

Green Late Deal

Broken promises and missed deadlines plague Eco-City Alexandria.

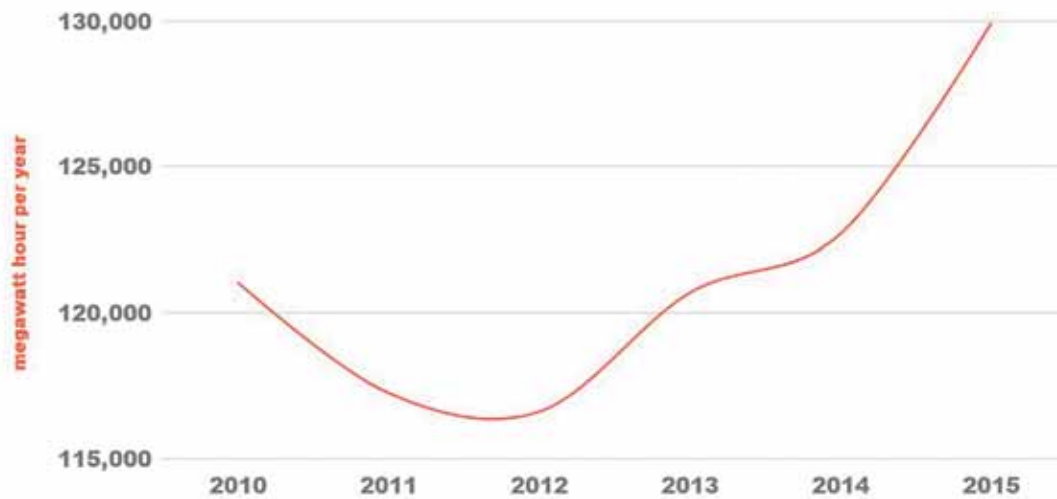
BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria adopted its Eco-City charter with great fanfare in 2008 along with a promise: The charter would be renewed in a decade. That deadline has now come and gone with no plans to update it. In 2009, members of the City Council approved an Eco-City action plan along with another promise: It would be renewed in five years. Once again, city officials breezed through that deadline. The promised annual progress reports happened for a while, but city officials haven't released one since 2016. For some members of the Environmental Policy Commission who were part of shaping Eco-City a decade ago, the broken promises and missed deadlines are frustrating.

"Frankly, I feel like the last four years of leadership were caught up in other dramas," said Danielle Fiedler, who was chairwoman of the commission when Eco-City Alexandria initiative was adopted. "If you're going to have this environmental action plan, you should be updating the short term action items. Those should be revisited every five years in order to stay on top of this."

The last decade has offered a mixed picture for the city's environmental health. Alexandria continues to dump more than 10 million gallons of raw sewage into the Potomac River every year, although city officials now have a plan after state lawmakers threatened to withhold money from city schools in 2017. Energy use in city government facilities has increased 11 percent since 2012, reflecting a tension between growth and conservation. Alexandria currently purchases renewable energy credits equivalent to 60 percent of its energy use, although the city manager's proposed budget calls for 100 percent by next year. And

Alexandria Government Operations Energy Use



source: Eco-City Progress Report and Key Environmental Indicators

then there's that charter revision that never happened and an action plan that city officials are just now getting around to updating.

"You don't accomplish things by making a list and putting them on the shelf," said former Del. Rob Krupicka (D-45), who helped create Eco-City Alexandria as member of the Alexandria City Council. "You accomplish things by making a list and then constantly revisiting it."

