

DEAR ALEXANDRIA RESIDENT,



Not since perhaps the late 1960s has the resiliency of the City government been tested as it was last year. The events of September 11, the anthrax scare, and the closing of Reagan National Airport significantly damaged the local economy. In addition, the Commonwealth's budget crunch and resulting reductions in state assistance to the City, and the federal government's decision to prosecute an alleged accomplice in the September 11 hijackings in Alexandria, all seriously impacted Alexandria.

Overall, I believe the City government responded well to these matters. The public safety response to the September 11 attack on the Pentagon was quick, competent and professional, as police, fire and sheriff personnel provided immediate assistance in a variety of forms to Arlington County. The response to the subsequent anthrax-related events was also solid.

On the economic front, the City developed a novel marketing plan by the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association to regain lost tourists, provided federal disaster loan assistance to businesses injured by September 11 and the airport closure, immediately expanded financial aid and social services to individuals and families harmed by these events, offered free parking in the Old Town area to assist local merchants, and imposed a freeze on City hiring with spending reductions.

There are several critical challenges ahead this year. These are described in the Major Challenges section of this report. Most of the decisions will be made in the context of the City's operating and capital improvement program budgets, both of which are discussed and debated in the early months of 2003 and adopted by Council in May. I urge all citizens interested in the major challenges facing the City to become involved in the budget process.

I hope that you enjoy this Annual Report, and that it encourages you to become an active participant in our community.

Sincerely,

Philip Sunderland

Philip Sunderland
City Manager