



2/24/23

RE: The Alexandria Arts Alliance Fully Supports Old Town’s Business Improvement Service District

The Alexandria Arts Alliance fully supports the development and implementation of the Business Improvement Service District proposed by the Old Town Business Association (OTB).

OTB has a long track record as an advocate and marketer and its recent merger with Old Town Boutique District has made that even stronger. OTB has been a driver of the Covid recovery efforts resulting in restaurant and retail revenues rebounding to pre-Covid levels. Remarkably, OTB’s success advocating for pedestrian blocks and expanded outdoor dining, producing a host of events and other activities has been done with volunteers, one staff person, and a limited budget.

As the recent pandemic has reshaped the city’s business and the arts & culture sectors, there is an opportunity to capitalize on the amazing resurgence of Old Town’s core components: a vibrant waterfront, boundless dining opportunities, boutique shopping, and a renowned arts and creative scene. To remain vibrant and competitive, Old Town needs a BISD. This entire ecosystem would be vulnerable, from the Waterfront all the way up to King Street Metro, if OTB were to go away due lack of funding and staffing. So there is an opportunity to elevate the experience on one of the “Great Streets of America” through the BISD to create a comprehensive vision and plan, smart and focused marketing, all with a collaborative approach in promoting the King Street commercial corridor.

The Alliance specifically supports the BISD because OTB is passionate about the arts in our city and they have established an ongoing partnership with the Alexandria Arts Alliance to integrate the arts into their efforts. The Alexandria Arts Alliance Board of Directors recognizes the value this BISD will bring to Old Town Business. But the Alliance also recognizes the

immense importance this BISD will be to the functionality and vitality of not just arts in Old Town, but Alexandria as a whole.

There are four key values in this BISD that support these concepts:

1) Local Large-scale Events with a DC Metro Area Focus

a) Currently, the OTBA and its various partners including the Arts Alliance develops and implements up-to 20 events in Old Town including the famous Walkable Warehouse Sale, Trick or Treat, Sidewalk Sale and Small Business Saturday.

i) Under the new BISD, not only can these events be scaled up, new large-scale events locally tethered by Old Town's business and art communities can be developed and implemented, not just amplifying Alexandria's identity and culture, but expanding and strengthening our unique visual and performing arts community.

2) Focused Marketing, Place-making, and Communications

a) While Visit Alexandria and AEDP excel in their specific roles and then some, there remains avenues in which the BISD can operate and implement to the benefit of Old Town and Alexandria as a whole.

i) This includes a unified and welcoming brand for the local area including a robust and comprehensive new website (designed specifically for non-redundancy with other city portals), local and regional advertising along with accompanied digital and social media engagement, all focused on the immediate Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area.

ii) Placemaking strategies such as banners, wayfinding, signage and outdoor programming and activation, even modernizing some city infrastructure including lighting and brick pathways. The BISD can update and transform Old Town's main hub into something that doesn't just drive focus to the waterfront, but spreads this focus throughout mid and upper areas of King Street corridor as well.

3) Business Support Programs

- a) Small business owners, even without a historic pandemic, face many challenges at all times. The OTB aims to meet these constant challenges head on with the BISD.
 - i) This includes the development and creation of mentorship programs, networking opportunities, shared services, workforce development, communications and the continued collaboration with other local organizations.
 - ii) A recommitment to the Arts here in Old Town through programming, activations and recruitment to reestablish King St. as the de facto Arts destination is one of these concepts.
- 4) Advocacy
 - a) Developing a central and impactful voice for the business and arts community is a central goal of the BISD.
 - i) This involves the continued work in creating partnerships with other local boards and commissions, liaising with City departments, and partnering with local non-profits like the Alexandria Arts Alliance to improve the well-being and provide sustainability for those in the BISD.

The Alexandria Arts Alliance and its Board of Directors recognizes the immense importance of this focused and tailored BISD to the immediate community. The benefits not just to the city's business community, but the added potential to bolster and amplify the Old Town arts scene are abundantly clear and the Alliance stands with Old Town Business Association in fully supporting the Old Town Business Improvement Service District and we urge our community to support this BISD as well.

Sincerely,

The Alexandria Arts Alliance Board of Directors