Docket Item #17

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2024

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

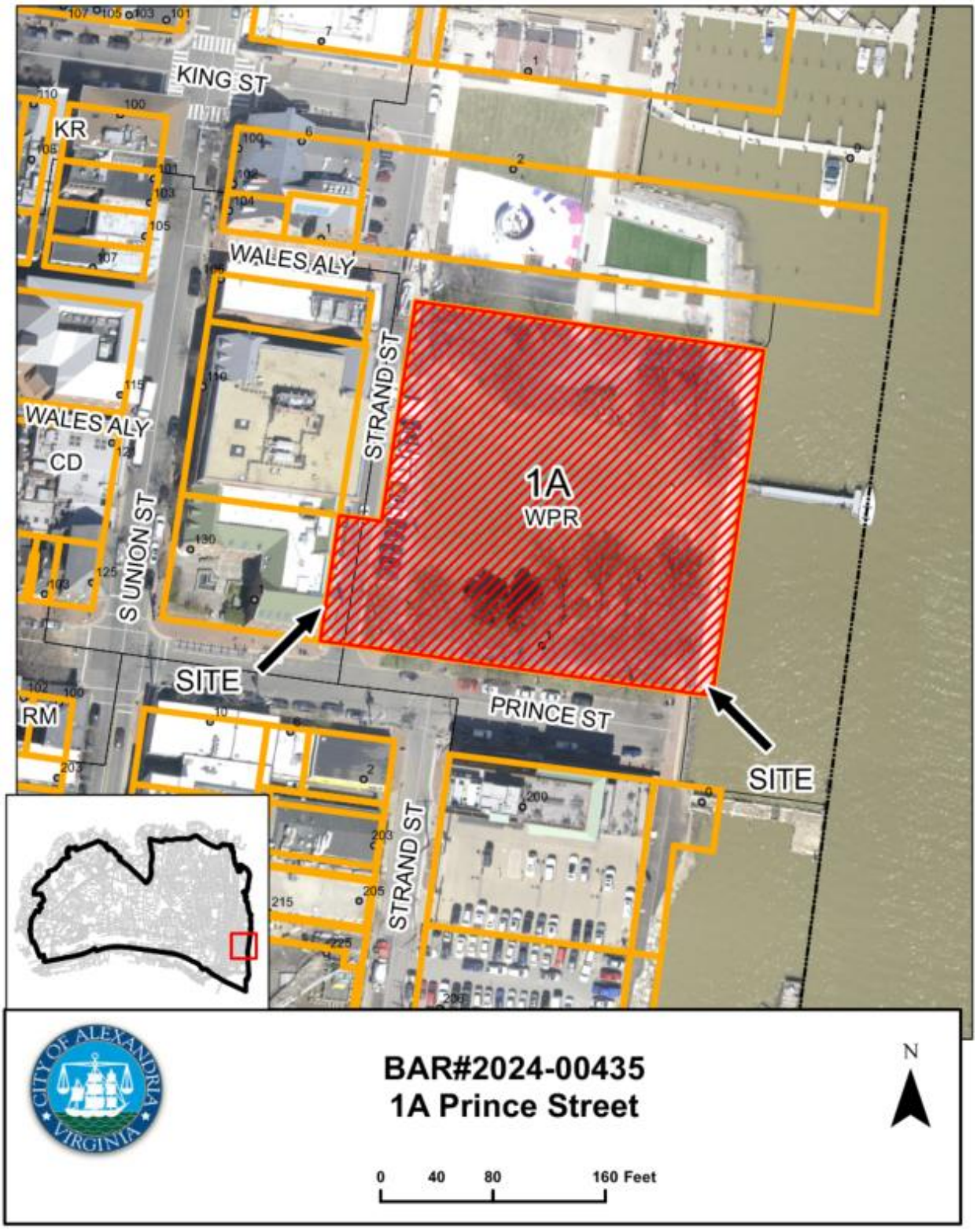
FROM: HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

SUBJECT: CONCEPT REVIEW OF 1A PRINCE STREET – WATERFRONT PARK AND PUMP STATION AND LUMLEY PARK
BAR CASE # 2024-00435

I. SUMMARY

The City of Alexandria is requesting BAR Concept Review for the redesign of Waterfront Park at the northeast corner of Prince Street and Strand Street to include the construction of a pump station and the redesign of Lumley Park at the northeast corner of Duke Street and Strand Street.

