

23  
6-14-25

# NORTH

OLD TOWN NORTH  
ALLIANCE

June 13, 2025  
Members of the City Council  
City of Alexandria  
301 King St.  
Alexandria, VA 22314

VIA EMAIL

**Subject: Response to Docket Item #23, Follow-up on Robinson Terminal North Project and June 4th Planning Commission Meeting**

Dear Members of the City Council,

The Old Town North Alliance (OTNA) is following up on our letter submitted to the Planning Commission on May 30, 2025, regarding the Development Special Use Permit #2024-10009 for the Robinson Terminal North project. We also want to provide an update on the Planning Commission meeting held on June 4, 2025, where this project was discussed.

During the meeting, the developer demonstrated a collaborative approach and openness to community input. Here are the key takeaways:

- The developer clarified that the budget for public art installations in **Phases 1 and 2 combined is approximately \$71,000.**
- The Planning Commission encouraged the developer to collaborate with OTNA and the community on the selection of public art.
- The developer has committed **approximately \$9 million to developing the common/public areas.** Approximately \$6.5 million of that is earmarked for site preparation and reinforcement, leaving **approximately \$2.5 million for the public path, park, lighting, beautification, and other public amenities.** They aren't necessarily opposed to building a more robust interim park/path in the Phase 2 site while Phase 1 is being built, but doing so would deplete available funds for the permanent infrastructure.

OTNA appreciates the Planning Commission's consideration of our initial letter and their encouragement of collaboration. As the project moves forward, we respectfully request the City Council's attention to the following:

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## Public Art and Open Space Commitments

1. **Clarity on Public Use Funds:** We need clarity on how and when the funds dedicated to public use—specifically the path, park, lighting, and other amenities—will be allocated and spent. We request a **timeline for these projects**, including specific project details and the standards that will be applied.
  2. **Interim and Permanent Open Space:** We are particularly interested in ensuring that the **Phase 2 construction site remains accessible, safe, and attractive with an interim park/path while Phase 1 is being developed**. Furthermore, we ask for a firm commitment from the developer to **fully develop the permanent park and path** as initially planned, even if there are delays in the overall Phase 2 construction timeline.
  3. **OTNA Consultation on Art Installations:** We reiterate our request for formal community involvement in the selection process. Specifically, we seek the **opportunity to provide feedback on public art installations provided by the developer on-site**, and to be **formally included in the process to select and locate any public art funded by an "in lieu" contribution**. Our involvement will help ensure the chosen art aligns with the community's vision and the Old Town North Small Area Plan.
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The Robinson Terminal North project presents a significant opportunity to enhance our community. Your attention to these matters will help ensure the project truly benefits the residents of Old Town North and Alexandria as a whole.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Ryan Whitaker*

Ryan Whitaker

President

*Tommy Volk*

Tommy Volk

Treasurer

*Agnès Artemel*

Agnès Artemel

Board Member

*Sarah Almy*

Sarah Almy

Executive Director

# NORTH

OLD TOWN NORTH  
ALLIANCE

May 30, 2025

Members of the Planning Commission  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

VIA EMAIL

**Subject: Response to Docket Item #10 – Development Special Use Permit #2024-10009,  
Robinson Terminal North – 500 & 501 North Union Street**

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

The Old Town North Alliance (OTNA) writes to you today regarding the Development Special Use Permit #2024-10009 for the Robinson Terminal North project. Our mission is to contribute to the health and vitality of the Old Town North business and residential communities and to forward the implementation of the award-winning Old Town North Small Area Plan. We aim to create opportunities for community involvement in the exciting future of Old Town North, focusing on activation, placemaking, and enhancing our vibrant, walkable mixed-use community.

OTNA strongly supports Planning Commission approval of the DSUP but requests serious consideration of the points raised in this letter. We appreciate the thorough staff report and the considerable effort that has gone into this proposal. The Robinson Terminal North development represents a significant opportunity for our neighborhood and the broader Alexandria waterfront. While we are broadly supportive of the project's goals, the Old Town North Alliance wishes to emphasize two matters of specific interest where we believe further attention and commitment from the developer are crucial: Public Art, and the integrated development of Open Space, Site Activation, Streetscape, and the Oronoco Street End.

## 1. Public Art

The Robinson Terminal North site serves as a crucial **Gateway to Old Town North**. As such, its development, particularly its public art component, must be thoughtfully integrated into the greater plan for our neighborhood. Its strategic location along the planned **Art and Culture Walk** route makes the inclusion of significant public art installations here essential, providing a vital link between Old Town and Old Town North and enriching the experience for residents and visitors alike.

