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Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

February 1, 2019

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February is when the City Council enters the most intense period of our calendar.

With the City Manager presenting his budget later this month, February is the most important portion of City Council's annual schedule.

The City Council held its [first retreat](#) last weekend, as we worked to plan the issues we will take up during this term.

The retreat was held at the brand-new Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center. The school welcomed its very first students last month!

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

Council Initiatives

Federal Shutdown Ends, But Impact Lingers

A week ago today, the longest Federal Government shutdown in our nation's history ended, as the President signed the very same legislation that he had rejected in December. While the shutdown was an absurd display of political dysfunction, that's not the point of this write-up.

The impact of the shutdown on the residents of Alexandria was significant, and will likely linger for some time. [Alexandria has 4.3% of the region's Federal employees, which is over 15,000 employees.](#) In addition, the City has many more Federal contractors and private sector employees depending on Federal spending.



[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

President's Day Parade

[The annual George Washington Birthday parade returns to the streets of Old Town!](#)

On Monday, February 18th from 1 PM - 3 PM, the parade is always an essential part of the season!

Stormwater Fee Credit Application

[In November, I wrote in this newsletter](#) about the credit structure for the recently enacted residential stormwater fee.

From now until February 15th, residential homeowners can apply for credits that they are eligible for. [Click here to begin the process.](#)

Free Tax Assistance

Starting tomorrow, eligible Alexandria residents can receive assistance in completing their Federal taxes.

[Sessions are held on Saturdays and Wednesdays between now and April 13th.](#)

The City Academy

[The City is accepting applications for participating in our City Academy.](#)

The nine week program, beginning in March, will help you understand the

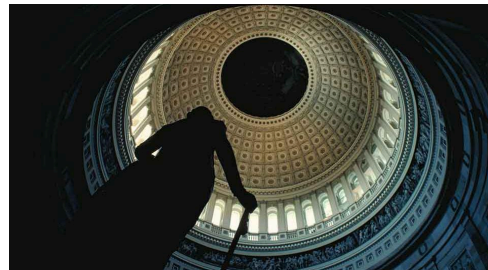
During the shutdown, the City worked to ensure access to safety-net services and partnered [with our non-profit community to provide for our furloughed residents in need](#). Many businesses came forward to offer discounts and other arrangements to support those impacted.

While the shutdown has concluded, we can only just now begin to take stock of the on-going impact. City tax revenues will be impacted, as the City saw reductions in some consumption-based revenue streams. Reports [from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\) that the shutdown was causing \\$400,000 of DAILY losses](#) were similarly alarming. Barring future service reductions or fare increases, those gaps will be financed by WMATA's member jurisdictions, including Alexandria.

During the protracted shutdown, [the City Council approved a resolution](#) not only urging a quick conclusion the impasse, but also pleaded for support of our residents and businesses in the form of Unemployment Insurance, back-pay, small business lending, extension of housing assistance, eviction forbearance, etc.

While the adopted continuing resolution provides funding for a short three week period, I am hopeful that Federal policymakers will not allow this to happen again.

This sad episode again demonstrates to fragility of our region's Federal dependence. With political dysfunction likely to continue, building resilience within our government and among our residents will help weather these storms in the future.



WMATA Closure Planning

[Last year, our region came together and adopted a new dedicated funding stream to support the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\).](#) This significant accomplishment was not without fault, but it did represent a positive step forward in addressing a backlog of investments required in Metro's basic infrastructure.

Once the crown jewel of the Washington, DC region, Metrorail is experiencing a very difficult time. Metro is a basic building block of our region's economy. If there is a perception that the system is unsafe, then that awareness can be crippling to the region.

Paul Wiedefeld, the WMATA General Manager for the past 4 years, has been aggressively working to tackle these challenges. [WMATA finalized the SafeTrack Plan, which concentrated three years of work into one year.](#)

Advancing this work required expanded time when the system is not operating. To make this happen, extended weekend hours were discontinued, new mid-day maintenance was scheduled, and most importantly, a series of "surges" occurred across the system.

[Working with WMATA, DASH, and other local partners, we came up with a series of alternatives to assist Alexandria riders in their commutes.](#)

[We will now have to put those lessons to the test as WMATA has announced a new set of closures for this summer.](#) This time, the closures will be to rebuild outdoor station platforms that are past the end of their usable lives. The first phase of this work will involve closing down the Braddock Road, King Street and Eisenhower Avenue stations. **This will mean that there will no blue or yellow**

way your government works!

