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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

December 1, 2022

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In This Month's Edition:

- Zoning for Housing
- Student Enrollment Growth
- Police Collective Bargaining
- Stormwater Utility Fee Credits
- Budget Preview
- Landmark Mall Redevelopment
- Vision Zero
- Policing in Alexandria
- Leaf Collection



Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

[Alex 311](#) (Submit Service Requests to City Agencies)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Real-Time Traffic Data](#)

I will begin this month with a recognition: The [Alexandria City High School volleyball team](#) went to Richmond last month and came home with a state championship. Congrats to ACHS on this significant accomplishment! You have represented our City quite well.

This weekend, we will enjoy some of the unique events that make our community special. [Saturday morning, the 51st annual Scottish Christmas Walk](#) steps off at 11 AM, parading throughout the streets of Old Town.

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[In the evening, return to the waterfront for the Holiday Boat Parade of Lights, as more than 50 decorated boats cruise the Potomac with their holiday spirit on display.](#)

[At the end of the month, we will ring in 2023 together as a community with First Night Alexandria, the best New Year's Eve celebration around.](#)

[On Sunday, along with my colleagues, we will be hosting a town hall meeting from 1 PM until 2 PM at Burke Library. Residents are welcome to discuss the issues of concern to you.](#)

[After two years of doing virtual town-hall meetings, including weekly sessions during most of 2020, I am moving back to in-person, "Living Room Town Hall" meetings. If you would like to host a town hall in your neighborhood, \[please drop me a line\]\(#\) and we'll get it on the calendar!](#)

[Contact me anytime. Let me know how I can help.](#)

Initiatives and Updates

Zoning For Housing

Every other year, the City conducts a statistically valid survey of our residents. While not definitive, it is a useful tool in understanding the pulse of our community. [In our 2020 survey](#), 86% of our residents rated the overall quality of life in our City "Excellent" or "Good."

[Yet, only 18% of our City's residents rated the availability of affordable quality housing as "Excellent" or "Good." In a call to action, 79% of our residents stated that it was "Essential" or "Very Important" for our City to focus on housing affordability for the next two years.](#)

[In September of 2019, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments \(COG\) unanimously adopted new regional housing creation targets.](#) This was the first-ever regional commitment to accelerate the development of housing supply as a means to address our affordability crisis.

Somewhat inexplicably, local governments have been reluctant to use the single most effective tool to increase the supply of affordable housing: build more housing. This has been the policy of the last three Presidential administrations, two Democrats and one Republican. It has been the approach of the Sierra Club and the National Association of Home Builders. It has been the approach of the Brookings Institute, the Hoover Institution and even the Cato Institute.

These targets, while voluntary, commit the City to the creation of additional units, with most of those units committed to be affordable for low to middle income households. To ensure that this housing creation does not exacerbate existing transportation challenges, most of this new housing must be located near job centers and high-capacity transportation infrastructure.

In March of 2020, the City Council became the third jurisdiction in the region to endorse these targets.

In 2013, while adopting our **Housing Master Plan**, City Council had set an ambitious goal to create or preserve 2,000 affordable units by 2025. **We are on track to meet this goal.**

With the adoption of the new COG housing targets, the City has committed to an additional 11,500 housing units, with 4,250 as committed affordable or workforce housing.

Over the last three years, the City has achieved the preservation or creation of **just about 1,000 units of committed affordable housing.**

The housing non-profit HAND has begun an annual report to measure the work that each jurisdiction in the region is doing to achieve our commitments. **The HAND "Housing Indication Tool" report shows that Alexandria has made significant progress, with more work to do.**

While there is a broad agreement in our community about the problem and the need to focus on solutions to our affordability challenges, bringing together agreement on the correct solutions to pursue is a little more challenging.

