

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

The Council Connection

your connection to City Council by:

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson

Alexandria, Virginia

October 1, 2016

In This Edition

[Council Initiatives](#)

[After the School Day](#)

[More Broadband Options](#)

[Public Housing's Future](#)

[Visiting Alexandria](#)

[Drawing New School Lines](#)

[SafeTrack After Action](#)

[Host a Town Hall](#)

[Upcoming Issues: Our New Budget & Surplus Property](#)

Quick Links

[E-Mail Me](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)

[City of Alexandria Website](#)

[Pay City Taxes Online](#)

[Review Real Estate Assessments](#)

[Crime Mapping & Statistics](#)

[Call.Click.Connect](#) (Submit Service Requests to City Agencies)

[Board & Commission Vacancies](#)

[Alexandria Health Department Restaurant Inspections](#)

[Report Potholes](#)

Alexandria is a unique community. It's not accidental. It's through the hard work of volunteers who make our City work.

[We lost one of those committed volunteers last month with the death of Stewart "Stew" Dunn.](#)

After service in the Army and alongside an impressive career as one of the best tax attorneys in the country, Stew found the time to give back to Alexandria.



With stints on the Human Rights Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Historic Alexandria Foundation, Hopkins House Board of Trustees, Old Town Civic Association, and finally over 20 years on the City's Planning Commission, Stew was an integral part of nearly every decision made in our community for decades.

He was the consummate gentleman and an endless source of wisdom and friendship. I'll certainly miss him.

With Fall finally here, the Council calendar is filling up. I've tried to provide updates below on some of the many issues facing your City Council.

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

Council Initiatives

After The School Day

[Schedule Child Safety Seat Inspection](#)

[Smoke Detector Installation Request](#)

[Real Estate Tax Receipt Calculator](#)

[License Your Dog or Cat](#)

[Report a Street Light Outage](#)

Events/Updates

Register to Vote!

The deadline to register or change your registration to vote is October 17th.

[Any changes can now be done online](#) or in person at 132 N. Royal Street.

[Absentee voting began last month.](#) You may register for mail absentee balloting [online](#).

[You may vote in person at 132 N. Royal Street, Suite 100 on any business day between 8 AM and 5 PM.](#)

Saturdays from now until Election Day will be available from 8 AM until 5 PM.

Beginning October 27th, absentee voting will begin at Beatley Central Library at 5005 Duke Street.

[The sample ballot is available online for review before you vote!](#)

Art on the Avenue Today!

[The region's premier arts and music festival returns to Mount Vernon Avenue today!](#)

From 10 AM until 6 PM, Del Ray will be filled with arts, food, music and 70,000 of your closest friends.

I'll see you there!

Fall Native Plant Sale

Last month in this space, I wrote about the recent academic performance in our schools. I noted that our children are only in school for 32.5 hours a week. So much of what determines their educational attainment and ultimate success in life occurs during the hours when they are not inside a school building.

Along with the Mayor, the School Board Chair, and the School Board Vice Chair, I serve on the City Council/School Board Subcommittee. Under the auspices of that committee, we have spent the past few years focused jointly on the times outside of the classroom. Our work has been designed to leverage those times to improve educational outcomes for our children.

In June, the Council and School Board [held a joint worksession](#) to focus on the after-school experience for students around our City.

Today public, private and non-profit organizations provide after-school services. The programs range from extensive homework assistance and tutoring to unstructured gymnasium time.

Our goal must be to improve the outcomes for our children by improving the coordination, quality, and availability of these services.

The first phase of this effort has been to catalog the existing offerings. This phase worked to document the locations, funding, capacity, and gaps that exist today.

The second phase of the effort worked to define what our goals for after-school must be. This phase looked at best practices, how to align with academic programs, and the financial implications of changes.



Our final phase will be to make policy proposals to implement an integrated and aligned system that will support success.

The [data collection efforts](#) showed clear discrepancies in the availability of after-school services in the west end versus the east end of the City. It also showed wide variation in the types of services offered to youth as well as the grade levels that the programs serve.

The policy recommendations for improving after-school will come to the Council near the end of this year. I'm hopeful that we will be able to advance policy changes that will fully leverage our investments in after-school activities to improve the academic outcomes for our kids.

Broadband Update

[About three years ago, I proposed that the City develop a broadband plan to bring true competition to Alexandria's broadband market.](#)

In [Chattanooga, Tennessee, a community of 170,000, a public electricity utility used hundreds of millions of dollars to build thousands of miles of underground fiber](#). In doing so, the utility enabled the residents and businesses of Chattanooga to receive the fastest Internet connectivity in our nation.

