



TRANSITION PLAN

MAYOR JEFFREY HALL

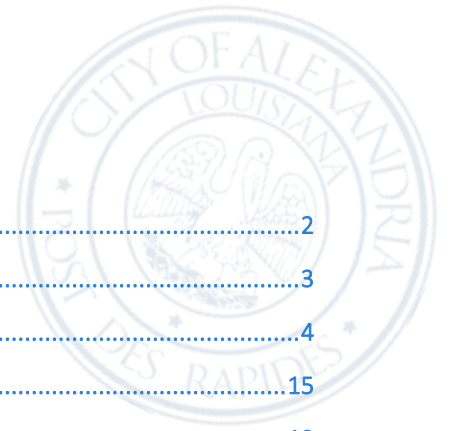


TABLE OF CONTENTS

THANK YOU	2
BACKGROUND	3
TRANSITION PLANNING: 2019 PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: QUALITY OF LIFE.....	15
SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: PUBLIC SAFETY	19
SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: INFRASTRUCTURE.....	22
SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: COMMUNITY SERVICES.....	27
SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: SUPPORT SERVICES.....	30
IMPLEMENTATION.....	34

THANK YOU

Nearly 60 key members of our Alexandria community supported this transition planning process by serving on the Mayor's Transition Team and/or one of Mayor's five transition subcommittees. Your commitment to our community and to this process are greatly appreciated.



TRANSITION TEAM

- William Barron, Barron Builders Construction
- Jason Cobb, Rapides Regional Medical Center
- Michael Grant, Grant Shelton Worldwide Tire
- William Earl Hilton, Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office
- Damon Horieh, Kolin General Store
- Matt Johns, Rapides Area Planning Commission
- Gregory Jones, Gregory L. Jones Professional Law Corporation
- Gregory O'Quin, FSC Securities Corporation
- Jimmy Sawtelle, Central Louisiana Technical Community College
- Ronald Smith, Cleco
- John Stigall, The Evangeline Bank and Trust Company
- Phillip Terrell, Rapides Parish District Attorney
- Jerry Williams, JWBP Broadcasting

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Shannon Basco, American Towing
- Mitch Daniels, Jones Lang LaSalle
- Michael Jenkins, Local Developer
- Richard Kyle, Kyle's Collision Center
- Oday Lavergne, Jr., Lee Gateway
- Jay Lynch, Barron Heinberg & Brocato
- Eric Mendoza, American Towing
- Mohammed Mohammed, Local Business Owner
- Matt Ritchie, Ritchie Real Estate
- Nenita Roy
- Mike Shelton, Grant Shelton Worldwide Tire
- Chris Soprano, FSC Securities Corporation
- Mark Vassar, Integrated Packaging Company

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Mark Brown, Local Business Owner
- Blake Chatelain, Red River Bank
- Marvinette Holly, COPE, Inc.
- Carmen Luneau, Community Leader
- Gregory O'Quin, FSC Securities Corporation
- John Stigall, The Evangeline Bank and Trust Company

PUBLIC SAFETY

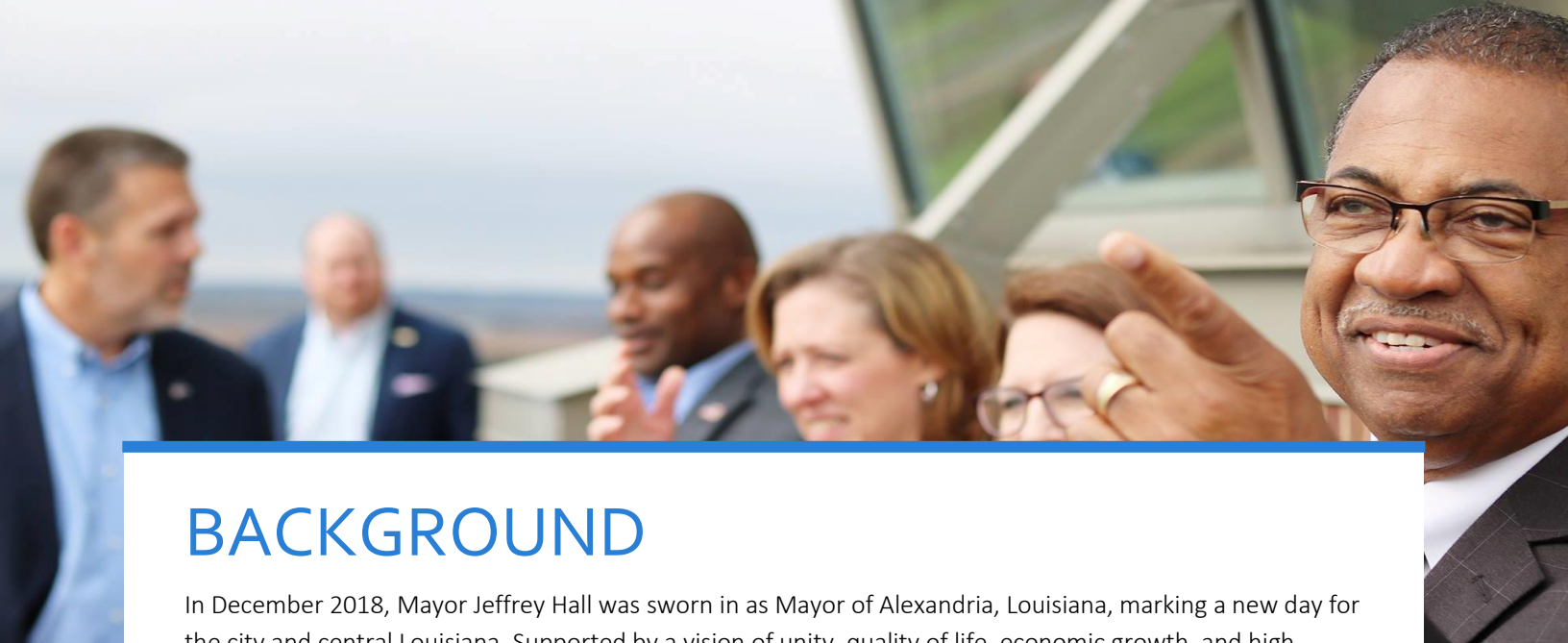
- June Johnson-Davis
- Myron Lawson, State Farm Insurance
- Gary Maxwell, The Pentecostals of Alexandria
- Amarjit Pillarisetti, Cenla India Association
- John Russell, Calvary Tabernacle
- J. Michael Small, Law Offices of J. Michael Small
- James Woodley, City of Alexandria

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Blake Chatelain, Red River Bank
- Thomas David Sr., Pan American Engineering
- Thomas David Jr., Pan American Engineering
- Randy Gilchrist, Gilchrist Construction Company
- Matt Johns, Rapides Area Planning Commission
- Anthony Mangun, Pentecostals of Alexandria
- Freddie Mason
- Robert Ratcliffe, Ratcliffe Companies
- Jeffrey Washington, TKDSdata.com

COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Levator Boyd, Certified Public Notary
- David Brooks, Calvary Baptist Church
- Margie Harris
- Dallas Hixson, Hixson Automotive Group
- Haywood Johnson, LSUA
- Patrick O'Quin, FSC Securities Corporation
- Clara Scott, St. Mark's United Methodist Church
- Jannease Seastrunk, Red River Bank
- Lynell Smith
- Morris Taft Thomas



BACKGROUND

In December 2018, Mayor Jeffrey Hall was sworn in as Mayor of Alexandria, Louisiana, marking a new day for the city and central Louisiana. Supported by a vision of unity, quality of life, economic growth, and high-functioning City government, the early days of Mayor Hall's administration featured the addition of highly qualified professionals to his senior leadership team and a commitment to inclusion and collaboration with the surrounding Alexandria community. As the Hall administration began to intently assess City government operations, it became evident that a clear, organized approach would be necessary to systematically address areas in need of improvement, refinement, or support – particularly those that could be addressed in the near-term and represented positive, forward progress for the City. Mayor Hall and his administration subsequently embarked on a formal transition planning process, supported by Louisiana-based management consulting firm Emergent Method.

This process involved detailed research of City policies, procedures, plans, and other documentation, as well as meetings with key division and department leadership to gain a clear understanding of the current state of operations in each functional area. Extensive reviews of background information supported and helped to reveal priority areas for the City. Additionally, detailed input was gathered from approximately 60 community stakeholders through the formation and meetings of a Transition Team and five topic-specific subcommittees – Quality of Life, Public Safety, Infrastructure, Community Services, and Support Services. The composition of these subcommittees included members based on relevant industries, interests, skillsets, and representations of various parts of the Alexandria community. Each group met twice and provided additional feedback over the course of a three-month timeframe on the goals the City should prioritize to meaningfully impact its citizens, business owners, and employees. The subcommittees sought to answer one fundamental question – *what programs, projects, initiatives, or strategies are valuable enough to undertake in the short-term given the impact they may have combined with their relative ease of implementation?*

Wishing to create an immediate impact and supplement the work already underway within the City, this short-term transition planning effort focused on identifying the goals and priorities, both internal and external, that the Hall administration could accomplish within the next several months to a year – thereby establishing momentum toward longer-term, multi-year goals. As such, this transition plan includes many short-term recommendations for each subcommittee focus area – action items that are high impact and high priority while still having an implementation timeline of less than approximately a year. To serve as a foundation for future planning efforts, the plan also includes several long-term considerations identified within each subcommittee focus area.

