



Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

February 4, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor & Members of City Council

RE: Development of Alexandria Seaport Foundation's Seaport Center II

The Waterfront Commission supports the Alexandria Seaport Foundation's development of the Alexandria Seaport Center II to be located on a floating dock adjacent to their current floating building, the McIlhenny Seaport Center, at the Alexandria City Marina.

The Seaport Foundation has had a presence at the Alexandria waterfront since 1982 and plays a role in the continuity of Alexandria's maritime history and traditions. The Seaport Foundation carries out its mission, "We Nurture Resilience. We Build Community.", by improving the lives of at-risk youth through the Seaport Apprenticeship program. The Seaport Foundation provides a safe haven where 18- to 23-year-olds can learn career and life skills through hands-on woodworking and boatbuilding; personalized instruction; and project-based learning.

The additional physical space expands the Seaport Foundation's ability to serve youth and engage the community. The addition of the larger new building will allow the Seaport Foundation to serve two-to-three times as many apprentices. It will have classroom space and private offices for confidential conversations and, in the off-periods, opens the opportunity for additional programs for the community and local schools.

The Seaport Foundation's mission and its work to preserve the craft of wooden boatbuilding is in line with the North Old Town Area Plan and the designation of North Old Town as an Arts District.

Seaport Apprentices learn boating, boating safety, sailing and rowing. Being on the water makes these activities possible. More importantly, as an independent reviewer recently observed, "the shop also seems to serve as a quiet, calm, and predictable place for young people whose regular lives may be chaotic and unpredictable. At least one of the apprentices mentioned their struggle with past trauma. The value of a predictable environment with reliable adults cannot be overstated for young people struggling with the effects of trauma. The aesthetically pleasing

nature of the shop should also not be underestimated. Simply being in a beautiful place, close to nature, or in this case on the water, can be a healing experience."

The Waterfront Commission continues to offer our support for the Seaport Foundation's work and commends staff and volunteers for their tireless efforts in executing tasks of the Apprentice Program. We appreciate that the Apprentice Program positively impacts the lives of the apprentices, improves our community and adds to the vibrancy of our waterfront.

We recommend that Alexandria City Council support the development of the Seaport Center II at the proposed location.

Sincerely,

Lebaron K. Reid, Chair
Waterfront Commission

cc: Waterfront Commission members
Jack Browand, Acting Director and Staff Liaison to the Parks & Recreation Commission