The Concept Review Policy was adopted in May 2001 and amended and restated in 2016 (attached). Concept Review is an optional, informal process at the beginning of a Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) application whereby the BAR provides the applicant, staff, Planning Commission, and City Council with comments relating to the overall appropriateness of a project's height, scale, mass, and general architectural character. These comments are not binding on the BAR or the applicant. The Board takes no formal action at the Concept Review stage but will provide comments and may endorse the direction of a project's design by a straw vote. If the Board believes that a building height or mass, or area proposed for construction is not appropriate and would not be supported in the future, the applicant and staff should be advised as soon as possible. This early step in the development review process is intended to minimize future architectural design conflicts between what is shown to the community and City Council during the DSUP approval and what the Board later finds architecturally appropriate under the criteria in Chapter 10 of the Zoning Ordinance and the BAR's adopted *Design Guidelines.*


KING ST
KR
WALES ALY
WALES ALY
CD
S UNION ST
STRAND ST
1A
WPR
SITE
PRINCE ST
SITE
RM
STRAND ST
BAR#2024-00435
1A Prince Street
N
0 40 80 160 Feet

II. SITE CONTEXT AND HISTORY

Site Context
Waterfront Park is at the northeast corner of Prince Street and Strand Street and is visible on all sides from the adjacent streets and public walkways. Both of the proposed locations for the Pump Station are adjacent to public streets and therefore all sides of the structure will be visible from a public right of way.

Point Lumley Park is located at the northeast corner of Duke Street and Strand Street. All elements of the park are visible from adjacent streets and public walkways.

History
Waterfront Park
The area now known as Waterfront Park was originally a marshland, part of the Potomac River. Early in the 19th century, waterfront areas in the city were dominated by industrial and warehouse uses. The area between King Street and Prince Street was no exception to this. Around this time a series of wharves appeared, projecting from these warehouses to the river (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Circa 1880s photograph of the wharves along the waterfront between King and Prince Streets

By the early part of the 20th century, many of the wharves had been removed or consolidated and this area of the waterfront fell into disrepair. By 1957, much of the area of the current park had been infilled and was used for commercial storage and light industrial functions. The City of Alexandria began acquiring waterfront property in 1977 and the area later became the current Waterfront Park.

Point Lumley Park

Point West and Point Lumley were designated as the northern and southern ends, respectively, of the crescent shaped bay that defined the waterfront area during the time of the founding of the City of Alexandria. The first warehouse in this area was constructed approximately 1755. At this time, the area currently known as Point Lumley Park was marshland; this area was infilled sometime between 1783-1786. Similar to the area around Waterfront Park, this area was home to warehouses and other industrial uses from the outset. Most of the structures in the area were destroyed in the large fire of 1810. The waterfront in the area of Point Lumley Park included a series of wharves extending from the warehouses to the Potomac River (Figure 2).

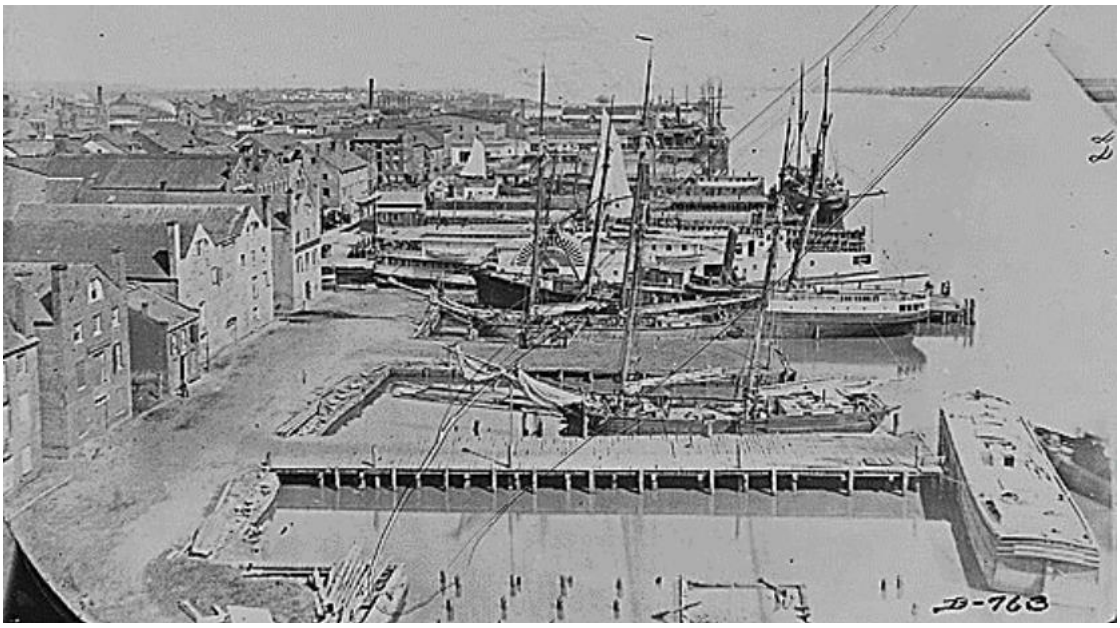


Figure 2: 1865 Photograph showing the wharves along the waterfront north of Pioneer Mill

