

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT





In March 2022, Alexandria City Council adopted six priorities that have been used to provide a cohesive framework for budget and policy decisions for the upcoming fiscal year. City Council developed these priorities at the Council Retreat, held January 29, 2022, and follow-up discussions at two City Council meetings.

Each of the six priorities have a business plan, which together provide the framework for an interdepartmental approach to achieving the goals of the Support Youth and Families priority. By consolidating recommendations and planned initiatives with specific objectives and indicators (which can be updated quarterly), the business plans describe how the City will ensure each priority area is well run and the community receives quality services.

Each City Council Priority Business Plan is viewed through the lens of established principles by asking:

1. **Equity:** Will these initiatives identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers in our City's systems and services?
2. **Environmental justice:** Do these initiatives provide equitable access to a healthy environment and take proactive measures to mitigate and adapt to future climate change?
3. **Civility & Respect:** How do we ensure that all interactions associated with these initiatives are done so in a way in which there is a healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives?
4. **Transparency:** Are we operating in a way that is easy for others to see and understand what is happening in these initiatives?
5. **Service:** Do these initiatives put the public's interest first and make a difference in the community?

These priorities do not diminish or change the City's continuing commitment to its ongoing core services and accountability; rather, they bring focus to the concerns of highest need at the time. City Council will re-evaluate the needs and priorities in December 2022 in anticipation of the year ahead and the Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

We will use both new and traditional outreach methods to ensure that engagement is efficient, effective, and accessible to all stakeholders, creating a clear connection between community input and its impact on policy decision, infrastructure needs, and financial considerations.

GOALS

1 Focus on communication strategies that promote trust-centered relationship building, equitable engagement, and meet people where they are.



MAJOR INITIATIVES

Increase awareness and reiterate expectations for community engagement, as outlined in Alexandria's Civic Engagement Policy (2014), including updating the Boards and Commissions Staff Liaison Handbook so that members of the community are actively, constructively, and meaningfully involved in the public decisions that affect them.

Administer strategies that remove barriers to participation in long-term planning efforts and engage a demographically representative sample of the community. This includes meeting people where they are by hosting meetings on various platforms (in-person, virtual, informally, etc.), engaging existing community leaders and networks, as well as providing necessary supports for participation, such as food, transportation, childcare, translation, and interpretation, including the processes for:

- Citywide Vision Plan 2040
- Alexandria West Plan
- Housing Master Plan Update
- Duke Street Transitway
- Alexandria Libraries 5-year plan, including libraries as Community Hubs

Recruit and employ neighborhood communicators within Alexandria that have the language skills, cultural humility, and diverse backgrounds to build long-term trust, a reliable presence, empowerment, and responsiveness with residents, particularly in historically marginalized, underserved, and hard to reach communities. This includes:

- Deployment of centralized grassroots organizers to initiate and support equitable resident engagement.
- Community Health Worker initiative focused on reducing inequitable health outcomes through culturally competent engagement, navigation, education, and empowerment.
- Employment of Youth Ambassadors through the Workforce Development Center to engage with peers and give voice to youth issues.
- Oral History Program Manager to engage with and gather stories from Alexandria residents.

“ It is encouraging and inspiring to see how this Plan prioritized the Hispanic/Latino population by engaging with the community in Spanish first during the plan's process. ”

Nick Rogers, AICP, CZA, APA Virginia's Vice President of External Affairs in regard to the Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan

MAJOR INITIATIVES (CONTINUED)

Utilize neighborhood outreach strategies focused on building authentic relationships, including:

- Develop and implement a Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) community engagement plan to promote recreation services and financial assistance opportunities.
- Establish targeted outreach for grant programs accessible to minority-owned small businesses in the West End. This outreach will prioritize the provision of materials in multiple languages, assistance in filling out applications, and regular communications.
- Through the Office of Human Rights, hold regular, small, community listening sessions at accessible and convenient locations to facilitate discussion on how to continue to combat discrimination, increase equal opportunity, and protect human rights for persons who live, work, or visit Alexandria.
- Advance youth safety and resilience efforts through initiatives like the "Youth Speak Up" event series hosted by ACAP, SAPCA, and the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission, as well as regular Teen Block Parties and other teen events hosted by RPCA.