[You may apply online today.](#)

Community Police Academy

[Sign up now to participate in the Alexandria Community Police Academy.](#)

This acclaimed program is one of the Police Department's key public outreach efforts.

In February, the Department will be hosting a half-day version of the program, in addition to the full 9 week program.

[Sign up today!](#)

DASH Schedule Changes

On Sunday, DASH Bus is implementing minor schedule changes on several routes.

[Full details are available online.](#)

Summer Camp Fair

Working to plan your child's summer and need help?

[The Alexandria PTA Council will be hosting their annual Summer Camp Fair on Tuesday February 26th from 5:30 PM until 8 PM at the T. C. Williams Cafeteria.](#)

This event brings together over 40 summer camps of all kinds!

Be A Snow Buddy

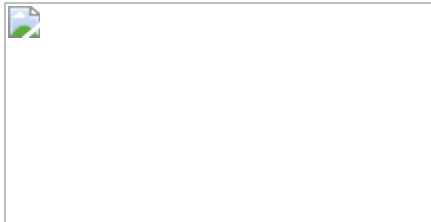
[Volunteer Alexandria and the City work together to recruit "Snow Buddies."](#)

Snow Buddies work across our City to help residents who are unable to clear snow during inclement weather.

Sign up today!

line service south of the airport expected from Memorial Day to Labor Day in 2019.

This will require a dramatic regional response. Far beyond the impact of the SafeTrack, this closure holds the potential to cripple our region. This closure will require the City and its regional partners to identify transit alternatives, teleworking options, economic development planning, and more. It will not only impact the ability of our residents to access their employment locations, but it will also hinder the ability of customers to access Alexandria businesses and employees to access their employers in Alexandria.



In October, City staff brought [the initial framework to Council to respond to the planned Summer 2019 Metro Shutdown in Alexandria](#). Planning efforts to prepare for needed repairs on Metrorail have been very active at the staff level, and we will require ideas from our residents as we work to prevent this from being a disaster for our City. [We continue to solicit specific suggestions from residents via our online survey.](#)

Two months ago, [our staff provided the Council with an update on the joint planning efforts, including a recent WMATA Board update on the planning.](#)

Upon review of that plan, our staff has raised very specific concerns over the capacity of WMATA's planned shuttle alternatives. As a result, the [City's City Manager relayed those concerns in writing to Mr. Wiedefeld.](#)

At the Council's second legislative meeting last month, the City Council [received the latest update from our staff and WMATA staff](#) on the planning efforts for this closure. You [can watch the presentation and the Council discussion online.](#)

The proposed mitigation plan relies on four pillars:

- WMATA service (shuttles and expansions of existing bus service)
- City/DASH alternatives
- Mobility alternatives (transportation network companies and transit modifications)
- Communication and outreach

The bedrock of this plan is the WMATA shuttles and service expansion. As mentioned by the Council during the presentation last month, there is grave concern that the currently proposed plan will be insufficient to support a closure of this magnitude.

Our staff will continue their work with WMATA staff to develop a plan that will ensure that our City will continue functioning during this period. The final plan will come to Council in March.

The work to restore Metro back to the level required to support this region continues. In the short-term, additional sacrifice will be required. As a daily Metro rider myself, I know the service challenges first-hand. I'm optimistic that these efforts will result in a more reliable system for Alexandria and the entire region.

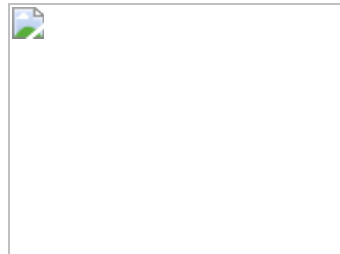
Improving Foster Care

In Fiscal Year 2017, 31 children were placed into the custody of the City's Department of Community and Human Services foster care program. While fortunately rare, when circumstances dictate that

children be in the custody and supervision of the City, it is incumbent upon our system to work towards positive outcomes.

In December, Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) [released a significant study on the Commonwealth's foster care system](#). The study identified challenges and opportunities for improvement around the Commonwealth.

I asked our staff to review the report and [the recommendations](#) and determine what applicability these findings present for Alexandria. The result was [an initial response looking at each of the statewide recommendations](#) and comparing to Alexandria's experience.



