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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

February 1, 2024

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Last week, [Chief Don Hayes of the Alexandria Police Department](#) announced that he will be retiring from [City government](#), after [43 years of service](#) to our residents.

I am thankful for Chief Hayes' dedicated service and commitment to our residents and their safety over his career. He leaves a rich legacy in our community and I wish the Chief and his family well in his next chapter.

Today marks the beginning of Black History Month. There will be a [series of events scheduled throughout the month](#)

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)
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[to celebrate the rich African-American history of our City.](#)

Next weekend, [we will celebrate the African-American Heritage Trail on Alexandria's Waterfront.](#) This new historic interpretative trail tells the story of the early African-American experience in our City.

On Monday the 19th, [the George Washington Birthday Parade returns to the streets of Old Town.](#) I will see you there!

If you would like me 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



A Proposal For Potomac Yard

Since the December economic development [announcement for North Potomac Yard](#), the City has [commenced with an extensive schedule of community engagement](#) as we work to discuss this proposal with the residents of Alexandria, solicit their input and determine the future of this important area of our City.

The City has already held two listening sessions which can be reviewed online:

- [Financial Proposal and Economic Impact](#)
- [Community Benefits](#)

A third listening session will be held this evening at 7 PM on Transportation and Traffic Management. [You can register for this session online.](#)

There will be a session next Thursday evening at 7 PM on [Small Business and Economic Opportunity.](#)

On Saturday, the entire City Council participated in a Town Hall meeting where we took questions from the audience on the proposal. [You can watch entire session online.](#)

At the last City Council legislative meeting of January, [City Council members received a presentation and](#)

asked questions of our project team reviewing the specifics of the proposal before the community.

The **attraction of the corporate headquarters of Monumental Sports, a new arena for two professional sports teams, a performing arts center, broadcast studios, practice facilities, and other ancillary uses will catalyze thousands of units of new housing (including a large infusion of committed affordable units), the creation of a new school, parks and more.**

You can **watch the formal announcement online**, including myself, Governor Glenn Youngkin, Senator Mark Warner, House Majority Leader Charniele Herring, and the owner of Monumental Sports, Ted Leonsis.

According to analysis by HR&A Advisors this proposal will provide nearly a billion dollars of permanent annual economic output for City, just from the first phase, which includes the corporate headquarters for Monumental Sports, the Monumental Sports Network Studio, the arena, the performing arts venue, team facilities and the arena parking garage. That same analysis shows that this first phase, would catalyze an additional \$5.6 billion of permanent annual economic output within the City. Together, this is projected to be \$3.6 billion of additional permanent annual economic output beyond what would occur without this catalyst.

While this economic impact is significant for the City, it is proposed to occur in a rather compact space. The arena, studios, headquarters and performing arts venue are all proposed for the area just south of the new Virginia Tech Innovation Campus building under construction, just north of the recently opened Potomac Yard Metro, just east of the existing Potomac Avenue and just west of the railroad tracks.

But to understand why we are here requires a step back a bit.

This year, **the City will collect \$856.4 million from a variety of tax and fee revenue sources to fund the costs of the City's government, including our schools, public safety, human services, transportation, infrastructure investment, debt service and more.**

A little over 62% of that money will be raised from the real estate tax. **Twenty years ago, 51.5% of our budget was funded by the real estate tax.** By digging a little deeper, the story becomes even more stark. Two decades ago, 69.6% of our real estate tax revenue came from residential sources, either residential taxpayers or the owners of residential multi-

family buildings. Today nearly 81% of real estate tax revenues come from those sources, with only 19% coming from our commercial tax base.

As a contrast, while our friends in Arlington have faced some of the same factors, **their commercial tax base is 23% of their total tax base**, which has led to Arlington having the lowest real estate tax rate of any major jurisdiction in the region. **In Fairfax County, their commercial tax base is now just a little over 16% of their overall base.**

What happened? The short answer: A lot of things:

- Obsolete office space converted to other uses, demand for office space dropped and retail space consumption plummeted, leading our office and retail sector to drop from over 24% of our tax base to 17%.
- With high demand for multi-family rentals, our multi-family rentals went from 12% of our tax base to 20.5%
- Our residential properties generally appreciated at a much higher rate than commercial properties over those two decades.

