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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

June 1, 2023

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On Saturday, [the Class of 2023 will walk across the stage and become graduates of Alexandria City High School](#). While this event is always poignant for me, it will hold special poignancy this year, as my oldest will be among those graduating.

This extraordinary class had their freshman year disrupted by a global pandemic. They have seen adversity and tragedy, but they will celebrate incredible accomplishment and continue their education and their careers with a strong foundation. The Class of 2023 will do amazing things and I cannot wait to see what they do next!

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On Sunday, [the Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee will continue their wonderful D-Day Commemoration](#). Held in Market Square starting at 2 PM, this event is a nod to our Sister City of Caen, France. Caen, in Normandy, was the location of fierce fighting in the days after the Allied D-Day landings.

On Friday June 16th and Saturday June 17th, [the Portside in Old Town Summer Festival returns to our waterfront!](#) This free festival brings music, food, art, history and more!

Beginning today, at 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



### Potomac Yard Metro Is Open!

Last month, the Potomac Yard Metro station finally opened. A lifetime in the making, this new station is one of the most significant economic development initiatives the City has ever undertaken. It is also one of the most significant transportation, climate, and infrastructure projects we have ever attempted.

Thanks to the tireless work of our City staff, our WMATA partners, our contractors, and a legion of residents, this station has become reality.

You can [watch the full ribbon-cutting ceremony online](#) (Watch the volume setting on your phone/computer, as I was quite excited!). We were privileged to be joined by Senators Warner and Kaine,

Congressman Beyer, the WMATA Chairman and General Manager, the Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the Chairwoman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the President of Virginia Tech.

In the first week, 17,000 trips started or ended at the new station. Average weekday entries have been over 1,000. The ridership **is at or above about 20% of the existing Metro Rail stations**, including most of the new Silver Line stations. And that is in the first week of service!

With the opening of the new station, **DASH Bus has realigned three different routes to provide new connections to the station**. The DASH 33, 34 and 36A/B lines are now servicing the station, providing frequent (and fare-free!) connections to this new Metro Rail station.

Just a little over 55 years ago, **the original plan for Metro Rail was adopted**. That original plan called for a Metro Rail station just south of Potomac Yard, which was then an active railroad yard.

Three and a half years ago, **we gathered to break ground** on a Metro Rail station in Potomac Yard.

To say that this station has been a long time coming is an understatement. The arrival of Metro Rail to Potomac Yard is a testament to the tenacity of a legion of Alexandria residents who never gave up hope.

On the front page of the **Final Environmental Impact Statement** for the Potomac Yard Metro Station are the seals of four entities: Federal Transit Administration, Department of the Interior, WMATA and the City of Alexandria. Later in the report there is additional input from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The breadth of the entities involved clearly demonstrates the complexity of the project. This project is deeply complex and has been challenging to bring to reality for decades.

**The Potomac Yard Metro project will facilitate the creation of up to 26,000 new jobs and will bring up to \$2 billion of new tax revenue to the City (over 30 years). It removes thousands of vehicles from one of the most crowded corridors in our City. It promotes the creation of the kind of walkable community our City has long desired in Potomac Yard.**

This is the 98th station in the Metro Rail system and the second in-fill station that has been added. It is one of

the first rail stations in North America to receive LEED certification for the sustainability of the construction.

In 2008, along with then-Councilman Rob Krupicka, I proposed a new start to efforts to bring Metro to Potomac Yard. **We included language in the City's Transportation Master Plan** explicitly calling for a new station at Potomac Yard. We also tied the construction and funding of Metro to the development occurring in the Yard.

The result is **a funding plan for Potomac Yard Metro** that not only leverages the development activity in Potomac Yard, but also does so without requiring the contributions of General Fund taxpayers.

The total project budget is \$370 million:

- \$250 million is being derived from tax revenues generated in Potomac Yard
- \$70 million is regional transportation revenues provided by the **Northern Virginia Transportation Authority**
- \$30 million was provided by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to support the new southwest entrance
- \$20 million was provided as part of Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) to support the new southwest entrance

The largest environmental, economic development, and transportation initiative in our City's history is being accomplished using **one of the most innovative funding mechanisms used anywhere in the country.**

It has been a thrill to see this long-awaited project come to fruition for our community.

## A New Duke Street



Our efforts to make it safer, more efficient and desirable to move people along Duke Street are reaching a critical stage, **as the input you have provided comes to the City Council** for action.

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

Last month, the Duke Street Transitway Advisory Group voted to make **its recommendations for configuration of the enhanced bus service on the corridor.** On June 27th, the City Council will be holding a public hearing and considering near and long-term recommendations for how the bus rapid transit improvements can be configured in the various segments along Duke. Upon Council's action, this project will enter a new phase of planning and implementation as we re-imagine one of the most important corridors in our City.

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 made 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 (although 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.



