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# The Council Connection

*your connection to City Council by:*

*Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson*

Alexandria, Virginia

August 1, 2017

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This summer has been anything but quiet. The City has kept pace on important infrastructure planning efforts, grappled with high profile criminal incidents, and experienced major leadership transitions.

[Last week Alexandria Police Officers Nicole Battaglia, Alexander Jansen and Kevin Jobe were honored at the White House with the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor.](#) It is great to see recognition of their heroic acts by our nation.



Friday was Dr. Alvin Crawley's last day as the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Superintendent. We wish Dr. Crawley well as he moves to George Mason University and enters the next phase of his career.

[Last month the School Board appointed former Falls Church Superintendent Dr. Lois Berlin as the interim Superintendent.](#) Dr. Berlin will serve in the role until the Board has completed its search for a permanent Superintendent.

For Dr. Berlin, this is a return to Alexandria. Prior to her time in Falls Church, she held several leadership positions with ACPS.

On Thursday Dr. Berlin will welcome the students at Samuel Tucker Elementary School back to school as they get their traditional jump-start on the 2017 - 2018 school year.

[Contact me anytime.](#) Let me know how I can help.

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

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## Events/Updates

### Tonight is National Night Out!

[Tonight neighborhoods all across our City will hold celebrations in support of our crime prevention efforts.](#)

With participation from the City's public safety agencies and the support of the many City government agencies that preserve our quality of life, this annual event is a great way to get to know your neighbors.

The full list of parties is on the City's website.

### Friendship Fire Festival Saturday!

[On Saturday from 9 AM until 2 PM, the annual Friendship Fire Festival returns to the 100 block of South Alfred Street in Old Town.](#)

Celebrating the founding of the historic Friendship Firehouse in 1774, this festival is a great event for residents and visitors of all ages!

### Sales Tax Holiday

In the past, the Commonwealth of Virginia had three separate sales tax holidays: one for back to school time, one for hurricane preparedness, and one for Energy Star efficient appliances.

[A few years ago, the three sales tax holidays were combined and this year will be held concurrently from August 4 - 6.](#)

## Council Initiatives

### Eco-City Alexandria

Led by an incredibly motivated and knowledgeable group of residents, the City vaulted to the lead among local governments by adopting the [Eco-City Charter](#) nearly a decade ago. The charter defined a comprehensive vision for our City to improve environmental sustainability.

The Eco-City Charter then led the City to adopt the [Environmental Action Plan](#). The plan laid out specific actions the City should undertake. It detailed how we should measure success and it began to define the next phase of our Eco-City evolution.

With any plan the City adopts, the test is not simply whether we will accomplish what we laid out in the plan (although that is an important test). The City plans that have transformative impact are the plans that end up cutting across multiple City policy priorities. The Eco-City Environmental Action Plan has had that impact. It has fundamentally transformed City operations in numerous policy areas.

With the Federal government now choosing to decline its traditional global leadership role in climate policy, the responsibility falls to local and state governments to lead the way.

[In April, the City staff released the latest report detailing our progress in achieving the items defined in the plan.](#)

We have seen great progress in the City in furtherance of our goals:

- The City government has reduced energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The percentage of new construction utilizing green building components has increased.
- The City's tree canopy has increased.
- We have protected over 100 acres of new open space.
- We have doubled our solid waste recycling rate.
- We have increased transit ridership.
- We have adopted smart-growth oriented residential parking standards.
- We have improved the walkability of our neighborhoods.
- We have implemented stormwater infrastructure around our City.

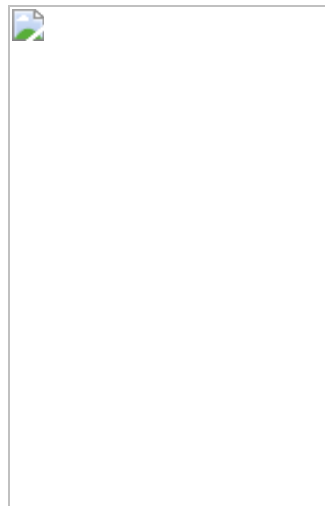
Despite a constrained revenue environment, we have used non-General Fund revenues to continue to make progress.

