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The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

November 1, 2019

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[Tomorrow, the City Council gathers for our annual budget retreat.](#)

This is when the Council typically gets our first peek at projected revenues and expenditures for the upcoming budget year. This information assists us as we prepare to adopt guidance for his City Manager for his upcoming budget.

We will also work to prepare the Council's work program for the next calendar year.

The public is welcome to attend to watch the Council's discussion.

Last month, the entire Council was present at Beatley Library as the City concluded a year's worth of observances and events recognizing the 80th anniversary of Alexandria Library sit-in.

[Led by a young attorney, Samuel Tucker, five young Alexandrians applied unsuccessfully for a library card at the Alexandria Library on Queen Street. After they were denied due to the color of their skin, the brave young men sat and read books in the library until the Police came and arrested them.](#)

After discovering that these charges were never dropped officially, our Commonwealth's Attorney, Bryan Porter, [successfully petitioned the Alexandria Circuit Court to drop these charges.](#)

[Last month's event featured descendants of the five young men and it was a distinct honor to present the](#)



[Report Potholes](#)[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

Vote on Tuesday!

On Tuesday November 5th, Alexandria voters will choose our General Assembly representation (members of the State Senate and members of the House of Delegates) and the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

The polls will be open from 6 AM until 7 PM. You can [check your polling place online](#).

[Today and tomorrow are the last two days to vote absentee in-person at either of the two locations.](#)

[Sample ballots are available online.](#)

See you at the polls!

St. Rita's 5K

On Saturday November 16th, the St. Rita's School 5K returns to the streets of Alexandria.

Beginning at 8:30 AM on Eisenhower Avenue in Carlyle, the race is fast and flat!

[Registration is available online.](#)

Leaf Collection Begins

The annual City's leaf collection effort begins on Monday.

[petition approved by the Court to each of the families present.](#)

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

Council Initiatives

Expanding the Arlington Partnership

A month ago, the Alexandria City Council and the Arlington County Board held a rare joint session. The meeting was intended as an initial kick-off of an effort to craft new joint initiatives between the two jurisdictions to ensure the benefits of our growth are shared by ALL in our community.

[You can watch the entire joint meeting online](#) .

This session was [prompted by a proposal](#) that I co-authored along with Arlington County Board Chair Christian Dorsey.

An unprecedented partnership between Alexandria and Arlington helped to bring home the most significant prize in the highest-profile economic development solicitation in decades.

[Amazon is coming to the Crystal City section of Arlington County.](#)

[The Virginia Tech Innovation Campus is coming to the Potomac Yard section of our City.](#)

While these new investments [provide significant financial benefits to both communities](#) , residents in both jurisdictions have expressed reservations about whether these benefits will accrue to all residents or simply those who are already doing well in our community.

It is not a new concern for our region. We live in one of the most heavily educated, affluent and thriving regions in the country. Employers are attracted to this area to gain access to the workforce and the high quality of life that we enjoy.

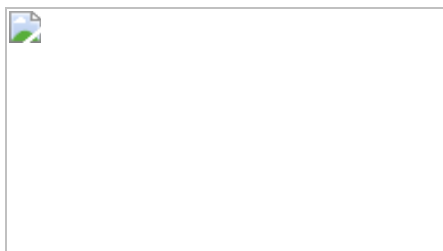
Yet the growth and success that this region enjoys [has not been enjoyed evenly by our residents](#). While some may view the paired investments of Amazon and Virginia Tech as a harbinger of growing inequality, I believe it presents an unprecedented opportunity to do things differently. But it will not just happen automatically.

While the session this evening will serve as an opportunity for the governing bodies of each jurisdiction to help craft a work program for the future, our initial proposal envisions cooperative efforts in:

- Housing Affordability
- Workforce Development
- P-12 Education
- Transportation/Mobility
- SWaM (Small, woman-owned and minority)Business Assistance

While both Alexandria and Arlington have varied programs in each of these areas, and have even collaborated in some of these areas in the past, we believe that this moment in our history should prompt new and innovative collaboration.

