

Waterfront Commission and Park & Recreation Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria VA 22311

May 21, 2025

To: The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

Re: Joint Letter on Robinson Terminal North (RTN) Development Proposal

We write to share recommendations from both the Waterfront Commission and the Park and Recreation Commission on the development of the Robinson Terminal North (RTN) site. Attached also is a more detailed report developed by the Waterfront Commission Subcommittee on this project.

RTN is one of the last remaining waterfront development sites in Alexandria. The process to bring the development to this point has taken many years and considerable planning, and the Commissions commend the progress made. It is imperative to learn from the lessons of past developments along the waterfront and incorporate these lessons into RTN. We recognize that waterfront property in Alexandria is a scarce resource and important for both the enjoyment and economic needs of the city, residents and visitors. We strongly encourage the City to work with the developer to maximize the public amenity space on the site, develop a plan for providing near-term public access to the water, and visibly recognize the historic nature of the site.

Several points are paramount to the success of RTN, consistent with the Waterfront Small Area Plan Development Goals and Guidelines:

- Designing and maintaining a continuous waterfront pedestrian promenade has long been a tenant of Alexandria's waterfront improvement efforts. The complexity and cost of the development has the potential to lead the developer to complete the work in two phases (West and East) with a lengthy delay in construction possible between the two phases. The project is expected to start with the West building. If there is a delay in start of construction of the East portion of the development, the City should require the developer to complete a public access path along the riverfront as soon as the developer is aware of its need for delays. It could be an extended period for the second (East) phase to be completed and leaving the waterfront access unavailable during this period is not acceptable.
- The site is contiguous to a large, dilapidated and complex pier. The pier is owned by the current owner of the site. We are pleased that the developer's demolition plan calls for cutting the pilings to a level close to the riverbed to allow for and protect waterborne traffic. We understand this work will begin in early summer 2025. The City should work towards replacing the pier and/or make improvements to the shoreline to enable use by pedestrians and boats or a floating dock (for kayaks, paddleboards or other non-motorized vehicles). This

enhancement would help accomplish the long-term vision of the Waterfront Plan to provide multiple water access points to Alexandria.

- The Commissions discussed at great length the optimal ownership of the public access areas of RTN. Ultimately, the Commission supports having the area that is contiguous to the river, including a walking path, owned by the City. Ongoing, daily maintenance would be the responsibility of the condominium residents and major capital improvements to be the responsibility of the City. The Commission saw merits to the City in having the Condominium owners retain ownership and full maintenance responsibilities with public access and authority given to the City for future development of the riverfront including a dock and access points. But ultimately it is decided that the City's ownership of the land along the river is in the public's best interest.
- The Commissions support construction of up to five pavilions with supporting infrastructure on the unit block of Oronoco Street and in the public access areas of the development to allow for publicly accessible areas for shade and for small gathering spaces. We request ongoing updates and consultation on the planned amenities and activation in the public access spaces in the development so that we may provide additional feedback.
- Finally, we urge the City and the developers to consider ways to visibly recognize the historic nature of the site through appropriate signage or art installations that would serve as a reminder of the vibrant past and present of this unique Alexandria space.

Thank you for the opportunity to review plans for this site and provide feedback to City Council. The two Commissions welcome further opportunities to review development plans as they are refined and finalized.

Sincerely,

Lebaron K Reid
Lebaron Reid, Chair
Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Dana R. Colarulli
Dana Robert Colarulli, Chair
Park & Recreation Commission

Janice M. Abraham
Jan Abraham, Chair
Robinson Terminal North Subcommittee

Attachment:

Report of Waterfront Commission Subcommittee on Robinson Terminal North
Development

Report of Waterfront Commission Subcommittee on Robinson Terminal North Development

The Subcommittee, which was chaired by Jan Abraham and included Sydney Smith, David Robbins, Louise Roseman, and William Vesilind, met on October 8 and 16, 2024, and January 29 and May 14, 2025 to review the proposed Robinson Terminal North Development. The discussion focused on adherence to Waterfront Small Area Plan Development Goals and Development Guidelines for the RTN site. The meetings were announced and open to the public. Representative City staff attended the meetings.

