

## Clarendon Alliance FY 2018 Annual Work Plan Final Draft

### 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 Clarendon are within the general guidelines of the Sector Plan;**
  - Within the limits of our Sector Plan Boundaries, almost all of our potential development sites have been, or soon will be, fully developed. We believe at this point in our history, it is appropriate to expand our boundaries, as described below.
- **Fostering the development of economically sound businesses — including, especially, a strong retail business community;**
  - Over the years, we have certainly seen growth of sound, ground-floor business—especially in the restaurant sector, even with the recent “churn”. Our “retail” sector, especially “independent” retailers—is quite dependent upon the new owners of Market Common—Regency Centers. We believe they are willing partners to increase the kinds of “independent” retail/nonprofit operators that Clarendon consumers demand. Nonetheless, there are outstanding issues requiring Board attention, as discussed in the body of this work plan.
- **Coordinating public and private expenditures for development and redevelopment in Clarendon 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.”**
  - This objective is important....
    - When the CA was formed, the BID mechanism did not even exist in Virginia—therefore, we were formed as a traditional “Membership organization”.
    - BID funding can initially be set at any approved level, and is inherently stable. We recognize and support all initiatives, including those of the County Board, AED, and the business community, to explore the pros and cons of establishing a Business Improvement District in the Clarendon/Courthouse/Virginia Square areas. We hope and expect to be partners in those discussions, in particular regarding discussions about potential BID services that would be most beneficial for our district.
    - We recognize that a BID formation in the Clarendon-Courthouse district—however defined—will take time. The CA remains committed to carrying out our current work, in creative ways, utilizing the resources we have at hand.

- Even as a BID exploration gets underway, led by private sector leaders, it is essential that the CA maintain its presence in the community through events, and through outreach and information gathering.

Our 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.”***

This mission statement came about through a County-funded facilitation process, conducted by Richard Brewster in 2015/16. In a rapidly changing real estate market, creating and maintaining a “distinctive character”—and communicating it to the public—is a big challenge. On October 5, 1995, in an article titled [\*“In Virginia, Tiny Clarendon is Thinking Big”\*](#), Stephen Ginsberg of the Washington Post wrote:

“The community is being shaped by the Clarendon Sector Plan, which was adopted by the Arlington County Board in 1984. The plan aims to make Clarendon an "urban village" by creating a centralized area with retail outlets, controlling the height of buildings and maintaining a high level of pedestrian walkways. The execution of the plan is overseen by the Clarendon Alliance.

"Most of our effort is based on creating an identity," said Eric Dobson, executive director of the Clarendon Alliance, a coalition of neighborhood businesses and residents. "There is a huge market in Arlington of people going out and there's really not an area catering to it. Clarendon can become that spot."

“While commerce in Clarendon formerly was characterized by large department stores, commercial space in the area now is made up of small businesses that seek to meet more specific needs and give the area a more communal feel. Since the mid-1970s, for example, numerous Vietnamese have migrated to the community, inspiring stores such as Fu Lo Bakery, which caters to Vietnamese residents and others.

“The Clarendon Alliance has attempted to sustain this shared feeling by supporting community events throughout the year.

“The neighborhood held its first annual Taste of Clarendon last month, with 18 of the area's 41 restaurants participating and 3,000 residents attending. In June the alliance sponsors the Virginia State Chili Cook-Off Championship and in April the Gold's Gym-Clarendon 5 kilometer race is run.”

After 20-plus years, a number of data points stand out from this excerpt:

- There *IS* a huge market in Arlington (and surrounding jurisdictions) “of people going out” and in many respects, Clarendon has become “that spot” ...but with more and more competition throughout the region. In FY 18, the CA wants to quantify the economic impact of that market, and develop strategies to maintain it. This kind of data is a rich source of information and will reveal not only the economic impact but substantially more about Clarendon demographics, and related analytical data points.