In recent years we created and sustained a very successful farmers market compost program.

In adopting the current budget the Council funded a new program to provide proactive maintenance of the City's urban forest.

We are actively bringing a new Metro station to Potomac Yard and a new dedicated Transitway to the West End.

We recently created a new stormwater utility to address our obligations to the Chesapeake Bay.



Use the opportunity to shop at some wonderful Alexandria businesses and enjoy the tax discount!

### Restaurant Week

Give your kitchen a break. It's time to dine out in Alexandria.

[Beginning August 18th through August 27th, Alexandria's Summer Restaurant Week is back!](#)

With 60+ Alexandria restaurants participating, you can obtain a three-course meal for one or dinner for two for \$35.

### Irish Festival

[On Saturday August 26th from 11 AM until 7 PM, the Ballyshanners host the Alexandria Irish Festival.](#)

Held in Waterfront Park at 1A Prince Street, the festival includes entertainment, food and family fun!

### Back to School Nights

With schools back in session next month, the Alexandria City Public Schools have scheduled Back to School Nights for parents throughout this month.

[Mark your calendars today and plan to learn more about your student's teachers.](#)

We identified hundreds of millions of dollars to address combined sewer modernization to address our obligations to the Potomac River.

Last year's approved budget included a new Sustainability Coordinator position. An applicant has now been selected and starts later this month.

Our approved Housing Master Plan recognizes the importance of energy conservation as a component of housing affordability. [In fact, we are seeking volunteers for our Energy Masters training program right now.](#)

Our Complete Streets investments have continued to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and accessibility throughout the City.

Our recently approved [Eisenhower West](#) and [Old Town North](#) Small Area Plans included substantial sustainability chapters. As these plans are implemented, the City will have opportunities to achieve more significant sustainability initiatives, including district energy and other large-scale efforts.

Yet, we can do more.

This fall, we will begin a process of [updating our Green Building standards](#). These standards set the obligations of developers for incorporating sustainability into their new construction.

Our planned municipal facilities work gives us an opportunity to raise the bar for sustainability practices in our own facilities construction.

A year from now, we will work to update our landscape guidelines to reflect the Environmental Action Plan and the City's Urban Forestry Master Plan.

[Our parking standards task force continues to work to "right-size" our commercial parking standards.](#)

Next year's General Assembly session gives the City new opportunity to request increased authority for tree preservation, local energy generation and more.

Constrained budgets make it more challenging for our City to continue its leadership in sustainability practices, but we can and should work to lead the region in this policy area. These efforts are critical given recent Federal policy changes, but are also good for our economy and our quality of life.

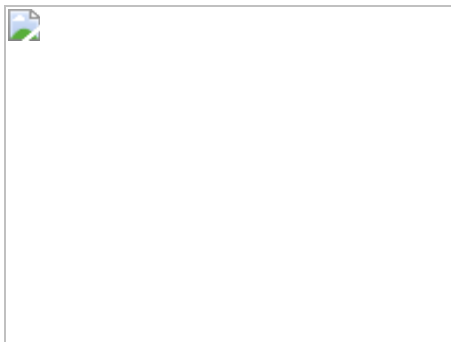
### Making PARKnerships

Politicians of nearly every stripe extol the virtues of "Public/Private Partnerships," sometimes called "P3" for short. While the partnerships come in many flavors, it usually involves the blending of private and public resources to achieve a community good.