Development Goals

- 1. Employ a land use mix and design which invites the public and encourages activity within the proposed development in the adjacent public spaces.**

The proposed development plan achieves land use mix.

- 2. Provide extensive public amenities and free access to and along the water's edge.**

Free access to and along the water's edge is achieved. The Commission requests ongoing engagement and consultation on the yet-to-be-designed public amenities. The Commission strongly encourages extensive interactive amenities (e.g., game tables, places for music concerts, exercise classes, and other public events). Bryant Park in New York City can be a model of a public space with high interactive amenities and engagement by the public. Chicago has also invested heavily in enhancing and supporting the waterfront as a community asset, notably with The Wild Mile, which is an example of a public-private partnership that enhances urban living.

Although the intent of the developer is to have the two phases (East and West of Union St.) be developed sequentially and as a continuous construction project, external and financial factors could delay construction of the East portion. The Commission strongly recommends, as a condition of DSUP, that if the construction of the East portion is delayed, the public riverfront path be completed as soon as the delay of the East project is identified by the developer and the City. This would allow continuous riverfront access throughout the City, if for some reason the East portion of the project is delayed.

To support public activation of the site, the Commission encourages utilities and other supporting infrastructure, including water fountains, electricity, and generator support, be installed in the public access area and up to five pavilions be constructed and located in the unit block of Oronoco and in the public access area of the development.

Public restrooms are planned for the West building. We believe these restrooms are an important element of the planned development and should be a condition of the DSUP.

The on-site restrooms should be publicly available 7 days a week, 365 days per year, from 7 am – 10 pm.

3. Improve access by extending Pendleton Street as a pedestrian connection to an improved public pier.

Pedestrian connection to the waterfront via Pendleton Street and Oronoco St. is achieved. No public pier is included in the proposed development and the current pier will be removed by the developer due to lack of structural integrity. The Commission encourages the City to retain the flexibility to build a public pier at Robinson Terminal North in the future to provide water access to the site for kayakers, paddle boarders, and boats. We believe amenities, either a fixed pier or a floating dock, should exist to encourage public access via the river.

The Waterfront Commission believes the park should be accessible to visitors who arrive from the river in various modalities. Robinson Terminal North is a historical deep-water port and a key connection between Alexandria and the river. Access from/to the river is also a key component of the Waterfront Plan. The current Robinson Terminal North development plan provides no access for visiting kayakers, paddle boarders or boaters. Access to Robinson Landing by boat, kayak and paddleboard has proven to be a huge success that both provides revenue to the City through docking fees, as well as public "parking" to access retail, restaurants, and adjacent parks.

4. Pay homage to historic West's Point through public space design and interpretive features.

The Commission has not yet seen the public space design and interpretive features paying homage to West's Point. The Commission requests an update on the plans before they go to the City for approval.

5. Maintain a building scale compatible with existing fabric to the south and west.

The proposed development is compatible in scale.

6. Maximize water views from buildings, streets and rooftop open spaces.

Many portions of the development have water views, which are primarily accessible to residents, such as from many of the condominium units and from the building rooftops. Residents will have access to water views from the West Building and restaurant patrons will have water views from the West and East Building restaurants. The public will have views and access to the water from the areas along the waterfront.

Development Guidelines

1. Active uses should be part of any development and should constitute the predominant ground floor uses.

Two ground-floor restaurants are included in the West building and one ground-floor restaurant is included in the East building. Most of the ground floor space in the East building is devoted to residential units.

2. Preferred use on the site is mixed use, emphasizing arts, history and culture (including a museum) and including vibrant commercial uses (such as hotel).

The proposed use of the site does not emphasize arts, history, and culture. Three restaurants on site support vibrant commercial use. The Waterfront Commission has been an advocate for a high level of activation for portions of the waterfront and encourages the plans to include appropriate infrastructure (electricity, plumbing etc.) to allow for active use of the public space, including the adjacent AlexRenew site, the football-shaped site on the southeast portion of the public space and up to five pavilions to provide sun protection and casual gathering spaces. The Commission requests updates on the plans as they are further developed.

3. Residential use and design should be compatible with a high level of public activity and located away from the water.

The design currently has residential units in the East building on the ground floor and in close proximity to the area of public activity. There should be a requirement that the residential units have robust soundproofing to minimize noise complaints.

