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Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

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Happy New Year!

It is hard to believe that it is 2017. I am certainly happy to see 2016 head into the history books

As 2017 begins, we have completed the first year of this Council term.

I'm proud of the work that this Council has done together to address our infrastructure needs, face the opportunity that school enrollment growth has provided

us with, and manage a period of unprecedented economic transition for our region.

We have a lot of work to do in the upcoming year. I look forward to working with the residents of our City to make exciting progress. Let's get started.

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

Council Initiatives

Streets Safe For All

In 2012, [a drunk driver killed a child walking along the road near Landmark Mall](#). His mother was also seriously injured.

In 2013, [a pedestrian was struck and injured while crossing Mount Vernon Avenue at Four Mile Road in the crosswalk](#).

In 2013, [another child, while trick-or-treating, was hit by a vehicle on Russell Road](#). While seriously injured, he fortunately survived.



[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Marketing Fund Deadline!

Do you have an idea to help promote Alexandria as a destination for visiting, shopping, dining or other business?

[If so, submit your application for funding by the Alexandria Marketing Fund.](#)

The Fund is designed to provide seed money to create public/private partnerships to promote Alexandria. [Here is a list of the grantees from last fiscal year.](#)

The deadline is Friday January 13th, so please submit your application today!

Drug Take Back

Do you have unwanted or expired prescription medications?

The Alexandria Sheriff's Department, in cooperation with the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria and The Neighborhood Pharmacy, will be conducting another "Drug Take Back" event.

[On Saturday, January 7th from 10 AM until 2 PM at The Neighborhood Pharmacy \(2204 Mount Vernon Avenue\), you may drop any of these medications that you might have.](#)

The event is free and anonymous.

In 2014, [a mother pushing a stroller with an infant was hit while walking on the sidewalk near Cora Kelly Elementary School.](#)

In 2015, [a resident was hit and suffered serious injuries while crossing the street at Duke and Ingram.](#)

A year and a half ago, [a long-time City resident was hit and killed at an intersection in Del Ray.](#)

In May of last year, [a biker was hit and seriously injured on Duke at West Taylor Run.](#)

In August, [a parking attendant was hit by a vehicle and killed in Old Town.](#)

In October, [a resident was hit and killed while crossing Yoakum Parkway on the West End.](#)

A few days later, [a pedestrian was hit by a drunk driver in Old Town.](#) The pedestrian died a little over a month later.

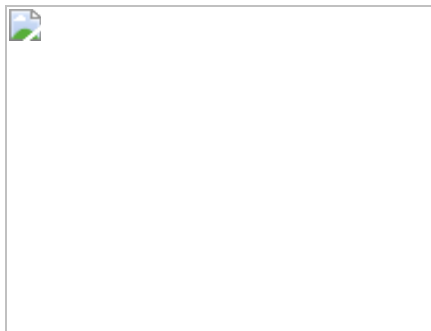
Just last month, [another pedestrian was hit in the crosswalk and killed walking home from work in Del Ray.](#)

[The data shows that vehicle accidents have trended downward over the past five years, peaking at 1,713 in 2012, and were on pace for under 1,300 to finish out 2016. Overall accidents involving pedestrians have stayed steady at roughly five or six per month. Yet the four pedestrian deaths last year was the highest count in years.](#)

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.

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 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 Council expanded the Alexandria Police Department's traffic enforcement capacity by 30%.](#) We also provided additional overtime funding to ensure expanded traffic enforcement until those resources come online.

Last year, [the Council adopted an overhaul of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.](#) Early this year, we will kick-off a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While such an initiative will involve

Help Choose a New Principal

The Alexandria City Public Schools are choosing a new principal to lead T. C. Williams, our only public high school.

In order to inform this process, an online survey is being conducted to collect your input. [Please take a moment to complete the survey prior to the deadline on January 8th.](#)

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!

Track a DASH Bus

DASHBus, Alexandria's local bus service has now implemented real-time bus arrival information.

[Try it out at your computer or mobile device today!](#)

See The Stars

One of the little known treasures of Alexandria is the Planetarium at T. C. Williams High School.

Even lesser known is that each month, Bob Nicholson, who has long managed the Planetarium, opens it up for the community for free.

[Reservations](#) are required, but don't miss out on this great resource! The next show is the evening of Tuesday, January 31st.

significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries.

