



## Councilmember Bagley statement on the Potomac Yard Entertainment District

In 2023, when Council was approached with the idea for a catalyzing set of projects for Potomac Yard, to include a concert venue, corporate headquarters, practice facility and sports arena, my role was to ask questions about key elements and consider whether we should move forward into a conversation with the public and the General Assembly. Given the slowed pace of development post pandemic at Potomac Yard, as well as the increasing reliance on residential property taxes, I agreed with my colleagues that presenting a framework for this unique opportunity to the public was a logical next step.

From the beginning, I asked about transportation and how to minimize the need to drive to the venues (in line with the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan that existed). I emphasized that organized labor should be a part of the conversation from the beginning and that resulting jobs should be competitively paid with proper protections. We also collectively wanted a Stadium Authority that accurately reflected the City's role in any resulting district as well as financial terms that were conservative and protected the City's AAA bond rating.

Once the announcement was made in December, the City began opportunities for the public to learn more, to ask questions, and to provide feedback about the proposal. For three months we have engaged in that effort. As a Councilmember, I have appeared at a Town Hall, at civic associations, at pop up events, in conference rooms and on doorsteps to discuss the proposal with residents. I have also read all the emails we have been sent (hundreds for and against) and listened to public testimony from residents.

What has resulted has been a valuable public conversation about not just the financial state of the City but also our plans for transportation related investments, encouraging competitive and union jobs into the City, and how we can accommodate and facilitate necessary growth while maintaining the elements of Alexandria we hold dear.

***My position throughout and until we departed this process today has always been to push for and work towards the best outcome for Alexandria, with or without an arena.*** There ultimately never was a deal before us to vote for or against. No finalized Authority legislation or transportation funding package, no final term sheet for me to take a clear "yes/no" position towards.

My first ever quote on the Potomac Yard Entertainment District was given on December 13th and essentially said that this project, like any other, would have to go through our local process and be evaluated for transit impacts, environmental impacts, and whether or not it met our standards for development and economic stability. We never reached that point in the process for this proposal.

For those who wish that this framework had never been considered and that the Council had rejected the idea in 2023, I have heard your position and concerns and will bear them in mind when future proposals come before the Council. I have also heard from those all over the City who were glad to know that Alexandria was in this conversation, that an opportunity like this for commercial revenue and economic opportunity was possible for Alexandria, and were hopeful the project would be successful.

I thank everyone who sent an email, came to a public hearing, had a coffee with me, chatted over a table, attended a Zoom or a Town Hall or chatted on a corner.

***This experience has revealed areas for improvement in our communications and outreach process while also demonstrating the tireless work ethic and determination of people within our City to achieve big outcomes.*** Though the Governor and General Assembly could not find a path forward for the project that could be evaluated by Alexandria, let us continue the dialogue we have begun together about our future.

We are in the midst of a serious budget conversation in the City, where we are contemplating the first increase to our real estate property tax rate in seven years. We are considering requests to address compensation and vacancy issues in core areas including ACPS, DCHS, and our Sheriff's Department. We are also being asked to take more direct action to address our housing crisis, beyond the work of Zoning for Housing, to invest sooner and directly in committed affordable housing.

Please continue to contact me and share your priorities and concerns. The next few weeks we are making important decisions about our FY25 budget and your input is vital. Thank you for your time and for your shared love of Alexandria.

Sarah Bagley  
Councilmember, Sarah.bagley@alexandriava.gov