

From the Mayor



Mayor Kerry J. Donley

Welcome to the City's 1999 Annual Report. Prepared by the City Manager and her staff, the report serves to keep citizens informed on the activities of City government and the key challenges facing the City. I encourage you to take a few minutes to read through this report.

During the past year, City Council and I have worked hard to bring to fruition several key projects, as well as forge ahead in new areas to prepare this City for the millennium. Construction is nearly completed on the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, which is scheduled to open this winter. In May, we broke ground for the first new school to open in the City in 30 years. Construction work continues in Cameron Station, one of the largest residential developments in the City, with current plans for 1,604 homes. We finally have begun planning for the construction of a new animal shelter to replace a structure that is more than four decades old. The City is building two new parks and expanding educational, recreational and cultural opportunities for youth and adults. And, although we are looking forward to the benefits of these projects in the future, we continue to appreciate our heritage through ongoing celebrations of the City's 250th anniversary this year.

During the 1999 fiscal year, Alexandria enjoyed a healthy economy. The City's office vacancy rate is under 5%, and retail sales grew by nearly 10%, largely due to new retail and commercial projects at Potomac Yard. Our tourism industry is up 8% from the previous year, providing more than \$7.7 million in annual tax revenues. Unemployment and violent crime are down and the City is experiencing a surge in its population and an increase in its diversity as more families, single professionals and retirees discover Alexandria's outstanding quality of life. Our challenge is preserving our historic character and residential neighborhoods, while working to expand our economic base and financial security.

This fall, when City Council resumes, we will be facing several key challenges that will have a significant long-term impact on the City's fiscal health. They include the relocation of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Potomac Yard, development of the Waterfront, the proposed King Street Visitor Center, as well as our growing list of transportation concerns, including the replacement of the

Woodrow Wilson Bridge. We will examine many of these issues during City Council's annual retreat on November 5 and 6 at the Lee Center.

It is my sincere hope that all of the residents in this community will want to be a part of these discussions and will engage in constructive, open and honest dialogue about issues that will affect not only our lives but the lives of our children and of future generations.

I encourage all citizens to become engaged in our government — to participate at City Council meetings and work sessions; to write, call and e-mail City staff; and to volunteer on our many boards and commissions. An engaged, active citizenry makes our community stronger.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelly Donley".

Mayor Donley joins participants in the City's "Krunch Bunch" lunch program at the Charles Houston Recreation Center.