While the City's Housing Master Plan contains a variety of tools in our housing "toolbox," the options the City has are generally limited to:

1. Raising and Spending Tax Dollars: To develop and preserve housing as well as assist residents in obtaining housing.
2. Using land-use policy (zoning) to create and preserve housing

In the budget the City Council approved in May, we expanded the tax dollars we have committed annually to affordable housing. **One cent from the real estate tax rate now goes to affordable housing**, which generates \$4.6 million annually. One percent of Alexandria's dining tax rate also goes to affordable housing, yielding another \$4.9 million annually. Together this generates \$9.5 million of annual revenue that is used to fund the creation and preservation of committed affordable housing, **with an aggressive project pipeline planned years in advance**.

This year has been very busy in putting those resources to work:

- **In September, we gathered at the corner of King and Menokin to celebrate the opening of "The Waypoint at Fairlington."** This partnership with Wesley Housing and Fairlington Presbyterian Church created 81 new units of committed affordable housing where there used to be an asphalt parking lot.
- Last month, **City Council approved an application** for the construction of 94 units of committed affordable housing on the site of a car dealership at 2712 Duke Street. This project is being proposed by **Community Housing Partners, a housing non-profit based in Christiansburg**.
- Early next year, the Planning Commission and City Council will consider approvals for the redevelopment of the Samuel Madden Homes. Samuel Madden is currently a 66-unit public housing development owned by the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). **This redevelopment would replace this property with 532 total units, 326 of which will be committed affordable units and 206 market-rate units**.
- Earlier this year, the City Council unanimously approved a proposal by the **Alexandria Housing Development Corporation (AHDC) to develop 474 committed affordable and workforce units in Arlandria at the corner of Glebe and Mount Vernon**. This is the site of a former Safeway and an office building bought by the City 2 decades ago, demolished and used as a parking lot as an interim use.
- Also earlier this year, the City' Council approved an application by another housing non-profit, **Wesley Housing Development Corporation, to build 373 committed affordable housing units at Parcview on Holmes Run Parkway**.
- In December, the City Council unanimously approved **a separate proposal by AHDC to develop 36 affordable homeownership units (31 townhomes and 5 condominiums)** and 3

flats to be operated by Sheltered Homes of Alexandria for 12 residents. This project is located on Seminary Road just east of the City's Fire Station.

- Early next year, the Planning Commission and City Council will consider an application from Community Lodgings, an Alexandria non-profit, to redevelop an existing 28-apartment affordable housing complex into a new 91-unit affordable-housing development.
- In January, Wesley Housing used resources from Amazon's Housing Equity Fund and a loan from Housing Partnership Fund, to purchase 66 private units in Arlandria and preserve them as affordable, with future redevelopment plans to come.

During the summer, the City was awarded a grant of \$60,000 from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, funded by Amazon's Housing Equity Fund, to explore two possible affordable housing developments, one on the site of the Van Dorn Metro station and another on property owned by WMATA next to their new office building being constructed in Carlyle.

Yet, the City cannot raise and spend enough money to make an appreciable impact on this problem. The City's power to determine how land is used, our land-use authority, provides a critical tool to spur the creation and preservation of both committed affordable housing as well as market-rate housing. Said another way: building additional housing supply, whether committed as affordable housing or market-rate housing, helps address our housing affordability challenges.

For a few years now, our Interdepartmental Work Program has included a comprehensive review of zoning tools available to advance affordability. The so-called "Zoning For Housing" effort has been proceeding with findings intended to come to Council and the Planning Commission over the next few years.

Over the 2 years, this includes study of:

- Inclusionary Zoning
- Townhouse Zoning
- Property Conversions
- Expansion of the Residential Multi-Family Zone (RMF)
- Expansion of Density Bonuses
- Co-Housing/Rooming Houses

One of those proposals came to the Planning Commission in June, a proposal to expand the applicability of "Bonus Height." As structured today, this program allows a landowner to request additional height, up to 25 feet if a third of that additional housing

is committed as affordable housing. This is similar to the City's "Bonus Density" program, which provides additional density in exchange for a third of affordable housing. Bonus height is today only allowed in a zone where the height limit is 50 feet. This proposal would apply the Bonus Height program where the height limit is 45 feet or higher.

