



POSITION STATEMENT: SMALL BUSINESS ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Alexandria has proposed new Small Business Zoning guidelines that establish clear and understandable permit application process changes for small businesses that seek to enhance their services.

The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce maintains that City government must always strive to be more efficient while maintaining its essential regulatory role. A smart balance between efficiency, regulation, and prompt, consistent decision-making is essential to a healthy City economy. These recommendations meet those criteria. Accordingly, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the proposed permitting and zoning changes.

In short, the City's current recommendations would institute a more effective method for issuing the Special Use Permits (SUPs) that businesses need to increase and enhance activities that residents enjoy such as outdoor dining, valet parking, and the creation of new services within existing businesses. By allowing City staff to issue SUPs under these expanded circumstances, and not requiring that each and every issue be decided by the City Council, decision making can be more centralized and further streamlined in such a manner that a business owner may accomplish permitted changes without incurring the additional cost of legal counsel.

The business community and Alexandria residents have benefited from the City's recent streamlining efforts, and the Chamber observes that the proposed regulations are an exciting addition to the success of the permit center, the A-frame sign program for King St, the administrative approval program for BAR signs, and the zoning ordinance changes implemented in 2009. These changes are all having a positive cumulative effect for businesses to open, expand and succeed in our City.

The City's proposal calls for the elimination of regulations that the City itself has deemed "onerous" and duplicative; cutting unnecessary red tape is a step in the right direction for businesses and for residents who seek to maintain their current tax rates and quality of life.

In particular, the City staff recommendations would help breathe new life into the business sector in Cameron Station, an area that has been particularly hard-hit by the economic downturn, by reducing unnecessary SUP regulations. Cameron Station illustrates the importance of the need for reduced red tape so that commercial amenities may be provided in close proximity to residential uses. Creating live-work developments (whether it be Cameron Station or future developments) without promoting a culture that fosters new and expanded business opportunities will only lead to more dark space and residents in cars traveling to other commercial centers.

The proposed new regulations would give businesses the opportunity to contribute to both the character and to the economic development of our City. The proposed permitting structure provides businesses in Alexandria with a clearer and more understandable process for enhancing

the services they provide, thus increasing the tax base in our City and improving our business climate.

For residents, these proposed recommendations mean that citizens will be able to enjoy a more diverse array of business services in our community, including additional outdoor dining, better parking in Old Town, and different types of shops, while ensuring that appropriate regulations remain in force and are *enforced* by City staff to ensure that residents are not adversely affected by the issuance of new SUPs.

The Chamber strongly supports this proposal and encourages City Council to adopt it immediately.