- The development of Market Common, and the significant changes in the retail and real estate environment since the 90's has changed Clarendon. "Independent restaurants" have grown in number; independent retail has declined in Clarendon (as it has in every major market). Our market wants, and wants to support, independent retail, restaurants, and public-serving nonprofits. [We propose to explore ways to keep rents viable for independent businesses in Clarendon in 2018.](#)
- To further the "coordination" of public and private expenditures, we believe we should update our Partnership Agreement with the County in FY 18. The original document dates from July, 2002, and its terms are outdated.
  - Given that there are now three "Partnership Organizations" in Arlington [Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO) and the Clarendon Alliance (CA)], and given that CPRO has been appropriated \$400,000 in direct funding by the County in FY 18, and that the CA has been appropriated \$45,000 in direct funding, and \$35,000 in Matching Grants, we believe that we can and should quickly renegotiate the CA's Partnership Agreement, as follows:
    - As a "Partner Organization" the CA (and CPRO) should be able to utilize County Staff, and Equipment, at County rates, to carry out duties required under the Partnership agreement.
      - For example, there are two County-owned street banner locations: one on Columbia Pike, the second on Wilson Boulevard in Clarendon. The CA (and we suspect CPRO as well) would be delighted to pay the County rate for a bucket truck to install and remove street banners promoting our events.
- We do not have a County-owned facility in which to conduct an event—CPRO conducts its Annual Spring Home Show in a County-owned facility. ALL our events are weather dependent; CPRO is less dependent on weather than the CA.
  - We believe that, as we develop an understanding about whether a BID District may be appropriate for Clarendon, a "rebalancing" of County assistance through our Partnership Agreement with the County is important. The fact that we "return" over 50% of funding to the County for Police and Permit fees for our events seems excessive in a "Partnership" arrangement.

## **FY 18 Initiatives and Potential Outcomes**

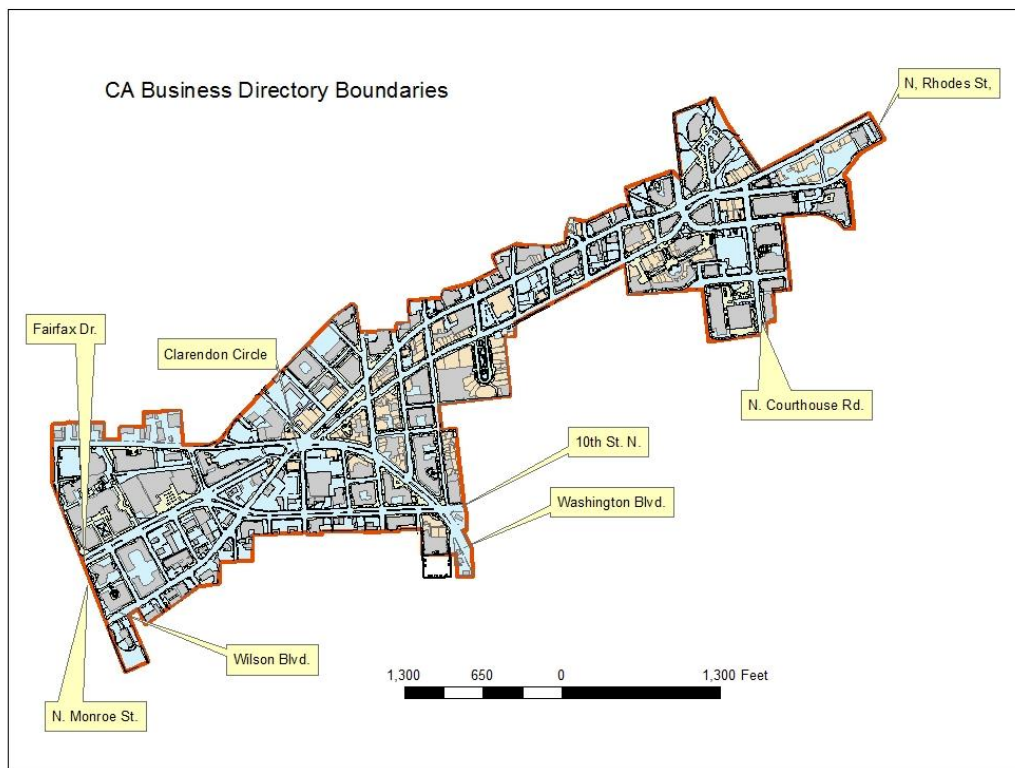
In our FY 18 work plan, we proposed moving forward with three inter-connected issues:

- We intended to "officially" expand our physical boundaries to include Courthouse, and a portion of Virginia Square. The Rosslyn BID anchors the east end of the R-B corridor and the Ballston BID anchors the west. A boundary change for the CA would require a recommendation from AED and approval by the County Board.
- We note that the Ballston BID has established its own 501(c)(3) [Ballston Cares] which is linked to the Ballston BID a 501(c)(6) organization like the Clarendon Alliance. The Ballston BID is now organizing their event production and fundraising through their (c)(3) affiliate.

