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Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

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[Last month we learned that Alexandria City Public Schools \(ACPS\) Superintendent Dr. Alvin Crawley will be leaving at the end of the July.](#)

During his four year tenure, Dr. Crawley has presided over significant advances in student achievement in our schools.

As a parent of two ACPS students and a policymaker who has worked closely with him as our Superintendent, I believe this is a big loss for our system. I wish Dr. Crawley well as he turns this page in his career.



As Dr. Crawley makes his transition to academia, we can also celebrate some of the great successes of ACPS students.

[A team of 5th Graders from MacArthur Elementary just returned from Michigan with First Place honors in the 2017 Odyssey of the Mind World Finals.](#)

They were also joined in Michigan by a team from George Washington Middle School that placed in the World Finals as well.

[Last month, both the men's and women's crew teams took home state championships, and brought home medals from the Stotesbury Cup Regatta in Philadelphia.](#)

[Separately, the T. C. Williams Men's Soccer Team has claimed its first conference championship since 2014.](#)

As the school year closes, congrats to the students who achieved this great success.

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Leading the Commonwealth

The process of choosing our new Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General is underway.

On Tuesday June 13th, both the Democratic and Republican parties will be holding statewide primaries to choose their nominees for office.

Polls across Alexandria will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM at your normal polling place.

The Democratic Party will be choosing a nominee for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Attorney General Mark Herring is unopposed for the Democratic nomination for reelection. [You can review the sample ballot online.](#)

The Republican Party will be choosing a nominee for Governor and Lieutenant Governor as well. John Adams is unopposed for the Republican nomination for Attorney General. [You can review the sample ballot online.](#)

Absentee voting is available for the primary. [Details and applications are available online.](#)

Alexandria Women's History Tour

The Alexandria Commission on Women and Historic Alexandria are joining

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

Council Initiatives

Investing in our Infrastructure

Despite large efforts to address deferred capital investment in recent years, the City stands at a crossroads. With a perfect storm of infrastructure needs for school, sewer, city facilities, transportation and recreation, the practices of the past will not sustain us in the future.

- [Only three school systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia have grown more than ours in the last decade. We're the only one of the top four growing systems to have not constructed a new building \(only renovations\) during that period.](#)
- [The City's sanitary sewer, stormwater sewer and combined sewer remediation challenges are not areas that can be deferred any longer.](#)
- [Our city facilities reflect decades of neglect and require millions in maintenance.](#)
- [The challenges of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\) have demanded dramatic increases from each member jurisdiction. For Alexandria, those increases have dominated our local transportation funding sources.](#)
- [The little funding that has remained for basic recreation services to support quality of life in our community has fallen victim to budget reductions.](#)

[The City Manager's proposed Capital Improvement Program](#) included \$2 billion of investment over the next decade. Yet the constraints of the Council's guidance and paltry revenue growth left over \$500 million of recommended, but unfunded, capital investments.

That \$500 million of unfunded capital investments serves as a hidden debt on our municipal balance sheet. Yet instead of the 2.12% rate (the true interest cost of our most recent debt issuance) that we are paying for the City's actual debt, this hidden debt is costing us much more.

With construction costs [climbing at an annual rate of nearly 5%](#) and the costs of patching, retrofitting, and otherwise "buying time" with existing aged infrastructure growing regularly, this hidden debt is far more onerous than the well-managed municipal debt load the City carries.

[This was the seventh City budget](#) that I have worked on during my time on the City Council. While I've never had the opportunity to work on a budget when revenues were skyrocketing, some years have been worse than others.

I've tried to have the same approach in each budget; push for efficiency and savings within the operating budget, but maintain strong levels of investment in capital infrastructure.

At various points, this philosophy has gotten me in trouble with people on either side of the debate about the relative size of government. I have generally opposed extensive growth in the operating budget but strongly supported addressing deferred capital needs.

The operating budget provides the resources to fund employees and their benefits. A competitive regional labor market have pushed employment costs higher. That drives our operating expenses to grow at a rate greater than general inflation.

forces on Saturday to continue the Alexandria Women's History Guided Tour.