At the request of the Planning Commission, this proposal was deferred to allow our staff to collect more data and refine how the proposal is presented.

As the Bonus Height proposal was considered by the community, we heard feedback from residents concerned that the amendment should not be considered in isolation and instead be considered in context with any other land-use changes to be considered. The "pause" requested by the Planning Commission has allowed the City to step back and craft a more comprehensive zoning reform proposal to ensure our neighborhoods, and the high quality of life we enjoy, remain accessible to those of moderate incomes.

Last month, the City Council unanimously endorsed an acceleration of the Zoning for Housing work program. For the next year, we will engage with residents to develop a package of specific land-use proposals in these areas:

- Single-Family Zoning
- Removal of Restrictive/Exclusionary barriers from the zoning code
- Bonus Height
- Expanded Transit-Oriented Growth
- Industrial Zones
- Coordinated Development Districts (CDDs)
- **Inclusionary Zoning**
- Townhouse Zoning
- Property Conversions
- **Expansion of the Residential Multi-Family Zone (RMF)**

The public piece of the engagement will kick-off early next year, with proposals coming to the City Council and Planning Commission a year from now.

The City will continue to seek creative partnerships, new land-use tools and innovative financing to preserve and create affordability in our City. I am pleased to see these efforts come to fruition.

Student Enrollment

This year, 15,732 students started in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). That constitutes an increase of 255 students from the previous year and



the first increase of enrollment since the beginning of the pandemic.

As we return to student enrollment growth, we have seen enrollment increases in 14 of the last 16 years. During that period, ACPS added over 5,000 students. The last time we approached having this **many children attending our schools was over 50 years ago in the early 1970s.**

Last year, there was a clear divide emerging in the post-pandemic enrollment trends, as enrollment in our high school (grades 9 - 12) continued to increase, while enrollment for elementary and middle school students dropped. This year, we saw strong growth in both elementary and high school, with a very small drop in middle school.

In July of 2021, **City Council approved a request from our School Board to provide funding to support the ACPS purchase of 1703 N. Beauregard Street to be swing space for future rebuilds as well as eventually a permanent school.** This building, an office building next to Ferdinand Day Elementary School, will provide an opportunity for another adaptive reuse of an under-utilized building.

In May, City Council unanimously approved a 10-year capital improvement program for the Alexandria City Public Schools including \$497.8 million over the next decade. This provides the funding for both new and renovated facilities, as well as non-capacity infrastructure investments. Only 9 years ago, **the 10 year capital improvement program for our Schools was less than half as much at \$203 million.**

This 10-year Capital Program includes rebuilds or builds of:

- Cora Kelly Elementary School
- George Mason Elementary School
- Minnie Howard Campus of our High School
- Renovation of 1703 N. Beauregard

Three years ago, **the City Council unanimously approved land-use modifications to allow the old Patrick Henry Elementary School building to be temporarily used at "swing-space"** to facilitate a rebuild of Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. In **September of 2020, the City Council unanimously approved the rebuild of MacArthur.** That rebuild is **under way with a new building scheduled to open in August.**

In March, we broke ground on a rebuild of Minnie Howard campus of Alexandria City High School. This will be a new 350,000 square foot facility intended to house 1,600 students. **The construction is expected**

to take 2.5 years and will open for the opening of the 2024-2025 school year.

All together, this is the largest period of new school facility construction in our City's history!

With the resources now in place, we must work collaboratively to ensure that these new facilities come to reality.

In June of 2021, feasibility studies were released by ACPS to inform planning for the new school buildings for **George Mason** and for **Cora Kelly**. Both reports examined the question as to whether "swing space" will be required during the construction process.

Over nine years ago, the City convened the Joint **Long Range Educational Facilities Work Group**. The group was given the essential charge to understand our recent increase in student enrollment, better project enrollment growth in the future, and to decide what to do about it.

