

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

City Services Map

Junior City Academy

City of Alexandria's  
Ongoing Efforts in Eviction  
Prevention and Housing  
Support

2024 Small Business  
Resiliency (SBR) Grant  
Program to Enhance  
Service



Credit: Christopher Connell

# CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

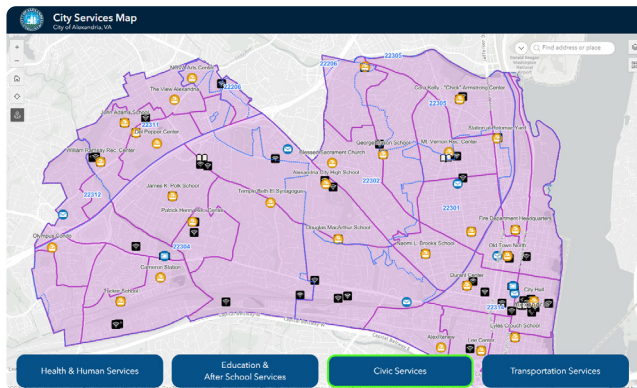
## FALL 2024 UPDATE

### City Services Map

#### PRIORITY: ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

During the 2023 Digital Equity Plan process, residents and partners—including Computer CORE—identified a need not only to know where publicly accessible WiFi is in the City of Alexandria but to understand the full range of services available at public facilities.

In response, City staff from Recreation Centers, Libraries, Community and Human Services, Alex 311, the Office of Communications and Community Engagement and the Health Department worked together to develop the City Services Map; an innovative tool which allows residents and City employees to explore the comprehensive array of public services offered in Alexandria, complete with detailed information on locations and resources.



*Continued on page 2*

### Junior City Academy

#### PRIORITY: COMMUNITY CONNECTION

For six weeks, 12 students participated in the pilot Jr. City Academy where they learned about how their local government works. Modeled after the City Academy, the program was launched in April 2024 in partnership with the Gang Prevention Community Task Force (GPCTF), the Court Service Unit (CSU), and the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), and introduced a range of City departments to middle- and high-school aged youth and encourages them to become more civically engaged.

*Continued on page 2*

Institute for Regional  
Excellence-Regional  
Executive Development  
Program

The 2024 Small Business Resiliency (SBR) Grant Program offered Alexandria business owners crucial funding to overcome significant challenges in accessing resources as they continue to recover from the pandemic.

*Page 4 for more*



## Junior City Academy *(Cont.)*

Each week, the Academy learned about a different departments' responsibilities, challenges and resources. These departments included:

- City Manager's Office
- the Mayor and members of City Council
- City Attorney's Office
- Alexandria Fire Department
- Alexandria Police Department
- Alexandria Sheriff's Office
- Race and Social Equity Office
- Court Services Unit
- Code Administration
- Transportation and Environmental Services
- Planning and Zoning

After the program, graduates reported that they have a better understanding of how their government works, how to access City resources, career opportunities, leadership skills and stated that they feel more comfortable approaching City leaders with current issues, problems and projects. Graduates also said "I really enjoyed every single one of the visits. It was really fun to learn about the different resources around

the city. I really hope that this wasn't a one-time thing and we can continue to do these same activities."

City Leaders also benefited from the experience. It gave them the opportunity to engage youth on current issues, problems, and projects, and encouraged them to consider pursuing careers in public service.

The participants affirmed the success of the pilot and the City's considerations in organizing future Academies. "It's a wonderful program and I would definitely love to see it next year and I would recommend it to everyone!" City staff are working across departments to plan out the framework for a second cohort, which they aim to launch in Spring 2025.



## City Services Map *(Cont.)*

By engaging frontline staff, the City identified and prioritized our residents' ten most requested services and determined information needs in four key areas: Health and Human Services, Education & After School Services, Civic Services, and Transportation Services.