THE IDEA OF Eco-City Alexandria began with a strategic planning process back in 2007, shortly after the United Nations concluded that the rise in global temperatures was the result of greenhouse gas concentrations. When the Alexandria's action plan was adopted in 2009, Alexandria was one of a handful of cities across the country that had created its own plan for dealing with climate change. The timing worked well for Alexandria because when the global economy tanked, city officials had a ready-made list of shovel-ready projects that quali-

fied for federal stimulus money. Plans to install solar panels at Beatley Library, for example, were fast-tracked for funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"In Alexandria, we recognize the quantity and sources of energy used by local government, businesses and residents affects our environment and quality of life," said then Mayor Bill Euille during testimony to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in the summer of 2009. "Local governments play a critical role in improving energy efficiency, shifting the country to cleaner sources of energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

The action plan laid out a series of goals and metrics. Now, a decade later, city officials say many of those goals have been achieved. Greenhouse gas emissions, for example, are on track to be reduced by 20 percent the 2005 level by 2030. Every new municipal building in Alexandria has been designated LEED Silver or better since 2005. And although Alexandria never set a target

for renewable energy production, city officials currently purchase renewable energy credits equivalent to 60 percent of city government electricity usage. When City Manager Mark Jinks introduced his proposed budget for fiscal year 2020 in February, he included plans to improve on that success.

"During FY2020, all expected city government electrical use will be linked to renewable sources such as wind, solar and biomass," Jinks wrote in the introduction to the budget. "As part of the green buildings policy review and report to City Council this spring, I will recommend that the city raise its green building goal for city facilities from the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver standard to LEED Gold."

ADVOCATES FOR ECO-CITY say the biggest success is one that can't be easily quantified — a culture shift at City Hall. Before Eco-City, concerns about the environment were largely the domain of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. Critics worried that approach would not be successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions or encouraging renewable sources of energy. That's why they say the exercise of putting together an action plan and assigning specific goals to departments throughout the city government was a success in its own right, shifting the priority from one department to across the organization.

"One of the successes that lurks in the action plan is a mindset that the city has got to do its bit for the environment, and that is now enshrined in all the planners," said Peter Pennington, who was a member of the Environmental Policy Commission when the Eco-City initiative was launched. "When developers come in with a brand

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Earth Day Agenda Alexandria: Green Report Card

Is the city addressing environmental concerns? What's happening with the Eco-City Alexandria initiative? Join Agenda Alexandria for a wide-ranging discussion of these issues on April 22 at the Hermitage, located at 5000 Fairbanks Ave. in the West End. Reception starts at 6:30 p.m.; program starts at 7 p.m. Cost is \$5 at the door; optional dinner starting at \$32. Panelists include:

❖ Bill Skrabak is deputy director of Alexandria's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. He has a bachelor of science in chemical engineering



from Lafayette College and more than 30 years experience in the environmental field. Before coming to work in Alexandria, Skrabak was enforcement manager for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. He is currently the manager of the Office of Environmental Quality, where he leads the city's Eco-City effort.

❖ Dean Naujoks is the Potomac Riverkeeper as part of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network. He has a bachelor's degree in environmental



policy and sustainable development from North Carolina State University and more than 20 years of environmental nonprofit experience. Before joining the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, he served as the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper and the Yadkin Riverkeeper.

❖ Andrew Macdonald is a former vice mayor of Alexandria. He has a doctorate in geology from the University of Western Ontario, and he has served as a member of the Environmental Policy Commission and chairman of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. He is



currently chairman of the Environmental Council of Alexandria, a nonprofit group established to protect the city's natural resources from development.

❖ Kenneth Warren is a senior at T.C. Williams High School who is the co-founder and CEO of a group known as Community United for Renewable Energy, which he created after traveling to India in 2016. As the leader of CURE, Warren works with school officials to help them make environmentally sustainable investments in Alexandria City Public Schools.



As It Is Happening



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Thankfully I woke up today (duh!) – without the crushing, incapacitating fatigue that I woke up with two weeks ago, post-my-last-immuno-therapy infusion.

As I have written previously, I did not alert my oncologist to my bedridden status then or since as I have been trying not to worry that I had crossed some Rubicon-type line concerning my treatment and its side/straight-on effects. Apparently, and I will continue to believe (cling to this belief) that my inability to get out of bed two Saturdays ago was indeed an aberration rather than an actualization, of life in this new Kenny lane.

So here I sit at my desk writing away, fully dressed, teeth-brushed and clean-shaven, all by 8:15 am, pill-popping as I go.

