

Clarendon Alliance FY 2017 Work Plan

History & Overview:

The Clarendon Alliance (CA) was incorporated in 1984 and received its IRS 501(c)(6) designation in 1986. Since 1984, it has worked to “for the purpose of fostering the development, redevelopment, and revitalization of the Clarendon area of Arlington (as defined in the Clarendon Sector Plan) through the pursuit of the following principal goals:

- Encouraging the physical development and redevelopment of the Clarendon area within the general guidelines of the Sector Plan;
- Fostering the development of economically sound businesses — including, especially, a strong retail business community...;
- Coordinating public and private expenditures for development and redevelopment in the Clarendon area as to foster...a cohesive, magnetic business and residential location alive with offices, retail shops, residences and parks that contribute to a pleasing and economically stable environment.”

In FY 17 two significant real estate projects, one under construction, and the other in pre-construction, are further proof that the goals laid out in the Clarendon Sector Plan are continuing to be achieved. Both the 10th Street Flats Project, and the multi-structure Shooshan project on the Red Top Cab site will help to enliven the western portion of our current district, improve connectivity through street realignments, and add green space to our district. The Clarendon Alliance approved both projects, and slowly we are seeing the Clarendon Sector Plan being realized.

Through a multi-year strategic planning process, supported by the Arlington County Board, last year we redefined our mission. Our current mission is: ***“To maintain and develop the distinctive character of Clarendon by presenting and promoting events that build Clarendon’s brand, and by advising on issues that affect Clarendon.”***

Summary of proposed new FY 17 Initiatives:

1. In conversations with AED and with County Board Members, including past CA Liaison John Vihstadt and current Board Liaison Libby Garvey, it becomes clear that FY17 should be the year for the CA to move forward with three inter-related issues we have discussed for years. The issues are 1) a re-definition of the Clarendon Alliance “official” boundaries, 2) assessing the potential for the establishment of a Business Improvement District in the Clarendon Area, and 3) the proper corporate structure for our organization if a BID is established. There is growing support, indeed an expectation, that a Business Improvement District will be established at some point in the Clarendon area. One purpose of this exercise is to determine where we are in that timeline.

Board input at our June meeting suggests that this effort should not solely be a CA initiative, but CA staff support is necessary for these efforts to proceed. AED technical support will be required as well. The Board discussion centered on the need to create a working group, composed of both CA Board Members and outside stakeholders, including AED. The group would proceed in the following way:

- Develop one or more potential maps for a BID District and/or a Clarendon Alliance boundary update.
- With the support of the working group, develop possible BID initiatives, budget options, and governance structure for a BID organization.
- Organize meetings with property owners to receive feedback on the BID initiative, and make revisions based on feedback.

The CA Board recognizes that this effort will not be completed in FY 17, but we need to create a working group of area stakeholders to begin the process, and our intention is to start that process in FY 17.

2. The Clarendon Alliance has received County approval to conduct a two-day music festival at the Courthouse parking lot over Memorial Day 2017. This will be a ticketed event, called [Festival BeCause](#), and is intended to bring together well-known musicians, and the causes they support, to raise money and build awareness of issues in seven program areas: Veteran support, social justice, sustainability, health care, support of the arts, family support, and technology and innovation.

The BeCause Festival is a major new initiative of the Clarendon Alliance and the BeCause Festival organizers. Their intention is to conduct a successful multi-day program over Memorial Day 2017, and to use the lessons learned to expand the festival to other cities across the country. While the CA will have an important partnership role in conducting this event, this event will mirror our “partnership” with Howard Alan Events, whereby the BeCause Festival will have significant funding responsibilities for the event. Our role will be primarily on the “back-end”; licensing and permitting, online ticket sales, and bookkeeping. The CA will be compensated for these efforts through the opportunity to organize and run beer sales during the festival.

3. For several years, the CA has been working with Arlington County to add additional power to the newly remodeled Clarendon Central Park. (Conduit was installed through the entire park, but outlets were only installed on the east end). This year, the Parks Department dedicated funds to install power into the west end of the park. As a result, the CA will expand its holiday lighting program through the entire park.
4. In May, to move forward with the BID initiative, the CA became a member of the International Downtown Association, so we would have access to their resources. Soon after, we were approached by Jim Blakeslee, the owner of [Geocentric.com](#), a Bethesda-based website developer best known for building websites for BID’s all across the country. While large

websites with the special mapping capabilities that Geocentric develops are expensive (roughly \$25K per site) the market is limited.

Mr. Blakeslee has developed a new “stand-alone” mapping utility, targeted for smaller-budget organizations. The utility will provide much of the functionality of their Citylight software, but will be sold on a subscription basis to Chambers of Commerce and Main Street communities across the country. Mr. Blakeslee proposed that the CA be the “beta-tester” for this new product, and we agreed. The data we collect for this initiative will be directly relevant for our work on establishing a BID and setting appropriate boundaries for the CA.

FY 16 Accomplishments

Maintaining Clarendon’s Historic and Distinctive Special Events and activities

Clarendon Day has been the CA’s signature event for close to 20 years, and we have grown the event to include 5 music stages, with 40 local bands (several of whom tour as national acts). In 2015, sold out ALL our event spaces, and our @clarendonday Twitter account has more than 5,000 followers. Despite the growth of the event, we maintain Clarendon Day as a Clarendon-centric event, with places for kids to play, and affordable prices for local restaurants, nonprofits, and general exhibitors. This year, at the request of our event partner, Pacers Events, we have moved Clarendon Day to the third Saturday of September. This move means that in future years, our event won’t compete with the Landmark Festival in DC.

Clarendon-Courthouse Mardi Gras Parade is a well-liked Clarendon institution, because it was started informally by some Clarendon bar owners who “just did it”—and the Parade caught on. While we have increased participation so that we regularly have 40 or more entrants, the Parade IS a weather dependent event. This year, in partnership with Arlington Arts, we added a ticketed Mardi Gras Ball at the Clarendon Ballroom, in order to generate income to offset Parade expenses, and to ensure that, even if the Parade is snowed-out, there will be a Fat Tuesday event in Clarendon.

The Arlington Art Festival is by far the most successful example of an event partnership we have built. Howard Alan Events organizes high-end art festivals all over the country and our three year partnership shows no signs of slowing down. Our festival is very successful, according to his metrics—and because we get paid to be his local partner—it’s a successful event from our perspective as well.

Bark in the Park: Last year, in partnership with Arlington County Parks Department and Clarendon Animal care, we helped to form a Friends of James Hunter Dog Park group, and organized a small festival with music and food in the park. We’ve continued that event in FY 16, and anticipate that the event will continue in future years. This year we added a “cute dog” photo contest, which

received around 40 entries, and hundreds of people voted to select the winners, who received prize packages from the Bark in the Park exhibitors.

Holiday Lighting: As described earlier, the Clarendon Alliance will be expanding its holiday lighting program throughout Clarendon Central Park in FY 17.

Urban Village Market continues to be a successful endeavor for the Clarendon Alliance. Arlington County will be removing the “slip lane” in front of 2100 Clarendon Blvd, so in FY 17 we will need to modify our event layout, and renew our R-O-W permit and Use Permit with the new plan in place. Some arts and crafts vendors have inquired about the feasibility of creating a “Night Market” on the Vorndado Plaza, and we will explore that option with Vornado as well.

Clarendon Farmers’ Market has been in operation at the Clarendon Metro for years. Unfortunately, the Farmers’ Market situation has changed in our region. More and more markets have opened; Whole Foods and (especially) Trader Joe’s have impacted market demand. Plus, our residential demographic has changed. Clarendon now has a lot of people in our neighborhood who live in smaller units and prefer dining out or perhaps pre-packaged meals—with the addition of fresh fruit or vegetables from our market. But our traffic counts and sales continue to decline, and even though we now allow vendors to exhibit for free, we are seeing fewer and fewer committed participants. We need to assess the feasibility of continuing the Market, or recruiting a different operator in order to increase participation rates.