The good news is that the City ensures that kids are placed in safe homes, has high placement rates with relatives, and maintains lower rates of congregate placements than elsewhere in the state.

The City does have challenges in overly large caseloads for our caseworkers and some challenges in achieving permanency for our kids by reunification with birth families.

Ensuring safe places for children to thrive becomes an obligation for the City for some of our families. Ensuring the welfare of these children is a important duty for our community.

Data Drives Good Decisions

Providing accountable results to the residents of Alexandria for their tax investment is a role of government. To support that accountability, government must have good data. We have now made another large step forward as we work to better collect more relevant data to measure how we provide City services.

[Over a decade ago, then City Manager Jim Hartmann introduced the Managing for Results Initiative, known as "MFRI."](#) MFRI categorized our City services into programs and activities that could be measured and reported. The budget format was then revised so that the proposed budget aligned expenditures to those programs and activities. This allowed the City to measure the performance and efficiency of services during the annual budget process.

Our previous City Manager, Rashad Young, then created the Office of Performance and Accountability (OPA). OPA was designed as an internal consultancy to implement performance improvement and efficiency throughout city government operations.

Three years ago we took the next step, as OPA unveiled the first draft of our regular Performance Reports. These reports cover each of the service areas of the City's Strategic Plan. They provide the performance and quality measures that are expected of City departments, while assisting the Council and City management to make good, data-driven decisions about those services.

We have now unveiled [our public Performance Dashboard](#), allowing the residents of our City to assess the performance of critical City services by their primary performance metrics.

The [Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\) also has a similar performance accountability system called iDashboard](#). ACPS provides a consolidated dashboard of its key performance indicators to allow parents and community members easy access to this data.

While identifying and reporting the metrics to measure the services we provide is an important innovation, we have a long way to go. We must improve the quality of our data, increase the frequency of when

it is reported, and use the data to make better decisions about how we allocate resources. I look forward to continued progress in this area.

High School Capacity

When Alexandria's students came back to school in the fall of 2009, [there were 2,233 students at T. C. Williams High School's King Street campus \(10th, 11th and 12th grades\) and 688 students at the Minnie Howard campus \(9th grade\)](#). The combined 2,921 students across four grades was after several years of stagnant enrollment numbers.

When school started this past fall, [there were 3,959 students across the four grades at T. C. Williams High School](#). Not only is T. C. Williams High School [the largest four grade high school in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the next largest school has a thousand less students!](#)

The configuration of the future of high school capacity will be one of the most important issues that our City works through over the next few years. In approving the most recent 10-year Capital Improvement Program, [the School Board included \\$124 million spread over 3 years to address high school capacity](#). This is a portion of the overall capital funding that the City Council provided for the School Board in our most recently approved budget.

The Board's approved Capital Improvement Program assumes an opening of a new high school facility during Fiscal Year 2023 (begins July 1, 2022). With the money in place, we must now determine the location and configuration of that new capacity.

[The City's decision to allocate significant resources to high school capacity began several years ago with requests for resources to add classrooms to the Minnie Howard campus](#). Ultimately that request would have only been a stop-gap, as we would have spent tens of millions of dollars to add capacity to a building that was not intended for high school use and would not have resolved the capacity challenges.

With the funding now in place for a more comprehensive answer to high school capacity, [the School Board has been conducting outreach to determine how to configure this capacity](#).

The City Council and School Board recently [approved the second phase of the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan](#). This phase focused on high school and early childhood education facilities and provided a series of recommendations for addressing capacity challenges for both.

[The Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force included resources to address high school capacity in their recommendations, but paired the resources with policy recommendations.](#)

The residents of our City have offered a variety of ideas for how we might configure this additional capacity. [Some residents support a rebuild of Minnie Howard, with a transition from a 9th grade center to one that houses 9th and 10th grades](#). Others have suggested that additional capacity be built on the existing King Street campus: either the site of the existing



stadium, in conjunction with a rebuild of the Chinquapin Recreation Center or on the Chinquapin Park circle. Other residents have advocated a totally separate four-grade high school elsewhere in the City. Some have suggested that we obtain capacity outside of the

King Street and Minnie Howard campuses for discrete programs (STEM Academy, International Academy, etc) to relieve pressure.