Beginning in front of Gadsby's Tavern at 134 North Royal Street, the tour runs from 10:30 AM until 12:00 PM and visits many different sites, highlighting the contributions of great women in Alexandria's history.

[Please RSVP to participate.](#)

Taste of Del Ray on Sunday!

[This Sunday from 1 PM until 3 PM the Taste of Del Ray returns.](#)

Twelve Del Ray restaurants will provide a taste of some of the best food on the Avenue.

[Tickets are \\$10 for adults and \\$5 for children and can be purchased in advance online.](#)

Pools Are Open!

[The City's outdoor pools are now open for business!](#)

First Thursday

Today is First Thursday!

[The Del Ray Business Association continues the tradition from 6 - 9 PM on Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray.](#)

D-Day Commemoration

On Saturday the Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee will be hosting the 6th Annual Commemoration of D-Day.

[The event will be held from 2:30 PM until 5:00 PM at Market Square in front of City Hall.](#)

Cinema Del Ray Returns!

Thanks to the generosity of Realtor Jen Walker, Cinema

Capital expenditures are the City's investment in our infrastructure. These investments can reduce operating costs, promote economic development and reduce the need for larger tax increases in the future.

[Deferring capital investment further will threaten economic growth and ultimately exacerbate the challenges we face .](#)

The City Manager's proposed 10 year Capital Improvement Program continued the focus on expanding infrastructure investment. The 10 year plan increased by nearly 20%, driven largely by \$368 million to address Combined Sewer projects, an additional \$161 million for increases for WMATA capital funding, \$144 million of increases for Alexandria City Public Schools capital funding, and \$47 million to address City facilities deficiencies.

Yet, even with a 10 year, \$2 billion Capital Improvement Program, the proposal leaves large gaps in the Alexandria City Public Schools capacity and modernization plans, as well as in City efforts to address deficient municipal facilities.

Knowing that it would be unable to address all our infrastructure needs, Council requested that the City Manager also include a [Supplemental Capital Improvement Program.](#)

[Alexandria currently has the second lowest real estate tax rate of major Northern Virginia jurisdictions](#) and given the adopted budgets of our neighbors, that will remain the case. Our City is not unique in the region. Other jurisdictions face similar challenges.

In March, the Council was obligated to "advertise" the highest tax rate that we might consider during this budget process. [The Council voted 6-1 to embark on a new direction.](#)

You can [watch the Council's full discussion on the matter online](#) .

Mindful of the significant capital overhang as well as the opportunity to collaboratively plan truly joint municipal facilities, the Council voted to advertise a total rate increase of 5.7 cents, which would bring our rate to \$1.13.

At a real estate tax rate of \$1.13 and including the impact of assessment increases, the average single family homeowner will pay an additional \$418 during 2017. The average condominium homeowner will pay an additional \$216.

[The Council also provided direction to the City Manager to develop the composition of a new group that would be empowered to develop a truly joint facilities plan,](#) providing recommendations as to how the community might prioritize nearly \$700 million of municipal facility spending for both the City and the Schools over the next decade.

The City is entirely too small and dense to continue building single use municipal facilities. It is imperative that we break down the barriers between the City, the Alexandria City Public Schools and other public agencies and use our scarce capital funds to truly collaborate. I'm hopeful this new process will help facilitate that.

[The City Manager returned to Council with a formal proposal as to how such a group might work.](#)



Del Ray returns on Saturday June 17th.

The monthly free outdoor movie on the field next to Mount Vernon Recreation Center has become a summer tradition.

[This month's movie is "Sing" and it starts when it's dark enough!](#)

Metro Forum

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission is sponsoring a series of forums around the region to engage the community in discussions about the future of Metro (WMATA).

[On Thursday June 15th, a forum will be held in Alexandria at the Durant Center \(1605 Cameron Street\) at 7 PM.](#)

Metro Board members, including Alexandria's representative Councilman Paul Smedberg, will be on hand for question and answer.