While the joint meeting affirmed the need to focus on these policy areas, as well as added a few others, the two



[The full schedule of leaf vacuuming efforts is available online and will continue for the next few weeks.](#)

Small Business Saturday

Saturday November 30th is Small Business Saturday!

This national event showcases the many small businesses that are backbones of our City's retail community.

[With deals and events throughout our City, this is the time to get your holiday shopping done while supporting Alexandria's diverse small retailers.](#)

City Tree Lighting

[On Saturday, November 23rd, at 6 PM Santa returns to Market Square in Old Town to light the City's tree.](#)

With a welcome from the Town Crier and performances of all kinds, this event cannot be missed!

Black Friday

Avoid the mall, head to Old Town for Black Friday!

[Throughout Alexandria, 50 independent boutiques will offer an alternative Black Friday experience!](#)

ACPS Calendar Input

The Alexandria City Public Schools are working to develop the academic calendar for 2020 - 2021 and they would like your input.

[You can review the three draft calendars online.](#)

You can [vote for your preference](#) online.

Alexandria Film Festival

bodies prioritized the work on housing, workforce development and business assistance as the areas of top focus.

I am optimistic this work will help set the example of how a community can harness economic growth as an engine to reduce inequality, not exacerbate it. This meeting was the kick-off of this collaboration, with much work ahead of us.

[Let me know if you have thoughts as we embark upon this effort.](#)

Housing for Alexandria's Future

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

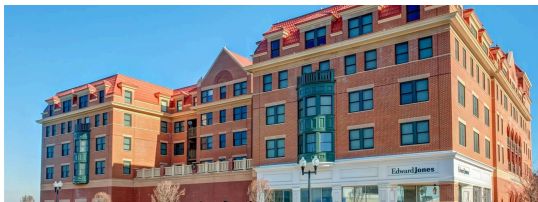
These targets commit the City to the creation of additional units, with most of those units committed to be affordable for low to middle income households. To ensure that this housing creation does not exacerbate existing transportation challenges, most of this new housing must be located near job centers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

In September of last year, the Board of Directors of COG [accepted a report that identified that 100,000 additional housing units will need to be constructed within the region just to meet expected job growth](#). That is 100,000 units BEYOND what is already planned to be developed.

The COG analysis focuses on the housing production required to meet the economic competitiveness and transportation efficiency goals for the region. Even with increased housing production at the levels recommended, it's unlikely to be sufficient supply to address affordability challenges.

The recent Amazon and Virginia Tech economic development announcements have stoked concerns regarding the impacts on affordability that may result throughout the region. While analysis shows the potential for impacts on affordability, [in](#)

[a region with over 3.3 million jobs](#), an additional 25,000 jobs entering the market over a decade is not likely to have a dramatic impact.



Yet these economic development "wins" have served to shine a light on an issue that has bedeviled our City and this region for decades. As [the region's job supply has grown, the housing supply has not sufficiently grown to match](#).

While the paired announcement of Amazon and Virginia Tech presents risks for affordability in the region, it also provides some critical opportunities:

- For the first time ever, [the Commonwealth included new housing investments in an economic development incentive package](#).
- In the aftermath of the announcement, [Governor Northam proposed new investments in the Commonwealth's Housing Trust Fund as part of his package of amendments to the budget for the 2019 General Assembly session](#).
- There is some reason to believe that the Amazon/Virginia Tech investment will prompt new housing production, thus alleviating some of the crunch.

Next weekend the Alexandria Film Festival returns to our City!

Meet the filmmakers at more than 50 film screenings, with the "Burke and Herbert Family Showcase," "Salute to Service Members Showcase," "Women in Film" and "late Night Film Noir."

[Ticketed and free shows at AMC Hoffman 22 and Beatley Library.](#)

Run For Turkey

For the 44th Year, Del Ray will host the best Turkey Trot around!

The 44th Anniversary Alexandria Turkey Trot 5 Miler returns to the streets of Del Ray and Rosemont on Thanksgiving morning.

Brought to you by the Del Ray Business Association and DC Road Runners, the race is a regional tradition and last year attracted 5,500 finishers!