[An amazing group of residents and organizations raised money to build the Miracle Field next to the Lee Recreation Center to help provide recreation opportunities for the special needs community.](#)

Residents in Arlandria are continuing [to raise money to support Four Mile Run Park](#), and have used private donations to create the park plaza that hosts the [Four Mile Farmers and Artisan Market](#) on recently acquired public space. [Recently, these efforts were nationally recognized as the City Parks Alliance touted the results of these partnerships.](#)

Residents and business leaders worked together to [raise significant resources to build the new Alexandria Police Memorial.](#)



The Del Ray Citizens Association [came forward to sponsor some park improvements in the pocket park at the corner of Commonwealth and E. Del Ray Avenue](#) , which was renamed the Judy Lowe Memorial Park.

Residents and businesses have partnered to make improvements at [Ewald Park](#).

A few months ago, [we dedicated a brand new playground at Maury Elementary School](#). The playground was the result of public money, donated money, donated services and the support of non-profit organizations.

[A group of parents at Mount Vernon Community School are working to renovate their playground as well.](#)

[Another group of residents continue to work to match City funds and raise money to light up basketball courts in Potomac Yard.](#)

Faced with dwindling public resources, and enthusiastic Alexandrians seeking to take matters into their own hands, I asked that we create a consistent approach to City participation in these partnerships.

[The result was the "PARKnership" program created by our Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department.](#)

[The summary report](#) from FY 2017 shows all of the good this new effort has launched around our City.

A component of this new attempt at partnership is the [City's Community Matching Fund](#), which provides public resources to supplement private efforts to improve our community.

[The projects funded by the FY 2017 grants](#) are all in various stages of procurement and implementation and will be making their debuts in the near future.

[A little over a month ago, the City awarded the grants for Fiscal Year 2018.](#) This is an exciting group of projects to benefit our community.

The awardees are:

- A partnership with Compost Alexandria to create pilot processing sites for food waste material.
- A partnership with the T. C. Williams High School Softball Boosters to make upgrades at Witter Field.
- A partnership with the Alexandria Little League to make improvements at Ben Brenman ball field.
- A partnership with Patricia and Kate Moran to make improvements at the Nancy Dunning Garden.
- A partnership with the Del Ray Gateway Project to make interim improvements to the Colosanto Pool site.

Our City is fortunate to have residents willing to contribute sweat and resources to make our City a better place. I'm excited to see the City partner with them to make it happen.

### **Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?**

I have now been a part of adopting seven City budgets as a member of the Council. Each year, I try to find new ways to engage residents

in the process, and increase understanding of budget priorities and trade-offs.

A few years ago, I worked with the staff in our City's Office of Management and Budget to create a new [Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#).

Modeled after the [Federal Taxpayer Receipt](#), this website will take the assessed value of your home and detail how much of your real estate tax is going to the various programs and services of City government.

A month ago marked the start of Fiscal Year 2018. Accordingly, we have updated the receipt to reflect the newly enacted budget. Give it a try and [let me know](#) how you like it!

## Fire Station Locations

[A year and a half ago Fire Station 210, the newest Alexandria Fire Station, was staffed and went into full operation on Eisenhower Avenue](#) .

In March, the City Council [provided final land-use approval to a rebuilding of Fire Station 203](#), serving the City from a location on Cameron Mills Road.

[The approved Capital Improvement Program for 2018 - 2027 includes \\$54.9 million of renovation and maintenance funding for the remaining Alexandria fire stations, including significant projects at Fire Station 205 on Cameron Street, Fire Station 206 on Seminary Road, and Fire Station 207 on Duke Street.](#)

Additionally, the City had included the addition of a new Fire Station 211 on the far West End of the City, proposed to be provided by the future developer of the [Beaugard Small Area Plan](#).

With the scale of public investment planned for our fire stations, the City Manager [directed an internal analysis to review existing station locations and determine the appropriate priorities for this substantial public investment](#).

In late May, the results of this study were presented to Council. The study reviewed the previous City planned investment, the newly proposed plan of investment, and created an "optimized" plan.