That leaves us in a place where today residents of Alexandria are footing a larger percentage of the cost of their government than they ever have. The trajectory that we have seen over the past two decades shows no sign of abating in the future.

The only true way to change this trajectory is through economic development. Alexandria has had some successes:

- **Landmark Mall is becoming the mixed-use village that we always intended, anchored by the new Inova Alexandria Hospital.**
- **We successfully attracted the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus to Potomac Yard, joining the neighborhood with the Institute for Defense Analysis, the American Physical Therapy Association and more.**
- **We successfully attracted the National Science Foundation and its 2,400 jobs to Carlyle.**
- **We have begun to achieve the economic potential of our waterfront with the development on the south end of our Potomac River shoreline.**
- **We are seeing the Oakville Triangle mixed-use vision come to life, anchored by an Inova HealthPlex.**

- **Hilco Redevelopment Partners is transitioning an obsolete coal-fired power plant on our waterfront to a modern mixed-use community.**
- **Decades of planning in Carlyle is paying dividends, as further mixed-use comes to life in that corridor.**
- **We have also made large investments in the infrastructure to drive economic growth long into the future, most significantly with the Potomac Yard Metro opening last May.**

That Metro Station is a key component of a larger vision for a mixed-use North Potomac Yard. For decades, City plans have assumed that over time, the existing shopping center and its acres of surface parking, would give way to a new mixed-use neighborhood, with residential, commercial, entertainment, a school, park land and much more. The North Potomac Yard Plan, includes the area north of East Glebe Road continuing to the City border, and allows over 7.6 million square feet of development. That future is now.

Much has changed since those plans were originally approved. New office development was on life support before the pandemic. In a post-pandemic world, there is essentially zero new office development occurring in the DC region. Existing office portfolios are defaulting at an alarming rate as tenants decide not to renew their leases. The economic growth of our region's future will be experiential, the types of non-residential uses that cannot be virtualized.

While this exact proposed use was clearly not specifically envisioned during the Small Area Plan process, it was not far from mind. From our Master Plan: "In addition, uses such as entertainment and/or live performance arts are encouraged. An entertainment district could provide a unique identity for Conceptual rendering of Metro Plaza. this neighborhood and would differentiate this new town center from others in the region. The entertainment and theater uses can utilize the office parking during the evening hours, and add evening activity within the neighborhood."

Like so many competitive economic development initiatives in the City's history, the formal announcement is the first time most residents of our community learned of this proposal. The competitive nature of these efforts require confidentiality. With the announcement now behind us, we are entering a phase of very active engagement with the community to discuss the details of the framework agreement, and ensure community voices are heard as many more

details are determined. We will work to ultimately settle on a proposal that is in the best interest of our City and our quality of life.

As the City engaged in this discussion with the Commonwealth and Monumental Sports and Entertainment over the past few months, we were mindful of the litany of public/private partnerships around the nation that turn out to be bad deals for the taxpayers, particularly when it relates to sports facilities. We have worked to make this deal different.

The arena and that land that it will sit on is proposed to be owned by a new Virginia Sports and Entertainment Authority.

The construction of the arena will be financed by three sources:

- A \$403 million up-front private investment by Monumental Sports and Entertainment
- A \$1.05 billion Project Revenue Bond issued by the new Authority
- A \$416 million Lease Revenue Bond issued by the new Authority

The debt from these bonds will be serviced and ultimately paid off over time by three sources:

- Annual lease payments that will be paid by Monumental Sports and Entertainment
- A portion of NEW tax revenues that are paid to the City of Alexandria by these new uses
- A portion of NEW tax revenues that are paid to the Commonwealth of Virginia by these new uses

Included in this deal is an ongoing fund that will renovate and upgrade the arena over time, to avoid the obsolescence that ultimately occurred at Capital One Arena.

Additionally, the City will have long-term agreements with Monumental Sports and Entertainment to ensure long-term tenancy and protect the City's taxpayers from risk.