[The City's Fall Native Plant sale has returned!](#)

Orders can be placed [online](#) or in person at the Buddie Ford Nature Center at 5750 Sanger Avenue between now and October 30th.

Pickup of all trees will be on November 5th between 10 AM and 1 PM.

Halloween Parade

[The 20th Annual Del Ray Halloween parade returns to Mount Vernon Avenue on Sunday October 30th.](#)

Free for all ages, the parade features prizes for the best decorated homes, strollers, businesses and pets.

It starts at 2 PM. I'll see you there!

Family Fun Festival

[The City's Family Fun Festival returns to Boothe Park \(520 Cameron Station Blvd\) on Saturday, October 15th, from 10 AM until 2 PM.](#)

With scarecrow making, facepainting, arts and crafts, pony rides, puppet shows, and much more; this event is not to be missed!

Tickets are \$5 per person, and \$15 per family.

Drug Take Back

Saturday October 22nd is the City's Drug Take Back.

If you have unwanted or expired prescription drugs, please take the time to drop them off at one of our three locations:

[Police Headquarters at 3600 Wheeler Avenue.](#)

[First Baptist Church at 2932 King Street.](#)

[Neighborhood Pharmacy at 2204 Mount Vernon Avenue.](#)

For years, Alexandria has sought new private investment in broadband infrastructure. For most of our residents, we have one company providing Internet connectivity and television. Regardless of the performance of that company, technological innovation and reliability thrives on competition.



This is an issue that affects not only residents but also our businesses and the ability of our community to attract commerce.

Our efforts to bring new broadband infrastructure to Alexandria are entering a new phase.

Last July, the City took a significant step forward in our efforts to bring new broadband options to Alexandria. The Council had supported the idea of issuing a Request for Information (RFI). This RFI solicited concepts from the private sector for partnership with the City in expanding broadband options, availability, and capabilities.

The [RFI was issued and we actively solicited those partnerships](#). We received 10 responses from potential private partners.

In March, the City completed the [initial financial estimates for the first phase of the infrastructure build-out](#). With a full cost of just under \$8.5 million, the plan is designed to replace the City's existing connectivity agreement for City facilities with a City-owned fiber network.

By [leveraging E-Rate funding from the FCC](#), achieving operating savings from the costs of the existing agreement, and the potential for private leases of our infrastructure, the effort may be able to pay for itself.

Last week, [the Council unanimously took the next step](#) in this important process, as we requested that the City Manager formally solicit for new providers to partner with the City.

Three years ago, one of the core components of the original proposal I made was that the City [adopt a "Dig Once" policy](#). Essentially that's a policy that makes the City more efficient by leveraging existing underground infrastructure work to also make broadband infrastructure investments. With hundreds of millions of dollars of sewer and transportation work scheduled over the next decade, we should sequence and combine that work to be the most efficient.

As we now begin the City's municipal infrastructure build-out, we are going to do just that.

The City is in the process of implementing [an unrelated transportation project, Intelligent Transportation Systems \(ITS\)](#). This effort provides for the installation of conduit and fiber connecting traffic signals along arterial roads to improve our traffic management and incident response. [We will now be combining three phases of our municipal fiber build work with this project. Doing so will save the taxpayers \\$1.2 million and reduce the amount of community disruption required.](#)

This is an exciting project and one that gives the City the best chance to leverage its assets to bring new broadband services to our residents and businesses.

Future of Public Housing

All locations will be open from 10 AM until 2 PM.

Harness The Sun!

[Between now and October 9th, you can sign up to participate in Solarize Alexandria.](#)

Solarize Alexandria is a partnership between the City, the [Northern Virginia Regional Commission](#), and [LEAP](#). The goal is to increase the deployment of solar power generation in our residential communities.

The program begins with a free assessment from the program installer. Sign up today!

Car Tax Due On Wednesday

Payments for the Vehicle Personal Property Tax are due Wednesday, October 5th.

[There are many ways to pay online, in person, or by mail.](#)

See The Stars

One of the little known treasures of Alexandria is the Planetarium at T. C. Williams High School.

Even lesser known is that each month, Bob Nicholson, who has long managed the Planetarium, opens it up for the community for free.

[Reservations](#) are required, but don't miss out on this great resource!

The next show is Tuesday, October 25th, at 7 PM.

Request a Bike Rack

Know a good place in the City where we should place a bike rack?