By 1957, many of the wharves had become infilled, with the exception of a single one that remained at the south end of what would become Point Lumley Park. By 1995, the current shoreline was in place, however there remained structures in the area of the current park. In 2018, all structures east of Strand Street were demolished and the current park took shape.

III. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The City of Alexandria is undertaking an effort to address flooding in the waterfront area that will include a network of below grade plumbing improvements and above grade modifications. As a part of this overall effort, the City will be making modifications to the Waterfront Park and Lumley Park.

A new Pump Station is being proposed to be located within Waterfront Park that will filter surface flood water and expel it to the nearby Potomac River. While much of the infrastructure for this facility will be located below grade, a new structure will be required to house some of the required equipment. Along with the new structure, the landscape of the park will be revised to include flood mitigation efforts along the water's edge. The City has submitted a variety of options for the design and location of the proposed pump station and for the design of the park.

For both design options the footprint and height of the pump station are the same, the variation is in the design of the exterior envelope. The structure will be approximately 36'-6" x 103'-4" with a height of 24'-0" to the flat roof. The envelope will require a series of exterior louvers and will have sections of enclosed roof and open wells that will not be visible from the public right of way. The applicant has submitted two options for the design of the structure. Option 1 uses an industrial motif with red brick, a stone base, and vertical pilasters. Option 2 is a more contemporary design, featuring a stone base with dark wood siding above and a roof of varied height. The City has also submitted two different options for the location of the pump station, one at the west edge of the park and the second at the south end of the park. Two options for the landscape design have been provided for the western edge option and four landscape designs have been proposed for the southern location.

Improvements to Point Lumley Park are also being proposed, although these improvements are limited to landscaping options, flood mitigation improvements, and potential shade structures. The City has included two options for the redesign of Point Lumley Park.

IV. STAFF ANALYSIS

As a reminder, the BAR's purview in this concept review work session is limited to endorsing the project and providing feedback on its height, scale, mass, and general architectural character. The Board will also be providing feedback on the proposed siting of the pump station structure and the overall design for each of the two parks. The City will ultimately return to the Board for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for architectural details, paving materials, and above grade park improvements after City Council approval of the DSUP.

Within the historic districts, the Board utilizes the *Design Guidelines* to determine if a potential new building or additions would be compatible with nearby buildings of historic merit. Unlike many of the new construction projects that the Board reviews, this project is unique in that much of the immediate setting is modern in nature with historic buildings located north and west of the project site. The immediate surroundings are dominated by the recently completed Old Dominion Boat Club across Prince Street from the park and commercial office buildings across Strand Street from the park.

As noted above, Waterfront Park and Point Lumley Park were historically dominated by industrial uses and, until relatively recently, the land on which they are located was a series of wharves extending from warehouses and other uses into the Potomac River. The consolidation and design of the Alexandria waterfront has been a decades long process that includes the development at Robinson Terminal South, the Old Dominion Boat Club, and the recently reviewed development at Robinson Terminal North.

The Alexandria Waterfront Small Area Plan was adopted by City Council in 2012 and was intended to address many of the issues being considered today. This proposal is an extension of that process and utilizes current information on environmental factors to address the chronic problem of flooding along the waterfront. The Board should consider these proposed variations from that plan and consider the proposed design in context with the overall waterfront in addition to the directly adjacent structures.

