CREATING THE ARLINGTON E-WAY:
ENHANCING & IMPROVING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our Vision:
Arlington will be a diverse and inclusive world-class urban community with secure, attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods where people unite to form a caring, learning, participating, sustainable community in which each person is important.

The Arlington, Virginia community thrives on the vitality of the Washington, D.C. region's most creative and educated population. These visionary, innovative and diversely talented people have energized Arlington's growth into a world-class urban community, a national model of transit-oriented development, and a leader in sustainable development practices and emission reduction initiatives.

Many examples of innovations that have been implemented in Arlington, and then studied and copied in other areas, can be found throughout the US. We are a community with high expectations for ourselves and for our governing bodies. Arlington has a nationally recognized tradition of being a very active and engaged community. We embrace a government process in which all members of the community contribute their knowledge and opinions.

Arlington's reputation as a "smart place" has long played a prominent role in how it thinks about itself and how it sets the expectations of the Arlington community.

For more than a decade, Arlington has emphasized its "smart" credentials. Policy-making, physical development, workforce access, infrastructure development, business sectors, educational systems and more are all positioned as "smart" characteristics that are inherent to Arlington. This "smart infrastructure" is at the core of Arlington's success. Even in a region that was recently named the most educated and affluent area in the United States, Arlington stands out. Arlington is well-positioned to make smart decisions and to implement policy wisely.

Our people are diverse: 28% of Arlington residents are foreign born—an increase of 44% from the previous decade, but they share a value system that transcends our varied backgrounds.

This institutionalized system of civic participation in government decision-making, known as the "Arlington Way," is true participatory democracy. Its backbone is a structure of more than 40 Citizen Advisory Groups and Commissions that interact with County staff, elected officials and networks of civic associations and community service organizations to work on public issues. Our Commissions develop policy recommendations based on extensive research and discussion with County residents. The informal manifestation of the Arlington Way is a transparent government and a shared philosophy of cooperation between the government and the community to have a positive impact on Arlington. The result—when done correctly—is high-quality

...the Arlington Way is in serious need of a 21st century update.
decision making, efficiently implemented, producing top-notch government services and wise use of taxpayer dollars, all of which creates a place where people want to live, work and visit.

However, the traditional application of the Arlington Way has not kept up with Arlington’s changing environment. A simultaneous change in both community demographics, plus the advent of technology as a source of information and as a means of communication have begun to limit the ability of the Arlington Way to engage the entire community.

Changing Demographics
Arlington is a magnet community for both immigrants and young urban professionals. Many of our newer residents face barriers to participating fully in civic life: language; limited time; a process that is sometimes daunting in its complexity and expectations. Thus, the current application of the Arlington Way process provides an advantage to a limited number of highly engaged people who may not be representative of the views of a changing population.

Technological Changes
As more and more people look to the Internet as a means to gather information and communicate, all levels of government are attempting to harness new ways to engage with members of the public. Providing information in a credible, accurate and timely fashion to the public on issues that can sometimes be extremely complicated and complex is particularly challenging. Public discourse conducted online—while very successful in disseminating information to large portions of people—can often quickly spread inaccurate information as well.

Arlington staff and leadership have yet to figure out how and when to participate in much of this new dialog; this lack of participation can often appear to the public as a lack of engagement or interest. In addition, it also means Arlington staff is not contributing credible data, information and leadership to important discussions, which results in poor outcomes on important policy questions.

At its core, Arlington’s community engagement process faces three main problems:

1. Providing information, which is often detailed and complex, in an accessible, timely, accurate, comprehensible and readily available format.

2. Effectively engaging a wider, more diverse and more representative group of residents and organizations who are able to express their opinions and participate in community-wide discussions in a more efficient and responsible format.

3. Providing effective and credible leadership within the public dialog process, so that staff can assist political leaders in responsible policy formation and decision making based on reliable and credible data.

Arlington is a great community that strives to become even better: much of the core competencies other communities struggle with are things Arlington has already mastered. With our “smart infrastructure” both in terms of population and existing technology, Arlington is well positioned to be a test bed for the implementation of a solution to the problems outlined above. Most importantly, the problems we see associated with the Arlington Way are found in communities throughout the United States: creating a more participatory democracy with active and responsible engagement from a diverse population is a problem that many governments at are attempting to solve.

The Arlington Way has served Arlington well for decades. However, given the composition of Arlington’s population, the expectations of its residents and business leaders for world-class government services, and the changing nature of citizen communication itself, the Arlington Way is no longer as
effective as it can be—or as it has been in the past.

Thus, a grant of IBM talent that would offer solutions to enhanced community engagement has the potential to fundamentally stabilize the very underpinnings of the Arlington community.

