Meet Our 2024-25 Youth Council

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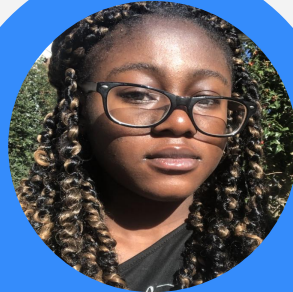
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Meet Our 2024-25 Youth Council

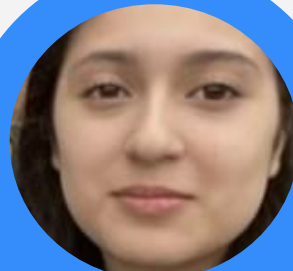
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Our Time Together

1 About the Youth Council

2 Our Activities

3 Learning....by Design

4 Exploring Our Topics

5 Breakout Conversations

6 Bringing it back together

Youth Council Overview

Youth Council Overview

The Alexandria City Youth Council started as a pilot program three years ago as an opportunity for students to engage in the community, leadership, and philanthropy.

Since then we've had several Discovery Projects, helped organize Spring2ACTion, and organized a grantmaking project!

The Discovery Project gives a voice to the youth to speak on issues that we face. Spring2ACTion allowed us a greater opportunity to engage the community in giving and supporting local efforts. Grantmaking helped support local nonprofits centered around important youth issues.

Recruitment

This Year's Recruitment Process:
- Hosted an Interest Meeting
- Collected applications from Alexandria youth
- Conducted interviews
- Reviewed applications anonymously
- Followed up via email

New Member Criteria:
- Be a high school student who is a resident of Alexandria (City of/Alexandria Fairfax County)
- Currently in 9th-11th grade
- Must be able to commit 10 hours per month

Advocacy

Child, Youth, & Families Collaborative Commission (CYFCC) presentation

- **Youth Engagement:**
  - Transportation
  - Recognize value of our time and contributions (stipends)
  - Scheduling flexibility
  - Importance of seeing ourselves in the work and having a voice
  - Avenues to express creativity

- **Promoting Youth Volunteerism:**
  - Social Media
  - Verifying volunteering across programs
  - Time management
  - Available and accessible

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Spring2ACTion

Have you heard of or participated in Spring2ACTion?
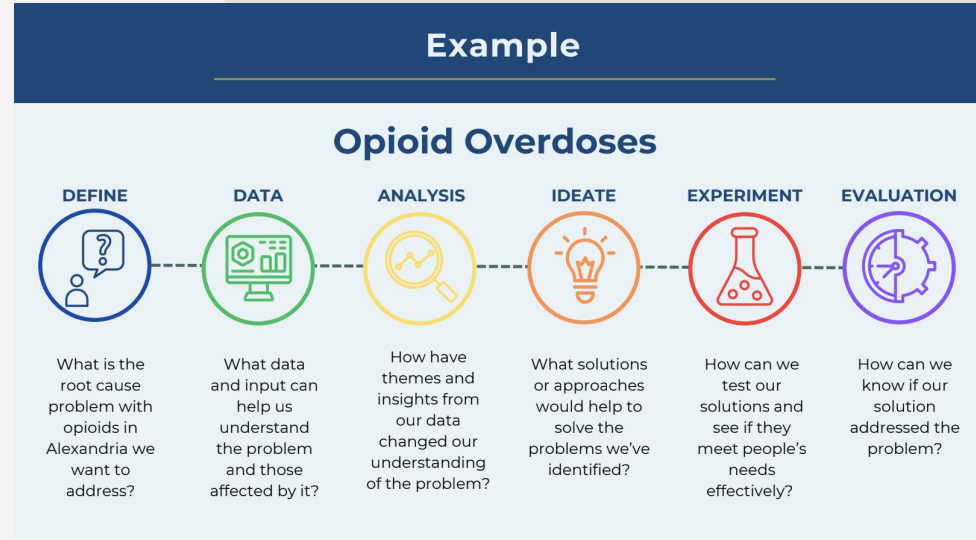
This year...

- Over **3,000,000** dollars were raised

- As a youth council we helped promote Spring2ACTion by having and decorating a table at the ALX Dog Walk

