

VIRGINIA

TOWN & CITY

The magazine of the Virginia Municipal League

VOLUME 48 NO. 7 SEPTEMBER 2013



President's Award

Virginia Beach

Planning initiative charted
new direction for city



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About the cover

Thirty-six entries in six categories were received for judging in the 2013 VML Achievement Awards competition. The VML awards program is conducted annually to encourage and recognize excellence and innovation in Virginia local government. This year's winner of the President's Award is the City of Virginia Beach.

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POPULATION CATEGORY WINNERS:

Population more than 90,000 – Arlington County

Arlington developed and implemented a program that gives middle school and high school students charged with a first offense involving drugs or alcohol a second chance instead of suspension or adjudication.

Population 35,001-90,000 – Town of Leesburg

Leesburg recognized that the build-out of the town required it to develop and implement a new long-range financial model to ensure the sustainability of municipal operations and to preserve the quality of life for residents and businesses.

Population 10,001-35,000 – City of Martinsville

Martinsville enhanced recreation opportunities by transforming a portion of a struggling business district into a destination trailhead that included an attractive parking area, increased safety measures and the seed of a unified design scheme.

Population 5,000-10,000 – Town of Strasburg

Strasburg completed an ambitious, cost-effective project to replace more than 1,600 feet of water and sewer lines on a busy street by using its own staff, working mostly at night and using innovative methods and equipment to save money.

Population fewer than 5,000 – Town of Clifton Forge

Clifton Forge persisted in assisting start-up businesses to locate downtown by transforming several of its own vacant buildings into incubators and affordable retail, office or service industry space.

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Norfolk wins planning honor

The American Planning Association (APA) Virginia Chapter awarded Norfolk the Outstanding Comprehensive Plan – Large City 2013 Award for *plaNorfolk2030* during the annual APA conference in Leesburg recently.

“Planners alone cannot develop a good plan,” said Frank Duke, director of planning. “Input from a multitude of technical experts, agencies and members of the public is essential.”

APA lauded the Norfolk comprehensive plan for adding metrics to track its progress, documenting more than 500 public comments and incorporating sustainability and sea level rise. The awards committee also noted that Norfolk’s plan was developed entirely in house, with no consultant services.

With a team of more than 100 people comprised of city staff, local and state agencies, and members of the public, *plaNorfolk2030* took four years to complete beginning in 2008. Development required three years of technical input, eight months of public input and four months to adopt. City Council adopted the plan in March.

Arlington recognized for Mobility Lab

Arlington County’s start-up think-tank, Mobility Lab (<http://mobilitylab.org>), received the President’s Award recently at the Association for Commuter Transportation Annual International Conference.

Born two years ago as a project of Arlington County Commuter Services, the Mobility Lab researches and creates solutions for transportation options that are cool, healthy, fun and efficient.

“This is a prestigious award that ACT gives, and we don’t award it every year – only if an individual or group truly merits it,” said Josh Kavanagh, president of ACT.

“Mobility Lab is doing industry-leading work and providing the research to back it up. Even as a local, regional agency, Mobility Lab is striving to help lead and define the

mobility-management industry, and it is making the effort to explain it in ways that even people outside of the transportation industry can understand and appreciate.”

“Arlington County created Mobility Lab to share with others our experience of how you can provide travel options that persuade people to walk, bike or use transit to get where they want to go, and to bring smart transportation ideas to Arlington,” said Arlington County Transportation Chief Dennis Leach.

Mobility Lab conducts original research, highlights the research of others and holds a regular series of events designed to encourage people to work together to find ways other than single-occupancy car trips to move people. As the transportation industry is challenged to build a cohesive voice about what it does – moving people instead of just cars – Mobility Lab leads the way with the research, collaboration and communications necessary to secure federal, state and local funding for mobility-management initiatives instead of just highways and transit.

The Mobility Lab is one partner in a group of innovative mobility-management practitioners. Arlington Transportation Partners (<http://bit.ly/1cYJeiz>), BikeArlington (www.bikearlington.com), WalkArlington (www.walkarlington.com), Capital Bikeshare (www.capitalbikeshare.com), The Commuter Store (<http://bit.ly/13AXpvE>), Commuter Direct (www.commuterdirect.com) and Arlington’s Car-Free Diet (www.carfreediet.com) are the boots on the ground, while Mobility Lab documents and communicates their accomplishments to help different audiences understand the value of mobility management.

Alexandria creates projects office

Alexandria has named **Emily Baker**, P.E. as director of the new Department of Project Implementation.

As part of the city’s efforts to improve government performance for residents and businesses, and to better



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align work with the city's strategic plans and goals, this new department will be charged with the implementation of infrastructure capital projects. The department will largely originate from the Engineering and Construction Management sections of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES). It will be responsible for engineering, contracting and overseeing the construction of infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, sewers and more.

During Baker's 20-year career, she has overseen the design and construction of projects in both the public and private sectors. Since 2000, she has served as the city engineer and deputy director of T&ES, where she managed the Engineering Division. She is a licensed Professional Engineer in Virginia and Maryland.

DMV to issue birth certificates statewide

State Department of Motor Vehicle offices will begin issuing birth certificates at its customer service centers beginning March 1, 2014. Beginning Jan. 1, 2015, DMV is authorized to issue certified copies of all death, marriage and divorce records. The partnership stems from legislation sponsored by Sen. Steve Newman of Lynchburg during the 2013 General Assembly.

Customers will still be able to obtain documents from the VDH Division of Vital Records office in Richmond, or by ordering online for delivery through the mail. The new partnership will make paper birth certificates from 1912 onward available at all 75 DMV customer service centers throughout the state beginning March 1.

Have news about your city, town or county government? Send information to David Parsons via e-mail at dparsons@vml.org

Correction

BECAUSE OF A MISTAKE made in our editing, the cover story of the July-August issue about water-related issues facing Virginia local governments contained an error. The section of the story dealing with water supply planning should have said that the state's future water resources plan will be utilized to inform the process for issuing permits for uses of state waters, not to establish the conditions under which these permits will be issued.



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Past VML Achievement Award winners

2012

Wise – under 5,000
Marion – 5,000-10,000
Falls Church – 10,001-35,000
Danville – 35,001-90,000
Portsmouth – over 90,000
Fredericksburg – Communications
Abingdon – President's Award

2011

Blackstone – under 5,000
Abingdon – 5,000-10,000
Winchester – 10,001-35,000
Leesburg – 35,001-90,000
Richmond – over 90,000
Blacksburg – Communications
Manassas – President's Award

2010

Elkton – under 5,000
Purcellville – 5,000-10,000
Herndon – 10,001-35,000
Blacksburg – 35,001-90,000
Alexandria – over 90,000
Hampton – Communications
Galax – President's Award

2009

Broadway – under 5,000
Ashland – 5,000-10,000
Falls Church – 10,001-35,000
Leesburg – 35,001-90,000
Henrico County – over 90,000
Alexandria – Communications
Virginia Beach – President's Award

2008

Town of Louisa – under 5,000
Bridgewater – 5,000-10,000
Fredericksburg – 10,001-35,000
Lynchburg – 35,001-90,000
Portsmouth – over 90,000
Chesapeake – Communications
Virginia Beach – President's Award

2013 VML Annual Achievement Awards

And the winners are ...

THE NUMBER OF RESPONSES to the call for entries in this year's Virginia Municipal League Achievement Awards competition is evidence that the commitment to creative, imaginative and cost-effective local government remains alive and well across the Commonwealth.

From some of the smallest towns to the largest cities and counties, the entries reflected the highest standards of professionalism and innovation, two traits that remain cornerstones of local government in Virginia.

Thirty-six entries were received for judging in six categories – five based on population and one for communications programs and projects open to local governments of all sizes. In addition, a President's Award is presented to the winner of the population category judged to have fulfilled VML's entry criteria the best.

The VML Achievement Awards program has a distinguished history as the most prestigious local government awards program in the state, often attracting more entries than any other competition.

This year's winner of the President's Award is the **City of Virginia Beach**. Virginia Beach's entry describing an extraordinary planning initiative that culminated with the adoption of eight separate master plans for the city's Strategic Growth Areas was judged as the best of the five population category winning entries.

The winners of the other population categories for 2013 are:

The **Town of Clifton Forge** – for its persistence in assisting start-up businesses to locate downtown by transforming several of its own vacant buildings into incubators and affordable retail, office or service-industry space.

The **Town of Strasburg** – for completion of an ambitious, cost-effective project to replace more than 1,600 feet of water and sewer lines on a busy street by using its own staff, by working mostly at

night, and by using innovative methods and equipment to save money.

The **City of Martinsville** – for enhancing recreation opportunities by transforming a portion of a struggling business district plagued by numerous vacant properties, empty streets and a general less-than-desirable appearance with a destination trailhead that included an attractive parking area, increased safety measures and the seed of a unified design scheme that would carry through the rest of the area.

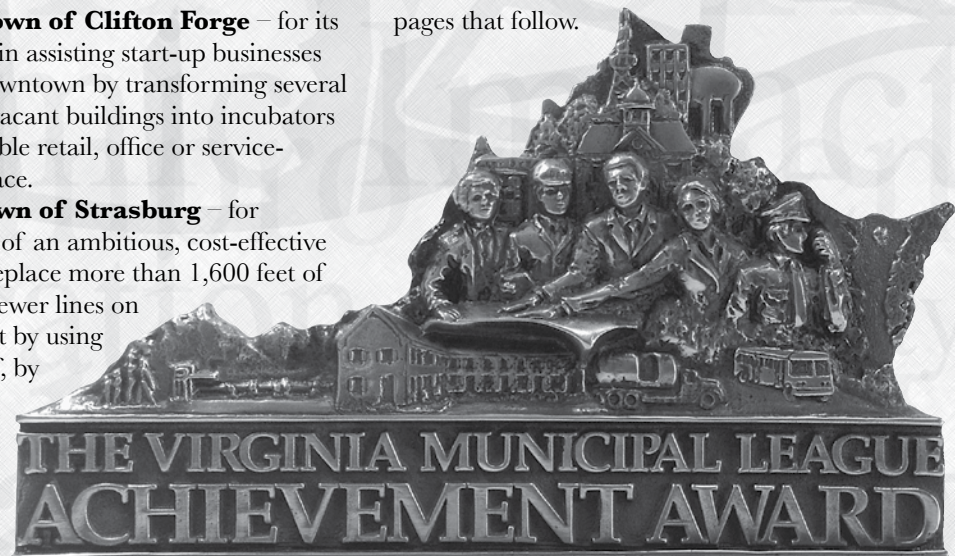
The **Town of Leesburg** – for recognizing that the build-out of the town required it to develop and implement a new, transparent, conservative long-range financial model to ensure the sustainability of municipal operations and to preserve the quality of life for residents and businesses.

And **Arlington County** – for development and implementation of a program that gives middle school and high school students who have been charged with a first offense involving drugs or alcohol a second chance instead of a suspension or court appearance.

The winner of the communications category is the **City of Fairfax** – for the execution of a comprehensive strategy to inform residents of the complicated issues surrounding the possible sale of its water treatment system to Fairfax County.

The winners will be presented their awards at a banquet during the VML Annual Conference in Arlington on Oct. 15.

Descriptions of the winning entries are included on the pages that follow.





Architect's rendering (left) of the "31Ocean" mixed-use lifestyle center and the finished project (below), which is an important piece of the Laskin Gateway portion of the Oceanfront/Resort Strategic Growth Area.