Old Town North is envisioned as a dynamic arts and cultural corridor, and public art is a cornerstone of this vision. We acknowledge the staff report's inclusion of conditions regarding public art (Conditions 174-177). However, to ensure a truly impactful and lasting contribution to the neighborhood's cultural fabric, OTNA proposes the following for your consideration:

- **Clarity and Transparency on In Lieu Contributions to the Public Art Fund:** In order to satisfy the requirement to provide public art, the developer may opt between

providing such art on-site or making a financial contribution in lieu. As a threshold matter, it is important for the community to understand how any in lieu contributions from this, or any, developer to the public art fund will be utilized. This is particularly important given the location of the Robinson Terminal North Project as a Gateway to Old Town North's Arts & Cultural District. We urge the Planning Commission to work with the applicant to ensure a transparent process for how their specific contributions will be decided upon and how they will be allocated to benefit the community. It has been widely acknowledged that progress on the implementation of the Arts & Cultural District has been far slower than expected. Ensuring that in lieu contributions to the public art fund for developments in and around Old Town North are designated for installations and initiatives that enhance the Arts & Cultural District can help accelerate that progress. A broader concern exists regarding transparency around the utilization of in lieu contributions to the public art fund by developers on other projects. When OTNA advocated for the Whitley Phase II developer's in lieu contribution to be spent in Old Town North at a Planning Commission meeting in April, the Planning Commission indicated that it had no visibility into the expenditure of such funds. Upfront clarity and transparency on the expenditure of these funds is essential.

- **Minimum In-Lieu Contribution:** We strongly encourage the Planning Commission to determine **an appropriate minimum in-lieu developer contribution per phase** towards public art installations for this project, with the existing maximum of \$75,000 per building (as stated in Condition 177) being the aspirational goal for each phase. This dedicated funding per phase will guarantee a substantive investment.
- **Art Installations in Both Phases:** Condition 175.a. mentions that if on-site public art is provided, a phasing plan should be provided during Final Site Plan. We urge the Commission to make it a clear expectation that significant art installations will be incorporated into **both Phase 1 and Phase 2** of the Robinson Terminal North development. This ensures that the entire project contributes to the artistic landscape of Old Town North and that early residents and visitors benefit from these enhancements.
- **Timeline for Phase 2 Art Contribution:** To ensure the public art benefit from this development is not indefinitely deferred, we request a condition that if Phase 2 construction (East Block) does not commence within a **reasonable and clearly defined timeframe** following the completion of Phase 1 (West Block), the in-lieu monetary contribution designated for Phase 2 public art, as outlined in Condition 177, shall be made by the developer to the City's Public Art Fund, with this specific contribution **dedicated to art development within Old Town North.**
- **OTNA Participation in Art Selection:** The Old Town North Alliance, as a key stakeholder and representative of the community, requests (i) the opportunity to provide feedback on public art installations provided on-site; and/or (ii) formal inclusion in the process to select and locate public art in Old Town North if the developer opts to make an in-lieu contribution. Our involvement would help ensure that the selected art aligns with the neighborhood's character, the Small Area Plan's objectives, and the community's aspirations.

## 2. Open Space, Site Activation, Streetscape, and Oronoco Street End

The planned open spaces, enhanced streetscape, and the transformation of the Oronoco Street End are vital components for creating a vibrant, accessible, and pedestrian-focused environment, as envisioned in both the Waterfront Plan and the Old Town North Small Area Plan. We are



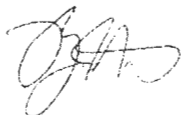
pleased to see the detailed attention given to these elements in the staff report. To ensure timely delivery and long-term success, OTNA puts forth the following recommendations:

- **Early Streetscape Development and Interim Park/Walkway:** We urge the Commission to ensure that the full streetscape improvements along North Union Street, Pendleton Street, and Oronoco Street (west of Union) adjacent to the West Block (Phase 1) are developed at the **onset of Phase 1 construction**. Concurrent with this, we strongly advocate for the establishment of the **interim 10-foot minimum asphalt or stone dust path along the waterfront** (as stipulated in Condition 2.d.) at the very beginning of Phase 1. This interim park and walkway are crucial for maintaining public access and enjoyment of the waterfront during the multi-year construction period.
- **Timeline for Permanent Park and Walkway:** While Condition 2.d. outlines the construction of a temporary path if the East Building permits are not issued by the 10th Certificate of Occupancy for the West Building, we believe a more definitive timeline for the activation of the East Block (Phase 2) is prudent. We request that the Planning Commission establish a condition that if Phase 2 (East Block development and its associated permanent open space improvements) is not initiated within a **reasonable and clearly defined timeframe** following the completion of Phase 1, the then-existing interim park and walkway on the East Block be enhanced **to create a high-quality public open space installation**, funded by the developer, the City or a combination of the two. This will prevent the East Block from remaining undeveloped or the interim solution from becoming a de facto permanent state without the full investment intended for this critical public amenity.