Save the Ship

[Last year an 18th Century ship was discovered as part of waterfront construction activities.](#)

A contract was awarded to the Texas A & M University Conservation Research Laboratory to perform a multi-year conservation effort.

On Thursday June 15th a "Bon Voyage Event" will be held at 116 S. Quaker Lane (Bus Barn) to say farewell as the ship heads to Texas for a few years.

The event will be from 3 - 6 PM.

[Tickets are free but can be reserved online.](#)

[Contributions to the conservation effort can also be made online.](#)

Real Estate Assessment Appeals

At the beginning of May, [the Council approved the budget by a vote of 6-1](#), and approved the creation of the Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force. [We are now working to constitute that committee.](#)

This budget asks a lot of our taxpayers. I do not minimize the impact this will have on residents who are already struggling to afford to continue living in our City. I do believe that this is the responsible course to avoid even more rapid escalation of taxation in the future.

We have created an entirely new process to achieve new efficiencies and wisely expend the taxpayer dollars. Yet these expenditures themselves are not luxuries. They are the basic infrastructure of our community.

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

Adding & Deleting

Once the City Manager [makes his budget proposal](#) the budget becomes the City Council's to amend and finalize to its liking.

At the conclusion of the budget process, City Council members make individual budget proposals for addition or deletion to the proposed budget. In order to keep the budget in balance, any additions must be offset by a deletion elsewhere, or additional revenue.

In order to be considered in the budget process, a proposed amendment must have the support of at least 3 members. In order to be considered as part of the final budget proposal voted on by Council, it generally requires the support of at least 4 members.

[These are the budget additions and deletions that were considered by the City Council in this year's budget process.](#) All of the proposals that were considered ultimately made it into the final approved budget.

These proposals were:

- As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, I proposed a budget add to dedicate all of the proceeds from the additional 3 cents on the real estate tax rate to municipal facilities (City and School) capital investment. This would dedicate roughly \$11 million annually of additional investment over the 10 years of the City's Capital Improvement Program. [This new investment would be informed by the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force.](#)
- In my November newsletter, [I wrote about the need to right-size correctional capacity based on reduced demand.](#) In this year's budget, [I proposed that funds planned for appropriation to the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center](#) instead be dedicated to [expanding early childhood services for low-income children.](#) My intention is that the City work with our regional and state partners to determine a new model for the existing Center. The funds would only become available for early childhood if those efforts are fruitful.
- I [made a budget proposal to provide new proactive maintenance of the City's urban tree canopy.](#) The proposal is a key recommendation of the [City's approved Urban Forestry Master Plan](#) and seeks to prolong the life of existing mature trees with appropriate maintenance. This proposal was funded with a reduction to the City's new tree-planting budget.
- The City currently has 6 red light cameras in the City. State law allows the City to deploy 15 such cameras. [I included a budget proposal to add two additional cameras funded by the revenue from the operation of the cameras.](#)

Any appeal of 2017 Real Estate Assessments must be filed by today for hearing by the Board of Equalization.

The [form is available online](#) and can be submitted by mail.

Real Estate Tax Payment Due

The first half payment of the 2017 real estate tax is due Thursday June 15th.

[Payment can be made in six different ways, including online.](#)

- Councilman Bailey [made a budget proposal to commit funds in support of a public-private affordable housing project on the City's West End](#). This add was funded with some of the current year proceeds from the real estate tax rate increase.
- Councilman Lovain [made a proposal to restore a proposed cut of a Deputy Sheriff position](#) that is currently dedicated to the [Capital Area Regional Fugitive Task Force](#). This proposal was funded by additional revenue generated by the Sheriff, and other budget reductions.
- Councilman Chapman [made a proposal to create a new microloan program to support small business economic development](#). This addition was funded using reallocation of undesignated contingent reserves.
- Councilman Bailey [made a proposal to expand the hours and duration of the City's existing youth summer employment program](#). This addition was also funded with the use of contingent reserves.
- Councilwoman Pepper [made a proposal to restore a proposed budget reduction to day-time "walk-in" hours at Cora Kelly and William Ramsey Recreation Centers](#). This restoration was funded with the use of contingent reserves.