As I recall two weeks ago, when I finally summoned the strength to extricate myself from under the covers to get dressed and attempt to walk downstairs and restart my day (I had gotten up earlier to feed our cats breakfast and give Chino his insulin shot), “The clock on the wall” (clock radio, actually), to quote George Thorogood, said 3:53 p.m. (And other than bathroom breaks, that was all I could muster in the nine hours since I woke up at 7 a.m.)

No pain, just zero energy. It was almost as if I was paralyzed.

Writing back to the present, anticipating this morning, I’ve been a bit apprehensive the last few days – fearful that when I awoke today, I would once again be fighting that terrible fatigue and considering a new reality in my cancer existence.

When my eyes popped open at 6:30 this morning, I was grateful (as my father used to say: “Any day that I wake up is a good day”) and relieved that when I raised my right arm to roll back the covers, I did so with relative normalcy; and even more relieved when I was able to swing my legs out from underneath the covers and onto the bedroom floor where I had no difficulty getting my bearings. Before too long (maybe 30 seconds or so), and after a few deep breaths, I stood up and officially began my day without any further adieu. Although I hadn’t taken any Roloids: “Oh, what a relief it is!”

Dare I say then it will be a normal day, up and at ‘em with nary a hint of fatigue in the forecast.

Rain, however, is in the forecast and given the date on the calendar: April 13, 2019, I have to face an even greater challenge than the fatigue I experienced two weeks ago: clothes shopping.

More specifically, I have to buy a suit, as well as some upgraded good-looking casual attire which my wife, Dina will approve and that Kenny’s budget will tolerate, as I’ll be attending a family wedding and rehearsal dinner beginning May 3, 2019.

One more concern: my weight. It’s not good. It’s the talking-scale-joke-will-one-of-you-please-get-off, bad. But I have no choice. Today’s the day (for availability reasons) or it will be “Good night, Irene.” Is there a tent sale going on anywhere?

You know, now that I think about it – and feel it, I may be feeling a little fatigue.

Maybe it’s not the best day to be trying on ill-fitting clothes ALL DAY. What if I don’t have the manual dexterity to be in and out of dressing rooms, up and down while in them and back and forth to the clothing racks with shoes, slacks, shirts and suits?

What if today is another day in my life – which seemingly began at birth, where I spent hours in the “Husky”/“Portly” departments at Jordan Marsh, Filene’s Basement and Kennedy’s in downtown Boston, trying to find Kenny some “school clothes” that fit, that is excruciating AGAIN? Granted, it wasn’t cancer then as it is now, but for an overweight young boy, it was torture personified and the experience imprinted me for life as a serial-clothes-shopping-hater.

Got to go. Wish me luck. I’ll need it.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

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NEWS

Green

FROM PAGE 3

new scheme they have to face up to the fact that there are environmental things they have to do.”

There’s the open space requirement, for example, that they have to meet. And when some tried to install a green roof and call it open space, members of the commission pressed city officials to make sure big-money interests were not gaming the system. Then there’s the desire for LEED certified buildings. As it turns out, Alexandria didn’t have to press developers too much on that because the market demands shifted and sustainable building practices have become the norm with most projects. Perhaps the more difficult hurdle is the population itself with Alexandria residents finding a way to decrease the carbon footprint of their own lives.

“The city has done a lot of things to heighten awareness. But I think ultimately it comes down to individual behaviors, and I think there’s still a long way to go.” said Patrick Hagan, a member of the commission when Eco-City was created. “I think that the behavior of individuals is what really needs to change.”

ENERGY CONSUMPTION is one of the metrics that Alexandria began documenting in Eco-City annual reports starting in 2011, a reflection of the city’s efforts to cut back on greenhouse gas emissions. In the first two years, energy consumption declined by 4 percent. But since 2012, consumption of energy for government use increased 11 percent. City officials say that’s a reflection of new city facilities, including a new police headquarters and a new fire station — both data-heavy buildings that have a higher demand for power.

“In some ways, that’s the cost of delivering services to the community,” said Bill Egers, energy manager for the city government. “As we deliver more and more services, there’s a tradeoff. And that tradeoff is an absolute increase in overall energy consumption for both electricity and natural gas.”