The study showed that the proposed eleventh fire station in the Beaugard Plan area was unnecessary to safely protect residents and property alike. As a result, the Council's

recently approved Capital Improvement Program removes any funding related to this proposed station.

Yet the study did show that response times could be reduced as a result of moving four of the existing fire stations further westward.

This proposal is just that: a suggestion for how the City might be able to optimize public safety response time around our City. Implementation would potentially involve land acquisition and costly construction activities.

As we move forward, however, this data can assist us in prioritizing how we invest in our fire stations, as well as take advantage of development and redevelopment activities to improve our infrastructure.

## AAA/Aaa Affirmed

Each time the City goes to borrow money for its capital budget, it must go before the rating agencies to have its credit worthiness assessed.

Much like individuals must have a credit check performed before acquiring a mortgage, a car loan, or a new credit card, the City must go before Standard & Poor's and Moody's to have the two organizations assess whether we are doing a good job managing the City's finances.

In May, the [City Council unanimously voted to authorized the issuance of up to \\$105.3 million of municipal borrowing](#). The exact amount will be determined once the bonds are issued.

[Both Moody's and Standard & Poor's re-affirmed the City's AAA/Aaa bond ratings, citing our strong fiscal management and conservative debt posture.](#)

Those high ratings qualify the City for the cheapest borrowing rates available, which will save our taxpayers millions over the 20 year life of these bonds.



In May, [the Council adopted our 10 year Capital Improvement Program, covering fiscal years 2018 - 2027](#). Over the 10 year period, the program calls for \$2.115 billion in capital investment throughout the City. A quarter of this funding goes to sanitary and stormwater sewer efforts. A third of this funding goes to City and School municipal facilities. Another third goes to transportation initiatives.

Our capital budget is funded primarily through a mix of debt and current year

funding also known as "cash capital." Relating this to your home mortgage, the cash capital is the down payment. We also pay interest each year on the debt that was issued in previous years.

[Alexandria is very conservative with our use of debt.](#)

For example, Arlington County limits its debt to 4% of its Fair Market Real Property Value. Both Fairfax and Prince William Counties limit their debt to 3%. [Alexandria's self-imposed limit is 2.5%, and this budget year we achieved 1.47%.](#)

The median for other similarly rated and sized jurisdictions is 2.42%.

Debt is a tool that allows us to balance the costs of large capital investments across the generations of Alexandria taxpayers that will benefit from them and to pay for our investments from the returns we reap from them.

[In issuing the City's rating, Moody's wrote: "The stable outlook reflects the likelihood that the city will maintain its satisfactory financial position due to proactive management, sound financial policies, and continued tax base growth and diversification."](#)

Standard & Poor's similarly cited the City's "conservative approach to debt issuance" as well as our "very strong management policies and practices.

It is important for us to maintain the careful stewardship that will protect our taxpayers and our City's infrastructure long into the future.

### Host a Town Hall in Your Living Room!

My regular series of Town Hall Meetings continue!



You supply the living room and a bunch of your friends and neighbors. I will supply a member of the Alexandria City Council (me) with the answers to any of your questions about our City.

Just [drop us a line](#) and we'll get a Town Hall on the calendar! Thanks for the interest!

## Upcoming Issues

### Future of Andrew Adkins

The [Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority \(ARHA\)](#) is an independent entity, with a City Council-appointed Board, but separate from the City. ARHA utilizes Federal funding from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to provide housing to low-income residents of Alexandria.

ARHA directly manages and controls 1,079 units of affordable housing. In addition, ARHA manages the City's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, which utilizes Federal funding to provide assistance for another 1,906 low-income families to reside in privately-owned housing units. Together, this is approximately 4% of the City's overall housing stock.

At the federal level, we have seen dramatic changes in how public housing is managed and developed. In the past, the Federal Government had been a proactive participant in bringing about the redevelopment of public housing. This was demonstrated in Alexandria when the City used [HOPE VI funding](#) to redevelop 100 units of Public Housing into [Chatham Square](#). This mixed-income development incorporated both market-rate and public housing.