Planning initiative charted new direction for city

PLANNING IS VIEWED in Virginia Beach as an essential civic process for building a beautiful and enriching city. In 2013, the city completed an extraordinary series of continuous planning initiatives that culminated in the adoption of separate master plans for eight Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs). The accomplishment, however, began taking root a decade earlier.

In its 2003 and 2009 comprehensive plans, Virginia Beach identified what became the SGAs as underutilized tracts that could be redeveloped at higher densities to create new urban areas. The SGAs represented only 2 percent of the city's total land area. Creating and implementing master plans for them became a top priority for City Council and the city administration.

With the help of design specialists from the private sector, Virginia Beach embarked on a multi-year planning process starting in 2007 and ending in early 2013. The process engaged hundreds of citizens in multiple neighborhoods to plan appropriate

patterns of development, open space and infrastructure for the SGAs.

Virginia Beach has had a strong urban service boundary in place since 1979 known as the Green Line. It spares productive rural land and the city's rich agricultural heritage from development. When working on citywide comprehensive plans in 2003 and 2009 it became clear that rapid suburbanization above the Green Line had consumed most of the remaining developable land in the city. That's a typical result when an unsustainable sprawling pattern of low-density development takes hold.

The city recognized the need for a more strategic approach to development – one that maximized the use of existing infrastructure and that

embraced many elements of urban living, including terms of service, housing, office space and convenience. Implementing the SGA strategy would accommodate population growth in greater development densities and fill the demand for a variety of new housing, as well as cultural

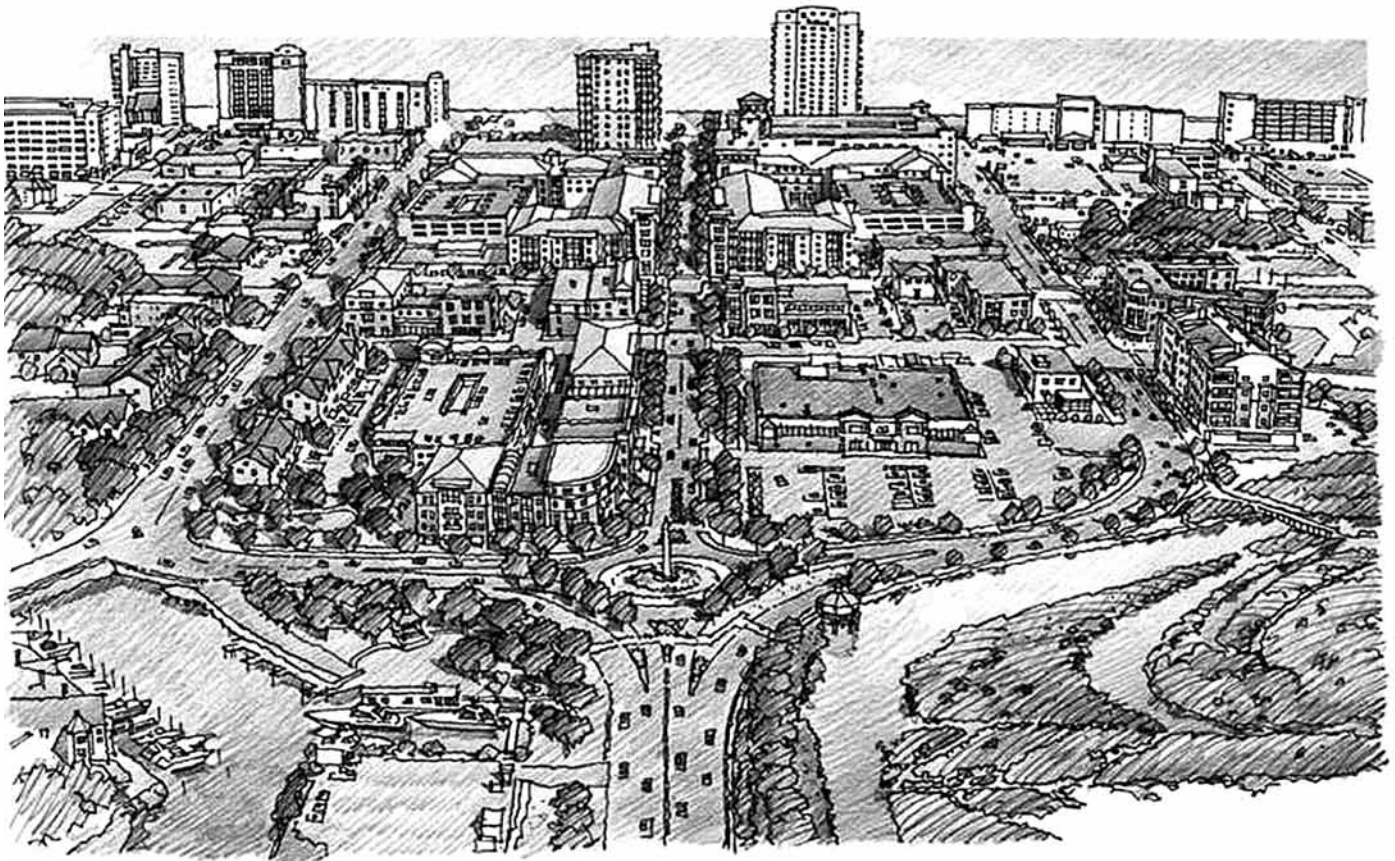
and transportation choices. Best of all, the approach complemented the city's many stable and safe suburban neighborhoods, as well as its farms.

Although each SGA is unique in its geography, existing development patterns, neighborhoods and potential, the city pursued a consistent plan-

ning strategy and underlying design principles. They encouraged transit-oriented, mixed-use development, improved connectivity, expanding parks and trails, building sustainable development, and accommodating new lifestyles. The city has embraced in its long-range planning for the SGAs the possibility of light rail transit as an important investment and catalyst for developing exciting new neighborhood centers. With the completion of the eight SGA master plans in 2013, all of which have been adopted as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the city has in place citizen-derived and council-supported visions, and development and redevelopment blueprints for a more sustainable future. It refers to them as "economic flypaper" because that has been the result. Beyond the economic and environmental reasons for Virginia Beach to set its sights higher, there are aesthetic ones as well. As the city's building stock ages, new quality residential and non-residential development, modern signature build-



Town Center, which anchors the central business district with a mix of shopping, dining, entertainment and residences, is at the heart of the Pembroke Strategic Growth Area.



Architect's rendering of the entire Laskin Gateway project, which is a cornerstone of the Oceanfront/Resort Strategic Growth Area.

ings and height diversity are needed. With real estate tax values not what they once were, the city adopted the new development model to remain viable. In short, Virginia Beach must grow up by developing the SGAs since it can no longer grow out.

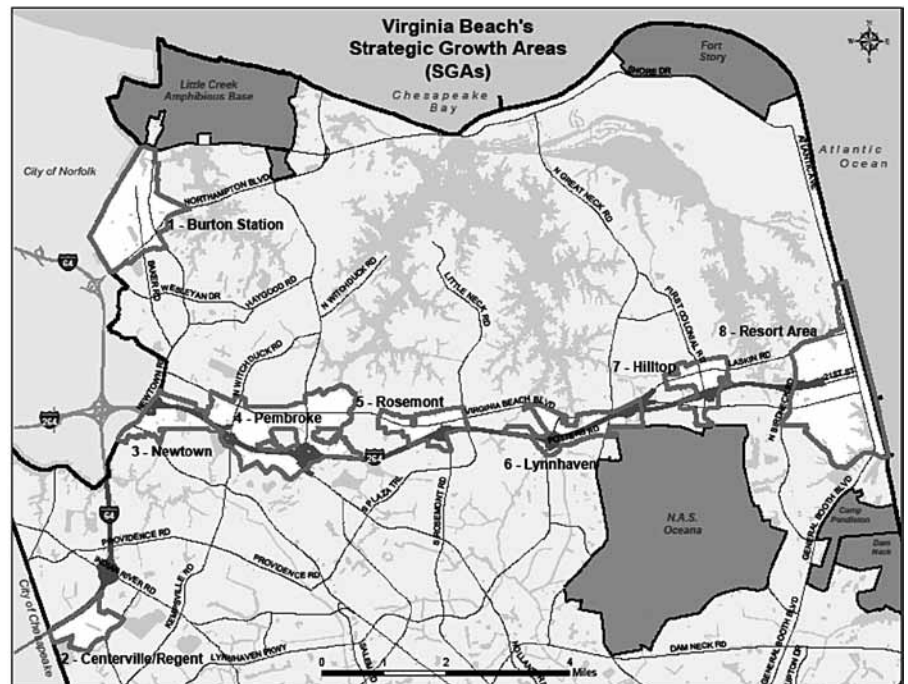
resource allocation. Following drafting of the eighth and final SGA Master Plan in the fall of 2012, a careful review of all SGA Master Plan implementation strategies was conducted. The review determined where there were common strategies

to assist city departments with plan implementation strategy prioritization and budgeting. Through FY13, more than \$70 million worth of capital projects have been implemented or approved to support the SGA effort. That number does not include nearly

Innovation in implementation

In order to have the organizational capacity to turn these plans into reality, the city established an inter-disciplinary Strategic Growth Area Office in 2010 to coordinate plan implementation. SGA Office staff consists of planners and urban designers, engineers, economists, landscape architects and administrative support. They are supported by the Planning Department and many other city departments, including the City Attorney's Office.

Along with this, City Council has demonstrated an annual commitment to implementing the public initiative components of these plans through its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and budget through a careful prioritization process and fiscally-constrained



Map shows the location of all eight Strategic Growth Areas.



Town Center is a hub of business activities.

\$40 million the city has also invested in the Laskin Gateway project (road/ infrastructure funding) in the Resort Area SGA. That money was reallocated from other approved, but non-SGA CIP projects, reinforcing the priority of SGA Master Plan implementation.

Where there are opportunities to dovetail the timing of phased priority public infrastructure development with the start of private development initiatives, they are seized. In some cases, however, the city has had to lead with the investment, to walk the talk in the master plans to cultivate private investment interest. When it has, both private reinvestment and new investment has followed. In other cases, the development community has pioneered to implement SGA visions in advance of planned public improvements. In still other cases, private and public improvements have occurred simultaneously. For example, a \$72 million private development initiative – supported by \$40 million in public infrastructure improvements to reroute traffic and replace old infrastructure in the Laskin Gateway area, and coupled with a \$1.8 million grant from the Virginia Beach Economic Development Investment Program for sidewalk and other streetscape improvements – has resulted in a public-private mixed-use project in the North Beach District of the Resort Area SGA that opened in Spring 2013. Called “31Ocean,” it includes a coastal vernacular four-story block with 178 apartments, an office tower, parking garage, and ground-level retail, realizing the SGA plan’s vision for a mixed-use, walkable environment at the Oceanfront.

To further support plan implementation, new development review processes were instituted in 2011. That means that all proposed development within the SGAs requires a pre-design/pre-submittal meeting

what they need to know, including any associated design guidelines and whom to contact if they are interested in developing in that SGA.

The Oceanfront Resort District Form Based Code, the city’s first form based code, and the corresponding Oceanfront Resort District Design Guidelines, were adopted in July 2012 to enable the vision put forward in the

Resort Area Strategic Action Plan. New SGA overlay zoning districts are being written to enable the visions put forward in the other SGAs.

Lastly, in 2012, a new category for SGA Development was added to the Planning Commission’s Design Awards Program to recognize

outstanding design in the SGAs.




