

From the City Manager



City Manager Vola Lawson

This will be my last annual report to the Mayor and Members of City Council and to the citizens of Alexandria, as I will be retiring on March 1, 2000, at which time I will have served 15 years as City Manager, and almost 29 years as a City employee.

I will always be grateful to have been a part of a City team devoted to the highest standards of public service. I have had the privilege of working for four outstanding mayors—Chuck Beatley, Jim Moran, Patsy Ticer and Kerry Donley—as well as for the many talented members of City Council. They have all devoted countless hours of their time to improve the quality of life in Alexandria, and to ensure the City's long-term financial viability. The other essential members of the City team are the City employees, who work hard every day to provide high quality services to the citizens of Alexandria. There is no better workforce anywhere in the country.

As this annual report points out, the City has a strong economy, and unemployment is at an all-time low. We continue to expand job opportunities by attracting new businesses and government agencies. Tourism is very strong, and our hotels and restaurants are generally doing a booming business. The quality of life here is excellent, and the City is a safer place to live, work, and visit as serious crime reached a 32-year low point this year.

But as this annual report also points out, the City must deal with important fiscal and transportation issues in the future. Current revenue and expenditure projections indicate that the City's future expenditure growth may outpace future revenue growth if the City does not seek to diversify its revenue base, and if it does not continue its efforts to live within its means and to control increases in expenditures. Strong fiscal management is a hallmark of the Alexandria City government, and the City will need to continue to make difficult choices in the years ahead that will enable it to balance its expenditures within its available revenues, while still providing adequate funding for the public schools and for high quality public services.

As I reflect on the progress this City has made over the last several decades in so many different areas, I am particularly proud of our progress as a diverse and caring community. These accomplishments, and many others discussed in this report, reflect the vision and commitment of our Mayor and City Council, the participation of so many of our citizens and citizens' associations, the involvement of the business community and the hard work of our City employees. They all play an

important role in making Alexandria a great City and believe that this is a special place to live and work. I share that belief, and will always take pride in having been a part of it for so many years. These have been the best years of my life, and I thank all of you for making that so.

Vola Lawson

City Manager Vola Lawson

City Manager Vola Lawson was appointed City Manager by City Council in 1985. She has been a City employee for 28 years. She was honored by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) with its 1997 National Award for Innovative Leadership and Accomplished Professionalism. The Virginia chapters of ASPA previously named Mrs. Lawson the outstanding public administrator in Virginia. The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) presented National Program Excellence Awards to Mrs. Lawson and to the City for the City's Community Shelter/ Substance Abuse Services Center and for the City's Innovative Community Policing Program. In 1993, Mrs. Lawson was inducted into the Virginia Women's Hall of Fame. Mrs. Lawson is a member of the Virginia General Assembly's Commission on the Condition and Future of Virginia Cities.

She is President of the Alexandria Transit Company, which operates the City's DASH bus system. She also is a member of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, Inc. Board and the Board of the Alexandria Bar Foundation. Mrs. Lawson has received numerous community awards, including the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce's George Washington Leadership Award, the Distinguished Service Award from the Alexandria Olympic Boys and Girls Club, the Elizabeth Ann Campagna Award from the Campagna Center, the Urban League's Northern Virginia Community Service Award, the Alexandria Commission on Women Award for Outstanding Achievement in Housing, the Alexandria-Washington Masonic Lodge's Community Builders Award; and an appreciation award from the Alexandria Black History Resource Center, Parker-Gray Alumni Association and the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage this past March.



Alexandria City Manager Vola Lawson and her dog, “Jack,” visit some of the young people and “Reba,” a shelter dog, who attended the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria’s annual summer camp. Construction of a new animal shelter is slated to begin in March 2000.