

## Commission on Aging Response to the Draft Vision for Community Input for the City's Strategic Plan

The Commission on Aging has reviewed the Draft Vision available on the Engage Alexandria website, and approved the recommendations cited below (and in accordance with the categories specified in the Vision) at its meeting on December 8, 2016.

While the draft Vision has some excellent proposals, more specific recommendations regarding the needs of older residents are essential. While “The Alexandria of Our Future, A Livable Community for All Ages: Strategic Plan on Aging, 2013 – 2017” successfully focused the city on the steps it should take to make Alexandria a more livable community for all ages, serious gaps still exist. A further complication of the Vision for 2022 in referencing the current Aging Plan is its five-year span, which ends in 2017.

In late spring of this year, the Mayor and City Council authorized the City, at the request of the Commission on Aging, to join the AARP/WHO Age-Friendly Community Network (AFCN). A condition of membership is submission of a plan for enhancing Alexandria's age friendliness for consideration by AARP/WHO by early 2018. (The City has complete flexibility in determining its priorities, but AARP/WHO will review the involvement of older adults in developing the plan and the establishment of appropriate indicators for assessing progress.)

Its membership in the AFCN gives the city a great opportunity to develop a plan that would encompass the years 2018 to 2020. Membership in the Network affords the city the abundant planning resources and innovative ideas available through AARP/WHO.

The Commission on Aging is responsible for developing the plan, in consultation with older residents, the Division of Aging and Adult Services, City agencies, organizations that serve seniors, the faith community, non-profit organizations, businesses and others. The City Council will review the plan and determine its readiness for submission to AARP/WHO.

Given the absence of an aging plan that conforms with the timeframe of the City's Strategic Plan, the Commission recommends that the City's plan include an eleventh theme that could be called “active and secure aging”. The benefit for the City's strategic planning would be its attention to the livability requirements of older adults and adult residents with disabilities. Though their needs often are similar to those of younger residents, it is very important that the consequences of aging and adult disability are taken into account as communities engage in planning for all of their residents. Increased longevity is a boon, but protecting its benefits requires communities to offer appropriate affordable, accessible and rent-supported housing; varied transportation options; community-based services; robust communications about available services and programs; continued involvement by residents in social and civic life; excellent health care, including preventive services and attention to chronic conditions; opportunities for wellness; and safety.

The following are our recommended additions (in blue) to the Draft City Strategic Plan:

## **Inclusive City (Aging Plan referenced)**

In 2022, Alexandria is a caring, compassionate, fair, just and equitable city that supports an affordable and livable community for all. Alexandria provides high-quality social services to eligible residents to reduce poverty and increase self-sufficiency. The City is welcoming to people in all stages of life and **is known as an age-friendly community**. The City has closed the broadband gap by ensuring quality access

### ***Key Indicators to Achieve by 2022:***

- Reduce the percentage of low- and moderate-income households considered to be housing cost burdened from 2015's 67%.
  - Increase the percentage of residents who do not perceive barriers to living in Alexandria based on age, gender, race, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation from 2016's 80%.
  - Reduce the percentage of residents living in poverty from 2014's 9.6%.
  - Maintain the unemployment rate below the regional, state and federal unemployment rate.
  - Reduce homelessness from 224 persons in 2016 to 208.
- **Increase Alexandria's net stock of affordable and accessible housing and assisted living units;**
  - **Educate residents and managers of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities about public and private supportive services that can be accessed locally and provided onsite;**
  - **Support through the development process "housing for a lifetime" features in both new housing and redevelopment of existing housing;**
  - **Assess and increase if necessary the City Tax and Rent Relief Programs for the Elderly and Disabled.**

## **Safe and Resilient Community (Aging Plan referenced)**

In 2022, Alexandria residents and visitors feel safe at all hours. If they require help, the response from well-trained staff is timely, courteous and professional. Preventable problems are avoided and the City takes a regional view of planning for safety and emergency response and recovery. **The community is resilient and prepared to handle emergencies and emerging risks**. Buildings in Alexandria are up to code to ensure they are structurally sound and safe.

### ***Key Indicators to Achieve by 2022:***

- Reduce the number of violent crimes from the 2015 rate of 209 incidents per 100,000.
- Reduce the response time for 90% of medical incidents from 6:52 (six minutes and fifty-two seconds) in 2016 to 6:30 (six minutes and thirty seconds).
- Reduce the response time for 90% of fire incidents from 6:57 (six minutes and

fifty-seven seconds) in 2016 to 6:30 (six minutes and thirty seconds).

- Increase the percentage of residents who have a positive overall feeling of safety in Alexandria from 2016's 80%.
- Increase the City's Building Insurance Services Office rating from 82 out of 100 in 2016 to 85 out of 100.

