



# Alexandria Waterfront Commission

*Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities*

*1108 Jefferson Street*

*Alexandria, Virginia 22314*

November 1, 2022

James F. Parajon, City Manager  
301 King Street  
Alexandria VA 22314

Re: FY 2024-FY 2033 Operating and Capital Improvement Budget Planning

Mr. City Manager:

This letter summarizes the Waterfront Commission's fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget priorities, in response to your recent request for recommendations from commissions to help inform City budget priorities and decision making.

The Waterfront Commission, charged with overseeing implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, continues to focus on analysis, planning and implementation of the capital improvements necessary to implement park improvements and flood mitigation projects, as well as ongoing maintenance and operation of high-quality parks and public spaces along the waterfront. The citizens of Alexandria made clear during the planning process and ongoing implementation period that they supported private development efforts but valued most highly the improvement and maintenance of waterfront public areas controlled by the City.

The Waterfront Commission appreciates the seven emerging issues identified by City Council that will serve as the focus for budgetary investments next year. We have summarized our recommendations for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Operating Budget, highlighting how each reflects emerging issue areas.

## **Capital Improvements**

### **Waterfront Flood Mitigation and Park Improvements**

#### ***Emerging Issue Areas: Infrastructure; Climate Change and Environmental Justice***

With climate change moving at a visibly rapid pace, including the amount of flooding observed along our waterfront, we recommend that decisions for implementing flood mitigation and park improvements be based on current and realistic estimates of the needs and perils of the waterfront. In addition, improvements should be engineered to be reasonably afforded by the City, including both up-front capital and ongoing maintenance and operations costs.

In May 2022, the Waterfront Commission offered [recommendations](#) on the progressive design-

build procurement for the implementation of flood mitigation and park features of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. These recommendations were informed by the work of our Flood Mitigation Committee, which reviewed concepts and provided recommendations to the full Commission. We encourage consideration of these recommendations as the City develops its FY 2024 Capital Improvement Program, which will help the City achieve infrastructure and climate change goals.

As plans for Waterfront Flood Mitigation and Park Improvements evolve, we encourage the City to consider designs and technologies that will further the City's climate change goals.

## **Operating and Maintenance Costs**

### **Priority Waterfront Operations**

#### ***Emerging Issue Area: Infrastructure***

The City's FY 2024 Operating Budget should sustain funding for priority waterfront operations and maintenance functions, including the marina, parks, policing, security, public restrooms, and debris removal. The budget should also support endeavors such as the Tall Ship Providence and special events – and to commit additional funding for operations and maintenance as public spaces along the waterfront continue to be activated and improved. Increased activity in waterfront areas requires higher standards of attention to effectively manage those spaces.

### **Employee Compensation**

#### ***Emerging Issue Area: Employee Compensation***

Staffing has been a chronic challenge facing Waterfront maintenance and operations. Managers have struggled to fill staff positions, challenged in part by the competitiveness of pay offered by the City. Improving compensation of hourly and salaried employees across City government will help to improve the competitiveness of the City in attracting and retaining employees key to supporting Waterfront maintenance and operations, including police, public safety, marina, and Waterfront parks and recreation positions.

### **Waterfront Transportation Access**

#### ***Emerging Issue Area: Climate Change and Environmental Justice***

We encourage continued investment in transit, bicycling, pedestrian and disabled access to and along the waterfront, including continued support of the King Street Trolley in Old Town and fare-free DASH Bus service throughout Alexandria as well as the water taxi. This mitigates the impact of changes in parking supply and helps to provide green and healthy means of transportation to enjoy the Waterfront.

### **Waterfront Funding Streams**

#### ***Emerging Issue Area: Recovery (COVID, Economic and Equitable)***

The Commission continues to encourage the City to find long-term and sustainable ways to fund investment in waterfront infrastructure, maintenance, and management through mechanisms such as a business improvement district, public/private partnerships, bonding, or application of

incremental revenue from the waterfront's completed new private development. Programs that address equitability like the Seaport Foundation's program for at risk and disadvantaged youth should continue to be supported.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, the Waterfront Commission recommends that the City Manager's proposed FY 2024-FY 2033 Operating and Capital Improvement Budget Planning reaffirm the City's commitment to funding planned capital expenditures, operations, and maintenance of the waterfront, and consider creative funding to ensure the future and continued success of the implementation of the Waterfront Plan.

We look forward to providing constructive feedback on the City's budget proposals over the coming months.

Sincerely,

Stephen Thayer, Chair



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

cc     Alexandria Waterfront Commission members  
Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager  
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager  
James Spengler, Director, Recreation Parks & Cultural Activities  
Terry Suehr, Director, Project Implementation  
Yon Lambert, Director, Transportation & Environmental Services  
Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Commission Staff Liaison