4. Residential use should not be the primary use of the site. The location, design and specific type of residential use proposed must coexist well with the other planned uses on the site and planned public activity in the public spaces adjacent to the residential development. Ground floor residential units are not permitted.

This guideline is not met. While the development plan includes three restaurants, residential use is the primary use of the site. The East building has ground floor residential units. The Commission is concerned with the interface between the public activation of the area and the highly priced residential condominium units with special attention on the ground floor condominium units. The Commission encourages sound insulation, privacy screens and triple-pane windows for ground-floor condominium units as well as full disclosure for all residents in condominium documents, describing the public access to the surrounding areas.

5. The streetscape and pedestrian experience along North Union Street should be enhanced; in addition to undergrounding utilities, providing street trees and appropriate light fixtures.

This guideline appears to be met. Union St will have areas for ride share drop offs and quick delivery of people and things to access the two residential buildings, East and West.

- 6. Historic interpretation, consistent with the recommendations of the History Plan, should inform every aspect of the redevelopment and adjacent public spaces, with particular attention given to the West's Point site which is the area which extends from the water west up Oronoco Street to Union Street and represents the origins of Alexandria.**

We encourage implementation of this guideline but have not seen the developer's plans in this regard. The Commission requests updates on the plans as they are developed.

- 7. Encourage modern design inspired by historic precedent while maintaining compatibility with the nearby residential neighborhoods and ensuring compliance with the Potomac River Vicinity Height District regulations.**

This guideline appears to be met.

- 8. Redevelopment proposals shall require review on an advisory basis by the Old and Historic District Board Architectural Review prior to being considered by the Planning Commission and City Council prior to approval.**

This guideline has been met.

- 9. Parking for new buildings should be accommodated on site and below grade. Although the Plan anticipates low parking ratios, the applied ratio must be consistent with industry norms for similar hotels.**

Parking for East building is below grade, but building constraints require parking for the West building to be at grade. The current plan does not include a hotel. The Commission does not believe that 12 public parking spaces are adequate for the three restaurants and guests of residents in the condominium units.

- 10. The bulk and scale of the buildings should be stepped down from Union Street toward the water.**

This guideline appears to be met; the East building is a smaller bulk and scale than the West building.

- 11. Curb cuts should not be located on any building and/or block frontages facing the water or North Union Street, and should be minimized if facing open space along Oronoco Street.**

There are two curb cuts at the development, one facing Pendleton Street for deliveries, trash collection and parking for the West building and one facing North Union Street for deliveries and the underground parking garage in the East building.

The Commission suggests that trash removal and deliveries, particularly supporting the East building 35 condominium units and a full-service restaurant, be further studied as the amount of activity for deliveries and trash will be considerable and the practicality of using smaller vans for trash collection and delivery is questionable. Much more frequent trash collection than specified in the DSUP application is encouraged.

12. Shoreline treatment at Robinson Terminal North should include native plantings and naturalization where possible.

The Commission does not have information regarding the landscape design and requests further updates as the plans are developed. The Commission supports ensuring that nothing is done during or after development that will hinder stabilization of the shore line.

13. Redevelopment should be compatible with any biosparging technology, or other bioremediation being employed by the City in treatment of the Oronoco Outfall-Alexandria Town Gas site located at the eastern end of Oronoco Street.

City staff confirmed these requirements have been met.

14. As part of the redevelopment, on and off-site public amenities shall be provided by the developer of the site. The specific amenities to be provided will be determined during the development review process. Desirable public amenities include:

- **Public art**
- **Open spaces with public access easements**
- **Retention of the Robinson Terminal pier**
- **Environmental amenities above and beyond minimum required**

Public art. The Commission is very supportive of public art on this site but has not yet seen the proposed art. We request that the Commission be updated as the plans are developed.

Open spaces with public access easements. The Commission strongly recommends that the RTN condominium association retain ownership of and maintenance/upkeep responsibilities for the public space (excluding the AlexRenew portion of the site), subject to a public access easement. The Commission believes this model of ownership will provide the highest level of maintenance and upkeep to this important public area and has been successfully adopted elsewhere along the waterfront, such as Harborside's ownership of and responsibility to maintain Shipyard Park including the shoreline.

