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Visit Alexandria Highlights Partnerships and Pandemic-Resilient Results at 2021 Annual Meeting

Frontline Tourism and Hospitality Staff Honored

Alexandria, VA—Visit Alexandria highlighted partnerships and pandemic-resilient results at its 2021 Annual Meeting on Thursday, October 14. At the event, entitled “Meeting the Challenge – Embracing Change,” Visit Alexandria also featured Fiscal Year 2021 adaptive strategies and announced Fiscal Year 2022 programs including expanded advertising and a new website.

The picture painted on Thursday evening showed the impact of the pandemic and preliminary signs of recovery across Alexandria’s hotel, retail and restaurant sectors

Visit Alexandria’s COVID-adaptive approach tapped into pent-up demand and matched content and marketing channels with changing consumer behavior. The result was positive results among key performance indicators for Fiscal Year 2021 including:

- 2.3 million website visits, +8% year-over-year (YoY); all-time record set three times since May
- 1,000+ press clips for the fifth year in a row; includes national coverage and record of nearly 100 D.C. regional broadcast clips, +58% YoY
- 125 million digital marketing impressions, +110% YoY
- 785,000 blog pageviews, +31% YoY
- 165,000 social media followers, +8% YoY
- 405 members, +5% YoY

“For Alexandria’s recovery, we know there is a lot riding on the health of our sector,” said Patricia Washington, President and CEO of Visit Alexandria. “These numbers are positive indicators of progress but clearly we still have a long way to go.”

Partnerships

Visit Alexandria’s marketing work one component of the City’s multi-pronged effort to help mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19, which disproportionately affect the hospitality and tourism industry.

The key to Alexandria’s resilience was partnership. Key leaders throughout the community helped advance the City’s preparedness during a global health crisis. With leadership from the **Alexandria Health Department**, the City launched the ALX Promise program and more than 400 businesses signed up. Consistent funding and support from the **City of Alexandria** allowed City Council and staff to lead the way with multiple zoning and economic adaptations, including expanded outdoor dining areas and the pedestrian-only block on lower King Street, while Back to Business grants were launched and supported by the **City and Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)**.

Visit Alexandria recognized retiring City Manager Mark Jinks and his transformational contributions to the City and the hospitality sector. Visit Alexandria also presented a [video that honors the city's frontline hospitality staff](#), featuring the resilience and dedication of the people that make it possible for small businesses, tours, attractions and hotels to operate and work toward recovery.

Fiscal Year 2021 Programs

Highlights of Fiscal Year 2021 programs include:

- **“Think Small” destination travel campaign** which leveraged Alexandria’s 2020 ranking as a Top 5 Best Small City by the *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers’ Choice Awards as travel began to resume and consumer research showed that travelers felt more comfortable in smaller towns and cities.
- **Flex Getaway and Love Your Summer hotel packages** which generated a quarter of a million page views to VisitAlexandriaVA.com.
- **D.C. regional strategies** including the Only in ALX campaign, waterfront campaign and content themes including outdoor experiences, holiday happenings and micro-weddings.
- **Expanded retail promotions** included an expanded outdoor footprint for Alexandria Sidewalk Sale in collaboration with the City, the Old Town Business Association and Del Ray Business Association, and holiday promotions including the **“Show Love. Shop Local.” campaign** and the first-ever **Alexandria Shop Small Week**.
- A new to-go model and offering for single diners for **Alexandria Restaurant Week**.
- The **meeting sales team** connecting with over 1,000 contacts and implementing more than 30 events showcasing Visit Alexandria members to keep our destination engaged with meeting planners.

Looking Ahead

New promotional opportunities are ahead for Alexandria in fiscal year 2022. With American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding from the City, Visit Alexandria’s **34% increase in advertising efforts** will include new media like streaming audio and Expedia, and an increased presence in YouTube, Connected TV and native advertising. The ARPA advertising expansion includes outreach to audiences of color with two new ad campaigns – a [Spanish-language campaign](#) in regional print, radio and social media channels and the just-launched [Drop-In Black travel campaign](#) featuring iconic and new travel experiences.

In spring 2022, Visit Alexandria will **launch a new website** featuring a mobile-first design, faster page speed, new mapping and more. As small cities with big tourism ambitions continue to shine, Alexandria will leverage its **new #3 ranking on Condé Nast Traveler’s 2021 Best Small Cities** list across various mediums. The return of Alexandria’s signature special events includes Visit Alexandria-produced events Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights and Portside in Old Town festival, while Visit Alexandria’s sales team will focus on retention of regional meetings, in-person site visits and destination familiarization tours.

ABOUT VISIT ALEXANDRIA AND ALEXANDRIA, VA

Visit Alexandria is the nonprofit tourism marketing organization for Alexandria, Virginia. Named a [Top 3 Best Small City in the U.S. 2021](#) by the *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers’ Choice Awards, Alexandria hums with a cosmopolitan feel and a walkable lifestyle—a welcoming weekend escape next to our nation’s capital. Founded in 1749, Old Town Alexandria is the nation’s third oldest locally designated historic district, boasting more than 200 independent restaurants and boutiques alongside intimate historic museums and new happenings at the waterfront. At the heart of it all is bustling King Street, a walkable mile recognized as one of the “Great Streets” of America. Walk in the footsteps of George Washington and America’s Founding Fathers while learning about Black history and African American changemakers that have shaped the history of Alexandria and the U.S. Learn more at [VisitAlexandriaVA.com](#).

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