➤ **Special needs populations within the city of Alexandria are defined and identified so that appropriate support is available to them in the event of an emergency.**

- **Provision of appropriate education of and services for special needs populations support them in time of emergency;**
- **The Office of Emergency Management assures the safety of special needs populations in cases of emergency.**

## **Flourishing Arts, Culture and Recreation**

The City has a network of accessible parks and public open spaces that define neighborhoods and provide connections to local and regional open space systems and trails. Alexandria's parks will be a combination of active and passive open spaces and are intended to integrate historical interpretive elements and public art. The design of these spaces will create and enhance active public gathering places for neighborhood performances, concerts, and cultural activities.

### ***Key Indicators to Achieve by 2022:***

- Maintain the percentage of residents satisfied with opportunities to attend arts, culture, and music activities at or above 2016's 74%.
  - Maintain the 2015 rate of 7.3 acres of open space per 1,000 residents.
  - Increase the percentage of Alexandria households participating in recreation programs from 2016's 52%.
- **Provide additional recreation opportunities for older residents.**
  - **Provide accessible community spaces where older adults, those with disabilities and others can safely convene/drop-in to meet others, not just for recreational or organized programs.**

## **Strong Economy**

In 2022, Alexandria is a business destination and center of innovation. Mixed-use development is oriented around transit hubs and activity centers. Alexandria's business community is diverse and robust, and the historic district attracts visitors that contribute to the tax base.

### ***Key Indicators to Achieve by 2022:***

- Increase the local gross domestic product from \$11.1 billion in 2015 to \$12.3 billion.
- Reduce the office vacancy rate from 15.6% in 2015 to 12.4%.
- Increase the number of jobs in Alexandria from 106,238 in 2015 to 113,850.

- **Support increased availability of help for older and disabled residents seeking part- or full-time work (particularly important, given fixed incomes and rising living costs);**

### **Healthy Residents (Aging Plan referenced)**

In 2022, Alexandria ensures equal and ready access to opportunities that promote mental and physical well-being, and a happy, active lifestyle. Alexandria will work to reduce inequities in the health system, increase access to care for all residents and provide a system of support for residents with behavioral health needs.

#### ***Key Indicators to Achieve by 2022:***

- Increase the percentage of residents who feel they are in very good or excellent health from 2016's 73%.
- Increase the percentage of clients who improve functioning after receiving emergency services from 2016's 90%.
- Reduce obesity among city residents from 16% in 2013-2014 to 13%.

- **Include provision for a locally funded nursing case management program for older City residents, including residents in subsidized housing;**

- **Work with the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria to identify additional methods for reaching older adults who may be eligible for additional health interventions;**
- **Develop intergenerational events or programs to provide this important information to older adults, residents with disabilities and all family members;**
- **Provide intergenerational service locations and programs that bring together people of various ages and abilities;**
- **Enhance education, services, and respite care for family members providing care for children, adults, and parents with health and/or mental health problems;**
- **Include needs of those with disabilities;**
- **Plan for accommodating needs of those with dementia;**
- **Inform and support caregivers, to include those in minority communities who may need assistance in understanding what is available to older family members.**

### **Multimodal Transportation (Aging Plan referenced)**

In 2022, Alexandria is regionally linked and easy to navigate regardless of resources or ability. The City supports a wide variety of connected transportation options that enable access to daily activities. Public transportation has reliable and frequent service that is clearly communicated and understood.

- Increase the percentage of commuters using alternative transportation options from 37% in 2013 to 40%.

- Reduce the number of traffic crashes from 1,440 crashes in 2015 to 1,400 crashes.
  - Reduce the number of traffic crashes that result in fatalities and severe injuries.
  - Maintain the percentage of residents with a positive view of the overall ease of getting to places they usually visit at or above 2016's 73%.
  - Increase Alexandria's Pavement Condition Index rating from 58 out of 100 (fair) in 2016 to 71 out of 100 (satisfactory).
  - Reduce the number of pedestrians and bicycles struck by vehicles.
- Implement Complete Streets design standards that provide safe and accessible streets for all users and prioritize pedestrians. This strategy should include the elimination of brick or paver sidewalk surfaces in areas of new development or redevelopment.
  - Approve Vision Zero as a means of achieving the goals of a multi-modal transportation system.
  - Improve the total fixed route transit system to include the waiting area, customer service provided by operators, enforcement of priority seating, security and accessibility, and accessibility of paths of travel to and from transit stops.
  - Provide public information on transit safety and security as a means of assuring real and perceived safety concerns are addressed at passenger waiting areas and on board transit vehicles.
  - In order to insure accessibility of multi-modal transportation, a centralized information system should be developed that can be accessed by people needing information on applicable mobility resources for them.

The Commission on Aging is also very concerned about the need for more attention to racial and ethnic minority and LGBT communities to inform them about the health and community-based services available in the City. Too frequently these communities experience disparities in health that should be addressed. The Commission, with the support of AARP, expects to hold listening sessions in these communities.

In summary, the Commission on Aging urges the City Council to specifically include "active and secure aging" as an eleventh theme in the City's Strategic Plan. Should it be preferable, because the Council will review and approve the Age-Friendly Community Plan prior to its submission to AARP/WHO, the City's Strategic Plan could simply reference it for incorporation when the AFCN Plan is approved.