Our Learning

1. Educate ourselves on various topics

2. Held a zoom meeting with presenters

3. Defined our problem using the 5 Whys method

4. Collected data

5. Brought in speakers

6. Currently on data gathering and analysis
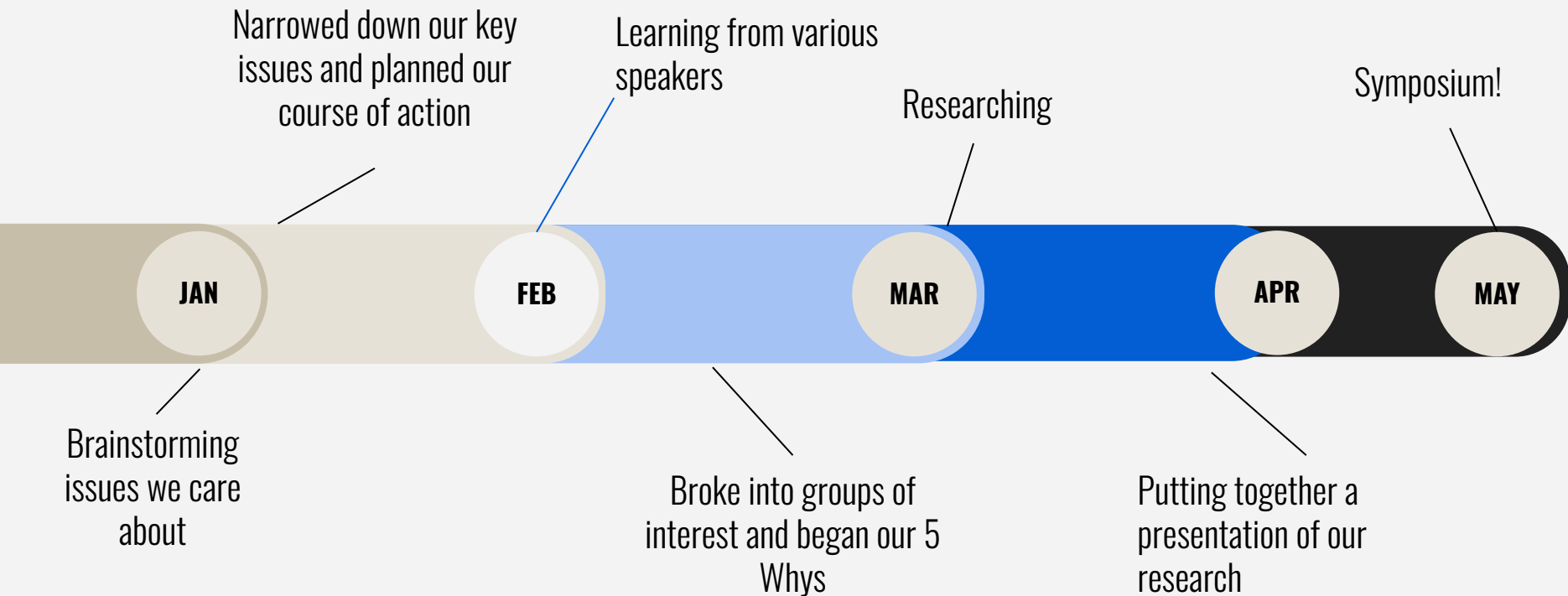
7. Continuing in the rest of the year

The Design Process

Example

Opioid Overdoses

DEFINE
What is the root cause problem with opioids in Alexandria we want to address?

DATA
What data and input can help us understand the problem and those affected by it?

ANALYSIS
How have themes and insights from our data changed our understanding of the problem?

IDEATE
What solutions or approaches would help to solve the problems we've identified?

EXPERIMENT
How can we test our solutions and see if they meet people's needs effectively?

EVALUATION
How can we know if our solution addressed the problem?

Timeline of Youth Council Initiatives

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Narrowed down our key issues and planned our course of action

Learning from various speakers

Researching

Symposium!

JAN **FEB** **MAR** **APR** **MAY**

Brainstorming issues we care about

Broke into groups of interest and began our 5 Whys

Putting together a presentation of our research

Substance Abuse: Alexandria Youth

2025 ACT Youth Council

Rationale

The Youth Council noticed the prevalence of substance abuse within the youth of Alexandria and the impact it has on our community. We wanted to raise awareness and address the dangers/consequences of substance abuse to help our youth lead healthier lives.

We wanted to take some time to inform others of preventative measures, methods of intervention, and resources for treatment/recovery.

Overview: 5 Whys

Why is there increased marijuana use in schools?
- There is increased access to Marijuana for youth.

Why is there increased access to marijuana for youth?
- Marijuana is more readily available due to less restrictive laws

Why are marijuana laws becoming less restrictive?
- Legalization among state laws have been increasing

Why is marijuana being legalized in more places?
- People are shifting to a more accepting viewpoint about Marijuana use

Why has public opinion shifted toward supporting legalization?
- Coping Mechanisms/ Mental health
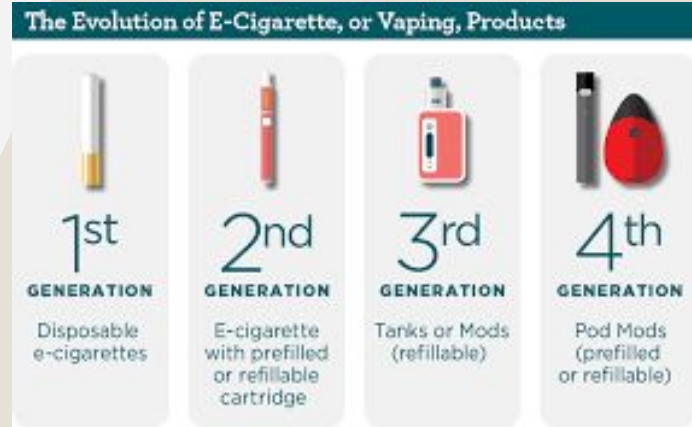 - Youth need better coping mechanisms

What is Substance Abuse?