The open space development plans should be coordinated with the contiguous AlexRenew space which while under separate ownership will flow naturally from the visitors' perspective.

Retention of the Robinson Terminal pier. The Commission recognizes the financial challenges of rebuilding the pier/dock at this time but strongly encourages the City to work towards replacing the pier in the near future with either another fixed pier for use by pedestrians and boats or a floating kayak/dinghy/paddleboard/dock. This enhancement would help accomplish the long-term vision of the Waterfront Plan with multiple water access points to Alexandria.

The Commission is pleased that the developer has assumed responsibility to remove the existing pier, including the pilings (to a level at or slightly above the river bed), and believes it is essential that it be done in an environmentally sensitive way. We also encourage the City begin the planning process for a replacement recreational, aesthetically pleasing shore line. The photo below illustrates the scale and complexity of the current dock with the numerous pilings supporting the pier. The Commission strongly recommends that nothing be done in the development of the RTN that would preclude long-term development of the waterfront for a future dock/pier. The Commission needs clarity on the future plans for the pier/dock and while this process evolves.



Environmental amenities. The Commission encourages the inclusion of one or more water fountains in the public space, consistent with City standards. Also, the Commission supports the removal of the railroad tracks on the street to support safer bike traffic. Special attention to the bike trail to road intersection is needed for safety of pedestrians and bikers, focusing on the corner of Pendelton and Union Streets.

The Commission encourages additional amenities, such as pavilions with utilities, games and recreational amenities on the public access area including a fire pit, lawn games, seating to watch the river and an area for small musical performances.

15. The maximum FAR and floor area allowed is included on the chart.

City staff confirm this condition has been met.

Signature: OKI
Lebaron Reid (May 22, 2025 13:21 EDT)

Signature: D. Colarulli
Dana Colarulli (May 22, 2025 14:22 EDT)

Signature: Janice M. Abraham
Janice M. Abraham (May 22, 2025 14:32 EDT)

From: [Catherine Miliaras](#)
To: [PlanComm](#); [Kendra Jacobs](#); [Ted Alberon](#)
Cc: [Michael Swidrak](#)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL]NOTICE Request for pedestrian path as Robinson Terminal North redevelops
Date: Thursday, May 22, 2025 2:03:43 PM

Please add to RTN docket

Catherine K. Miliaras, AICP
City of Alexandria
703.407.1450 (mobile)

From: NOTICE Communication <notice.communications@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2025 12:59 PM
To: Catherine Miliaras <Catherine.Miliaras@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Melissa Kuennen <melissa.b.kuennen@gmail.com>; Marsha Thaler Smith <marshathalersmith@yahoo.com>; Margaret Townsend <yoga.with.margaret@gmail.com>; Mary Harris <mary.celeste.harris@gmail.com>; Peggy Marchbanks <peggy@marchbanks.us>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]NOTICE Request for pedestrian path as Robinson Terminal North redevelops

May 7, 2025

Catherine Miliaras
Principal Planner, Development - Old Town and Old Town North
Planning & Zoning Department
City of Alexandria
301 King Street, Room 2100

Alexandria, VA 22314

catherine.miliaras@alexandriava.gov

Re: Robinson Terminal North

Dear Catherine,

The Robinson Terminal North parcel is the last remaining property on the city's waterfront to be developed and its design must reflect the high standards the city has set for access to the Potomac River. The project as a whole will ultimately connect Oronoco Park to Founders Park with its own waterfront park, which in turn will provide the final connection of public access to the waterfront from Jones Point to Daingerfield Island. This connection has been planned by the City for over 30 years.

We understand that the developer, Rooney Partners, has decided to divide the project into 2 phases - with Phase 1 to be completed by RTN West LLC, and with Phase 2 (RTN East LLC) happening "in several years" - leaving the Old Town North neighborhood with an unfinished parcel, and no guarantee of completion of the park.

We request that once the River Renew Plaza is turned over to the owners - expected in October of this year - that the remaining construction site be developed as follows right away to create a safe

pedestrian connection between Oronoco Park and Founders Park.