The Robinson Terminal North project holds immense promise for Old Town North. By giving special attention to these aspects of public art and the timely, comprehensive development of public spaces, we can ensure that this development fully realizes its potential to enhance our neighborhood's unique character and vitality.

The Old Town North Alliance supports the development of Robinson Termination North as generally proposed by the developer and encourages the Planning Commission, City Staff and, ultimately, City Council to move this project through its entitlement phase carefully but expediently. OTNA is committed to working collaboratively with the Planning Commission, City staff, and the applicant to achieve the best possible outcomes for our community. We thank you for your time and consideration of our input.

Sincerely,



Ryan Whitaker  
President



Tommy Volk  
Treasurer



Agnes Artemel  
Board Member



Sarah Almy  
Executive Director

23  
6-14-25



June 13, 2025

Alexandria City Council  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Honorable Mayor Gaskins, and Members of City Council:

The Alexandria City Human Services Organizations would like to express our sincere appreciation for the independent Alexandria Fund for Human Services (AFHS) Evaluation released in May 2025 in response to our request for assessment of the fund. The thorough review and thoughtful approach in evaluating the effectiveness of this vital fund demonstrate the city's commitment to strengthening our collective efforts to support the residents of Alexandria.

The evaluation has provided valuable insights that will undoubtedly guide us all in ensuring that human services funding continues to address the most pressing needs within our community and consider how we can collectively work together to create solutions that demonstrate the care and concern this community has for its citizens. We are pleased to see the recommendation that additional funding should be made available to support AFHS. It will also be critical to determine the programs which may be considered under the "survive" category, and addressed on a contract basis as part of the FY27 budget deliberations.

As the city considers further decisions regarding the recommendations outlined in the evaluation, we would like to remain engaged in an open and collaborative dialogue to contribute our perspectives, expertise and ensure consensus in defining terms and allocations of the resources.

We believe that continued partnership between the city and all its human services organizations will be instrumental in advancing equitable and impactful solutions for our residents. We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss how we can work together to implement these recommendations effectively.

Thank you for your leadership and ongoing commitment to supporting the well-being of Alexandria's community. We look forward to continuing our collaboration and dialogue.

Sincerely,

Alexandria City Human Service Organizations Executive Committee

## Gloria Sitton

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**From:** noreply@alexandriava.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 11, 2025 11:28 PM  
**To:** Gloria Sitton; Keia Waters  
**Subject:** 6/14/2025 #23: Melissa Kuennen registered

Individual Melissa Kuennen has registered to speak before City Council on 6/14/2025 regarding item number 23.

Currently there are 8 individuals signed up for this meeting, including 1 speakers for item number 23.

## Details

Meeting Date: 6/14/2025  
Docket Item #: 23

Speaker's Name: Melissa Kuennen  
Phone #: 5714586588  
Email: melissa.b.kuennen@gmail.com  
Address: 525 Montgomery St

Representing: NOTICe - North Old Town Independent Civic Association

Position on the item: *For*

Nature of interest: Civic interest

Are you being compensated? No

Speaker comments:

*NOTICe supports the redevelopment of Robinson Terminal North and looks forward to the completion of the Mount Vernon Trail and the African American History Walk that are currently interrupted at this location.*

*Completion of public access to the Potomac River waterfront has been envisioned by the City for over 30 years.*

*The city currently has jurisdiction of River Renew plaza until October when it will be turned over to the developer, where access will be from Union St. until the completion of Phase 2 on the East parcel. Since once the waterfront park is completed the waterfront section will become responsibility of the city.*

*During construction of Phase 1 there will be no access to Union Street, the current path of the Mount Vernon Trail, and that people taking that route will have to detour up to Fairfax Street to get to Founders Park - unless they trespass through the commercial building parking lots or through Tobacco Quay. The developer states they need full access to Union Street and the East parcel for the two year construction period of the West building in Phase 1.*

*Since the developer cannot commit to the period of time between Phase 1 and 2 (listed as "several years" in the DSUP application), NOTICe recommends that the city step in to protect the best*

*interests of its residents and visitors to the city once the DSUP process is completed and ask the developer to fence off approximately 10 foot wide portion of the East parcel along the waterfront to create a temporary public path to be used during Phase 1 and the indefinite period of time before the completion of Phase 2.*



City Council - June 14 2025

Melissa B. Kuennen, NOTICe VP for Development

### Item 23

**NOTICe** fully supports the redevelopment of Robinson Terminal North and looks forward to the completion of the Mount Vernon Trail and the African American History Walk that are currently interrupted at this location.

Completion of public access to the Potomac River waterfront has been envisioned by the City for over 30 years.