Outcome: In FY 17, after discussion with County Board members and AED, we learned that there appears to be an increasing measure of support within the business community and within County government to support exploration into forming a Clarendon BID. In FY 17, the CA Board approved a motion to do just that.

Because a BID formation would require the formation of a new governing organization (and likely the “winding-up” of the Clarendon Alliance), it appeared to the CA Board and staff that the establishment of a 501(c)(3) organization may be premature. However, in light of the “Ballston Cares” 501(c)(3) formation, a (c)(3) formation will be considered by the CA Board in FY 18.

In terms of “officially” expanding our boundaries, we recognized that it is likely that the boundaries of a Clarendon-Courthouse BID cannot now be set. However, we have defined a map of the “Clarendon Area”, which we use as the boundary for our Business Directory (published on the CA website) and to set pricing for participation in Clarendon events. (Businesses within the boundary pay lower participation fees). See below for an image:



- In FY 17, the Clarendon Alliance had proposed a partnership with Songwriters and Poets and Sehkraft Brewery to conduct a two-day music festival at the Courthouse parking lot over Memorial Day 2017. Intended to be a ticketed event called [Festival BeCause](#), it was 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.

Outcome: Sehkraft Brewery has vacated their location on Washington Boulevard, and our partnership agreement required Songwriters and Poets to raise operating capital prior to the event. Unfortunately, they were unable to do so. If sufficient funds are raised, we may consider holding the event in FY 18.

- 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). In FY 17, the Parks Department dedicated funds to install power into the west end of the park.

Outcome: The CA purchased and installed an additional 10,000 feet of lights during the FY 17 holiday season, and plans to continue the holiday lighting program going forward. We have budgeted for replacement lights, as our initial purchase is slowly wearing out.

### **New Initiatives for FY 18**

1. The Clarendon Alliance anticipates and greatly appreciates \$80,000 in County funding in FY 18 .. However, this level of funding has been steady since FY 13, and represents between 35 to 40 percent of our total budget in recent fiscal years. We raise additional funds primarily through event production, sponsorships, and membership income.

While we raise a substantial proportional share of our funds through events, we return well over 50 percent of our grant funding back to Arlington County in License, Permit, and Police fees. We first broke the 50% barrier in FY 15, when we had added the Courthouse Arts & Craft Beer Festival to our calendar. Those fees were 42% of our grant income in FY16, and over 54% of our grant funding in FY17, not including the Courthouse Festival.

We will explore alternative event locations in FY 18 to reduce these costs. We are considering the Vornado plaza as a potential location of a BeCause Festival. We are considering the new Plaza at 3100 Clarendon as a potential ticketed Beer Garden at Clarendon Day. We are considering the Crystal Parking lot next to Whole Foods as a site for an event to support Arlington Independent media. We understand Arlington's cost-recovery policy, and we recognize that conducting open-air events in Arlington presents serious security challenges. Privately owned venues may help us offset these ever-increasing event-production costs.

2. Event Sponsorships: In FY 17, we saw a significant decline in sponsor revenue compared to prior years for our special events. For FY 18, we are mapping out an annual event calendar, with

more targeted sponsorship options within each event. With a well-designed, annual sponsorship campaign, we intend to encourage sponsors to build in Clarendon Alliance events into their annual marketing budgets. We are moving forward to be more pro-active in sponsor recruitment.

3. Wi-Fi Adaptation: We have been closely following the Wi-Fi rollout in Ballston, which is being constructed by a firm called Wi-Fiber. We believe, like Ballston, that the cost curve now makes it feasible for the CA—through partnerships with sponsors—to roll free Wi-Fi service in portions of our district. We have a map of potential Wi-Fi hot spots, and associated potential sponsors, for major portions of our district, as mapped above. We will develop a sponsor benefit package for Wi-Fi implementation, to serve as a sister publication to our event sponsorship program. We will make personal contact with potential sponsors in FY 17 and FY 18. Wi-Fi rollout will likely be incremental in Clarendon.
4. Business Outreach: We recognize opportunities for assertive business outreach. We plan an email newsletter, similar to the one Columbia Pike instituted over the past several months. We plan to have a program of “business mixers” like the Chamber of Commerce, to enable Clarendon-Courthouse businesses to interact. We plan to enhance our presence on social media. While we recently updated our business roster, we plan to further develop and plumb this asset. At this point, developing the CA database is now urgent. We will complete data collection early in FY 18.