[Let us know!](#)

Racks are installed on a seasonal basis and cannot

The [Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority \(ARHA\)](#) is an independent entity, with a City Council-appointed Board, but separate from the City, that 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. This is approximately 4% of the City's 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 utilized [HOPE VI funding](#) to redevelop 100 units of Public Housing into [Chatham Square](#). This mixed-income development incorporated both market-rate and public housing.

Now in 2016, the Federal Government is 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 with the effects of sequestration, this is likely to get worse.

With aging properties sitting on valuable land, ARHA is now looking 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.

Today, 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 have 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.

[One of the properties that ARHA removed from the RFP process was Ramsey Homes. Ramsey Homes, which includes 15 total public housing units, consists of four buildings on N. Patrick Street between Wythe and Pendleton Streets. ARHA made the decision to pursue redevelopment of Ramsey Homes independently without a partner using Virginia Housing Development Authority \(VHDA\) tax](#)

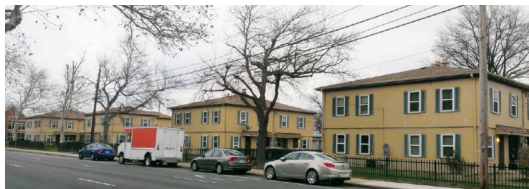
be
installed
on private
property.



[credits](#). ARHA initially pursued an application to build 60 units of affordable housing on the site. After consultations with City staff, they began pursuing an application for 53 units of affordable housing.

Ramsey Homes was constructed beginning in 1941 and acquired by the Federal Government for defense housing. Maps from the time describe it specifically as a home for African-Americans. In 1953, ARHA purchased the property and it has been operated as public housing since that time.

The property is not in good condition and requires significant renovation to meet current standards. There is consensus that without replacement or renovation, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will no longer provide financial support for the units in the near term.



Given that Ramsey Homes is in the Parker-Gray Historic District, any demolition applications are heard by the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review (BAR). [In April of last year, the BAR heard the case and unanimously voted to deny the permit to demolish the existing homes.](#)

Obviously, without permission to demolish, the redevelopment could not proceed, and ARHA would either have had to renovate or close down Ramsey Homes.

As such, ARHA appealed the BAR's decision to the City Council. In September, the Council heard the case and voted to overturn the BAR by a vote of 5-2. In doing so, the Council requested that ARHA explore alternatives to full demolition.

Since that vote, litigation was filed challenging the Council's decision to allow demolition. Additionally, City staff analyzed the ARHA proposal, as well as an alternative with a few less units and some preservation.

In February, [ARHA came back to the City Council with their original proposal of 53 units](#). The proposal consisted of a Development Special Use Permit, a rezoning, and a master plan amendment.

Under the City's Charter and Zoning Code, neighbors of the Ramsey property signed a petition protesting the potential rezoning. With the protest deemed valid, the City Council is required to have six votes in order to pass the amendment to the master plan.

The day before the hearing, ARHA requested deferral of the Development Special Use Permit, but still requested approval of the master plan amendment and the rezoning.

[In the end, the master plan amendment passed 6-1, the rezoning passed 5-2 \(but failed to have the six votes required, and the Development Special Use Permit was deferred as requested.](#)

However, that was not the end of the story.

[As the dust settled on the vote](#), my colleague Councilman Smedberg made a request at the next Council meeting to rescind the vote. That request passed unanimously, which essentially wiped the slate clean.

In March, the zoning and master plan amendment were back before the Council. This time, Council approved them both unanimously.

The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group, which I serve on along with Councilman Chapman, the ARHA Chair, the ARHA Vice Chair, and the Planning Commission Chair, [has been working since that time to develop alternatives.](#)

[In late June, the work group brought two scenarios to the Council: the original proposal and an alternative that preserved one of the four original buildings. The preservation of the one building was funded using Federal Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\) funds.](#)

Faced with these alternatives, the Council instead proposed a third choice. [The unanimous Council ultimately decided that the preservation alternative was not advantageous and instead directed our staff to work with ARHA to prepare a new alternative that creates 52 new affordable housing units, a new plot of open space, and reorients the building on the site.](#) At a community meeting late last month, [the latest designs for the configuration of the site were presented.](#)

[This has been a very unfortunate time for our City](#) and for the City Council. I'm excited that in the end we have coalesced around a proposal that satisfies many of the goals of our community.

While Ramsey will return for final Council approval this fall, the Work Group has now turned its attention to the remaining five properties contained in the original RFP: Andrew Adkins, Samuel Madden, Hopkins Tancil, the ARHA Headquarters building and Cameron Valley.