## Flooding Mitigation

Last summer we saw the devastation that can be wrought by the impact of heavy rain events, with severe flooding in **Buchanan County, Virginia** and **Eastern Kentucky**. These examples were reminders of the constant risk communities like ours face and the necessity to implement climate-resilient infrastructure to protect the lives and livelihood of our residents.

For Alexandria, this flooding risk presents itself in a variety of ways. Our residents have endured 5 storm events in the past 4 years (July 8, 2019, July 23, 2020, September 10, 2020, August 15, 2021 and September 16, 2021) where the intensity and duration of the rain has far-exceeded the design capacity of our storm sewers, resulting in devastating inland flooding. That devastation has accompanied more familiar risks the City faces with shoreline flooding from the Potomac River, primarily in Old Town.

The efforts to address both of Alexandria's flooding challenges continue, dominating our capital infrastructure plan.

Along the Potomac River shoreline, the City is working to advance a \$100 million project to address backflow of



river outfalls, overtopping of our bulkheads and inundation of our storm sewers. The City is reaching a critical stage of this project, as we will be formalizing an interim agreement with a contract team, under the **Progressive Design-Build Model** that has been selected for this work.

Eight contract teams responded to a request for qualifications (RFQ). That resulted in three teams being short-listed. Our staff is now recommending that the leading team, **Skanksa/JMT**, be awarded the contract.

Later this month, **our staff will return to City Council with a contract for Phase 1 of the waterfront flood mitigation work**, including site investigations, analysis of alternatives, development of a design, permitting and development of a guaranteed maximum price proposal.

In the fall of last year, **the City applied for a Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency** to support this project. **The BRIC program** is a very competitive grant vehicle that has recently seen a large increase in funding. If the City is successful in receiving this funding, this will allow us to expand the scope of this project and protect more areas from flooding.

In addition to the progress the City is making along the waterfront, the City is also making significant progress in addressing some of our inland flooding challenges, which have been occurring due to more frequent and more intense rain events. These storms are causing our residents and businesses to suffer significant financial loss due to damage from flooding and sanitary sewer backflow.

Addressing this challenge requires immediate and sustained action in the following areas:

- Infrastructure Investment and Maintenance
- Financial and Technical Assistance to Residents
- Development Policy Reform

Last month, while adopting our budget, the City Council unanimously adopted an ordinance to again increase our Stormwater Utility Fee, to further increase the resources available for investments in our storm sewer infrastructure. This increase will mean a condo owner will pay \$86.44 annually, a townhouse owner \$129.65 annually, a small single-family homeowner \$308.70 annually and a large single-family homeowner \$515.53 annually.

The Stormwater Utility Fee revenue, paid by all property owners in the City (including non-taxable properties), will allow for an acceleration of major capacity projects and "spot improvements," an increase in channel

maintenance, new "state-of-good repair" investments, property owner grants and new staffing in support of these projects and the system.

**Recently enacted state legislation**, sponsored by Senator Adam Ebbin at the City's request, gives the City the flexibility to use these resources to address all of the challenges facing our residents.

The increases of the fee over the past three years have allowed the City to quadruple the planned investment in stormwater mitigation since 2020 and **support a newly accelerated 10-year program of investments**.

While these funds will **address many smaller "spot improvement" projects**, this funding will allow the City to undertake 11 of the top priority storm sewer capacity projects over the next decade:

- **Commonwealth & Glebe: \$34 million**
- **Ashby & Glebe: \$16 million**
- **Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: \$60 million**
- **Edison & Dale: \$13 million**
- **Dewitt Avenue: \$15 million**
- **East Mason Avenue: \$1 million**
- **Notabene & Old Dominion: \$4 million**
- **Mount Vernon, E. Glendale, E. Luray & E. Alexandria: \$10 million**
- **E. Monroe & Wayne: \$3 million**
- **Russell & W. Rosemont: \$6 million**
- **Russell & W. Rosemont (south): \$8 million**

In addition to these locally-funded infrastructure initiatives, **the City Council voted to allocate \$5.8 million of our American Rescue Plan funding to address maintenance and investment in our Storm Sewers**.

The **Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group**, is a citizen group constituted to provide advice to Council and our staff as we execute this aggressive investment schedule. This committee **regularly receives reports on the progress of these important investments**.

A climate-resilient City requires investments and potentially new policies to ensure that residents of our City do not suffer devastating damage with such frequency.

Putting in place the infrastructure that can support a changing climate will be a significant undertaking for our community. It will involve a large commitment of new resources and possibly private property impacts. I am pleased that the City has made these new investments. Now we must continue to explore every option to accelerate this work.



## Violent Crime



We have continued to see several shooting incidents occurring throughout our City, including a shocking incident on the West End last night that left two individuals wounded. 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.

