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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson

July 1, 2023

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Welcome to Summer!

[Next Saturday evening \(the 8th\), Alexandria will gather in Oronoco Bay Park to celebrate our City's 274th birthday and our nation's 247th birthday.](#)

The most cherished of Alexandria traditions: We will have fireworks, enjoy a performance by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra, cannons from the 3rd U. S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) and have birthday cupcakes distributed by the City Council.

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This event is my favorite of the year and I'm looking forward to being back with all of you on our waterfront, Alexandria's front yard! The festivities get started at 6 PM. I'll see you there!

On Tuesday, the Rosemont Citizens Association [brings back a time-honored event, their Fourth of July Celebration, at Naomi Brooks Elementary School at 600 Russell Road.](#) There will be patriotic dogs, decorated bikes, music, food, a moon bounce, and much more!

The Beatley, Barrett, Burke and Duncan library branches, we will be distributing no-cost cable and trigger locks for firearms. [These devices are an initiative of Lock and Talk Virginia, a suicide prevention program.](#)

The Alexandria City Public Schools have commenced Kindergarten registration for the 2023 - 2024 school year. [The process and required documentation is detailed online.](#)

If you would like to host a town hall in your neighborhood, [please drop me a line](#) and we'll get it on the calendar!

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

Initiatives and Updates

A New Duke Street



Last week, the City Council unanimously voted to endorse the recommendations of the Duke Street Transitway Advisory Group [for configuration of the enhanced bus service on the corridor.](#)

Council took this action after several hours of public testimony both for and against these recommendations. With Council's action, this project will enter a new phase of planning, design and implementation as we re-imagine one of the most important corridors in our City.

The focus of our efforts on Duke Street are divided into 5 key areas:

[Duke Street Traffic Mitigation:](#) To Reduce Congestion and Cut-Through Traffic

Smart Traffic Signals: To better manage traffic with technology

Duke Street at West Taylor Run: To improve access to the highway

Vision Zero: Reduce serious crashes

Duke Street Bus Rapid Transit: Enhance and improve bus service

The Advisory Group has made a long-term recommendation that bus service along the corridor should travel in center-running bus lanes with separate spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. This would be implemented over time as funding and redevelopment make this vision feasible.

In the near-term the Advisory Group has recommended that the busway be implemented today:

Segment 1: From Ripley to Jordan, with center-running bus lanes

Segment 2a: From Jordan to Wheeler, with buses running in mixed traffic

Segment 2b: From Wheeler to Roth, with a single direction center-running bus lane

Segment 3: From Roth to Callahan, with center-running and mixed traffic/curb running and mixed traffic

Over 15 years ago, the City adopted its latest **Transportation Master Plan**. At the time, the plan was a significant transition in that it shifted from a plan focused on roads and vehicle traffic, to a plan that prioritized transit.

One of the most significant changes that came from the 2008 Master Plan was the designation of three transit corridors for high-capacity transit. The three corridors were Transit Corridor A, which was nominally north to south on Route 1 on the east end of the City, Transit Corridor B, which was intended as east to west on Duke Street and Transit Corridor C, which was north to south on the west end of the City using Van Dorn and Beauregard.

After the adoption of the 2008 Master Plan, **a community task force was assembled to provide some more details around the vision for each of the transit corridors.**

Transit Corridor A began service as "Metroway" nearly nine years ago, and was the region's first bus rapid transit service, providing service to Potomac Yard and Crystal City, which further enhancements planned.

Transit Corridor C, now called the "West End Transitway" will be the next to come to reality. The West End Transitway has now been awarded **\$73 million of State and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) funds.**

The slower pace of redevelopment in the Beauregard corridor will necessitate multiple phases to implement this project. With funding now in place (not until 2024-2025), work begins to plan the implementation.

Transit Corridor B, the Duke Street Transitway, will be the final corridor implemented. Nearly 3 years ago, the City received \$75 million in regional funds from the NVTA to bring this new transit to reality.

High capacity transit provides our residents with alternatives to congestion and delay. Coupled with the other improvements on Duke, I am confident the important road will become a more usable, safe and efficient option for our entire community.



Funding Metro

On Tuesday April 4th, during Cherry Blossom season, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Metrorail system carried 426,000 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 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, in the past few days, Metrorail is recovering and will be 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.

Last month, 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.

As such, 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.



More Electric Buses!

Almost 3 years ago, Former Governor Northam and his Secretary of Transportation were in Alexandria to join me in unveiling our first electric buses!