ARHA has now 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.

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.

The [proposed sequence](#) has Andrew Adkins and Samuel Madden proceeding first, with the redevelopment approvals tentatively planned to be before Council and the Planning Commission in December of 2017. After Adkins and Madden, the ARHA Headquarters site and Hopkins Tancil are proposed to proceed to approval in June of 2019. Cameron Valley would proceed last with the development approval in December 2020.

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!

Bringing People to Alexandria

In Fiscal Year 2016, [visitors to Alexandria spent \\$771 million in our City](#). That spending supports 6,340 jobs and provides \$25.5 million of tax revenue.

That equates to over 6.5 cents on our real estate tax. Tourism in our City essentially saves the average homeowner \$338 per year.

The City achieved a 72.9% hotel occupancy (compared with a 65.5% national average) and the highest ever revenue per available room with \$110.

Visit Alexandria is the City's public/private partnership to increase tourism. I serve as the Council's representative to their Board of Governors.

In our most recently approved budget, the Council increased the budget of the [Visit Alexandria](#) to provide new resources to capitalize on the PBS "Mercy Street" show as well as providing resources to update the digital marketing content.



Yet our City cannot rest on its laurels. During difficult times, communities around our country and particularly our region are working to offer unique experiences to visitors.

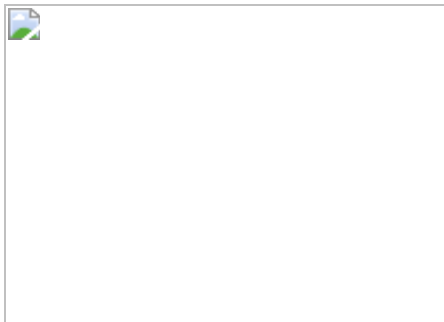
With that in mind, [Visit Alexandria recently launched the update to its branding](#).

Designed to showcase the best of Alexandria, this new marketing effort draws on our residents and businesses to attract visitors from around the country to our City.

New Districts for Our Schools

[Last month, I wrote about the challenges that rapid student enrollment growth](#) has created for our many overcrowded school buildings.

For the first time since 1999, our School Board is conducting a redistricting process. With the exception of the newly rebuilt Jefferson-Houston Elementary School, each Alexandria City Public School utilizes at least 92% of its existing capacity with some schools at 152% of their capacity. While redistricting can help arrive at more straightforward attendance zones, it will not resolve our capacity challenges.



While this effort falls completely in the purview of our elected School Board, it is a highly visible effort that we as a community are now involved in.

The School Board has been advised in the process by a [review committee of residents](#) representing each school as well as

community and student representatives.

The Board has adopted a [set of criteria](#) to guide the process.

Last month, the Board [made the decision to delay implementation of the new school districts until the 2018-2019 school year](#). While the decisions will be made early in 2017, the actual implementation will await the opening of the new Patrick Henry School and the [new West End elementary school](#).

Additionally, [ACPS has now circulated five draft maps for consideration by the committee and the community](#).

[ACPS has set up a form to accept questions and comments on this ongoing process](#).

SafeTrack Follow-Up

Once the crown jewel of the Washington, DC region, Metrorail is experiencing a very difficult time. While the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has numerous challenges, the most serious and pressing are related to safety.

Metro is a basic building block of our region's economy. If there is a perception that the system is unsafe, then that awareness can be crippling to the region.

The new General Manager of WMATA, Paul Wiedefeld, is aggressively working to tackle these challenges. [WMATA finalized the SafeTrack Plan, designed to concentrate three years of work into one year](#).



Advancing this work requires expanded time when the system is not operating. To make this happen, extended weekend hours have been discontinued, new mid-day maintenance will occur, and most importantly, a series of "surges" will occur across the system.

There have been two "Safety Surges" that directly impacted Alexandria. [Safety Surge 3 occurred from July 5th through July 11th](#). During this time, there was no Metrorail service on the Blue and Yellow lines between Braddock Road and National Airport stations.

[Safety Surge 4 occurred from July 12th through July 18th](#). During this time, there was no Metrorail service on the Blue and Yellow lines between National Airport and Pentagon City.

[Working with WMATA, DASH, and other local partners, we came up with a series of alternatives to assist Alexandria riders in their commutes](#).

While WMATA is certainly analyzing the success of their repair efforts, the City is reviewing our mitigation efforts.

During the surges, bus ridership in the corridor doubled and ridership on the Route 1 Transitway tripled. The shuttle bus operation carried 17,000 trips a day during Surge 3 and 25,000 trips a day during Surge 4. On DASH, ridership increases were between 26-31%.