Definition of Substance Abuse: Excessive use of psychoactive drugs, such as alcohol, pain medications, or illegal drugs. It can lead to physical, social, or emotional harm.

Nicotine: A natural, highly addictive chemical compound found in tobacco plants. It is the main ingredient in cigarettes and electronic cigarettes (vapes).

Marijuana (Cannabis): A psychoactive drug that comes from the dried leaves and flowers of the cannabis plant. It contains the THC compound which is responsible for the intoxicating effects.

E-cigarettes (vapes): Battery operated devices that heat a liquid typically containing nicotine and artificial flavors which creates an aerosol.

- Vaping is the action of inhaling the aerosol

The Evolution of E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Products

1st GENERATION
Disposable e-cigarettes

2nd GENERATION
E-cigarette with prefilled or refillable cartridge

3rd GENERATION
Tanks or Mods (refillable)

4th GENERATION
Pod Mods (prefilled or refillable)

Age Demographics

Alexandria:

- 9% of 8th graders, 11% of 10th graders, and 19% of 12th graders reported regularly using **marijuana**.

- 6% of 8th graders, 11% of 10th graders, and 13% of 12th graders reported regularly using **e-cigarettes**.
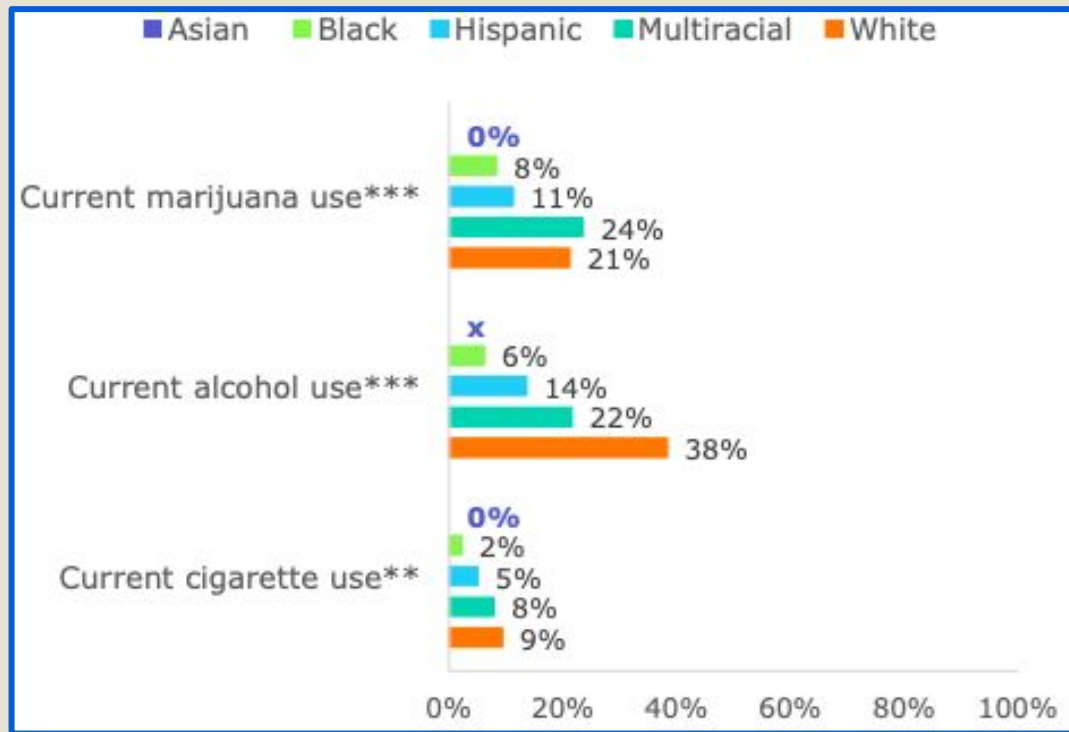
General:

- Males are more likely to use nicotine products than Females (20% men and 14% women in the United States)

- The majority of smokers begin before the age of 18

Racial Demographics

From the Alexandria
Youth Risk Behavior
Survey in 2023:

Misconceptions

True or False!

Only hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin are addictive   FALSE

Prescription drugs are as addictive as street drugs   TRUE

People struggling with substance abuse can stop at any given time   FALSE

It can take a month or longer to get marijuana out of your system   TRUE

It's easy to pick a person with an addiction out of the crowd   FALSE

You have to use "tough love" to help people with their addiction   FALSE

Why Do Teens Do Drugs?