TRANSITION PLANNING: 2019 PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS



While there are numerous short-term recommendations identified and confirmed through meetings, interviews, document review, and discussions with both internal and external City stakeholders, there is a distinct set of recommendations that should serve as priorities for implementation through 2019 and into early 2020. These recommendations are prioritized and confirmed by the Hall administration based on three key criteria:

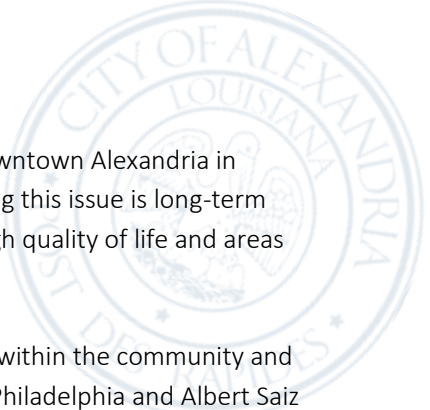
1. **VALUE** associated with implementation (to what degree can these actions or initiatives improve internal operations, City services, and/or community quality of life?)
2. **EFFORT** associated with implementation (how feasibly can these actions or initiatives be implemented, given resource or other constraints?)
3. **IMPACT** associated with implementation (what actions or initiatives will create the greatest possible positive, lasting impact within City government or the broader Alexandria community?)

To that end, eight priority recommendations are outlined below with a brief description of the problem and the necessary solution(s). These priority recommendations are followed by an overview of key findings by each transition subcommittee, along with associated short- and long-term initiatives and the relevant divisions or departments that will be critical to their success.

1) Address issues with blight, dumping, and other code violations that contribute to a dilapidated appearance and atmosphere

City division heads and community stakeholders voiced much concern about the high levels of blight, dumping, and code violations within city limits. Issues with certain portions of the code enforcement process have historically prevented the City from properly and holistically addressing these violations. Meetings with code enforcement staff and the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization have revealed instances in which the City lacks the resources and/or efficient legal mechanisms necessary to enforce outlined consequences associated with code violations once identified (see Code of Ordinances Article VII., Sec. 15-121).

These same stakeholders identified blighted properties exacerbated by property owners or managers, or "slumlords," who in many instances are not taking care of their property to the detriment of their tenants and the surrounding area. City officials must use every tool at the City's disposal to change these behaviors, such as providing a confidential mechanism or "hotline" for tenants to report landlords in violation of local ordinances; utilizing agencies and staff such as SafeALEX to conduct inspections and identify substandard living conditions; modifying ordinances to allow for an expedited fee or fine structure for those properties not in compliance; and using mechanisms such as utility cut-offs or activation to enforce payment of outstanding fines and rehabilitation of the property. Any such steps, however, should be made in coordination with large property owners or managers and realtors in the community to ensure ordinance changes are structured appropriately.



Additionally, community members report “dead zones” in the areas surrounding downtown Alexandria in which there are significant amounts of blight and few retail options. While addressing this issue is long-term and multi-faceted in nature, it is critical to ensure that nearby citizens maintain a high quality of life and areas of community or economic growth drive additional growth in adjacent areas.

Improving the city’s overall appearance can drive significant positive improvements within the community and local economy – a recent study by Gerald A. Carlino of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and Albert Saiz of Massachusetts Institute of Technology suggests that a city’s appearance directly contributes to population growth and a healthy housing market, regardless of its size.¹

2) Identify and continue with short-term solutions to address growing crime issues in the area

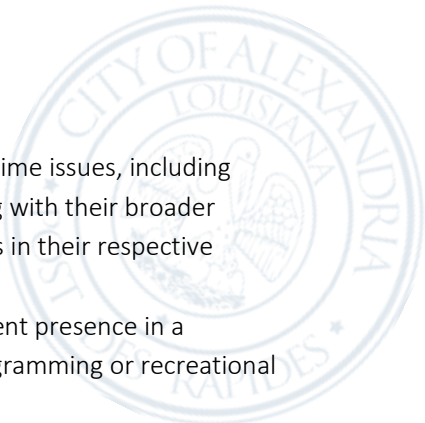
The Alexandria Police Department has experienced challenges keeping up with the growing crime rate in the city, in part due to struggles to recruit and retain quality officers. As of April 2019, the department experienced a significant officer shortage of 17 officers for a full uniform patrol of 161, which represents a 10.6% vacancy rate. With another 10 officers planning to retire by the end of 2020, the department is at a critical point for officer recruitment and retention. Furthermore, while not directly related to crime issues, the Alexandria Fire Department is reporting similar issues and expected attrition in the coming years, particularly among its senior leadership team.

APD leadership and officers attribute much of this shortage to a lack of competitive pay and fringe benefits. Historically, APD officers benefited from policies such as take-home vehicles and other benefits that helped to balance against comparatively lower base pay rates. In addition to the immediate short-term reinstitution of benefits like take-home vehicles, where feasible, the City should identify ways to gradually bring officer pay rates up to a competitive benchmark as part of a recommended City-wide compensation and benefits study. The City should also consider the secondary benefits of a take-home vehicle policy, such as the reintroduction of marked patrol vehicles in a neighborhood setting during off-shift hours as a significant and proven crime deterrent.

In addition to the noted human resource constraints, recent escalating crime rates combined with local courts and jails operating at full capacity have made it difficult for officers to effectively perform their jobs, leading to significantly reduced jail time or penalties for offenders. In coordination with area law enforcement agencies, the City should take a leadership role among area law enforcement and criminal justice partners in facilitating community-wide discussions about solutions to the common struggles they face, strategies to combat rising crime, and ways to involve the community in these efforts. Three early strategies that should be pursued in the immediate short-term include:

- Re-establishing active communication and dialogue between APD and area neighborhood associations or groups, or supporting the organization of such groups in areas where structures do not currently exist

¹ Carlino, G. A., & Saiz, A. (2019). Beautiful City: Leisure Amenities and Urban Growth. Working paper (Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia). Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. <https://doi.org/10.21799/frbp.wp.2019.16>

- 
- Empowering the city's faith-based community as partners in addressing rising crime issues, including working with church and congregation leaders to share guidance and messaging with their broader congregations, such as the importance of reporting crimes and known offenders in their respective neighborhoods
 - Utilizing the City's community centers as assets for establishing a law enforcement presence in a neighborhood setting, both for crime prevention and youth engagement in programming or recreational activities

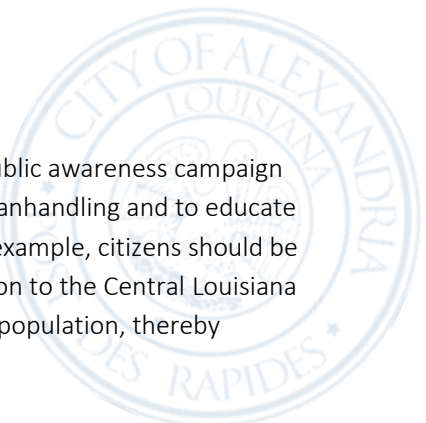
In the longer-term, the City must focus on pursuing and utilizing alternative and external sources of funding, such as through grants and participating in grant-related or technical assistance programs, to help address the root cause of public safety and criminal justice issues. Many communities have used such funding mechanisms to great success as strategic crime deterrents and intervention strategies that work in tandem with day-to-day crime strategies. This is true for City divisions and functions beyond public safety, where historically grant opportunities have not been pursued or maximized to their fullest advantage – whether at the local, regional, state, or federal level. With an appropriate internal structure, including checks and balances for outcome reporting, grants can serve as a key funding supplement to the City's operating budget and deliver significant benefits for the Alexandria community.

3) Assess and update policies, ordinances, and procedures for addressing complaints related to panhandling

Over the past several years, Alexandria has seen a significant increase in panhandling activity, although limited data is available to quantify this increase other than anecdotal observations and citizen-reported encounters. This rise in panhandling has mirrored a recent influx of homeless individuals to the Alexandria area, with the area homeless population anecdotally reported in some instances as exceeding several hundred and well beyond the Cenla Homeless Coalition's reported 2018 point-in-time count (sheltered and unsheltered) of 177. In some instances, homeless individuals have built multi-story structures in remote areas of the city, or regularly position themselves in high-traffic areas for the purposes of soliciting or begging for money.

While some of these individuals are unquestionably long-time Alexandria citizens who, in some cases, may have fallen on hard times, many reports and conversations among APD officers and members of the homeless population attribute the rise in homelessness to the area's friendly environment for panhandling and begging as a means to earn money – a reputation that has been circulated among other cities in the surrounding region. APD is actively working to curb this behavior and work against this perception, but there are limited enforcement mechanisms available – and in many instances, a low fine for begging combined with an overcrowded jail or criminal justice system is treated as a largely unenforceable offense. As of March 2019, APD officers have been instructed to check panhandlers in violation of City ordinances against any outstanding warrants before issuing a citation, and APD is currently reviewing departmental policies and/or related City ordinances to strengthen the way local laws are enforced to dissuade future behavior. Such modifications should be implemented in the immediate short-term in a manner that is consistent with civil liberties and rights for public demonstrations.

Most critically, the Alexandria community must make it clear to those individuals who have come to Alexandria to profit from the kindness and generosity of citizens that the practice will not be tolerated. To support this



stance, Mayor Hall and other community leaders should implement an aggressive public awareness campaign to ensure citizens understand what is contributing to the rise in homelessness and panhandling and to educate them on the proper behavior when encountering someone begging for money. For example, citizens should be urged to redirect the money they would have given to such an individual as a donation to the Central Louisiana Homeless Coalition, or a comparable nonprofit in the area that serves the homeless population, thereby creating a more direct and sustainable impact for area homeless citizens.

In addition, the City should continue progress toward facilitating positive relationships between the recently formed Harbor Patrol's APD officers deployed to the downtown area and the surrounding homeless population. Already, the City has seen positive results in this relationship building effort, allowing officers to resolve potential issues in an effective and non-violent manner while providing individuals with direction and information on where they can receive resources. These efforts should continue as an important element of building trust between law enforcement and the community members APD serves.

Finally, the City should focus long-term on properly supporting local and state level charities and advocacy groups' efforts – not just to mitigate the negative effects of panhandling on residents, but to make a sizable reduction in the City's homeless population. Through these collaborative efforts, the City should support increased access to clean food, safe shelter, and job training for its homeless population.

4) Streamline internal processes that are slowing down the speed of government

While processes can always be improved, particularly through the more intentional use of technology, there are several internal processes that must be improved in order to provide efficient and effective citizen services. These represent areas that, if not properly addressed, can lead to inefficient use of limited City resources at best and regressive economic development or community investment at worst.