Going into 2017, the Federal Government was forcing changes in public housing with its inaction. Today, HUD only funds 73% of every dollar required to operate Alexandria Public Housing units. The balance of revenue that ARHA collects as rent is not sufficient for sustainable management of their properties, and this is likely to get worse. The impact of [current Federal budget proposals on housing programs](#) could be cataclysmic.

With aging properties sitting on valuable land, ARHA must look at the highest and best use of its land to preserve housing for low-income residents in our City.

Over 30 years ago, the City Council adopted [Resolution 830](#), which committed the City to the replacement of any public housing unit that was displaced by redevelopment. In past redevelopment efforts, replacement units have been obtained and created throughout our City.

In 2008, the City Council adopted the [Braddock East Master Plan](#), which called for redevelopment of several aging public housing properties. By allowing additional density near existing transit, it was designed to encourage private partnership in the redevelopment of this housing.

Aligned with this Plan, James Bland Homes [have become Old Town Commons](#). This redevelopment activity has proven successful in providing a sustainable model for mixed-income housing in our City.

In the fall of 2014, with these experiences and lessons behind us, [ARHA issued an RFP \(Request for Proposals\) to solicit proposals from private developers for the potential redevelopment of seven additional properties: Cameron Valley \(built in 1985\), Andrew Adkins \(built in 1969\), Samuel Madden \(built in 1945\), Ramsey Homes \(built in 1942\), Hopkins Tancil \(built in 1945\), Ladrey \(built in 1968\), and the ARHA Headquarters building on North Fairfax Street.](#)

As they continued through the process, ARHA narrowed the number of properties down to five: Andrew Adkins, Samuel Madden, Hopkins Tancil, the ARHA Headquarters building, and Cameron Valley.

The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group, on which Councilman Chapman and I serve, along with the ARHA Chair, the ARHA Vice Chair, and the Planning Commission Chair, is tasked with coordinating the work between the City and ARHA.

ARHA has chosen development partners for each of the five remaining properties:

Andrew Adkins: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty

Samuel Madden: Alexandria Opportunity Housing, LLC, an affiliate of Clark Realty

Hopkins Tancil: EYA/Penrose/JBG

ARHA Headquarters: EYA/Penrose/JBG

Cameron Valley: Bozzuto/Wesley Housing

Each of these redevelopment efforts will rely on [Low Income Housing Tax Credits](#) (LIHTC) and will need to compete successfully for those funding sources. [The LIHTC program has also been impacted by potential changes at the Federal level.](#)

Given resource constraints at the staff level, as well as the need for Federal tax credits to make redevelopment feasible, these projects have now been sequenced.

Redevelopment of Andrew Adkins, a property located on West Street facing Braddock Road Metro, is proceeding first.

Last year, the [Andrew Adkins process began](#) with a kick-off meeting for the community to meet with the redevelopment team. Since that time development partners have been submitting concepts to the City's Planning and Zoning staff for review and comments.

In early June, [the revised concept plan was presented to the City Council](#) in a worksession for comments and discussion. Since that time, there has been substantial discussions between the City, ARHA and ARHA's private development partner. These discussions have focused on concerns regarding:

- The number of public and committed affordable housing units to return to the site
- The integration of committed affordable housing and market development in the new complex
- The application of the City's Affordable Housing Density Bonus program

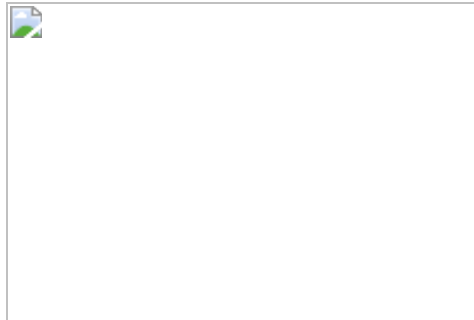
These concerns have been voiced from within City government as well as [from outside advocacy efforts](#). ARHA [has worked to be responsive to these concerns](#).