Broadband Update

[Over three years ago, I proposed that the City develop a broadband plan to bring true competition to Alexandria's broadband market.](#)

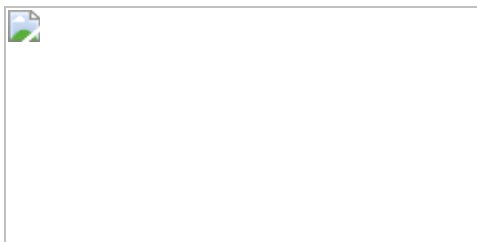
In [Chattanooga, Tennessee, a community of 170,000, a public electricity utility used hundreds of millions of dollars to build thousands of miles of underground fiber](#). In doing so, the utility enabled the residents and businesses of Chattanooga to receive the fastest Internet connectivity in our nation.

For years, Alexandria has sought new private investment in broadband infrastructure. For most of our residents, we have one company providing Internet connectivity and television. Regardless of the performance of that company, technological innovation and reliability thrives on competition.

This is an issue that affects not only residents but also our businesses and the ability of our community to attract commerce.

Our efforts to bring new broadband infrastructure to Alexandria are entering a new phase.

Nearly two years ago, the City took a significant step forward in our efforts to bring new broadband options to Alexandria. The Council supported the idea of issuing a Request for Information (RFI). This RFI solicited concepts from the private sector for partnership with the City in expanding broadband options, availability, and capabilities.



The [RFI was issued and we actively solicited those partnerships](#). We received 10 responses from potential private partners.

In March of last year, the City completed the [initial financial estimates for the first phase of the infrastructure build-out](#). With a full cost of just under \$8.5 million, the plan is designed to replace the City's existing connectivity agreement for City facilities with a City-owned fiber network.

By [leveraging E-Rate funding from the FCC](#), achieving operating savings from the costs of the existing agreement, and the potential for private leases of our infrastructure, the effort may be able to pay for itself.

In the fall, [the Council unanimously took the next step](#) in this important process, as we requested that the City Manager formally solicit for new providers to partner with the City.

The City is now taking two more important steps, as we solicit for private partners to complete the City's fiber backbone infrastructure, as well as working with other private partners to provide the "last mile" coverage to potentially connect residents and businesses.

One of the core components of the original proposal I made was that the City [adopt a "Dig Once" policy](#). Essentially that's a policy that makes the City more efficient by leveraging existing underground infrastructure work to also make broadband infrastructure investments. With hundreds of millions of dollars of sewer and transportation work scheduled over the next decade, we should sequence and combine that work to be the most efficient.

[As we now begin the City's municipal infrastructure build-out, we are putting that type of coordination into motion.](#)

The City is in the process of implementing [an unrelated transportation project, Intelligent Transportation Systems \(ITS\)](#). This effort provides for the installation of conduit and fiber connecting traffic signals along arterial roads to improve our traffic management and incident response. [We will now be combining three phases of our municipal fiber build work with this project. Doing so will save the taxpayers \\$1.2 million and reduce the amount of community disruption required.](#)

This is an exciting project and one that gives the City the best chance to leverage its assets to bring new broadband services to our residents and businesses.

Commercial or Residential?

A few months ago, [I wrote about the potential economic crisis facing our City and our region if a severe form of Federal budget austerity were to take hold](#). A decade ago, we were facing a similar inflection point for our City's economy.

With job growth stalled and commercial development lagging, an ever-growing burden of the cost of government was falling upon our residential taxpayers.

Back then the City convened the Mayor's Economic Sustainability Work Group comprised of deeply experienced City residents to chart a new path to sustained economic growth. [The group provided a detailed report whose recommendations have become a checklist of policy reforms for the City to pursue](#). In many policy areas, the recommendations reflected conventional wisdom. In some policy areas, they became conventional wisdom.