We have a [database template](#) which was developed by a former Main Street Manager that is well-suited to our needs. (Click on the image at the link to scroll through the system. Importantly, this template includes a BID formation module which will be useful going forward). We also believe that we can utilize this database as an effective tool to generate invoices for members, which has been a perennial problem for the CA. New plugins allow FileMaker to interact with Quickbooks Online. This is an important functionality we need to build in FY 18.

We also must update and utilize our Hootsuite Social Management system. We have contracted in the past with the “Social ‘N” network to build our base of followers on Facebook and Twitter. In FY 18, we need to invest in staff training to learn how to better manage the system and use social media to better promote both our events, and our business community.

Finally, the CA website was developed in WordPress when current staff came aboard. The design is now five years old, and the website needs to be updated. A new, more mobile-friendly theme will help modernize our look and feel. This work will enable us to better connect with our business community and with the influencers in the DMV.

## **FY 17 Accomplishments**

### **Maintaining Clarendon's Historic and Distinctive Special Events and activities**

Clarendon Day has been the CA's signature event for more than 20 years! We have grown the event to include several music stages, with scores of local bands (several of whom tour as national acts) plus two stages for young artists. In FY 16, we sold out ALL our event spaces, and our @clarendonday Twitter account now has more than 5,000 followers. In FY 17 we added new event vendors, which saved us money, and provided more capability. While we continue to maintain Clarendon Day as a Clarendon-centric, flagship event, we need to evaluate Clarendon Day income and expenses more carefully in FY 18.

Changes for FY 18: With the departure of Hard Times Chili, we will re-evaluate the [ICS Chili Cookoff](#) with a new Sponsor. We are likely to re-arrange the event site, and may remove or combine a performance stage to substitute a ticketed "beer garden" on the plaza of 3100 Clarendon (or at another location on the site. We fully intend to keep a well-balanced event, with a kid's area, plenty of arts and crafts, and a mix of general exhibitors, food purveyors, Arlington nonprofits, and Event Sponsors. In FY 18, Pacers Events decided to organize the Pacers 10K/5K/Kids Dash for the day *after* Clarendon Day, with the runner's "package pickup" *on* Clarendon Day in front of Pacers: we are evaluating the impacts of that change right now. In short, we will maintain our site, maintain our mix of attractions, and test new approaches to improve the quality of our event, while reducing costs and adding value for the Clarendon community.

Clarendon-Courthouse Mardi Gras Parade is a well-liked Clarendon institution. It was started organically by a group Clarendon bar owners—and the Parade caught on. Sadly, our Parade is a weather dependent event, and in recent years, the weather has not been great. Last 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. In this Fiscal Year, Arlington Arts chose not to continue its support, but we believe that the second iteration of the Mardi Gras Ball was even better received, with a talented DJ and increased involvement of the LSU Society in the Washington region.

We also added the "Jesters Dash", which was a fun-run immediately prior to the Parade. (The theory was, "We've paid to close the streets already, and it turns out it's a mile from the Parade end to the Parade start, so why not?") With a good forecast, we should be able to generate additional revenue from the run. Finally, we were also able to engage some sponsors who exhibited in Clarendon Central Park. The net result was that, for the first time, we believe that our Parade broke even, even after accommodating increased expenses that APD has (properly) mandated—requiring that we line our parade route with orange barrels.

Changes for FY 18: Our intention is to grow Mardi Gras in Clarendon in FY 18 via earlier promotion, greater sponsorship involvement at Clarendon Central Park prior to the Parade, and more early registrants for the Jester Jaunt, which we hope to turn into the Clarendon version of the DC "Drag

Races”, but with a Mardi Gras focus. We think this will take a couple more years, and a bit of outreach, but we think that we’ll eventually achieve a goal we articulated years ago—to make Mardi Gras financially self-sufficient.

The Arlington Festival of the Arts is by far the most successful example of an event partnership we have built. Howard Alan Events (HAE) organizes high-end art festivals all over the country and despite wet weather, the partnership shows no signs of slowing down. This Festival, which just held its fifth anniversary, has now grown to 170 artists. APD did the best job ever in FY 17 in organizing traffic, and we’re told that the Arlington Festival now rivals the long-standing Alexandria Arts Festival in artist popularity. This Partnership is successful, from the CA point of view, because: a) we get a great event; b) we generate income both through fees paid to us by HAE; and, c) HAE does the heavy lifting: artist jurying, event layout, event logistics, and promotion and marketing. We do not anticipate making any changes to this event.

Bark in the Park: Two years ago, 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. This year’s event will be held on June 4, and we anticipate that the event will continue in future years. Last 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, and that will continue as well.

