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CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

MARCH 2023 UPDATE

COVID-19 RECOVERY

Move to Redella S. “Del” Pepper Community Resource Center

Beginning in February 2023, the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), Alexandria Health Department (AHD), Neighborhood Health Clinic, Permit Center, and some limited Finance Department and Clerk of Court services moved to a new, centralized location: the Redella S. “Del” Pepper Community Resource Center at 4850 Mark Center Drive. More than 600 City employees moved from their existing offices in phases based on current location and department.

The move to the Redella S. “Del” Pepper Community Resource Center was planned with all Alexandrians in mind and is part of City Council’s Priority for COVID-19 Recovery, as part



of it’s third goal to make sure that everyone’s basic needs are met and recovery lifts all. Previously, health and community services were provided across many sites in the City. This new centralized location benefits residents and clients by creating a “one-stop shop” for health and community clients with seamless transition between related services. This includes a “no wrong door” approach, so that clients experience a continuum of services available at all points of entry. The new location is also just a five-minute walk away from the Mark Center Transit Center, which provides convenient access to several different bus routes and other forms of public transportation. This unified setting also aims to ensure increased access, equity, collaboration, privacy, and safety for all residents who use city

services within the facility. It will serve as a community hub offering opportunities to access resources, convene meetings and events, and to promote the health and wellbeing of Alexandrians.



- ▷ **COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY**
Work ‘n’ Well Program
(Back Page)

“ Del Pepper was my favorite. She was my favorite councilperson. She was there for us, and she attended everything the Elks was involved with. We could always count on her being there. ”

- Donald J. Taylor
Resident interviewed through Oral History program



In addition to the online archive, appointments can be made to visit the Oral History Center by calling 703.746.4821.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

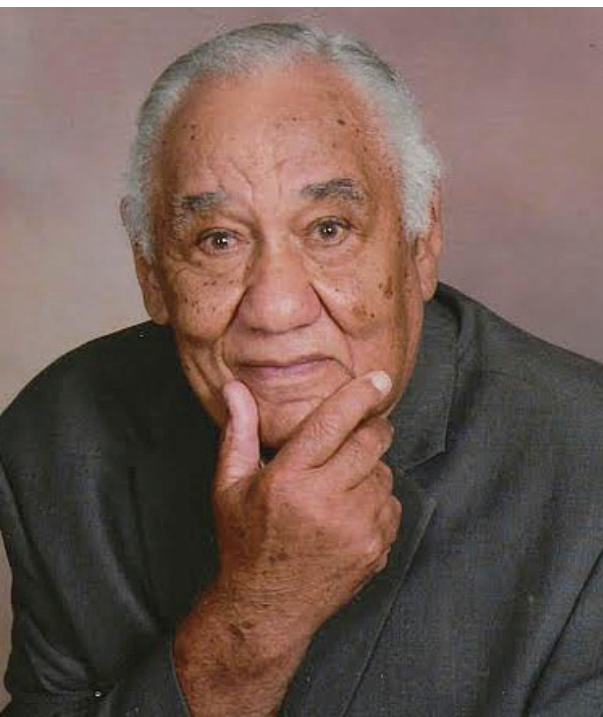
Oral History Center

The Oral History Center, in the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), captured seven oral histories in January and February of 2023. The stories from current and past residents of the City represent the diversity, cultural richness, and historic significance of our communities.

The Oral History Center, launched by OHA in September 2022, is a community-driven collaboration to document and preserve the memories and stories of Alexandria. The Center provides residents with oral history trainings and resources to conduct oral history interviews and community history projects. The Center welcomes all residents to book an appointment with the Center's manager and record their own oral histories.



Cross Canal Aerial Photo Circa 1927



DONALD TAYLOR

Excerpts from Donald Taylor's Oral History

Donald Taylor, a native Alexandrian and active community member, was born on July 31, 1931. In September 2022, the Oral History Center interviewed Taylor about his about life in the City of Alexandria, childhood, and experience in the U.S. Air Force. Taylor also reflected on his work with the Elks Lodge. The following excerpts were edited from transcripts of his interview for clarity.

"Everybody Came to the Rescue": Childhood in Cross Canal

Taylor grew up in Old Town North area known as Cross Canal—a historic neighborhood of Black residents who settled across from the canal shortly after the Civil War. The canal extended

from the Potomac River to Washington Street, then north to Rosslyn. According to the historic marker, Cross Canal was a rural neighborhood, it was "all country roads with nothing but trees and dirt roads." Families lived in small frame houses with gardens and raised farm animals in their back yards. Many residents worked at nearby industrial plants.

"[We lived on a] dirt road. It was just a country place and at night in the summer, our parents and grandparents would get together. And they would sing every night. They would sing spirituals every night. I wish that they had been recorded," said Taylor. "We were all poor and we didn't know we were poor. And when someone got sick, any family in Cross Canal, everybody came to the rescue."

"These are memories that I feel formed my life. Those are the

things that made me realize later on in life just how fortunate I was. Living in Cross Canal taught me how to care for one another. It's made me be respectful to people. Because you had to show respect for older people. And it gave me a sense of knowing that what I was doing helped my family."

Taylor Moved to Trailer Courts in 1942. He Explains How His Family Was Displaced from Cross Canal.

"The City came in and said they had to upgrade the houses [in Cross Canal], they had to put in plumbing, they had to put in electric and stuff, and people couldn't afford to do it. That was their way of taking the property. How you're going to put in a sewer when there is no sewer there? And we didn't have a recourse."

"At that time, it was rough. [My parents] didn't have too many

options. The Blacks didn't have too much power. We didn't have any power at all. You go down to City Hall, there were no people of color or Blacks in City Hall unless you had a broom in your hand. You know, and no Blacks at the bank. No, no Black bank tellers. The jobs that you had were menial jobs. And so that was it. We were in the south. But then things have gotten better, and things are better."

Taylor Recalls Helping the Freedom Riders and Councilwoman Redella S. "Del" Pepper

"You know one of the things that I'm most proud of was when the

Freedom Riders broke down on a highway 95. Their bus broke down and a City Council person came to us, asked could we keep them up overnight. They stayed at the Elks home overnight. And we housed them, and we fed them. I was fortunate enough to be almost on a first name basis with the people on City Council, you know, like Euille and Del Pepper. And Del Pepper was my favorite. She was my favorite councilperson. She was there for us, and she attended everything the Elks was involved with. We could always count on her being there."

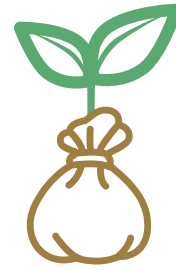
“ We were all poor and we didn't know we were poor. And when someone got sick, any family in Cross Canal, everybody came to the rescue. ”

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Commitment to Climate Action

A twenty-first century economy relies on the actions we take today to address climate change, sea level rise, and recurrent flooding.

The City of Alexandria is situated along a low coast and is particularly prone to flooding—which damages both residential and commercial real property and can have a distressing effect on economic growth and sustainability. Per World Scientific, even minor flooding events can have a major negative impact—particularly on small businesses. A study on the impact of climate change in Virginia commissioned by Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) indicates racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with lower income, the elderly, renters, non-native English speakers, and people with mobility challenges will be disproportionately affected by the potentially severe effects of climate change that are expected before 2100.



This past quarter, the City of Alexandria has made strides in addressing the climate crisis: the creation and implementation of the Office of Climate Action, increasing and expanding the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit, and attracting future-forward, climate-minded businesses to our community.

“ We are at a crucial moment where City ambitions must turn into clear actions. ”

Office of Climate Action

The City has undertaken several initiatives to address climate change and mitigate flooding. Most recently, Ryan Freed was brought on as the City’s very first Climate Action Officer and began with the City on January 23.

Freed comes to Alexandria from the Institute for Market Transformation (IMT), where he held the position of Senior Director for Policy and Regulatory Strategy for seven years. There, he developed the Institute’s government-focused work related to the Institute’s climate solutions, economic opportunity, and resiliency endeavors. Previously,



RYAN FREED

Freed served as the Director of the Kansas Corporation Commission Energy Division. He holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of Kansas and earned his bachelor’s degree from Washburn University.

Freed says about taking on the position: “The climate crisis is a global issue, and the City of Alexandria has shown its commitment to tackling it in the creation of the Office of Climate Action as a part of the City’s Environmental Action Plan. I am honored to have been chosen to be the first Climate Action Officer for the City of Alexandria. We are at a crucial moment where City ambitions must turn into clear actions, and I look forward to implementing and growing upon the ambitious climate action goals of the City.”

Stormwater Utility Fee Credit

In February, The City closed a round of applications for the newly expanded Stormwater Utility Fee Credit. The Credit puts money back in the pockets of residents and businesses who act on their property to mitigate flooding, prevent excess runoff, and maintain green spaces, among other things.

Families and business owners can not only contribute to the future of our City remaining bright but can be compensated in tax credits for keeping the climate in mind.

Attracting Future-Forward, Climate-Minded Businesses

Alexandria is also attracting businesses on the forefront of the climate crisis. Metroscope, a small business that provides tools to understand root causes of energy loss, recently opened its U.S. Headquarters in Alexandria. The Paris-based company chose the City because of the close-knit, walkable community and proximity to Washington, D.C. and other Northern Virginia localities. They have also been able to experiment with flexible and affordable office space thanks to the unique opportunities Alexandria offers.

Metroscope’s mission is to use technology to combat climate change on a large scale. This vital mission has kept nearly 1 million tons of carbon dioxide out of the air—the same as 5,700 New York to Paris flights—on behalf of their clients. Metroscope’s technologies give real-time, reliable diagnostic data on energy use, and mitigates energy loss by identifying potential weaknesses and future breakages.



PROVIDE DIVERSE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The Healthy Homes Initiative

The Healthy Homes Initiative is designed to help each Alexandrian get access to a healthy and hazard-free home. The program originated from Alexandria’s Community Health Improvement Plan and addresses resident concerns around home conditions, particularly in affordable housing properties. Within this initiative, multiple City departments, community-based organizations, housing providers, and residents work together on data analysis, programs and systems change to improve residents’ access to safe, sustainable, and equitable housing.

ALX Breathes

As part of the Healthy Homes Initiative, Alexandria Health Department launched a pilot study of ALX Breathes in 2022. ALX Breathes uses one-on-one assessment, tailored education, and service referrals to help low-income Alexandrians eliminate home-based triggers for chronic respiratory issues. After successfully collaborating with 20 Alexandria households during the pilot, Alexandria Health Department plans to launch a permanent ALX Breathes program in 2023.



2023: Year One of a Healthy Homes Initiative

This is a roadmap for how the City of Alexandria and its partners will work with residents to lay the foundation for improved home conditions in the community:

1. Convene a formal Healthy Homes Network of partner organizations to coordinate service delivery and implement strategies with measurable goals.
2. Work with impacted residents, property managers, and other stakeholders to identify pain points and opportunities within the current healthy homes ecosystem.
3. Implement then evaluate solutions that have been co-designed with residents and partners, then build a detailed flow and system map of resources for internal and external use.
4. Institutionalize and/or expand healthy home programs and data sources to best serve residents.

Why does the City need a Healthy Homes Initiative?

Residents across Alexandria recognize the impact of housing on health. Advocacy groups, residents, and City agencies have been working to improve housing conditions for decades. Yet, there is still a significant need both for direct services and coordination among the various stakeholders in this arena. Additionally, progress on healthy and stable homes is hard to measure. A dedicated plan and strategy give the community metrics to determine impact in this area and provide a clear pathway for inclusive collaboration.



How was the Healthy Homes Initiative developed?

The Alexandria Health Department (AHD) volunteered to lead the Healthy Homes strategy and facilitate the next steps. Although AHD was focused on pandemic response between 2020 and 2022, COVID-19 increased the urgency for healthy homes work. Mold and pest issues can make respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) worse, a primary insight of AHD’s ALX Breathes program. This is particularly important now, as someone with these conditions could have a more serious case of COVID-19 if they get sick. Additionally, people have been spending more time at home throughout the pandemic, potentially exposing them to housing-related hazards for a greater length of time.

SUPPORTING YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Alexandria Mentorship Program

The work of the Alexandria Mentorship Program (AMP) supports over 700 mentoring relationships each year by working with a variety of programs. Mentoring is proven to decrease the risk factors associated with crime, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, poor school performance, and gang affiliation.

In 2006, in an effort to support the work of the several mentoring programs already in existence, a number of community members, City employees, school staff, and members of the non-profit community initiated a collaborative partnership of citywide mentoring programs, The Alexandria Mentoring Partnership.

As the AMP grew and recognized the large number of youth needing mentors, it became increasingly evident that a full-time staff person was essential to adequately develop the AMP programs in order to effectively reach all youth in need of a mentor. In the fall of 2021, a full-time position was created by City Council: The Alexandria Mentoring Partnership Coordinator. The coordinator, David Ulloa, developed a number of initiatives including a new AMP website, an increased public awareness/communications campaign, a database for managing referrals, and a method for ensuring that all AMP programs are implementing quality programs based on national best-practice models. With the addition of this full-time position, the AMP is able to manage the volume of referrals of mentors received from the City of Alexandria.

AMP's Mission

The AMP's mission is to bring together and expand the City's mentoring programs by assisting with program development, capacity building, community partnerships, and program support through diverse high quality mentor recruitment, and best practices training.

MENTORING TAKES MANY FORMS:

- one-to-one mentoring or group mentoring.
- on-site or community-based mentoring.
- academic or activity-based mentoring.
- elementary, middle school or high school mentoring.

At the heart of all the AMP programs lies a common belief that mentoring positively impacts youth development, and that every child in the City of Alexandria who needs a mentor should have one.



Wright to Read

Wright to Read provides volunteer-based one-on-one sustained literacy tutoring and mentoring relationships to City of Alexandria elementary school children in need, and collaborates with families, schools and community partners to create a comprehensive support network that guides each child to success.

Nik Pirouz is a Wright to Read mentee since 2019.

“ She helped me become the successful person I am today. ”

Speaking about her mentor, Pirouz said, “without her I wouldn't be going this far, I wouldn't be the child I am today, or part of the National Junior Honor Society. She helped me become the successful person I am today.”



The Director of Wright to Read and SOHO Mentor, Katrina Foeldsche, said this about her experience of being a mentor: “The ability to impact a youth's life in any way I can – to be a trusting, caring adult in their life, to be an active listener, to help see them through the challenges that they encounter, to see that progression from a fifth grader to a tenth grader – has just been so rewarding.”

TESTIMONIALS

Space of Her Own (SOHO)

Space of Her Own, Inc. (SOHO) is an award-winning 501c3 charitable organization committed to helping girls make good choices, live healthfully, communicate openly, progress academically, and give back to others in order to lead fulfilling lives. Two programs for 5th graders operate from Alexandria, each supporting 13 girls. The SOHO Club provides activities and services to SOHO girls and their mentors throughout their middle school years, promoting long-term mentoring relationships and ongoing learning opportunities.

“ This is a great program... They're here to support you. ”

Michelle Lopez Romero, a SOHO mentee since 2017, said about the program and its mentors: “This is a great program, where you can feel trusting toward [your mentors], and they can help you with any issues that you have as well. They're here to support you, and the girls are here to support each other as well.”



Mentor Open House

In late January 2023, a Mentor Open House was held for adults interested in becoming mentors in one of these programs. This event provided an opportunity for attendees to engage with over a dozen mentoring programs, hear personal reflections from mentors and mentees, and learn about how mentoring amplifies change, one relationship at a time.



MENTOR ONE CHILD.
CHANGE TWO LIVES.

ALEXANDRIA MENTORING PARTNERSHIP



Human Resources' Work'n Well Program Recognized by American Heart Association

The City of Alexandria's Human Resources Department is being recognized by the American Heart Association for its Work'n Well Program for its second year in a row. The City is receiving the 2023 Gold Level Workplace Health Achievement award, after accepting the honor in 2021 and 2022. The commendation will be highlighted in Spring 2023's "Forbes Brandvoice", "Forbes" online publication, as well as an ad in the "Forbes" print magazine.

The City's Work'n Well Employee Program, established in 2014, offers support and resources for all dimensions of well-being. The program includes Work'n Well Rewards, which provides awards and incentives based on quarterly progress. The program also offers an insurance premium credit for a higher-level achievement milestone. The Work'n Well program actively works to lower healthcare costs, reduce sick leave, increase productivity, boost employee morale, and increase overall employee health awareness.

The City pays the full cost of employee participation in the program. When employees sign up, they are able to track activity,

sleep, nutrition, biometrics and other healthy habits. The more activities and challenges employees do, the more points they earn. If employees reach Level 3—12,000 points during a quarter—they receive a \$50 incentive per month for the following quarter. Then the cycle starts over and employees have another chance to reach the rewards level for the next quarter.



Work'n Well is a hallmark of the commitment of our workforce and embodies our organizational core values – respect, integrity, teamwork, and continuous improvement. Plus, employees are able to bring out their fun and competitive side in a way that benefits all staff through the promotion of healthy life skills.



Learn more about City Council Priorities:

alexandriava.gov/Council