One such area related to the relative benefits of commercial development versus residential development. The report enshrined a desire to return to "50/50" balance in our tax base between residential and commercial properties. The report warned against further conversion of commercial properties to residential uses. It even urged that the City explore ways to modify existing zoning to remove residential development rights to ensure that only commercial development occurred.

There is no question that commercial development provides a rich return for the taxpayers of this City. City [analysis shows that all commercial property uses provide a net positive return](#).



For every dollar of tax revenue from a new hotel in the City, only 7 cents is required to provide services to that hotel. For every dollar of tax revenue from an office use, only 12 cents is required for services to that office use.

This benefit has become ingrained as orthodoxy for most in our City. Conversely it is also accepted as settled fact that residential development provides a net loss for the taxpayers.

Yet, is that true?

With office demand significantly diminished and residential demand still strong and durable, the pressure for landowners to forgo riskier commercial development and focus on residential development is strong.

[To examine the issue, the City and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership studied several office to residential conversions to determine how the taxpayers fared in the aftermath.](#)

The results of the study reversed several of the conclusions from a decade ago.

The Oronoco, [now a multi-family building on the City's waterfront was an office building when it was sold and converted to residential](#). Sold for \$21 million, the property is now assessed at \$126 million after the conversion, more than covering any additional services required for the residents.

An office building at 4501 Ford Avenue on the West End had sat vacant for the better part of decade. [It was converted to a residential "live/work" concept](#). It was assessed at \$20 million prior to the conversion. It is now assessed at \$55 million.

The data shows us that on the average for every tax dollar received from multi-family development, 38 cents is required to provide services. This estimate aligns very closely with our student generation rates, Whether children attend school from a property is a major determinant of the financial return.

So where does this analysis leave us? This is arguably one of the most important land-use questions the City faces. Should the City allow commercially zoned property to remain underutilized or completely unused for decades, or pursue possible conversions to residential to ensure near-term economic growth?

For me, I believe that this data shows that the City must be discerning. **All residential development is not a net loser for the City taxpayers, but conversely, all of it is not a net winner.**

We must continue to promote commercial development in areas that can support new development and redevelopment. Yet residential conversion is an option to address stubborn office vacancy, and done properly, it can help the City's bottom line.

[Let me know your thoughts on this important issue.](#)

Market-Based Solutions For Affordable Housing

When the City attempts to address housing affordability, it is going up against powerful economic forces. Employing market-based

solutions to these affordability challenges is where the City can be most effective.

When City Council approved the [City's Housing Master Plan](#), Councilman Chapman and I proposed that the City take a look at expanding our density bonuses for affordable housing.

[The City currently has a provision in our Zoning Code that allows for 20% additional density and 25 additional feet in construction if at least a third of the additional density is provided as affordable housing.](#)

Use of this provision has allowed the creation of 290 affordable housing units, with another 233 pledged to be delivered when the private development occurs.

[After substantial community input, last month the City Council unanimously endorsed our proposal to expand affordable housing density bonuses to 30%.](#)

Last month the City also received notification that three City affordable housing projects, including Ramsey House redevelopment, a redevelopment of the Carpenter's Shelter and renovation of the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation's Lacy Court, [have all been awarded Federal low-income housing tax credits.](#)

[Last year, I prompted a bit of controversy by writing an intentionally provocative take on housing affordability and what the City can do to improve accessibility.](#)

In late 2015, [Jason Furman, then the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers](#), made a speech that drew a direct connection between one of the most challenging issues for us in Alexandria to one of the most challenging issues facing our nation.

He laid the blame for these challenges squarely at the feet of local policymakers.

[In this speech, Mr. Furman addressed the large and growing challenges of housing affordability in communities. He connected those challenges with growing income inequality around our country.](#)



But most relevant to us in Alexandria, he assigned blame for a lack of housing affordability on local zoning restrictions.