There is no City or Commonwealth tax dollars being invested in the arena.

In addition to the arena, there will be two components that the City will be invested in. As part of this arrangement, the City will be investing in the new performing arts Center and the parking facilities, as a joint venture with Monumental. As part of that arrangement, the City is entitled to a share of the revenues from both of those uses.

Of the overall \$2 billion of investment from this project, 42% will be financed by Monumental, 53% will come from a portion of the new tax revenues generated by the project and 5% will come from the City.

The City's long-time municipal finance advisors, Davenport & Company, have closely advised us as we have gone through this process. [You can watch our advisors and our City's Director of Finance discuss the financing of this project in a video we released last week.](#)

You can also [watch our City Manager and the CEO of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership present the full proposal to our City Council meeting in December.](#)

While the contours of the financial relationship between the City, Monumental and the Commonwealth has been negotiated, there is a lot of detail associated with this proposal that must be determined. Protecting our existing neighborhoods from any negative impacts, ensuring that our transportation infrastructure can support any plans for use of these facilities and prioritizing public investments are just a few of the critical details that must be determined in close collaboration with our residents over the next year and beyond.

In addition to broad, city-wide engagement, we will have very targeted engagement with directly impacted neighborhoods, as we work through details specific to those communities.

While this discussion is playing out in Alexandria, there is also action occurring in Richmond at the State Capitol. The General Assembly will consider legislation that has been filed in both the [Senate](#) and the [House of Delegates](#) that would create the authority necessary for this proposal to become reality.

This is a large opportunity for our City and its future. We are in this discussion because the City Council, the Governor and leaders in the General Assembly believe that this proposal can be beneficial to our community. Those benefits will accrue to the many services that our residents expect and demand, including our schools, our public safety agencies, transportation, housing, human services and more.

I look forward to extensive engagement as we shape this proposal to realize those benefits. Let me know your thoughts as we continue this discussion.



Choosing a President

With the caucus and primary last month, the United States has begun choosing its next President. Virginia voters can now cast their first votes in this process!

In Virginia, both the Democratic and Republican Presidential primaries will be held as part of Super Tuesday, when about a third of the delegates for both the Democratic and Republican nominations will be selected. This year, Super Tuesday is on Tuesday March 5th.

On primary day, all City polling places will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM.

While we do not have party registration in Virginia, and primaries are open to all voters, when you vote, you will be asked to select which party's primary you would like to participate in.

[Here is the Democratic Sample Ballot.](#)

[Here is the Republican Sample Ballot.](#)

Virginia voters have three alternatives for voting in this primary:

1. [You can request a ballot by mail online now.](#) The ballot can be mailed back or dropped 24/7 at the drop-box located in front of 132 N. Royal Street.
2. [You can vote in person at the Alexandria Registrar's Office, Monday - Friday from 8 AM until 5 PM.](#) Saturdays and evening voting will begin on Saturday February 24th.
3. You can vote in person [at your precinct](#) on the Primary Day of March 5th.

I'll see you at the polls!



Budget Update

Later this month our City Manager will present the [proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 \(July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025\)](#) and the [proposed Capital Improvement Program \(CIP\) for Fiscal Year 2025 through Fiscal Year 2034.](#)

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, with impacts in the real estate market driven by higher interest rates, and where we continue to see inflation impacting the cost of talent and raw materials, two things local governments buy in large quantities.

In November, 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. After seeing the healthiest growth in our real estate tax base in over 15 years, last year we saw slowing. For 2024, we are expecting further slowing as the impact of mortgage rates more than doubling is affecting our real estate market.

Real estate tax revenues are currently projected to grow by 2.4%, which would be a return to the anemic growth that has characterized much of the last decade and a half. After a pandemic-driven aberration with higher than expected vehicle prices, our staff is now projecting that vehicle personal property tax revenues will return to normal with a modest 1% increase next year.

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, the costs of regional and local transit services and the impacts of new collective bargaining agreements for our City employees.

With these revenue estimates and expenditure estimates, this brings us to a projected revenue shortfall of \$19 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 could include a rate increase.

