring visitors to Alexandria.*
- *Permanent and/or visiting historic ships and other ships of character.*
- *A stage supporting performances, movies, and other entertainment or cultural events, using the natural slope of Waterfront Park and the low berms or seating walls of the flood mitigation strategy to allow park users to view the stage.*

Delete references to the restaurant building from the Implementation chapter.

- **Minor changes to the language for Rivergate and Oronoco Bay Parks** regarding potential designs for the observation area at the foot of Montgomery Street and the location of the children's play area (response to public input from Rivergate homeowner's association) (page 43).

Revise recommendation 3.17: *At the end of Montgomery Street, consider low-impact hardscape options and enhance the observation area at the point, possibly with a set of steps leading down to the river and vertical elements to frame the view, and possibly angled to the north to better capture views of the nation's capital.*

Revise recommendation 3.31 to separate the discussion of a children’s play area into a new recommendation and delete the reference to a location. The new recommendation would read:

~~*Within the emerging forest, A small children’s play area is proposed, with recreation and water features – uniquely designed by artists – perhaps comprised of recycled materials or carefully screened flotsam from the river so children will see a direct relationship to natural and cultural cycles.*~~

- **Add the language about redevelopment of the Sheetmetal Worker’s Union building** requested at the public hearing by a representative of the building’s owners, regarding the importance of the connection to the public spaces if redevelopment takes place (page 44). The new recommendation would read:

If the Sheet Metal Workers building were to be redeveloped, such redevelopment shall provide a high level of pedestrian and visual connectivity between the redeveloped property and Oronoco Bay Park. Provided that the redevelopment is compatible with the uses in Oronoco Bay Park, a rezoning may be considered.

- **Add the cost of Windmill Hill Park implementation to the overall cost of the plan**, as requested by the Waterfront Committee in their public testimony.

Add a new paragraph to the Implementation chapter (page 131):

Windmill Hill Park: This phase includes the improvements to Windmill Hill Park contained in the approved park plan, including the bulkhead repair and shoreline improvement projects.

- **Make a series of editorial changes designed to strengthen the connection of plan recommendations to the History Plan.** These changes do not raise new ideas, but give more emphasis to ideas in the History Plan appendix by bringing them into the main body of the plan, and by reordering some paragraphs, etc. This responds to testimony from the history community.

The language changes are detailed on pages 32-27 of the staff memorandum for the May 3 Planning Commission meeting.

- **Add language providing flexibility in the spending of the \$3.6 million included in the plan budget for a civic/cultural building.** The overall goal is the creation of a history and/or cultural “anchor” in The Strand, and these funds are intended to implement that vision – which could be implemented in a variety of ways, only one of which is a civic building in Point Lumley Park. This responds to testimony from the history community.

Add a sentence to the discussion of the Civic Building on page 140: The funds identified for the construction of a civic building are intended to be used to implement the southern cultural anchor recommended by both the Art and History Plans as well as the Waterfront Plan itself – even if that implementation does not include a new building.

- **Add language clarifying that the proposed piers can be of a different length or design** from those shown in the plan illustratives (responding to several expressions of concern over the pier length).

Amend recommendation 3.75:

Construct a new pier, centered on the new public park between King Street and Wales Alley, ~~extending from the shore to the pierhead line~~. Expanded docking locations for commercial boats may also be provided ~~within the pierhead line~~ in the marina immediately upriver from the current water taxi stop in front of the Chart House. Pier designs shown in this plan are illustrative; the ultimate design will be determined during the implementation phase and may be of a different length, width or location from that shown in the Plan.

- **Further reduce the square footage of restaurants assumed for the revenue estimates – initially 109,000 square feet in the draft plan – to 50,000 square feet**, in response to several expressions of concern about the amount in the assumption.

Amend the paragraph at the top of page 126 of the Plan to read:

For the purposes of estimating revenue, the Plan anticipates ~~109,000~~ 50,000 square feet of restaurant space, including ~~60,000 square feet~~ restaurants in three hotels, ~~a 33,000 square foot restaurant building facing Waterfront Park,~~ and an operating Beachcomber.; and increased outdoor dining in the Strand and in the vicinity of the Foot Court.

- **Added language to the development guidelines noting that consideration should be given to hotel parking ratios of 0.5/room.**

The development guidelines would be amended to read: Parking for new buildings should be accommodated on site and below grade. Although the Plan anticipates low parking ratios, the applied ratio must be consistent with industry norms for similar hotels.

The same language would be included in the Restaurant/Hotel/Commercial Uses Policy (in the hotel section).