Those Eco-City annual reports may be a thing of the past though. It’s been three years since the last one, and now city officials are ready to move into the next phase of the environmental initiative. Last October, City Council members approved a short-term update to the Eco-City action plan. And this summer, council members will be considering a long-term update. That could open the door to a new Eco-City charter, which would finally fulfill the broken promise from a decade ago.

“With our new City Council makeup and our new mayor and vice mayor it would be really helpful for them to take a look at what the actual vision is,” said Jessica Lassiter, a former member of the Environmental Policy Commission who helped created Eco-City Alexandria. “We need to take a look at the actual vision for the city and make sure it’s still relevant because I think a lot has changed.”

Living in the Dark

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Consider, for a moment, the disaster scenario: A massive earthquake along the New Madrid Fault Line in the American midwest renders the East Coast without power for months. The cell phone networks in Alexandria are down, rendering your iPhone an expensive paperweight. Local grocery stores might have supplies, although they are only taking cash because credit cards aren't working.

It's a little like Mad Max on the Potomac, only without Mel Gibson. What's the first thing you're going to need?

"Cash," says Kevin Peach, chairman of the Alexandria Local Emergency Planning Committee. "If the power goes out, which it will, ATMs won't work."

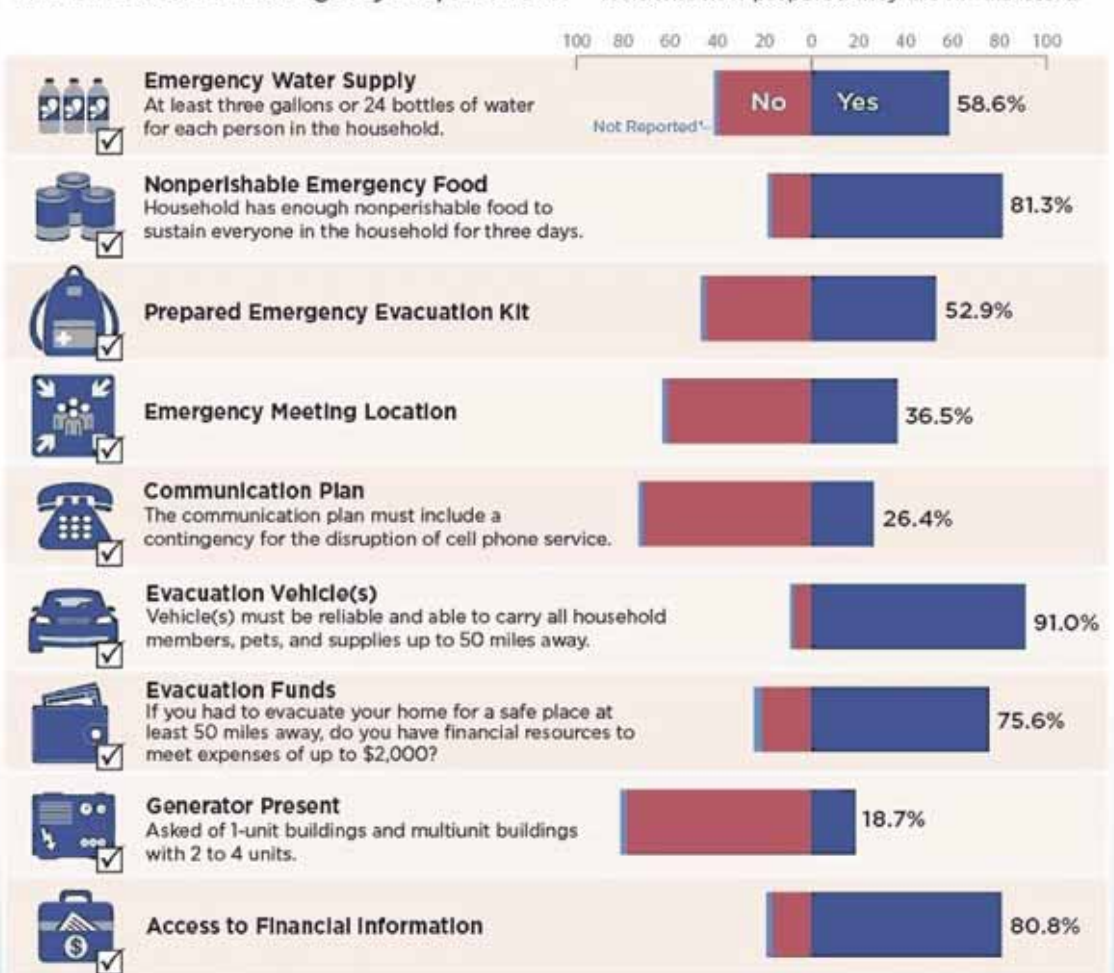
He suggests stashing \$2,000 in cold, hard cash. That's money that can be used at the grocery store, assuming the crippled communication network hasn't crippled distribution channels. After squirrelling away your evacuation funds, Peach says, the next thing on your emergency planning agenda should be an evacuation kit — sometimes called a "go kit" — a container with protein bars, water bottles and a first aid kit. Beyond that is something a little less tangle, an ability to live off the grid.