The Sandler Center for the Performing Arts at Town Center.

with city staff to ensure compliance with the design principles included in each SGA plan. During these meetings, multi-disciplinary teams of Planning Department and SGA Office staff meet with property owner/ developer applicants and their design teams at the conceptual design stage of each project – be it a discretionary or by-right development activity. They review the design principles of their particular SGA and work together to the greatest extent possible to achieve those desired outcomes through private investment and public initiative partnership. This mandatory pre-design process is being periodically reviewed and refined to improve the customer service experience and outcomes.

SGA boundary maps have also been incorporated into the Planning Department’s Special Areas Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tool to provide all Planning Department staff with an easy reference when working with customers in SGAs. The SGA Office website has been improved to enable customers to easily navigate through each SGA to learn about existing conditions, the SGA vision and master plan, underlying design principles and key recommendations; to view street-level maps of the SGA boundaries for orientation and project-siting; and, to find out

Conclusion

The results have been exciting. In November, in great measure due to the strength of the SGA planning and the broad public participation in it, Virginia Beach voters supported a referendum to study the feasibility of extending Norfolk’s light rail transit system 11 miles to the Oceanfront. A similar referendum failed in 1999.

By participating in the SGA master planning process, Virginia Beach residents have realized the difference they can make by articulating their values and aspirations for the city. New urban form development projects are coming out of the ground and transforming Virginia Beach’s landscape, providing new choices and reasons to live a lifetime in the community. Localities that have chosen to designate and plan for Urban Development Areas can learn from the Virginia Beach experience, including its return on investment analyses. The city shared its story with a national audience at the 2013 American Planning Association National Conference in Chicago in April. It continues to extend an invitation to host local government officials who are interested in visiting and learning more about the transformation that is occurring. 

City strategy informed residents on sale of water assets – in a hurry

ALTHOUGH THE CITY of Fairfax was established in 1961, its history and its water system are much older. Both date back to a time when the small community of farm-focused activity was growing, and growth meant consideration of management of water and sewer services.

In the 1950s and into the 1960s, the then-Town of Fairfax experienced supply difficulties with its well water system. After achieving city status in 1961, city leaders established a new water treatment plant in Loudoun County. Since that time, water was delivered through a city-owned pipeline to customers: both city residents and businesses, as well as to water customers who live outside the city limits.

The next 50 years brought tremendous changes to the city and to its water supply system. The city's water customer base diminished due to the loss of original jurisdictional partners, resulting in loss of economy of scale. The cost of maintaining and operating a small water treatment and distribution system was accelerating faster than other, larger Northern Virginia water systems. Water rates were rising much faster than those in surrounding towns.

At issue: Should the city sell its water assets and get out of the water business? City leadership needed to carefully weigh future costs and risks associated with aging infrastructure and technology. The city's population – businesses and residents – supported the system's record of high quality product and excellent service. Would they want to keep "their" water system regardless of escalating water

rates, or would they want to abandon their system in favor of a cheaper alternative?

Public communications strategy

The goals of the public communication strategy were to:

(1) Educate the community on the history of the water system, alternatives for water service delivery and the complexities involved with legal issues that had arisen concerning the water system; and (2) provide public information via multiple media and create numerous opportunities to provide feedback to city leaders.

Executing the plan

The city's execution of a comprehensive communications approach – devised and carried out in house – eventually made use of every available resource in the small city's playbook. Residents and businesses were supplied with the following information as the issue transformed from one that was seemingly resolved to one splattering on the front burner.

Brochure. In March 2012, the mayor and City Council first broached the topic with its customers through a brochure titled *Options for the Future of the City's Water Treatment Facilities*. The brochure outlined two options for the future of the water system. Subsequently, three public hearings were conducted during regularly scheduled City Council meetings. The options were clearly outlined, and the response was clear: Customers wanted to keep the water service as it was, even if their costs would increase. City leadership accepted this

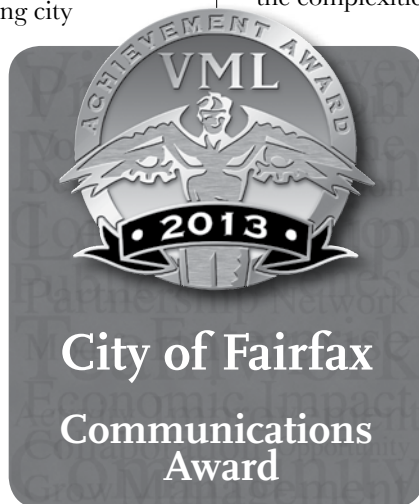
position, and the issue was considered resolved in April 2012.

Later that year, however, the city found the issue further complicated. Fairfax County passed an ordinance that required all utility companies that provided water in Fairfax County to charge the same amount for water service as did Fairfax Water, the county's water authority. A federal court battle ensued. As a result of required mediation, the parties agreed upon a series of proposed win-win actions that, under the control of a federal judge, would be submitted to a community review and approval process spanning just 60 days. It was crucial that the mayor and City Council quickly engage in an effective dialogue with all city water customers to determine the fate of the city's water utility.

The city has had a history of close contact with its residents and businesses, so many tools already were in place to connect with this population. These tools served the city well in this instance. In what amounted to a Phase II, the city quickly cranked up a comprehensive plan for engaging residents and businesses. These included:

Letter / news release. The initial public information effort of Phase II occurred Feb. 22, 2013. It was quick and brief. A letter, signed by the mayor and all council members, was sent to every city residential and business water customer, along with a news release informing them that city leaders needed immediate input regarding a complex issue. That material also was e-mailed to the media, as well as to 49 civic associations, which historically have shared city information with their membership.

This February 2013 mailing accomplished a number of goals. It let water customers know there was an important issue at hand and it offered a brief overview in general terms of the matter. It alerted customers to the imminent delivery of another,



City of Fairfax
Communications
Award




The city implemented an effective communications program in just 60 days.

more detailed document: a forthcoming brochure. Finally, it allowed the mayor and City Council to stress the importance of each customer’s participation.

New web page. At the same time the first communiqué was mailed on Feb. 22, the city launched a web page, www.fairfaxva.gov/water, on which it posted all water issue-related material. The water web page offered an overview of the situation and put related documents in a single, easy-to-find location. Also in this location was a list of all city outreach meetings at which the public was encouraged to attend. The date of the decision was prominently included so customers understood the near-term urgency of the situation.

Brochure. The city followed the letter and news release in March with a brochure titled *At a Crossroads: The Future of the City of Fairfax Water System*. Mailed within two weeks of the first contact, the brochure included key information needed for a fully informed decision.

The public was offered background and history of the issue that began before the city was even incorporated. In addition to a full explanation, readers were offered charts that illustrated the water rate differential between the city’s service and Fairfax



Options for the Future of the City’s Water Treatment Facilities

March 2012

The Mayor and City Council Request Your Participation

To Residents and Customers of the City’s Water System.

As you may know, for the past 50 years, the city has treated its own drinking water from its water treatment plant located in Loudoun County and transported it to the city via a water pipeline. Once it arrives in the city, the water is delivered to your home or business through the city’s distribution network.

Due to the age of the water treatment plant facilities in Loudoun, and, like other city infrastructure that is periodically required and maintained, the facilities are in need of significant repairs and improvements.

The city is at a decision point, whether to:

Option 1: invest substantial sums for capital improvements to its Loudoun facilities, or

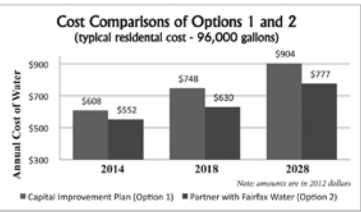
Option 2: sell the water treatment plant and invest in ownership of the Fairfax Water system.

If the decision is made that the city discontinue producing water at its plant in Loudoun County, the city would sell its assets there, including the water plant, Beaverdam Reservoir and supporting facilities. With the proceeds from the sale, the city would purchase permanent ownership in a Fairfax Water treatment plant. With this option, there would be no change to the current method of water delivery; the city would continue to own and operate the in-city retail distribution system. Only the source of the water would change.

This is not an easy decision, and the various issues and variables involved are complicated. We want you to be informed of this important decision facing the community. The City Council is at the point where it has identified two basic and viable options with regard to the future of the city’s Loudoun facilities based on the best information available.

Providing this guide is the first in a multi-step process that will lead to the City Council making a final decision on the future of the water treatment component of the water system. There will be opportunities for public comment, which are presented on the back page.

This chart provides projected cost comparisons of the two options at three points in time. 2018 cost increases account for the anticipated loss of the city’s largest wholesale customer.



Year	Capital Improvement Plan (Option 1)	Partner with Fairfax Water (Option 2)
2014	\$608	\$552
2018	\$748	\$630
2028	\$904	\$777

Note: amounts are in 2012 dollars

Water, as well as a “frequently asked questions” section that addressed many of the initial questions posted by customers.

The mayor and City Council also offered their unanimous conclusion: Becoming retail customers of Fairfax Water was the best solution.

Finally, the dates for all meetings were included prominently on the final page, as were the telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and mailing address of the mayor, City Council, city manager and utilities director.

Video Public Service Announcement. In early March 2013, the city also produced a video public service announcement that, in a little more than one minute, allowed the mayor to explain the issue at hand, announce the forthcoming materials to be mailed, and encourage the public to attend any of the public hearings and outreach meetings scheduled. The video was posted not only on the cable television area of the city website, but also on the city’s cable television station, on the city’s home page and on YouTube for full access and easy viewing.

Response was immediate. Water customers began directly contacting the mayor, City Council, city manager and utilities director with questions and comments. This immediate feedback helped the city formulate the information the public wanted – and needed.

Cityscene newsletters. Every month, the city publishes a newsletter, *The Cityscene*, that highlights current city government-related news. This matter received front-page treatment in the following issues: April, May and June in 2012; and March, April and May in 2013. Cityscene is mailed and e-mailed to city residents and businesses and posted on the city’s website.

Public outreach meetings and public hearings. The outreach meetings held on March 21 and April 6 in 2013 were central to the communication plan. Much information needed to be shared promptly. Many people needed to have their questions answered and their concerns heard. Most importantly, people wanted to ask questions directly to the water experts and talk directly to the policymakers.

Each meeting began with the mayor explaining the matter, answering many questions that had frequently

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Persistent town cultivated start-up business culture

HOW DOES A small town with very few financial resources go about recruiting new businesses, thereby growing its tax base and making the community more appealing to prospective residents? In Clifton Forge, you put whatever assets you have to work and don't take no for an answer.

In 2010, when the Allegheny Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Tourism was looking to relocate, Clifton Forge offered one of the town's vacant buildings that was centrally located in the region. Politics eliminated the site in favor of one off of Interstate 64 with no perceived ties to an individual locality. Although not taken up on its generous offer, the town was convinced it was on to something. It offered the building to its Main Street organization later that year, again at no cost, to increase the non-profit's spending power. Clifton Forge Main Street was paying \$3,600 a year for leaking, cramped space. Once again, however, politics dictated that the town offer be refused.

Convinced more than ever that the prime downtown space had much potential, Town Council altered course and decided to make it available to new *for-profit* activities at a very nominal cost.

Like many older communities, Clifton Forge has a number of vacant buildings in its central business district. Many of these are owned by absentee property owners who either 1) have unrealistic expectations about the value of their property and therefore demand high rents and tenant responsibility for build out or 2) don't really want to deal with landlord issues. Several prospective businesses, after managing to get into contact with those owners, threw their hands up and walked away, taking precious tax dollars with them.