Alarmed by these recent incidents, the Council held a discussion regarding pedestrian safety last month at our first legislative meeting. [You can watch the staff presentation and the Council discussion online.](#)

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 shows that the changes that will most significantly improve safety, are also the most controversial in our community. We have to follow the research.

[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 shows that the project has reduced speed, reduced accidents 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. Data collection will be conducted on these changes in the future.

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 looked at signalization efforts that can improve safety. At the site of one recent pedestrian fatality, the City created a "[Leading Pedestrian Interval](#)" to allow residents to get a head-start crossing before traffic can move.

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.

[In response to concerns among several neighborhoods in the center of the City, the City is currently conducting data collection to guide future mitigation efforts for traffic concerns in several neighborhoods.](#)

As I mentioned during the Council discussion last month, I do believe there is more we can do.

The research shows that [speed is closely linked with the lethality of a pedestrian accident](#). 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.

[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](#).

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.

[I also believe it is time to budget for safer streets differently than we have in the past. We now view road paving, sidewalk improvements,](#)

[and our complete streets investments as a program, rather than discrete investments. It's time to budget and plan accordingly.](#)

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 Call, Click, Connect to bring those areas to the attention of our city staff for analysis.](#)

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.

Municipal Buildings

In school, most students learn sooner or later that procrastination doesn't typically yield good results (it certainly took me a while). The same rule holds true for the maintenance of infrastructure.

Last year the City began a multi-year effort to assess the condition of City facilities. Rather than rely on anecdotes and intuition, the assessment is designed to provide objective data to guide City investment decisions.

The City currently has 123 facilities. These facilities have an average age of 57 years old. Of those, 12 of them are over 100 years old, and five of them are over 200 years old. [Our oldest is Gadsby's Tavern, which was built in 1785.](#)

Rather than go through all 123 at the same time, the Department of General Services assessed 36 of the facilities in the first phase of the effort. Each facility was assigned a score of A through F.

Last year's [results were as jarring as they were expected. While 13 of the assessed facilities fell into the A or B scoring, the remainder were C and below, with eight drawing an F score.](#) Included with a failing score was our own City Hall.

Last year, as part of the [\\$10.2 million infrastructure package approved as part of the City's FY 2017 Budget](#), the Council chose to include \$3.75 million to address facility issues, including the Courthouse, Gadsby's and the Apothecary museums.

We have now completed the second phase of the assessment. This phase included an additional 54 facilities, including most of our fire stations, group homes, and Chinquapin Recreation Center. We have now assessed 68% of our overall municipal square footage.

With 90 facilities assessed, 31% are rated D or F. Simply to bring all 90 of the facilities that have been assessed up to a C grade over the next decade would require \$165 million, an additional \$80 million beyond what is currently in our 10 year Capital Improvement Program. To bring these facilities to an A grade would require an additional \$239 million beyond what is currently in the Capital Improvement Program.

When we are discussing such significant amounts of new investment, I believe that we would be irresponsible not to have a full deliberation as to alternatives and trade-offs.

[Sadly, attempts in 2015 at reasonable discussion on these issues got lost in election year politics.](#)

With the election behind us (and hopefully the politics), I'm optimistic that reasoned decision making is now possible. The significant need for investment in this infrastructure also creates opportunities for the City. We have the ability to assess collocation with other City (and non-City) services, more balanced geographic delivery of City services, and relative service prioritization.

Our use of City facilities can and should evolve over time. [Our City Hall previously housed our Police Department, our courts, and our Fire Department](#). Those services are now elsewhere in our community. At one point, our City ended at Quaker Lane. Now, most of our population lives west of Quaker Lane.

At my request, last year's [annual Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program](#) included a new City Facilities Master Plan effort. The approved budget included new funding to execute the effort. In late November, [the Council commenced the process, now rechristened the City's Strategic Facility Plan](#).

This process is designed to look holistically at our facility needs, including those of the Alexandria City Public Schools. The goal will be to effectively invest in our municipal facilities to provide the infrastructure necessary to serve our residents.

Investing in our municipal infrastructure is vital. Leveraging those important investments to improve efficiency and effectiveness is an opportunity we should not squander.

Preserving Affordable Housing

The [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.

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.

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.

Now at the beginning of 2017, the Federal Government is forcing changes in public housing with its inaction. Today, HUD only funds 73% of every dollar required to operate Alexandria Public Housing units. The balance of revenue that ARHA collects as rent is not sufficient for sustainable management of their properties, and this is likely to get worse. The impacts of the new Administration are largely unknown at this point.