[Join me on Thanksgiving for a great run through Alexandria.](#)

Donate Blood

The Inova Bloodmobile will be in Old Town at McEneaney Associates (109 S. Pitt Street) from 11 AM until 3 PM on Tuesday.

[Appointments to donate blood can be made online.](#)
Thanks for saving a life!

Community Health Improvement

As the City works to develop our Community Health Improvement Plan, the Alexandria Health Department will be hosting three community meetings this month.

Focused on the three priority areas of Mental Health, Poverty and Affordable Housing, these

While [the national media](#) has highlighted the potential impact of this new growth on Arlandria and other vulnerable neighborhoods, the City [recently commenced a long-planned effort to update our plans in Arlandria and Del Ray](#). Housing affordability will be a significant component of that process.

[An online survey](#) is now available to collect input as this process gets started, and community meetings are scheduled for Thursday November 21st at 6:30 PM at Cora Kelly School (3600 Commonwealth Avenue) and Thursday December 12th at 6:30 PM at Mount Vernon Community School (2601 Commonwealth Avenue).

[In response to requests earlier this year by Council, our staff returned last month with revisions to our Interdepartmental Work Program to include a comprehensive review of zoning tools available to advance affordability, including Accessory Dwelling Units \(ADU\), inclusionary zoning, and beyond.](#)

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.

A few years ago, [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](#). Late last year, [Minneapolis approved one of the more radical approaches to addressing affordability, by rethinking the entire construct of "Single Family Zoning."](#) [A recent analysis looked at similar approaches in our region, including Alexandria.](#)

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

Our discussions on affordable housing have generally been 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

meetings are intended to brainstorm ideas to make tangible improvements.

[Learn more information or submit ideas online.](#)

REVIVE Training

[Twice a month the City offers free training to residents seeking to learn how to spot and reverse an opioid overdose.](#)

No RSVP is required, and attendees receive a free medical kit upon completion.

Help become a lifesaver in our community!

Real Estate Tax Bills Due

[The second half real estate tax bills are due on Thursday, November 15th.](#)

Save a stamp and a trip to City Hall by [using the City's eChecks system.](#)

Census Jobs

As part of the preparation for the 2020 Decennial Census, the United States Census Bureau is already hiring in our area.

Click [here](#) or [here](#) to review the various jobs listed for hiring.

Thanks for joining our effort to ensure a full and complete count!

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 rarely 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. I would also suggest that we have done some 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.

In 2017, at the suggestion of Councilman Chapman and myself, [the City expanded our "density bonus" program for affordable housing.](#) The program essentially trades additional market density with landowners in exchange for new committed affordable housing.

As we work to implement the City's Housing Master Plan, we must seek to comprehend and be willing to address all of the factors that challenge affordability in the City. Amazon's arrival and Virginia Tech's expansion doesn't dramatically change the affordability challenge in our region, but it does perhaps give us the impetus to make the difficult decisions to address it.

[Let me know your thoughts!](#)

Financing our Infrastructure

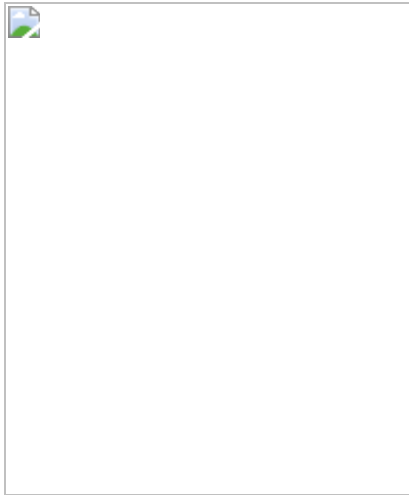
[Last month, the City Council unanimously voted to authorize the issuance of \\$200 million of new General Obligation bonds.](#) This new borrowing will be used to finance the construction of the Potomac Yard Metro station as well as other projects in our Capital Improvement Program.

Each time the City goes to borrow money for its capital budget, it must go before the rating agencies to have its credit worthiness evaluated, which guides market valuation. Next week, I will be accompanying our staff to New York to meet with the agencies and present information on the City's newly planned borrowing.