Said another way, our limitations and restrictions on development have driven the cost of housing to unaffordable levels thus exacerbating income inequality. [He even traces the impact of these restrictions to reductions in employment.](#)

Furman writes *"Zoning restrictions--be they in the form of minimum lot sizes, off-street parking requirements, height limits, prohibitions on multifamily housing, or lengthy permitting processes--are supply constraints. Basic economic theory predicts--and many empirical studies confirm--that housing markets in which supply cannot keep up with demand will see housing prices rise."*

Some have even [suggested that removal of some local authority over land use can help address the affordability issue.](#) Others have

ascribed [even more nefarious motives to how zoning restrictions are applied](#).

All this leads us to the fundamental question about whether Alexandria's efforts to address affordability are helping, hurting or having no effect.

Up until now, our discussions on affordable housing have focused [on funding questions](#), [debates about the impacts of individual projects](#), and [the contention between affordability and other City priorities](#). We adopted the [Housing Master Plan](#) which gave the community a series of tools with which to tackle the challenges of affordability.

Yet, if Furman and other economists are to be believed, we in Alexandria have never tackled the fundamental root of housing affordability. Most of our efforts are aimed at creating or preserving housing that will ultimately be in the public domain or under nominal public control. However, it is through our zoning authority that we can truly impact housing affordability in privately owned housing.

Obviously zoning restrictions have a place and serve a need for our community. In addition to last month's change, I would also suggest that we have done some other things right.

For instance, [in 2015, the City Council adopted new parking standards for multi-family housing](#). By rightsizing parking, we significantly reduced the cost of construction for multi-family residential development, provided new incentives for the use of transit, and freed up resources for alternate community investments.

However, these new standards went even farther, by providing steeper parking incentives for restricted affordable housing units. [The City essentially adopted our largest financial incentive for the creation of new affordable housing](#), while also reducing the overall cost of private housing development.

The City has aggressively utilized our land-use authority to:

- limit density
- increase open space
- create new retail
- improve architecture
- improve transportation infrastructure
- preserve historic structures
- develop new public facilities
- create affordable housing
- improve basic infrastructure
- improve public art, and more

The [process of working to redevelop Ramsey Homes demonstrated the inherent tension between community expectations and affordability](#).

At some point, the question becomes whether those efforts are ultimately self-defeating, particularly as it relates to housing affordability?

In June of 2012, the City Council adopted the [Beauregard Small Area Plan](#) which laid out a vision for a 395 acre swath of land constituting a major portion of the City's West End.

As in much of the City, the landowners in the Plan area had millions of square feet of development permitted (5.5 million constructed, 10 million permitted) under their existing zoning, but not currently developed.

Through the planning process, the City attempted to use the incentive of additional development to provide significant public

amenities as well as to encourage land-uses other than additional townhomes.

The approved plan provides a funding formula (including developer funding, tax increment financing, and City Affordable Housing Trust Fund dollars) for the creation of at least 800 new units of committed affordable housing, funding for a new fire station, a new "ellipse" at the intersection of Seminary and Beauregard Roads, a new transitway, additional tree canopy, and 44 acres of new open space.

In total, the Plan exacted \$150 million of developer-funded public amenities.

Yet it didn't happen.

[Now the properties are on the market](#) with another owner ready to enter the picture and likely to have a different vision of the plan.

As we work to implement the City's Housing Master Plan, we must comprehend and be willing to address all of the factors that challenge affordability in the City. [Let me know your thoughts!](#)

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

Creating the Incentive

Since January of 2010 exactly one new Class A office building has been delivered in the City of Alexandria without the City's financial participation (either through tax incentive or discounted financing).

[The City's office vacancy rate remains slightly higher than the regional average at 18%.](#) Yet nearly 20% of the City's total vacancy rate is attributed to one building: [the Victory Center on Eisenhower Avenue](#) and the vacancy rate near our Metro stations is much lower than that elsewhere in the City.

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, commercial development provides significant returns to the taxpayers of this City, easing the burden on residential taxpayers. Yet that only works if the commercial development occurs.