This will be a challenging environment to adopt a budget. 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 7th 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 27th.



WMATA Funding COG Report

Last month, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) **unveiled a fun new feature where a rider can generate a 2023 ridership report**, detailing their transit ridership for the past year. For me, that showed I rode Metrorail 287 times last year and took another 34 Metrobus trips in the same period. Unfortunately, my ridership alone won't balance the budget!

On Tuesday November 14th, coinciding with the March for Israel, WMATA's Metrorail system carried 563,000 riders. **This was the highest single day of ridership on Metrorail since the beginning of the pandemic.**

While it is exciting to reach this milestone, the excitement is tempered by realization that in 2019, the AVERAGE ridership on Metrorail was 626,000 riders each day. Even with years of recovery, Metrorail's ridership remains only around half of its pre-pandemic level.

I have written previously about the success of Alexandria's DASH bus, with the implementation of our new route network and the elimination of fares. **DASH was the first regional bus system to exceed pre-pandemic ridership, and now has hit all-time ridership records in each of the past few months.** Metrobus has also seen a similar recovery, as its ridership has reached 88% of pre-pandemic levels.

The stubborn gap between ridership of the region's core rail system and the region's bus systems is pronounced and depicts stark differences in the populations each mode is transporting. Metrorail, is the mode of choice for the region's white collar workforce. These workers worked from offices in Washington, DC prior to the pandemic, **and have remained in home offices in large numbers, more so than almost any other metropolitan area in the nation.**

Conversely, our bus systems are carrying the region's workers who must work outside the home, residents

conducting non-commuting trips and students. Those trips have continued and grown in volume.

The region's transit services have historically been financed by fare revenues and taxpayer subsidy from the region's states and local governments. The City of Alexandria is contributing \$56.6 million of operating dollars this year to WMATA and \$16.6 million of capital contributions. During and after the pandemic, **Federal subsidies kept WMATA (and other transit agencies) afloat as ridership slowly recovered.**

The pandemic and its aftermath has coincided with an era of significant infrastructure investment for Metrorail, as the region addressed decades of deferred maintenance. That work has adversely impacted transit riders across the region. Most notably for Alexandria, this led to a significant shutdown in 2019 and again earlier this year. **Yet Metrorail is recovering and is running a higher level of service than at any point in its history.**

As the Federal revenues now disappear, a reckoning is afoot. Without the full recovery of Metrorail ridership, we cannot support transit service levels as we have.

With the presentation of a sobering budget, the WMATA staff presented a dire picture of the region's transit finance in the future. A combination of relief that had been provided to the taxpayers of local jurisdictions during the pandemic, decreased fare revenue and the impact of inflation and collective bargaining agreements for WMATA's employees has left a \$750 million operating deficit going forward. **The size of this gap is such that WMATA cannot solve this on its own solely with fare increases and service reductions.** Doing so would devastate the system across the region. Yet, the local and state taxpayers are not equipped to come to WMATA's rescue either.

In December, the Chief Administrative Officers of the region's jurisdictions, led by Alexandria's City Manager Jim Parajon, **prepared an interim report that detailed a framework for how we move forward as a region to stabilize the finances of WMATA.**

While I do not agree with everything proposed in this framework, it is a clear-eyed assessment of the decisions before us.

As the General Assembly works to address this challenge, **Governor Youngkin has now signaled his support for increased state funding for WMATA in conjunction with approval for the North Potomac Yard Entertainment District proposal.**

Addressing this financial gap will require collective action across the three state governments, its local jurisdictions (including Alexandria) and the Federal Government. **This type of conversation is one that is playing out around the nation**, but it will require a series of difficult decisions locally.

Transit is essential to our region's economy and our quality of life, but the financial model that has supported its existence for a generation is upside down. The work ahead requires defining a new model to sustain transit for another generation.



Ladrey Redevelopment

Last month, **the City Council unanimously approved the redevelopment of Ladrey Homes and the adjacent headquarters of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA)**.