-
-
- the existing concrete slab be removed,
-
-
-
- the site graded with appropriate planting fill and planted with grass,
-
-
-
- a landscaped public walkway be created, similar to the walking paths
- in Oronoco Bay Park, and
-
-
-
- appropriate (down-lighted) sidewalk lighting be installed.
-

The waterfront park is to be maintained until Rooney Partners, as RTN East LLC, returns to complete the full design. The design of this temporary park is to meet the expectations of the City for a landscaped public path to be utilized by residents and visitors to the city. The design is to be reviewed and approved by UDAC, the Waterfront Commission, the Planning Commission and City Council.

We look forward to the successful completion of both phases of Robinson Terminal North in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of NOTICE

Mary C Harris, President

Melissa B Kuennen Vice President

Marsha Smith, Secretary

Peggy Marchbanks, Treasurer

Margaret Townsend, At Large Member

(adopted May 7, 2025)

North Old Town Independent Citizens Association, PO Box 25571, Alexandria VA 22313

From: [Kendra Jacobs](#)
To: [Kendra Jacobs](#)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL]Walking path at RTN
Date: Wednesday, May 28, 2025 5:24:59 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Jennifer Williams <jswilliams2@me.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 11, 2025 7:16 PM
To: Catherine Miliaras <Catherine.Miliaras@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Walking path at RTN

[You don't often get email from jswilliams2@me.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

Hi,

I want to add my voice to those asking for completion of a walking path along the Potomac River between the river and the slow-rolling construction of the eastern half of the Robinson Terminal North or River Renew or whatever it's properly called.

That's a really badly constructed sentence, but I think you'll know what I mean.

Thanks for counting my vote,
Jennifer

Jennifer Williams
601 N. Fairfax St., ALX
Mobile: 410-371-4211

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From: [Kendra Jacobs](#)
To: [Kendra Jacobs](#)
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL]Walkway on Robinson Terminal North plot
Date: Wednesday, May 28, 2025 5:24:38 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Jacob <wcjacob@me.com>
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2025 1:06 PM
To: Catherine Miliaras <Catherine.Miliaras@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Walkway on Robinson Terminal North plot

[You don't often get email from wcjacob@me.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

Hello

I hope that the Waterfront Commission can convince the developer of RTN to construct a walkway to connect the riverside walking paths as soon as possible.

Even a simple paved path across the eastern (riverside) plot would be useful.

Thanks
Bill Jacob
601 N Fairfax St Apt 217

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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



City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 30, 2025

TO: MAYOR GASKINS AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
CHAIR McMAHON AND MEMBERS OF PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR; DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

SUBJECT: DSUP #2024-10009 / ROBINSON TERMINAL NORTH AND THE CITY'S
CONTAMINATED LANDS PROGRAM

Community Concerns and Questions

City residents have raised concerns about preexisting contamination at the proposed site and asked questions about how contamination would be mitigated during construction. In particular, the following questions have been asked

1. What is the environmental status of the site?
2. How does the City's Contaminated Lands Program work? And what other project sites in the city have gone through this remediation process?
3. How will the public be kept informed if the project is approved?

City staff appreciates the seriousness of land contamination and has established procedures that developers must follow to maintain safety during construction and properly mitigate environmental hazards. These procedures provide for the safety of neighbors, workers, and future residents. This memo provides responses to the questions raised and describes how the City's procedures apply to this application.

Environmental Status of the Site

The Robinson Terminal North (RTN) site includes two parcels at 500 and 501 North Union Street in Alexandria's Old Town North. The 500 parcel (West) currently contains a one-story warehouse on concrete slab and is occupied by a restaurant ware supplier, between Pendleton and Oronoco streets. The 501 parcel (East) serves as a staging area for Alexandria Renew Enterprise's RiverRenew CSO tunnel project and contains a concrete slab, pier, access shaft, and material storage yard.

Like much of Old Town and the City's rail corridors, both parcels have a documented history of industrial use dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries. Historical uses included coal and petroleum storage, fertilizer and acid manufacturing, and chemical mixing operations. Adjacent properties also hosted gas works and other industrial activities commonly seen in the Old Town district at the time. These uses contributed to contamination in soil and groundwater, including petroleum hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), and metals such as mercury and arsenic. The most recently known industrial use at the West site was with the R.H. Bogle Company, which consisted of an herbicide production plant. Other sections of the Bogle site were redeveloped as the Tobacco Quay town houses and Dalton Wharf office complex in the early 1980s.

