

2023 Livable Communities Leadership Award Description – Mayor Justin Wilson

We are pleased to announce that this year’s Livable Communities Awardee is City of Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson! Mayor Wilson has been a dynamic and vocal champion for smart growth in Alexandria, working in close collaboration with his fellow council members and a creative, dedicated city staff on numerous major land use, housing, environmental, and transportation initiatives. He served eight years on Council before first being elected Mayor in 2018 and won reelection in 2021. Both elections centered on debates over land use and transportation issues in the city. He is also Senior Director of Supplier Management at Amtrak and holds a BS in Information Systems from Virginia Commonwealth University. Not surprisingly, Mayor Wilson is a systems thinker and has worked with the Council and city staff to address complex issues facing the city.

Over Justin Wilson’s tenure, the historic 274-year-old City of Alexandria has become one of the DC region’s best examples of a walkable, transit-oriented community, while working hard to preserve and add affordable housing and ensure access to opportunity for all residents. Mayor Wilson has partnered with council members, City Managers, city staff, and engaged residents to implement significant plans, policies, and projects in line with smart growth principles, including:

Transit: Planning, permitting, and funding the Potomac Yard Metro station, only the second infill station on Metrorail; advancing the nationally recognized DASH Bus network redesign and city funding for Zero-fare service, achieving record ridership growth; and planning for new bus rapid transit corridors.

Safe Streets: Adoption of Vision Zero; approving successful road diets with protected bike lanes, buffered sidewalks and safer crossings, including major projects for King Street and Seminary Road; automated speed enforcement and lower speed limits in school zones; and pedestrianizing lower King Street.

Land Use: Updating a high-density, transit-oriented plan for North Potomac Yard including a new Virginia Tech campus; the Oakville Triangle redevelopment west of Potomac Yard; implementation of the Waterfront Plan; the Landmark Mall redevelopment; planning for a sustainable mixed-use neighborhood and open space to replace the Potomac River Generating Station coal plant; and continued transit-oriented development in North Old Town, near the Braddock Road Metro station, and at the Eisenhower Metro station.

Housing Affordability: Mayor Wilson has strongly supported the COG regional housing goals, with the City being the first jurisdiction in Northern Virginia to incorporate those goals into its Housing Master Plan. The city has increased funding for affordable housing, reduced parking requirements that add to housing costs, and adopted Residential Multifamily Zoning (RMF) to enable use of significant density bonuses to convert market rate affordable housing to long-term committed affordable housing, while adding more affordable units in mixed-income developments. Approved projects using the award winning RMF zoning include the Heritage at Old Town and ParcView II, each approved in the face of vocal opposition, but with the support of a wide and diverse array of residents and advocates.

Environmental: Addressing the combined sewer overflow problem; accelerating stormwater improvements to better handle heavy rain events; adopting the comprehensive Environmental Action Plan 2040; creating a new city Office of Climate Action with significant funding; and setting strong city greenhouse gas reduction targets while also endorsing the COG target and Transportation Planning Board’s goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation to 50% by 2030.