Waterfront Park

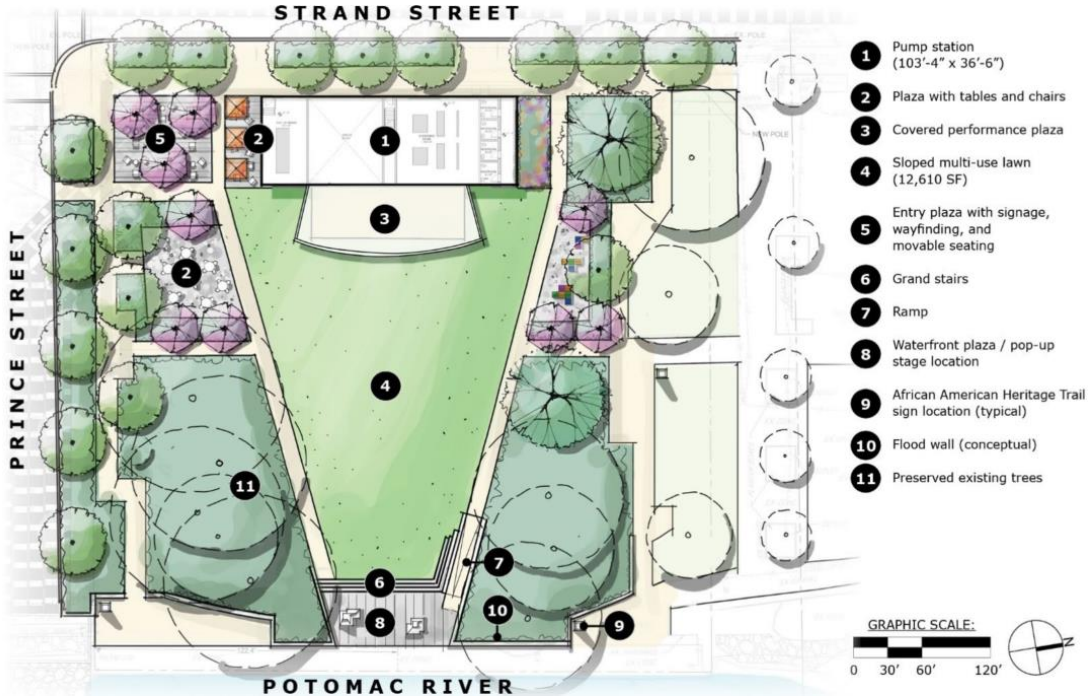
Following the approval of the Waterfront Plan, the City conducted a design process, including considerable public engagement, on a Waterfront Schematic Landscape and Concept Design Plan, which was approved by City Council on June 14, 2014. That Plan anticipates the location of a flood mitigation pump station along the west (Strand) side of Waterfront Park (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Excerpt from the Waterfront Schematic Landscape and Concept Design Plan depicting the pump station (22) and shade structures (23) at the western edge of the park

The size of a pump station was not known at the time that the Landscape Design Plan was being prepared. The proposed structure will be large enough, both in footprint and in height, to impact the design of the park and the proposed landscape designs are a response to its final location. The City is currently proposing two different options for the location of the pump station, one along the western edge of the park in the location of the current parking spaces. The second area is at the southern end of the park across Prince Street from the Old Dominion Boat Club building and the jog in the direction of Strand Street (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proposed options for location of the new pump station

The City is proposing variations on the overall design concept for Waterfront Park based on the final location of the pump station. There are two different designs for the park with the pump station located on the western edge of the park, these are labeled Concept 1A and Concept 1B (Figure 5).