Builders and developers in the city have expressed concern and frustration with past experiences with the City's permitting process, both from a speed and ease of use standpoint. City planning and permitting staff have been working to address these issues by making information more easily accessible and streamlining existing processes that are currently slowing the permitting timeline. Such improvements are critical to driving and supporting new development in the city and to sending a message to those interested in investing in property in Alexandria that the city is "open for business." Specifically, priority opportunities to streamline development and permitting issues include:

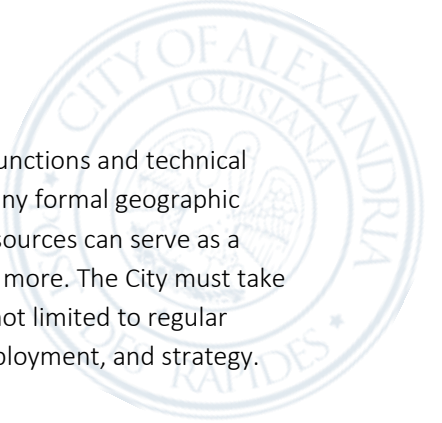
- Establishing a consistent approach for builders interested in setting up master accounts with the City
- Implementing a clear and standard dedicated process, and associated signage at the Utility Business Office, for builders or citizens looking to conduct a project on their property (a "one-stop shop" for commercial permitting)
- Implementing a clear and expedient escalation process for senior management at the Planning Division to triage and address discrepancies or issues taking place at the permitting level
- Communicating to contractors the digital or online resources, from payment to document submission, available to them while building upon the tools that already exist for contractor use



The City's primary citizen response and issue resolution system, QAlert, ranges from underutilized to, in some instances, unutilized. In April 2019, a system analysis revealed more than 20 pages of requests since February 2015 still classified as "open," or unresolved. There is some momentum in closing outdated or resolved tickets, but limited system use in addressing current complaints or issues – for example, over a recent ten-day timeframe, only seven City employees logged actions within the system reaching double digits, representing significant underutilization of the system and corresponding workflows and rendering it largely ineffective given the lack of employee participation. This is further compounded by anecdotal discussions and observations related to other means of resolving citizen service requests, ranging from phone calls and emails to paper complaint resolution forms, contributing to a highly inefficient and decentralized process and a lack of data to identify and address service performance issues. Several divisions operate at an extreme disadvantage by not using such technology to guide their operations; for example, Sanitation Department staff could more efficiently organize how collection vehicles are deployed in specific geographic areas along a more regular and predictable schedule.

In the immediate short-term, the QAlert system should be re-configured to account for present-day workflows and employee groups and re-launched internally – with an executive order issued by Mayor Hall that all divisions and employees use it for all related citizen complaints or requests – as well as externally, with a public campaign to reintroduce the system as a means for requesting services or reporting issues and an emphasis on using the AlexConnects mobile app and/or City of Alexandria website to do so. The mobile app and website should also be re-structured in tandem with internal updates to facilitate ease of use and access, such as positioning the web module on the homepage of the City website.

In the longer-term, the City should explore expanding the system more extensively across government functions and divisions, similar to how the system is deployed in other communities, and issuing regular data reports or progress updates related to performance. For example, integrating QAlert with the MyPermitNow workflow management software used by the Planning Division for permitting purposes would provide an end-to-end system that correlates code, planning, or zoning issues with a specific permit.



In coordination with these system updates, the City must more deeply integrate IT functions and technical expertise into all facets of City operations. For example, the City does not maintain any formal geographic information system (GIS) program, where having such geospatial capabilities and resources can serve as a critical tool for functions such as planning, development, capital improvements, and more. The City must take steps to establish a centralized IT management and support strategy, including but not limited to regular coordination meetings among divisions and IT staff for technology procurement, deployment, and strategy.

Finally, existing processes in areas such as purchasing are stalling the speed at which City government engages the private sector in contracting opportunities, many of which represent projects and maintenance needs associated with day-to-day government. For example, the current spending threshold for entering into public works contracts is \$7,500, with any contract amount exceeding this threshold required to be publicly advertised for bids and ratified by the City Council prior to entering into a contractual agreement². With input from private contractors, the City should work to establish a new, higher threshold based on the average size of public works contracts typically let – one that is both in alignment with state law³ and similar to other comparable or in-state municipalities. For example, the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge requires any contracts above \$17,500 receive Metro Council approval; however, there is no explicit requirement that they be publicly bid if there are expediency or expertise-related considerations. This contract limit, though it is more than twice the amount of the City of Alexandria's, has recently been identified as a hindrance to effective operations in the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge⁴, further outlining the importance of raising the limit in Alexandria. City officials must take steps to increase this amount to better facilitate routine maintenance and project expenditures through City government, such as targeted drainage improvements or equipment purchases, rather than fall months behind on meeting citizen requests or needs due to prohibitively lengthy purchasing policies.

5) Address city employee morale and culture issues through proactive and intentional employee engagement

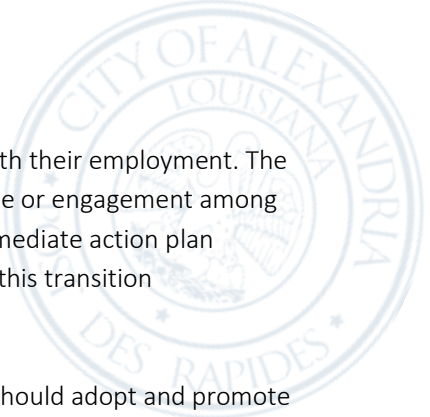
To provide high-quality customer service to Alexandria citizens, the City should make a concerted effort to address the morale and culture issues that exist within City divisions and are affecting the City's ability to effectively serve its citizens.

The first step to addressing employee morale and culture issues involves fully understanding the problem at hand. The City should conduct an employee engagement study to identify short-term solutions to improving low employee engagement and morale. This study should target identification of specific areas and issues that are influencing the low morale City employees are experiencing in order to create an action plan for addressing them, providing employees with a safe and open environment for sharing feedback and perspectives with no fear of punitive action or retribution. While pay and benefits are always contributors to an employee's job satisfaction, and thus performance, these are not the only inputs that influence engagement and performance. This is particularly true in the public sector, where individuals may seek and

² Alexandria, Louisiana, Municipal Code Part I. Article I. Section 5-10.

³ La. Rev. Stat. § 38:2212

⁴ Riegle, Stephanie. (2019, April). City Hall efficiency expert identifies needs in purchasing department, 311 call center. *Greater Baton Rouge Business Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessreport.com/>



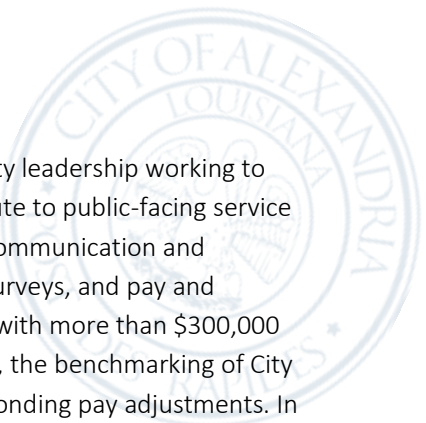
value opportunities due to the stability, security, and long-term future associated with their employment. The City must use this engagement effort to fully understand all influencers of low morale or engagement among City employees, including but not limited to pay and benefits, and implement an immediate action plan to address priority issues using the same value-to-effort framework that has guided this transition planning process.

Concurrently with the employee engagement study and thereafter, City leadership should adopt and promote an open, collaborative leadership style. This involves senior leaders making themselves accessible to employees and citizens alike, both on an ongoing basis and through dedicated feedback events like community town halls. Leadership must be as communicative and open to feedback from its employees as possible. Additionally, the City should institute mandatory leadership training opportunities for each supervisory position. In addition to these representing critical skills to succeed in their positions, an organization's investment in its employees' professional development has been shown to improve employee retention. This is particularly critical given the anticipated exodus of senior or long-serving talent across City divisions, in some instances expected by division heads to reach 25-to-30% of existing full-time employees. The City must actively prioritize the retention of top talent not expected to leave due to impending retirement, utilizing a structured succession planning framework to ensure those individuals seeking additional leadership opportunities within their department or division remain along a clear track to compete for them.

6) Improve customer service across City government

Many community leaders, stakeholders, and citizens have noted inconsistent levels of service when interacting with City employees. Such experiences range from positive, with employees specifically identified as models for citizen service; to inefficient, with no clear public ownership of a citizen's problem or request; to poor, with negative attitudes clouding a citizen's experience and interaction with City government. These varying experiences can create confusion among citizens and frustration among businesses seeking to operate in Alexandria. It is important to note that poor customer service cannot be simply attributed to a lack of desire among employees; instead, it is often the byproduct of functions internal to an organization such as hiring, training, communication, and engagement – all of which lead to how an organization's employees interact with the surrounding external environment.

The City must take measures to enhance the experience that citizens, business, and key partners have with City divisions and staff – both to improve the manner in which City government functions and to demonstrate a return on investment to taxpayers that, while difficult to immediately quantify, is critically important to current and future funding initiatives. This must include regular City-wide customer service training – beginning with the divisions, departments, and offices in which citizen interactions occur most frequently – establishing a clear benchmark for service to which all City employees will be held moving forward. In tandem with this City-wide training must be a focused leadership and supervisory training program for all City employees operating in a supervisory capacity, helping those who have been promoted from within understand how to be an effective leader for their organization – holding both their peers and direct reports accountable for service and performance expectations. Once this initial training is complete, the City should provide a mechanism, whether through direct citizen surveys or focus groups, to routinely assess the performance of City divisions and the satisfaction of citizens with services they have received.