The current Ladrey is 170 units of committed affordable units, affordable for those at 30% of the **Area Median Income (AMI)**. **The new Ladrey will be 270 units of committed affordable units, with 170 remaining for those at 30% of AMI, joining 20 new units affordable for those at 60% of AMI and 80 new units for those at 80% of AMI**. This proposal replaces the current affordability and creates a significant supply of new affordable housing for residents age 55 and older in our community.

In this newsletter, I frequently write about our efforts to create and preserve "affordable housing." The term "affordable housing" itself is imprecise to the extent of being nearly useless, in that it means different things to different people.

We tend to deal with both "committed affordable housing" and "naturally-occurring affordable housing." The former are units that are restricted legally in some way to ensure that they remain affordable to those of moderate incomes for an extended period of time or in perpetuity. The latter are market-rate units that just happen to be affordable at current rates for those of moderate incomes. The latter is largely extinct in the City of Alexandria today.

Most of the new committed affordable housing developed by the City is in partnership with non-profit affordable housing developers, or committed units that are provided by private developers as a development proffer, typically in exchange for density.

Yet, if you ask most residents of our City what they think of when they are asked about "affordable housing," they think of public housing. While Alexandria does have a significant stock of public

housing, our public housing authority has not been a significant entity in the recent development of new committed affordable housing in our City. That is changing.

A year ago, our Planning Commission and the City Council approved an application for redevelopment of Samuel Madden Homes. Samuel Madden is currently a 66-unit public housing development owned by the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). **This redevelopment will replace this property with 532 total units, 326 of which will be committed affordable units and 206 market-rate units.**

ARHA directly manages and controls 1,079 units of affordable housing. In addition, ARHA manages the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, which utilizes Federal funding to provide assistance for another 1,906 low-income families to reside in privately-owned housing units. Together, this is approximately 4% of the City's overall housing stock.

Over 42 years ago, the City Council adopted **Resolution 830**, which committed the City to "one for one" replacement of any public housing unit that was destroyed by redevelopment. The City has met that commitment in each redevelopment effort.

As of four and a half years ago, Resolution 830 is no more, replaced by Resolution 2876. The new resolution, endorsed by the City and our public housing authority Board, modernizes the City's commitment to preservation for a new generation of challenges.

Making the commitment stated in Resolution 830 (now 2876) is rather easy. Actually achieving that replacement, in an environment of dwindling Federal resources and rapidly-appreciating property values, is extraordinarily difficult.

That difficulty was again demonstrated by **the announcement almost six years ago that ARHA and its private development partner could not come to terms to move forward with the redevelopment of the Andrew Adkins development.** While not unexpected given the challenges of this project, this was a terribly disappointing turn of events that has delayed redevelopment efforts by multiple years.

The future state of Resolution 830/2876 and the future of the Andrew Adkins redevelopment effort are linked. The very same factors that prompted a review of Resolution 830 challenged the feasibility of redeveloping the existing Andrew Adkins.

After a few years of reset after the failure of Andrew Adkins, ARHA is getting back on track with both Madden and Ladrey. The authority has worked to restructure the financing of existing public housing properties and better utilize available tools and capabilities. This will facilitate redevelopment beyond Madden and Ladrey.

Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority (ARHA) is an independent entity, with a City Council-appointed Board, but separate from the City, that utilizes Federal funding from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to provide housing to low-income residents of Alexandria.

At the federal level, we have seen dramatic changes in how public housing is managed and developed. In the past, the Federal Government had been a proactive participant in bringing about the redevelopment of public housing. This was demonstrated in Alexandria when the City used **HOPE VI funding** to redevelop 100 units of Public Housing into **Chatham Square**. This mixed-income development incorporated both market-rate and public housing.

With aging properties sitting on valuable land, ARHA must look at the highest and best use of its land to preserve housing for low-income residents in our City.

In 2008, the City Council adopted the **Braddock East Master Plan**, which called for redevelopment of several aging public housing properties. By allowing additional density near existing transit, it was designed to encourage private partnership in the redevelopment of this housing.