At this point, the City is working to reconcile concerns regarding the proposed project so that the Adkins redevelopment can remain on schedule.

Associated with this process is discussion of the modernization of [Resolution 830](#) itself. The resolution was adopted 35 years ago, and itself was an update to a resolution adopted in 1972. [In 2009 the Alexandria Affordable Housing Initiatives Work Group, co-chaired by then-Councilmen Rob Krupicka and Ludwig Gaines provided a series of recommendations, including a suggested update of Resolution 830.](#)

In the past 35 years, much has changed about the way the City approaches affordable housing. Last year, the City Council approved a project done in partnership with [Carpenter's Shelter](#) and the [Alexandria Housing Development Corporation \(AHDC\)](#), [to create 98 new affordable rental units](#). AHDC is the City's affordable housing non-profit. AHDC was [originally created by the City in 2003](#).



Much of the new affordable housing creation the City does today is in partnership with non-profits. One of the goals of a modernization of Resolution 830 will be to reflect that reality and ensure that our preservation commitments do not just apply to public

housing units, but across the spectrum of affordable housing.

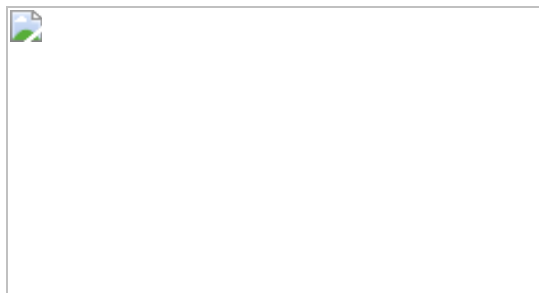
[The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group along with a stakeholders group will be tackling this issue in consultation with the many City boards and commissions that advise the City on housing issues.](#)

As ARHA begins this effort in cooperation with the City, we will have a historic opportunity to partner with the private sector and provide new housing for a variety of income levels near existing transit in our City. This effort will also provide financial stability for ARHA in the face of continued change at the Federal level.

Let me know your thoughts!

**Investing in Our Municipal Facilities**

[The City Council's adoption of the City's Operating and Capital Improvement Budget in May included making a new 10 year commitment to invest in our municipal facilities.](#)



In adopting the budget, we knew that doing things the way we had always done them was not sufficient. In addition to new investment, we had to take a dramatic step forward in

bringing together the disparate visions of the City and School municipal facilities plans.

To do so, we created the [new Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force](#). This blue-ribbon group brings together significant expertise to help the City prioritize and streamline a

municipal facilities vision that ensures the success of City and School services for decades to come.

Despite large efforts to address deferred capital investment in recent years, the City stands at a crossroads. With a perfect storm of infrastructure needs for school, sewer, city facilities, transportation and recreation, the practices of the past will not sustain us in the future.

- [Only three school systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia have grown more than ours in the last decade. We're the only one of the top four growing systems to have not constructed a new building \(only renovations\) during that period.](#)
- [The City's sanitary sewer, stormwater sewer and combined sewer remediation challenges are not areas that can be deferred any longer.](#)
- [Our city facilities reflect decades of neglect and require millions in maintenance.](#)
- [The challenges of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\) have demanded dramatic increases from each member jurisdiction. For Alexandria, those increases have dominated our local transportation funding sources.](#)
- [The little funding that has remained for basic recreation services to support quality of life in our community has fallen victim to budget reductions.](#)

#### [The City Manager's proposed Capital](#)

[Improvement Program](#) included \$2 billion of investment over the next decade. Yet the constraints of the Council's guidance and paltry projected revenue growth left over \$500 million of recommended, but unfunded, capital investments.