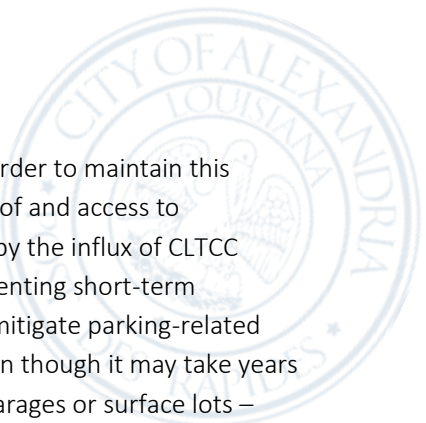
City employees must also be engaged in these internal improvement efforts, with City leadership working to build an understanding of drivers behind poor morale or cultural issues that contribute to public-facing service issues. Mayor Hall and his senior team can, and must, reinforce this need for open communication and employee engagement through measures such as employee town halls, employee surveys, and pay and benefits improvements. The Mayor's administration is taking steps in this direction, with more than \$300,000 allocated in the 2019-2020 fiscal year budget for targeted salary increases. However, the benchmarking of City job classes against market pay ranges has been historically limited – as have corresponding pay adjustments. In the coming months and years, the Mayor's administration must take steps to institute regular maintenance of the overall City pay plan through annual salary surveys and benchmarking and initiating improvements to specific job classes, based on positions of greatest need and/or those that are furthest from the market midpoint. In the long-term, the City's Human Resources Division must work to design and implement a pay plan that reflects the needs of today's workforce and provides clear opportunities for growth and progression throughout.

Just as critical as transforming an organization's internal approach to service excellence is transforming its actions and reputation into one that is known as such publicly, which is accomplished through clear, consistent, and coordinated communication. The City must take the input gathered through this transition planning process as both a series of immediate actions to take and foundation upon which to build, including but not limited to:

- Holding recurring and inclusive community town halls with Mayor Hall that also serve as a venue for citizens to engage with senior City officials
- Establishing a new brand for City government that reflects the Alexandria community and is consistently used across all public communications (both in appearance and meaning)
- Coordinating regular communications among City public information officers for real-time, planned, and emergency public communications
- Utilizing existing communications channels and capabilities to connect citizens with critical information and updates, from live-streaming Mayor Hall's State of the Community monthly briefings on the City's Facebook page to including important information for citizens in monthly utility bills
- Maintaining, and potentially expanding, the subcommittee structure utilized to guide this transition planning process as a means for regularly meeting with key community groups, industries, and stakeholders with valuable perspectives that can positively inform City operations

7) Leverage the growth potential that exists for downtown Alexandria by jointly promoting economic development and public safety

Downtown Alexandria includes one of the most active and exciting corridors within the city, with tremendous growth potential but also clear threats that stand to stall or limit achieving the area's full potential. Mayor Hall has taken clear and immediate steps to pursue a vision for a thriving downtown by harnessing ongoing or planned economic activity, such as the Central Louisiana Technical Community College's new downtown campus, and instituting measures to address public safety concerns through the advent of the new Harbor Patrol police zone and improved lighting along the riverfront.



However, there are a number of considerations that must be taken into account in order to maintain this momentum. Many downtown stakeholders have concerns related to the availability of and access to convenient parking, which is an existing issue that stands to be further exacerbated by the influx of CLTCC students beginning with the Fall 2019 semester. The City is in the process of implementing short-term solutions, such as road striping and directional changes for key streets, designed to mitigate parking-related concerns. However, a longer-term solution must be developed in the near-term, even though it may take years to implement. This includes consideration of strategic parking locations – whether garages or surface lots – based on available and conveniently accessible land or public right of way, as well as greater connectivity to the downtown area from satellite parking lots adjacent to the central business district of downtown Alexandria. This will require more reliable and accessible public transportation options, including through strategically using ATRANS assets to facilitate mass transit, implementing ride-sharing ordinances, and installing infrastructure that facilitates use of new mobility options such as scooters and e-bikes.

The need for local ride-sharing infrastructure, both policy and vehicles, cannot be overstated. In June 2019, the Louisiana Legislature passed HB575 that allows for statewide regulations for ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft, after years of stalled progress at the state level and partially as the result of active support for such regulations from Mayor Hall and other central Louisiana stakeholders. The City must move swiftly to implement local ordinances consistent with these new statewide regulations in a manner that fosters immediate interest in and buildout of local ride-sharing transportation networks among private providers. These new state and local laws will serve a critical role in helping the City balance economic growth and activity with public safety considerations. With the unreliable public transportation options currently in place, such as through taxicabs, the Alexandria Police Department has maintained a rigorous focus on preventing driving while intoxicated or under the influence. However, measures like the DWI Task Force has in many instances, according to community members, stalled economic activity and limited the success of nightlife in areas that would greatly benefit from it. The introduction of ride-hailing capabilities to Alexandria will serve as a boon for facilitating small business growth in the dining and hospitality sectors, providing safe and secure methods of transportation, and help to direct limited public safety enforcement resources accordingly. For example, in the City of Baton Rouge’s first year of ride-sharing ordinances, the Baton Rouge Police Department reported DUI arrests having decreased by nearly 28%, with the number of DUI arrests remaining lower in the years that followed⁵.

Finally, the City must continue to work toward a more vibrant riverfront by leveraging and building upon the assets that currently exist. The Red River, for example, can serve as a foundational element for outdoor recreation, concerts, dining, nightlife, and general quality of life if properly mobilized in the same manner as other communities with comparable riverfront areas. The City must be proactive in pursuing grants and partnerships, as well as prioritizing local funding resources, to capitalize on this asset where opportunities and clear return on investment exist to do so. Similar to addressing parking challenges, these may involve short-term decisions that deliver significant long-term returns for years to come.

⁵ Ourso Landry, Annie. (2017, August). Uber winning the ride-hailing battle in Baton Rouge – for now. *Greater Baton Rouge Business Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessreport.com/>

8) Develop a comprehensive plan to address aging city infrastructure

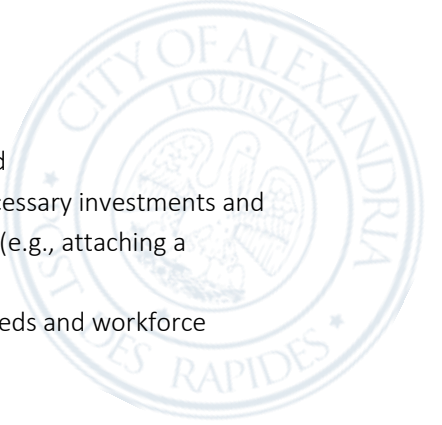
Over the past several years, the City has made considerable investments in the City's electric utility infrastructure, including new power plant generators purchased in 2016 for more than \$130 million that have helped to facilitate the Alexandria Utility System's connectivity to the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). Through MISO, the City is able to consume electricity from and sell electricity to other participants of the regional transmission network based on the lowest cost of generation.

However, these investments have strained the City's bonding capacity for additional large-scale capital needs, such as replacing aging and outdated water and wastewater infrastructure without corresponding rate increases. For example, the City's main water transmission line is more than 50 years old, with other key lines, infrastructure, and equipment extending to and beyond their natural life. Water meters are reported as significantly outdated, and the system does not integrate new technology and automation into many elements of how utility services are delivered to customers (e.g., remote activation and management of residential utilities). This lack of automation, combined with outdated equipment, causes frustration among citizens and drives expensive staff maintenance and oversight practices.

Furthermore, there are a number of issues contributing to an unstable workforce in relevant infrastructure departments, including low pay, the absence of a formal safety program, a lack of formal or on-the-job training, and critical staffing levels with significant attrition expected in the near-term due to long-time employees entering retirement. Formal succession planning, training, and knowledge transfer must take place immediately in advance of this attrition – beginning with those positions requiring regulatory or industry expertise – while longer-term staffing needs associated are considered, including where targeted pay increases should be implemented where current compensation may deviate significantly from the market midpoint. Protocols for reporting, tracking, and addressing workplace safety violations or accidents must also be implemented immediately, both for general employee well-being and to improve workers compensation rates.

There are extensive frustrations among citizens related to customer service, ranging from inefficiencies in how reported maintenance issues are addressed and highly inconsistent meter reading practices to interactions citizens have with City staff when seeking to pay or ask questions about their utility bills. A centralized call center for citizen requests or complaints would help to aggregate all such reports or requests into one customer service environment, generating key data that can be used to confirm the appropriate delivery of services and resolution of issues or analyzed in aggregate to understand service trends. Additionally, citizens often note utility rates as “high” in comparison to nearby communities or other service providers, a perception that is compounded by the manner in which the City bundles services into one bill, displaying a total bill that may appear to be comparatively more expensive. The City should formally assess Alexandria Utility System rates against those of other communities and service providers and initiate a public education effort to explain the results of this assessment, along with how utility bills are structured.

Most critically, the City is in a position where it must make difficult decisions in the near-term regarding the future of its utility infrastructure, including establishing a cohesive and long-term vision for the sustainability of the utility system. This vision must be supported by a detailed, long-term plan for capital investments that includes:

- 
- Key assets or equipment that should be replaced, upgraded, or decommissioned
 - A reliable and balanced financial model that incorporates and prioritizes the necessary investments and corresponding costs, as well as revenue sources to support future utility pricing (e.g., attaching a Consumer Price Index or Cost of Living Adjustment slider to the rate ordinance)
 - A workforce and staffing plan for utility system employees, including training needs and workforce replacement strategies

The City should engage a third-party utility expert to conduct an analysis of the Alexandria Utility System to better understand current and future risks or opportunities, with the results of this assessment incorporated into the development of this vision and long-term plan.



SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: QUALITY OF LIFE

Relevant City Divisions or Departments

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA/COMMUNICATIONS

PLANNING

CODE ENFORCEMENT

SAFEALEX

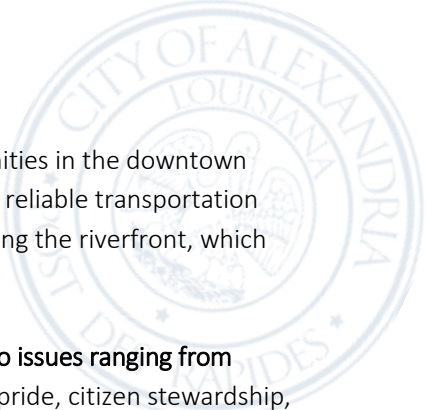
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Key Findings

Strong quality of life is a key consideration for any city looking to retain their citizens, grow, and continue to flourish. The Quality of Life Subcommittee was charged with identifying priorities to improve Alexandria for all citizens, with a specific focus on promoting economic development, job growth and retention, workforce development, and entrepreneurship and small business growth.

A group of community stakeholders whose personal or professional interests align with positive city and community growth provided extensive feedback on these topics. Additionally, relevant City divisions and their staff, especially those whose services impact economic development and communications, were involved in providing feedback and perspectives to inform these recommendations.

There is tremendous growth potential for downtown Alexandria, which must be cultivated in a manner that jointly promotes and balances economic activity and public safety. Subcommittee members and division heads expressed sentiments that there are numerous opportunities for economic development in the city, but especially in the downtown area where growth of recreational activities and nightlife would likely spark



increased interest from the city's young adult population. Existing nightlife opportunities in the downtown area are hindered by citizens' perception of the area as unsafe, as well as the lack of reliable transportation options. Additionally, great potential for recreational and other attractions exists along the riverfront, which represents one of the city's greatest assets that must be intentionally cultivated.

Alexandria does not currently have a clear identity or brand as a city, which can lead to issues ranging from community pride and blight to economic growth and talent recruitment. Community pride, citizen stewardship, and flourishing economic development begins with a clear identity and value proposition for the city. Several community members expressed concern that Alexandria, while it has plenty of charm and potential, has lost a sense of identity that should serve as a recruitment tool for prospective tourists, citizens, and businesses as well as a reminder of the positive qualities of the city to existing citizens and businesses.

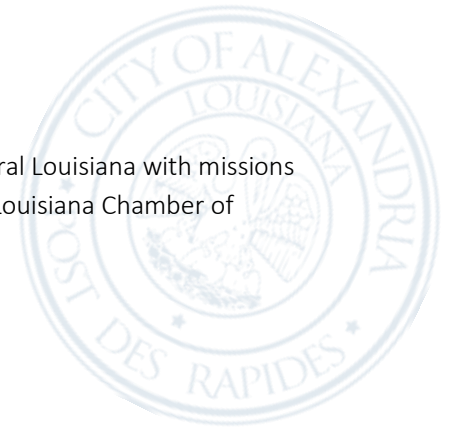
Though it is a city with great growth potential, Alexandria has not taken advantage of opportunities to regularly hear from the younger, millennial generation that will soon make up the largest portion of the U.S. workforce and comprise a significant portion of downtown Alexandria via the CLTCC campus. The Mayor should intentionally engage this group into City-level decision making by establishing a Millennial Advisory Council – helping the City make improvements that will attract the next generation of citizens to work and live in Alexandria while guiding the future direction of the city. Internally, the City should more intentionally focus on building its workforce of tomorrow, including but not limited to structured internship programs with regional higher education institutions that offer pathways to potential full-time employment with the City and branding City government as an employer of choice for the area.

Issues with blight, dumping, and other code violations are contributing to a dilapidated appearance in some areas of the city. City division heads and community stakeholders voiced much concern about the accelerating levels of blight, dumping, and code violations within city limits. Issues with certain portions of the code enforcement process, including lack of clarity regarding “ownership” for resolving blighted properties, have historically prevented the City from properly addressing these issues. Additionally, community members report “dead zones” in the areas surrounding downtown Alexandria in which there are significant amounts of blight and few retail options.

Given its central location in the state, Alexandria is in an excellent position to attract businesses, but the economy has stagnated in recent years. For various reasons, Alexandria's economy has remained steady with little growth over the course of the last several years. City leadership and community stakeholders alike desire increased efforts and incentives to attract new businesses and events that drive economic development (e.g., sports tournaments). To do so, City government must collaborate with the private sector to make the biggest impact for its citizens by facilitating economic development and making it easy to do business in the city.

The Central Louisiana Business Incubator is not at capacity and historically has operated at a loss. The City must take steps to divest of this expensive asset with minimal return on investment by selling the facility and investing in small business incubation through alternate means. Recent appraisals suggest proceeds generated by selling the facility will be more than enough to repay the required portion of the building's fair market value to the U.S. Economic Development Administration, thereby removing any remaining obligations that the City must fulfill as a condition of the grant that funded the incubator. Moving forward, the City should consider providing resources in the form of grants, promotional support, or other resources to one of several

established organizations already positioned to spur small business activity in Central Louisiana with missions inextricably linked to economic development (such as CLEDA, GAEDA, the Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce, CLTCC, LSUA, and others).



Short-Term Recommendations

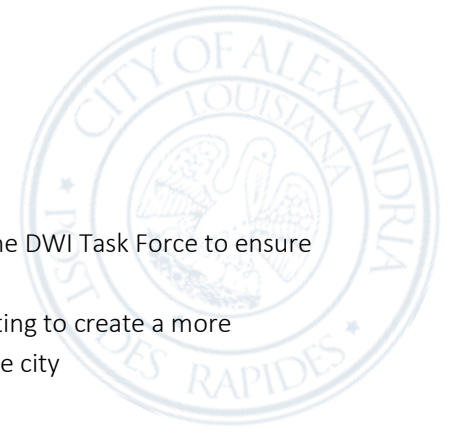
Citizen Engagement & Communications

- Hold regular “Town Hall with Mayor Hall” meetings to give citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions on areas for improvement and future direction of the city
- Establish a Millennial Advisory Council for young members of the community to offer feedback and suggestions about the things that are important for their generation to have in order to live and work in Alexandria
- Utilize input gathered through the transition planning process and recommended town hall meetings to establish a new brand for City government, including a new logo mark and branding elements that represent the entire community
- Rebrand City materials and website to create a cohesive look and feel for all internal and external communications
- Have a City representative take part in a short weekly TV/radio segment to speak about the positive initiatives the City is working on and take questions from citizens
- Create a set of talking points that highlight the City’s core strengths (e.g., central geographic location, interstate systems, the Zoo, the local education system) and ensure all community, business, and economic development leadership utilize them in business recruitment and retention efforts
- Have City of Alexandria representatives maintain an active presence at non-City governmental meetings to seek opportunities for greater regional collaboration (e.g., parish and other city/town councils or community meetings)

Economic Development

- Leverage recently adopted state legislation to develop and implement local ridesharing regulations in City limits
- List the Central Louisiana Business Incubator facility for sale and, once sold, initiate pay-back to the EDA of the remaining fair market value
- Identify potential opportunities, including other facilities or existing programming, to invest in and promote the Alexandria entrepreneurial ecosystem in close coordination with local and regional economic development organizations





Public Safety

- Work with the Alexandria Police Department to assess current operations of the DWI Task Force to ensure it keeps citizens safe but does not hinder the growth of downtown nightlife
- As part of ongoing city-wide revitalization efforts, continue to install more lighting to create a more inviting, safe atmosphere for patrons of public spaces and areas throughout the city

City Beautification

- Assess, update, and enforce City ordinances related to dilapidated housing and blight to implement more stringent consequences for offenders
- Develop and implement a mechanism via escalating fine structure to hold landlords accountable for the conditions of rental properties, from codifying this mechanism in ordinance to implementing a dedicated hotline or communication channel for tenants to report substandard living conditions (code infractions) in need of inspection
- Develop clear communication materials and promote how citizens can get involved in either reporting or addressing blighted areas through innovative programs successfully implemented in other Louisiana or peer communities (e.g., mow to own)
- Collaborate with and enlist the help of neighborhood watch groups, churches, and other community organizations to report ordinance violations and clean up blighted areas, such as through community clean-up weekends

Long-Term Considerations

- Coordinating with relevant community organizations, support growth in the downtown Alexandria area through the development of sites and attractions around and along the Red River
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with area foundations and the local philanthropic community to advance important community initiatives aligned with short- and long-term foundation priorities
- As part of the City's next comprehensive plan update, implement code modifications that ensure new construction in Alexandria is held to a common and appealing aesthetic standard
- In collaboration with relevant local, regional, and state economic development organizations, identify and implement opportunities to offer local or regional tax incentives to businesses considering moving to the region
- Coordinate with regional economic development organizations to promote economic opportunities and recruit businesses by leveraging the assets of the "anchor point" of the ten-parish area in an integrated manner
- Work with the Alexandria/Pineville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and relevant economic development organizations to identify opportunities that increase tourism by leveraging the presence of historical community assets as part of a cohesive strategy
- Establish City-level land banking function for condemned or heavily blighted properties that allows for long-term community revitalization and redevelopment
- Work to address the "dead zones" of the City in which there are few retail options and significant levels of blight



SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: PUBLIC SAFETY

Relevant City Divisions or Departments

ALEXANDRIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Key Findings

Public safety is of utmost importance to Mayor Hall and his administration and is essential to the success of any city. The Public Safety Subcommittee was charged with identifying short-term priorities to increase safety in the city, including issues associated with the Alexandria Police and Fire Departments, violence reduction, and coordination of public safety strategies.

A group of community stakeholders with experience in public safety matters and neighborhood improvement efforts were assembled to provide observations and feedback to inform the identification of near-term opportunities addressing crime rates in the community. The following represent key observations from these discussions, along with input and data shared by public safety leadership within City government.

Crime is a growing concern to citizens and business owners alike. Community stakeholders and public safety officers alike expressed concern that rising crime will be increasingly challenging to handle. Especially in the downtown Alexandria area, there is a perception that it is unsafe to be out at night due to the risk of becoming victim to a violent or non-violent crime. The establishment of the Harbor Patrol Zone will likely provide some improvement in the downtown area, but community members desire a long-term solution to high crime rates.