At that point, the town decided to double-down and take matters into its own hands. Two vacant town-owned properties in the business district were

identified as locations that were ideal for small business development.

Experience has shown that many startups are reluctant in their infancy to enter into long-term leases or take on significant build-out costs while paying market rate rents. With this in mind, staff advertised the space with this straightforward, open-ended pitch: "Make me an offer that you can afford."

The building at 403 Ridgeway St. was advertised first. Two proposals were received – one from an existing coffee shop that wanted to expand and offer baked goods, and the other from a Lynchburg technology business that was seeking new territory. Council chose to negotiate with the local business. Unfortunately,

the prospective tenant asked for what was deemed an excessive build-out allowance and cash up front. Town Council, not deterred, opted to re-advertise the space.

Not long after, two young women wanting to start a new business made an offer on the space that was accepted. The tenants made substantial improvement to the building's interior in exchange for four months free rent. They began paying \$400 a month plus utilities after that for the balance of the year's lease. Business was so good for the two women and their businesses – Barberette & Artisan Guild – that they signed another one-year lease in September 2012. The owner of Artisan Guild, because of her location on Ridgeway Street, developed a new business relationship. She now manages the Tea Room down the street and stocks some of her Artisan Guild items at this new location, while still paying half the rent at 403 Ridgeway. The other ten-

ant occupying the Ridgeway space has expanded her hair cutting business. She has hired a nail technician and provides tanning services.

The town, in turn, has held up its end of the bargain as a landlord, dealing with an assortment of maintenance issues. The increased traffic into town, however, has far outweighed having to service a balky air conditioner or a failed hot water heater.

In May 2011, the town was approached by two men looking for a location for their financial investment business. They had visited several privately-owned buildings in town, but found the rent too steep for their fledgling venture. The town leased them two

small offices on the top floor of 601 Main St., their choice of location, for \$275 per month including utilities. Six months later, however, the men terminated the month-to-month lease when the volume of business they anticipated did not materialize. They left behind two very nicely furnished rooms for future use.

The next prospective tenant at 601 Main St. was very ambitious. Unfortunately, she defaulted on her lease after receiving a \$5,000 loan from the Chamber of Commerce for build-out improvements.

The town, however, understood that there was likely to be a false start or two along the way. In June 2012, reading in the Roanoke newspaper about a person who had purchased a dry cleaners, it contacted the new owner and asked him to consider piloting a location in Clifton Forge under very favorable conditions. (A dry cleaner was the most frequently requested service need that town



residents identified in the most recent comprehensive plan update.)

After visiting, the new owner cobbled together a pick-up and delivery shoe repair and onsite alterations service along with his daily dry cleaning pick-up service. And just like that, after offering free rent for four months for the reception area, two rooms and storage closet, 601 Main St. had a new tenant. While startup was slow, the tenant signed a 15-month lease in October 2012 with a stepped-up rental rate and payment of a utility allowance over the 15-month period. The only other dry cleaner in the Highlands, located in Covington, has

recently closed. Area residents now have the option of visiting the Clifton Forge location, which offers next day service. Shoe and alteration services have been in great demand as well.


The Allegheny Highlands Economic Development Corporation, Allegheny Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Clifton Forge Main Street held an open house in April trying to draw out prospective businesses and/or individuals thinking about starting a business. Although the event provided information on private spaces as well as the town-owned spaces, the flexibility of the town's approach to making space available

garnered the most attention. Two young men have visited the Town Manager since that event inquiring about space at 601 Main St. for a recording studio.

Even as the town has been trying to attract new business into its spaces, new businesses are appearing every month in downtown – a second florist shop, two new restaurants, a full-service gas station and specialty retail. Existing businesses are expanding their space as well, moving to other larger locations in the downtown.

In the fall of 2012, the town responded to a hardware retailer's need for additional space for seasonal outdoor sales by renting 10 parking spaces to the rear of the store for a nominal amount, seven months of the year. The immediate increase in sales after only two months has already prompted the owner to request a similar seven-month lease for 2014.

Recently, the area economic development organization, impressed by the success of the town's two locations, submitted a grant application seeking to expand activity to a bigger business incubator – a co-working center. Just recently, the application was approved and 601 Main St. will be equipped with office furniture and equipment, available 24-7 for businesses working out of their home or garage. This will allow them to have access to items occasionally needed in their business while the Allegheny Highlands Economic Development Corporation offers them assistance in developing achievable business plans.

The town's goal of jump-starting new business development is being achieved, but it is a work in progress. Clifton Forge knows that not every start-up business will thrive or even survive, but the town wants to make it as easy, painless and as inexpensive as possible for entrepreneurs to try. 



Business is brisk these days at 403 Ridgeway St.



Recruiting a dry cleaner at 601 Main St. fulfilled one of the town's most requested services.

Town took utilities replacement project into its own hands

THE TOWN OF Strasburg has a rich heritage, a beautiful natural environment and a spirit of community that makes it a wonderful place to live. It also includes a diverse economic base, ranging from international industry to mom-and-pop businesses and restaurants. Recognizing the desirability of both, the town strives to preserve its cultural and natural heritage while attracting appropriate growth through realistic and far-sighted planning.

It also is a goal of the town to revitalize downtown and its infrastructure. In order to help accomplish that task, Strasburg successfully applied for a grant in 2007 under the Virginia Department of Transportation Enhancement Program (now MAP-21) to design and construct streetscape improvements along the busy King Street corridor. The first phase of construction was placed out to bid in June.

Identifying a significant need

The Strasburg Public Works Department realized through public input and other research that a number of issues existed within the underground water distribution system and the sanitary sewer collection system along King Street. The issues included water saddles breaking, no water meters on private services, stormwater inflow into broken sanitary sewer lines caused by tree roots, and other damaged pipes and manholes that were converted into cleanouts prior to 1990. On top of this, any work that was to be corrected needed to be completed prior to the contractor starting on the first phase of the streetscape project. Upgrading the utilities would benefit the community by increasing capacity, improving service and reducing the

number of calls to the town to resolve an assortment of problems.

Project approach

In July 2012, Public Works staff started to work on a replacement plan for the water and sewer distribution and collection system. The project would include replacing 755 feet of sanitary sewer main lines, 400 feet of sanitary sewer laterals, water main saddles, 500 feet of water services, and replacing all water meters with new radio-read meters. Based on the amount of work, an 11-week schedule was developed (including weather days). The goal: Completion of the labor-intensive project before Strasburg's Annual Mayfest event.

Town staff spent three months investigating, videotaping and re-researching the project to ensure that all available data was collected. Plans and



Town crews worked at night to keep disruption of traffic to a minimum.

profiles were then prepared internally to correspond with the plans that were developed for Phase 1 of the streetscape project.

Upon completion of the plans, staff held a number of meetings with the local VDOT residency office (Edinburg) to discuss the concerns of the location and scope of work. King Street is also known as U.S. Route 11, a state maintained roadway. Meetings and plan changes took place for three additional months, prior to gaining VDOT approval for the project.

Innovative service delivery

While the plan was developed and discussed, Department of Public Works staff realized that the large amount of daytime traffic on King Street (Route 11) was going to cause



excavation contractor and a hauling contractor were brought on board. The excavation contractor was needed because the town did not own any large equipment to handle a job this size. The hauling contractor was needed to bring stone in during the day and

remove excavated material at night. It was important that the hauling contractor remove the material to its location, since the town's fill location was slated to be under construction as the site of a new wastewater treatment plant.

Additionally, the town was looking at ways to reduce the number of required VDOT inspections, which would be billed to the town since the work was to take place at night. Prior to the start of the project, three town staff members attended

VDOT inspection classes that covered asphalt, concrete and site work. The training would allow the employees to make field corrections in accordance with VDOT specifications while reducing consultant costs.

Staff also prepared for construction by updating their certifications in Basic Work


Zone and Flagger Training, confined spaces and trench box certification. While updating the certifications, the town realized that it did not own the correct equipment to be in compliance with current regulations. Staff ordered the necessary work zone equipment and the trench box equipment that was needed. With the additional safety supplies and construction equipment, staff also needed a way to transport the material to the job site. Staff adapted an existing stock

trailer by adding lights, a generator and modifying the trailer specifically to stock the safety equipment. An additional trailer was bought to provide staff with a combination break room / office / emergency equipment storage area. The enclosed trailer was modified with interior shelving and storage for working, while additional lighting was placed inside and outside for safety.

As discussions with VDOT ended and approval seemed near, discussions were held concerning work hours and flagging through the work zone. It was agreed that work was to be completed during off-peak hours of travel (night work) except for asphalt paving. Using automatic flagging assistance devices (AFAD) to assist the undermanned town staff also was discussed. Staff worked with VDOT on obtaining an AFAD unit set from the only approved manufacturer allowed in the state. Upon receiving the AFAD unit, staff had a training session on the operation and maintenance of the equipment.

Increasing citizen participation

Because staff realized the significant amount of inconvenience that residents and business owners were likely to experience, two open houses were held well before the start of construction. Detailed presentations were delivered followed by a question and answer period. During the open houses, citizen input was obtained and in some cases worked into the plan. The exhibits used at the open houses were placed in the lobbies of several downtown businesses. Contact information was provided on these exhibits along with a preliminary construction timetable.

Town staff also wanted to make sure that residents and business were aware of the project, so in addition to the open houses, public announcements on local radio stations, interviews with television stations, radio stations and newspapers were conducted. Additional notices were handed out to businesses and the town's monthly newsletter informed residents as well. Prior to and during construction, portable electronic message boards were placed on Route 11 noting the construction. 



Town crews were able to complete the labor-intensive project within its 11-week schedule.

significant problems during normal working hours. The department's director, supervisors and foreman agreed that they needed to invent a new approach. The department prepared schedules for its employees, which entailed having staff on 24 hours a day from Sunday at noon until Friday at 4 p.m. Most of the construction activity would need to take place at night to avoid delays.

Even with the change in work schedules, staff realized that the job required additional assistance. An

City transformed unsightly blocks into park and trail hub

MARTINSVILLE'S HISTORIC BUSINESS district, known as "Uptown Martinsville," was once the thriving economic center of the city. As Uptown residents and businesses moved to the edges of the city and the suburbs, the area was left with numerous vacant properties, empty streets and a lack of activity resulting in a less-than-desirable appearance. Visitors shied away.

In 2010, city officials hit upon an idea that would help transform a part of Uptown in need of revitalization. The overarching goal of the project was to draw people – locals and tourists – back to Uptown and return some of the city's center to its vibrant origins.

The heart of the project, which was part of an Economic Restructuring Strategy (to enhance recreation opportunities) and a recommendation of the 2010 Uptown Martinsville Revitalization Plan, was the creation of a destination trailhead. The new trailhead would include an attractive parking area, increased safety measures, and the seed of a unified design scheme that would carry throughout the rest of Uptown.

Background

Depot Street in Historic Uptown contains the only urban trailhead in the central business district. It came about because of funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation in 2005 that paid for the creation

of a spur trail that linked with the Smith River Trail System's Dick & Willie Passage Rail Trail. The trailhead, built in 2006, was adjacent to an outdated parking lot and contained a gazebo, shrubbery, a sign and kiosk, which was maintained by city crews and the Gateway Streetscape Foundation, a non-profit organization. However, there was no connectivity from Uptown to the trailhead, and no "You Have Arrived" feeling once people got there.