Aligned with this Plan, James Bland Homes **became Old Town Commons**. Ramsey Homes **became The Lineage at North Patrick**. This redevelopment activity has proven successful in providing a sustainable model for mixed-income housing in our City.

This is a significant undertaking and we will have a historic opportunity to partner with the private sector and provide new housing for a variety of income levels near existing transit in our City. This effort will also provide financial stability for ARHA in the face of continued change at the Federal level.



Crime Data

At the beginning of December, the **Alexandria Police Department arrested an individual who was alleged to have stolen a vehicle on the West End**. While our Police were able to quickly apprehend a suspect, this incident was one of 472 vehicles stolen in Alexandria in

2023. This was a nearly 50% increase in stolen autos from 2022, with [Hyundai and Kia thefts constituting nearly half of the vehicles stolen](#).

Part 1 crime is the most serious crime (homicides, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and auto theft). In 2023, the incidents of Part 1 crime in Alexandria increased nearly 30% from 2022. This increase was driven primarily by aggravated assaults, robberies, larcenies and auto theft.

The Alexandria Police Department [recently created a new APD Crime Dashboard](#), which allows residents to track the incidents of crime by incident and location, showing trends for each.

Protecting the safety of our community is the most important obligation of local government. If our residents are not safe, nothing else matters.

Alexandria remains a safe community. While the year ended with positive trendlines in several areas, the overall increase for 2023, and particularly the increase in violent crime, is unacceptable.

The underlying causes of the increases in violence (not just in Alexandria, but around the region and our nation) are so varied, that there is no single answer to this issue. However, the City is approaching this uptick in violence using multiple approaches:

- Restoring Police Staffing/Reducing Attrition
- Expanding "upstream" investments (family supports, mental/behavioral health, housing, re-entry programs, etc) proven to reduce violence
- Expanding community policing
- Continue advocacy for new laws in Washington and Richmond to slow the flow of dangerous firearms into our community

In recent budget decisions, we have included new funding for investigatory capacity focused on those responsible for homicides, felony sex offenses and crimes driven by weapons. We have continued to see mental health and behavioral health incidents driving emergency response. [The City's ACORP program](#), a co-response program pairing a sworn police officer with a mental health practitioner, has seen considerable success. The City Council chose to build on the success of this effort by expanding ACORP by adding two new ACORP pairs, for a total of 3.

The City has hired two of the largest classes of new police officers entering the Academy. As those officers conclude their training, we will make large progress on some of the staffing challenges the Police Department has experienced for the past few years.

Coupled with new investments in preventative (upstream) investments, we can buck national and regional trends and reduce violence and property crimes in our City.

Our Police rely on information from the public. Please report anything that is out of the ordinary to 703-746-4444 or 911, as appropriate.



Freedom House

The [City's Freedom House Museum is now hosting a temporary exhibit through the middle of April.](#)

The new exhibit is based on [Gonzaga High School's research on its own connection to the slave trade,](#) and how that history informed their own reconciliation efforts.

This new temporary exhibit aligns well with the City's interpretative mission for this important space, [that we continue to plan and implement.](#)

[Between 1828 and 1861, over 100,000 enslaved African-Americans passed through 1315 Duke Street in the City of Alexandria. This building was the headquarters for one of the largest domestic slave trading operations in our nation.](#)

[For the past 4 years, the City of Alexandria owns the building, having purchased it from the Northern Virginia Urban League to ensure the preservation of this important historic resource.](#) While the purchase was [locally funded](#), the Commonwealth's approved budget in 2020 included [\\$2.4 million of state funding](#) to support the rehabilitation and development of the historic resources on the site.

In furtherance of this effort, the City commissioned a comprehensive Historic Structures Report (HSR) to formally document the history, plan future interpretation and prioritize rehabilitation. Two years ago, the firm commissioned to perform the study [formally presented their findings](#) and the [final report.](#)

Operating from a prominent location, this human trafficking operation brought enslaved African-Americans from the Chesapeake Bay area to a holding pen surrounding the building, where they were then forced by foot or by ship to Natchez, Mississippi or New Orleans.