The School Board Chair and Vice Chair at the time, the Mayor at the time, and I joined a group of community members and staff to steer the effort.

We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. The type and age of housing is a significant determinant of the student generation rates. Today, 88% of ACPS students live in housing that is over 30 years old.

We learned that low-rise apartments generate nearly three times the students as high-rise or mid-rise apartments do. We learned that single family homes generate nearly double the students as townhouses. We know that public housing and other income-restricted units far outpace any other property type for student generation.

These data points remind us of the need to address this enrollment growth head-on.

In June of 2015, the City Council and the School Board adopted the **Joint Long Range Educational Facilities Plan**. The Plan is the culmination of the group's work in conjunction with the efforts of both ACPS and City staff. The Plan looks at each elementary school building in the City, assesses the facility's educational adequacy, and provides a roadmap for increasing capacity and addressing deficiencies.

Three years ago, the Council and School adopted phase two of this effort, **planning for additional capacity at the high school level and in pre-school.**

Four years ago, ACPS opened the first "net-new" school building in nearly two decades with the **opening of**

Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School on the West End. Almost four years ago, ACPS **opened the newly rebuilt Patrick Henry K-8 School.** Both of these new buildings added badly needed capacity in areas of the City with rapidly growing enrollment.

While capacity will remain the focus of the investments we must make in our school facilities, we have seen far too many examples of the dangers of systemic underinvestment in our school facilities. Returning our school facilities to a state of good repair while sustaining a preventative maintenance cycle must be a priority of our collective investment. There can be no excuse for poorly maintained learning environments for our children.

The Interim Superintendent has now proposed her Capital Improvement Program covering Fiscal Year 2024 through 2033. The School Board is now working to consider this proposal before formalizing this request to the City Council.

While the pandemic paused a decade and a half of enrollment growth, it can be assumed that we are returning to our growth trend as our schools continue return to "normal." These long-term investments become critical to support the success of our students in the generations to come.



Police Collective Bargaining Agreement

Last month, **the City Council voted to commit the financial resources to support the first public-sector collective-bargaining agreement in Virginia since the 1970s.** This new agreement, between the City and the Southern States Police Benevolent Association (SSPBA), covers the sworn personnel of the Alexandria Police Department and will apply to a 3-year period commencing July 1, 2023.

This new agreement will provide for significant increases in compensation for new and existing police officers. The agreement will make Alexandria a more competitive employer in a hyper-competitive marketplace for public safety talent.

Alexandria remains a safe community. In 2021, **we saw an overall decrease in Part 1 crime, as our community recovered from the pandemic.** This recovery came as the City was being served with **the fewest number of police officers on the streets of our City in recent memory.** This agreement helps address these staffing challenges.

Nearly 46 years ago, **the Virginia Supreme Court invalidated the collective bargaining rights of public sector employees in Virginia.** At that time, 19 Virginia

jurisdictions, including the City of Alexandria, had some form of collective bargaining with public sector employees.

Under [legislation adopted by the Virginia General Assembly during the 2020 session](#), localities in Virginia can again allow their employees to collectively bargain on the conditions of their employment.

Last year, the City Council held a special meeting to consider [a complicated ordinance that would make Alexandria the first jurisdiction in Virginia to bring back collective bargaining](#).

While both sides did not get everything they wanted in this agreement, I believe we have set a solid foundation for cooperation over the coming years.

Additionally, I look forward to similarly constructive relationships with the organizations that our remaining public-sector employees have selected to represent them.



Stormwater Utility Fee Credits

In June of 2018, [property owners in Alexandria paid a Stormwater Utility Fee for the first time ever](#). The creation of this fee was driven by the need for additional revenue to comply with [the City's MS4 Permit](#). [The permit reflects Alexandria's obligations to reduce pollutants contained in storm run-off which makes its way to the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways](#).