The ACPS Superintendent ultimately made a recommendation to the School Board to pursue a "[connected high school network model](#) ." The Superintendent's [formal recommendation](#) was to pursue a campus approach retaining one high school, over multiple buildings.

The School Board received and cast votes on the Superintendent's recommendation last week. [You can watch the School Board's discussion and votes online.](#)

The Board ultimately cast two votes. The first vote was a unanimous vote to pursue building a new high school building on the site of Minnie Howard School, while incorporating that building in the connected high school network model as the Superintendent had proposed.

The second vote was a closely divided 5-4 vote that directed the Superintendent to provide multiple preliminary design proposals, with analysis for each, including a proposal for a second four grade high school.

This is a project that will serve the students of our City for a few generations to come, and the process must reflect the importance of the investment.

As we enter a new era of joint collaboration and investment in partnership with the Alexandria City Public Schools, this project will be a crucial test of our ability to work together and work to satisfy multiple municipal needs on a single site.

[Please let me know your thoughts!](#)

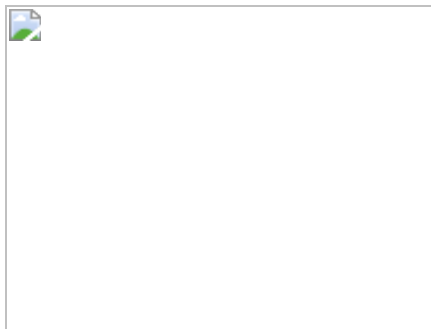
Vision Zero

Each year, an average of 37 people are killed or seriously injured on Alexandria's streets. This past weekend, [a pedestrian lost his life on Seminary Road](#). 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.

With the recent large increases in road resurfacing budgets, [the Council has also steered new dollars into our "Complete Streets" efforts, the City's program for improving non-vehicular transportation infrastructure.](#)



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.

[In the current budget the adopted last spring, the Council added 6 new sworn traffic safety officers.](#)

Our Police Chief has worked to increase the focus of existing resources on traffic enforcement efforts. This has resulted in education and significant increases in traffic citations being issued throughout our City.

Nearly 3 years ago, [the Council adopted an overhaul of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.](#)

We kicked-off a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While this initiative will involve significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries. [At the end of 2017, the Council approved our Vision Zero Action Plan.](#)

One of the components of the City's Action Plan was to install "Leading Pedestrian Intervals" (LPI) at at least 10 intersections around the City. An LPI is an extra phase at a signalized intersection that gives pedestrians a "head start" prior to vehicles entering the intersection.

Last month, [City staff selected intersections based on crash and safety characteristics and implemented 17 new LPI's around our City.](#)

Another one of the components of the City's Action Plan was to remove the ability to make right turns on red lights at a selection of intersections. Removing this turn movement reduces the complexity of intersections and improves safety for pedestrians and other users. The City [recently announced the initial intersections that will have this turn movement banned](#) following a review of crashes, usage and efficiency. These restrictions were recently implemented.

[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.](#) The [District of Columbia is now considering similar changes](#) at selected locations.

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. We have to follow the research.

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. [In September of last year the City Council and Traffic & Parking Board received the initial analysis of those changes.](#) As with the first phase, crashes have been reduced, average speed has been reduced.

On Seminary and Quaker, the City reduced speed limits to improve safety. [The initial review of this action has indicated a reduction in speed and accidents.](#)

We have also explored the creation of additional ["pedestrian scrambles"](#) to create an "all pedestrian" phase at problematic intersections. One example can be found at the intersection of W. Mt. Ida and Commonwealth Avenues.

[We have HAWK \(High Intensity Activated crossWalk\) signals in place](#) to ensure high visibility of pedestrians in high traffic corridors.

I do believe there is more we can do.

The research shows that [speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian crash](#). Lowering speed limits where appropriate will likely be in our toolbox around the City.

[Reducing traffic lanes, or so-called "road diets," can improve safety](#). As we approach future road resurfacing, removing lanes will likely be an option we consider.

It has been the City's practice to [announce enforcement efforts for intoxicated driving in advance](#), as well as [announce the results afterwards](#). We should do the same with our traffic enforcement. I believe greater transparency will help get the message out and improve safety throughout our City.

We need your input!