Depot Street was separated from the parking lot by a concrete island, with parking marked on the street side of the island near Ford Street. There was a steep embankment along the parking lot's edge with the sidewalk. Users needed to walk to the corner of the lot at the Franklin Street intersection to access the sidewalk, or on Depot Street to access the trailhead. All lighting was cobra head street lights. The lot was also used as a testing area by VDOT for people seeking a commercial driver's license.

The parking lot, while a convenient location for users of the trail, as well as a nearby theater, museum and education center, was unappealing

and did nothing to signal the existence of the urban trailhead. As a result, the lot was underutilized.

In late 2010, the city received a grant from the Harvest Foundation to enhance the Depot Street parking lot to make it attractive, well lit and more convenient for both automobiles and pedestrians wanting access to Uptown and the neighboring New College Institute

(NCI). The city worked with a group of stakeholders called the Uptown Management Team, as well as with business owners, Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association (the Virginia Main Street organization), NCI, TheatreWorks, the Harvest Foundation, the Heritage Center, and property owners surrounding the parking area to assess their needs and concerns.

From these conversations the city learned that safety was a primary concern. In addition, lighting was not sufficient and stairs that went from the lot up to Franklin Street were much too steep and long. The city and stakeholders envisioned a park-like setting to accommodate the tourists and recreation enthusiasts who would use the trailhead to access the newly



View of space from old staircase (left) looking toward the parking area and Depot Street prior to it being relocated. Refurbished parking lot (right).



A new staircase, flag mural and landscaping (bottom) have transformed the area adjacent the TheatreWorks building.

opened Dick & Willie passage.

One of the first changes to the scope of the project was a decision to relocate Depot Street closer to the trail and combine the two parking areas with a green space in between the street and the parking. This would align four separate streets and allow for the possible construction of a roundabout that was called for in the Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Plan. The city also worked with VDOT to move CDL testing to another location.

Increased citizen participation, higher service levels

The Uptown Connection Park & Trail started out with a Harvest Foundation grant and city in-kind work, but as the project grew more partners

came onboard. The foundation provided a grant for the space, design work and a train depot-like roof for the comfort station.

City workers relocated Depot Street by December 2011, and contracted for new curbing. In spring 2012, final plans were developed, the project was bid and the contractor and subcontractor were chosen.

The space, completed in 2013, features new curb, gutter and sidewalks, a green space featuring two custom Uptown picnic tables and trees planted by Gateway Streetscape Foundation, Uptown benches and trash cans placed off of the pedestrian right-of-way, two sets of pedestrian-friendly stairs, and a retaining wall.

In 2005, VDOT gave the city a grant to create the initial trail. When it was completed, the city transferred leftover funds to Henry County to use for the Dick & Willie Passage. To revamp the space in 2012, the county returned some of the money to help pay for the restroom facility.

The city provided staff time and helped pay for some expenses: gutter work on Ford Street, striping the street, and grading and shaping Depot Street. Staff also provided electrical and plumbing work to the comfort station and paved around it, including a path from the restroom to the trail, installed the water fountain, and installed a bike rack. The city paid for some work change orders including paving, installation of a crosswalk, and guardrail work.

Ray Gibbs, the former director of a non-profit community development corporation, designed a train depot-style façade to be built on the modular comfort station as a reminder of the heritage of Depot Street.


Piedmont Arts Association, the community's art organization, became a part of the project in spring 2012. It worked with the Tunnels to Towers Foundation and a renowned artist to install a large American Flag mural on the side of the TheatreWorks building. The art has become a prominent addition to the space.

The comfort station and green space are maintained by the city's Parks & Recreation and Public Works Departments; events are scheduled through city staff; and Gateway Streetscape Foundation maintains the landscape and trees. This is budgeted by each organization.

The funding was broken down by: \$346,596 from the Harvest Foundation; \$132,714 for City of Martinsville in-kind; \$48,484 from VDOT; \$7,500 from the Tunnels-to-Towers Foundation; \$20,123 from Phoenix CDC; \$661 from Cari Zimmer of Activate MHC; \$3,575 from Gateway Streetscape Foundation. The project total was \$559,603; with in-kind a total of \$215,057.

The project was innovative and efficient. Martinsville received CDBG funding in 2010 to prepare an economic development plan and physical improvements plan that would guide revitalization efforts within Uptown. The city had the foresight to follow through with this plan rather than shelve it, wait for the perfect moment to implement it, or continue producing studies. It realized that a plan of that breadth would need to be implemented in phases and as time and funding allowed. The Uptown Connection Park & Trail was one of the first projects that sprang forth from the revitalization plan.

In summary, the project:

- Addressed a significant item recommended in the Uptown Martinsville Revitalization Plan.
- Improved safety in the area.
- Redeveloped an underutilized space in Uptown.
- Made the trailhead more prominent to the rest of Uptown.
- Increased pedestrian activity by drawing in visitors and residents.
- Became a model and catalyst for other revitalization projects in the city.
- Created an urban space suitable for large events.
- Reflected the heritage and traditions of the railroad. 

Town charted new long-term, conservative financial path

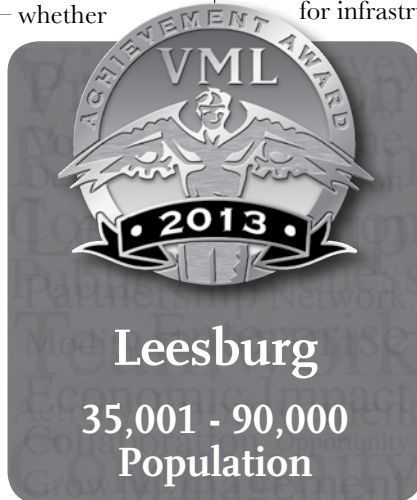
IT HAS LONG been a tenet of local government financial planning that “growth pays for itself.” In other words, the revenue generated by new development – whether residential or commercial – will cover the cost of services required by those new residents or businesses. But what happens when there is no growth? The effects of the Great Recession brought home to many local governments the importance of planning for tough economic times.

Most Virginia jurisdictions use short-term financial models to develop their annual operating budgets, but the Town of Leesburg took this concept one step further. What began as an effort to plan for moderating revenue because of the dwindling of developable land morphed into development of a blueprint for the long-term financial sustainability of municipal operations that could preserve the quality of life for Leesburg residents and businesses.

The boom years

From 2000 through 2005, the number of new housing starts in Leesburg averaged just over 600 annually, resulting in a 42 percent increase in housing units. During the same period, more than two million square feet of new commercial space was constructed, a 24 percent increase. After 2005, the number of new housing starts dropped dramatically, due to the absorption of nearly all residentially-zoned land. This unprecedented growth, coupled with rapidly rising property values, pushed total real estate assessments to nearly \$7 billion by 2007. Real estate assessments jumped upwards of 35

percent during that stretch. In order to keep pace with the population boom, the town incurred additional liabilities to meet the pressing demand for infrastructure improvements and municipal services. Analyzing development trends, town staff realized by 2007 that Leesburg was rapidly approaching build-out and would no longer continue to experience the same level of revenue growth.



The new normal

In preparation of the FY08 budget, and at the recommendation of town management, Town Council approved the creation a \$1.4 million Revenue Stabilization Reserve Fund, on top of the town's 15 percent unassigned fund balance reserve. The stabilization fund would provide additional financial resources in the face of build-out and moderating real estate revenues. As it turned out, these new fiscal policies were implemented at just the right time. When the housing bubble collapsed in the fall of 2008 and the recession's grip began to take hold, revenues began to decrease and continued their decline through 2010. Recognizing that the town faced the “new normal” faster than anticipated, Town Council included

the development of a long-term sustainable budget plan among its FY11 strategic goals. While previous management practices and fiscal policies had helped blunt the effects of the recession, Leesburg needed a new approach to the town budget – one that would balance finances while maintaining levels of service at a stable tax rate.

Adjusting course

In order to right the ship, the town took immediate action to get through the remainder of FY11 and prepare for the FY12 budget cycle. Recognizing that the debt obligations were a priority, the town's financial advisers made a series of recommendations that included a debt restructuring that would take advantage of low interest rates to reduce debt service payments through FY16. Although this action resulted in significant and immediate cost savings, additional actions were



Leesburg's long-range financial plan is kept front-and-center throughout the year, not just during budget deliberations at Town Hall.

required. Town leadership, having already reduced capital and other operating expenditures for the previous two budget years, made the difficult but necessary decision to reduce the size of the town's workforce. In February 2011, faced with a nearly

\$2 million budget gap, Town Council approved a Reduction-in-Force (RIF). Twenty-eight full-time positions and a number of part-time positions (7 percent of the town's total workforce) were eliminated.

Path to sustainability

The steps taken during FY11 set the stage for a new sustainable budget framework for the future. The hallmarks of the new budget process are stability and predictability. By taking the long view, Town Council and staff no longer make decisions on a year-to-year basis. Instead, the effect of decisions made in one budget cycle on future budgets is clearly identified. Leesburg's new long-term budget

framework consists of the following elements:

Two-year budget cycle. Beginning with the FY12 budget, town staff prepared and presented a two-year budget. In FY11, the Town Council adopted the FY12 budget and provisionally approved the FY13 budget. In FY12, the FY13 budget deliberations were limited to exceptions to the provisionally-approved budget. This two-year budget cycle requires the council and staff to manage to the second year of the budget based on revenue projections. In order to make the budget work, the town must make any needed hard decisions in the first year of the two-year budget cycle.

Six-year Capital Improvements Program. In order to align

the town's Capital Improvements Program with the state's transportation funding cycle and the Virginia Department of Transportation's Six-Year Plan, the town extended its CIP from a five-year program, to a six-year program. The town also scaled back the CIP, focusing on critical transportation, storm drainage and downtown projects.

Long-range pro forma. As a result of the debt restructuring, the town's debt service payments will be reduced by almost \$1.5 million per year, from FY14 through FY16. In FY17, debt service payments are projected to increase by \$2.5 million and then decline steadily over the next eight years. Finally, in FY25, debt service payments are projected to be less than when the debt restructuring took place. In order to show the overall effect of the debt restructuring on the budget, staff prepared a 15-year pro forma through FY26.

Capital asset replacement reserve. In the budgets for the first two years after the recession, the town saved money by delaying replacement of capital assets, such as vehicles, heavy equipment and building assets. Recognizing that these delays could not continue without serious repercussions, and per GFOA Best Practices, the town created a separate fund and allocates a specific amount each year as identified in the long-range pro forma towards the replacement of capital assets.

Debt service reserve. As a result of the debt restructuring that took place in FY11, the town originally expected to hold the tax rate steady through FY14. As debt service payments increase after that, an increase in the tax rate was anticipated. Because debt service payments are projected to rise above the \$5 million mark for seven years in row starting in FY17, the long-term pro forma required that the tax rate be increase by one penny in FY15, one penny in FY16, and three pennies in FY17 in order to meet the debt service obligations. The total amount for these seven years, above \$5 million each year, is just over \$10 million. To address the issue, the town established a Debt Service Reserve with a



Town staff realized by 2007 that Leesburg was rapidly approaching build-out and would no longer continue to experience the same level of revenue growth.

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County gave students involved in alcohol, drugs a second chance

AN ARLINGTON COUNTY program now offers a second chance for some teenagers caught using alcohol or drugs – a three-day session on substance abuse that takes the place of a mandatory school suspension or court hearing.