### Change of route for the Mount Vernon Trail:

The current path of the Mount Vernon Trail is on Union Street at this parcel, but the developer states they need full access to Union Street and the East parcel for the two year construction period of the West building in Phase 1.

So people taking the Mount Vernon Trail will have to detour up to **Fairfax Street** to get to Founders Park - unless they trespass through the commercial building parking lots or through Tobacco Quay.

In addition, the developer takes possession of the **River Renew Plaza** from the city in October of this year. The developer says public access will be from Union Street. But since Union Street will not be open to the public for more than 2 years it will remain vacant and unused. There is no access from Oronoco Bay Park.

### How long do we wait for access to the waterfront?

We are concerned about the length of time that could pass before there is public access to this portion of the waterfront:

- We do not have a start date for construction of **Phase 1** after approval of DSUP. If you take the example of almost every other approved DSUP in the past 5 years that period appears to be between 12-18 months.
- There is currently no schedule for **abatement** of contamination on the west parcel.
- **Phase 1** construction is expected to take 24 months
- The developer cannot commit to the period of time between Phase 1 and 2 (listed as another "several years" in the DSUP application), adding say another 24 months
- There is currently no schedule for the abatement of contamination on the east parcel.
- Phase 2 is expected to more than 24 months until completion.

***This adds up to, at the earliest, 7 years, and could stretch to 10 years.***

**NOTICE** sent a letter May 7 2025 to city staff asking for a **temporary path** for **waterfront access** as soon as possible. Other residents and OTN organizations have made similar requests

City staff's recommendations are only for a temporary path ***if there is a delay*** to the start of Phase 2, but this is **undefined**. The Planning Commission agreed to this undefined timeline, but

**We think the city can do better for the great number of residents and visitors who use this path daily.**

Once the DSUP is approved we ask the city to ask the developer to

- fence off an approximately **10 foot wide** portion of the East parcel along the waterfront,
- string up **lights** on the construction fence
- create a **temporary public path** to be used during Phase 1 and the indefinite period of time before the completion of Phase 2.

***This would not be a hardship to the developer*** who has already stated they intend to add a protective layer of fill on the east parcel and plant grass before they start Phase 1 construction.

Please work with the developer so that the city does not have to wait for nearly **another decade** to complete the now 30 year old vision of full waterfront access.

## SPEAKER'S FORM

DOCKET ITEM NO. 23

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND GIVE IT TO THE CITY CLERK  
BEFORE YOU SPEAK ON A DOCKET ITEM

PLEASE ANNOUNCE THE INFORMATION SPECIFIED BELOW PRIOR TO SPEAKING.

1. NAME: Kenneth Wise
2. ADDRESS: 708 W. Fairfax Street, Suite 605, Alexandria  
 TELEPHONE NO. 202-431-3027 E-MAIL ADDRESS: KWise@wsregell.com
3. WHOM DO YOU REPRESENT, IF OTHER THAN YOURSELF? Applicant
4. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE ITEM?  
 FOR: ☒ AGAINST: \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
5. NATURE OF YOUR INTEREST IN ITEM (PROPERTY OWNER, ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST, CIVIC INTEREST, ETC.): Attorney
6. ARE YOU RECEIVING COMPENSATION FOR THIS APPEARANCE BEFORE COUNCIL?  
 YES ☒ NO \_\_\_\_\_

This form shall be kept as a part of the permanent record in those instances where financial interest or compensation is indicated by the speaker.

A maximum of three minutes will be allowed for your presentation, except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard on a docket item shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation. If you have a prepared statement, please leave a copy with the Clerk.

Additional time not to exceed 15 minutes may be obtained with the consent of the majority of the council present; provided notice requesting additional time with reasons stated is filed with the City Clerk in writing before 5:00 p.m. of the day preceding the meeting.

The public normally may speak on docket items only at public hearing meetings, and not at regular legislative meetings. Public hearing meetings are usually held on the Saturday following the second Tuesday in each month; regular legislative meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays in each month. The rule with respect to when a person may speak to a docket item at a legislative meeting can be waived by a majority vote of council members present but such a waiver is not normal practice. When a speaker is recognized, the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply. If an item is docketed *for public hearing* at a regular legislative meeting, the public may speak to that item, and the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply.

In addition, the public may speak on matters which are not on the docket during the Public Discussion Period at public hearing meetings. The mayor may grant permission to a person, who is unable to participate in public discussion at a public hearing meeting for medical, religious, family emergency or other similarly substantial reasons, to speak at a regular legislative meeting. When such permission is granted, the rules of procedures for public discussion at public hearing meetings shall apply.

## Guidelines for the Public Discussion Period

(a) All speaker request forms for the public discussion period must be submitted by the time the item is called by the city clerk.

(b) No speaker will be allowed more than three minutes; except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard during the public discussion period shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent.