

## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

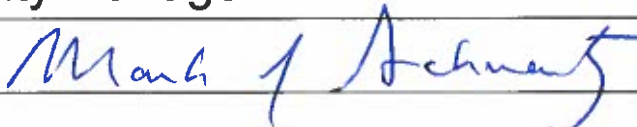
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Arlington  
Program Title: Activating Commercial Areas with Pop-Up Libraries  
Program Category: Community & Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Mark J. Schwartz  
Title: County Manager  
Signature: 

## **“Activating Commercial Areas with Pop-Up Libraries”**

### Executive Summary

Arlington County and Arlington Public Library have forged partnerships with local business improvement districts, civic groups, property managers and private developers to establish “pop-up” libraries in vacant retail spaces in pursuit of two goals: to leverage public libraries as activators in new, transitional and high-vacancy commercial districts in primary planning areas; and to increase awareness and use of library services. Pop-up libraries are targeted to population centers currently underserved by existing library locations. And both their design and functionality are scalable depending upon the budget available and terms of agreement with business partners.

Arlington’s Pop-Up Libraries operate for as little as 30 days or as long as 3 years, depending on the opportunities and goals. To create pop-up libraries, staff quickly transform retail spaces to look and feel like small public libraries. Collections, events, programs and services are curated to reflect the unique needs and interests of the surrounding population. Flexible shelving on wheels is moved in to house small lending collections of popular books, movies and games. With support from partners in business and real estate, Arlington Public Library has occupied each of these pop-up retail spaces rent-free.

Since 2016, more than 8,500 square feet of vacant retail space in primary planning sectors has been activated by Arlington’s Pop-Up Libraries over more than 1,000 days. Hundreds of thousands of people have encountered a library embedded alongside their shopping, dining, workplaces and homes.

Thousands of Arlington residents have borrowed materials, obtained library cards, participated in free library programs, and enjoyed access to community space. Through these initiatives, Arlington County and Arlington Public Library have activated vacant retail spaces, forged new and lasting alliances with community partners, and gained valuable market insight about each neighborhood that will influence future service planning.

## Problem and Challenge

Long valued as drivers of literacy, education and civic trust, public libraries increasingly play a more unexpected role – as centerpieces of commercial development projects. In major cities like Seattle, Austin and Denver, public libraries anchor bustling downtown districts, creating a sense of place and generating activity that benefits the surrounding businesses.

Arlington has followed this trend; recent development projects shifted two branch libraries away from plots in residential neighborhoods and into nearby commercial areas. Though each library moved only a few blocks, circulation of materials immediately increased and today these libraries are beloved beacons in the heart of thriving business districts

Spurred by these outcomes, Arlington Public Library set out to examine how Arlington County could further leverage libraries as community activators and economic stimulators. The answer? To experiment with Arlington's new stock of lower-level retail storefronts.

Such retail storefronts are in good supply. Arlington County has three primary planning sectors located along major transportation routes. Development activity is focused in these corridors, bringing new commercial and residential construction with lower-level retail storefronts crafted to create the walkable, mixed-use streetscapes that define Arlington's urban neighborhoods. Half of Arlington residents live within the planning corridors, and 85 percent of population growth is forecast in these areas.

Arlington's eight public library facilities, which operate as a free resident service funded through the County's annual budget, are not well distributed in consideration of the planning sectors. The current County-owned library branch sites were plotted by 1958, well before transit-based planning funneled much of Arlington's growing population into these densely-populated corridors. At present, only two of Arlington's full-service public libraries are well-sited within the boundaries of the primary planning sectors.

Library use is also not well balanced across Arlington County. Overall library use in Arlington is high and above national averages; 3 million library materials were borrowed last year, and 44 percent of households in Arlington are actively using a library card. But the highest usage is clustered among households near a library facility and at branch libraries in commercial areas. Library usage is lower among households further from a library facility and in areas with a higher percentage of renter-occupied residences, including the transit corridors. These findings are in line with national studies that identify location of a library facility as a key predictor of library use.

Knowing that areas of growth in new and transitional commercial developments correlate with areas of lower library use, Arlington Public Library leadership saw an opportunity to leverage libraries further as activators and economic stimulators in the primary planning sectors, while also quickly increasing equitable access to library services for a growing population of residents underserved by existing libraries. From this opportunity and dual goal emerged a plan for Arlington's Pop-Up Libraries.