Earlier this year, the City Council unanimously adopted [an ordinance to again increase our Stormwater Utility Fee](#), to further increase the resources available for investments in our storm sewer infrastructure. This increase will mean a condo owner will pay \$82.32 annually, a townhouse owner \$123.48 annually, a small single-family homeowner \$294 annually and a large single-family homeowner \$490.98 annually.

Today the fee supports [nearly half of a billion dollars of infrastructure, maintenance and operating expenses for water quality and water quantity initiatives over the next decade](#).

While the purpose of the fee is to raise revenues for these important initiatives, the fee is structured in a manner that is designed to incentivize property owners to take actions that will protect stormwater quality and reducing flooding impacts. As such, the City created a credit structure to reduce the fee for property owners taking these actions.

Faced with evidence last year that the credits were being rarely received by property owners, the City Council recently **approved a new credit manual** to expand the credits available, make the credits last longer and reduce the paperwork required.

Between now and February 15th, **residential and commercial property owners can apply for a credit of up to 50% against their annual Stormwater Utility Fee.** Please apply online to receive reductions for the efforts you are taking to improve stormwater handling.

When property owners implement best practices to benefit our stormwater systems, it helps the community as a whole. Please make sure you obtain credits for these important efforts.



Budget Preview

In three months our City Manager will present **the proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) and the proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Fiscal Year 2024 through Fiscal Year 2033.**

The most important decision the City Council makes each year is the adoption of the annual operating budget and capital improvement program. The operating budget generally funds the on-going costs of government (primarily personnel), while the capital budget funds one-time expenditures that provide the community with an asset (new schools, new roads, new playing fields, transit buses, etc).

The upcoming budget will be proposed and adopted in an uncertain environment, where inflation is impacting the cost of talent and raw materials, two things local governments buy in large quantities.

Last month, the City Manager presented his initial outlook for the upcoming budget to our annual Council retreat.

In Virginia, the structure of municipal finance is heavily reliant on real estate taxes. Consequentially, in Alexandria the real estate market, both residential and commercial, dictates our budgetary fate. Last year, we saw the healthiest growth in our real estate tax base in over 15 years. Yet, **in the past year, mortgage rates have more than doubled.** It's hard to imagine that such an increase will not eventually impact our real estate market.

Real estate tax revenues are currently projected to grow by 1.2%, which would be a return to the anemic growth that has characterized much of the last decade and a half. Much higher than expected vehicle prices are

continue to drive vehicle personal property tax revenues.

Yet on the expenditure side of the ledger, we are seeing increases in costs across our balance sheet, driven by new costs for cash capital and debt service to support City and School capital investments, new investments to support student enrollment growth and the costs of regional and local transit services.

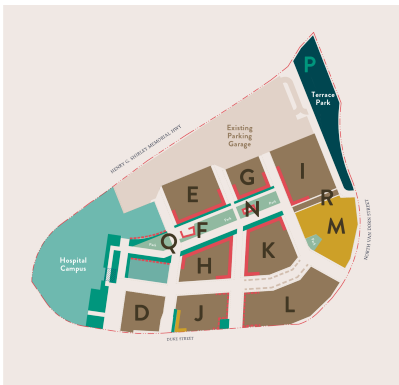
With these revenue estimates and expenditure estimates, this brings us to a projected revenue shortfall of \$16.1 million.

Given that our local budget must be balanced, that shortfall must be resolved with either spending reductions, tax increases or some combination of the two.

To formally commence that process, **the City Council adopted our annual budget guidance for the City Manager.** Given the considerable uncertainty, the adopted guidance asks the City Manager to propose his budget without a tax rate increase, as well as a scenario that includes a rate increase.

This will be a challenging environment to adopt a budget within. With our residential taxpayers already paying more this year due to the appreciation in our residential tax base, I believe we should again work to avoid a rate increase while protecting the core services our residents depend on. Last year was the 6th budget in a row without a tax rate increase and I am hopeful we can continue that pattern.

The City Manager's budget presentation is on February 28th.