EPA Review and Non-Superfund Finding

The R.H. Bogle site was evaluated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) beginning in the early 1980s under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) for potential inclusion on the National Priorities List (NPL). Following that review, the site was designated No Further Remedial Action Planned (NFRAP), indicating that based on available data, the site did not warrant federal Superfund cleanup.

State Voluntary Remediation Program and Petroleum Program

In 2016, applicants seeking to redevelop the West and East parcels entered the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) and received closure under an industrial use standard in 2022. In parallel, the East site was also enrolled in VDEQ's Petroleum Program (PP) following the removal of three 8,000-gallon underground storage tanks. This triggered a Site Characterization Study, groundwater monitoring, and the development of a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address petroleum-related impacts under VDEQ PP guidance. As part of the current process, an updated CAP is required under the Petroleum Program to reflect ongoing site conditions and proposed land use changes. In 2024, the owners re-entered the VRP to enhance mitigation standards for residential redevelopment. Updated restrictions under the residential classification within VDEQ's amended restrictive covenants require the site developer to install vapor mitigation, place two feet of clean fill or hardscape cover, and submit a Health and Safety Plan (HASP) along with post-construction compliance reporting to VDEQ.

City's Contaminated Lands Program for Development Projects and Precedent Projects

The City has a very robust Contaminated Lands Program for development projects. Projects that have evidence of past contamination are required to furnish sampling analytical data and risk assessments for City review under the Contaminated Lands Program to ensure potential exposure risks are below the VRP threshold for commercial and residential standards. Many applicants, including this one, enroll into the VRP when seeking redevelopment approval and provide this information in advance of project approval. This approach has been used regularly for other sites with similar historical uses, including projects at Robinson Terminal South, Potomac Yard, Carlyle, Cameron Station, and Vulcan Materials Storage, among others.

Regardless of VRP enrollment, City staff utilize exposure thresholds established by the VRP as the basis for mitigation requirements if the environmental investigations find contamination exceeding the commercial or residential standard. As is the case for RTN, the City often requires additional mitigation and remediation documents like a Soils Management Plan (SMP) and a HASP. These plans specifically targets mitigating effects to adjacent landowners and onsite workers as an additional layer of protection to human health and the environment. The SMP specifies haul routes, off-site disposal protocols, and requirements for the handling of imported and exported materials, especially those in contact with contaminated soil. The HASP, prepared and signed by a professional engineer and certified industrial hygienist, addresses mitigation to protect construction workers, adjacent landowners, and the broader community. This includes protocols for air monitoring, dewatering, and real-time oversight by an on-site Health and Safety Officer empowered to stop work if unsafe conditions are identified. (See the figure below for the City's process.)



City Review Process

City's Contaminated Land Program and Development Review Process

The community will have opportunities to provide public comments during an upcoming Planning Commission meeting and City Council Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for the Spring of 2025, and during community meetings to be hosted by the developer which are not yet determined.



*Current Status: RTN site has submitted a preliminary DSUP application.

Keeping the Public Informed

Staff has proposed development conditions to enhance public transparency throughout the application process, and if approved, the construction process.

In Condition 125, staff recommends requiring the applicant to maintain a publicly accessible project website throughout the duration of construction and until Certificates of Occupancy are issued. This webpage must house all relevant environmental documentation submitted to VDEQ and the City, including reports related to the VDEQ's VRP and PP, and the City's Contaminated Lands Program.

In Condition 139, staff recommends requiring the applicant to host a community meeting to present the approved Remediation/Corrective Action Plan and HASP required under the City's Program prior to the release of any permits for new construction. The meeting must be publicly notified at least 14 days in advance and include outreach to all adjoining property owners, registered civic associations, and the Departments of Planning & Zoning (P&Z) and Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES). The goal of the meeting is to provide surrounding residents with a clear understanding of the planned environmental safeguards and risk mitigation measures before site work begins. Note that demolition of the pier is being reviewed under a separate demolition permit and that work is anticipated to occur in June 2025.