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.

Over 30 years ago, the City Council adopted [Resolution 830](#), which committed the City to the replacement of any public housing unit that was displaced by redevelopment. In past redevelopment efforts, replacement units have been obtained and created throughout 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 [have become Old Town Commons](#). This redevelopment activity has proven successful in providing a sustainable model for mixed-income housing in our City.

In the fall of 2014, with these experiences and lessons behind us, [ARHA issued an RFP \(Request for Proposals\) to solicit proposals from private developers for the potential redevelopment of seven additional properties: Cameron Valley \(built in 1985\), Andrew Adkins \(built in 1969\), Samuel Madden \(built in 1945\), Ramsey Homes \(built in 1942\), Hopkins Tancil \(built in 1945\), Ladrey \(built in 1968\), and the ARHA Headquarters building on North Fairfax Street.](#)

As they continued through the process, ARHA narrowed the number of properties down to five: Andrew Adkins, Samuel Madden, Hopkins Tancil, the ARHA Headquarters building, and Cameron Valley.

The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group, which I serve on along with Councilman Chapman, the ARHA Chair, the ARHA Vice Chair, and the Planning Commission Chair, is tasked with coordinating the work between the City and ARHA.

ARHA has chosen development partners for each of the five remaining properties:

Andrew Adkins: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty

Samuel Madden: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty

Hopkins Tancil: EYA/Penrose/JBG

ARHA Headquarters: EYA/Penrose/JBG

Cameron Valley: Bozzuto/Wesley Housing

Each of these redevelopment efforts will rely on [Low Income Housing Tax Credits](#) (LIHTC) and will need to compete successfully for those funding sources.

Given resource constraints at the staff level, as well as the need for Federal tax credits to make redevelopment feasible, these projects have now been sequenced.

The [proposed sequence](#) has Andrew Adkins and Samuel Madden proceeding first, with the redevelopment approvals tentatively planned to be before Council and the Planning Commission in December of 2017. After Adkins and Madden, the ARHA Headquarters site and Hopkins Tancil are proposed to proceed to approval in June of 2019. Cameron Valley would proceed last with the development approval in December 2020.

Last month, the [Andrew Adkins process began](#) with a kick-off meeting for the community to meet with the redevelopment team. Soon, the development partners will begin submitting concepts to the City's Planning and Zoning staff for review and comments.

Associated with this process is discussion of the modernization of [Resolution 830](#) itself. The resolution was adopted 35 years ago, and itself was an update to a resolution adopted in 1972. [In 2009 the Alexandria Affordable Housing Initiatives Work Group, co-chaired by then-Councilmen Rob Krupicka and Ludwig Gaines provided a series](#)

[of recommendations, including a suggested update of Resolution 830.](#)

In the past 35 years, much has changed about the way the City approaches affordable housing. Last month, the City Council approved a project done in partnership with [Carpenter's Shelter](#) and the [Alexandria Housing Development Corporation](#) (AHDC), [to create 98 new affordable rental units](#). AHDC is the City's affordable housing non-profit. AHDC was [originally created by the City in 2003](#).



Much of the new affordable housing creation the City does today is in partnership with non-profits. One of the goals of a modernization of Resolution 830 will be to reflect that reality and ensure that our preservation commitments do not just apply to public

housing units, but across the spectrum of affordable housing.

The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group will be tackling this issue in the New Year in consultation with the many City boards and commissions that advise the City on housing issues.

As ARHA begins this effort in cooperation with the City, 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.

Let me know your thoughts!

Data Drives Good Decisions

Providing accountable results to the residents of Alexandria for their tax investment is an obligation 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.

[Nearly 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.

The 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.

[A year ago we took the next step, as OPA has 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 updated these reports to show our performance for Fiscal Year 2016. Two of the reports (Internal Audit and Housing) are in a new format that ultimately all agencies will be converted to.

[In addition, the Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\) unveiled 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 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.

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings continue!



You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply a member of the Alexandria City Council (me) with 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

Saving Metro

Once the crown jewel of the Washington, DC region, Metrorail is experiencing a very difficult time. While the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has numerous challenges, the most serious and pressing are related to safety.

Metro is a basic building block of our region's economy. If there is a perception that the system is unsafe, then that can be crippling to the region.