Landmark Mall Redevelopment

Next week, the Alexandria Planning Commission will be hearing applications for the specific development approvals for Blocks E, G, I and K for the redevelopment of the previous Landmark Mall site.

Block I is proposed as 390 units of residential development and 105,000 square feet of commercial space.

Block K is proposed as 337 units of residential development and 32,000 square feet of commercial space.

Blocks E and G are proposed as 390 units of residential development, 80,400 square feet of commercial space and 119,500 square feet of medial office space.

The Planning Commission will be accepting public testimony on these applications on Tuesday December 6th beginning at 7 PM. **Testimony is welcome in-person at City Hall or virtually.**

Assuming Planning Commission action, the City Council will accept public testimony and act on these applications at our public hearing on Saturday December 17th at 9:30 AM.

Earlier this year, Foulger-Pratt, the private development partner spearheading the redevelopment of Landmark Mall began **demolition on the existing site.**

Construction activity will be beginning shortly, **under the aggressive schedule they have presented to the community.**

Late last year, the **Alexandria Industrial Development Authority (IDA)** closed on **the purchase of an 11-acre parcel on the site of the former Landmark Mall.** The purchase of this property was immediately followed by IDA's issuance of a 99-year ground lease of the property to **Inova Health System.**

After two decades of discussion about how to redevelop Landmark Mall, the City of Alexandria is finally redeveloping Landmark Mall!

In July of last year, the City Council unanimously approved the plan to reshape the most significant redevelopment site in our City.

Long sought, this arrangement was named by the Washington Business Journal as the 2020 Real Estate Deal of the Year.

Days before Christmas 2020, **the City joined with a few partners, some familiar and some new, to announce the future of the Landmark Mall site.** The new development plan will move **Inova Alexandria Hospital** from its home for **the past 60 years** on Seminary Road to a new modern facility on the site of Landmark Mall.

The location, one of the largest sites inside the Beltway awaiting redevelopment, will see a billion dollars of new investment, including a new Level II trauma center, medical office buildings, residential, retail, parks, a new fire station replacing **Fire Station 208**, new committed affordable housing and a new transit hub anchoring the City's new bus rapid transit network, DASH and Metrobus.

This will not only revitalize a site that many had given up on, but will also provide a catalyst for redevelopment and enhancement throughout the West End of our City.

A year ago, the City Council unanimously approved [a master plan amendment and rezoning of the site of the existing Inova Alexandria Hospital](#). This land-use decision was the first legislative action required to bring this plan to reality.

Despite over two decades of decline, it is not a mystery why we had been unable to spur redevelopment on this site in the past. It is a complicated site, with a complicated ownership structure requiring significant infrastructure investment.

Conquering those obstacles requires a unique partnership and financial arrangement. A local firm, [Foulger-Pratt](#) is leading a joint venture in partnership with [Howard Hughes Corporation](#), the current owner of the mall site, and [Seritage Growth Properties](#), the owner of the Sears site. They were able to bring [Inova Health System](#) into the arrangement to anchor this redevelopment.

The City will finance some of the infrastructure improvements required on the site and we have purchased the future hospital site to lease back to Inova. Inova's proceeds from selling their existing site on Seminary Road is financing their expenses related to the move.

We have finally assembled a partnership, financing and a plan to revitalize this site. Landmark Mall redevelopment has been complicated from the beginning, but this exciting partnership is making things happen on this site for the first time in decades. I look forward to now watching this vision come to fruition.

Vision Zero

Five years ago, [the City Council adopted our Vision Zero Action Plan, with a vision to end deaths and serious injuries on our roads by 2028.](#)

[The data shows that crashes have slowly trended downward over the last few years. Overall crashes involving pedestrians have stayed steady at roughly five or six per month. Last year we had 28 crashes that resulted in death or serious injury. We had four individuals lose their lives on our roads last year, all of which were pedestrians.](#)

Each of these tragic incidents change the lives of the victims and their families in dramatic ways. But for each tragedy, there are also countless close calls and near misses that don't get reported.