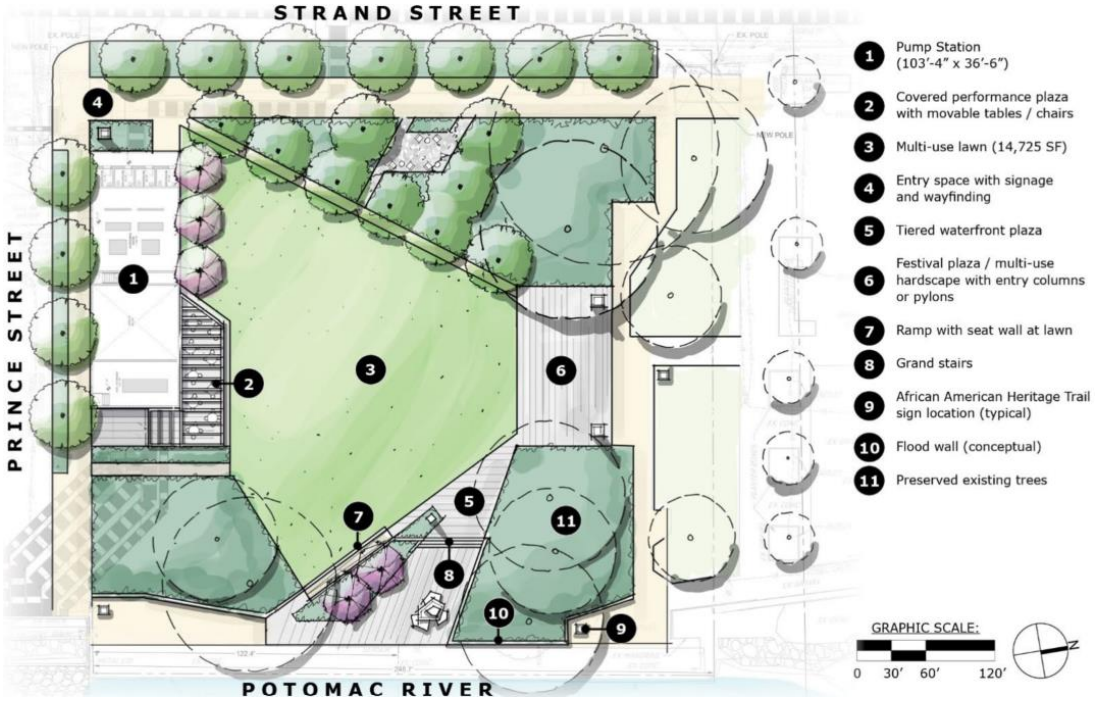


Concept 1A

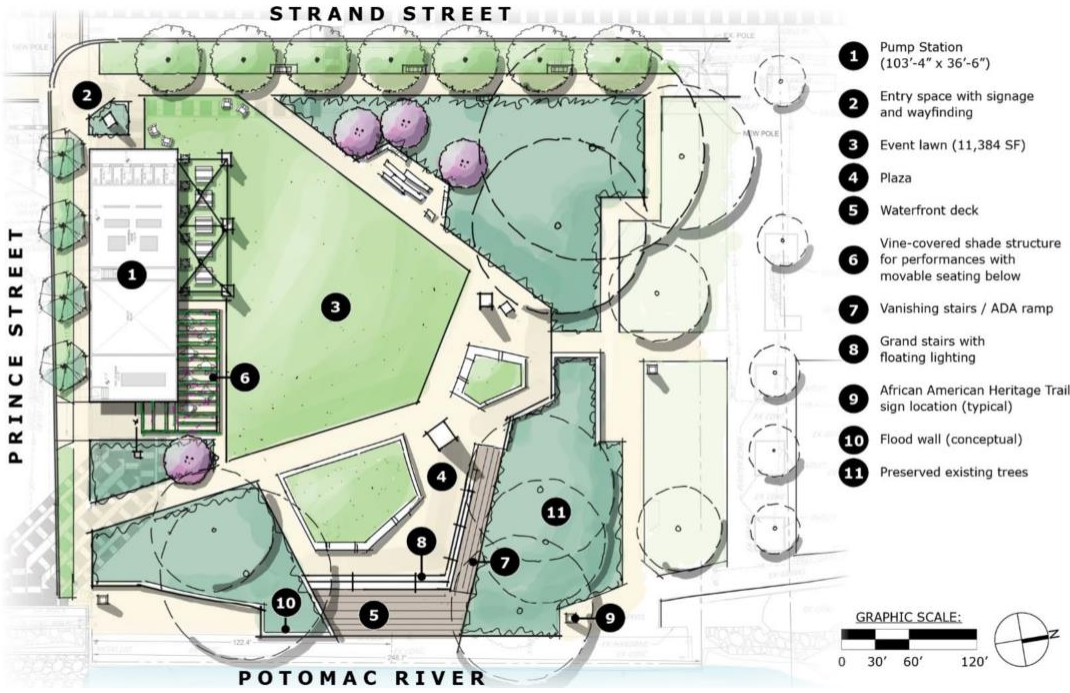
Concept 1B

Figure 5: Concept 1A (top) and Concept 1B (bottom) for the design of Waterfront Park

The City is proposing four different options for the park with the pump station located on the southern edge of the park, these are labeled Concept 2A, Concept 2B, Concept 2C, and Concept 2D (Figure 6).

