



Mayor's State of the City 2013

Good afternoon! I'm Mayor Bill Euille, and thank you for joining me today. One of my favorite things to do is to talk with young people, so I thought we'd try something new for this year's State of the City address – have a conversation with students from Alexandria City Public Schools about our great city. We'll talk about what we've accomplished, how far we've come, and where we're going. So, I'd like to hear from you—do you have any questions?

STUDENT: Why does the City flag have a ship on it?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- Well, back in the early days, Alexandria was one of the 10 busiest ports in America.
- That's one reason why the symbol of our great city is a ship.
- Our ship has endured rough weather lately, but we are staying on course
- The City has a Strategic Plan that guides us
- And new leadership on City Council and in the City Manager's office,
- We are ready to steer forward into the future.

STUDENT: What's in our future?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- Well, the future is...you!
- You are our future residents and leaders.
- One of the things that make Alexandria a great place to live is the support we provide to young people.

- In fact, in 2012, Alexandria was named one of the Nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People by America's Promise--for the fifth time.

We got the award for our programs and services in early childhood education, child obesity prevention, mentoring, teen pregnancy prevention, youth development and juvenile delinquency prevention.

And, there are residents and City staff creating a "road map" for the future of our youth. The Children, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission is leading the creation of a Child and Youth Master Plan in Alexandria. This Plan will serve as a blueprint for developing and improving services and support for the City's young people, from cradle to career.

We also support Alexandria City Public Schools, and we're preparing for the future generations of Alexandrians. The City is working with ACPS in developing future plans for school facilities. Enrollment in the Schools has grown by 2,600 in the past five years. As enrollment exceeds classroom capacity, the City faces not only an education challenge, but also a budget challenge as well. The City and ACPS have joined in developing a Long Range Educational Facilities Plan to analyze school enrollment trends, improve facilities planning, accommodate the growing student population, and enhance educational programs and services.

STUDENT: Summer's coming, and I'm looking for things to do. What opportunities does the City offer?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- The City has lots of summer activities for Alexandrians of all ages
- We encourage people to visit our recreation centers, museums, libraries, and parks
- We offer recreation programs, camps and other fun things to do,
- We also offer programs to help teens find jobs

The City's *TeensWork!* employment program helps young people ages 14-21 find summer jobs in the DC metro region.

Through the program, teens have found jobs in City offices and with employers in the private sector. And, teens ages 16 and older can receive job search assistance and placement.

The City's support for children, youth, and families--and the health and well-being of all Alexandrians--extends to the addition of two new recreation spaces:

Witter Fields, a new, state-of-the-art facility developed at no cost to the City through a partnership with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project;

And the Kelly Cares Miracle Field, a recreational space, featuring a rubberized playing field designed for people with disabilities. The Kelly Cares Miracle Field was planned and constructed using a combination of City funds, and in-kind and private donations.

STUDENT: You said the City was like a ship. How is our ship doing?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- Our ship is sailing well right now.
- The State of our City is strong in many ways.

We've accomplished many things in the last year:

- Like City Council's recent vote implementing the Waterfront Small Area Plan, after years of passionate debate;
- the long awaited closing of the GenOn power generating plant; and the establishment of Alexandria's first solar energy project, located at Beatley Central Library; and
- introduction of two new City initiatives designed to increase our connections with the community.

STUDENT: There's been a lot of news about how bad the economy has been, and how slowly things are taking to get better. What are some of the economic challenges the City faces?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- Well, the City is experiencing a climate of economy uncertainty for the sixth year
- And that's compounded by the "sequestration" that instituted automatic funding cuts in the Federal government.
- The City works to manage these, and other economic challenges through the annual budget process.

The interesting thing about challenges is that sometimes, they come with opportunities. And we have had many.

Guided by the Strategic Plan, the City Manager continues to streamline government, improve services, and increase community engagement. Besides realigning the City's internal structure, he's established internal, guiding principles based on excellence in service delivery and increased accountability and transparency; and implemented a new performance management program that continues the work started by the 2006 Managing for Results Initiative.

In January, the City unveiled *Call.Click.Connect*, a customer service initiative combining people, processes and technology to deliver information, services and solutions to the public. It places "your City government at your fingertips" through an online system designed to help us respond more efficiently to you.

The City also launched *What's Next Alexandria*, in collaboration with ACTion Alexandria, to begin a community dialogue about civic engagement, planning for the future and how community members can best participate in the process. Hundreds of people have attended community dialogues--in person and online--and have developed principles for civic engagement. The conversation continues--and you're invited to be part of it!

STUDENT: I want to hear about police and firefighters!

MAYOR EUILLE:

- That's a great idea.
- In fact, let's talk about police officers, firefighters, and all the people who keep our City safe.
- They make Alexandria an exceptional place to live, and preserve our quality of life
- They are our neighbors and our friends.

That was evident after the February shooting of Officer Peter Laboy, who was critically wounded during a traffic stop. In the weeks since the incident, the outpouring of support from the community to Officer Laboy and his family has been phenomenal, and we keep him, and family in our thoughts and prayers as he continues his miraculous recovery.

In 2012, there were **no** homicides in the City, the first time in at least 42 years. Initial crime statistics, though not final, also show that violent crime decreased again in 2012, continuing a historic low in Alexandria. And the City works to prevent crime by engaging at-risk youth through initiatives such as the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership, the Gang Prevention Task Force, and other youth activities and programs.

STUDENT: I heard there's going to be a new firehouse, and fire trucks, too!

MAYOR EUILLE:

- That's right.
- New facilities and equipment are some of the ways the City helps take care of the people who protect us.
- We're building a new Fire Station in the Eisenhower Valley

Beginning in May 2014, Fire Station 210 will provide enhanced emergency response time to Alexandria's West End, and provide additional Fire Department training facilities and community meeting space, all housed in an environmentally sustainable, state-of-the-art facility.

For budget year 2013, the Fire Department will also receive nine new engines, a new tower truck, and four medic units.

And in May, the Fire Department will get a new 50-foot, state-of-the-art fireboat, funded by grants from the Federal Emergency Management Administration. The new Fireboat will respond to emergencies on the Potomac River.

STUDENT: That sounds great! What other good things are happening?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- There's lots of good news.
- The City is definitely seeing some gains on the economic front.
- Even with a slow economic recovery, things are looking up in our business sector.

The City is receiving national accolades as a place to shop, dine and travel in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Bon Appetit* [BONE APP-eh-tee], and *Food and Wine*; and was named one of the 44 "Top Art Places in the U.S." for 2013. And our museums, which

attract thousands of visitors each year, have recently earned national accreditation as a museum system from the American Alliance of Museums--one of only eight municipal organizations awarded this honor.

People are choosing Alexandria as a unique destination for vacation and leisure.. Visitor spending in the City over the last 5 years increased 22 percent, and our tourist industry supports more than 6,000 local jobs annually.

Nonprofits and commercial creative companies are choosing Alexandria as their home. Investors continue to choose the city to place funding for high-quality, mixed use projects such as the new Harris Teeter-anchored multi-family building in Old Town, which broke ground last summer. And the BRAC-133 facility in the West End, now fully occupied, has brought thousands of additional jobs into the City.

Have you been to King Street lately? The retail district is the healthiest it has been in years, attracting many successful independent businesses and national retailers. And our other retail "main street," Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray, is experiencing new growth, with redevelopment of the Calvert (scheduled for completion in early 2014), which will bring retail to the street level, promoting vibrancy, and the new Four Mile Run Center, which is inspiring activity in Arlandria.

Because of careful planning, community involvement, and commitment to our historic past, the City has maintained its quaint charm, celebrated its natural resources, preserved its historic treasures, and celebrated the arts.

**STUDENT: There's a lot of building going on in neighborhoods and on the streets.
What's happening?**

MAYOR EUILLE:

- There is a lot going on,
- New neighborhoods are being born, and other neighborhoods grow

- It's because of people, government, and business working together to help shape our City's future.

According to famed architect and urban planner Léon Krier [Lee-on KREE-er], "A city is not an accident, but the result of coherent visions and aims."

That really describes the balancing act involved in envisioning, developing and implementing the transportation, development, housing, and supporting infrastructure elements that

- Sustain the City's strong economic position and maintain our regional competitiveness
- Support a thriving business community, and creates jobs
- Preserve and protect affordable housing, and
- Enhance the quality of life in our city.

Let's start with transportation. Using the Strategic Plan, the City is now implementing its vision of a multimodal, active transportation network that will provide residents and commuters with internal mobility and regional connectivity in accordance with City's Transportation Master Plan, and Eco-City Alexandria Environmental Action Plan.

A great example is proposed Potomac Yard Metro station, which will support the City's largest redevelopment project. The proposed station is undergoing the environmental impact statement process, with a draft environmental impact statement anticipated for release in May 2013. The City will host a series of workshops for the community, with additional public hearings to follow in the fall.

Another is the Route 1 Transitway, currently under construction between Potomac Avenue, the Monroe Avenue Bridge, and East Glebe Road. Once completed in spring 2014, the transitway, funded by a federal TIGER grant, will be the first of its kind in the region.

In the West End, the feasibility Study has been completed for Beauregard/Van Dorn and Duke Street Transportation Corridors, with environmental impact work to begin for the Beauregard/Van Dorn Corridor C.

Alexandria built on its bike-friendly reputation by becoming part of the Capital Bikeshare system in 2012, with eight stations located in Old Town and the King Street and Braddock Road Metro station, and additional stations proposed for Old Town, Carlyle, and Del Ray. To encourage bike owners to pedal instead of drive, DASH recently installed bike racks on all of its buses and a bike corral has been installed in the unit block of King Street.

Supporting all this is the 560 lane miles of roadway and nearly 320 miles of sidewalks the City maintains. Underground, the City sustains more than 240 miles of sanitary sewers and 189 miles of storm sewers. In 2013, the City will undertake its second citywide pavement management inventory to determine which streets should be repaved over the next five years. This study also allows the City to target its limited street maintenance funds and pursue matching funds from the State.

STUDENT: Some people are moving out of Alexandria because they say it costs too much to live here. Is the City doing anything about that?

MAYOR EUILLE:

- Yes, we are.
- Keeping housing affordable continues to be a great concern to us.
- We value the social and ethnic diversity of our city, because it helps keep our City strong and vibrant.
- But affordability is key.

In 2012, we took several steps to address the lack of affordable housing options in the City:

- The City released the draft Housing Master Plan, a citywide vision guiding future development with the goals of preserving and protecting affordable housing opportunities. The Master Plan developed in process with residents, community stakeholders, and City staff. (graphic: www.alexandriava.gov/HousingPlan)

- City Council approved the Beauregard Plan, seeking to preserve 800 units of long-term affordable housing, and passed a resolution recognizing the Hunting Towers Apartments, a source of affordable workforce housing in the City, as a significant community asset.
- City Council approved the development of the property at East Reed Avenue and Route 1 in partnership with AHC Inc. The development will provide 77 units of long-term affordable housing.
- The City's Neighborhood Stabilization Program partnership with Rebuilding Together Alexandria and the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation assisted nine first-time homebuyers.

And across the City, new communities are being built as small area plans become reality. For example, seven new development projects in the Braddock Metro area are underway, with two buildings, The Asher and The Henry, already complete. Over in Potomac Yard, a new community continues to takes root.

- Construction on townhouses, urban lofts and a multifamily building continues, and the Potomac Yard Linear Park will be opening this summer.
- Four other multifamily buildings are been approved over the past year, along with a Giant grocery store slated for Route 1. These projects should be starting construction this spring and summer.
- And approvals have been made for a major new office building to house The Institute for Defense Analysis, one of the City's largest employers. The Institute will move its headquarters from Mark Center to the new building, which when completed, with be the centerpiece of the South Potomac Yard Town Center.

CHILD 5: So, are those all the things that make our City strong?

MAYOR EUILLE (ADLIB):

- Yes, all that...but it's also the people who make us strong.
- “When you look at a city, it's like reading the hopes, aspirations, and pride of everyone who built it.” [also on title card, with attribution -- Hugh Newell Jacobsen, architect]

We are a vibrant, diverse, urban community; a haven for lovers of nature, walking and biking. We are a city of voracious readers—and defenders of our libraries; Nirvana for history buffs and lovers of the arts, and a hub of charitable giving. We're an Eco-City, a great place for kids—and pets, and a caring community that reaches out to its most vulnerable members. Alexandria is a place where we all--residents, government, community organizations and businesses--work together to build a future for ourselves and for those who will come behind us.

We are the city. Despite the many challenges Alexandria has faced over the last few years, we have—and will continue--to endure whatever comes our way.

The State of our City is strong, because **we** are.

I would like to take this time to thank my colleagues on City Council: Vice Mayor Allison Silberberg, Councilman John Chapman, Councilmember Tim Lovain, Councilwoman Del Pepper, Councilman Paul Smedberg, and Councilman Justin Wilson, for all the hard work they have done so far, and in the coming weeks and months.

I would like to thank our City workforce, whose dedication and commitment reflects in the high quality of service they provide.

Many thanks also to the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, the Alexandria Visitors and Convention Association, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, and our business community, who helps keep our economic viability strong.

And I want to thank you, who participated in this important conversation, and all Alexandrians, whose passionate commitment and caring response as a community shows how much you love the City, and all she stands for.

God bless you, and God bless the great City of Alexandria.