

## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

### Ten Questions for Discussion Friday

1. What do you mean by “advanced technology?”  
“Technology is the application of science, engineering and industrial organization to create a human-built world.” Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.  
“Advanced” reflects a forward-looking focus on advancements of our past quarter century.
2. What areas of technology should be included in NMAT? (Reworded)  
Focus is on technology affecting humans on a regular, daily basis. E.g., space exploration-NO; Information Technology (IT)-YES. Another: archeology—no display of what has been unearthed; rather, explain how technology has augmented the work. Same for other fields of science.
3. Who are the most logical prospective candidates for an admission free NMAT.  
Public: Smithsonian Institution. Private: perhaps joint venture of (e.g.) Microsoft; Apple; Alphabet (Google); Amazon; Meta (Facebook)—5 of the 6 largest companies in the world (combined market capitalization value of over \$12 trillion).  
DMV also the home of two organizations with potential to have a major role: (1) The Consumer Technology Association (cta.tech), HQ in Crystal City. CTA puts on the annual world-class Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas in January— 2024 CES attendance 138,789; (2) Association of Science and Technology Centers (astc.org), HQ in Washington, D.C. ASTC supports 700 member science centers and museums; holds an annual convention in late September.
4. Must NMAT be a public institution?  
Preferred; not essential so long as admission is free. A public museum can be funded by a group of private companies, possibly with branded, non-traditional exhibit space under the framework of a use and operating agreement. Underground parking, if provided, need not be free (Udvar-Hazy).
5. Where do JBG Smith and Virginia Tech stand on this idea?  
I have presented NMAT to their NPY land use attorneys and a VP at JBG. Major reservations so far: Can you find someone to fund, build and operate it?
6. How can JBG Smith and its partner be adequately compensated for their investment?  
Unresolved, critical component of any viable museum plan. This does not mean it is an insolvable problem, especially when NMAT is rightly seen as a major catalyst for development of the rest of NPY. (See Question 9)

7. Is the NMAT preferable to a more entertainment-oriented use?

Alexandria has never presented itself or been regarded as an entertainment mecca. That is not the image planned for NPY. An entertainment use would require a NPYSAP amendment likely to be controversial in ways NMAT is not.

8. What data exists to support the notion that the NMAT would be a real boost to the City Consumption Tax revenue?

Visit Alexandria (VA) reports: FY 2024 City tax receipts (sales, meals, lodging) = \$86.6 million; and about 28% from overnight visitors (residing 50+ miles away). Total visitor spending in the City for FY 2023: \$941 million. VA estimates that at the lower tax revenue in FY 2022 (\$76 million), visitors reduced the average Alexandria household's property taxes by \$750.

When I inquired of VA about proximity to the District of Columbia as a factor in destination visitors choosing to stay in Alexandria, Vito Fiore of VA provided me a great deal of supporting data and concluded as follows:

According to our 2019 Destination Analysts survey of our past and potential visitors, you'll see that proximity to DC and historic attractions were the two top factors affecting the decision to visit Alexandria. Slightly more people were visiting Alexandria as the primary destination, but about a third were mainly using Alexandria as a home base for exploring DC and the region. (and about a quarter were doing both equally). You can also see below the top activities they did, where they stayed, etc. Visiting Old Town was the #1 activity, following by visiting DC.

9. What do the leaders of Visit Alexandria think of the NMAT idea?

I met this summer with Patricia Washington, VA President and CEO, just before her retirement, COO Tom Kaiden and Vito Fiore, VP of Research and Marketing. All were receptive to the NMAT concept. VA has a new President and CEO, Todd O'leary. He was quoted in the September 12, 2024 *Alexandria Times*, linking the failed NPY sports arena to the VA mission as follows:

"From my perspective, [the sports arena] could have been something that [was] a catalytic project, not only in and of itself, and what that would look like, but the other types of ancillary development that might have outflows from that particular project . . . **It could have been something that really helped our tourism economy.**" (emphasis added)

10. What steps, particularly within the City government, require immediate attention to begin to move forward if there is broad consensus within the Commission on this ambitious undertaking?

I am hoping for broad consensus, but need a lot of help from Commissioners and others on mapping out a plan. Some first steps will be offered on Friday. What I offer here is perspective, not an actual action plan:

The NMAT project is a very big lift, but one that with time and effort, the City can, with patience, perseverance, and common cause, accomplish. The project ought to benefit from widespread support to become, along with the VT innovation campus, the capstone of the NPY Innovation District. Alexandria, already a top destination among small cities, would rise even further with one of the 20 most visited museums in the Country, with a unique subject matter that is highly relevant to daily life. It is also future-directed and, as such, a great complement to Alexandria's celebration of its origins and history.

The Commission is normally devoted to reacting to plans developed by and presented to us by others. But NMAT at this location is too ideal, too significant and too essential to needed future revenues not to adopt a more proactive approach, and to do so without delay.