

HARC Advocacy Committee meeting
December 6, 2022 @ 10:00 am
La Madeleine, King Street

Present: Michael Hobbs, Gail Rothrock, Donna DeBlasio, Ivy Whitlach, Lisa Schumaier, Martha Raymond

Public: no public attendees

Recent Project Review: Torpedo Factory

1. We discussed that it would benefit the National Register nomination for the Torpedo Factory to have significant emphasis on the Alexandria Archaeology Museum and its having been a part of the Torpedo Factory Arts Center from the start. City Archaeologist Eleanor Breen can provide information along with oral histories of former workers at the Torpedo Factory. Information from the Black History Tours is also important to include in the nomination, along with the list of historic character-defining features of the building. It is important that the already-completed preliminary information form go forward to get the nomination process started as soon as possible; additional information about the significance of the building can follow as part of the review process with the State Historic Preservation Office in Richmond. There is a desire to move quickly now to get the building listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places in time to CELEBRATE the 50th Anniversary of the Torpedo Factory Arts Center. We discussed providing the list of benefits of National Register listing (from HARC's May, 2022, letter) as a one-page handout to the Torpedo Factory Task Force on Dec. 7th. It is important to note that reviews by the Board of Architectural Review of alterations to the building are already required because the building is part of the historic district.

2. Regarding the Torpedo Factory Task Force, we discussed the three questions posed to Task Force members by the City prior to the Dec. 7th meeting.

a. Regarding building improvements - we compared the two basic competing visions for the Torpedo Factory Arts Center: 1) As the historic UNIQUE working center for artists and archeologists vs. 2) a commercial arts venue indistinguishable from many other art malls. We discussed the need to enhance the UNIQUE vision rather than the "mall" vision, emphasizing that changes and enhancements can and should be made within the UNIQUE vision (it is not a static place but an authentic experience). It was noted that the artists already pay for the building's maintenance. It is important to take care of deferred maintenance first!

b. Regarding Place-based marketing - Discussed using lights to highlight the waterfront entrance tower (referencing the light show there this past weekend) to draw attention to the building and its uses. That entrance bay/tower is iconic (do not make major alterations to it or cover it with additions). Noted that the building is not only iconic from the waterfront and from boat on the river, it is also iconic from the sky view (with so many planes flying above on their way to DCA) - so use this for marketing - design a sky-facing sign flat on the roof to greet flyers above (without changing the character of the building or impacting structural capacity). Enhance the torpedo exhibit — visitors LOVE this exhibit as is but it can be enhanced.

c. Marketing - the 50th Anniversary of the Arts Center is coming up soon! Use this for celebration and marketing. Celebrate with listing the building on the National Register of Historic Places! That will be possible if we start the process now. Also, coordinate marketing with Visit Alexandria - they already know how to market the UNIQUE historic character of Alexandria.

Next Advocacy Committee Meeting - All are Welcome! January 3rd, 2023, at La Madeleine, King Street