"People don't even know how to get to their hospitals because all they have to do is put it into Google Maps," said Peach, who is chief operating officer at the Texas-based Disaster Services Corporation. "That's why a cyber attack would be so devastating to us if it knocked out all our communications and power or didn't allow us to access the internet. It's scary the things that could happen."

ALEXANDRIA HAS SOME experience dealing with disaster scenarios, a long history that dates back to the Air Florida disaster in 1982 and continued through the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Mayor Justin Wilson says those experiences prompted city officials to have plans in place for communicating with city residents through reverse 911 and social media. But, he adds, the last few major snowstorms have revealed a major potential problem during any emergency situation, particularly ones that call for sheltering in place for long periods of time.

"It always concerns me when we have one of those big storms that makes it hard for us to get roads cleared in three or four days how many people say these 10 things in my

How Ready Are We? Natural Disaster or Emergency Preparedness



"If the power goes out, which it will, ATMs won't work."

— Kevin Peach, chairman,
Alexandria Local Emergency
Planning Committee

life won't happen if I can't get off my street," said Wilson. "We have residents who contact us and say they don't have enough medication or they have important medical procedures that happen and they have no way to get there."

The mayor adds that the government shutdowns have revealed another major weakness — just how tenuous financial situation can be for people who miss one or two paychecks. Wilson says the most recent government shutdown revealed a surprising truth about Alexandria residents who are solidly middle class or even upper middle class households. Many of them would be on the brink of total disaster without a regular source of income for a very brief amount of time.

"That is very concerning, and not just a matter of whether you have \$2,000 of cash

Could you survive without your iPhone?
Do you have an evacuation kit?
Are you really prepared for the worst?

National Preparedness Month

This year, National Preparedness Month will focus on family and community emergency planning, with the overarching theme "Prepared, Not Scared." National Preparedness Month reminds everyone to be prepared for the unexpected; to learn lifesaving skills such as CPR and first aid; and check insurance policies for coverage of hazards residents could face, such as floods and hurricanes.

The Alexandria Fire Department and Volunteer Alexandria will offer several opportunities to learn how to prepare, including Until Help Arrives and Hands-Only CPR training, and an Emergency Preparedness Fair, all free and open to the public.

"Until Help Arrives"

This training, which provides information on how to take action in emergency situations while waiting for professional responders to arrive, will be held at Volunteer Alexandria (123 N. Alfred St.). Space is limited; online registration is required.

Sept. 11: 1-5 p.m. and 6-10 p.m.
Sept. 25: 1-5 p.m.

Hands-Only CPR

This training, which provides participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform CPR without mouth-to-mouth breaths, will be held at the following locations:

Sept. 5: 6-8 p.m. at First Thursday in Del Ray (Mt. Vernon and E. Del Ray avenues)
Sept. 6: 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at McDonald's (1000 N. Henry St.)
Sept. 9: 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Torpedo Factory (105 N. Union St.)
Sept. 18: 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at United States Trademark and Patent Office (Dulany Gardens, 300 Dulany St.)
Sept. 24: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the City's Emergency Preparedness Fair (Market Square, 301 King St.)