- Enjoyment
- Coping Mechanism
  - i.e, stress, life, depression, mental health
- Social Acceptance
- Boredom

It is estimated that over ***30%*** of marajuana users use to cope with depression.

Resources & Coping

- Healthy coping mechanisms lessen adverse mental health challenges
- Common coping mechanisms include social support, connecting with spirituality, and exercising

Current Resources
- Teen Wellness Center
  - Available to anyone living in Alexandria City aged 12-19
- Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition
- Virgina Teen Addiction Hotline
- (Youth Help!)YHELP! Scholar and YHELP! Wellness Club
- Embark Behavioral Health*

Other Districts

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Arlington

- **Substance Abuse Counselors:**
  - Intervene, build relationships, identify risk factors, referrals, educate.
- **Smoke-Free Parks:**
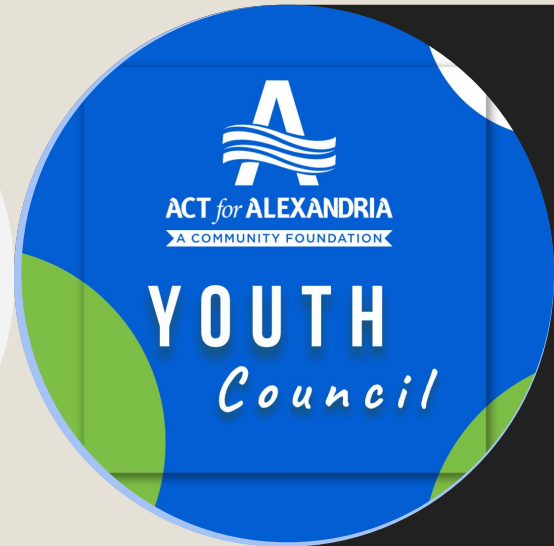 - Signs banning smoking in public parks

Alexandria

- **Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA):**
  - An alliance with the goal of reducing underage substance abuse.
- **Online Resources**
- **Vape detectors in ACHS bathrooms**
  - Send security to bathrooms

Fairfax

- **Substance Abuse Prevention Program (SAP):**
  - Meetings during school to identify course of action
- **Online Information:**
  - Resources for seeking help on Fairfax county and FCPS website targeting parents in supporting students.
- **Tobacco Free Play Zones**

Why Healthcare?

- Healthcare is a basic human need that everyone deserves, but doesn't have access to

- There are still major factors in Alexandria that contribute to this inequity

- We wanted to explore how our city can improve on making healthcare accessible to everyone

Our 5 Whys

Presenting Questions: Why Doesn't Our Community Know About Resources?

1. Community does not know where to find information
2. Lack of connection between city officials and individuals in need of these resources
3. City website is hard to navigate
4. Not prioritized because there is not enough advocacy
5. Those more influenced by these issues are not as involved in city policy or how possible resources should be presented. (e.g., language barriers)

Healthcare Statistics

Healthcare Statistics

- Age has been one of the greatest factors when looking at who can access healthcare: Older adults in Virginia had higher rates of routine check ups than the national average (2022).

- Language Barriers: 31.9% of Alexandria City Residents speak a language other than English—double the state average.

- Race & Insurance: Most uninsured Virginians were White non-Hispanic (37.8%) , followed by Hispanic (30.5%), Black (19.0%), Asian/Pacific Islander (6.3%) and multuracial (6.4%) . Hispanic virginians were uninsured at higher rates at 21.2%.

- Avoidable deaths due to lack of insurance and resources: two out of three premature deaths in Alexandria City were avoidable.

Available Options

Available Health Options

1) Teen wellness center(now known as Virginia Insurance Marketplace)
2) Obama Care
3) FAIMS - Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan
4) Medicaid + Medicare
5) Handicap parking access
6) Healthcare providers
7) Dental/Vision/Hearing program
8) On the website there is an Alexandria Health Department drop down menu when you look up anything related to health!

Drop down menu:

ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Alexandria Health Department