Much like individuals must have a credit check performed before acquiring a mortgage, a car loan, or a new credit card, the City must go before Standard & Poor's and Moody's to have the two organizations assess whether we are doing a good job managing the City's finances.

In May, [the Council adopted our 10 year Capital Improvement Program, covering fiscal years 2020 - 2029.](#) Over the 10 year period, the program calls for \$1.618 billion in capital investment throughout the City. A third of this funding goes to City and School municipal facilities. Another third goes to transportation initiatives.

Our capital budget is funded primarily through a mix of debt and current year funding also known as "cash capital." Relating this to your home mortgage, the cash capital is the down payment. We also



pay interest each year on the debt that was issued in previous years.

Alexandria is very conservative with our use of debt.

In issuing the City's last rating, Moody's wrote: "The stable outlook reflects the likelihood that the city will maintain its satisfactory financial position due to proactive management, sound financial policies, and continued tax base growth and diversification."

Standard & Poor's similarly cited that the City's "...overall net debt is low" and noted that the City's "debt and contingent liability profile is very strong."

Arlington County limits its debt to 4% of its Fair Market Real Property Value. Both Fairfax and Prince William Counties limit their debt to 3%. [Alexandria's self-imposed limit is 2.5%, and this budget year we achieved 1.60%](#) .

The median for other similarly rated and sized jurisdictions is 2.42%.

Debt is a tool that allows us to balance the costs of large capital investments across the generations of Alexandria taxpayers that will benefit from them and to pay for our investments from the returns we reap from them.

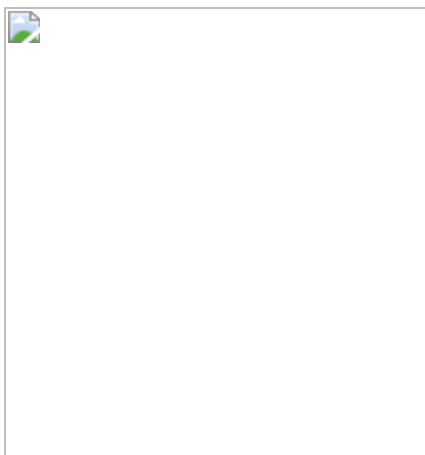
It is important for us to maintain the careful stewardship that will protect our taxpayers and our City's infrastructure long into the future.

Small Cell Deployment

Last year, [I provided an update on the City's deployment of a municipal fiber network](#). Our work continues with procurement activities for the fiber build efforts occurring later this year.

Yet the broadband-dependent applications of tomorrow will be delivered through a variety of different technologies. The [next iteration of cellular technology is known as 5G](#), which will be capable of delivering broadband capabilities far beyond current deployments.

How to facilitate the deployment of 5G has been the topic of both



Federal and state rule-making and lawmaking. [Last year, the Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\) issued an order attempting to accelerate deployment of 5G by preempting some local authority over this infrastructure work.](#) Similarly, the Commonwealth of Virginia [adopted new legislation facilitating the construction of so-called "small cell" installations](#), which support

existing 4G networks and are often required for 5G deployment.

The City has already received 50 applications for small cell installations around our community.

[Our City staff is working to develop new guidelines and ordinances to allow this new wireless deployment](#), while being respectful of the potential aesthetic impacts to our streetscape.

Last month, the Council approved 5 year agreements with both [Verizon](#) and [AT&T](#) to allow their installation of small cell equipment in City right-of-way on utility poles owned by third parties.

Ultimately, we want to ensure Alexandria not left behind as technology advances. To do so we must quickly adopt a regulatory framework that supports prompt deployment of this infrastructure.