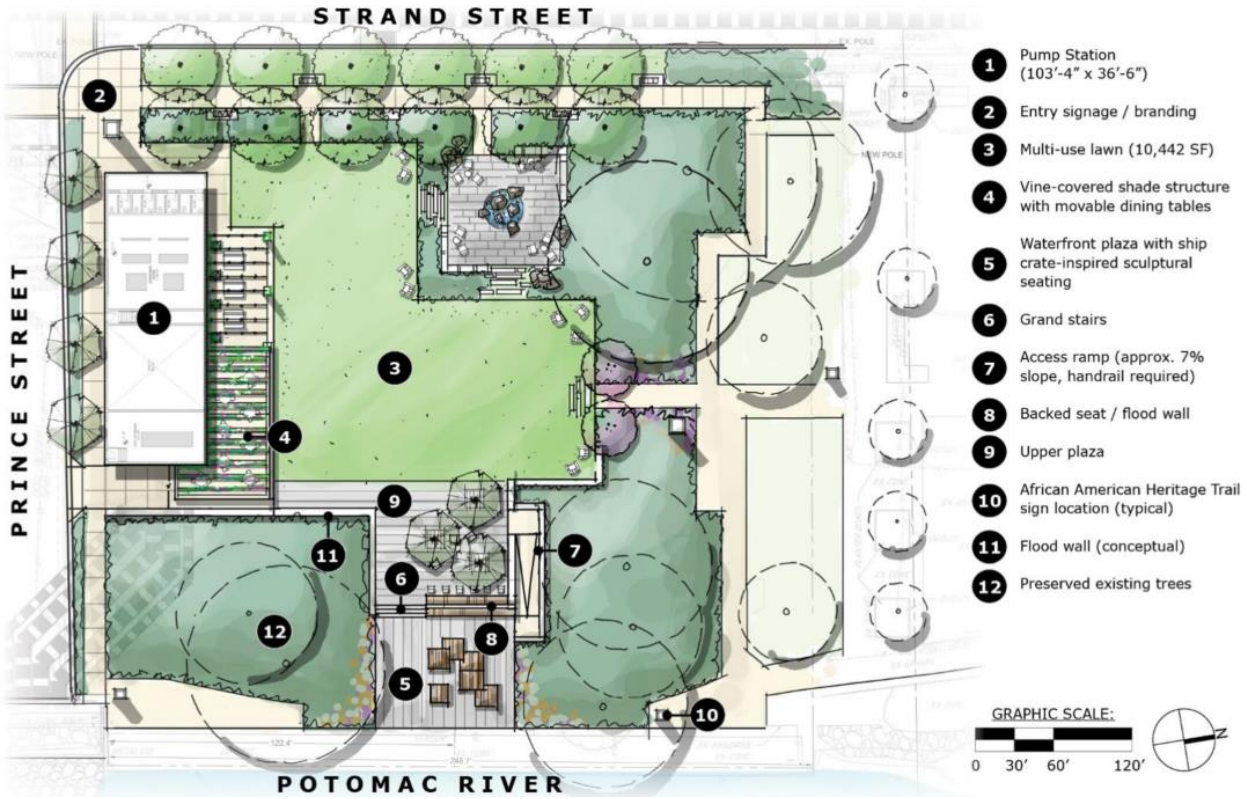


Concept 2A



Concept 2B

Figure 6: Concept 2A (top) and Concept 2B (bottom) for the design of Waterfront Park



Concept 2C

Concept 2D

Figure 6: Concept 2C (top) and Concept 2D (bottom) for the design of Waterfront Park

The City has submitted two options for the design of the pump station. These designs are independent of the chosen location and the Board should be providing feedback on a design motif that is most appropriate for the park and giving direction on ways that the design can be improved as the project moves forward. As a reminder, during the concept review phase the Board provides feedback on the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of a proposed structure. The Board will examine proposed materials and construction details further during the Certificate of Appropriateness stage but for this review the Board will provide feedback on the compatibility of the design. The overall size of the structure is the same in both proposals, however in Option 2 there is a section with a lower roof height.

Option 1 uses an industrial design motif with a stone base and red brick above. The red brick is broken into vertical pilasters that stop at soldier courses at the top of the stone and at the coping. Square openings for "false windows" and louvers are located in each bay with these openings aligned with the pilaster on the long side of the building (Figure 7). This industrial motif is reminiscent of the warehouses and other industrial uses historically found at the project site, however the Board should note that these buildings are no longer in place, modern buildings now surround the park.

If the Board finds that this approach is most appropriate for the site, staff recommends that the City continue to develop and refine the architectural details. The pilasters should have greater relief from the building and be expressed at both the top and bottom of the structure. The second floor wall openings should be pulled away from the pilasters and they should all read the same, regardless of whether it is a louver or a "false window." As with the second floor openings, the ground floor openings should be better composed with each of the bays. Larger openings should be aligned with the openings above and the floating second floor garage door opening should be grounded somehow. The brick walls are currently showing a soldier course at the top, the applicant should explore the use of a precast coping in this area to create a clear top to the building.

Figure 7: Option 1 for the design of the pump station

Option 2 is more contemporary in design, using a taller stone base than Option 1 with dark, flush wood siding above (Figure 8). In this design, the roof steps down at the approximate midpoint of the long direction of the building. Corresponding to this step, the top of the stone base slopes down on the Prince Street side of the building. Dark metal louvers make up the second floor openings with aligned recessed panels at the first floor. These recesses are topped with a steel metal lintel painted to match the siding.