A standout feature of the City Services Map is its multilingual capability, powered by Google

Translate. Users can view the map in multiple languages, including Amharic, Arabic, and Dari, ensuring accessibility for Alexandria's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) community.

The City's GIS Team and instructors at Computer CORE tested the tool with students and gathered feedback that further shaped the live version of the map, which can be accessed

at [alexandriava.gov/live](https://alexandriava.gov/live). This feedback gave us the opportunity to train the City's front line staff to assist residents with finding and navigating services.

The City Services Map represents a significant step toward bridging the digital divide between the City of Alexandria and its residents and businesses and will continue to evolve as we identify new service needs from our community.

# City of Alexandria's Ongoing Efforts in Eviction Prevention and Housing Support



**PRIORITY: HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

The City of Alexandria continues to prioritize housing stability through its active support of the Eviction Prevention Task Force, offering residents easily accessible, culturally competent assistance in housing and resource navigation, and relocation services when necessary. This coordinated effort reflects the City's commitment to addressing the ongoing critical housing challenges and mitigating the impact of evictions on underserved households.

Since July 1, 2024, a total of 506 unlawful detainers have been filed in the City, which is a decrease of 181 submitted during the same period in 2023.

## **Changes to Task Force Structure and Focus Areas**

To enhance its efficiency and focus, the Eviction Prevention Task Force has transitioned from monthly to bimonthly meetings, allowing its subcommittees to convene for more targeted discussions and actions. The Steering Workgroup, which focuses on analyzing eviction prevention data and trends, now leads the overall

direction of the Task Force. This Workgroup will allow the Task Force to remain responsive to the evolving housing landscape.

In addition to the Steering Workgroup, other active subcommittees include:

### **Tenant Education and Community Outreach Subcommittee led by Legal Services of Northern Virginia**

1. Engages in weekly courthouse outreach, offering direct support to households facing eviction proceedings.
2. Created a Courthouse Navigation informational flyer, guiding at-risk households through the court process, and available in both English and Spanish.

### **Landlord Outreach Subcommittee**

1. Fosters collaboration and communication with landlords to encourage housing retention strategies and mitigate evictions through proactive engagement.

### **Legislative and Legislative Advocacy Subcommittee**

With a broad coalition of local, regional, and state stakeholders, this committee is already preparing for the 2025 General Assembly. Participants include community members, Tenants and Workers United (TWU), Arlington County, the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance (NVAHA), the Virginia Poverty Law Center (VPLC), and HOME of Virginia. In its first meeting of the fiscal year, the committee celebrated the passage of three key housing stabilization bills that were signed into law on July 1, 2024:

1. HB1487 – Requires the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to translate critical housing forms and documents into five non-English languages, enhancing accessibility for non-English-speaking residents.
2. HB73 – Addresses the expungement of unlawful detainer actions, enabling automatic entry of an order without the need for further petition or hearing, reducing the burden on tenants who have resolved eviction issues.
3. SB405 / HB967 – Amends the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to mandate clearer disclosure of fees in rental agreements, ensuring transparency and fairness in tenant contracts.

As the City navigates the ongoing housing challenges, it will continue to work closely with local and regional stakeholders to advance legislative priorities and provide comprehensive housing assistance to its residents.





# 2024 Small Business Resiliency (SBR) Grant Program to Enhance Service

## PRIORITY: ECONOMIC STRENGTH

The 2024 Small Business Resiliency (SBR) Grant Program offered Alexandria business owners crucial funding to overcome significant challenges in accessing resources as they continue to recover from the pandemic.

Sixty-four recipients are set to receive disbursements totaling more than \$410,000 via grants of up to \$7,000. The program was designed to support businesses with the highest needs, prioritizing those located in census tracts with low economic opportunity indicators and those that hadn't previously received funds from earlier federally funded City grant programs.

The grants went to diverse entrepreneurs across the City, most of whom have 10 or fewer employees. Businesses were evenly split between home-based and brick-and-mortar establishments. Many plan to use the funds to drive growth, broaden their services, and strengthen their stability, paving the way for future success in Alexandria.