Preserving Freedom House

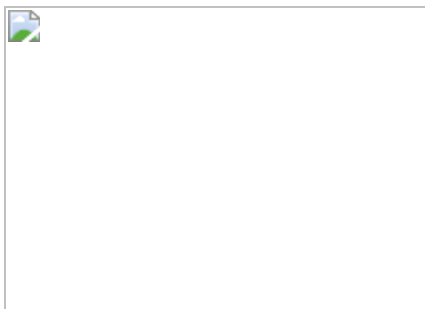
[Between 1828 and 1861, over 100,000 enslaved African-Americans passed through 1315 Duke Street in the City of Alexandria. This building was the headquarters for one of the largest domestic slave trading operations in our nation.](#)

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

Today, known as Freedom House, the building has been owned by the Northern Virginia Urban League since 1996 and is being operated as a museum in partnership with the City.

[Last year, the City extended financial support when the Urban League's finances prevented successful operation of the museum.](#)

[Now, the Urban League has placed the property on the open market.](#)



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

The City is working closely with a variety of public and private partners to keep this building accessible and ensure that we can continue to interpret the history of this important, and tragic, era of our past.

Refugee Resettlement

In late September, President Trump issued [Executive Order 13888, entitled "Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement."](#) This executive order provided direction to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to devise a process whereby local jurisdictions and states can submit objections to the Federal government to prevent refugee resettlement activity in their community.

For generations, our nation, our Commonwealth and our City have resettled refugees fleeing war, famine and persecution. This resettlement activity is performed by the Federal government in

partnership with non-profit organizations, including the faith community.

[Refugees are among the most vetted entrants to the United States.](#)

Those that are admitted have gone through a multi-year process to validate their status.

Local governments have not traditionally had any role in deciding whether refugees are resettled in their communities. While some communities, including Alexandria, provide supports to ensure the success of these individuals, the "approval" of a local community has not been a component of the process.

The President's executive order attempts to insert local governing bodies in this process, presumably to prompt communities to declare themselves off-limits to this resettlement activity.

Refugees have made significant contributions to the success of our City throughout our history. I do not believe there is any valid rationale for our City to attempt to prevent refugee resettlement activity in our City.

As such, the City Council [unanimously adopted a resolution](#), at my suggestion, to affirm the City's posture on this question. We have provided this resolution to our Congressional delegation, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

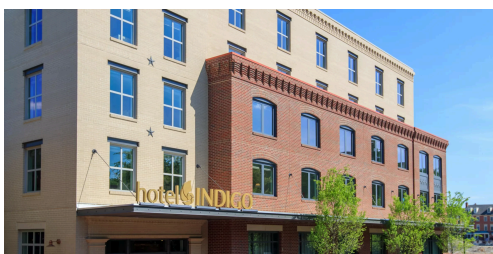
I am hopeful and optimistic that our neighboring jurisdictions will make similar affirmations.

Welcoming Visitors to Our City

In a difficult year, with headwinds from the Federal Government shutdown and the Metro Platform Improvement Project, the investments the City has made in attracting new visitation to our community has again paid dividends for our taxpayers.

In Fiscal Year 2019, [visitors to Alexandria spent \\$859 million in our City](#). That spending supports 6,583 jobs and provides \$27.9 million of tax revenue.

That equates to almost 7 cents on our real estate tax. Tourism in our City essentially saves the average household \$673 per year.



The City achieved a 72.5% hotel occupancy (compared with a 65.5% national average) and has exceeded 70% for the fifth consecutive year.

[As we were recognizing these accomplishments the City was voted by Conde Nast Traveler Magazine readers the third best City in America!](#) This designation is a significant recognition for the work that our businesses and residents do to ensure our City is a hospitable place for visitors.

Yet our City cannot rest on its laurels. During difficult times, communities around our country and particularly our region are working to offer unique experiences to visitors.

With that in mind, Visit Alexandria will be focusing on expanding the King Street Corridor Initiative, designed to focus on programming, beautification and marketing of our central business district. New efforts focused on neighborhood promotion in Del Ray, Carlyle/Eisenhower, the West End and Old Town will be launched, along with efforts associated with the Tall Ship Providence.

Non-residents account for 71% of the City's consumption-based taxes (sales, meals and lodging). Hosting visitors in our City not only allows us to show off our wonderful community, it is also great for our taxpayers!

Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

As Mayor, I am continuing my regular series of Town Hall Meetings.