Emergency Preparedness Fair

At the City's Emergency Preparedness Fair on Sept. 24, in addition to hands-only CPR training, representatives from the Alexandria Fire Department; Volunteer Alexandria; Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); Department of Transportation & Environmental Services; and the Alexandria Health Department will provide the public with information about emergency preparedness and volunteer opportunities.

SEE EMERGENCY. PAGE 11

Emergency

FROM PAGE 3

Where are you going to store the fuel? How far away from your house should the generator be? What are the fire hazards? How long should the extension be from the generator to the house?

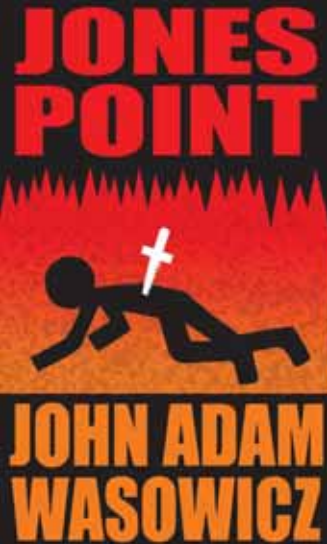
“There’s a lot of factors that go into why people don’t get generators,” said Whatley. “It’s one of those things that’s nice to have, but then you start scratching your head and thinking what else do I need to do?”

AS HURRICANE DORIAN slowly makes its way along the Eastern Seaboard this week, people are more focused on emergency planning than they might otherwise be. That has people living near the Alexandria waterfront thinking about storm surge, and state leaders say it should have everyone thinking about the risk of flooding — even in areas that have never flooded before. Setting aside partisan concerns about climate change, state officials say everyone needs to take action now to prevent heart-ache later.

“Every homeowner should have flood insurance, whether you’re in a flood zone or not,” said Brian Moran, secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security. “And then have a plan, actually have that discussion with the family and friends about what if a storm were to occur and have that pre-disaster plan already established.”

Moran adds people should also think about what would happen in a cyber attack. The explosion of a nuclear warhead far above the Earth’s surface, for example, could wipe out the country’s communication systems and power grid. A determined group of hackers could damage infrastructure and block access to the internet. And then there’s that potential for a catastrophic earthquake along the New Madrid Fault Line, one that would leave the East Coast without power for months. Is Virginia ready for any of that?

“We’re making preparations,” said Moran, who represented Alexandria in the House of Delegates before his appointment to the Cabinet. “A lot of our infrastructure is owned by private entities, so it requires a good working relationship with the private sector.”



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WEEK IN ALEXANDRIA

Scottish Origins

Alexandria's Christmas Walk dates back to mid-1960s, a time when the YWCA had a colonial theme for the festivities. Then, in 1970, everything went plaid. That was the year that the Christmas Walk became the Scottish Walk, a theme chosen to celebrate the city's Scottish founders.

The kickoff that year happened Friday night in Market Square with a program titled "All Hail to Christmas." The next morning, Scottish pipers and drummers wearing kilts opened the doors of various places on the walk, starting at the "Scotland House" at 607 South Washington Street, where the owners accepted the traditional sprig of heather as a formal salute to Christmas.

At noon, the pipers gathered at the steps of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, where the public was invited for a service of carols and anthems with a message from **William Sengel** (father of longtime Commonwealth's Attorney **Randy Sengel**) on the contributions of the Scots in Alexandria.

A Scottish menu was also the theme of the luncheon served at Christ Church that year, including a rib-sticking Tartan Hot Pot along with smoked salmon and anchovy butter. Tickets were only \$3.50, and that included a fashion show.

As the Campagna Center prepares for the 50th anniversary of the Scottish Walk, those humble origins many years ago have grown into a holiday juggernaut that attracts visitors from across the region.

"2020 is not only the 50th anniversary of the Scottish Walk, it's also the 75th anniversary of the Campagna Center," said **Andrew Palmieri**, chairman of the board of directors. "So it'll be a really big year for us."

Planeando Para el Futuro

It's rare that planning for the future has been such a high-stakes endeavor. But the arrival of the new Amazon headquarters in Arlington is creating an unprecedented sense of uncertainty in Arlandria, a neighborhood of Latino residents that hugs the southern border of Arlington.