In Alexandria, we are fortunate to have pedestrian scale, walkable neighborhoods with urban amenities



throughout our City. Yet if residents do not feel they can safely traverse the streets of our City, then all the urban amenities are for naught.

The City **has invested millions of taxpayer dollars to improve pedestrian safety throughout our community.** Those resources have included improving pedestrian access to schools, building and improving sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming efforts, bike lanes, new signalization, and more.

Yet there are still areas of our City where sidewalks are non-existent or unusable, intersections are unsafe and unsafe driving is rampant. We must improve the safety of our streets for all users. Doing so requires changing the behavior of all users of our roads.

My view is that in order to significantly improve pedestrian safety in our City, we will have to be willing to make trade-offs in the pursuit of safety. The data show that the changes that will most significantly improve safety are also the most controversial in our community.

For instance, **the first phase of the King Street Complete Streets** effort involved the removal of parking, narrowing of travel lanes, improved crosswalks, signage, new bike lanes, etc., to reduce speed and improve safety. **The initial analysis showed that the project has reduced speed, reduced crashes and improved safety.**

The second phase of the work on King Street was an even more dramatic overhaul of the corridor, including reductions of travel lanes, pedestrian islands, crosswalks, etc. **When the City Council and Traffic & Parking Board received the initial analysis of those changes,** as with the first phase, crashes have been reduced and average speed has been reduced.

On Seminary and Quaker, the City reduced speed limits to improve safety. **When that action was reviewed, it also indicated a reduction in speed and crashes.**

On Seminary Road, **the road was narrowed, safer crossings for pedestrians created and new areas for pedestrians and bikers created.** While the pandemic delayed the data collection and analysis, **last month the City released a similar analysis of those changes.** The report showed what we expected:

- Traffic volumes, travel times and crashes went down.
- Speeds decreased slightly
- Traffic did not appear to divert to neighborhood streets

We have also looked at signalization efforts that can improve safety. At a few problem intersections, the City created a "[Leading Pedestrian Interval](#)" to allow residents to get a head-start crossing before traffic can move. [Over the past two years, we have implemented these changes at numerous intersections around the City.](#)

We have also explored the creation of additional "[pedestrian scrambles](#)" to create an "all pedestrian" phase at problematic intersections.

[We have HAWK \(High Intensity Activated crossWalk\) signals in place](#) to ensure high visibility of pedestrians in high traffic corridors. [A new one was installed last year on W. Braddock Road near Minnie Howard School.](#)

I do believe there is more we can do.

[Our Vision Zero Dashboard shows that while we have made progress, the data indicates the need for more work.](#)

The research shows that [speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian crash.](#) Lowering speed limits where appropriate will likely continue to be in our toolbox around the City. [Our Traffic & Parking Board approved such a speed limit reduction on 5 high-crash corridors around the City.](#)

[Allowing right turns on red was pushed by the Federal Government during the 1970s as a response to the energy crisis.](#) Some [communities in the country are banning right turns on red to improve pedestrian safety by reducing complexity at intersections.](#)

[For this fiscal year, our Action Plan includes safety audits, a neighborhood slow zone, new restrictions on right on red and beyond.](#)

The ideal condition on our roads is to separate users by mode, particularly when there can be large disparities in speed. That means building new sidewalks and new lanes for bikes.

Alexandrians should be able to use our streets safely. We will have to take ourselves out of our comfort zone to make that happen. Ultimately, these efforts will not only provide mobility options for our residents, help achieve climate initiatives, but also save lives.

Policing in Alexandria

Elsewhere in this newsletter, I wrote about the recent collective bargaining agreement with our sworn police



officers. This agreement ideally will stabilize staffing issues that have plagued our Department. Staffing aside, we are at a crossroads for policing and a period of enormous change for Alexandria's Police Department.