The Arlington initiative came as a number of school districts in the Washington region began re-evaluating their “zero tolerance” disciplinary policies, which provided little flexibility once a student was charged.

In a newspaper article about the launch of the program, Arlington Board member Mary Hynes described the lack of an alternative this way: “The consequences are so dire or life-altering that students and adults are afraid to engage those who might be able help.”

Beginning last fall, the Second Chance program was made available to students charged with a first offense of using alcohol or marijuana. To avoid a suspension – a punishment that often complicates a student’s academic future – students must bring a parent or guardian to the three-day session, where experts will detail the risks related to substance abuse. The program’s architects maintain that traditional punishments, like suspension and court involvement, are overly punitive and do little to change behavior.

The emphasis on early intervention and parental involvement rather than discipline followed the release of new data about drug and alcohol use among Arlington teens. Since 2000, the Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, has been administering the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to Arlington students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12. The partnership is comprised of a group of Arlington citizens and school and county staff charged by the County Board and the School Board to develop a consistent community agenda for Arlington’s children and families. The youth

risk behavior survey results over the past decade have shown that underage binge drinking and drug use is a serious problem in the community. This issue has consistently caught the attention of the partnership, as well as the Arlington Department of Human Services (DHS), Arlington Public Schools, the Community Services Board, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, the police and parents.

The results of the 2007 YRBS were particularly troubling. The survey showed that the percentage of Arlington students who were binge drinking was equal to or slightly higher than the national numbers. Even more disturbing was this trend: While the national numbers were falling, the numbers in Arlington were on the rise. In addition, the percentage of Arlington young people who reported alcohol use in the past 30 days exceeded that of all the surrounding jurisdictions. Addressing this problem became a major focus for all of the stakeholders in Arlington.

In 2008, the Arlington community took two major steps. First, the partnership received a five-year federal grant, which funded the creation of the Arlington READY (Reduce or Eliminate Alcohol and Drug Use by Youth) Coalition, whose goal is to significantly reduce and delay teen use of alcohol and other drugs. Second, the Public Health Division of DHS convened Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), a 10-year communitywide strategic planning initiative for improving community health. This public-private, comprehensive partnership determined that teen binge drinking was one of the five

major strategic issues that Arlington needed to address. A call for volunteers to develop a committee to tackle this issue yielded an overwhelming response. Clearly, the issue – and level of concern – resonated across all sectors of the community. Committee members ultimately included key stakeholders from the county, schools, juvenile courts, non-profits, police, parents, and substance abuse professionals. A member from both the School Board and County Board



signed on, too.

As part of the committee’s early work, it conducted 15 focus groups with patrol officers, school resource officers, assistant principals, school substance abuse counselors, juvenile-probation officers, parents, teens in treatment, teens in school leadership roles, teens on the partnership committees, teens in alternative schools, and PTAs. Interviews were conducted with Arlington County Board members, School Board members, the two juvenile court judges, the Commonwealth’s Attorney, the police chief and the fire chief. Those who participated in the focus groups and interviews agreed that the following two components must be addressed to effectively tackle the issue:

- There must be consistency across all sectors of the adult community in the treatment of young people who get caught, and
- Early intervention is crucial to prevent serious criminal activity, serious school implications and physical consequences.

As a result of the focus groups and interviews, the committee agreed that Arlington needed to develop

and implement an early intervention educational program for middle- and high-school students in the early stages of alcohol and drug use. Committee members did extensive research to learn about other similar programs. While it found plenty of diversion programs, none had gone through an evaluation process that showed effectiveness. The committee determined that it would need to develop its own program with its own curriculum, and subject it to scientific evaluation to objectively show its value.

Program development

As the committee set out to develop the program, there was universal agreement that it would be exclusively for Arlington middle- and high-school students, enrolled in either Arlington Public Schools or a private school, who get caught with alcohol or marijuana for the first time by school officials, the police, or their parents. Students could also self-refer. Rather than face school suspension or appearing in front of a juvenile court judge, students and their parents could instead choose to participate in this program. The committee also agreed that students who successfully complete the program would avoid school suspension, have nothing about the offense in their official school file, and would have no further court involvement. The program would be educational and not punitive, and students could participate only once. Should they get caught a second time, they would have to face the consequences. After establishing these foundations, the committee built the program and curriculum. Both were developed primarily by one of Arlington's high school substance abuse counselors, with assistance from a probation officer, the coordinator of the READY Coalition, and the head of a residential substance-abuse treatment facility. The result was the creation

of a three-day educational program for the students, a three-hour parent program, and a three-hour booster session for both students and parents (to be conducted six weeks after the initial sessions), each with its own set of lessons, resources and materials.

Second Chance is designed to educate teens about the

alcohol use and learn strategies for supporting their teen. The booster session serves as a follow-up to ensure that the teens and their parents are using the resources and skills learned from their earlier sessions. The program is held in an Arlington County firehouse and is operated under the auspices of Phoenix Houses of the Mid-Atlantic, a leading provider of substance-abuse services.

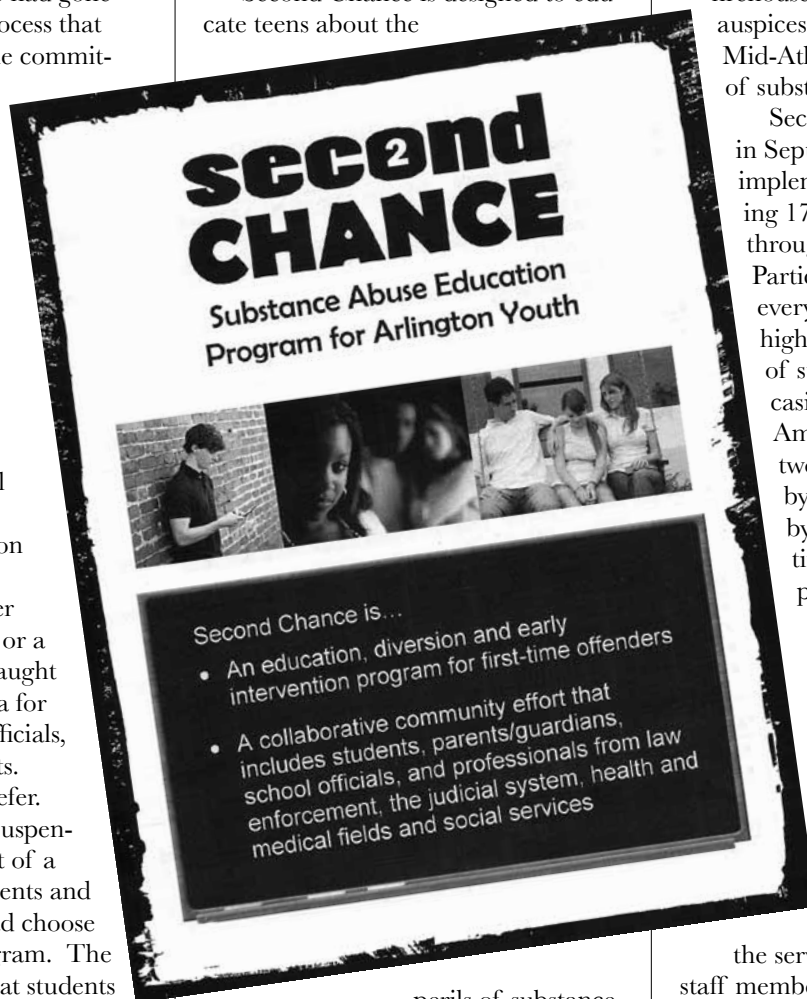
Second Chance was launched in September 2011. It has been implemented 20 times, serving 170 students in grades 7 through 12 and their parents. Participants have come from every Arlington middle and high school. The majority of students have been Caucasian, Hispanic or African-American; approximately two-thirds have been referred by the schools and one-third by the court; nearly three times as many males have participated than females.

Program staffing

The Partnership for Children, Youth and Families Foundation owns the Second Chance program and contracts with Phoenix Houses of the Mid-Atlantic to provide

the services. Two part-time staff members (each working 20 hours a week) run the program. Each component of the program is offered once per month. The teen program is held over three days, for eight hours per day. The parent program is three hours, and offered twice to accommodate parents' schedules: on the last evening of the teen program and the following Saturday morning. The booster session, held six weeks after the teen and parent sessions, is three hours. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, staff is responsible for interacting and following up with referral sources and participants, preparing paperwork, following through on correspondence, preparing for the three programs each month, and ensuring the provision of

Continues on page 23



perils of substance abuse. The curriculum is rich with information on refusal skills, adolescent brain development, making good choices, understanding positive and negative influences, and in-depth discussions on different aspects of substance abuse. Teens review their behaviors, relationships and knowledge to look for the links that led them to use substances, and participate in exercises that explore alternative behavior. There are also opportunities for the teens to hear from guest speakers with expertise in these areas. The parent program focuses on some of the same physiological effects of alcohol and drugs on the developing brain, but its primary focus is to help parents identify signs of drug or

City of Fairfax

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been asked, and then encouraging the public to engage in conversation with representatives from the city, Fairfax County and Fairfax Water.

Dialogue at the public outreach meetings was dynamic. More than 100 water customers and city residents asked pointed questions and raised concerns. Leaders responded frankly and thoroughly, which helped dispel misinformation and rumors. Public comment also was encouraged during public hearings held during three City Council meetings (March 12, March 26 and April 9).

Frequently Asked Questions.

During this process, information on the city's website was constantly reviewed, updated and expanded. One of the most dynamic tools in the information program was use of the Frequently Asked Questions section of the city's website, which featured three dozen questions based on inquiries and comments received from water customers at public outreach meetings, public hearings and during individual encounters (in-person, e-mail, mail, phone calls). These questions and answers began with the information included in the brochure then were updated frequently as the conversation between the city and the public evolved. The document was posted on the water web page and updated during the public outreach period. Questions were reviewed, answered and clarified. Every single question that was submitted to the city was answered and posted on the FAQs.

Joint statement. After six weeks of dialogue, the mayor and City Council were faced with a decision. That decision was announced in a joint statement issued as a news release entitled "City of Fairfax and Fairfax Water Enter Into a Win-Win Water Agreement." The decision also was announced on the city website and in the May 2013 *Cityscene*.

Reviewing, updating, clarifying

During this process, information on all of the city's communication resources was constantly reviewed,


updated and expanded as needed. Messages were sent out using Facebook and Twitter, directing the public to resources for information and reminding them of this myriad of public comment opportunities. The public did not use the city's social media presence to discuss the subject; rather, they used tried-and-true methods, including telephone, e-mail and conversation with city leaders.

City-owned signs that post government meeting information included water outreach and City Council meeting public comment opportunities. Additionally, signs were posted curbside in the days preceding outreach meetings. Information also was posted on the 24-hour bulletin board televised on Cityscreen-12, the city's television station.

Information source

The City of Fairfax generated all of the communications materials and was responsible for their content. Because Fairfax County and Fairfax Water were involved, all three parties reviewed the materials and were present at public discussions. In a very short time, water customers were drawn into a dialogue with city staff and leadership. City water customers were provided with an array of venues to have their opinions, comments, questions and concerns heard and discussed.

Conclusion

The city's decision to sell its decades-old and highly regarded water treatment system was monumental for a small community. The multi-faceted and integrated communications program provided a wealth of information using numerous tools to reach as many water customers as possible in a short time. In the end, this successful communications program made the difference between a community that could have been severely divided on the issue and one that was well-informed. 

