

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 22, 2016

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
PARKER-GRAY DISTRICT BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

FROM: BAR Staff

SUBJECT: Informational Presentation on Capital Bikeshare in Alexandria

You will note on your docket for next Wednesday's hearing that T&ES will provide a presentation under Other Business regarding the status of Capital Bikeshare in Alexandria. The BAR is not being asked for any approvals and this is for your information only, as there are several bike stations adjacent to the PG historic district and some may be located within the district in the future.

In response to questions from several Old Town residents about the bikeshare program, particularly the station placed in front of the Safeway parking lot on South Royal Street, City staff prepared the following response that was made available to those neighbors early last month. The Old and Historic Alexandria District BAR also received this information and heard an informational presentation at their meeting on July 6, 2016.

Is the Bikeshare station on Royal Street in the public right of way?

The City of Alexandria parcel viewer shows that the sidewalks adjacent to 500 South Royal Street are in the public right of way:

<https://geo.alexandriava.gov/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=parcelviewer&run=QueryParcel&queryValue=080.02-05-01>, and the Bikeshare station is on the sidewalk.

Is a Bikeshare station a "business"?

Bikeshare is not a business, it is a government program to promote mobility in Alexandria and the region. The City of Alexandria owns the Bikeshare stations and manages the program but contracts with Motivate to service these stations. The use of a contractor to service the stations does not change the program's status to that of a business. As a result, Section 7-2400 of the zoning ordinance, regulating bicycle rental businesses, does not apply to Bikeshare.

Has the Board of Architectural Review approved the design of the bikeshare stations located in the Old and Historic Alexandria District?

Section 10-103(A) states that: "No building or structure shall be erected, reconstructed, altered or restored within the Old and Historic Alexandria District unless and until an application for a certificate of appropriateness shall have been approved by the Old and Historic Alexandria District board of

architectural review or the city council on appeal as to exterior architectural features, including signs (see Article IX), which are subject to public view from a public street, way or place.”

The BAR considered Bikeshare stations to be temporary and easily removable because they are not affixed to the ground and are held in place only by gravity. The electrical system is not hard wired and the station is powered by solar panels. The stations may expand, contract or be removed easily as the rider demand dictates. As such, they are not considered permanent structures and do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The OHAD Board of Architecture Review (BAR) received an informational presentation from T&ES staff and endorsed the Capital Bikeshare pilot program on October 5, 2011. The BAR directed BAR staff to work with T&ES staff to install individual Bikeshare stations in the historic district, as long as they are not placed directly in front of the district’s most significant historic buildings or frequently photographed tourist sites such as Gadsby’s Tavern. The BAR reviewed and supported the initial locations, such as King Street at Market Square. On July 10, 2013, the BAR again received an informational presentation from T&ES on expansion of the program. Subsequently, BAR staff reviewed the proposed locations for the 2016 stations and found no objection with their placement since they were not located in front of buildings of historical significance.

During the July 2013 BAR meeting, T&ES staff did indicate that they would return to the BAR and brief them on additional locations for Bikeshare stations in the historic district BEFORE installing additional stations. This, unfortunately, did not happen. While I recognize that staff should have honored the commitment to the BAR by coming back prior to the installation, this omission, while regrettable, does not violate any regulatory requirement with respect to installing the stations. Staff will be returning to the BAR in July to provide them with an update.

Do the signs at the Capital Bikeshare stations require BAR approval?

Zoning Ordinance section 9-103(A) exempts governmental signs from the ordinance requirements. Because Bikeshare is a governmental program, these signs are not subject to BAR review. The Bikeshare equipment is owned by the City, and the maintenance of the program is contracted to Motivate.

What are examples of other “temporary” structures in the historic districts?

The BAR does not have a formally adopted policy for what is considered temporary, though by longstanding practice, the BAR has chosen not to review seasonal or special event tents, such as those used at the Carlyle House for concerts and weddings or the special event stages in the waterfront parks. Likewise, they did not review the seasonal dining tent in the rear of Taverna Cretekou on King Street, though they reviewed the fixed outdoor dining awnings proposed in the City Marina for the Waterfront Café and in the rear of Blackwall Hitch because these were to be permanently bolted to the decking to resist the wind loads proscribed in the building codes. The BAR did not require a Certificate of Appropriateness for the temporary stage at Market Square, as this stage is not affixed to the ground. They do not review the individual tables, chairs and umbrellas or railings used for seasonal outdoor dining on King Street, though they did endorse the King Street Outdoor Dining program design guidelines.

There are a number of other minor architectural elements that the BAR has chosen not to review. The OHAD BAR permits administrative approval of sheds in the rear yard less than 50 square feet in area if they are easily removable and not set on a permanent foundation. The BAR does not review children’s play equipment because swing sets are often in place for a short period of time and equipment like soccer goals and basketball hoops are often portable. The Board does not review temporary or portable planters, which are specifically defined in the City Code as capable of being moved by two persons when empty. They do not review portable benches in the public sidewalk or private patio furniture. Finally,

they do not review landscape plant materials because trees and shrubs grow, may lose their leaves seasonally and then die and are removed at the end of their natural lives.

However, the BAR has required a Certificate of Appropriateness for so-called “short term structures” that were permanently affixed to the ground, such as the temporary guardrail around the damaged bulkhead at Windmill Hill Park and the BAR will review any fixed structures above grade at the Interim Fitzgerald Square.

Will staff update the BAR on the Capital Bikeshare program?

Staff stated that they would report back to the BAR on the Bikeshare program, and staff is attending a meeting next month to provide an update and discuss station placement in the Old and Historic District. Staff will provide a report on the program to City Council in the fall of 2016. As part of this report, staff will outline refinements to the station siting and community involvement process now that the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan has been adopted. The update to Council will include usage information for all of the Bikeshare stations.