CHILDREN & YOUTH REPORT CARD REVIEW

BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL

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TOPIC

Cost of living and Education

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Alexandria's focus on educating residents on budgeting, curbing homelessness, and preventing displacement is critical to mitigating a severe affordability crisis, as nearly half of all renter households face housing cost burdens. These efforts aim to stabilize housing, reduce the trauma of displacement, and strengthen the local workforce—including teachers and service workers—by enabling them to live in the city where they work. This approach promotes long-term economic resilience and fosters an inclusive community, aligning with Alexandria's 2026 housing goals

The high cost of living has led to significant consequences, including severe housing overburden for 60% of renters and a widening disparity that forces service workers, teachers, and first respondents out of the city. Barriers to improvement are largely structural, including a limited land supply for new development, high construction costs, and community resistance to denitrification. Negative factors include soaring childcare costs—often exceeding $20,000 annually—and high vehicle taxes, which act as a "second mortgage" on households. Positive factors bolstering the city's approach include a robust, dedicated housing trust fund, the adoption of a 2026 budget that prioritizes economic justice and education, and a strong public-private partnership network designed to produce more affordable units

RESULT

Intended result is to improve education about budgeting and finance, which will help reduce homelessness and need for families to move homes frequently.

CYCP GOAL AND STRATEGIC AREA

It focus on creating an "affordable by design" economy. This approach aims to reduce household expenses by transitioning away from volatile fossil fuel costs, accelerating housing production, and expanding access to essential services.

SIGNIFICANCE

Educating people on the cost of living in Alexandria and budgeting, by creating workshops in the cities and classes to teach these skills starting at a young age. This will effect most people that are currently scraping or unfamiliar with how to live in Alexandria, by teaching those how to budget, where shop, reading leases, avoiding violations, making sure owner meets standards and much more. But mainly this for people who make under 100k in Alexandria.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

In Alexandria, approximately 44% of renters are cost-burdened, spending over 30% of their income on housing. Driven by a gap between stagnant wages and average rents often exceeding $2,100, this crisis has caused eviction filings to approach pre-pandemic levels.To combat this, the city operates an Eviction Prevention Program offering emergency financial aid. Additionally, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) requires a financial literacy course for students, covering budgeting, housing, and personal finance.

SPENDING IN ALEXANDRIA

Expense Category	Average Monthly Expense Single Person	Average Monthly Expense Family of Four	Alexandria compare to: U.S. Average
Housing	1646	3017	37.1%
Food	397	1289	-0.9%
Energy	172	295	-1.6%
Transportation	424	901	6.0%
Healthcare	277	739	-7.6%

IMPLEMENTATION

As of early 2026, the City of Alexandria is actively pursuing solutions to its severe cost-of-living crisis, with an overall cost roughly 43% higher than the national average. Solutions are heavily focused on housing supply and resident education, including the Housing 2040 plan to increase density, the 1% restaurant meal tax dedication for affordable housing, and projects like Witter Place (94 affordable units) and Sansé. To educate and support residents, the city provides free financial literacy workshops, VITA tax preparation, and rental counseling through the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and the Alexandria Library. The city also fosters a "Fresh Start" partnership with local nonprofits to address mounting back rent in public housing

PARTNERSHIPS

ARHA
Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Housing Alexandria

ahc
AFFORDABLE HOMES & COMMUNITIES

PERFORMANCE EFFORT

Back Rent Clearance: The initiative is clearing approximately $1 million in accumulated back rent for nearly 450 households (approx. 338+ verified families) living in Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) properties.
Private Funding: The effort is funded through private donations, primarily led by a pledge from Alfred Street Baptist Church to raise the full amount, avoiding the use of city taxpayer money.
Systemic Accountability: ARHA is required to improve its internal systems, increase transparency, and enhance communication to prevent future large-scale arrears.
Resident Support: The Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and local nonprofits are providing mandatory financial empowerment workshops and counseling to participants.
Partnership Structure: ACT for Alexandria is managing the independent charitable fun

PERFORMANCE EFFECT

Immediate Eviction Prevention: The initiative successfully halted potential evictions for hundreds of families who owed debts ranging from $50 to $30,000.
Operational Reset: It forces a "reset" between residents and ARHA, aiming for better long-term management and communication to prevent debt accumulation.
Financial Literacy: Participants must attend meetings to create financial stability plans, helping them move from immediate crisis to long-term stability.
Sustainable Model: The partnership demonstrates a salable model for addressing housing affordability through faith-based community action and private philanthropy

RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy addresses Alexandria's high cost of living by establishing a financial literacy course starting in elementary school & extending to adulthood. For households earning under $100k, the program moves residents from survival to stability by embedding practical skills—like budgeting for local rent and understanding tenant rights, The youth strategy introduces "Alexandria Economy" simulations in elementary and middle schools, teaching children the basics of earning and saving through hands-on local examples. By normalizing financial conversations early, students build there knowledge on real world finance—like utilities & emergency funds—long before they receive their first paycheck. This early start removes the intimidation often associated with money management in high-cost areas. For adults, the policy provides tactical workshops on localized budgeting and tenant advocacy. Residents learn where to find affordable groceries and how to scrutinize leases for predatory clauses or code violations. By teaching citizens how to hold property owners accountable through the city's Code Administration, the initiative protects lower-income earners from exploitation. Accessible in multiple languages and supported by local nonprofits, this plan transforms financial savvy into a public utility for all Alexandrian's.

ONLINE

https://www.alive inc.org/

https://www.alxnow.com/

CITATIONS

https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/clean_annual_plan_draft_3.14.25.pdf. (2026, January 23).

https://www.salary.com/research/cost-of-living/alexandria-vaProvides (2026, February 15). .

https://www.alexandriava.gov/housing-services/homebuyer-resourcesIncludes (2025).

IN PERSON

Office of Housing (City of Alexandria): Located at 421 King Street, Suite 215,
Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) **- Del Pepper Community Center:** Located at 4850 Mark Center