Homelessness and related panhandling behaviors have become concerns for citizens and downtown business owners, exacerbated by the perceived and/or real migration in recent years of homeless individuals from other areas to Alexandria. Additionally, a lack of resources and effective procedures for handling complaints related to panhandling and homelessness have made it difficult for APD to address those issues. This issue exacerbates

Alexandria's challenge to recruit new citizens and businesses to the area in general, but especially the downtown area.

A lack of competitive pay practices, as well as changing perceptions of careers in law enforcement, have made it difficult for the City to retain a quality public safety workforce and has discouraged qualified firefighters and police officers from taking leadership positions. This understaffing routinely stretches these two public safety departments thin, especially during police or fire training academies that require dedicated staff members for extended periods of time. Pay rates for APD officers and AFD firefighters are not viewed as competitive compared to surrounding areas, while many staff point to low morale among officer and firefighter ranks exacerbated by fringe benefits that have declined or been taken away over the years (e.g., new uniform replacement policies, take-home vehicle policies, and training opportunities), all of which contribute to high rates of turnover and understaffing.

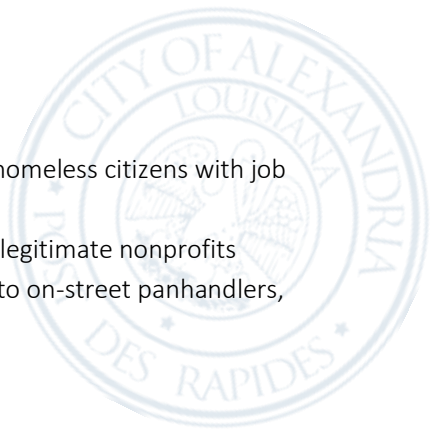
Short-Term Recommendations

Crime

- Work with the Alexandria Police Department to create a short-term action plan to address rising crime rates, beginning with the creation of a task force(s) consisting of Mayor's Office, APD, SafeALEX, District Attorney, Sheriff's Office, the Rapides Parish School Board, and others as necessary
- Re-position City community centers as assets for community engagement and decreasing criminal activity in surrounding neighborhoods
- Collaborate with and enlist the help of neighborhood watch groups for reporting criminal activity and orienting patrols or other strategies in areas in need of such a presence
- Collaborate with the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice and other juvenile service agencies to support improvements in areas such as the local education system that have the potential to break systemic cycles of poverty and crime
- Expand and promote the use of Community Police Academies to help involve interested and motivated citizens in crime-fighting efforts
- Continue to deploy APD patrols to address public safety concerns or issues in key high-density areas, such as the downtown area, based on crime trends and other data-related observations
- Prioritize SafeALEX programs that support safe, educated communities and promote the program to the community while clearly communicating the roles and responsibilities of SafeALEX staff to key audiences
- Establish recurring communication and coordination process between APD and City Court leadership to ensure citations or arrests are properly reinforced between the two organizations

Panhandling & Homelessness

- Update APD policies for addressing panhandling complaints, balancing free speech laws with panhandling activity that is in violation of existing or future ordinances
- Identify and implement opportunities for strengthening existing panhandling ordinances, including corresponding enforcement strategies, based on best practices and models proven to decrease panhandling

- 
- Collaborate with area homeless shelters or nonprofit organizations to connect homeless citizens with job training and workforce opportunities
 - Initiate public awareness campaign emphasizing the importance of donating to legitimate nonprofits established to assist the area homeless population and discouraging donations to on-street panhandlers, with a focus on interrupting the cycle of homeless and poverty

Internal Operations

- Design and implement a succession planning process that identifies and prepares potential internal candidates for expected vacancies in key public safety leadership positions where attrition is expected in the near-term (e.g., AFD)
- Establish additional training capacity for police and fire academies to ensure department-wide training initiatives are sustained while academies are active
- Establish supplemental fire inspection capacity functions, either via full-time or contract staff, to address backlog of inspections and ensure the ongoing maintenance of property insurance ratings
- Based on cost-benefit analysis, as well as other benefits such as neighborhood-level crime deterrents, consider re-establishing take-home car policy for APD officers and/or other employee benefits that supplement base pay and benefits packages

Long-Term Considerations

- Implement targeted officer recruitment campaign for APD to address current and project officer shortfalls based on baseline service level needs
- Ensure the Alexandria Fire and Police Departments have dedicated mechanical support, whether through the City's motor pool or through a third-party facility, to keep key equipment running properly
- Collaborate with the Greater Alexandria Economic Development Association, the Alexandria Central Economic Development District, and other partners to support the establishment of dedicated facility for citizens in crisis with a mental illness or substance addiction, with a focus on referring to long-term treatment options as opposed to less effective and expensive emergency room or jail-based interventions
- Establish robust crime analytics function for more efficient incident responses and more effective deployment of limited public safety resources across the community
- In close coordination with SafeALEX, establish processes to ensure that leadership changes among neighborhood groups take place in a manner that maintains knowledge of how to serve as a partner to City government and connectivity to key agency contacts (such as through "neighborhood succession planning")



SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: INFRASTRUCTURE

Relevant City Divisions or Departments

PLANNING

PUBLIC WORKS

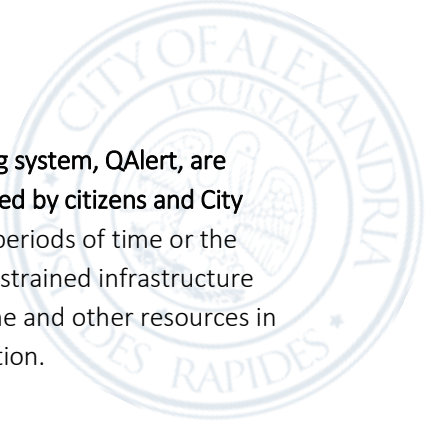
UTILITY

Key Findings

The Mayor's Transition Planning Infrastructure Subcommittee was charged with identifying priorities associated with streets and roads, traffic, mass transit, and infrastructure maintenance. A group of community stakeholders with experience in construction, planning, and development and helped to inform the following context and findings.

An unnecessarily confusing and complicated permitting process has played a key role in stalling development activities that has inhibited corresponding economic growth. Developers and community members expressed frustrations at the lack of information and confusing process associated with opening a new business in the city. Assessing and restructuring this process to allow for new development is essential to the future of business in Alexandria. The City must take steps to streamline this process through technology, efficiency, and citizen service measures in a manner that demonstrates the City is open and welcoming of new residential and commercial development.

An expected shortage of downtown parking has become a concern with the community college opening in Fall 2019. While the City has taken steps to provide short-term solutions, community members are still concerned about the logistics associated with an impending influx of students in the downtown area. Adequate parking will be critical to the continued growth of downtown Alexandria.



The AlexConnects mobile app and its associated internal citizen response and ticketing system, QAlert, are excellent resources for citizens to report issues or request services but are underutilized by citizens and City employees alike. As a result, requests for service may go unaddressed for extended periods of time or the reliability of issues having been addressed is unknown, further exacerbating already strained infrastructure and/or maintenance functions. Effective utilization of these digital tools will save time and other resources in addition to increasing overall efficiency and citizen satisfaction with request completion.

Limited long-term capital planning combined with escalating maintenance requirements could lead to issues with aging infrastructure in the future. The City of Alexandria has several infrastructure systems that will require extensive maintenance or replacement soon due to natural lifespans. This is particularly true with water and wastewater infrastructure, where some transmission lines are more than 50 years old. While capital planning occurs through a five-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), there appears to be limited long-term consideration given toward the City's future utility needs, including opportunities for modernization and automation. Significant and objective attention must be placed in the near-term on critical infrastructure upgrades where public safety risks are most pressing, with considerations given toward funding mechanisms for such needs – particularly given the City's existing debt and available bonding capacity along with sensitivities that citizens may have with future rate increases.

The lack of a robust employee safety program is exposing the City, and thus employees as well as taxpayers, to significant risks. Particularly in the Public Works and Utility divisions, it is critical that all employees follow a comprehensive safety program to prevent workplace accidents. Additionally, workplace accidents are not currently being recorded in a consistent, structured manner.

Inconsistencies in existing meter reading practices combined with poor customer service have created frustrations for citizens. As recently as January 2019, citizens reported receiving a utility bill for a 40-day period rather than the usual 30-day period, an inconsistency that created financial strain for many citizens. Instances such as this, combined with complex bill structure, leads to confusing and frustrating experiences for Alexandria Utility Systems customers.

Highly visible and heavily utilized public areas are experiencing overgrowth and other issues due to a resource-constrained Public Works Division with limited capacity to perform routine maintenance functions. Understaffing in the division has led to existing staff working long hours and being rushed to complete their workloads and struggles to properly distribute human resources between departments within the division. Use of inmate labor has proven to be a cost-effective method of supplementing Public Works staff but should be assessed to determine whether the benefit of continued use outweighs the risks associated with inmate and supervision.

Current contractual thresholds for engaging vendors without a competitive bid process (\$7,500 or more) are slowing the process by which simple, yet critical public works projects are completed. This contractual threshold is drastically lower than that of surrounding or comparable jurisdictions in the state, preventing small projects from being completed quickly and smoothly and slowing the speed at which government can move. Increasing this contractual limit would allow for expedited public works contracts and infrastructure maintenance and improvements.



Short-Term Recommendations

Permitting

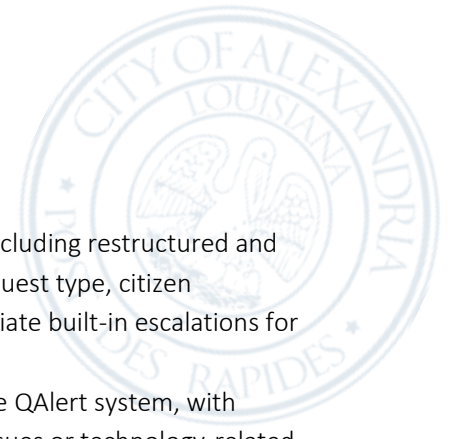
- Streamline the process for opening a new business in Alexandria and promote via easy-to-understand materials, both in print and digitally, with clear contact information for relevant divisions and key staff contacts
- Re-design the permitting section of the City website to help businesses and homeowners easily access the information they need to begin and complete their projects
- Implement on-premise wayfinding signage at relevant high-volume City storefronts (e.g., Utility Business Office) to more efficiently connect homeowners, business owners, and contractors with the appropriate City resource or expert
- Utilize a consultative process for permitting requests from the point they are submitted, helping to ensure applicants have a full understanding of the process and necessary steps while working collaboratively to prevent avoidable delays or frustrations
- In coordination with process streamlining efforts, clarify oversight functions within the Planning Division for resolving permitting disputes and/or conflicting interpretations of policy or ordinance and communicate such points-of-contact to the public
- Establish an option for residential contractors to set up master accounts with the Utility Business Office with consistent and clearly communicated parameters for doing so
- Implement a solution to address frustrations associated with utility set-up on multi-meter properties
- Identify a single-payment solution for permitting applications to reduce the amount of on-site foot traffic required by contractors and work to implement

Infrastructure

- Continue advancing plans to alleviate parking shortages in the short term by having students park in existing street spots, the Ned Randolph Riverfront Center parking garage, and a newly constructed lot near the college's riverfront campus
- Engage community organizations to sponsor target areas for neighborhood clean-up days and/or ongoing maintenance support (e.g., Baton Rouge Green model)
- Explore opportunities to establish longer-term solutions, including the potential for establishing satellite parking lots outside of the downtown area with frequent shuttle service to key destinations, such as the college campus

Utilities

- Provide user-friendly information for customers to understand how to read their utility bill and contact the appropriate point(s) of contact with questions
- Continue with facility modifications focused on opening a second drive-thru window at the utility customer service office
- Hire a third-party consultant to assess critical City utility infrastructure and develop a long-term plan for key assets and operations, with a focus on risk management and cost controls for utility operations (particularly water and wastewater functions)

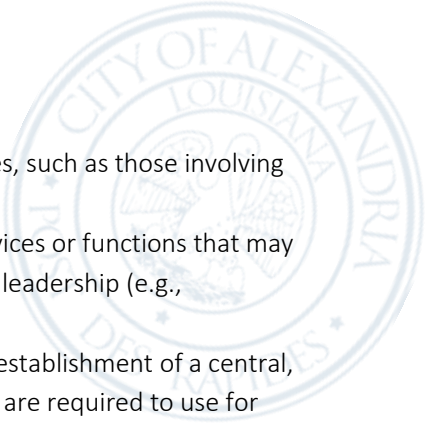


Internal Operations

- Re-launch the QAlert citizen service request system within City government, including restructured and streamlined routing to appropriate users/user groups based on the service request type, citizen notifications for completed work, automated reporting functions with appropriate built-in escalations for priority requests, and service satisfaction surveys
- Provide training for all City employees to ensure proper and efficient use of the QAlert system, with regular reporting and coordination across relevant divisions to troubleshoot issues or technology-related needs
- Enhance visibility of mechanisms for reporting issues or requesting services, such as through the website or AlexConnects app, including through public education on how to use such functions and how they are processed or managed by City staff
- Issue and enforce executive order mandating the use of QAlert as central citizen request and ticketing system for all relevant requests for service or reported issues
- With the help of a new staff position dedicated to City employee safety, develop and implement a safety program that includes policies and procedures necessary to maximize safety and minimize risk for all City employees
- Establish and implement a process to ensure all workplace accidents are documented appropriately
- Conduct City-wide customer service training, beginning with key divisions, departments, and offices in which citizen interactions occur most frequently
- Utilize enhanced citizen reporting and ticketing system to inform bulky trash pick-up routes and related workflows, which are currently highly inefficient and observationally driven versus demand driven
- Update contracting threshold in City ordinance requiring public bids to be consistent with that of nearby cities and parishes to expedite procurement on small but critical projects or support needs

Long-Term Considerations

- Ensure timely, consistent, and accurate reading of meters by bringing on contract staff when needed, providing proper training, and updating and replacing software and meter reading equipment based on a clear asset refresh cycle
- Proactively position for and seek grant opportunities to support key infrastructure priorities, particularly those federal funds accessible on a recurring basis through the metropolitan planning organization (MPO)
- Utilizing state and grant funding opportunities in coordination with MPO, assess and update current ATRANS routes to account for the needs of current ridership and provide adequate shelter at bus stops, potentially through a model similar to Lafayette's Adopt-a-Stop program in which business partners and community leaders make donations to cover the cost of bus stop shelter construction/improvements
- Implement electronic records management system for all utility-related data
- Assess feasibility of establishing dedicated call center function that integrates with QAlert ticketing system and relevant work order management systems
- Update the City's comprehensive plan that includes aesthetic requirements for new construction and includes development standards that account for long-term flood risk
- Develop a long-term strategic plan around preservation and use of historic facilities and properties

- 
- Strengthen integration of GIS functions across all City divisions and key processes, such as those involving planning and zoning and public works
 - Consider organizational restructuring to create standalone divisions for City services or functions that may benefit from greater autonomy and a more visible reporting relationship to City leadership (e.g., Alexandria Zoo, Animal Services)
 - Establish the parameters for large equipment purchases, including through the establishment of a central, shared equipment warehouse and supporting policy measures, that all divisions are required to use for equipment needs above a certain financial threshold
 - Enhance building codes and development standards as necessary in coordination with regional and state partners to improve local drainage conditions and mitigate future flood risk
 - Assess the return on investment of continuing to utilize inmate labor as an alternative to full-time or contract staff



SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: COMMUNITY SERVICES

Relevant City Divisions or Departments

COMMUNITY SERVICES

PUBLIC WORKS

PLANNING

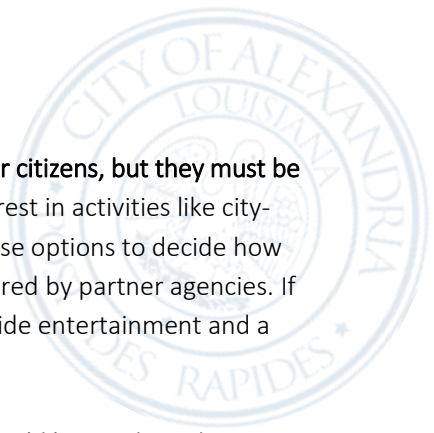
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

The Community Services Subcommittee was charged with establishing priorities associated with parks and recreation, the Alexandria Zoo, community centers, and special programs and initiatives. The following represent key observations from discussions with relevant division leadership and staff, as well members of the Community Services Subcommittee.

Many community centers in the city have been left unmanned and without programming in recent years. Due to this lack of use, several centers have fallen into a state of disrepair. Community members believe that performing necessary maintenance and staffing these community centers to providing regular programming will positively impact the community and achieve indirect benefits such as decreased crime levels in the surrounding neighborhood.

The Alexandria Zoo is a strength of the community that should be further leveraged. Community members unanimously agreed that the Zoo is an excellent community asset, and opportunities exist to better leverage and advertise it to other areas of the region and state. The Zoo will soon experience turnover among senior leadership due to planned retirements, and there is currently a lack of succession planning efforts to mitigate the corresponding loss of institutional knowledge and skillsets.



Opportunities exist for the City to provide more recreational and outdoor activities for citizens, but they must be programmed in a manner that is consistent and equitable for all. There is citizen interest in activities like city-wide sports leagues for adults/children. The City should gauge citizen interest in these options to decide how to prioritize funding in coordination with other available programs or resources offered by partner agencies. If not currently available or easily accessible, recreational activity offerings could provide entertainment and a positive outlet for the city's youth to participate in after school.

An assessment of the effectiveness of community outreach initiatives and services should be conducted to determine best allocation of City resources. Currently, the City is not utilizing historical data to drive its programming, which could lead to less effective programming. The City should introduce a consistent approach to measuring the return-on-investment of community events to plan effective future programming and partnerships with community organizations.

Grants have not been heavily pursued or relied upon in recent years, leading the City to operate and provide programming solely on local tax collections and City revenues. The City is not positioned to pursue potential opportunities to receive grants or other funding that would allow for achievement of impactful initiatives without needing to allocate general fund or local taxpayer revenues. Taking steps to seek additional grant funds would allow the City to support initiatives in a variety of areas such as arts and cultural programming and community services.

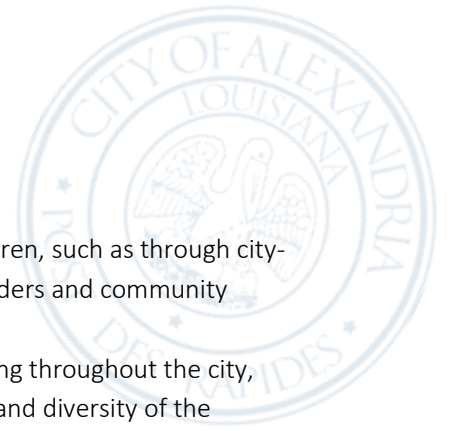
Short-Term Recommendations

City Facilities & Services

- Perform necessary maintenance on community centers to allow for basic operations and community meetings or programs to take place
- Begin to regularly staff community centers and gauge community interest in different types of activities for seniors and children
- Improve Zoo marketing and advertisements to other areas of the state and in local high traffic areas, helping to drive tourism and economic activity for other businesses in the city

Internal Operations

- Implement a structured scheduling system for reserving City facilities
- Implement a proper succession plan for Zoo leadership to account for anticipated staff attrition and sustain current levels of success
- Establish and implement consistent criteria for City-supported community events or organizations with clear return on investment and success metrics attached to partnership or sponsorship agreements
- Aggressively identify and pursue state, federal, foundation, or nonprofit grants that can supplement City funds and are aligned with short-term priorities across City divisions – from arts, cultural, and business education programming to demolitions and blight reduction strategies



Long-Term Considerations

- Consider providing or promoting additional recreational opportunities for children, such as through city-wide sports leagues and summer programs (in coordination with existing providers and community partners)
- Establish standards and expectations for multi-cultural and diverse programming throughout the city, particularly for larger community events, that adequately reflect the make-up and diversity of the Alexandria community
- Analyze overtime costs associated with City employees supporting public events and implement staffing or programming changes as necessary based on return on investment of overtime expenditures



SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: SUPPORT SERVICES

Relevant City Divisions or Departments

FINANCE

HUMAN RESOURCES

IT

MEDIA/COMMUNICATIONS

Key Findings

The Support Services Subcommittee was charged with identifying priorities for internal City of Alexandria operations such as human resources, finance, and fleet management. The observations from community members were reinforced by detailed discussions and data analysis at the department level regarding current state operations and the use of systems, policies, and more.