Leesburg

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purpose to stockpile money from the amount in excess of the 15 percent fiscal reserve in the unassigned fund balance to cover the portion of debt service that exceeds \$5 million for the FY17 through FY23 budget years.

Managing for the long term

By FY13, the town had embarked down a path toward healthy financial reserves as a result of exercising fiscal prudence and sound management practices. With this long-term financial goal clearly outlined, every decision of the Town Council is now evaluated not on how it affects the current year's budget, but on how it affects the budgets for the next 10 years. This focus on the "out years" of the town's financial plan makes it easy to prioritize current demands on the budget. The financial plan has become a regular part of the Town Council's discussions and decision making.

An essential aspect of Leesburg's long-range financial plan is keeping the plan front-and-center throughout the year, not just during budget deliberations. The Town Council memorialized the plan and the accompanying changes to the town's fiscal policy and reserve funds in a series of council resolutions passed in March 2012. Having the council's commitment to the plan "on the record" provided greater transparency regarding the town's financial situation. In addition, good public information efforts, including meeting one-on-one with reporters, issuing press releases and posting budget information on the town's website, have contributed to wide acceptance and community buy-in of the long range financial plan.


Leadership for results

With the financial sustainability plan firmly in place, at the start of the FY14 budget process Leesburg found itself in the best financial condition since the outset of the recession in 2008. The town can report the following results:

- A balanced budget

- Cut projected tax increases in half
- Establishment of a debt service reserve fund
- Establishment of a capital asset reserve fund
- Maintained/enhanced long-term service viability
- Financial accountability and transparency
- Continued infrastructure and technological investments

Conclusion

Over the past five years, Leesburg has faced a near worst-case budget scenario, including a 20 percent drop in real estate tax assessments. When recovery proved slower and more modest than anticipated, the Town Council and staff took steps to avoid future financial roller coasters by creating a long-range financial plan. The key element to the on-going success of this long-range plan is the ability to clearly demonstrate the effect of current year budget decisions on future fiscal year budgets. Using the 15-year pro forma as a budget tool, the Town Council has a consistent means of exercising budget discipline. The temptation to make spending decisions that resolve short-term issues but create long-term problems is greatly reduced. The end result is that the town's long-range financial plan will provide Leesburg's residents and businesses with a government that lives within its means, keep its promises and provides affordable municipal services designed to enhance the quality of life for residents and businesses into the future. 



Arlington

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interpretation services when needed. Written marketing materials and the various documents used in conjunction with the parent program have been translated into Spanish. In any given month, the program can accommodate up to 20 participants, although the optimal number is not more than 16.

Preliminary results

Even without the completion and analysis of a full evaluation until this fall, Arlington has learned a great deal about the effect of Second Chance, both anecdotally and based on some preliminary data. The county also knows from both the schools and the courts that there is a low rate of recidivism. Anecdotally, many parents are reporting that the program empowered them to set boundaries, convey expectations and establish (or enhance) positive family communication. The program appears to give parents permission to hold their teen accountable for his/her actions and whereabouts. Several parents have indicated that the program gave them back their family. Students have commented that:

- “Second Chance was honestly one of the best things that happened to me.”
- “Second Chance taught lessons applicable to real teenage life.”
- “Second Chance made me realize who the positive and negative influences on me were.”

Of all the students who have been referred from Arlington Public Schools since the inception of the program, only a few have since been disciplined for a substance-related infraction. None of the participants have dropped out of school, and all of the program participants who were


seniors when they participated in the program last year graduated on time in June 2012.

The Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court reports that, during the first year of Second Chance implementation, 42 juveniles were charged with possession of marijuana; 27 cases were sent to court and 15 were diverted to Second Chance. In addition, 49 juveniles were charged with underage possession of alcohol; 41 cases were sent to court and eight were diverted to Second Chance. Particularly notable is that only one juvenile among these 23 diversion cases re-offended with an alcohol- or drug-related charge. Overall, of the 170 teens who have participated to date, fewer than 10 percent have had a repeat alcohol- or marijuana-related offense that resulted in either school suspension or having to go to court.

Funding

Funding for the initial two years of Second Chance was provided by Arlington County and the Century Council, a not-for-profit group funded by distillers and a leader in the fight against underage drinking – further evidence of the program's origins as a public-private partnership.

Starting in July, the program was jointly funded by the county, Arlington Public Schools and the Century Council. In addition, the Century Council is assisting with developing new marketing materials and designing and printing the curriculum. It also is providing technical support to develop and launch a website where parents and others can find more information about Second Chance, and other communities can learn how to implement the program.

It is important to note that Second Chance is beginning to bring some cost savings to its referral sources as well. As noted, the juvenile court is beginning to see significant changes in the number of teens diverted to Second Chance, thereby saving the county the need and associated costs of sending youth through the juvenile justice system. 

Cities, towns can benefit from electricity microgrids

THE NORTH AMERICAN electrical power system is a modern marvel. The National Academy of Engineering proclaims it is the single greatest engineering innovation of the 20th century, and it is widely considered the largest, most complex machine ever created by humankind. Over the course of a century or so, it has helped transform modern life – yet it is about to change dramatically.

Most people have read or heard about the smart grid but may not understand the effect of this coming revolution. A number of changes will be made to the electric power grid and it would take several books, rather than a brief article, to fully describe those changes. On a fundamental level, the grid is being upgraded to include the ability to collect immense amounts of operational data that can then be used for more advanced control of the power system.

These changes will improve grid reliability and allow easier interconnection of local power sources, such as large and small wind turbines, solar photovoltaic residential systems, large-scale battery systems for energy storage, and combined heat and power systems for large power consumers. The overall goal is to generate electrical power in a more efficient manner and to optimize the infrastructure needed to transmit that power to the locations where it will be used.

Why does this matter to municipalities?

It matters because innovation-based economic development is critical to attracting entrepreneurs and industry to localities. In a very complementary way to the manner that Virginia's Commonwealth Energy Fund seeks to support energy technology innovation, municipalities may consider creating microgrids needed by such energy technology firms.

Microgrids are smaller, more intelligent versions of the larger grid. They have local sources of power, the




Wiley|Wilson designed a 13.8kV campus power distribution system that used an automated intelligent piece of switchgear, the installation of which is shown here at a community college in Maryland.

ability for high-speed switching, and looped systems with the necessary intelligence for automated restoration. They can take the form of a single building, a business park, or even a city neighborhood.

Smart power infrastructure can support an entrepreneurial company's need for a highly reliable power source without forcing small businesses to invest the capital needed to construct such a system on their own. It also attracts like-minded companies into the same area, providing for added collaboration and synergy. Finally, a smart community as described provides these types of companies a ready test-bed for implementation of their created technology.

Of course, investment is required to re-construct and upgrade power system infrastructure to create microgrids. Such funding remains a challenge in today's economic situation and regional partnerships or collaboration with an electric utility may be required. Advantages may exist for Virginia municipalities that operate their own electric power systems since they own and operate the local electric grid.

It's an exciting time to be a power systems engineer. The electric grid that transformed our society over the past century is in the process of being transformed itself. That process will lead to even greater benefits for the state and the country – and Virginia towns and cities can be at the forefront. 

Firm contacts:

Stephen A. Bowman, PE
Vice President
Department Manager (Electrical)
434/455-3229

J. Frederick Armstrong, PE
Chairman and CEO
Lynchburg
434/947-1901.

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Longer version of job ads posted at www.vml.org

VML maintains a detailed listing of local government job openings on its website at <http://www.vml.org/JOBS/Jobs.html>.

Director of Operations, Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority

SALARY: Negotiable DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. RWSA is a regional, non-profit, public corporation that supplies wholesale drinking water and treats sewage for Charlottesville and parts of Albemarle County. Reqs. bachelor's degree in civil, environmental or sanitary engineering, or a related field and/or a degree in business or public admin., with min. 10 yrs. exper. of progressing responsibility in operation of a water and wastewater utility, including considerable exper. in supervising technical and operating staff. Prefer Va.-registered P.E. or a Va.-licensed certified water/wastewater operator or be capable of becoming licensed or certified within 12 mos. Send confidential resume with cover letter and present salary immediately to: Robert E. Slavin, President, Slavin Management Consultants, 3040 Holcomb Bridge Road, Suite A-1, Norcross, GA 30071. Phone: (770) 449-4656 or Fax: (770) 416-0848 or e-mail: slavin@bellsouth.net. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Finance, Richmond

SALARY: Negotiable up to \$153,875 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Lead Department of Finance. Under jurisdiction of the deputy chief administrative officer, the department is responsible for all financial transactions in conjunction with the city's \$760.5 million FY14 general fund budget. Submit cover letter, resume, salary history and 5 work-related references to: John A. Anzivino, Springsted Incorporated, 1564 E. Parham Road, Richmond, VA 23228-2360; Fax: 804-726-9752; e-mail: Richmond@springsted.com. Electronic submissions preferred. For a complete position profile, visit: www.springsted.com. Priority given to application materials submitted by Sept. 5. Open until filled. EOE.

Budget/Management Analyst, Hanover County

SALARY: \$40,492-\$48,000 hiring range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Monitors operating and capital bldgs. and perform ongoing bldgt. analysis. Provides support to county depts.; drafts sections of the annual bldgt. book; has responsibility for financial

system integration; develops presentations. Reqs. bachelor's degree and extensive computer skills with emphasis in Excel, Word and PowerPoint. Prefer budget or local govt. exper. More info and apply at www.hanovercountyjobs.com or call 804-365-6489. Open until filled. EOE.

Young Adult Librarian (Part-time), Falls Church

SALARY: \$26,060-\$42,999 DOQ/DOE (+) prorated benefits. This is a 20 hr. per week position – rotating hrs. to include at least 1 evening per week and 1 Saturday per month and occasional Sundays, plus morning and afternoon weekly hrs. Reqs. ALA accredited master's degree in Library Science (MLS) with a Va. certificate; min. 3 yrs. professional public library exper. in a youth services dept., with young adult exper. preferable. Submit resume or application to: City of Falls Church, Human Resources Division, 300 Park Ave., Falls Church, VA 22046, or via e-mail at hr@fallschurchva.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Library Assistant I (Part-time), Falls Church

SALARY: \$17.45 per hr. (+) prorated benefits. Will work 20 hrs. per week in Circulation Services at the Mary Riley Styles Library. Hrs. are flexible, but will include 1 evening per week and rotating Saturday and Sunday hrs. Reqs. 2 yrs. of college with some courses in library science preferred; exper. working at circulation desk in a public library. Submit resume or application to: City of Falls Church, Human Resources Division, 300 Park Ave., Falls Church, VA 22046, or via e-mail at hr@fallschurchva.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

IT Public Safety Specialist, Manassas

SALARY: \$49,795-\$82,160 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Provide first line hardware/software support to public safety personnel. Prefer familiarity with law enforcement applications (VCIN/NCIC, Computer Aided Dispatch, Netmotion VPN, and RMS), including security, user profiles, performance monitoring and tuning, hardware/software inventory and tape backup and recovery of systems. Microsoft MCP req'd (MCSA preferred). Reqs. bachelor's degree in IT or related field supplemented by 2 yrs. exper. utilizing computer technology; or any equiv. comb. of educ., training and exper. that provides the req'd knowledge, skills and abilities. To apply, complete city application at www.manassacity.org/jobs. Open until filled. EOE.