If the Board finds that this approach is most appropriate for the project site, then staff recommends that the City continue to refine and develop the architectural details. The second floor openings appear to sit on a dark precast top to the stone base with the wood siding dying into the sides of the openings. The City should consider how these elements come together and include whatever trim pieces are most appropriate. As noted above, at the Prince Street side of the building, the top of the stone base slopes down. This creates an awkward corner where the taller and shorter stone parts intersect at an outside corner. The applicant should consider wrapping this elevation around the east end of the building to create a consistent stone elevation. The drawings indicate the use of painted flush wood siding at the upper portion of the structure. The City should consider the use of painted wood in this location as it carries significant maintenance requirements in order to maintain the design intent. Other options with less maintenance requirements could achieve a similar effect.

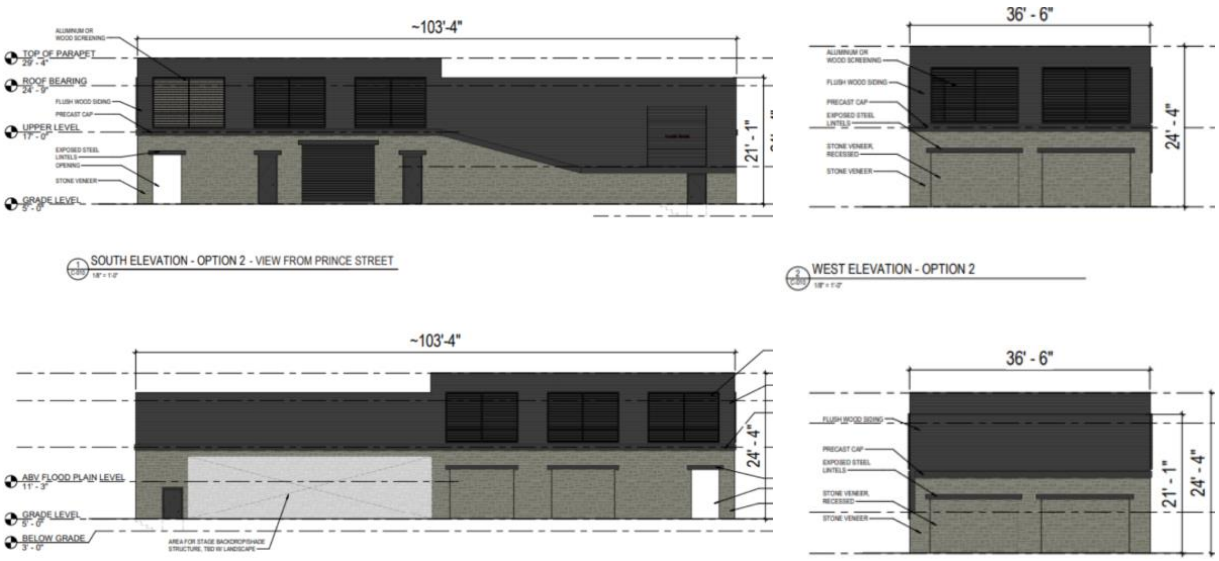


Figure 8: Option 2 for the design of the pump station

Point Lumley Park

Similar to Waterfront Park, Point Lumley Park was once dominated by wharves that connected the Potomac River to warehouses and other industrial uses. In the 20th century, the last of the industrial uses in this area of the waterfront went away and the park became a part of the continuous waterfront access stretching from Jones Point at the south end of the city to the Tide Lock Park at the north end of the city. While not a part of the pump station infrastructure plan, the revision to

Point Lumley Park contains elements of the waterfront flooding mitigation plan, and the Board is reviewing the proposed design for the park as part of this concept review.

The Waterfront Small Area Plan, and the Waterfront Schematic Landscape and Concept Design Plan that followed, envisioned Point Lumley Park as an active park that engages the waterline and includes some limited structures (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Excerpt from the Waterfront Schematic Landscape and Concept Design Plan depicting a renovated Point Lumley Park

In the current proposal, the park remains an area for active use with direct access to the river. The structures are no longer included in the plans and the bulkhead now serves to assist in the overall flooding mitigation efforts. The applicant has included two options for the design of Point Lumley Park (Figure 10).