Housing values are expected to skyrocket, and the cost of living is also expected to rise dramatically. All of that is creating pressure in a neighborhood where the median household income is about \$54,000 and 77 percent of children speak Spanish at home. City officials are responding by conducting a series of neighborhood sessions, including an inaugural event that was conducted entirely in Spanish.

"I cannot remember the last time the city held a meeting entirely in Spanish," said Councilman **Canek Aguirre**, Alexandria's first Latino member of City Council.

"I can confirm it was our first planning meeting that was conducted entirely in Spanish," added City Manager **Mark Jinks**.

"Wonderful," responded Aguirre. "This is an area that's going to be highly impacted considering the arrival of Amazon and Virginia Tech. Their voices are going to be very important in this planning process."

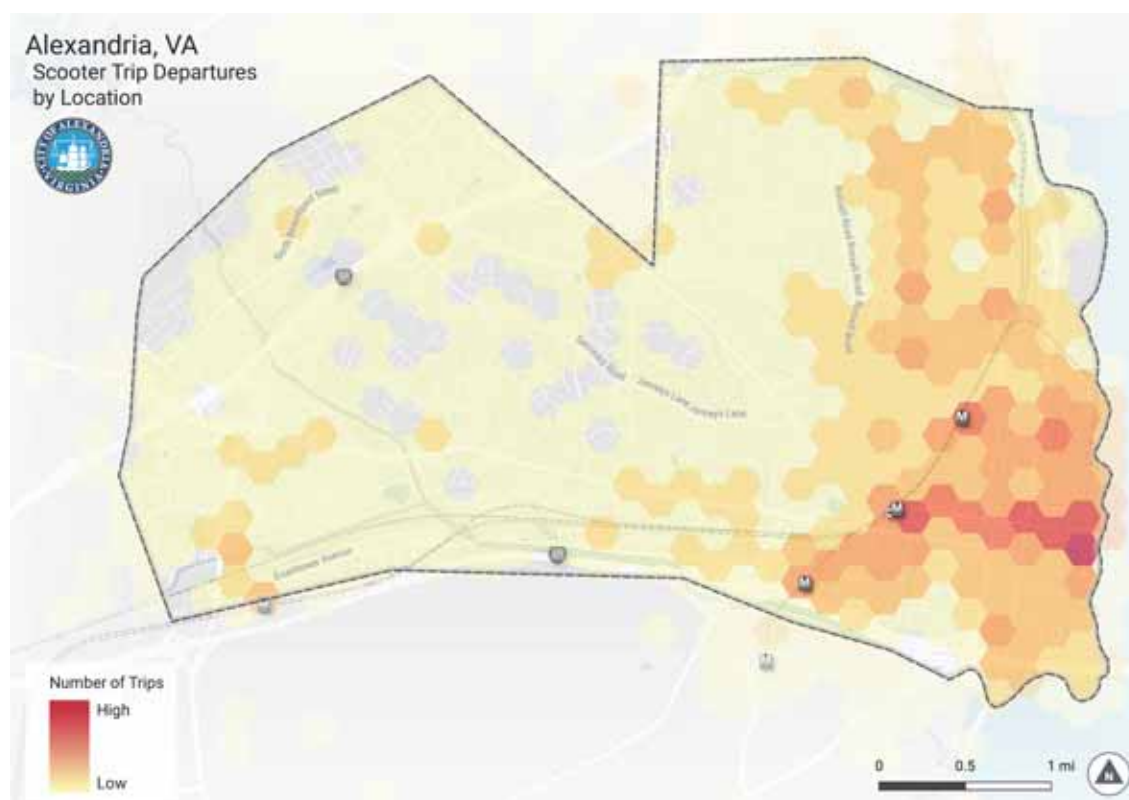
Transgender Moment

Two years ago, Virginia elected its first transgender member to the oldest lawmaking body in the New World: **Danica Roem**. Since that time, the august chamber has dropped gender-specific titles in favor of more neutral language and people started adding gender identifiers to their Twitter profiles. Now Alexandria may be on the verge of having its own transgender moment.