The General Manager of WMATA, Paul Wiedefeld, is aggressively working to tackle these challenges. [During the summer, WMATA began implementing the Safe Track Plan, designed to concentrate three years of work into one year.](#)

Advancing this work requires expanded time when the system is not operating. To make this happen, extended weekend hours have been discontinued, new mid-day maintenance is occurring, and most importantly, a series of "surges" will occur across the system.

There were two "Safety Surges" last year that directly impacted Alexandria. [Safety Surge 3 occurred from July 5th through July 11th.](#) [Safety Surge 4 occurred from July 12th through July 18th.](#)

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

During the surges, bus ridership in the corridor doubled and ridership on the Route 1 Transitway tripled. The shuttle bus operation carried 17,000 trips a day during Surge 3 and 25,000 trips a day during Surge 4. On DASH, ridership increases were between 26-31%.

We saw a 92% increase in usage of the Potomac Yard Trail, an 89% increase for the Mount Vernon Trail. Those were coupled with a 27% increase in Commonwealth Avenue bike traffic.

Unfortunately, the impact of these safety surges on Alexandria is not complete. While WMATA has delayed the start of the next surges, [the](#)

[next three will have considerable impact on Alexandria.](#) The schedule for these changes should be released this month.

This is in addition to [speed restrictions that remain in effect indefinitely on the Blue and Yellow line](#), as well as [Blue Line head-ways that remain the longest in the system.](#)

While safety is paramount, it cannot be the singular focus for the system. WMATA has also released the ["Back2Good Plan."](#) The focus is to address the many factors that impact reliability and riders' experience.



[As part of that discussion, the WMATA Board recently adopted new hours for the operation of Metro Rail. Beginning July 1 of this year, Metro Rail will operate 5 AM until 11:30 PM from Monday through Thursday, 5 AM until 1 AM on Friday, 7 AM until 1 AM on Saturday, and 8 AM until 11 PM on Sunday.](#)

As a daily WMATA rider myself these are important improvements, but they also come at a severe cost. That cost must be borne by riders or the local jurisdictions, or a bit of both.

[On the capital side, the WMATA General Manager has proposed an ambitious plan for new investment. That plan would require \\$37 million from Alexandria next year, \\$26 million more than was originally planned.](#)

[On the operating side, the General Manager has proposed a plan that would require over \\$6 million of additional funding next year.](#)

Returning Metro to a system that the region can be proud of is a long-term project, and one of the most important regional initiatives under way.

At the end of this month, the WMATA Board members from Virginia, including my colleague Councilman Paul Smedberg, will be participating in a forum in Alexandria. [The forum, sponsored by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, will be on Monday January 30th, from 5:30 PM until 8:30 PM at Durant Center at 1605 Cameron Street.](#)

Torpedo Factory

[The Torpedo Factory Arts Center](#) is an iconic presence on the City's waterfront. Bringing a half million visitors into working artists galleries, the Factory is a economic development engine and unique arts resource for our community.

The City of Alexandria purchased the Factory from the United States Government in 1969. The Arts Center was opened in 1974 and has been a model for similar centers around country.

Yet for the past several years, the challenges of the Factory and the possible solutions to those challenges have been divisive.



In 2009, the [City commissioned a study to review the Factory and the opportunities of the site](#). The result of the study was a series of organizational changes to the Factory. [Those led to the creation of a new non-profit Board](#) to run the operations and leverage private resources to support the Factory.

With the existing lease nearing conclusion on June 30th of last year, the Torpedo Factory Arts Center Board [commissioned another study to look at the strategic options available to the City and the Factory](#).

This report recommended more changes to the governance, the management, and vision of the Factory.

My focus is on deriving a structure for the operation of the Factory that:

- expands the vitality of the Factory
- improves its financial sustainability
- improves its diversity
- ensures the success of Alexandria's premier arts destination long into the future.

I am confident that working together we can achieve these goals.

[As the efforts to chart that course continue, the City has now taken steps to provide stability in the intervening time period. Effective October 1, the City assumed caretaker leadership for the Factory.](#) Since that time, the City has provided 3 year leases to the existing artist tenants, and is providing day to day management.

Starting early this year, we will have a series of public input opportunities to assist in determining the future of the Torpedo Factory.

It is my hope that this phase will be brief and we will be able to move forward with a new structure for the future of the Torpedo Factory.

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