You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply the Mayor who will hopefully have 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

Rethinking Alexandria Bus Service

On an average weekday, about 14,500 people board Metrorail at one of our four stations (Braddock Road, King Street, Eisenhower Avenue and Van Dorn Street). It is certainly an important part of transportation in our City.

Yet our four Metrorail stations (soon to be five) serve only a small portion of our 15.5 square miles. On an average weekday, almost 24,000 people board a bus, either [DASH](#) or Metrobus.

The tool our City has used for decades to serve the transit needs of most of our neighborhoods has been the bus.

[The Alexandria Transit Vision Plan](#) is the City's effort to rethink our buses. Last month, [DASH released the most significant "re-imagining" of its route structure in its history](#). This restructuring is designed to:

- Increase the number of Alexandrians near frequent transit (a bus or train arriving every 15 minutes or better) from 27% to 79%.
- Increase the number of jobs in Alexandria near frequent transit from 40% to 75%.
- Increase the number of jobs accessible by transit (within 45 minutes) to Alexandrians by 18%.
- Increase the number of residents in poverty near frequent transit from 29% to 89%.
- Increase the number of seniors near frequent transit from 23% to 74%.

Earlier this year, DASH celebrated 35 years of serving Alexandria.



What started with 17 buses and served less than a million passengers, today serves over 4 million passengers with 85 buses. While new routes have been added, and existing routes tweaked at times, the basic construct of DASH's route network has largely been unchanged.

Communities around our nation have done the difficult work of rethinking their bus route networks to improve frequency of service, reduce

route duplication, and ultimately serve more riders. [Houston's overnight route network transformation helped spur growth in ridership at a time when transit ridership was dropping elsewhere.](#)

Our effort is similar, designed to re-imagine our bus routes and ultimately increase ridership and route efficiency.

To provide a factual basis for this effort, [a "Transit Choices Report" was developed.](#) This report is a compendium of data on our existing transit network, designed to support this significant undertaking.

[This is an opportunity for the City to make transit more relevant and vital for more of our City's residents.](#) To do so, will require trade-offs around the City. We need your input on those potential trade-offs and their impacts on you and your neighbors.

[A survey will be collecting online input until November 22nd.](#)

[On Wednesday November 13th, the DASH Board will be holding the final community meeting to collect input. This meeting will be held at City Hall at 5:30 PM.](#)

Let me know your thoughts as we create a transit system that serves more of our community.

Juvenile Detention Home

Three years ago, I used a [write-up in this newsletter](#) to address concerns that I held about the City's future relationship with the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home.

Along with Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, the City owns [the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home](#). Located in Alexandria, the facility has a capacity for 70 children who are awaiting disposition by the juvenile justice system and 10 children who have already received disposition. The home is run by a board with representatives from all three jurisdictions. [There is a school run there by the Alexandria City Public Schools](#).

[The City spends a little over a million dollars each year to contribute to the operation of this facility.](#) The [latest data shows that about 20% of the capacity is being utilized with about half of the usage coming from Alexandria.](#)

During recent budget cycles, [additional money has been requested to increase staffing to comply with the Prison Rape Elimination Act \(PREA\).](#) Council chose to defer decisions to allow a larger conversation about the future of the facility to occur. Do we have the ability to partner with other facilities or the state to provide these services?

This conversation the City is having is very much aligned with similar



conversations around the Commonwealth. Driven by lower populations of children committed to the state Juvenile Justice system as well as a desire for better

outcomes, the state has worked to reduce capacity as well.

[The Department of Juvenile Justice closed a facility in Culpeper in 2014 and worked to close two larger facilities in the Richmond area.](#) The Department is currently [executing a "Transformation" plan to redirect resources and improve the outcomes for our children.](#)

The three jurisdictions are now conducting a study on the future of this facility, and we would like your input. [Three community meetings are scheduled this month, including one on Wednesday November 20th at 7 PM at Lee Center \(1108 Jefferson Street\).](#)

[Additionally, a short online survey is available for your review.](#)

I am also hopeful that the three jurisdictions can work together to chart a new future for this facility.

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