Councilman **Mo Seifeldein** says he's preparing an amendment to the city's Human Rights Code to add gender identity and transgender status, which he says is long overdue. He plans on formally introducing it later this month.

"No one should have to be left out of the Human Rights Code," said Seifeldein, announcing the proposal last week. "This is acknowledging a person's basic humanity."

— MICHAEL LEE POPE



Responding to concerns that the vast majority of scooter availability is in Old Town, the City Council is considering a proposal to require scooter companies to deploy 10 percent of all scooters west of Quaker Lane and another 10 percent west of Interstate 395.

Scooting into 2020

City Council considers extending dockless mobility pilot program.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria is bitterly divided over scooters, and a recent survey showed that the city is just about evenly split between people who hate the dockless mobility program and people who love it. That's the backdrop for members of the Alexandria City Council, who are now considering extending the pilot into next year. A public hearing on the issue is scheduled for Dec. 14.

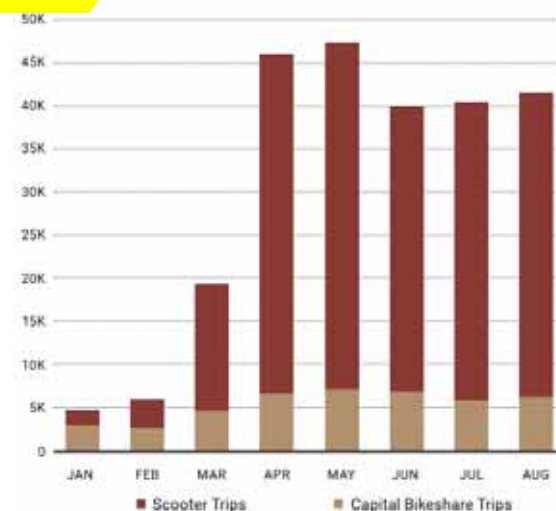
At issue are thorny questions about sidewalks and equity, vexing policy issues that confront a city grafting 21st century technology onto 18th century streets. Perhaps the trickiest question is whether scooters should be allowed on sidewalks. If scooters follow the same rules as bicycles, they would be allowed on almost every sidewalk in the city. But council members are considering a plan to forbid them on sidewalks in parts of Old Town and along Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray. The no-go zone in Old Town would be from the waterfront to West Street and from Montgomery Street to Wilkes Street.

"For enforcement purposes, it needed to be something that is clear and crisp," said City Manager Mark Jinks, "something that could be easily remembered."

But how will tourists know when and where they are allowed on sidewalks? And how can the Alexandria Police Department possibly monitor and enforce this newly created sidewalk prohibition? What happens when scooters become more popular on the sidewalks of Del Ray? These remain open questions as council members prepare to vote on potentially extending the pilot program.

"I don't know how realistic the enforcement is," said Councilman Mo Seifeldein, a vocal critic of the pilot program. "If it's there and we don't put constant enforcement, we're going to be hearing from the residents."

Total Shared Mobility Trips



More than 230,000 scooter trips were reported from January through August. The average trip time was 10 to 15 minutes, and the average distance was just under a mile. Scooter companies report about 15,000 active users in Alexandria.

Council members are also likely to hear from residents about a lack of equity. Responding to a concern that the vast majority of scooter availability is in Old Town, the City Council is considering a proposal to require scooter companies to deploy 10 percent of all scooters west of Quaker Lane and another 10 percent west of Interstate 395. That would flood parts of the city that have yet to see any scooters at all, although it flies in the face of the business model that balances supply and demand.

"My concerns is not about their business model," said Councilman John Taylor Chapman. "We need to make sure all of our residents have equal access."

But requiring hundreds of scooters in areas where there is less demand could cause another problem: unused scooters sitting idle. Anticipating neighborhood complaints about pristine rows of untouched scooters clogging the public right of way, council members are trying to navigate the need for equity with the demands of the marketplace.

"There's a concern with being overly rigid here," said Mayor Justin Wilson. "We don't want to cause more problems than we solve."