Use neutral third-party facilitation to help with consensus building when necessary, including:

- Ad-Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee
- Torpedo Factory Stakeholder Task Force





2 Share and receive information in an accessible, effective, and dynamic way

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Establish a city-wide communications plan to tell the story of the community and its residents, and that supports major City priorities. The plan will include a strategic approach to integrating and coordinating the initiatives in this business plan.

Integrate new web editor at the Office of Communications and Public Information to create and increase access to information, as well as enhance user experience.

Develop a centralized Language Access Program to implement policies on language services, cultural fluency, and meaningful representation of the City's primary languages, as well as the deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. This is supported by the hiring of a Language Coordinator and Bilingual Writers.

Receive, review, and manage Alex311 calls and performance indicators to proactively identify trends and opportunities for community engagement, outreach, and response to targeted issues in the community.

Disseminate information from technical subject-matter-expertise (SME) utilizing communications tools that emphasize storytelling techniques like infographics and testimonials from residents. Specific initiatives include: Flood Action Alexandria, Duke Street Transitway, Recurring Seasonal Operational Initiatives (e.g. Inclement Weather, Leaf Collections, Paving, etc.), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Projects Communications and Project Management

Advance digital content creation and implement strategies that increase the quantity and quality of social and web engagements, and measure effectiveness. Specific initiatives in the upcoming year include Flood Action Alexandria, RPCA Connect with Us, the Alexandria Library System, and Historic Alexandria's digital content.

Offer free, educational programs to residents that promote City government operations, services, and programs, including City Academies, building code trainings, environmental workshops, and library conversation clubs.

3 Be proactive in promoting City programs, services, and accomplishments

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Boost multimedia production, including visual message delivery and accessible educational materials, with quicker and consistent outreach.

Establish versatile messaging through non-traditional marketing tools, including a podcast, live platform streaming and influencer marketing.

Expand outreach to ESL and Under 40 populations through prominent digital tools including TikTok, WhatsApp, Discord and NextDoor.

Integrate the City's Editorial and Media Manager to build relationships with media reporters and pitch stories to regional and national news outlets.

Promote the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, a city-wide initiative dedicated to helping Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes, to local, regional, and national media. This will advance the City's goal of building a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion.

Use the City's upcoming 275th Anniversary (2024) as an opportunity for collaboration and storytelling of our organization and community.

Continue coordination with DASH to implement the 2030 Alexandria Transit Vision Plan Network, including route realignments, major frequency and span improvements, and expansion of electric bus infrastructure, ensuring safe and equitable access to public transportation.

Employ multimedia production to showcase internal City services, including the Office of Performance Analytics, Internal Audit, and the R.I.S.E. Leadership Academy.

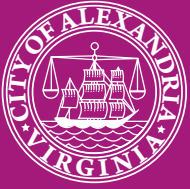
“ This building immerses me into such a deep and tragic history that is not spoken of or taught enough. It's one thing to learn about slavery at an objective level, almost 200 years later on pages, but to stand where these mistreated human beings stood and breath the same air they did, you place yourself in the fear and internalized pain they faced daily. Learning the stories of the brave folks who fought for freedom gives me hope in humanity. ”

- Freedom House Visitor Feedback





Status	Indicators	Current	Trend & Target
	Welcoming Citizen Involvement This indicator from the resident survey measures resident perception of the job the Alexandria government does at welcoming citizen involvement. The City's target is to strive to see annual improvement.	55%	
	Public Information Services This indicator from the resident survey measures resident perception of the quality of public information services. The City's target is to strive to see annual improvement.	73%	
	Opportunities to Participate This indicator from the resident survey measures resident perception of opportunities to participate in community manners. The City's target is to strive to see annual improvement.	73%	
	Responsiveness to Resident Requests This indicator from the resident survey measures resident perception of the responsiveness of Alexandria government to resident's requests, questions, and concerns. The City's target is to strive to see annual improvement.	56%	
	Transparency to the Public This indicator from the resident survey measures resident perception of Alexandria government's transparency to the public. The City's target is to strive to see annual improvement.	52%	



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