



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

October 24, 2025

To: James P. Parajon, City Manager

Re: Input to the FY27 Operating and Capital Improvement Budgets

The Waterfront Commission appreciates this opportunity to provide input to the Council's consideration of the FY27 budgets. Our recommendations primarily address the City's goal to build on its economic strength through diversification of our tax base. The City's waterfront is a major draw for visitors, who contribute significantly to the City's consumption (sales, meals, and lodging) taxes. The initiatives noted below would further enhance the City's reputation as a first-class tourist destination and would make the waterfront an even better amenity for Alexandria residents.

Waterfront Flood Mitigation Project

We believe this project is critical to the long-term viability of our waterfront. Depending on the City Council's assessment of the analysis of the costs and benefits of locating the pump station at the 1 Prince Street site versus in Waterfront Park, incremental CIP funding may be needed. Also, additional funding is needed to replace the bulkhead adjacent to the Chart House and Thompsons Alley, which is in very poor condition.¹ This aspect of the flood mitigation project is currently not funded in the CIP.

Torpedo Factory Arts Center (TFAC)

TFAC used to be a prominent anchor along the waterfront that drew visitors from far and wide. Unfortunately, it is no longer living up to that potential. The last major renovation was more than 40 years ago and the building is in significant need of a major rejuvenation. A 2021 building conditions assessment estimated that the construction costs to address both the structural infrastructure issues and deferred maintenance would total \$40+ million, with an additional \$20+ million to make the rooftop usable as a public space. Inflation since this assessment was made has likely increased these projected amounts. The Waterfront Commission strongly recommends that the City approve funding to modernize the building and position TFAC to be a major regional attraction. In addition, funding will be needed to engage a private-sector firm to operate the TFAC. The City has recognized for many years that significant investments in the TFAC are warranted; now is the time to take action.

Art in the Parks

The Waterfront Small Area Plan (Appendix 5) lays out an exciting vision for permanent art installations in each of the waterfront parks. We think the City should include funding in the CIP

¹ <https://www.alexandriava.gov/waterfront/chart-house-and-thompsons-alley-bulkhead>

to realize this vision, which, together with the rejuvenation of the Torpedo Factory, would make the Alexandria waterfront a major arts and cultural destination.

Streetscape Improvements to the Pedestrianized Blocks of King Street and the Strand

Funding should be provided to make streetscape improvements to the pedestrianized 100 block and 200 block of King Street and the 100 block of the Strand that would create a distinctive and inviting environment that further enhances the waterfront area.

Park Maintenance and Improvements

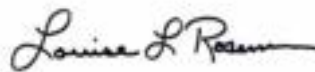
The waterfront is the City's crown jewel, enjoyed by both residents and visitors. To ensure our waterfront remains a top attraction, increased funding for park maintenance and improvements is needed. For example, greater funding is needed to (1) increase the frequency of removal of logs and other trash debris from the shoreline, (2) regrade the paths in several of the parks to minimize the water accumulation after rain events, (3) address the increasingly frequent high-tide flooding of the path in Oronoco Bay Park, (4) either remove or repair/replace the piers in Oronoco Bay Park, which have been closed for several years due to structural integrity problems, and (5) address landscaping needs in several parks. The attached PowerPoint presentation discusses these and several other issues that should be addressed.

Increased Activation of the Parks

Festivals, concert series, and other events along the waterfront draw for both visitors and residents to the waterfront area. These events will be an especially important means to attract visitors to the waterfront as we enter the construction phase of the flood mitigation project. The Council should assign responsibility for managing the further activation of the waterfront parks. We believe that increased funding by the City for such events would be money well spent.

Thank you for considering our input as you develop the City's FY27 budgets.

Sincerely,



Louise L. Roseman

Chair

- c: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 Waterfront Commission Members
 Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
 Alethea Predeoux, Deputy City Manager
 Hashim T. Taylor, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
 Jack Browand, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
 Daphne Kott, Interim Director, Department of Project Implementation
 Matt Landes, Portfolio Manager, Department of Project Implementation

Attachment

Waterfront Maintenance and Improvement Needs

Attachment to Waterfront Commission

Input to FY27 City Budget

October 22, 2025

Introduction

- The waterfront is a crown jewel of Alexandria, enjoyed by both residents and visitors.
- To ensure that our waterfront remains a top regional attraction in the future, funding is needed to improve park maintenance and to provide better signage for the public.

Note: The photos on the subsequent slides are illustrative and don't necessarily reflect all areas requiring additional maintenance.

