



March 20, 2023

Mayor and Members of City Council
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the board of the 400+ members of Visit Alexandria, we would like to express our endorsement of the proposed Old Town Business Improvement Service District (BISD). We view the BISD as an opportunity to advance Alexandria's vibrancy for these reasons:

- Special assessment districts for business support and improvement, marketing and activation are now the norm locally and nationally. A BISD creates a public/private partnership to coordinate, plan and implement services to increase the economic impact of our commercial core.
- Visit Alexandria's primary mission is to generate *overnight* visitation by branding and building awareness for the City among drive and fly market audiences and through regional marketing focused primarily on citywide content and signature events. The BISD will provide sustained marketing to the micro regional and DC regional market to better address the current gap and better support our restaurants and retailers.
- Fiscal pressure on the City's general operating and capital budgets make it clear that the City also cannot shoulder a burden beyond its current core services
- Given the expansion of the Wharf's Phase II and ongoing pressure on DC to diversify its tourism base, Alexandria must provide events and activation that will enable us to compete with other destinations and retain the level of visitation that supports our hotels, restaurants and retail tax base
- The BISD is entirely consistent with and core to the City's already approved Waterfront and Old Town plans
- Independent brick and mortar businesses continue to face fierce competition from online shopping and national chains. To remain vibrant Alexandria must offer a unique, high quality experience that enables our independent retailers and restaurants to stand apart. Experiential retail that reinforces our unique brand and sense of place including streetscape beautification, engaging programming, cultural activities, etc. - is critical if Old Town's commercial corridors are going to continue to grow and thrive.


**Visit Alexandria, 277 South Washington Street, Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314
703-652-5369 | VisitAlexandria.com**

For all of these reasons we encourage you to support the proposed Business Improvement Service District to maintain competitiveness without adding to the residential tax burden. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kate Ellis, Board Chair, Visit Alexandria



Patricia Washington, President & CEO, Visit Alexandria

Cc: James Parajon, City Manager
Sarah Taylor, Assistant City Manager
Karl Moritz, Director of Planning
Stephanie Landrum, President & CEO, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Charlotte Hall, CEO, Old Town Business
Joe Haggerty, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce