

State of the City Address - 2014
Our Vision, Our Future
Mayor William D. Euille

Good evening. I'm Mayor Bill Euille.

Tonight, I come with good news. The state of our City is strong. Alexandria has weathered many economic challenges since 2009. Despite a slow economic recovery, our city continues to grow and thrive--and we are laying the foundation to a great future.

A future that requires change to meet twenty-first century needs, while maintaining the things we value:

- A historic, caring, diverse community;
- An excellent quality of life;
- Strong financial management; and
- A tradition of community and government working as one Alexandria to shape the City's future.

Change is everywhere.

Look around town. You'll see it in new neighborhoods emerging--like Carlyle, Potomac Yard, and Old Town Commons. Established communities, like Cameron Station, Mark Center, Del Ray, Old Town, and others, are thriving.

These corridors, which physically connect our community, continue to provide access to the vibrant parks and recreational spaces that offer a beautiful landscape and support our health and wellness.

Within these corridors, new grocery stores and other retail are generating economic activity and jobs in our communities, bringing residents diverse options--and investing our dollars here in Alexandria.

There are more than just new buildings. Last year, City Council approved Alexandria's first Housing Master Plan. The plan offers principles, goals, strategies and tools to meet the City's anticipated affordable housing needs for the next 20 years. It also sets a ten-year goal of developing or preserving 2,000 affordable housing units through 2025.

I am happy to report there are more than 3,700 committed affordable housing units in the City today. We're making strides in preserving affordable housing and the social and ethnic diversity that keeps our communities strong and vibrant.

Alexandria's communities are becoming more connected, locally and regionally. DASH, our award-winning local bus service, just celebrated its 30th anniversary. DASH's free King Street Trolley continues to draw thousands of residents and visitors to shop and dine in Alexandria every day.

The very popular Capital Bikeshare system will expand in Alexandria later this year, and we have taxis--on land and on water! And there are new options coming, beginning with the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway, set to open this summer, and of course, the future Potomac Yard Metrorail Station, to complement Alexandria's four existing stations.

Supporting much of that transit is the City's street network, our largest and most heavily used public infrastructure. The City's repaving program helps keep our road network in good shape as it

handles local trips by residents and commuting trips by our neighbors.

Over the past year, eight road sections have been resurfaced, with five more sections identified for resurfacing this spring. We are on target to meet this fiscal year's program goal of resurfacing 22 lane miles, and the proposed FY 2015 Capital Improvement Plan will nearly double that number.

All these plans and accomplishments are steps toward realizing the City's Strategic Plan, developed by City Council and the community, and approved in 2010. The Plan is our Vision and roadmap for our future.

We've been working actively to pursue and realize the goals of that Plan. With your help, we've developed and instituted ways to:

- Measure the performance of our government, through an initiative called Results Alexandria;
- Improve civic engagement through principles and concepts, developed through the *What's Next Alexandria*

initiative, which City Council recently adopted as City policy;

- Provide you with “government at your fingertips” through the *Call.Click.Connect* customer service initiative; and
- Institute measures citywide to increase the quality of our services and provide the community with exceptional customer service.

We’re changing the way we do things to meet the City’s future needs, and to serve you better.

One example is the Fiscal Year 2015 budget development process.

This year, the City took a bold, new approach, representing a dramatic shift in our previous practice. Staff focused intently on aligning the City’s efforts with the long-term outcomes our residents want.

Instead of simply continuing most of the previous year's expenditures in the new year's budget and making some adjustments, staff examined the outcomes defined in the

City's Strategic Plan and the City Manager's Performance Plan, and proposed programs and related spending designed to achieve these outcomes.

The proposed FY 2015 Budget is organized around four distinct Focus Areas that show what success looks like in our community:

- Accountable, Effective and Well-Managed Government;
- Healthy and Thriving Residents;
- A Livable, Green and Prospering City; and
- A Safe, Secure and Just Community.

This year, we're again faced with many challenging budget decisions. It's now Council's turn to weigh those budget decisions carefully, and come to a consensus on how to provide the best services we can as we move forward together.

Here's some good news.

The proposed FY 2015-2024 Capital Improvement Program includes new funding from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. This revenue—about \$210 million--is now annually

available for local and regional transportation-related capital and operating expenditures.

NVTA funding allows the City to make significant new investments in transportation infrastructure while reducing planned borrowing for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station and other transportation projects. This year's proposed Capital Improvement Program reflects this new funding strategy.

All of this strengthens our multimodal transportation network, supporting sustainable land use and providing local and regional connectivity for Alexandrians.

Let's talk about public safety.

In Alexandria, we enjoy an unparalleled quality of life. That's due in large part to the excellent work of our Police forces, our Fire and EMS services, the Sheriff's Office, and the Department of Emergency Communications.

Thanks to their efforts, the City has experienced a historically low crime rate.

However, we must recognize there are still unsolved crimes that have deeply shaken our community. Our Police Department is working tirelessly to solve these crimes; I am confident they will apprehend those responsible and bring them to justice.

In the meantime, I assure you that our city is still a safe place to live and work. The safety of our residents has always been paramount. As part of that commitment, the City has, and continues, to invest in our public safety departments.

Since FY 2010, the City has opened a state-of-the-art Police Headquarters and established the Department of Emergency Communications. In FY 2012, Alexandria embarked on a 10-year, \$32.5 million plan to replace all the Fire Department's heavy apparatus and light duty fleet vehicles; and in FY 2015, the City will open Fire Station 210 in Eisenhower Valley.

The City will also launch a new Computer Aided Dispatch system in FY 2015. The system, funded through an \$18 million capital project, will improve public safety by:

- enhancing emergency response for law enforcement, fire and EMS,
- providing expanded inter-agency communications and data sharing; and
- giving our public safety agencies critical "real time" information they need in the field.

Planning for the future is not a perfect process--sometimes there are disagreements along the way.

Change can be difficult.

As Frederick Douglass said, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

In an ever-growing city where community involvement is a strong tradition, we have had our struggles. However, out of many struggles have come positive changes.

That's evident in the City's efforts to achieve resolution in the dispute regarding the Old Dominion Boat Club's parking lot area. Thanks to hard work, negotiations, and collaboration on both sides, we were able to reach agreement on a way forward. As a result, we'll be able to substantially realize the vision for the Waterfront—and the Boat Club will have a prime Waterfront location for a new facility.

That is progress.

Once completed, the new Waterfront will provide great open spaces for residents and visitors. This jewel on the Potomac will be the flagship of the City's many parks and open spaces, which serve as havens for recreation and relaxation, and preserve our natural resources.

Alexandria has nearly completed a multiyear process to develop a Citywide Parks Improvement Plan that will enhance and preserve these spaces. The plan looks at existing conditions and future needs for large, multiple-use parks, like Chinquapin and Four Mile

Run, and is scheduled for Council consideration this spring. A similar citywide initiative for neighborhood parks is planned. These plans will ensure that our community has access to outstanding open spaces and amenities for generations to come.

Speaking of future generations, helping our young people to achieve is an investment in our City's future. Our public school system is experiencing a new heightened level of enrollment. Most growth is now being felt in elementary schools, with middle schools also seeing increases.

To meet this need, Alexandria City Public Schools is launching a comprehensive effort to grow achievement by restructuring at the middle-school level. The City and ACPS are working with community representatives to develop a Long Range Educational Facilities Plan to improve facilities planning, accommodate the growing student population, and enhance educational programs and services.

I know you've heard me say this time and time before, but Alexandria truly is a caring community. During the April 9

Spring2Action day of giving, Alexandrians gave more than \$1 million in donations to 121 local nonprofits. This is just one stunning example of why I'm so proud to be an Alexandrian. There are so many ways people like you help make our city a better place to live, like

- volunteering to serve on a Board or Commission;
- mentoring young people;
- participating in community activities and events; and
- taking time to voice your opinion on issues you care about.

The State of our City is strong. Why?

Because we are one Alexandria, united in our love for this city, and committed to leaving no one behind.

We may not always see eye-to-eye, and there will be struggles to overcome on the path to progress.

But we have the same goal--to make Alexandria the best it can be.

We will continue to promote a vibrant and healthy community.

We will continue to improve our quality of life by

- enhancing City services;
- maintaining our strong record of public safety;
- making our community pedestrian, bike, and transit-friendly;
- cherishing and protecting our environmental resources;
- supporting our schools; and
- promoting economic development to help our business community—and exceptional neighborhoods--thrive.

To my colleagues on City Council: Vice Mayor Allison Silberberg and Council Members John Chapman, Tim Lovain, Del Pepper, Paul Smedberg, and Justin Wilson: thank you for all you do, now and in the months to come.

I would also like to thank City Manager Rashad Young and our City workforce for their dedication, commitment, and excellent customer service.

And especially, thanks to our community. Your input helped us shape the vision for our City. Your participation helped us develop

ways to improve civic engagement, and your continued involvement will help guide our progress in the coming years.

I look forward to realizing the vision that we all have helped to create, and for what will be a magnificent future.

Our vision. **Our** future.

Our best days are yet to come.

Thank you, and may God bless the City of Alexandria.