City Health Topics ⌄

Health Clinics

Vital Records

Environmental Health

Disease Reporting

Public Health Emergency Management
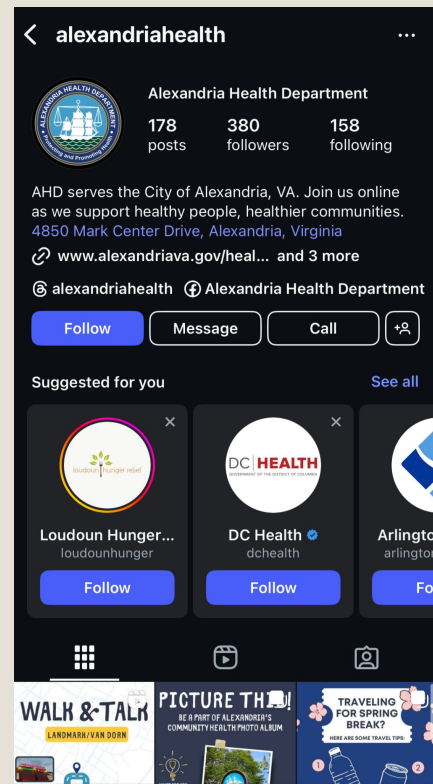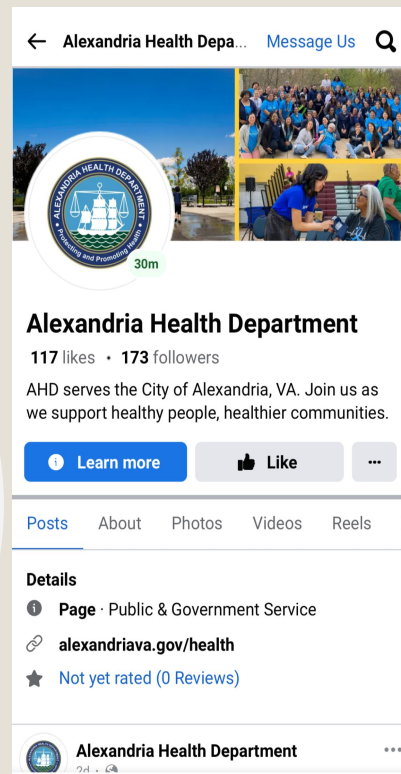
Medical Reserve Corps

Health Department News

Ways to Find Information

How Have Affordable Healthcare Options Been Advertised?

Alexandria City Health Department

- Has both a Facebook and Instagram account

- Posts include educational messages, community opportunities, and health related statistics in Alexandria

- Almost completely in english

- Not much engagement:
  - Instagram: >300 followers, about 10-20 likes per post
  - Facebook: 170 followers, 1-5 likes per post

Alexandria Health Depa...   Message Us

Alexandria Health Department
117 likes · 173 followers

AHD serves the City of Alexandria, VA. Join us as we support healthy people, healthier communities.

Learn more   Like   ...

Posts   About   Photos   Videos   Reels   M

Details
Page · Public & Government Service
alexandriava.gov/health
Not yet rated (0 Reviews)

Alexandria Health Department
2d

alexandriahealth

Alexandria Health Department
178 posts   380 followers   158 following

AHD serves the City of Alexandria, VA. Join us online as we support healthy people, healthier communities.
4850 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia
www.alexandriava.gov/heal... and 3 more
alexandriahealth   Alexandria Health Department

Follow   Message   Call

Suggested for you   See all

Loudoun Hunger...   DC Health   Arlingto
loudounhunger   dchealth   arlington
Follow   Follow   Fo

How Have Affordable Healthcare Options Been Advertised?

https://neighborhoodhealthva.org/our-locations/

According to their website, Neighborhood Health's mission is to improve health and advance health equity in Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax by providing high quality primary care regardless of ability to pay. They offer affordable primary care and pharmaceutical services, with 8 locations in Alexandria. In 2023-2024, they cared for over 42,000 patients and filled over 29,000 free/low cost prescriptions.

Neighborhood Health

- Has an Instagram account and website

- Instagram has over 2000 posts and over 1300 followers

- Instagram is mostly english, but website is translatable to many languages

Neighborhood
Health
Your Health. Our Passion.

How Have Affordable Healthcare Options Been Advertised?

https://www.alexandriava.gov/hub/public-health-and-wellness

The City Website

- Only takes 2 clicks to reach healthcare information

- Translatable to many languages

- Most pages have been updated in the last year and the links are valid

How Have Affordable Healthcare Options Been Advertised?

The Teen Wellness Center is a program that provides no cost health care to all teens living in Alexandria. They have 2 locations at the Minnie Howard and King Street campuses of ACHS, and offer free physicals, immunizations, reproductive health services, and more.

Teen Wellness Center

- Does not have a social media; website connected to cities

- Outreach through community events and word of mouth

- Has a difficult time finding opportunities for outreach

Transportation Barriers

Transportation Barriers to Healthcare Access

Car Access:

- 50.2% of Alexandria residents drive alone, while 12.7% use public transportation as of 2023
- The median income for Alexandria is $113,638 while the West End's median income is $97,296, making it hard to afford a car.

Walking Distance:

- Neighborhood Health at Martha Custis Dr. is a 0.5–1 mile walk from nearby apartments short walk for local residents(DASH routes 36A,36B,103)
- Inova Alexandria Hospital can be a 56 minute walk away or 25 minute DASH transit for some Alexandrians.