Overview of Waterfront Maintenance Needs

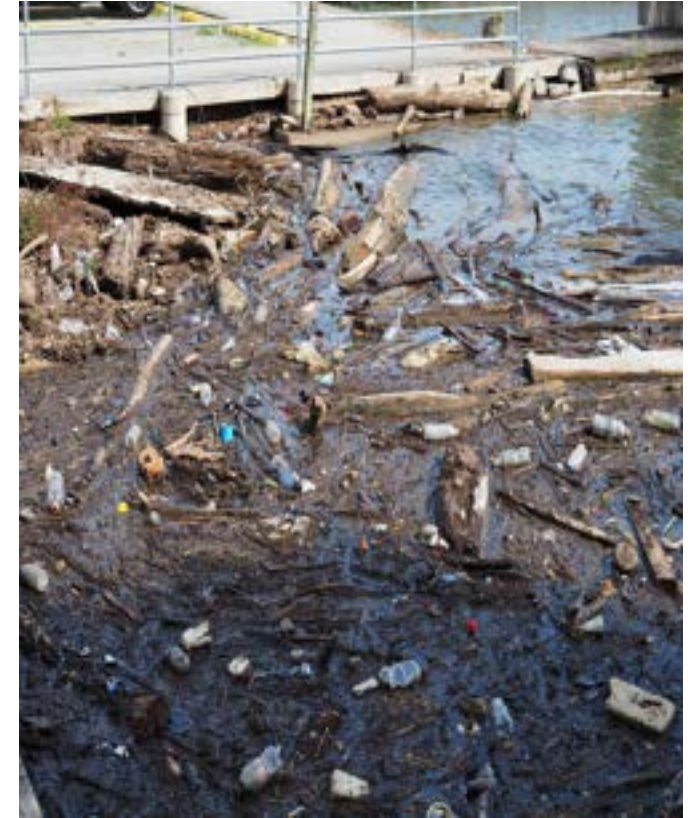
Additional City funding should be provided to address –

- Debris removal
- Water accumulation on the paths
- Oronoco Bay Park path flooding
- Oronoco Bay Park piers
- Landscaping
- Servicing of trash bins
- Public restroom signage

Debris Removal

- Logs and other trash debris build up along the shoreline, detracting from the parks' appearance. Funding should be provided to increase the frequency of log and other trash debris removal.
- The City should meet with DC Water officials to learn about their experience with trash skimmer boats and to investigate the feasibility and cost of contracting with DC Water to use its trash skimmer boats to regularly clear debris from our waterfront or paying it to do so on the City's behalf. The City could also collaborate with National Harbor or the US Army Corp of Engineers, both of whom have an interest in keeping the shoreline and waterways free of debris. Options to clear debris from both the water and land side should be considered.

Log/Trash Debris Build-Up



Water Accumulation on the Paths

The paths in several (but not all) of the parks accumulate significant water, even after relatively minor rain events. These paths should be regraded to minimize the water accumulation, allowing the public to more easily travel along the waterfront parks.

Some of the Areas of Frequent Water Accumulation

Founders Park



Windmill Hill Park



Oronoco Bay Park Flooding

- During high-tide events, the northern portion of the Oronoco Bay Path is often underwater. When the water recedes, the path is full of log debris.
- To address this increasingly frequent problem –
 - The level of the pedestrian path could be raised to avoid the flooding, or
 - An alternate path, further from the river, could be established in this part of the park. The path in Founders Park through the Grove, which also provides an alternate route when the main path is underwater, is a model that could be used.

Oronoco Bay Park Flooding



Oronoco Bay Park Piers

The two wooden piers in Oronoco Bay Park have been closed for several years, due to structural integrity problems. They should either be removed or repaired/replaced.

Closed Oronoco Bay Park Piers

South End



North End



Landscaping Improvements

Landscaping improvements should be made to enhance the scenic beauty of the waterfront. For example –

- New trees should be planted –
 - in tree wells that are empty or have trees that are dying and
 - to replace trees in parks that are dead or not thriving, particularly in Oronoco Bay Park (along Madison Street and the Mt. Vernon trail, where the current trees have not been able to survive the strong light and summer heat) and in Founders Park. The City arborist should determine which species of trees are hardier and attractive for these locations.
- Landscaping should be added to the south edge of Founders Park.

Examples of Landscaping Needs

Unit Block of Union Street



Dead Tree in Founders Park



South Edge of Founders Park



Trash Removal and Servicing of Trash Bins

- During peak days, trash should be removed from the trash bins more frequently. On weekends, trash often overflows the bins and blows through the park or into the Potomac.
- Periodic inspections of trash bins are needed to ensure they don't need repair and are in clean condition.

Need for More Frequent Servicing of Trash Bins



Public Restroom Signage

- It is important that the public can easily find the public restrooms along the waterfront.
 - The signage for the public restrooms adjacent to Blackwall Hitch is not legible from the nearby decking.
 - There is no signage on the exterior of the Torpedo Factory regarding its public restrooms.
 - The Public Restroom sign adjacent to Barca cannot be seen from the pedestrian promenade when walking north; the Barca sign obscures it.

Public Restroom Signage

Adjacent to Blackwell Hitch



Robinson Landing

