

2017 AIA Virginia Prize Competition  
sponsored by AIA Virginia, a Society of the American Institute of Architects

# VA Prize.

## A Waterfront Terminus on King Street in Alexandria, Virginia



Survey maps of Alexandria prepared by George Washington, 1748 and 1749. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic/info/default.aspx?id=51690#1748PlanoftheLandwhereonStandstheTownofAlexandriaGeorgeWashington>.

The Potomac River waterfront in Old Town Alexandria where neighborhoods are compact and walkable is attractive to residents and tourists alike. Over the centuries, King Street has remained the primary commercial area. George Washington drew survey maps of the land and the city in 1748-49 showing the old colonial settlement beginning to form its distinctive chessboard grid oriented to the waterfront rather than by the compass. A bluff near the water's edge was excavated and used to fill in the shallow water to improve the port. The native people who once fished these shores were displaced by the growing city with warehouses for mainly flour, tobacco, cotton, wine and sugar. By 1779 it was a port of entry for foreign vessels and its waterfront was soon filled with brigs, schooners and other vessels which engaged in coast-wide and international trade. Alexandria was also home to one of the largest slave trading operations for the south. Many Alexandrians owned slaves, their labor helping to build and maintain the City. In 1791, Alexandria was included in the area chosen to become the ten-mile square District of Columbia. The City was retroceded back to Virginia from the Federal Government in 1846, probably in part to facilitate the trade in enslaved people.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Alexandria was quickly occupied by the North. Shuter's (Shooter's) Hill, a little more than a mile from the foot of King Street, was changed into Fort Ellsworth. In the twentieth century, the 120-foot hill became the site for the George Washington Masonic National Memorial that stands 333-feet tall. This towering building marks the other end of King Street like a chess piece and was designed from a reconstruction of the lighthouse in Alexandria, Egypt – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

On the day after Armistice Day – November 2, 1918 – the Torpedo Factory was opened on the waterfront and was in use through the Second World War. In 1974 it reopened as the home of the Art League and later also became a home to the Alexandria Archaeology Museum.

The slow extension of the City into the River over the years was facilitated with fill from ballast, building waste, early wharves and sinking old vessels such as the 200-year old fifty-foot hull recently discovered during excavation for a new hotel near the waterfront site. This fill created the low ground at the end of King Street that is in the 100 year floodplain and nuisance flooding occurs fairly frequently in the area. Here the Potomac River is tidal, and fluctuates approximately three feet between high and low tide.

In recent years, with much spirited public debate, the waterfront has been changing from its industrial past into a place for public enjoyment. Free trolley service on King Street connects the waterfront with the King Street Metro station near the foot of the Masonic Temple.



Images of Alexandria Waterfront at the terminus of King Street then (left) and now (right).



Detail of a slave ship at the Alexandria, Virginia (then DC) waterfront. From broadside published by the American Anti-Slavery Society. Original caption of the image: "View of a section of Alexandria, with a slave ship receiving her cargo of slaves." American Anti-Slavery Society - <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661294/>.