We saw a 92% increase in usage of the Potomac Yard Trail, an 89% increase for the Mount Vernon Trail. Those were coupled with a 27% increase in Commonwealth Avenue bike traffic.

While these shutdowns certainly had negative impacts on our residents, they also allowed the City and its partners to experiment in our responses.

We will put that education to test when in [early 2017, when SafeTrack returns](#) to impact Alexandria.

Let us know your thoughts as we prepare.

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

Our Next Budget

Fiscal Year 2017 just began on July 1, yet we're getting ready to discuss Fiscal Year 2018. While it will still be a few more weeks until the City Council begins to get a picture of what revenue growth for our next budget will look like, we are starting to get some sense of the challenges that face us.

In August, [the Governor brought together the Joint Money Committees from the General Assembly and gave them the sobering news](#) that state revenues had not met the forecasts in the approved biennial state budget. The change to the revenue estimates removes \$1.2 billion from the budget over the two years.

Faced with this reduction of revenue, that state is now forced to dip into its revenue stabilization fund (the so-called "Rainy Day Fund") and defer planned salary increases. With those changes, there is still additional spending to be cut in the upcoming General Assembly session.

The City receives over \$46 million in General Fund revenues from the Commonwealth along with another \$69 million in non-General Fund revenues. This is not an insignificant portion of our revenue.

Within City Government and within the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), the engagement to develop the next budget is now commencing.

On Thursday, October 6th, at 7:00 PM, [the ACPS staff will be holding a community meeting to discuss their upcoming budget](#). This meeting will be held at T. C. Williams High School in the Rotunda Room at 3330 King Street.

[A week later, on Thursday October 13th, at 7:30 PM, the City staff will have a community meeting to begin collecting input for the next budget](#). This meeting will be held at Patrick Henry Elementary at 4643 Taney Avenue.

Please [let me know your thoughts](#) as we work to develop budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2018.

Disposing of City Property

In 2007, a blue ribbon commission of residents and business leaders in Alexandria, formally known as the "Mayor's Economic Sustainability Work Group," [made their report to the City Council](#).

One component of their report related to City-owned properties. The report urged that the City create a good accounting of the property we own and dispose of properties that were no longer required to provide municipal services.

After adopting this recommendation, the City hired the national real estate firm Jones, Lang, Lasalle to perform such a review. The review looked at the full inventory of 300+ properties owned by the City. These properties ranged from tiny slivers of land that were completely inaccessible to large multi-block tracts.

In the end, the Jones, Lang, Lasalle review [led to a series of recommendations for the Council to pursue](#). They made specific recommendations of properties to dispose of. They also made recommendations of properties that could be reused for other purposes.

In 2009, the Council adopted these recommendations and began to pursue disposition of the properties that were designated as surplus.

Today, only one of the eight properties that were designated for surplus remain in City ownership. All of the properties are listed below with their disposition:

401 E. Braddock Road (corner of Braddock & Mount Vernon Avenue): This was sold in 2011 for \$280,500.

716 - 718 N. Columbus Street (former residential care home): This was sold in 2012 for \$662,000.

3600 Jefferson Davis Highway (corner of Jefferson Davis & Reed): This was transferred to AHC Inc. (an affordable housing non-profit) to support a new affordable housing development.

200 N. Royal Street (Elder Crafters): This was sold in 2013 for \$1,250,000.

509 N. St. Asaph Street (old Health Department building): This was sold in 2014 for \$5,230,000.

1505 Powhatan Street (corner of Powhatan & Slaters Lane): This was sold in 2014 for \$4,400,000.

0 Prince Street (Beachcomber Restaurant): This was exchanged in 2014 as part of the land swap with the Old Dominion Boat Club.

912, 916, 920 King Street (King at S. Patrick): Last week, [the City Council bundled these properties with 116 S. Henry Street \(an existing parking lot\) and bundled them for sale](#).

We will still need to select a buyer, determine how to ensure the existing parking is not lost, and proceed with the normal development approval process.

The net proceeds from the completed sales have generated \$115 million of one-time funds that we have used to fund our Capital Improvement Program. Beyond that, these sales have taken properties that were non-taxable and placed them on the tax roles, easing the tax burden on residents and business owners throughout our City.

Vice Mayor Justin M. Wilson
703.746.4500
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov
www.justin.net
Alexandria City Hall

12/3/24, 4:13 PM

October 2016 Council Connection
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Paid for by Wilson For Council