DASH was the **recipient of \$5.1 million from the Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust**, which has allowed the purchase of electric buses for its fleet.

Last month, **the Federal Transit Administration awarded the City \$24 million through its Low/No Emission Buses & Bus Facilities Program**. This historic grant will allow the City to purchase 13 new electric buses and related charging infrastructure.

This is will give the City one of the largest electric bus fleets on the East Coast.

Motor vehicles are the largest non-stationary sources of greenhouse gas emissions. One of the City's most significant efforts to reduce emissions and fulfill our obligations in battling climate change are our investments in mass transit. While most of that investment goes to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), for over 35 years the City has run the **DASH Bus system** to serve our local needs.

While DASH is experiencing the ridership crisis that is facing all transit agencies, prior to COVID, DASH carried a little over 3 million passengers per year.

In 2011, the **City made a decision to purchase hybrid diesel/electric buses to begin replacing the all-diesel fleet of buses that was in operation at that point**. At that time, a diesel bus cost \$450,000 apiece, and the hybrid buses cost \$700,000. Yet it was believed that the combination of the fuel savings and potential maintenance savings would cause the total cost of ownership to be lower over time for the hybrid buses. With reduced emissions, fuel consumption and particulate matter, this switch was in alignment with the City's **Environmental Action Plan**.

Three years ago, the Council directed a brief return to diesel bus purchasing in order to retire the oldest (and highest polluting) buses in the DASH fleet. This interim move allowed for DASH to prepare for electrification of its bus fleet.

As electric transit bus technology matures and comes down in cost, the City should lead the way by putting these cleaner transit vehicles on the streets of Alexandria. I am excited to see these buses hit the road.



Water Refunds

Alexandria remains one in a relatively small list of Virginia jurisdictions who have a private water utility. [Virginia American Water Company \(VAWC\)](#), a subsidiary of a large national company, provides the water supply to Alexandria's residents and businesses.

As a private utility, VAWC is subject to the authority of the [State Corporation Commission \(SCC\)](#) in Richmond. [In November of 2021, the utility filed before the SCC for a rate increase.](#)

In April of last year, [the City Council voted to intervene in this application before the SCC and oppose this rate increase.](#)

Earlier this year, the SCC concurred with the City's position and rejected most of VAWC's requested increase. [As such, all Alexandria water rate-payers will receive a refund retroactive to 2019.](#)

I'm hopeful we can continue our efforts working with VAWC to improve our aging water infrastructure but respect our ratepayers and good processes at the same time.



Zoning For Housing

Last week, the City Council met in a joint worksession with our Planning Commission to discuss the ongoing Zoning For Housing initiative. This is our year-long effort to expand housing production and affordability as well as address past and current barriers to equitable housing access.

[You can watch the entire joint worksession, including the comments from both members of Council and members of the Planning Commission.](#) It was an interesting dialogue.

We continue to [seek public input from residents](#) as our staff works this summer to craft the specific package of reforms that will be presented to the community in September and voted on later this year.

[In March, the City kicked-off an acceleration of the Zoning for Housing work program.](#) We have worked all year to engage with residents to develop a package of specific land-use proposals in these areas:

- Single-Family Zoning
- Removal of Restrictive/Exclusionary barriers from the zoning code
- Bonus Height
- Expanded Transit-Oriented Growth

- Industrial Zones
- Coordinated Development Districts (CDDs)
- **Inclusionary Zoning**
- Townhouse Zoning
- Property Conversions
- **Expansion of the Residential Multi-Family Zone (RMF)**

This is the most ambitious housing effort in the City's history and we want the voice of residents from throughout our community involved in this process.

You can watch my comments at the kick-off the last session, and leading into presentations from Richard and Leah Rothstein, **the authors of the forthcoming book, "Just Action,"** a follow-up to Richard Rothstein's **seminal tome "The Color of Law."**

All of the sessions **have been recorded and are viewable online**.

While this effort has a pair of motivations, a foundational acknowledgement is that for much of the 20th Century, **wide swaths of Alexandria housing was off-limits to Alexandrians that were not white**. That reality was enforced by a patchwork of ordinances, restrictive covenants, intimidation and lending practices that served to effectively segregate our City for generations. While de jure policies that explicitly enforced segregation **were made illegal long ago**, the legacy of these policies live on today. In fact, in recent years, **Alexandria has grown MORE segregated**. These realities are detailed in the **Draft Regional Fair Housing Plan** that I wrote about a few months ago.

The question before our community is what can be done about it. It was generations of intentional acts that led to our current reality. It will require intentional acts to change it.

As our City has grown more segregated, the lack of housing supply has left Alexandria inaccessible for low and moderate-income residents. It is those paired challenges that leave our City at a crossroads.

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

Somewhat inexplicably, local governments have been reluctant to use the single most effective tool to increase the supply of affordable housing: build more housing. The reluctance of local governments has been even more surprising given that a supply-based approach has been the policy of the last three Presidential administrations, two Democrats and one Republican. It's **the policy of our current Republican Governor**. It has been the approach of the Sierra Club and the National Association of Home Builders. It has been the approach of the Brookings Institute, the Hoover Institution and even the Cato Institute.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While there is a broad agreement in our community about the problem and the need to focus on solutions to our affordability challenges, bringing together

agreement on the correct solutions to pursue is a little more challenging.

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

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

There will be many opportunities for engagement throughout this process. The City will continue to seek creative partnerships, new land-use tools and innovative financing to preserve and create affordability in our City. I am pleased to see these efforts come to fruition.



Student Enrollment

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

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

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

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

One of the products of this joint effort was a new enrollment projection methodology. This methodology uses the birth rate and corresponding Kindergarten capture rate, the cohort survival rate and the impacts of new development to project student enrollment each year. This methodology has been very accurate in

predicting how our student enrollment will grow over the past decade.

The **April update of our enrollment projections** showed that without the impact of planned development and growth, school enrollment is expected to peak in two years and then slowly decline. When the impact of planned development is included, the enrollment is projected to dip, but later return to pre-pandemic levels within a decade.

We have also worked to understand where the enrollment is coming from. The type and age of housing is a significant determinant of the student generation rates. **Just last month, we updated the student generation rates, by development type.** This analysis showed some results that might be considered counterintuitive by some in our community:

- 73% of Alexandria's housing is over 30 years old
- 89% of students in the Alexandria City Public Schools live in housing that is over 30 years old
- Only 3% of ACPS students live in market-rate, multi-family housing that was built in the last 30 years
- A third of ACPS students live in low-rise apartments, with nearly all of that enrollment in apartments that are older than 30 years old

We are in the most significant era of new school construction in our City's history.

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

In March of last year, we broke ground on a rebuild of Minnie Howard campus of Alexandria City High School. This will be a new 350,000 square foot facility intended to house 1,600 students. **The construction is expected to take 2.5 years and will open for the opening of the 2024-2025 school year.**

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

In May, City Council unanimously approved a 10-year capital improvement program for the Alexandria City Public Schools including \$367.2 million over the next decade. This provides the funding for both new and renovated facilities, as well as non-capacity infrastructure investments.

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

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

Five years ago, ACPS opened the first "net-new" school building in nearly two decades with the **opening of Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School on the West End.** Almost five years ago, ACPS **opened the newly rebuilt Patrick Henry K-8 School.** Both of these new buildings added badly needed capacity in areas of the City with rapidly growing enrollment.

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

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

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



Stream Restoration

In April, the City Council **voted to formalize the return of two grants valued at just over \$3 million** to the Commonwealth. These grants had been awarded through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's **Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF)**.

The City had been awarded SLAF funding for three urban stream restoration projects: Taylor Run, Lucky Run and Strawberry Run.

To help us reconcile , the City had brought in the [Institute for Engagement & Negotiation \(IEN\) of the University of Virginia](#). IEN served as a neutral third-party to lead the definition of the path forward. [They worked closely with our staff, community members and City boards and commissions to chart next steps.](#)

This [consensus-building exercise came to a close, with the new recommendations brought to Council last month](#). After considerable discussion, the City Council chose to accept the recommendations for Taylor Run, and to reject the recommendations for Strawberry Run. [You can watch the full City Council discussion \(head to the 2:44:00 time point\).](#)

The three original projects were intended to meet the City's obligations under the Federal Clean Water Act and the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. The City holds an MS4 Permit (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System). [The permit, issued by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, imposes a "pollution diet" on the City.](#)

Just over a decade ago, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made a historic commitment to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. [With the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\), the EPA committed six states and the District of Columbia to significant reductions in pollutants across a 64,000 square-mile watershed.](#)

The establishment of this TMDL imposed a "pollution diet" on the entire watershed, committing to reductions of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment from flowing into the Bay. To meet these ambitious goals, this TMDL was divided into smaller TMDLs for waterways and jurisdictions throughout the watershed.

We are in the second 5-year permit cycle that will culminate in reaching our portion of the TMDL.

By 2023, we have to meet 40% of the TMDL. By 2028, we must reach 100%.

[After an assessment helped prioritize and assess the pollutant reduction opportunities](#), the City selected three projects to be submitted to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Each was awarded SLAF funding by the state.

[The EPA has advanced stream restoration as a technique for the reduction of pollutants in the Bay.](#) This technique involves repairing the human impacts on streams, with the goal of restoring these streams back to their natural states.

The Lucky Run Stream Restoration project had received \$668,000 of SLAF funding and proposes to enhance the stream, re-introduce native plants, and improve the aesthetics of this area located in the shadow of Interstate 395 on the West End. This project was unanimously approved by City Council to be submitted for funding in 2017. **More information was presented to the community at a meeting in 2019.**

The Strawberry Run Stream Restoration project had received \$800,000 of SLAF funding and proposes making natural stream restoration improvements in an area bounded by Fort Williams Parkway, Taft Avenue and Duke Street. This project was unanimously approved by City Council to be submitted for funding in 2018.

The Taylor Run Stream Restoration had received \$2.55 million of SLAF funding and proposes restoring the natural stream-bed and repairing a threatened sanitary sewer connection in an area near the Chinquapin Recreation Center. This project was unanimously approved by City Council to be submitted for funding in 2018. **At the end of January 2021, a community meeting was held to review changes and solicit community feedback.**

Together, these were very important environmental projects for our City.

At Taylor Run, in addition to protecting a sanitary sewer line running through the area, this project will result in 9% of our required Nitrogen reduction, 30% of our required Phosphorous reduction and 4% of our required sediment reduction.

At Lucky Run, this project will result in 9% of our required Nitrogen reduction, 26% of our required Phosphorous reduction and 57% of our required sediment reduction.

At Strawberry Run, this project will result in 10% of our required Nitrogen reduction, 34% of our required Phosphorous reduction and 14% of our required sediment reduction.

Yet the projects are controversial, with opposition from residents concerned about construction impacts, potential ecological impacts, accuracy of pollution reduction estimates, tree impacts, among other objections. While these types of projects are under way in hundreds of other communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, similar controversy has erupted in other communities, including **Fairfax County** and **Arlington County**.

Two years ago, **our staff provided an update on the City's Stream Restoration strategy.** The was

followed by a presentation by our Environmental Policy Commission, which has come out against stream restoration as a technique. [You can watch the full presentation and Council discussion beginning just after the 3:44:00 mark in the video.](#)

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Council gave our staff direction to pause on the projects, do further measurements of all three, engage with the community and the Environmental Policy Commission on other alternatives and return to the City Council for further direction. Ultimately, the Lucky Run project is proceeding and the Taylor Run and Strawberry Run projects remain paused. In March, a contract was awarded to proceed with the work at Lucky Run. That work is now underway, with a scheduled completion in January of 2024.

[The measurements were conducted and were received by the City and our Environmental Policy Commission at the end of 2021.](#) These measurements show that the default formula provided by the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to estimate pollutant reductions, over-estimates the pollutant reduction for these three projects, as expected. In the case of Taylor Run, our estimated pollutant reduction rate of \$15,000 per pound, will rise to \$50,000 per pound. For Lucky Run, it goes from \$7,000 per pound to \$72,000 and for Strawberry Run it goes from \$5,000 to \$20,000. If the City seeks to claim the same pollution credits, using this method, it will now cost more.

While this discussion has now concluded with the Council's action on the recommendations, our commitment to the future of the Bay requires extensive, collective action across the watershed. Meeting our obligation to our neglected public land will require similar effort and action. Alexandria will continue our work to do our part.



Violent Crime

Last month [18 new Alexandria police officers and 15 new Alexandria sheriff's deputies graduated from the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy.](#) As one of the largest classes Alexandria has put through the academy in recent years, this class has signed-up to keep our community safe in an important time.

We have continued to see [several shooting incidents occurring throughout our City.](#) including one last night that left an individual injured on Madison Street. Residents are certainly justified to be concerned about these incidents. This violence has no place in our City.

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. In 2021, [we saw an overall decrease in Part 1 crime, as our community recovered from the pandemic](#). This recovery came as the City was being served by [the fewest number of police officers on the streets of our City in recent memory](#). This progress was the testament to the hard work of the Alexandria Police Department and the vigilance of our residents.

[The City's violent crime remains 25% lower than we were 15 years ago](#). Our property crime remains 7% lower than 15 years ago. Yet, we cannot tolerate any crime in our community.

In March, the City Council received [our 2022 crime statistics](#). This report contained good news and bad news for our community, and this report compels further action.

Part 1 crime is the most serious crime (homicides, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and auto theft). In 2022, the incidents of Part 1 crime in Alexandria increased 4.7% from last year. This increase was driven primarily by robberies, larcenies and auto theft. The City experienced a large drop in aggravated assault, to the lowest level in 4 years.

Part 2 crime are primarily "quality of life" infractions as well as incidents driven by enforcement activities. These incidents increased as well, with increases in Destruction/Vandalism, drug and narcotic offenses, driving under the influence and drunkenness.

While overall violent crimes decreased by over 12% versus 2021, we saw a doubling of crimes involving firearms, from 76 incidents to 152. So far in 2023, these Part 1 crimes have significantly increased versus 2022, being driven by aggravated assault and larcenies.

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

Our current fiscal year budget, approved by the City Council a year ago, included new funding for a Special Investigations Unit focused on investigating those responsible for homicides, felony sex offenses and crimes driven by weapons. Over the past 18 months, this new unit has arrested 76 violent felons, a third of which were directly implicated in gun crimes.

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. Over the past year, ACORP handled 2,387 behavioral health calls. Only 2% of 911 calls that ACORP responded to resulted in an arrest and 17% resulted in an involuntary transport to a hospital. Nearly two-thirds of the ACORP calls were referred to community services.

In approving this year's budget, the City Council chose to build on this success by expanding ACORP by adding two new ACORP pairs, for a total of 3.

Last year the City hired the largest-ever class 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. Together with officers who are concluding training, this will result in a 15% increase in our available sworn police staffing in one year.

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.



Fund for Human Services

Alexandria depends on its partnerships with numerous non-profit organizations to provide critical services to our community. In many cases, these organizations leverage significant charitable giving to provide these services far more efficiently than City government could ever achieve.

At the core of Alexandria's partnership with the non-profit community is the [Alexandria Fund for Human Services](#). The Fund receives \$2 million from the taxpayers annually to utilize the capacity of non-profit

organizations to provide services to vulnerable populations in our City.

With limited resources and large unmet needs in our community, the Fund has been challenged to fund long-standing programs with established records of success, while also preserving resources for new emerging efforts to respond to changes within our City.

A decade ago, together with my former colleague Councilman Paul Smedberg, we proposed a new look at the administration of this Fund. That effort resulted in several reforms to how the City distributed these resources.

A decade later, **we took a new look at the fund and adopted recommendations, priorities and focus populations.**

The solicitation was then issued seeking grant applications to achieve the following priorities:

- All children and youth are school ready (this includes young children 0 to 5).
- All Alexandrians are socially connected, emotionally secure and culturally competent.
- All Alexandrians are economically secure and career ready.
- All Alexandrians have access to physical, dental, mental health and vision resources and services.
- All Alexandrians are assisted in and empowered to prevent and remedy crises (this includes food insecurity, evictions, and financial crises).

The invitation to bid asked for organizations to focus their services on these populations:

- Children and youth (including ages 0-5)
- Individuals with low incomes and low wealth
- Individuals with dental, physical health, mental health and vision care needs
- Individuals facing crises
- Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Older Adults
- Historically marginalized communities: This population includes, but is not limited to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant populations (including those who lack documentation or families with mixed status), Justice involved individuals, LGBTQIA+, Persons with disabilities across the lifespan to include support for care givers, Individuals with Limited English proficiency, Unhoused /Housing Insecure /Housing Cost Burdened

The result was that our application review panel received 65 valid applications from 57 organizations, requesting \$5.3 million. As a special focus for this application round, 28 of the applications were new to the Fund.

The review committee recommended 53 grants for award, totaling \$1.996 million.

We are fortunate to have so many high-functioning non-profit organizations that address need in our community.



Want Solar Power?

Are you interested in harnessing solar power for your home?

Beginning this month, you can sign up to participate in Solarize Alexandria.

Solarize Alexandria is a partnership between the City, the **Northern Virginia Regional Commission**, and **LEAP**.

The goal is to increase the deployment of solar power generation in our residential communities. In addition to reducing emissions and reducing your power bill, **the City of Alexandria provides a real estate tax exemption for qualifying solar installations.**

The program begins with a free assessment from the program installer. Sign up today!

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