For questions or further clarification, residents may contact

- Gavin Pellitteri gavin.pellitteri@alexandriava.gov, Stormwater Principal Planner or
- Jesse Maines Jesse.Maines@alexandriava.gov, Stormwater Management Division.

Staff:

Karl Moritz, Director, P&Z

Paul Stoddard, Deputy Director, P&Z

Jesse E. Maines, Division Chief, Stormwater Management, T&ES

Robert M. Kerns, AICP, Chief of Development, P&Z
Gavin Pellitteri, Principal Planner, Stormwater Management, T&ES
Catherine Miliaras, AICP, Principal Planner, P&Z

From: [Kendra Jacobs](#)
To: [Kendra Jacobs](#)
Subject: FW: Docket #10 Planning Commission Meeting June 4, 2025
Date: Tuesday, June 3, 2025 9:08:32 AM
Attachments: [Planning Commission June 4, 2025.docx](#)

-----Forwarded Message-----

From: <annshack@earthlink.net>
Sent: Jun 1, 2025 2:17 PM
To: <plancomm@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: : Alyia Gaskins <alyia.gaskins@alexandriava.gov>, Sarah Bagley <sarah.bagley@alexandriava.gov>, John Chapman <john.taylor.chapman@alexandriava.gov>, Kirk McPike <kirk.mcpike@alexandriava.gov>, Jacinta Greene <jgreene4citycouncil@gmail.com>, Abdel Elnoubi <abdel.elnoubi@alexandriava.gov>, <canek.aguirre@alexandriava.gov>, <jim.parajon@alexandriava.gov>, Jesse Maines <Jesse.Maines@alexandriava.gov>, Jeremy Flachs <jeremy.flachs@flachslaw.com>, <annshack@earthlink.net>, Andrea Stowers <andreal.stowers@gmail.com>, Hal Hardaway <jameshardaway@gmail.com>, Mary Harris <mary.celeste.harris@gmail.com>, Agnès Artemel <aartemel@gmail.com>, <foundersparkalexandria@gmail.com>, <president@thetowntowncivicassociation.org>, <info@oldtownnorth.org>, Laurie Hughes <lauriehughesmba@gmail.com>, <nancyk764@verizon.net>, NANCY MEYERS <echomeyers@verizon.net>, Ben <FrankeB@uanpf.org>, <melissa.b.kuennen@gmail.com>, Robert Kerns <robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov>, Ryan Whitaker <president@otnalliance.org>, Mace Carpenter <pmasoncarpenter@aol.com>, Robert J. Segan <bsegan@seganmason.com>, Andrew Macdonald <ahmacdonald@mac.com>
Subject: Docket #10 Planning Commission Meeting June 4, 2025

Planning Commission Members:

Since I am unable to attend the meeting on June 4th, I submit this attached letter to you in advance. Please read this and put it into the record.

While the City staff has a "standard" method of allowing development of land within the Alexandria City limits, not all sites that are contaminated should be treated the same way. In this case, the health and safety of the next door residents are a significant risk. Thank you for your consideration of our request. Sincerely, Ann ShackTobacco Quay