DASH Bus System:

- Neighborhood Health at Mark Center is well connected via Route 35.
- Inova Cares in Mt.Vernon can be harder for people in Old Town to access via DASH

MetroAccess Paratransit

- Eligibility is confirmed by appointment, it is not free($4.50 or less), use is determined by closeness to Metro-accessible spots, and all rides are by appointment only.
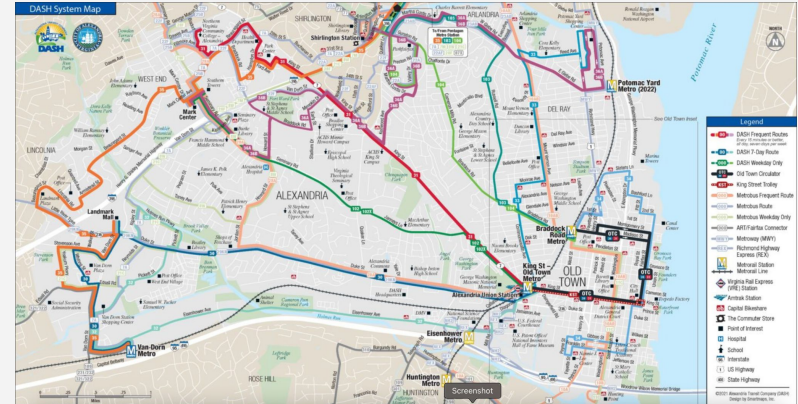
Challenges We Ran Into

- Limited data
- Outdated sources
- Calculating distance from clinics

- Understanding how free transit can impact healthcare access
- Lack of human impact data

Takeaways

- Accessible healthcare is more than a cost

- Age, race, insurance, or language can harm a person's ability to access healthcare

- While healthcare programs are available, a lack of usability and awareness prevents information from getting to those who need it

- There's a disconnect between in-person and digital outreach

- Physical distance increases healthcare inaccessibility for people without stable/personal transportation
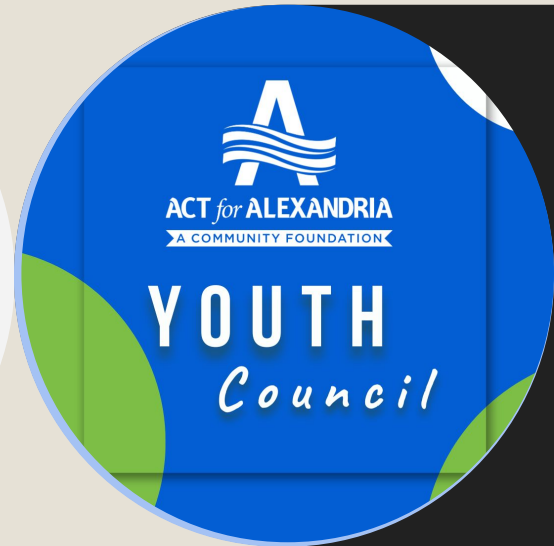
Why Housing?

- Housing is a basic human need

- Housing is just like infrastructure

- Alexandria has a very competitive housing market

- We wanted to research ways that our city tries to combate this

- Find ways to help renting in Alexandria become increasingly affordable.

Our 5 Whys

Presenting Questions: Why Doesn't Our Community Know About Resources?

1. Community does not know where to find information
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5. Those more influenced by these issues are not as involved in city policy or how possible resources should be presented. (e.g., language barriers)

Housing Statistics

Overall Housing Stats

- 66% of people younger than 25 have either a Bachelor's degree or higher (combined)

- Bachelor's degree earn $85k

- To rent a 1 bedroom apartment, need to make more than $86,000

- Excluding people who even have a bachelor's degree

What can contribute to Housing Instability?

Unanticipated job changes, including loss of hours

Changes in family relationships, which can result in loss of income and/or housing

Changes in personal health conditions or the health of a family member

Poor housing conditions, which can impact health and result in loss of income

Unexpected new expenses (ex. loss of vehicle which impacts access to employment or childcare)

High costs and fees, including utility costs, condo fees, special assessments, and new fees

Annual rent increases that exceed annual increases in wages

Disabling conditions, which can limit job opportunities

Landlords

How do Landlords play a role in housing?

- set rental prices
- determining tenant selection criteria

How have recent events affected the rental market?