Are there particular areas of our City that you feel are unsafe and need attention? Are there intersections that are unsafe? Are there incomplete sections of sidewalk? Are there places where signage can be improved? [Please use the Alexandria Vision Zero Safety Map to report these areas.](#)

Alexandrians should be able to use our streets safely. We will have to take ourselves out of our comfort zone to make that happen. Let me know your thoughts.

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

As Mayor, I am continuing my regular series of Town Hall Meetings.



You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply the Mayor who will hopefully have the answers to any of your questions about our City.

Just [drop us a line](#) and we'll get a Town Hall on the calendar! Thanks for the interest!

Upcoming Issues

The City Manager's Budget

[The City Manager will present his proposed budgets on Tuesday, February 19th, and the City Council will adopt the budget on Wednesday, May 1st.](#)

From 2002 until 2009, the City was enjoying the run-up in the residential real estate market. Our General Fund budget increased by an average of 6.5% per year. The work force in City Government grew from 2,229 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 2,660 FTEs during that period.

In Fiscal Year 2010, the bottom fell out as the Great Recession took hold. The City adopted its first negative budget in at least 40 years, reducing spending from Fiscal Year 2009 to 2010 by over 2%. From 2010 to 2019, the General Fund budget increased by an average of 3.3% per year.

Today, the City workforce is at 2,578 FTEs, 4% lower than 2009.

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



ongoing 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).

It has always been my view that the most important part of the budget process is the adoption of our annual budget guidance for the City Manager. In the fall, the City Council adopts a resolution which provides direction to the City Manager as how to prepare that budget.

The guidance typically provides direction on tax policy, expenditure priorities, debt policy, and other emergent issues. To prepare the Council to provide this direction, a retreat is scheduled.

In early November, the Council had our annual retreat and [received the first glimpse into next year's financial picture](#) . This is the beginning of the Council's process to adopt the Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020) Operating Budget and the Fiscal Year 2020 - Fiscal Year 2029 Capital Improvement Program.

The current projections are that next year's revenues will grow at a rate of 1.9% overall. If that estimate holds (particularly in the aftermath of the shutdown), that would provide the City government with about \$14.2 million of new revenue.

On the expenditure side, we quickly began to see our challenge. Driven largely by [student enrollment growth](#) , the Superintendent [has proposed a budget that requires \\$8.47 million \(3.7% growth\) of additional operating funds](#) from the City for the Alexandria City Public Schools.

The estimates also include \$4.5 million for additional City government costs (mostly salary increases and benefit expenses), and \$6.2 million for transit services (mostly Metro and DASH).

All together, that creates an estimated shortfall near \$14 million, before we start the process.

By the time the City Manager presents his budget, that gap must be addressed by tax increases, expenditure reductions, or some combination of the two. The Council begins to set that direction with the adoption of its budget guidance.

In the budget guidance adopted by the Council for this year, I successfully included language requesting that the City Manager not include an increase in the real estate tax rate in his proposed budget.

Once the budget is presented, [the Council will have a series of worksessions and public meetings](#) to solicit public input and finalize the adopted budget.

The Council will host a budget public hearing on Monday March 11th at 4:00 PM at City Hall.

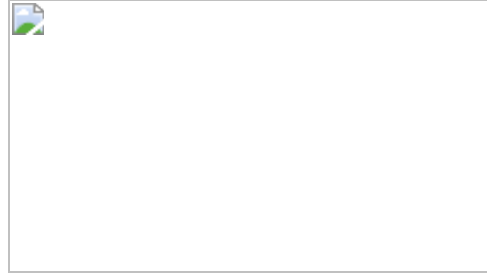
I hope to see you there.

Transportation Funding

Over the next decade, the City plans on spending \$2.2 billion on infrastructure spending, based on [our existing approved Capital](#)

[Improvement Program](#). Of that, just a little over \$600 million is to support transportation initiatives. Of the transportation funds, nearly \$280 million is intended to come from non-City sources, primarily state and regional transportation funds.

In 2014, then Governor Terry McAuliffe signed [legislation](#) that created new criteria for the evaluation of transportation projects for state funding by the [Commonwealth Transportation Board](#). The implementation of this legislation has resulted in [SMART SCALE](#).



The acronym stands for "System Management Allocation of Resources for Transportation" and then the scoring attributes "Safety Congestion Mitigation Accessibility Land Use Environmental Economic Development."