The City budgeting process needs to be restructured in order to better account for annual division-level priorities and ensure allocations are determined based on outcomes and performance. The current method of budgeting and associated decision-making is based on limited data and does not allow for maximum use of public resources to fund key initiatives. A more collaborative approach to building budgets with division heads should be adopted to ensure finances are used efficiently.

The City has struggled to recruit and retain high-performing employees in recent years due to low pay, low morale, poor training and onboarding, and lack of opportunities for advancement. Lack of adequate pay increases to keep up with inflation and other market forces has left many areas of City government with pay that is lower than that of surrounding local governments. Additionally, the City is not currently leveraging local

educational institutions as recruiting channels. A clear plan to bring City pay-rates closer to a competitive benchmark, along with improvement recruitment and retention efforts, should help to lower employee turnover rates over time.

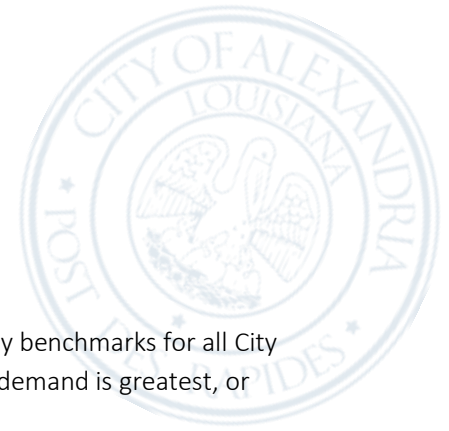
Poor customer service over the years has led to dissatisfaction among citizens when receiving services, seeking information, or determining where to go to get information. These issues appear to be concentrated in specific areas of City government and could be attributed to poor employee attitude and engagement. Addressing these issues through training and other improvements to general employee morale will improve citizen satisfaction and ease of use regarding City services.

An ineffective purchasing/procurement process is slowing processes and projects within the City, while it is unclear how and to what degree the City is achieving targets for small and disadvantaged business engagement. A clearly documented standard operating procedure for recording of data associated with procurement and contracting should be adopted by all necessary staff to ensure proper procurement records are kept. The City should also ensure small and disadvantaged business engagement targets are based on the results of a disparity study, which considers both spending disparities and the availability and interest among local contractors to provide services by industry.

The City's IT department operates in a siloed manner that minimizes the efficiencies and opportunities that can be created through effective technology deployment and exacerbates unnecessary risks associated with key systems and assets. Currently, individual divisions are largely responsible for implementation and maintenance of their technology systems. This approach could lead to issues ranging from inefficient systems maintenance to security risks. A City-wide approach to governing and coordinating the use of technology across all departments will lead to more effective and secure use of technology.

Outdated human resource policies are unclear at best and do not foster a culture or working environment consistent with an organization the size and scale of City government. Additionally, the City is not currently operating a comprehensive workplace safety program. It should leverage the recent addition of the position of Internal Auditor and creation of a Safety Director position to build a robust safety program that limits the City's exposure to workplace accidents and preserves the safety of City employees.

The City operates several communication channels that, if better coordinated, can help ensure consistency in voice and messaging to the public and media. Additionally, allowing opportunity for public feedback in the form of Town Halls, monthly "State of the Community" updates, and customer satisfaction surveys will engage the community in the regular operations and priorities of City government while allowing community members to feel heard by those who represent and/or serve them.



Short-Term Recommendations

Human Resources

- Initiate a City-wide total compensation study (pay and benefits) to establish pay benchmarks for all City positions and implement a multi-year plan for making pay adjustments where demand is greatest, or market variances are most acute
- Identify urgent succession planning needs across City divisions and implement measures to facilitate leadership transitions as expected retirements and natural staff attrition occur
- Conduct an employee engagement study to gather input on key issues and identify areas for internal improvement that help position the City as an employer of choice for the community
- Establish a set of City-wide core values based on employee feedback and implement across City divisions, including by installing signage reaffirming this commitment to values in office settings where citizen engagement or interactions take place
- Implement leadership, supervisory, and customer service training programs focused on delivering a consistently positive experience to citizens
- Continue and finalize recent efforts to update and implement all critical human resources policies and achieve consistency in policy with local, state, and federal laws
- Initiate an internship or apprenticeship program to engage students from area high schools and colleges and create a quality workforce pipeline for the City to recruit from

Accessibility

- Implement way-finding or other onsite signage at high-traffic City facilities or heavily utilized areas that help connect citizens directly with the resources or information they need
- Implement short-term navigational upgrades and an enhanced site structure across the City of Alexandria website to assist citizens and business owners in easily locating the information they need

Communications

- Develop and implement policies and procedures for media engagement, social media management, and internal communications
- Update emergency protocols to delineate clear points of contact with supporting and redundant technology functions, including call center management and media relations, that promote reliability and continuity of operations with clear and consistent communications between City Hall and Alexandria citizens
- Design and implement a citizen satisfaction survey to establish a baseline for service satisfaction and identify opportunities for service-related improvements
- Establish internal communications committee consisting of public information officers from all relevant divisions and departments, designed to achieve coordination in all public communications in a manner that is consistent with the City brand



General Operations

- Modify ordinances to delineate an effective process and proper cost thresholds for how contracts are awarded, both directly and through competitive bid
- Implement an IT Governance Committee consisting of division and department-level representation with a focus on informing how departments are using technology and serving as a clearinghouse for future IT-related procurements
- Identify and implement short-term solutions to protect the integrity and ongoing performance of key IT systems and platforms

Long-Term Considerations

- Where applicable, provide clear pathways for internal advancement and opportunities for professional development
- Expand employee recruitment efforts with a focus on high-need divisions or functions, including actively recruiting entry-level workforce from local colleges
- Develop or update (where existing) training and onboarding procedures to ensure all City employees are in a position from their first day to succeed during their time with the City
- Restructure the City pay plan to allow for internal advancement opportunities and enhances employee recruitment and retention efforts
- Revamp the process for publishing and promoting contract or bid opportunities, tracking and recording bids, and managing contracts or contract documents in an easily accessible document management system
- Establish reasonable and legally defensible targets or priorities for engaging local small and disadvantaged businesses in City contracting opportunities
- Inventory all currently utilized software, hardware, and other databases or IT systems
- Establish standardized IT use policies and procedures for all City divisions and departments
- Move toward a performance-based budgeting system that includes budgetary allocations submitted by divisions to the Mayor's Office, with input from the Finance Division, based on clear success metrics and demonstrated community or service/programming needs
- Develop workforce succession plan for each City division focused on identifying when and where expected staff attrition may take place while preserving key knowledge bases in a manner that sustains future operations
- Develop a long-term IT services and systems solution – preferably a secure, centralized platform with necessary IT expertise to serve all City divisions and departments, including Police and Fire
- Regularly rebid employee benefits package(s) to ensure City benefits are competitively procured and deliver maximum value both to employees and taxpayers
- Create a contingency plan for medium-to-long-term financial needs in the event City pension contribution rates experience dramatic increases

IMPLEMENTATION: MOVING FORWARD

To facilitate the successful implementation of the recommendations detailed above, it is critical that Mayor Hall's administration immediately begin working with the City Council to identify and advance key priorities requiring budgetary considerations, via budget amendments or supplements as necessary. Progress toward these priorities, as well as all short-term recommendations as adopted by the Mayor, should be regularly measured and publicly communicated to the Alexandria community.

Internally, the Mayor should assemble a series of interdivision working groups or committees. The composition of these working groups should align with transition subcommittee focus areas to the greatest extent possible, with departmental representatives working together to address each series of recommendations. These working groups should ideally consist of key leadership from multiple divisions and departments related to each group's focus area. Working group members will be tasked with assisting City leadership in developing action plans and assigning staff-level responsibilities related to the implementation of these plans.

In addition to establishing the internal structure for advancing these short-term initiatives, the Mayor should maintain a regular meeting schedule (e.g., quarterly) with the subcommittees assembled for this transition planning process. Their feedback and guidance will be invaluable as the City of Alexandria moves forward in addressing these recommendations, as well as identifying other issues or opportunities as work continues throughout Mayor Hall's first term in office. City leadership and corresponding working groups should work closely with each subcommittee, preparing regular progress updates on advancing these recommendations and providing subcommittee members with an opportunity to provide input on the direction.

Finally, while there are a number of recommendations or initiatives in this transition plan classified as "long-term" in nature, this categorization does not suggest a lack of importance or urgency related to moving each forward. Rather, transition subcommittee members acknowledged the level of effort required by many of these items may require years, as opposed to months, to implement. The City of Alexandria is like any public sector organization in that it operates with limited resources and must prioritize the use of those resources based on where community and employee needs are the greatest. As these short-term recommendations continue to advance in the coming months, the City must also begin taking incremental steps toward these longer-term initiatives – utilizing short-term action items to lay the groundwork wherever possible.

As Mayor Hall has consistently noted, his vision for the City of Alexandria is for unity, quality of life, economic growth, and high-functioning City government. This transition planning process has served as a clear embodiment of this vision, while translating it to clear actions the City and community must undertake to fully achieve it. With the spirit of collaboration, coordination, and unity represented by all involved in this process, the City is poised to make significant progress for its citizens in the coming months and years – supported by priorities and initiatives fully aligned with this vision and a clear path forward for the Alexandria community.