- In 2023, 60% couldn't afford a two-bedroom apartment
- Covid
- Increased competition for available units
- Housing Affordability Index lows

1 Stable income

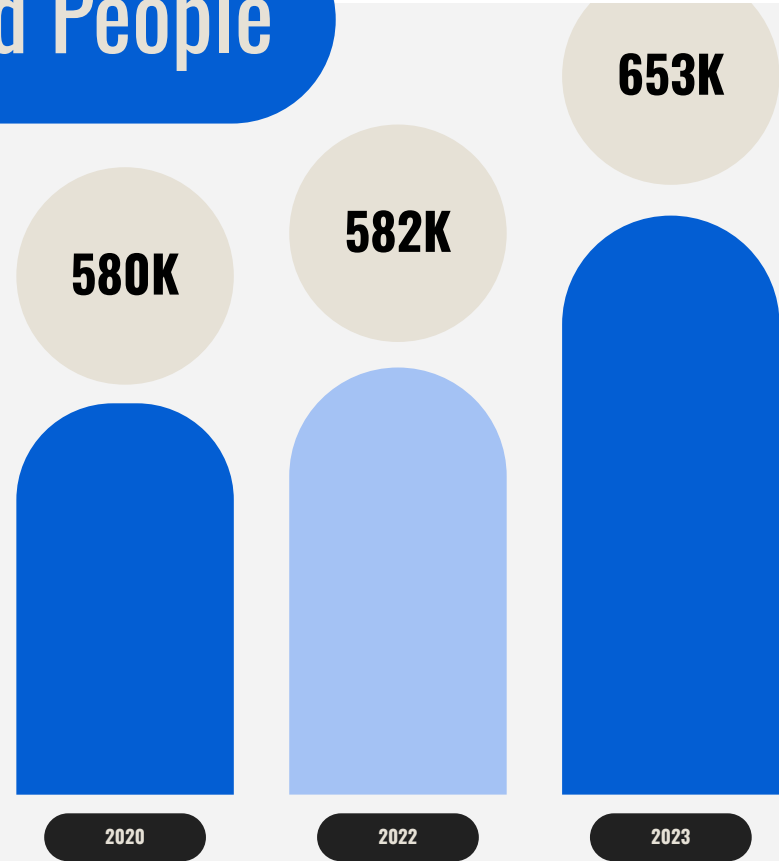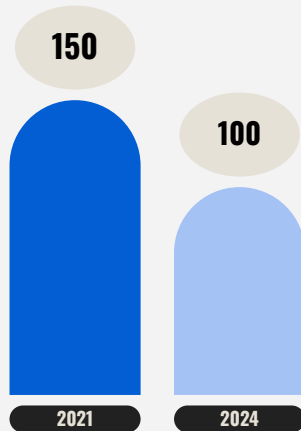**2** Good credit

3 Positive rental history

4 No payment assistance

Available Options

Available Housing Options

1) **Housing Choice Voucher Program**
   - 16-28 month wait period
   - Almost 11,000 people on the waitlist
2) **ARHA Public Housing**
   - Income limits to 80% of AMI for low income and 50% of AMI for very low income
   - Almost 9,000 people on the waitlist
3) **Department of Human and Community Services**
   - Serves 40,000 Alexandria City residents annually
4) **Virginia Homeless Solutions Program**
5) **HUD**

Drop down menu:

OFFICE OF HOUSING

Housing Homepage

Housing Master Plan & Regional Housing Initiative

News & Announcements

Renter Resources

Homeowner Resources

Homebuyer Resources

Landlord & Property Manager Resources

Developer Resources

Affordable Housing Projects and Partners

ARHA Redevelopment Projects

Publications, Reports & Videos

Housing Boards & Committees

Ways to Find Information

How Have Housing Accessibility Options Been Advertised?

https://www.alexandriava.gov/housing/affordable-housing-projects-and-partners#:~:text=The%20City%20partners%20with%20a,Housing%20Authority%2C%20and%20private%20developers.