- Not unlike police departments around the region and the nation, **Alexandria has struggled to attract and retain police officers to the profession.**
- In the wake of well-publicized crimes, mistakes and excesses by law enforcement around the nation, the public perception of the role policing should play has evolved.
- Violent crime has increased, nationally and locally.

We have a highly skilled and diverse police force serving Alexandria. In a period of change for policing, Alexandria has continued as a national leader.

Our officers participate in training aimed at de-escalation of volatile situations. We outfit our police officers with non-lethal force options to assist in the de-escalation of these incidents. Our officers have been trained in crisis intervention and the proper ways to address civil disobedience.

We have officers that participate in **training designed to address implicit bias in policing.**

In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, our **Police Department** and our **Sheriff's Department** provided summaries of use of force guidelines, procedures and practices for public review and comment.

At various points over the years, **I have written in this newsletter attempting to relate the national conversation on policing to our experiences in Alexandria.**

While the national discussion is instructive, Alexandria must engage in this reform conversation using the facts and experiences of our residents with the public safety personnel that serve our community. The City Council has been focused in two areas:

- Refining Civilian Oversight
- Reducing the Burden on Police (alternative response techniques)

At the end of 2020, the City Council received the **initial feedback from our staff on Council efforts to explore alternative response techniques, focused on efforts to use non-police response for quality-of-life complaints, homelessness, behavioral health crisis, intoxication and beyond.**

Last September, the City launched **the Alexandria Crisis Intervention Co-Responding (ACORP) Pilot Program**. This program pairs a behavioral health clinician with a trained behavioral health police officer to respond to calls for service regarding residents in need of behavioral health crisis intervention. This program provides residents in crisis with more specialized services to ensure safety of the individual in crisis and the community.

Shortly after the launch of ACORP, **the City Council received an update on the implementation and success of this new program**. The City Manager's proposed budget includes funding for a second ACORP team, and the City Council added funding for a third team in the budget adopted in the spring.

A year and a half ago, the City Council worked to refine civilian oversight, **with the creation of an Independent Community Policing Review Board**. At the end of last year, the Council appointed the new members of this board, and they are now working to get organized and prepare for their important role.

As part of that effort, the Board assisted City Council in a hiring process to choose our first-ever Independent Policing Auditor. **This month, Kim Neal will originate this role for Alexandria, as she has done in Fort Worth, Texas**. I am confident that Ms. Neal brings the experience and judgement to serve in this very important position.

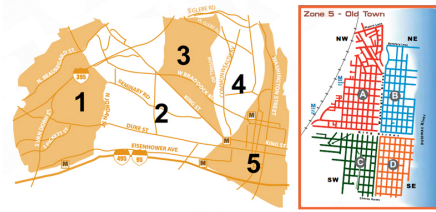
In November of 2020, **our staff brought to the Council a study on the costs for implementing a body-worn camera program for the City's public safety agencies**. While there has been support on the Council to implement such a program, the funding required has been difficult to prioritize.

With a more modest implementation plan, and Federal dollars advanced by Congressman Beyer, the City is now moving ahead to implement this important transparency and accountability measure.

The City Council's approved budget also included five additional positions within the Police Department focused **specifically on weapons violations, to continue the progress the City has made in quelling a spike in firearm-fueled violent crime**. These new resources will also serve to reduce the strain that these incidents have had on our limited patrol staffing.

These efforts must continue as we work to provide the resources and a level of transparency that supports public confidence in the great work done by the men

and women who serve and protect our community every day.



Leaf Collection Continues

Alexandria's annual leaf collection began last month and continues this month! We make three passes on each street. Check online to learn your collection date.

Leaf vacuuming will proceed to each of the designated zones beginning on the scheduled dates. Each zone will take several days to complete.

Additionally, the City is making up to 15 leaf bags available for each residential household. The bags can be picked up at City Hall, the City's self-service shed at the corner of Roth and Business Center Drive or at Charles Houston, Chinquapin, Patrick Henry or Mount Vernon Recreation Centers.

These leaf bags can be placed out for collection on your regulation collection day.

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