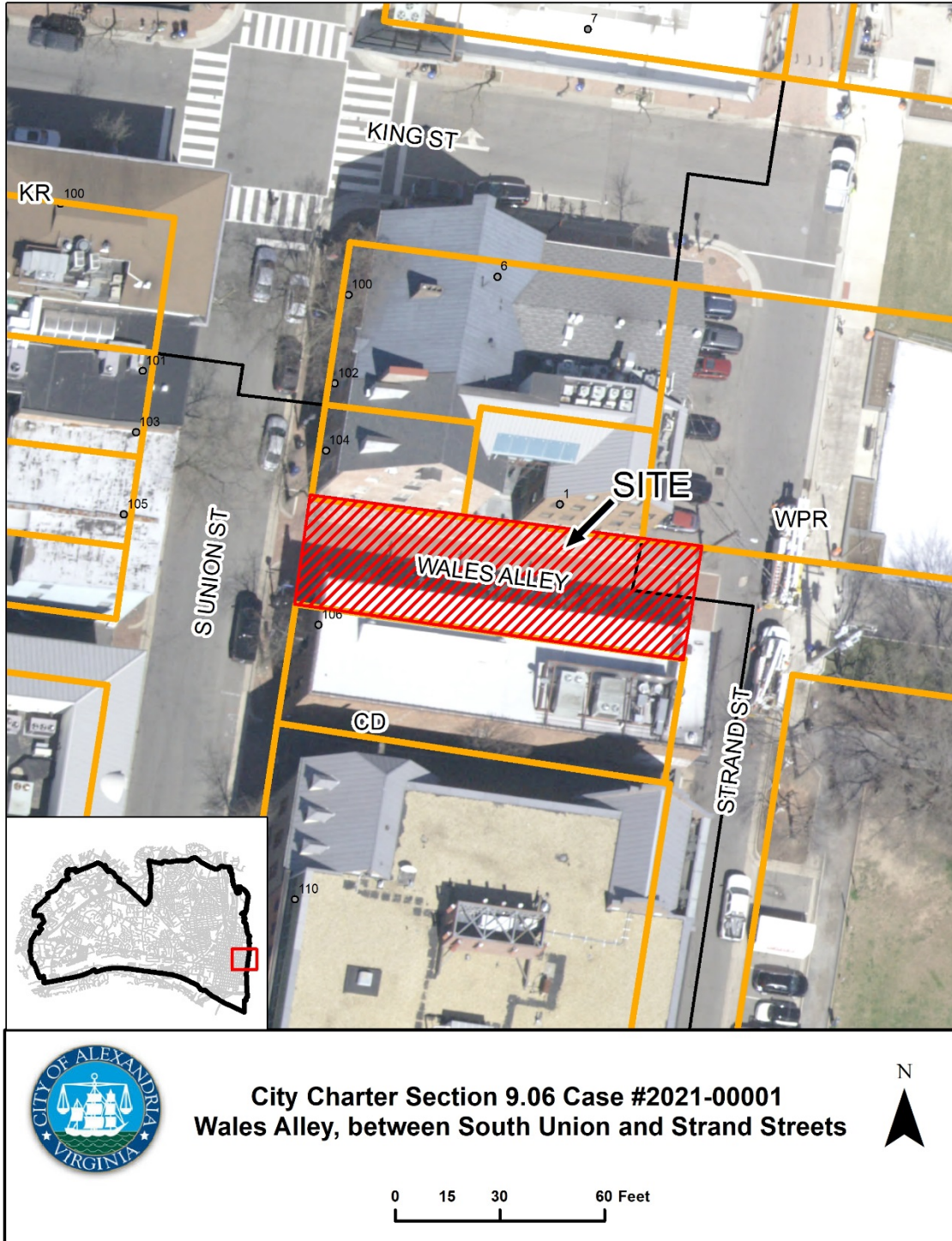
**DOCKET ITEM #5****City Charter Section 9.06 Case #2021-00001*****Wales Alley Between Strand and South Union Streets***