Public Services Librarian, Campbell County

SALARY: \$35,080-\$39,087 start range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Performs general reference services, programming, and technology teaching, among other duties. Ideal candidate will be well-rounded, demonstrate excellent customer and team skills. Reqs. min. of a master's degree in library science (or enrollment therein) and 3 yrs. relevant exper. Position reqs. occasional evening and Saturday work. Reqs. completion of county application available at www.campbellcountyva.gov. Deadline: Aug. 30. EOE.

Human Resources Manager, Caroline County

SALARY: \$49,892-\$58,252 start range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Responsibilities include: recruitment and selection, employee relations, benefits administration, analysis and recommendations on county policies and procedures, employee classification and compensation program and insurance liability programs. Reqs. relevant bachelor's degree from accredited college supplemented by 5 yrs. progressively responsible public sector personnel mngmnt. exper., or any equiv. comb. of training and exper. that provides the req'd knowledge, skills and abilities. Prefer SPHR/PHR certification. Submit a completed county application, resume and cover letter to: Alan Partin, Assistant County Administrator, P.O. Box 447, Bowling Green, VA 22427; (804) 633-5380. Applications available from the County Administrator's Office or online at www.visitcaroline.com. Deadline: Sept. 2. EOE.

Planner (Planning & Inspections), Staunton

SALARY: \$36,102-42,000 anticipated hiring range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Perform professional work including oversight of the city's Corridor Overlay District; analysis of zoning and special use permit proposals; report preparation and presentations; interpretation of demographics, construction and community design, level of service and resource impact; and interpretation and administration of development regulations, city plans and policies. Reqs. educ. and exper. equiv. to a bachelor's degree in planning or related field with proven ability to analyze data, manage special projects, meet deadlines and communicate effectively. Apply at www.staunton.va.us. Anticipated start date is Nov. 4. Deadline: Aug. 30. EOE.

Police Officer, Warsaw

SALARY: DOQ/DOE. Duties entail full police services to the community. Reqs. current Va. Law Enforcement Certification. Must meet min. employment criteria set forth in §15.2-1705 of the Code of Va. Applications may be picked up at the Town of Warsaw Robert W. Lowery municipal building, 78 Belle Ville Lane, Warsaw, VA 22572. For information, contact Chandra Johnson at 804-333-3737. Open until filled. EOE.

Interim Town Manager, Exmore

SALARY: \$55,000-\$75,000 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. (Pop, 1,460) The interim manager of this Eastern Shore town may be a candidate for the permanent position, for which an executive search firm will be used. Reqs. a bachelor's degree (master's preferred) and 2-5 yrs. exper. in local govt. administration. Must demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities in finance, public utilities, planning and zoning, as well as project management. Submit a resume/CV, cover letter and 5 professional references to: eparks@exmore.org or mail to: Town Clerk, P.O. Box 647, Exmore, VA 23350. Position available after Sept. 12. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Finance, Louisa County

SALARY: DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. (Pop. 33,000; 500 sq. miles) Responsible for the strategic leadership of the Department of Finance. Located between Fredericksburg, Charlottesville and Richmond in the heart of Central Virginia, Louisa is an award-winning county and a destination location for outdoor enthusiasts, boaters and fishermen. In addition to agri-business, wineries, and forestry, the county also features an airpark, aquatic center, active Chamber of Commerce and fully accredited public schools. For complete position details, visit www.louisacounty.com. To be considered, a completed Louisa County Employment Application is required. Open until filled. EOE.

Public Works Director, Buena Vista

SALARY: \$58,795-\$68,484 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. (Pop. 6,500) Seeking energetic, engaged, customer-focused person for position that reports directly to the city manager and serves as a member of city's management team. Preferred candidate will have a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and be a state-licensed P.E. Reqs. min. of a bachelor's degree in public admin., environmental science or related field supplemented by min. 3 yrs. exper. as a public works director, assistant

director or other similar position. Send resume and complete state application for employment to: Jay Scudder, City Manager, City of Buena Vista, ATTN: Public Works Director, 2039 Sycamore Ave., Buena Vista, VA 24416. Deadline: Aug. 30. EOE.

Code Compliance Inspector, Winchester

SALARY: \$37,419-\$59,883 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Conducts regular and special inspections of properties for compliance with legal standards. Interprets and applies city and state codes; testifies in court for prosecution of code violations; assists with the administration of the zoning ordinance. Reqs. H.S. diploma or GED equiv. (associate's degree preferred), with considerable exper. in the construction trades. Must obtain and maintain a Property Maintenance Inspector Certificate from the VBHCD within 1 yr. of appointment, as provided in the Virginia Certification Standards. More info and apply at www.winchesterva.gov. Open until filled. EOE.

Director of Finance and Administration, Manassas

SALARY: \$106,828-\$176,300 DOQ/DOE (+) benefits, including VRS. Manage complex municipal financial operation encompassing a \$330 million bdtg. and accounting, budget, information technology, purchasing and risk management functions. Reqs. master's degree in business, public admin. or accounting or related field; supplemented by 7 yrs. progressively responsible mngmnt. exper. in local govt. finance and administration; or any equiv. comb. of educ. and exper. that provides the req'd knowledge, skills and abilities to perform wide range of functions assigned to the position. Prefer CPA and thorough knowledge of GASB guidelines and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles related to public sector financial mngmnt. Submit letter of application, detailed resume with salary history and 5 work-related references to: John A. Anzivino, Senior Vice President, Springsted Incorporated, 1564 E. Parham Road, Richmond, VA 23228; Fax 804-726-9752 or e-mail: richmond@springsted.com. Preference given to applications received by Aug. 29. More info at www.springsted.com or www.manassascity.org. Open until filled. EOE.

Assistant Director of Public Works, Fredericksburg

SALARY: \$71,449-\$86,232 start range (+) benefits. Responsible for water and wastewater operations under general

supervision of the director of public works. Reqs. bachelor's degree in public admin., engineering, environmental science or other relevant field supplemented by 5 yrs. of responsible exper. in public utilities operations and administration, or an equiv. comb. of educ., training and exper. that provides the req'd knowledge, skills and abilities. Prefer Va.-registered P.E. or ability to qualify for such designation within negotiated period. To apply, submit city application, cover letter and resume. Application and more info at www.fredericksburgva.gov or contact the HR Department at 715 Princess Anne St., Room 217, Fredericksburg, VA 22401; (540) 372-1028. Deadline: Aug. 30. EOE.

Superintendent of Public Works, Fredericksburg,

SALARY: \$62,779-\$76,202 start range DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Manages the daily operations of the City Shop, including street maintenance and sanitation, traffic signals and signs, fleet maintenance, refuse and recycling collection, tree maintenance, drainage, water distribution and sanitary sewer collection/transmission. Reqs. a vocational/technical diploma in engineering technology, utility management or other relevant field plus 6-9 yr. of responsible exper. in public works and/or utilities construction/maintenance. Application and more info at www.fredericksburgva.gov or contact the HR Department at 715 Princess Anne St., Room 217, Fredericksburg, VA 22401; (540) 372-1028. Deadline: Aug. 30. EOE.

Public Safety Communications Center Manager, Hampton

SALARY: Negotiable DOQ/DOE (+) benefits. Coordinates, manages and directs operations for the E911 Public Safety Communications Center, which provides emergency and non-emergency communications services. Reqs. bachelor's degree (master's preferred) in public admin., business admin., communications or a related field and min. 5 yrs. exper. working in a 911 Call Center environment; min. 3 yrs. progressive supervisory exper., preferably in an emergency communications call center. More info and apply at www.hampton.gov/hire. Deadline: Aug. 30. EOE.


SUBMITTALS: *Submit ads as text files via e-mail to David Parsons at dparsons@vml.org. VML posts job ads on its website at no cost to its local government members. Non-members are charged a flat rate of \$25 per ad, which includes a listing in the VML eNews newsletter and publication in Virginia Town & City (deadlines permitting). VML edits position descriptions in printed publications because of space limitations.*



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State should shoulder share of teacher retirement liability

VIRGINIA LOCAL governments with school divisions are about to be saddled with more than \$15 billion in unfunded liabilities for the teacher retirement plan as a result of new standards adopted by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

Without some help from the General Assembly next session, these local governments will pay a steep price for 20 years worth of decisions they didn't make. The General Assembly can help if it chooses, but is unlikely to act unless local governments make their case forcefully.

The new accounting standards affect how liabilities are calculated and reported. The upshot is that liabilities will be recognized more quickly and the calculation of their cost will be much more affected by the volatility of the stock market.

Further, for the first time, GASB creates standards regarding the reporting of unfunded liabilities of cost-sharing plans. A cost-sharing plan is one in which participating government employers pool their assets and their obligations for a defined benefit pension. Virginia's teacher retirement plan is a cost-sharing plan.

The liabilities for the school divisions will officially show up on local financial statements in FY15, and will be based on the FY14 valuation.

The Virginia Retirement System, however, has to comply with the new standards a year earlier. The valuation done this fall, based on FY13 financial information, therefore, will be available to bond rating agencies and others on an unofficial basis a year earlier than local governments are actually required to make these disclosures. There is no doubt that the information will be used by the bonding agencies.

GASB requires that the unfunded liability must be apportioned among the participating employers that pay

the retirement contributions to the pension plan. In Virginia, teachers are employees of the school boards, which send retirement contributions to VRS.

Even though the contributions are funded by the state and the school board, under the new GASB rules, the unfunded liability falls solely on the school boards. In Virginia that means that the liability will be shown on the city, county or town financial statement.

These liabilities had not been previously reported on local financial statements, as there were no procedures for apportioning the unfunded liabilities. They had been shown, however, in footnotes on financial statements for the teacher retirement plan.

The liability will be apportioned among the school divisions based on each division's percent of payroll.

The school division most affected is Fairfax County, whose payroll is 17.5 percent of the payroll for teachers statewide. Were these standards in place right now, the county would have to show this additional \$2.7 billion in unfunded liabilities on its comprehensive financial statement.

There is no doubt that these added liabilities will affect some local government bond ratings.

Here are a handful of reasons why localities should not have to bear full responsibility for the unfunded liability of the teacher retirement plan:

- The state sets standards that require a minimum number of teachers and shares in the cost of salaries.
- For more than 20 years the state has chosen to fund the teacher retirement plan at rates below those recommended by the VRS Board of Trustees.
- Up until the last few years, the state also expanded retirement benefits by decreasing age and service requirements, allowing for purchase of service, and requiring health insur-


ance credits, to name just a few.

- The General Assembly sets many of the retirement benefits, including requirements that retirement, group life insurance and health insurance credits are offered.

- The unfunded liability should be a shared responsibility just as salaries and benefits are a shared responsibility.

Consistent underfunding, benefit increases and investment losses have led to the magnitude of the shortfall of the teacher retirement plan, which has only about 60 percent of the assets needed to pay its liabilities.

VML's Finance Policy Committee supports legislation to have the state pay its share of teacher retirement costs directly to the Virginia Retirement System. This would mean that a portion (about 35 percent statewide) of the unfunded liability would be assigned to the state. The effect on a specific locality will vary widely. The VML Legislative Committee will consider this proposal at its September meeting. If approved by the committee, the membership will have the opportunity to debate and vote on it at the business meeting on Oct. 15 in Arlington County.

In the meantime, local governments need to sit down with their legislators and explain how taking on added pension liability will aggravate their financial situation. And while they're at it, local officials can remind senators and delegates of their moral commitment to the teacher retirement system, not to mention the state and local partnership that pays for K-12 education. 



About the author
Mary Jo Fields is the director of research for VML.

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