That \$500 million of unfunded capital investments serves as a hidden debt on our municipal balance sheet. Yet instead of the 2.12% rate (the true interest cost of our most recent debt issuance) that we are paying for the City's actual debt, this hidden debt is costing us much more.

With construction costs [climbing at an annual rate of nearly 5%](#) and the costs of patching, retrofitting, and otherwise "buying time" with existing aged infrastructure growing regularly, this hidden debt is far more onerous than the well-managed municipal debt load the City carries.

In June the City Manager constituted the new Ad Hoc group, and they have now held two meetings. [You can watch the meetings and read the materials online.](#)

On the 10th and 14th of this month, the committee will participate in a two-part bus tour of proposed major [City](#) and [Schools](#) capital projects.

This group has arguably one of the most important tasks of any recent City group. They will be hard at work throughout the summer, and welcoming public input throughout the process.

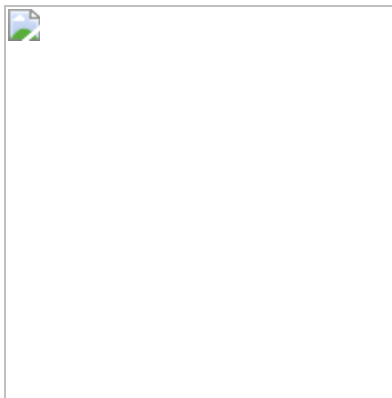
### **Capital Bikeshare Expansion**

The City's Capital Bikeshare network is again growing. With the award of grant money, we are adding 10 additional stations to showcase the bike sharing public/private partnership that now counts the District of Columbia, Arlington, Fairfax, Montgomery County and Alexandria as members. Prince George's County and the City of Falls Church will join within the next year.

At the conclusion of this expansion, the City will have 41 stations.

The expansion [came after a review of the existing system by the Transportation Commission](#) and our City Staff.

The City's Capital Bikeshare system was originally funded using



Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. The CMAQ funds and developer contributions now purchase new stations, while about 5% of the City's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) now funds operations for existing stations.

Both public and private transportation systems of all kinds depend on various forms of public subsidy. In

Alexandria, the DASH Bus system recovers approximately 30% of its costs from fare box revenue. Original estimates of Capital Bikeshare's performance were expected to be similar. **Surprisingly, Alexandria's cost recovery in the first year reached 72% from rentals and now hovers at 63% with the expanded network.**

[Motivate International](#) is the private contractor who administers the network for Capital Bikeshare. As they recently assumed the operations agreement, they also accepted a 25% reduction from previous pricing, thus driving down the City's cost for on-going operations.

[Arlington County, acting on behalf of all of the member jurisdictions of Capital Bikeshare, issued a solicitation in June to sell regional advertising.](#) As in other jurisdictions, such an agreement can reduce the taxpayer subsidy required for operation of the system.

The system has provided a critical, low-cost connectivity option for short trips, used frequently by our residents and visitors alike. Current plans will allow continued expansion over the next few years. [Please use this link to suggest station locations.](#)

[The survey input we received this year](#) helped develop the list for this year's expansion.

The new stations in this year's plan are:

- Braddock Road Metro South (to supplement the existing station at the Metro)
- Ben Brenman Park and Somerville Street
- Duke Street and Holmes Run Trail
- Eisenhower Avenue and Holmes Run Trail
- East Glebe Road and Main Line Boulevard
- Potomac Avenue and Reed Avenue
- Green Street and Washington Street
- Holmes Run Parkway and North Pickett Street
- Barrett Library
- West Reed Avenue and Edison Street

The full expansion map is [available for review online.](#)

At the end of last month, the [City's Traffic & Parking Board heard public testimony and made recommendations on how to proceed with this year's proposed expansion.](#)

Ultimately the Board recommended eight of the proposed sites, while asking that our Staff conduct further community input and analysis on the Ben Brenman Park location and the Green Street location.

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