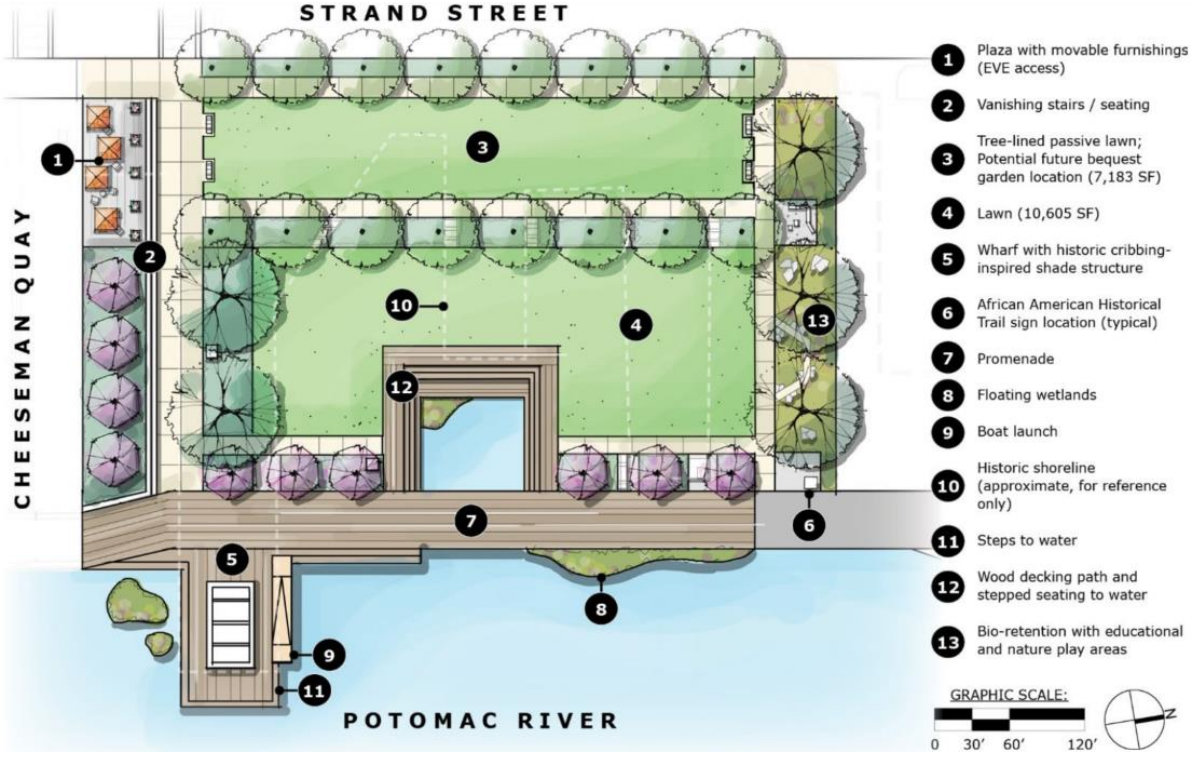


Figure 10: Concept 1 for the design of Point Lumley Park

Figure 10: Concept 2 with Alternates 1 and 2 for the design of Point Lumley Park

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff appreciates the variety of options for the siting and design of the proposed pump station and for the variety of designs for both Waterfront Park and Point Lumley Park. As noted above, an important step in the development of this project will be the determination of the final location of the proposed pump station. Once this has been determined the options for the design of the station and for the design of the park will be more limited. Given the variables in the proposed design, staff recommends that the Board provide specific feedback on the proposed locations so that the design team can continue to progress the overall design.

The proposal includes two different designs for the pump station, one of which is more industrial in nature and the other is a more contemporary design. As noted above, in the concept design phase the Board is considering the height, scale, mass, and general architectural character of the proposed structure. Staff recommends that the Board provide feedback on the general architectural character of the proposal as either the industrial or contemporary design. Once the design motif has been determined, then the team can return to the Board with additional details on the proposed building to get additional feedback in advance of the Certificate of Appropriateness review.

Regarding the review of the proposed designs for Waterfront Park and Point Lumley Park, the provided options contain a variety of different types of spaces and design priorities. Unlike the design for the architectural expression of the pump station, there are not distinct competing design motifs. Staff recommends that the Board review the different options and provide feedback on the benefits and drawbacks of each option.

Staff recommends that the Board provide feedback on the proposed designs for each park and for the proposed pump station and request that the City return for an additional review once the design has continued to progress.

STAFF
William Conkey, AIA, Historic Preservation Architect
Tony LaColla, AICP, Land Use Services Division Chief, Planning & Zoning

VII. ATTACHMENTS

1 – Application Materials