### Program Description

Since 2016, Arlington County and Arlington Public Library have pursued partnerships with local business improvement districts, civic groups, property managers and private developers to establish a series of pop-up libraries in new and existing vacant retail storefronts. Public and private sector organizations have been eager to partner and benefit from the placemaking and public activity a neighborhood library can generate, and in all cases the retail spaces have been offered to Arlington County rent-free.

To pilot the idea of pop-up libraries, Arlington Public Library set out to occupy a new vacant retail storefront within a new County-operated Community Center along Columbia Pike for a four-month residency. Building on this success, staff next worked with partners to occupy a location in the Crystal City underground, a transitional area with several retail vacancies. The following year the Library eagerly accepted an opportunity from the Rosslyn Business Improvement District (BID) to co-program a planned

pop-up space at the base of a new Rosslyn high-rise. Today, planning is underway with the Ballston BID for a pop-up library in Ballston Quarter, a vibrant retail, dining, and entertainment destination.

To create pop-up libraries, staff quickly transform retail spaces to look and feel like small public libraries. Collections, events, programs and services are curated to reflect the unique needs and interests of the surrounding population. Flexible shelving on wheels is moved in to house small lending collections of popular books, movies and games. Operating hours are carefully scheduled for efficiency and impact.

Arlington’s Pop-Up Libraries have varied in size, scope, scale and duration depending on the opportunity and partnership, and offer a broad menu of models for other jurisdictions to consider:

Pop-Up	Arlington Mill Community Center
Planning Area	Columbia Pike Corridor
Duration	4 months, January – April 2016
Size	1,875 sq. ft.
Partners	Arlington Co. Department of Parks and Recreation, Economic Development
Services	Library Cards, Collections, Programming, Technology

Pop-Up	Connection: Crystal City
Planning Area	Route 1 Corridor
Duration	3 years, September 2016 – December 2019
Size	1,222 sq. ft.
Partners	Crystal City BID, Crystal City Civic Association, Vornado, JBG Smith
Services	Library Cards, Collections, Programming, Technology

Pop-Up	The Alcove
Planning Area	R-B Corridor
Duration	60 days, August – September 2018
Size	4,250 sq. ft.
Partners	Rosslyn BID
Services	Programming

Pop-Up	Ballston Pop-Up
Planning Area	R-B Corridor
Duration	30 days, July 2019 ( <i>proposed</i> )
Size	1,189 sq. feet
Partners	Ballston BID, Ballston Quarter/Brookfield Properties
Services	Library Cards, Collections, Technology

## Program Costs and Staffing

Through these public-private partnerships, the pop-up libraries have operated with a very low-cost model. Each pop-up library has benefited from contributions and contributions-in-kind from partners, including rent subsidy, infrastructure supports and marketing assistance.

The initial pilot at Arlington Mill operated with existing staff and resources and did not utilize any dedicated funding. To support the operation of the Connection: Crystal City, the Arlington County Board in 2016 allocated one-time funding for a build out of \$250,000.00 for costs associated with:

- Renovation of the space including paint, carpeting, demolition and new furniture
- County network and wireless installation
- Maintenance and utilities fees

The Friends of the Arlington Public Library provided \$1,000.00 to support start-up programming activities including community game nights, cook and craft workshops, knitting classes, book clubs, and small tool lending and continue to provide ongoing annual support as with all Library locations.

Throughout the projects, existing FTEs and temporary staff have been reallocated to balance demand at Library facilities and the pop-up locations, and operating hours have shifted in line with demand and resources as necessary. Shelving, furniture and collections material purchased for pop-up locations are reused and repurposed, decreasing the need for additional outlays with each endeavor.

In the case of The Alcove, the Rosslyn BID managed the pop-up space and associated costs, with Arlington Public Library as a programming partner. For the proposed Ballston pop-up, the Library will spend around \$7,000 on furniture and technology items that will be re-used in other locations.

## Outcomes

Since 2016, more than 8,500 square feet of vacant retail space in primary planning sectors have been activated by pop-up library services. Arlington's Pop-Up Libraries have been operational for 1,000 days over the last four years, with planning for new projects currently underway.