Changes for FY 18: We are considering requiring participants to pay a small entrance fee for the event.

Holiday Lighting: As described earlier, the Clarendon Alliance expanded its holiday lighting program throughout Clarendon Central Park in FY 17. Because of the larger scope of work, the installation and removal of the lights can no longer be completed by CA staff. We have worked with the Shirlington Education and Employment Center to provide installers in FY 17.

Changes for FY 18: We now know that the life-span for our professional grade LED lights is around 4 years, so we will have to test and replace an unknown number of strings in FY18. To do this, we hope to generate income from lighting sponsors, and work with the County to find a way to acknowledge those sponsors via banners to be located in the park near the Metro entrance.

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 Boulevard in FY 18, so we will need to modify our event layout, and renew our R-O-W permit and Use Permit in light of the new construction. 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.

### Membership Development

While the Clarendon Alliance is a membership organization and has membership dues, membership accounts for only a small part of our income. Staff believe that people's perception about the "value" of a membership has changed over time: Rather than, Do I want to support this organization, the question now becomes, what do I "get" for our membership dues?

The CA Board continues to explore membership question. Some argue that the time and effort to recruit and retain members is a poor use of staff time, and believe that we should simply make all the businesses and property owners in our district members by-right. Others argue that there is "value" in membership, and that we should continue to devote staff resources to building membership.

Staff recognize that only through an automated system can we hope to provide steady contact with, and timely billing to our members. We are working to automate invoicing from our FileMaker database, whereby we would recognize membership income in Quickbooks. This work should be complete early in FY 18.

### Developing and Evaluating New Events and Partnerships

Over the past several years, the CA has added new events and activities each year. For example, in FY 17 we doubled the Holiday lighting program, and added the Jester Dash to the Mardi Gras Parade.

As noted above, the CA intends to reach out to area property-owners to identify potential event sites. We believe, for example, that the Vornado plaza in Courthouse may lend itself well to a modified BeCause Festival, that the plaza area at 3100 Clarendon could be a location for a Clarendon Day beer garden in partnership with the owners of Pamplona and Bao Bar, and that the Crystal Parking lot adjacent to Whole Foods might be utilized as event space.

### Assistance to AED and other County Boards and agencies

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 will continue to be important concern in our neighborhood in FY 18, and we will monitor county actions in this area.

We will assist AED in its efforts to explore the establishment of a BID in Clarendon, and in particular, we will offer our advice about additional activities that BID funding might support. We believe that if and when a BID is ever formed, its budget should be set around the proposed program of work that such an organization advances within our community to achieve a majority vote. We have opinions about that.

### Information and Advice to Businesses

The CA was intended to be an information clearinghouse. We no longer use rack cards, as was envisioned in our original Partnership agreement. 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 intend to update those capabilities in FY 18.

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. Our objective for FY 18 is to spend a minimum of 30 minutes each day monitoring and responding on our social media, and promoting posts and tweets from those in our community.

### FY 18 Plan

The CA's plan for FY17 is to continue with our calendar of special events, to add new events if possible on alternative locations. As described earlier, we plan 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.

### FY 18 Draft Calendar of Events:

- Summer 2017 – Music/Food Truck event to benefit WERA
- September 23—Clarendon Day Festival
- October 8-9—BeCause Festival (if funding becomes available through underwriting)
- November 24 - January 12—Central Park Lighting
- December 15 – Feb 14 -- Kiss in Clarendon photo contest
- February 13, 2018 – The Clarendon-Courthouse Mardi Gras Parade & Ball + The Jester Junt
- Q1 2019 – Clarendon Alliance Annual Meeting (Date TBD)
- Clarendon Farmers Market (TBD)
- April 20-21, 2019 -- Arlington Festival of the Arts
- June 2, 2019—Bark in the Park
- Urban Village Market (weekly)

## **Conclusion**

Over the past several years, the CA has made significant strides. We've doubled or tripled attendance at our historic events, (depending on weather), we've built new, successful events, (Arlington Festival of the Arts, the Mardi Gras Ball, Courthouse Arts & Crafts Beer Festival, Clarendon Dogs event, Holiday Lighting, etc. We've updated our technology, and we've revised our mission. We know that our situation will be evolving, and we are prepared to assist AED in helping our organization evolve. We have an ambitious calendar to deliver in FY 18. At the same time, we must redouble our efforts to communicate more effectively with our members, our potential members, our sponsors, our potential sponsors, and with our community at large.