

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

TO: MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON & COUNCILMAN JOHN TAYLOR
CHAPMAN

SUBJECT: EXPANDED KING STREET PEDESTRIAN PLAZA

In October of 2021, City Council voted to make the closure of the 100-block of King Street to cars permanent.¹ A year later, Council voted to close the unit block of King Street as well².

While additional work is scheduled to provide the permanent treatment of both closures³, these changes have been quite popular with residents and visitors alike. These closures have provided new public spaces and supported expanded visitation.

There remains pent-up demand for properly programmed public spaces in this area and an extension of the King Street Pedestrian Zone into the 200-block of King has been suggested by residents and business owners as a way to enhance the appeal of our “Main Street.”

A potential 200-block closure would require the same careful analysis of deliveries, disabled access, and public safety response that occurred as part of the 100-block closure. Yet, the City’s experience in the 100-block has shown that these potential challenges can be addressed reasonably.

We have successfully used pilots to experiment with new concepts in Old Town through the years. Last year, the City closed the 200-block in support of the busy Scottish Christmas Walk weekend. We would ask that City staff return to Council with proposals for a longer pilot closure this year, perhaps from the Tree Lighting through First Night, so that the concept can be fully explored. Any pilot proposal should include measures to gauge success and a schedule for Council action resulting from the pilot’s results.

¹ <https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5180740&GUID=33D4069D-D1CE-4B35-8130-88B7882109B0>

² <https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5924862&GUID=D72EA090-332D-4ED1-98AB-6D822E860460>

³ <https://www.alexandriava.gov/transportation-planning/lower-king-street-pedestrianization-project>

Cc: James Parajon, City Manager; Adriana Castañeda, Transportation & Environmental Services; Karl Moritz, Planning & Zoning; Alexandria Waterfront Commission; Alexandria Planning Commission; Old Town Civic Association; Old Town Business & Professional Association; VisitAlexandria; Gloria Sitton, City Clerk