

**Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association  
FY 2009 Annual Membership Meeting**

**Remarks**

**Paul Smedberg, City of Alexandria City Councilmember**

It's my pleasure to be with you this afternoon as the Mayor's appointee to the ACVA Board of Governors, and I'm looking forward to working with the Alexandria tourism industry during a time of unprecedented opportunity for economic development and tourism in the City of Alexandria.

It has been a prolific year for the City, its business community and the ACVA. Despite staggering economic challenges, we have worked together to improve the economic sustainability of the City through privately and publicly financed improvements, increased funding of ACVA's marketing efforts, and unprecedented collaboration among the City's economic development partners.

Alexandria's hotel industry has invested more than \$388 million in new construction and renovations, generating annual room revenue of more than 171-million-dollars. These high quality amenities add to the City's unique collection of inspired cuisine and independently owned shops to heighten the historic ambiance and contemporary flair that attracts 3.3 million visitors to the City each year.

Just 18 months ago, National Harbor opened its doors and became a major tourism destination within view of Alexandria. The National Harbor Collaborative Task Force brought recommendations to City Council that were enacted to attract visitors from across the river. Those investments have paid off and we are already realizing increased visitor spending.

The Alexandria-National Harbor Water Taxi carried 100,000 passengers during its inaugural season. And, the popular King Street Trolley has been used by almost 900,000 visitors and residents since beginning operations in April of 2008. Additional public projects included

enhancements to the Marina, extended hours at the Visitors Center, seminars for small business owners, and an innovated cell phone-based history tour – to name a few.

At the same time, City Council recognized the intense regional competition for shoppers and diners, and appropriated supplemental funding to the ACVA to launch its first comprehensive advertising campaign targeting Alexandria’s residents and neighbors.

A research-driven new brand was introduced to replace the City’s decade-old slogan, “The Fun Side of the Potomac,” and the ACVA retooled its media plan to make the most of every available advertising dollar.

This prolific expansion of our tourism development and promotion efforts has resulted in increased visitor spending at Alexandria’s shops, restaurants, attractions, and hotels – as well as more tax revenue in City coffers.

Governor Kaine announced the results of the Economic Impact Estimates on Friday, and I am happy to share with you that Alexandria achieved the fourth largest increase in visitor spending in the Commonwealth in 2008.

Visitor spending rose 10.3 percent to total \$645 million, supporting more than 6,000 jobs with payroll of \$111 million.

Visitor spending contributed \$21 million to the City’s tax base – an increase of 11 percent.

We can all share in this success, thanks to the vision and support of Mayor Bill Euille, my fellow City Council Members, our City Manager Jim Hartmann, our City Staff – and each of you.

Congratulations to everyone here today for the role that each of you is playing in this continuing success story!