June 4, 2025

Planning Commission Docket #10

Development Special Use Permit #2024-10009

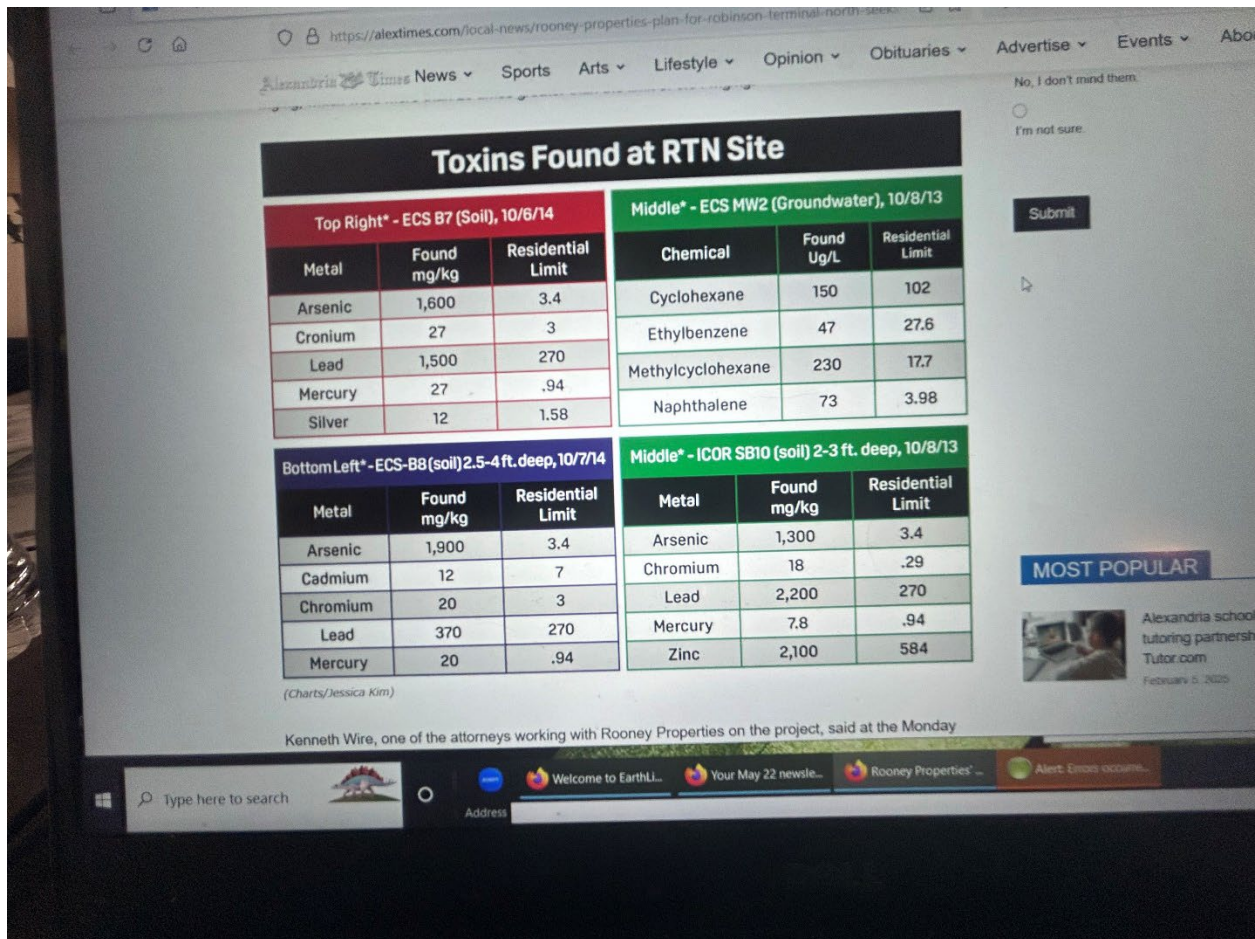
500 and 501 North Union Street - Robinson Terminal North

Statement for the Planning Commission Regarding the RTN Site – Carcinogenic Toxins and Public Safety

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I submit this statement to raise a serious concern regarding the extraordinarily high levels of **carcinogenic toxins** found in the ground at the RTN site.

“RTN Site – Toxin Levels Compared to Acceptable Standards.”



This is a chart that illustrates, in stark terms, the gap between what levels of these toxins are considered acceptable and what is actually present at the site. These are not minor deviations — they represent significant, well-documented health risks.

These substances are **known carcinogens**. Exposure to them, even at low levels over time, can result in long-term health consequences. This affects not only construction workers and future residents, but the surrounding community as well.

We, the residents, are not opposed to development. We want development that is **safe, transparent, and accountable**. Currently, there has been **no public review** of two essential, legally required documents:

- The **site mitigation/remediation plan**
- The **health and safety plan**

We respectfully request that the Planning Commission **condition any approval of the DSUP** on the addition of a **public hearing step** that would:

1. Require the **submission and public disclosure** of both the remediation and health and safety plans.
2. Allow **public and expert review and comment** before any final DSUP approval.

This is not an obstruction. It is a **reasonable and necessary safeguard** to ensure that our community is not exposed to unnecessary risk.

We urge the Commission to make this added step a formal part of the approval process.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to protecting the public interest.

Sincerely,

Ann Shack

Tobacco Quay