There are millions of square feet of approved commercial development around the City that is not occurring due to a lack of market demand. Long gone are the days where a landowner would build a commercial building "on spec" or without an identified tenant prior to construction. Not only will landowners await future tenants, but in the case of larger commercial tenants, they can expect financial incentives from the local government.

[The City successfully used incentives to attract the National Science Foundation to our community; a win that will provide our taxpayers with a significant return once the National Science Foundation moves in this summer.](#)

[Arlington County recently used incentives to attract Nestle's corporate headquarters to the county.](#)

From a macroeconomic perspective, I am not enamored with the concept of local governments offering tax incentives to attract employers from one side of jurisdictional boundaries to another,

However distasteful, large commercial office tenants demanding financial participation from local governments is a practice that has become de rigueur across the region.

Today the City handles each potential office tenant on a case by case basis. My view is that the City should adopt standard practices and approaches to the application of incentives. I think doing so will not only make the City more competitive, but also make the process more transparent.

At a time where we are asking more and more of a residential taxpayers, we need to use every tool available to attract quality commercial development to diversify our tax base and ease that burden.

Vision Zero

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.

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.

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

[The data shows that vehicle crashes 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 crashes 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.

Our new Police Chief has worked to increase the focus of existing resources on traffic enforcement efforts.

Last year, [the Council adopted an overhaul of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#). Early this year, we kicked-off a [Vision Zero initiative](#) for Alexandria. While such an initiative will involve significant resources and planning, it simply means that we would design road spaces, traffic regulations and operations to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries.

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 showed 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 a few problem intersections, 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 just concluded data collection at 20 locations to guide future mitigation efforts for traffic concerns in several neighborhoods.](#) The results should be presented to the community later this summer.

The City just issued a contract to implement intersection and pedestrian improvements as part of our "Safe Routes to School" effort. These improvements will be conducted at [Maury](#), [Ramsay](#) and [Polk](#) Elementary Schools. The work should begin this 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.

We need your input!

[Between now and Monday, the City is conducting a short Vision Zero Action Plan Survey.](#) Please take a moment to complete it.

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

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

Bidding on a BID

Last year, I wrote about the work of the City's Waterfront Commission. The Commission was working to determine the governance and funding for programming and improvements in the new public spaces on our waterfront.

[At the time, the committee had looked at a variety of different options to partner with private landowners and business owners to fund public improvements and programming for these important public spaces.](#)

This conversation has now merged with advocacy for the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Old Town. If the City Council were to authorize a BID, commercial property owners (in many cases passed through directly to businesses themselves) in the district would pay a higher real estate tax rate. The additional

revenue would support a new entity that would annually provide a budget to the City Council for approval.

This idea was pursued several years ago, but efforts ended when there was not sufficient support from the businesses who would ultimately pay the tax.

[The idea is back again, with business community support.](#)

[During the budget process last year, my colleague Councilman Chapman, successfully proposed allocating funding to study the idea more thoroughly.](#) This would provide a series of recommendations if the Council chooses to pursue implementation.

This month, Council will decide whether to enact an ordinance that



would designate a Business Improvement District. If the district were created, a more formal proposal would be created and would need to have support of the businesses and commercial property owners

who would provide the funding. With that support, Council would then formally adopt the new tax rate and the budget for how it would be expended as part of next year's budget process.

[The City Council will hold a worksession to discuss this proposal on Tuesday evening. The worksession will be at the Durant Center \(1605 Cameron Street\) at 7 PM.](#)

Consideration of the ordinance to create the district will occur first at our legislative meeting on Tuesday June 13th. Final adoption will be scheduled after a public hearing on Saturday June 24th, beginning at 9:30 AM.

I believe that Business Improvement Districts have been very successful tools across the country. They help leverage private investment and encourage small business growth. Ultimately, it will be up to those who will fund this proposed BID to demonstrate their support or opposition for this particular proposal.

I look forward to further consideration of this concept.

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