The SBR Grant recipients by race and ethnicity breaks down as follows:

- 37% Black or African American business owners
- 31% White business owners
- 20% Asian business owners
- 7% Identify as multi-racial business owners
- 3% Prefer not to say
- 2% American Indian and Alaska Native business owners

In addition, 12% of all business owners identify as Hispanic/Latino.

The program was administered by the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC), with outreach support delivered by the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP).

AEDP visited approximately 800 businesses to advertise the grant and heavily promoted the in-person and virtual multilingual information seminars offered by LEDC.

More than 140 business owners applied for the grant, thanks in part to AEDP's outreach efforts. That in-person approach was key in achieving the grant's goal: connecting with businesses that might not otherwise know about available resources and

supporting businesses that had not previously received funding. "Our hands-on approach with local business owners made a significant difference, ensuring more entrepreneurs were aware of the grant and could benefit from this essential funding," said Cristina Amoruso, AEDP's Director of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

To qualify for the SBR Grant, businesses must operate within Alexandria, employ 100 or fewer staff, and have revenues under \$250,000 before December 31, 2023. They also had to be current on local taxes and free from bankruptcy. The program excluded non-profits, financial institutions, and corporate-owned locations unless they were locally owned.

Those businesses who did not receive funding are encouraged to take advantage of the many free services available through the AEDP Small Business services. "We work to provide every business owner with the chance to thrive," said Amoruso. "We invite all entrepreneurs in Alexandria to take advantage of our complimentary services to help their business succeed."

Click here to sign up for AEDP's small business newsletter to stay in the know about business development in Alexandria.

# Institute for Regional Excellence-Regional Executive Development Program

## PRIORITY: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Institute for Regional Excellence Regional Executive Development Program (IRE-REDP), established in 2001, offers leadership and management training for mid-level and senior managers from local governments in our region. Developed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in partnership with George Washington University's Center for Excellence in Public Leadership, the program equips participants with skills to address regional challenges and foster innovative solutions in public administration. Upon completion, graduates earn a Certified Public Manager® (CPM) designation.

### In this 12-month program, participants will:

- Earn 300 credit hours of instructive academic coursework led by university professors and leadership experts
- Participate in hands-on leadership experiences meant to enhance capabilities



- Foster innovative problem-solving
- Build a deeper understanding of regional interdependencies among local governments
- Encourages collaboration among leaders from across the region
- Work on team projects addressing critical regional issues

at boosting workforce retention and equitable housing.

Christina Damhuis with the Department of Community and Human Services stated: "I've learned so much from the curriculum and my peers about effective leadership and public management. I will carry the knowledge, skills and network I gained in this program with me throughout my career!"

### 2024-25 IRE-REDP City of Alexandria Participants include:

- Unique Coleman (General Services)
- Stephanie Marzelli (Alexandria Criminal Justice Services)
- Jacquay Plummer (Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities)

We look forward to seeing how they grow and learn together with our regional partners!

Since 2007, 37 individuals from a multiple levels and areas of the City of Alexandria have participated in the program. Lieutenant Marcus Downey from the Alexandria Police Department, participated in the 2023-24 cohort and worked with a group that focused on the affordable housing crisis through a public-private partnership. Their project developed a program offering rental assistance and promoting homeownership, supported a variety of community partners, and aimed



Marcus Downey, COG Class of 2024, participating in a Washington D.C. teambuilding activity with his IRE team.

"The COG/IRE Program helped develop my leadership and management skills while building a deeper understanding of issues not only impacting the City, but also the entire DMV region."

– Sermaine McLean, Chief of Staff,  
City Manager's Office

"The COG/IRE Program allowed me to understand local government from multiple perspectives and build a network of regional colleagues to brainstorm and consult with. It helped me reframe how we approach issues in the City by working to define problems before searching for solutions."

– Dana Wedeles, Strategic Initiatives Officer,  
City Manager's Office