Application		General Data	
Request: Review whether the closure of Wales Alley, between South Union and Strand Streets, to vehicular traffic is consistent with the City of Alexandria Master Plan pursuant to Section 9.06 of the City Charter.		Planning Commission Hearing:	March 2, 2021
		City Council Hearing:	March 13, 2021
		Zone:	CD & WPR
Address: Wales Alley between Strand and South Union Streets		Small Area Plan(s):	Waterfront

Staff Reviewers:Karl Moritz, Director, Planning & Zoning, karl.moritz@alexandriava.gov;Katie North, Transportation & Environmental Services, katie.north@alexandriava.gov**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission **approve** this request, finding that the proposal is consistent with Section 9.06 of the City Charter of Alexandria, Virginia, and with the City's Master Plan.



I. DISCUSSION

The City proposes to close Wales Alley, between South Union and Strand Streets, to vehicular traffic. Section 9.06 of the City's Charter requires that the Planning Commission review any changes to the use of a public street. The Planning Commission is charged with ensuring that any change is consistent with the City's Master Plan.

II. BACKGROUND

The section of Wales Alley between Strand Street and South Union Street is a one-way alley heading east towards the Potomac River. The alley is approximately 29 feet wide and is paved with decorative brick pavers. Prior to the pandemic, the southern half of the alley was used for outdoor dining for the adjacent restaurant Virtue Feed and Grain, which was approved through a license agreement in 2016. A five-foot-wide sidewalk is located on the north side adjacent to retail buildings containing Old Town Books and Bike and Roll. The area in between was available for one-way vehicular travel, although traffic on this alley is very light. Other nearby businesses include Starbucks, Mai Thai, Ben and Jerry's, the Old Town Shop, and Windsor of Old Town Salon and Spa. Wales Alley has primarily been used to access the Old Dominion Boat Club's parking lot that was previously on the east side of Strand Street. However, now that the Boat Club has moved, this access is no longer needed.

In Spring 2020, the Virtue Feed and Grain submitted a request to use more of the alley for outdoor dining. Indoor dining was limited, and additional space was needed to meet social distancing requirements. To accommodate this request, the City temporarily closed the alley to vehicular traffic to allow the restaurant to expand further north into the alley, while maintaining pedestrian access along the north side. This expansion was approved through the City's temporary outdoor dining program that was created to allow for additional dining space in the public right of way. The concept of closing this portion of Wales Alley had also been discussed prior to the pandemic as a way to provide additional pedestrian space and more connections to the Waterfront.

The City will continue to own the alley even if it is closed to vehicular traffic. There are no plans to vacate this property. Adjacent property owners may continue to use portions of the alley as negotiated through license agreements with the City. The City Council will review this proposal at a public hearing and will consider the feedback from the Planning Commission, as well as the Traffic and Parking Board and Waterfront Commission who have also reviewed this proposal.

III. CONSISTENCY WITH THE MASTER PLAN

Alexandria Waterfront Small Area Plan (2012)

The subject property is within the Waterfront Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan. Closure of this section of Wales Alley to vehicular traffic is consistent with several goals

stated in this plan. One goal states: *“Increase and improve access to the public spaces of the Waterfront. Pedestrian connectivity along the Waterfront should be continuous.”* This alley provides a connection to the Interim Waterfront Park and by removing vehicles from this segment, more space is provided for pedestrians to access the park.

Another goal states: *“Improve the Waterfront’s vehicular and pedestrian circulation.”* and calls for minimizing pedestrian and vehicle conflicts. This portion of the alley does not provide any significant benefit to traffic circulation. By eliminating vehicles from this area, more space is provided for pedestrians and reduces conflicts.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that the proposed closure of Wales Alley, between South Union and Strand Streets, to vehicular traffic is consistent with Section 9.06 of the City Charter of Alexandria, Virginia and with the City’s Master Plan, including specifically the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

STAFF: Karl Moritz, Director, Planning & Zoning
Katie North, Transportation & Environmental Services