The ability to create a better Arlington Way—one that incorporates new ways in which people would like to receive information and communicate, and disperses credible information clearly and in a relevant way to all members of the Arlington community, while soliciting inputs: data, opinions, behavior and more in real time to create the best possible groundwork for sound decision making, is something that has the potential to affect how Arlington acts on every key issue it faces now and into the foreseeable future.

From land use and development decisions, to human services, policy making, the budget process, sustainability, community resilience, security and more, the contribution of IBM talent and technology would enhance Arlington's ability to deal with virtually every conceivable issue. Finally, the solution to these types of problems would solidify Arlington's position as truly a world class community, and would create an example community that could be emulated across the U.S. to allow other communities to improve accessibility and relevance, thereby improving the nature of participatory democracy itself.

Arlington innovates in many ways—we have mastered many things communities still struggle with today, and we are studied as a community to emulate. As such, the resources that would be made available through the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge have the capacity to reinvent and recharge an aging system of community engagement. Arlington stands ready to implement these resources to assist with a variety of community engagement processes which have helped shape the successful community we enjoy today. Following are examples of ways in which Arlington has been a leader and innovator and which could be improved through more effective community engagement.

Development Innovation
Arlington's history of innovation stretches back to the 1960s when the county was a typical aging inner suburb—losing population and its commercial base to the rapidly expanding outer suburbs. Schools were being closed. Businesses were shuttering. The county's future seemed bleak. Visionary leaders realized that only bold action would save Arlington. The County became the first locality in the Metropolitan region to embrace the federal government's plan to build a Metro rail system. It then worked tirelessly to ensure that Metro would be more than just a means to transport workers from the outer suburbs to the District of Columbia. Through tenacity and force of will, Arlington secured more Metro stops than any jurisdiction outside the District. It then leveraged its two Metro corridors, through careful planning involving the entire community, into an engine for economic rebirth. By carefully concentrating development around the Metro corridors, creating highly desirable "urban villages," and preserving the tree-shaded neighborhoods flanking those corridors, Arlington remade itself into a national "Smart Growth" model. In fact, more than half the value of Arlington real estate is on only 11% of the land—our Metro corridors.

The County was a pioneer in encouraging mixed-use development around transit stations to achieve a balance of employment, shopping and residential
opportunities. Its development policies increased the supply of housing by encouraging a mix of housing types and densities – with high densities focused on the Metro corridors and buildings tapering down to well-preserved single-family neighborhoods and retail areas outside the high density "bull's-eye" development zones.

Today these vibrant corridors are places for high-rise living, retail shops, restaurants, night clubs, and business offices. They are home to George Washington University, George Mason University, Marymount University, and Virginia Tech as well as other educational institutes. They are also the site of the nation's high-tech scientific agencies, including the National Science Foundation, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Office of Naval Research.

As land in Arlington County has become more valuable, the County has taken an innovative approach to achieve our community goals and benefits. Arlington's development process allows developers to build larger buildings than what they would be entitled to in return for increased community benefits such as street and sidewalk improvements, infrastructure improvements, affordable housing units, public art and more. This innovative negotiation between the County, the community and developers increases profitability for developers by granting additional "density." All stakeholders are included and heard in a process that ensures that all parties benefit.

**Innovations in "Sustainable Livability"**

Arlington has long been an innovative leader in building a sustainable community. The County has received national recognition for its Fresh AIRE (Arlington Initiative to Reduce Emissions) program and is currently working on a ground-breaking Community Energy Plan, an ambitious, community-wide effort to redesign the way energy is distributed and used in Arlington. County government is steadily increasing its use of renewable energy, retrofitting its buildings to boost energy efficiency and running a county fleet of hybrid vehicles.

The County also has extensive walking and biking pathways which connect to a regional network helping to earn Arlington's designation as the "Most Walkable City" in the United States in 2005 by the American Podiatric Medical Association; a new "single stream" recycling system that has increased recycling in Arlington by 20%; nationally recognized arts and culture, including Signature Theatre, winner of a 2009 Tony Award for best regional theatre; and a public arts program that has won numerous national awards.

**Smart Infrastructure Master Planning**

The County has a special high-speed I-Net system that currently connects all the county schools, County offices and many public facilities. The agreement under which this is provided for free expires in 2013. The County is now systematically installing 244 strands of dark fiber in conduits between all of the traffic light signals in the County as they are opened for repair and maintenance. This is being conducted under a U.S. Federal grant to create an "intelligent traffic system". A bonus to this broadband network between traffic signals will be to ability to complete a "public network" and have it in place within 3 to 5 years.