## The Challenge.

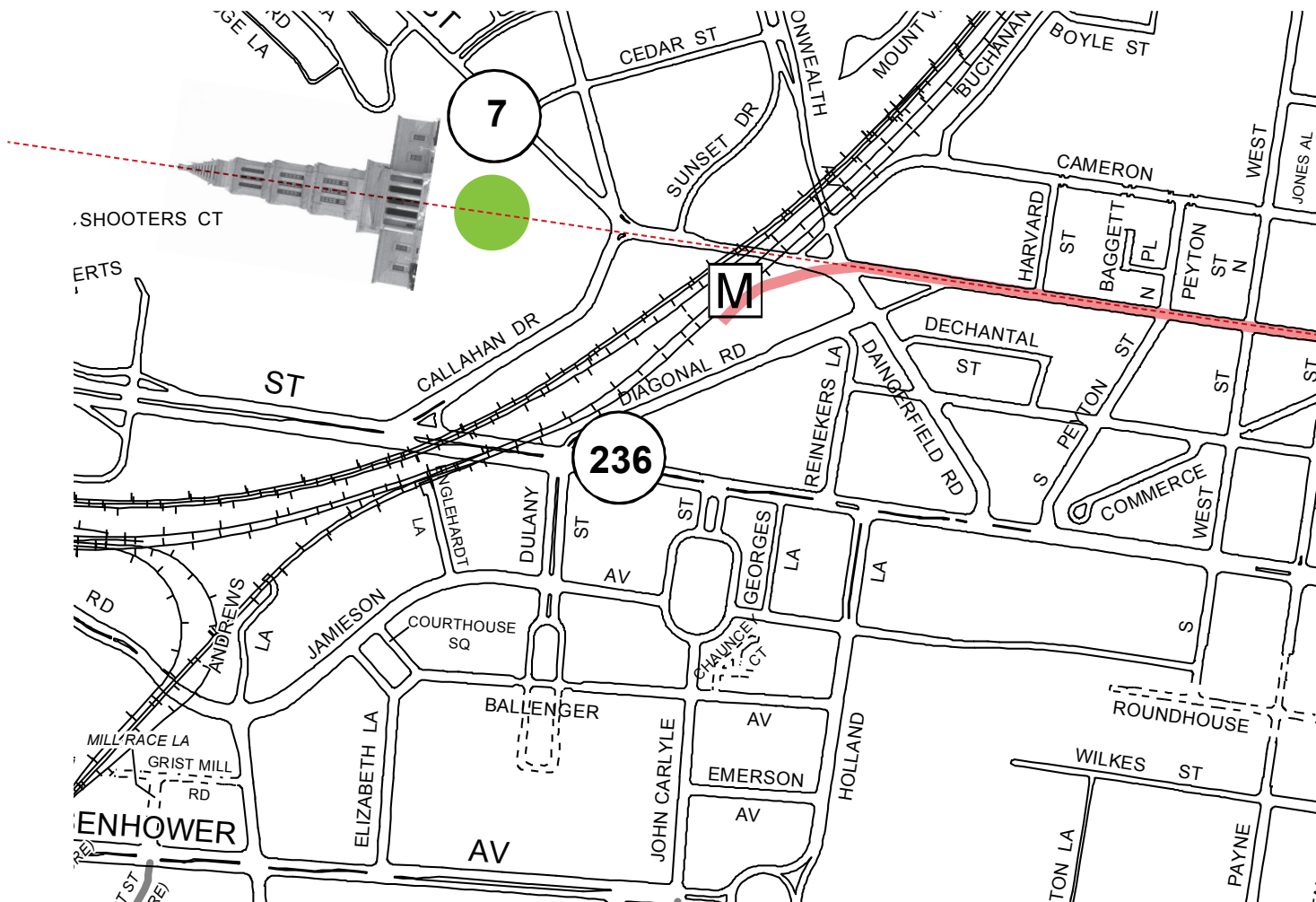
Design a terminus for King Street at the Potomac River waterfront to celebrate its historic role as the origin of Alexandria and the front door of the City. It should be a significant public space that offers a destination, or as was written: 'where one of America's great streets meets one of America's great rivers'. It should provide a counterpoint to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial at the other end of King Street.

The open space should also include access to a dock for water taxis, which take commuters and tourists to Washington DC, Maryland (National Harbor and MGM Casino) and Georgetown. Assume each boat will accommodate up to twenty-four people.

The King Street water taxi embarkation point will also require a building. The building at the terminus should have a ticket office, public toilets, waiting area, coffee and snack service and an exhibit area for local historic information and small archaeological objects.

## Nota Bene.

- The present shoreline can be altered and elements may project into the water up to the edge of the navigation channel.
- Flood mitigation should be integrated in the design such as sea walls, bulkheads and shoreline articulation.
- The existing private Old Dominion Boat Club building will be removed.
- Panoramic views of Maryland and Washington DC monuments upriver are possible from the site.
- Consider daytime and evening use.





## The Site.

The site for the design proposal is the final block of King Street extending from Strand Street to the waterfront and includes the existing Old Dominion Boat Club site on the north and the parking lot on the south. It does not include the existing Waterfront Park. The site extends on the river as far as the dotted line of the navigation channel. The existing Boat Club building and piers will be demolished. The car parking does not need to be replaced.

- ↑ NORTH
- G.W. MASONIC MEMORIAL
- FREE TROLLEY ON KING ST. (EVERY 15 MINUTES)
- - - MAJOR THOROUGHFARES
- VA PRIZE SITE
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- EXISTING PARKS
- POTOMAC RIVER



## Submission Requirements.

The competition begins on Friday, September 15th 2017 at 5:00 pm and concludes Monday, September 18th at 9:00 am.

On one 20" x 30" board, landscape or portrait orientation, include:

- Site plan or axonometric view.
- Site section.
- Perspective views and other drawings as required to explain the design.

The board must not exceed ½" thickness or 5 lbs. in weight.

**TAPE A SEALED ENVELOPE ON THE BACK CONTAINING A NOTE CARD WITH YOUR NAME, E-MAIL ADDRESS AND SCHOOL. THIS INFORMATION MAY NOT BE VISIBLE ANYWHERE ELSE ON THE BOARD.**

Each participating school will announce its own location for collecting submissions and its manner of internal judging. Completed submissions will be collected in a unique manner by each School of Architecture in Virginia. Please inquire with your school administration for your specific submission location.

## References.

A good resource for this competition is the Alexandria.gov web site. On it, you will find historical and contemporary maps and images of the Alexandria waterfront, including a GIS model and current and past master plans. Here are some links to get you started.

**Historic Maps of Alexandria:**

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic/info/default.aspx?id=51690#1748PlanoftheLandwhereonStandstheTownofAlexandriaGeorgeWashington>

**GIS Model:**

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/GIS>

**Alexandria Base Map:**

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/gis/info/Alexandria-BaseMap2017.pdf>

**Waterfront Redevelopment Master Plan:**

[https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/master-plan/City\\_Master\\_Plan\\_Map/WaterfrontPlanCurrent.pdf](https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/master-plan/City_Master_Plan_Map/WaterfrontPlanCurrent.pdf)