In June of 2018, the City Council approved [the City's application for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 funding](#). The City applied for \$88.7 million of funding in support of the following initiatives:

- West End Transitway: \$60 million
- Landmark Transit Hub Improvements: \$10 million
- Safety and Capacity Enhancements at Duke/Taylor Run/Telegraph: \$4.5 million
- DASH Zero Admission Fleet Program: \$12 million
- Transit Signal Prioritization: \$2.1 million

A few weeks ago, the Virginia Department of Transportation staff posted [their recommended funding scenarios](#). These staff recommendations will be before the Commonwealth Transportation Board for approval in June.

The draft recommendations include all submitted projects with the exception of the DASH fleet program.

[Many of the City's projects were among the highest ranked projects in the state](#). These important resources, if approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, will help bring these important projects to reality.

Landmark Mall

There is no clearer demonstration of the City's financial challenges than the predicament that currently faces Landmark Mall.

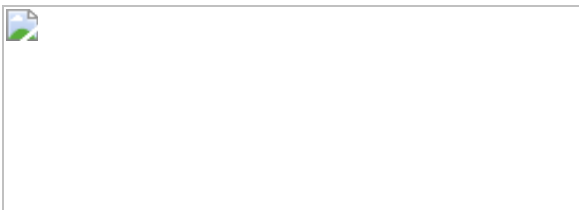
Eighteen years ago, when the ownership of the properties at Landmark Mall received their tax assessments from the City, the [actual mall site was assessed at \\$76.4 million](#). The [Sears store was assessed at \\$19.7 million](#). The [Macy's store site was assessed at \\$17 million](#).

At the City's tax rate in 2000, these three sites alone generated \$1.25 million in real estate tax.

Today, the three properties are assessed at \$24 million, \$13.4 million, and \$10.6 million, respectively. They generate about \$500,000 in real estate tax today, less than half of what it used to be.

To make the situation even more severe, real estate tax is only a portion of the picture. The reduction in revenues from sales tax, dining tax, and other business taxes has also been dramatic at this site.

The City has taken a number of steps over the years to revitalize the site.



In 2009, the City Council approved the [Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan](#). This plan laid out a comprehensive vision for the redevelopment of the entire corridor including the properties on the existing Mall site.

The bankruptcy of one of the owners, unfavorable market conditions, and the complexity of the relationship between the three owners on the site resulted in little action for several years.

In June 2013, after taking over ownership of the mall site, the Howard Hughes Corporation [received approval by the Planning Commission and City Council for a redevelopment of their portion of the site](#). A slower than expected leasing market has slowed that company's intentions to redevelop.

In 2015, Howard Hughes Corporation was back at City Hall to apply for very minor amendments to the approval that was issued in 2013. [These changes were approved by City Council in April of 2015.](#)

While no one should be convinced until they see bulldozers knocking down the existing mall site, there is a lot going on, including some significant events earlier this year. Landmark Mall redevelopment has been complicated from the beginning, but I believe we can be cautiously optimistic that it is finally coming together.

- [Early in 2017, Macy's announced the closure of their store at Landmark.](#)
- [The Howard Hughes Corporation later announced that it had purchased the Macy's store site.](#)
- [The Howard Hughes Corporation subsequently announced that the existing mall site is closing.](#)
- [Mill Creek is now engaged to handle the residential portion of the redevelopment.](#)
- There have been discussions between the City and Howard Hughes about potential public/private partnerships that will help spur the redevelopment.
- Sears spun-off a new Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) in 2015 called Seritage Growth Properties to maximize value out of their remaining real estate. [The Landmark Mall Sears store property is now owned by the new REIT.](#)

One of the largest impediments to redevelopment has been the presence of three landowners on the site. We now have two landowners on the site and we are getting closer to having one landowner with full site control.

While that is good news, the shift from a modest redevelopment of only the mall site to a more comprehensive redevelopment means some more delays as new plans are submitted for a larger area.

An expedited community process to arrive at a new comprehensive plan for the site is underway. Last weekend, [the latest community meeting was held to solicit feedback from the community](#). The meeting reviewed [a set of draft recommendations for the plan updates](#).

The redevelopment of the Landmark Mall site has been a long time in coming to fruition. I am optimistic that we are finally making real progress in this effort.

The upcoming plan revisions are scheduled to come to the City Council in April.

Mayor Justin M. Wilson
703.746.4500
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov
www.justin.net
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Paid for by Wilson For Mayor