The City Website

- Third result when searching "housing"
- Translatable to many languages
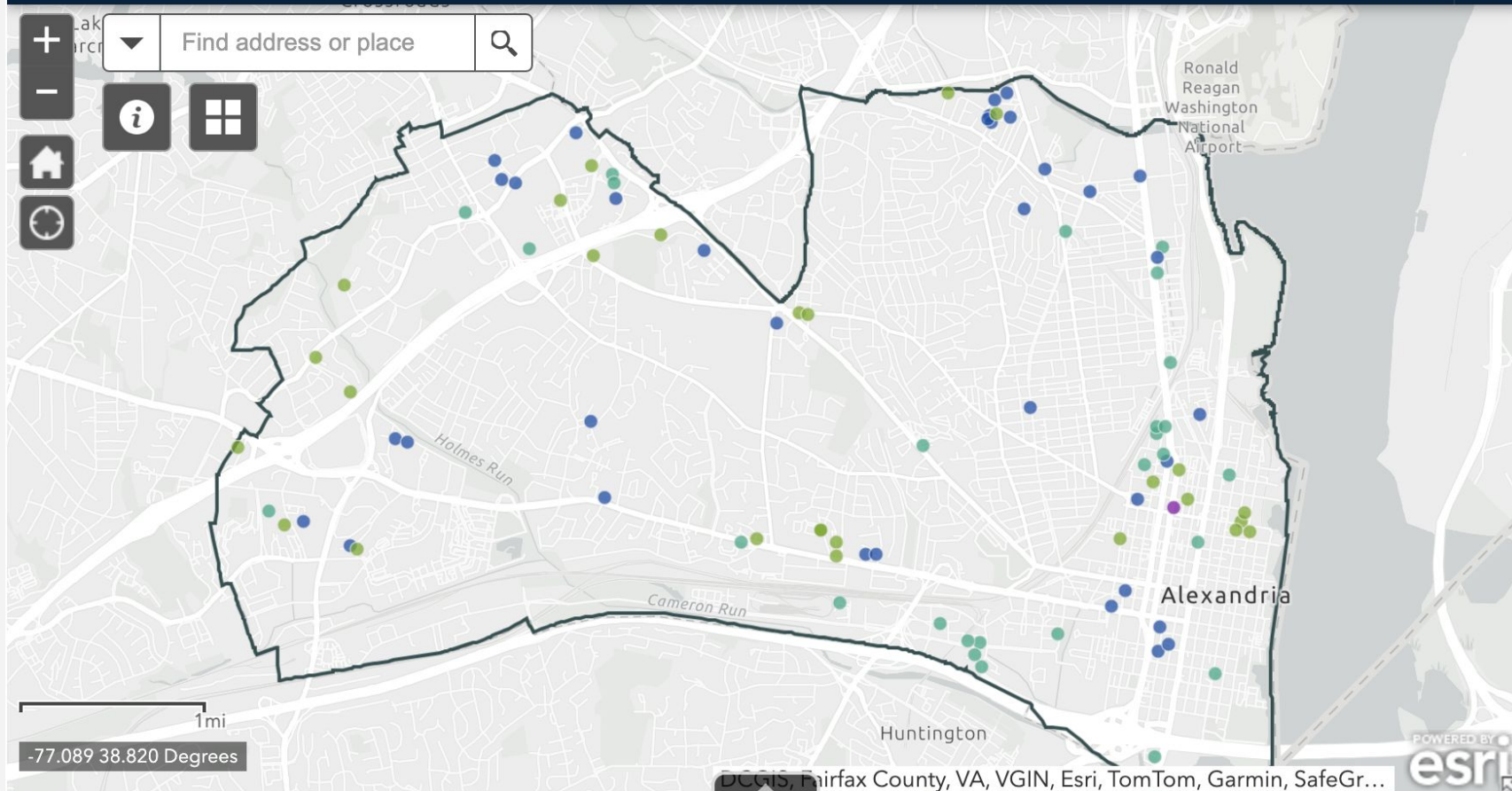- Most pages have been updated in the last year and the links are valid

How Have Housing Accessibility Options Been Advertised?

https://www.apartments.com/alexandria-va/

Apartments.com

- 1st link when looking up specifically housing in ALX VA
- Interactive Map
- Simple, relevant filters and icons to assist your specific needs

Apartments.com™

How Have Housing Accessibility Options Been Advertised?

https://www.arha.us/

Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

- Two links brought up when asking "how to apply for low income housing in alexandria va"
- Contains job recruitment and opportunities
- Waitlist of 8,787 for Public Housing

ARHA
Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Challenges We Ran Into

- Lack of voices from lower income households

- Difficulty finding family resources data

- Data sometimes too specific (not equal)

Takeaways

- Most people who aren't able to afford housing, are employed but their incomes aren't able to keep up with rising prices

- The available options that are open to the public have aren't advertised enough

- Available options are very delayed with their services

- Most people who need affordable housing resources are the ones least likely to have access to the internet where the resources are

- Overwhelmed public housing assistance indicates a private market failure

Works Cited

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Statistics

- https://alexlibraryva.org/frontend-images/pdfs/alexandria/City_of_Alexandria_Demographic_Profile_-_library.pdf
- https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/health/info/appendix-b-final=1=.pdf
- https://www.vhcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Profile-of-Virginias-Uninsured-2022.pdf

Ways to Find Information

- https://www.alexandriava.gov/TeenWellnessCenter
- https://www.alexandriava.gov/hub/public-health-and-wellness
- https://neighborhoodhealthva.org/our-locations/
- https://www.instagram.com/alexandriahealth/
- https://www.facebook.com/p/Alexandria-Health-Department
- https://www.instagram.com/neighborhoodhealthva/?hl=en

Available Options

- https://www.alexandriava.gov
- https://www.alexandriava.gov/dchs/benefits-food-healthcare-utilities-financial-assistance-hub
- https://www.alexandriava.gov/TeenWellnessCenter

Transportation

- https://datausa.io/profile/geo/alexandria-va?u
- https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/alexandriacityvirginia
- https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/alexandria-economic-development-partnership/page-west-end
- https://humantransit.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-Alexandria-SysMap-System-Map-FINAL-1536x816.jpg
- https://www.wmata.com/service/accessibility/metro-access/

Thank You!

NOW LET'S TALK

Thank You!

NOW LET'S CELEBRATE!!