**Creating a Test Bed for Innovative Solutions**

Arlington County has unique characteristics that have made it an ideal test bed for a variety of complex and smart service and infrastructure initiatives.
It is small geographically, yet dense in its development. Its transportation options are diverse: Metro, freight rail, air service, highways and waterways all run through Arlington or are adjacent to it. Multiple law enforcement offices operate within its borders including Arlington County Police, Pentagon Police, the Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C. Police and the Secret Service. This combination of characteristics has given created unique opportunities for Department of Defense (DoD) agencies, private organizations, universities and local governments to test a variety of technologies and processes in Arlington.

Transit-oriented development or “Smart Growth”
The County has won many national and regional awards for its Smart Growth planning. Arlington is often cited as a model of a built community that has been able to transform itself from a decaying inner suburb to one of the most successful, diverse communities in the nation. Arlington’s traffic is less than it was in 1970, even though our population has doubled in that time—standing in stark contrast to others within the region. In 2009, the National Academy of Science hailed Arlington as “one of the nation’s best TOD (transit-oriented development) success stories,” citing our “adherence to textbook planning principles,” focus on creating attractive, walkable spaces, and proactive community involvement.

Environmental Sustainability
From its FreshAIRE program to its Community Energy Plan, an ambitious joint effort by government, businesses, organizations and residents to rethink the way Arlington uses and distributes energy, Arlington County is aggressively seeking to reduce its carbon footprint. The County posts its building report cards on the energy use of County-owned buildings on the web, making the information readily available to the public. As part of our Green Games Challenge, the County encourages local businesses to reduce their energy usage and increase energy efficiency.

Government Communications
Arlington is a leader among state and local governments across the nation in its use of social media and other methods to communicate with and hear from residents. In 2010, the Northern Virginia Technology Council awarded Arlington top honors for “Best Integrated Social Media Campaign.” The Sunshine Review, a watchdog group, recently awarded Arlington an A+ for transparency on our Web site. AVN, the County’s cable channel, has won national awards for its innovative programming and documentaries. AVN produces high-quality news programming, features, and the innovative Cuentos y Mas, a series of bi-lingual programs that promote reading and literacy. “Food for Thought,” a program conceived, produced, filmed and edited by AVN, was nominated in 2009 for a prestigious Emmy award. Arlington’s Spanish language Web site reaches a traditionally underserved community, providing a wealth of County information in Spanish. Many County press releases are also translated into Spanish, and the County practices ongoing, aggressive outreach to Spanish language media about County programs and services.

Diversity
In 2008, the County launched a series of “Diversity Dialogues”, conversations about the sometimes difficult subjects of race, diversity and how different ethnic and national groups in our highly diverse community interact. Those successful conversations, using a world café model, continue today, helping to build understanding among Arlington individuals and groups.

Resiliency
In 2005, Arlington was faced with the loss of over 4 million square feet of leased office space, due to recommendations by DoD to close or relocate virtually all DoD presence from Arlington, with the exception of the Pentagon. This process, known as the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, set into motion a series of events in which Arlington worked closely with an embedded team of consult-
ants and lobbyists to change the DoD recommendations and retain these high-value agencies in Arlington.

Following the initial DoD announcement, the Arlington Economic Development (AED) offices were transformed in a matter of days into a war room: hub of activity with key decision makers on-hand to craft a plan, compile information and data and then implement a multi-faceted plan to retain DoD agencies in Arlington. Over the course of approximately three months, the County Manager’s Office, AED and nearly every other department in Arlington was focused on this issue. In the end, Arlington was successful at keeping its most highly valued agencies in Arlington.

This is just one example of Arlington’s history of working on-site with consultants and community leaders in a facilitative and efficient way. Should IBM select Arlington to invest its time and talent, Arlington has already committed a variety of resources to this project:

- Arlington will provide a point person to coordinate all logistical aspects of the program before, during and after IBM’s work in the community.

- IBM staff will be embedded in Arlington County offices with access to key decision makers and community leaders.

- Leadership Arlington—a leadership program with over 675 youth, young professionals, seniors and executives in Arlington—is prepared to partner with the IBM team, providing access to its cadre of trained community leaders.

- Arlington will assign senior executives from the County Manager’s Office (CMO) to assist with the project, providing access to all areas of Arlington County government and both staff and political leadership.

As the County Manager and signatory on this application, I can assure you that Arlington is not only fully prepared to execute the recommendations of the IBM team, but we are excited to welcome the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge to enhance our ability to have better community engagement for better decision-making. We look forward to further conversations with your team so that if selected, IBM’s work with the Arlington community will proceed most effectively and efficiently, and that the project’s recommendations will be fully implemented with successful results.

Barbara Donnellan

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Arlington County Manager