This property is a significant piece of Alexandria and our nation's history. The history depicted in the museum today, and the history yet to be unlocked in the building is a story that must be told. I believe we

must work to ensure this history remains accessible to the public.

Additionally, private fundraising efforts are working to support this important resource. [Please join me in donating to support this effort.](#)

I am excited about the opportunity that this museum presents for the City to better discover, interpret and educate the public on a vital part of American history. I am excited to see this museum open and serving the public again.



Youth Safety & Resilience

It should be no surprise, that as we grapple with an uptick in violent crime, that the perpetrators of that violence are almost exclusively young men and boys. It is these boys, ranging from the teenage years to young adulthood that are most in need. It is these boys who suffered the most during the pandemic as the array of services that we provide to serve them became frayed as school buildings remained closed.

[The Alexandria Mentoring Partnership](#) is looking for you to help be part of the solution! Mentoring is a proven method to decrease the likelihood that our youth will become involved in crime, substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, and gang affiliation. [Please sign-up today to mentor our youth!](#) We will provide the training and ensure that you are successful.

In the aftermath of significant violence involving our youth, [Councilwoman Gaskins and I proposed a framework](#) for a series of youth-led engagements to better understand how we can productively invest in the resilience of our youth.

That call and engagement [resulted in a comprehensive analysis prepared by our staff.](#)

Last month, [our youth ambassadors came to City Council to present their findings.](#) You can watch their presentation [by going to the 1:45:00 point of our last City Council Legislative meeting video.](#)

This engagement has resulted in important recommendations relating to:

- Communication of resources
- Creation of dedicated space for youth
- Improved transportation
- New programs for youth engagement

Our youth have shouldered the worst of the challenges we have collectively faced over the past 4 years. Ensuring that every young person in our City is

equipped to thrive during these challenging times remains a top priority in our community. Elevating these youth voices to help guide our approach can help us craft more authentic solutions.



Confederate Street Names

Last month, the City Council unanimously approved the [renaming or rededication of 4 streets in our City:](#)

- North Breckinridge Place will become Harriet Jacobs Place: Harriet Jacobs was an African-American abolitionist and writer who established the first free school for African-American children in Alexandria.
- North and South Early Street will become North and South Earley Street: Lt. Col. Charity Earley was the US Army's highest-ranking African-American woman officer during World War II
- North and South Jordan Street, Jordan Court will be rededicated: Thomasina Jordan was the first American Indian to serve in the United States Electoral College
- Forrest Street will become Forest Street

These were the [recommendations of the Alexandria Naming Committee to undertake a renaming or rededication of several City streets.](#)

This recommendation was informed by [the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission which endorsed a list of new street names](#), prioritizing those who are underrepresented on Alexandria street signs, particularly women and minorities.

Those who served on City Councils of the past used street naming policies as a form of permanent protest against the burgeoning civil rights movement and growing political power for African-Americans. As a symbol, these honors persist today, honoring virulent racists, many of whom took up arms against our nation. These honors are not defensible and should be removed.

In August of 2016, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Confederate Memorials and Street Names [presented its final report to the City Council](#). This report recommended that the City proceed with a [renaming of Jefferson Davis Highway](#) and allow the typical City renaming process to handle renaming of other streets in our City.

During the FY 23 budget process, our City staff [provided a detailing of the budgetary impacts that would accompany street renaming efforts and detailed a more methodical approach.](#)

While it is important to remove these inappropriate honors, it is also important to consider practical concerns as thousands of Alexandria residents live on these streets, numerous businesses operate on these streets and residents and visitors use these existing street names to navigate our community. As such, I believe a reasonable, yet deliberate pace of renaming these streets over time should be embarked upon.

Early last year, [my colleagues supported my proposal](#) to ask our Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) to help us develop a list of people, places and things worthy of honor, particularly those names that draw attention to people and events of our history that have been frequently overlooked. With that list, the City's Naming Committee will go to work to assign new names to approximately 3 streets each year.

[Honors and commemorations that seemed appropriate a century or even 40 years ago, may no longer be appropriate in a modern Alexandria.](#) Our ability to reflect and change is a strength of our community.

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