Developing and Evaluating New Events and Partnerships

Even as the CA has been following the *Envision Courthouse Square* planning process, we long-ago recognized that the parking lot behind the County Building was potential event space. In FY 15 we engaged in a process to open that space for special event use. Because the process took longer than anticipated (ultimately requiring County Manager approval) what was initially planned as a Spring Event became (in its first iteration) the Courthouse Arts & Craft Beer festival, which was held over the Columbus Day weekend in 2014, with an array of artists, local craft beer brewers, musicians on two stages, a poetry corner, and food trucks for sustenance.

This was the first ticketed event the CA ever organized, and our ticket technology worked—we sold \$16K in tickets for a first-time-ever event. Given the weather, our total income of \$49K was respectable for a first-time event in a brand-new venue.

While we had hoped to organize our new BeCause Festival for this Memorial Day weekend, due to financial and logistical constraints we realized that we should postpone the event for a year, to build awareness and support, and as noted earlier, we intend for the event to move forward in 2017.

Assistance to AED and other County Boards and agencies

We believe that AED's restructuring, which puts a central point of contact for the BID's and Partnerships, is an important improvement in AED's structure.

We continue to participate in BID and Partnership working groups organized by AED and other County agencies to provide feedback on a variety of issues which impact our district. Staff believes that parking related issues, including curbside management and food truck locations, are likely to be significant issues in FY17 and we expect to be fully involved in those discussions.

Information and Advice to Businesses

The CA was intended to be an information clearinghouse. Our methods have changed. We no longer use rack cards, as was envisioned in 1984. We DO run a WordPress Multi-site website with plugins that enable us to take applications for our events, accept payments, sell tickets, post events on our website calendar, and as noted earlier, we expect to dramatically improve our mapping and directory capabilities this year.

We have also invested in the Hootsuite content management software, which allows us to manage our Twitter and Facebook accounts from one dashboard. We are working to improve our usage of Twitter and Facebook by monitoring our followers, so we can better connect with the Clarendon community. Our goal will be to collect and share social media notifications from the Clarendon community to our followers.

In June, we achieved one of our FY 16 objectives by securing office space in the MakeOffices workspace at 3100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 200. The location is perfect for the CA, and we'll have a private office and access to meeting rooms and other facilities to better connect with our neighbors. A Clarendon office will make it easier for staff to spend more time in the Clarendon community as well.

FY2017 Plan

The CA's plan for FY17 is to retain our historic and more recent distinctive special events, to add new events as described earlier, to monitor, research, and comment upon government and private sector initiatives which may impact Clarendon—broadly speaking—and to work strategically with our government partners and others to improve our communications and outreach.

In FY2017 we intend to achieve the following:

- To cement an annual year-round special event calendar that provides great community events in Clarendon and Courthouse.
 - First Quarter 2017 – Clarendon Alliance Annual Meeting
 - February– The Clarendon-Courthouse Mardi Gras Parade and Ball
 - April—The two-day Arlington Festival of the Arts
 - May—The two-day Festival BeCause.

- June—Bark in the Park
 - September—Clarendon Day Festival
 - November—Central Park Lighting
 - Clarendon Farmers Market (weekly)
 - Urban Village Market (weekly)
 - New Events TBD
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- To continue to improve our ability to communicate with businesses and property owners in our district, and to share information throughout the community.

 - As described above, to develop a working group to focus on the organizational reforms described earlier: District Boundaries, IRS status, and potential BID formation.

Conclusion

Over the past several years, the CA has made significant strides. We've doubled or tripled attendance at our historic events, we've built new, successful events, we've updated our technology, we've revised our mission, and we've met our budget projection for an FY16 surplus. We have an ambitious calendar to deliver in FY 17, but we must also redouble our efforts to re-model our organization to so we have resources to respond to the current and future challenges our district will face.