## Youth Safety & Mentoring

A little over 26 years ago, [our community was reeling, as Romulo Eric Ardila was murdered in a gang-related fight outside George Washington Middle School.](#)



One of Ardila's friends was quoted in the Washington Post at the time saying: "Everybody cares about him when he's dead. When he's alive, only his friends and family cared about him. That's how this world works."

When history repeated itself last year, with the tragic murder of Luis Mejia Hernandez, properly honoring his memory required action. In a few days, the individual accused of Luis' murder will stand trial. While the criminal justice process is a necessary and important part of the response to this incident, it is only a portion. There is rarely one cause or one solution to the kind of unspeakable violence that causes one student to take the life of another, but we can learn much by engaging with the youth most impacted.

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

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

In the aftermath of Luis' murder, Councilwoman Gaskins and I proposed a framework for a series of youth-led engagements to better understand how we can productively invest in the resilience of our youth.

Last year, the Health & Safety Coordinating Committee, which I chair along with Councilwoman Gaskins, received the first update on the result of these efforts.

What we learned in the focus groups should not surprise us. Students told us that policymakers should:

- Offer creative, inclusive, flexible youth programs that foster social connection and a sense of belonging and promote youth behavioral health
- Use a variety of methods and partnerships to creatively encourage young people and ensure that they are aware of the resources and programs available to them
- Build effective Youth-Adult Partnerships by providing adults with ongoing trainings and technical assistance to promote positive youth development, and by providing youth with a

strong foundation and opportunities to participate in decision and policy making with adults

- When asking youth for their input and feedback, it is critical that adults listen, take their ideas seriously, and hold themselves accountable to respond to their concerns.

We are working to bring these recommendations to reality in the form of compelling programming, services and improved communication. This will require the work of all facets of our community, but the result is worth the commitment.

There were also important developments within ACPS in the area of youth safety. In the aftermath of the rancorous community discussion regarding the presence of Alexandria Police Officers in our schools, the [School Law Enforcement Partnership \(SLEP\) Advisory Group](#) was constituted by the School Board. This group was charged with reviewing the relationship between ACPS and the Alexandria Police Department.

This committee provided [their recommendations earlier this year](#) and last month the City Council and School Board met to discuss the recommended changes to the School Resource Officer program. [You can watch the full joint work session between the two elected bodies.](#)

Our youth have shouldered the worst of the challenges we have collectively faced over the past 3 years. Ensuring that every young person in our City is equipped to thrive during these challenging times remains a top priority in our community.

## Ladrey Public Housing Redevelopment

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

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

Most of the new committed affordable housing developed by the City is in partnership with non-profit affordable housing developers, or committed units that



are provided by private developers as a development proffer, typically in exchange for density.

Yet, if you ask most residents of our City what they think of when they are asked about "affordable housing," they think of public housing. While Alexandria does have a significant stock of public housing, our public housing authority has not been a significant entity in the recent development of new committed affordable housing in our City. That is changing.

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

The redevelopment of Samuel Madden will be followed by the redevelopment of the Ladrey High Rise. **ARHA selected new private partners to lead the future redevelopment and replacement of this important public housing facility.**

Winn Companies **is now bringing forward concepts for the future of Ladrey.** The current Ladrey is 170 units of committed affordable units, affordable for those at 30% of Area Median Income (AMI). The new Ladrey would be 275 units of committed affordable units, with 170 remaining for those at 30% of AMI, joining 27 new units affordable for those at 60% of AMI and 78 new units for those at 80% of AMI. This proposal leverages HUD funding to create significant new workforce affordable housing for our community.

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

Over 41 years ago, the City Council adopted **Resolution 830**, which committed the City to "one for one" replacement of any public housing unit that was destroyed by redevelopment. The City has met that commitment in each redevelopment effort.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



## Zoning For Housing

This month, engagement and discussion on our Zoning For Housing initiative will continue. We are working to educate and collect community input on our effort to expand housing production and affordability as well as address past and current barriers to equitable housing access.

From now until June 19th, **we are seeking community response on a survey of residents**. On Monday June 26th, **the City Council will hold a public joint work session with our Planning Commission to discuss the specific initiatives being considered**.

**In March, the City kicked-off an acceleration of the Zoning for Housing work program**. For the rest of this year, we will 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.

## **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 was awarded SLAF funding for three urban stream restoration projects: Taylor Run, Lucky Run and Strawberry Run.

These 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 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 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](#) has 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 Chinguapin 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 the Commonwealth has reiterated its support for the default calculations, this finding requires further review. To help us chart the next step, the City brought in the **Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN) of the University of Virginia**. IEN is serving as a neutral third-party to lead the definition of the path forward. **They have worked closely with our staff, community members and City boards and commissions to chart next steps.**

**This consensus-building exercise is now coming to a close, with the new recommendations coming to Council in the next month.** Upon receipt of this report, the Council will now determine the feasibility and funding for the recommendations of this effort, now that \$3 million in grants from the state have been returned.

Meeting this 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.