During this time, hundreds of thousands of people have encountered public libraries embedded alongside their shopping, dining, workplaces and homes. Thousands of Arlington residents have borrowed materials, obtained library cards, participated in free library programs, and enjoyed access to community space. Half of these users report visiting the Pop-Up Library once a week or more, increasing overall foot traffic and activity in the surrounding areas.

- Library cardholders have borrowed more than 40,000 books, movies and games at the Connection: Crystal City. 1,200 new members have joined the Library and 2,000 people have participated in free programs. This pop-up has been extended twice by popular demand and is now open through December 2019.
- 50 percent of people using the Connection: Crystal City Pop-Up Library reported visiting the location at least once a week, and 22 percent reported visiting at least once a month.
- After visiting the pop-up, people were reportedly more likely to attend a library program (62 percent), use downloadable eBooks (61 percent) and visit another Library location (46 percent).
- More than 10,000 people visited The Alcove, where the Library offered a series of public programs and raised awareness of library services over a two-month period.

*"The pop-up library is essential to Crystal City. The underground has shuttered a lot of businesses ... Every time I walk by it (despite entering or not), it is ALWAYS occupied with people, both young and old alike. I have yet to visit an actual brick-&-mortar Arlington library because they are too far away: the pop-up library eliminates the distance and brings the library to people."* – Connection: Crystal City User

Outcomes beyond activation and library use include:

- **Experimentation:** The pop-up locations have been an ideal proving ground for innovative services that can be piloted at small scale, such as lending of board games, technology and tools.
- **Community Support:** Residents and stakeholders in the target communities have become, and remained engaged and enthusiastic, supporters of library services in their community.
- **Enduring Partnerships:** Arlington County and Arlington Public Library have strengthened relationships with public and private sector partners and continue to partner on new projects.
- **Market Analysis:** Arlington County and Library leadership have gained valuable metrics and insights that will inform future planning and service decisions.

### Summary for Media Releases

Arlington County and Arlington Public Library have pursued partnerships with local business improvement districts, civic groups, property managers and private developers to establish a series of pop-up libraries in new and existing vacant retail storefronts. The goal? To leverage public libraries as catalysts for new and transitional commercial districts in primary planning areas; and to increase awareness and use of library services in areas currently underserved by existing bricks and mortar library locations. The size and functionality of each pop-up space can be tailored to fall within available budgets. Pop-up libraries in Arlington have been established for as little as \$7000 and as much as \$250,000.

To create pop-up libraries, staff quickly transform retail spaces to look and feel like small public libraries. Collections, events, programs and services are curated to reflect the unique needs and interests of the surrounding population. With support from partners in business and real estate, the Library has occupied each of these pop-up retail spaces rent-free.



Since 2016, more than 8500 square feet of vacant retail space in primary planning districts has been activated by Arlington's Pop-Up Libraries on more than 1,000 days. Through these initiatives, Arlington County and Arlington Public Library have forged new and lasting alliances with community partners by attracting patrons to these vacant retail spaces, and gained valuable market insight about each neighborhood that will influence future service planning.

Slides from 2015 presentation by Arlington Public Library to the Arlington County Board, "Libraries Grow Communities"

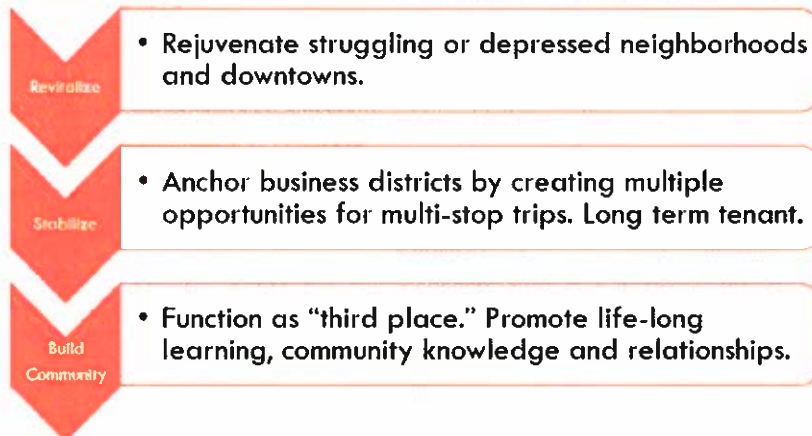
## Place

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## Libraries add value to communities:

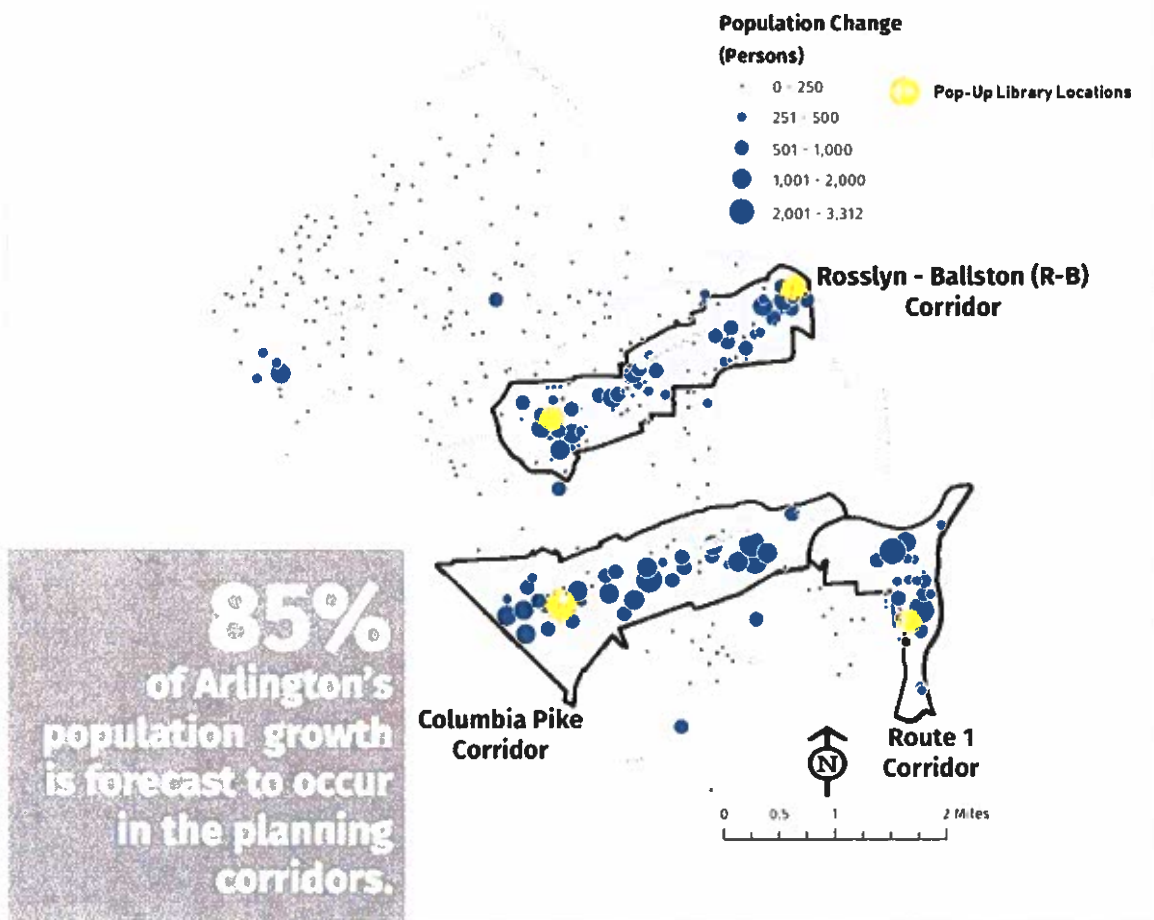
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Edwards, Julie Blono. "Community Centered: 23 Reasons Why Your Library Is the Most Important Place In Town." *Public Libraries Online Community Centered 23 Reasons Why Your Library Is the Most Important Place in Town Comments*. Public Libraries Magazine, 30 Apr. 2013. Web. 12 June 2015. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2013/04/community-centered-23-reasons-why-your-library-is-the-most-important-place-in-town/>

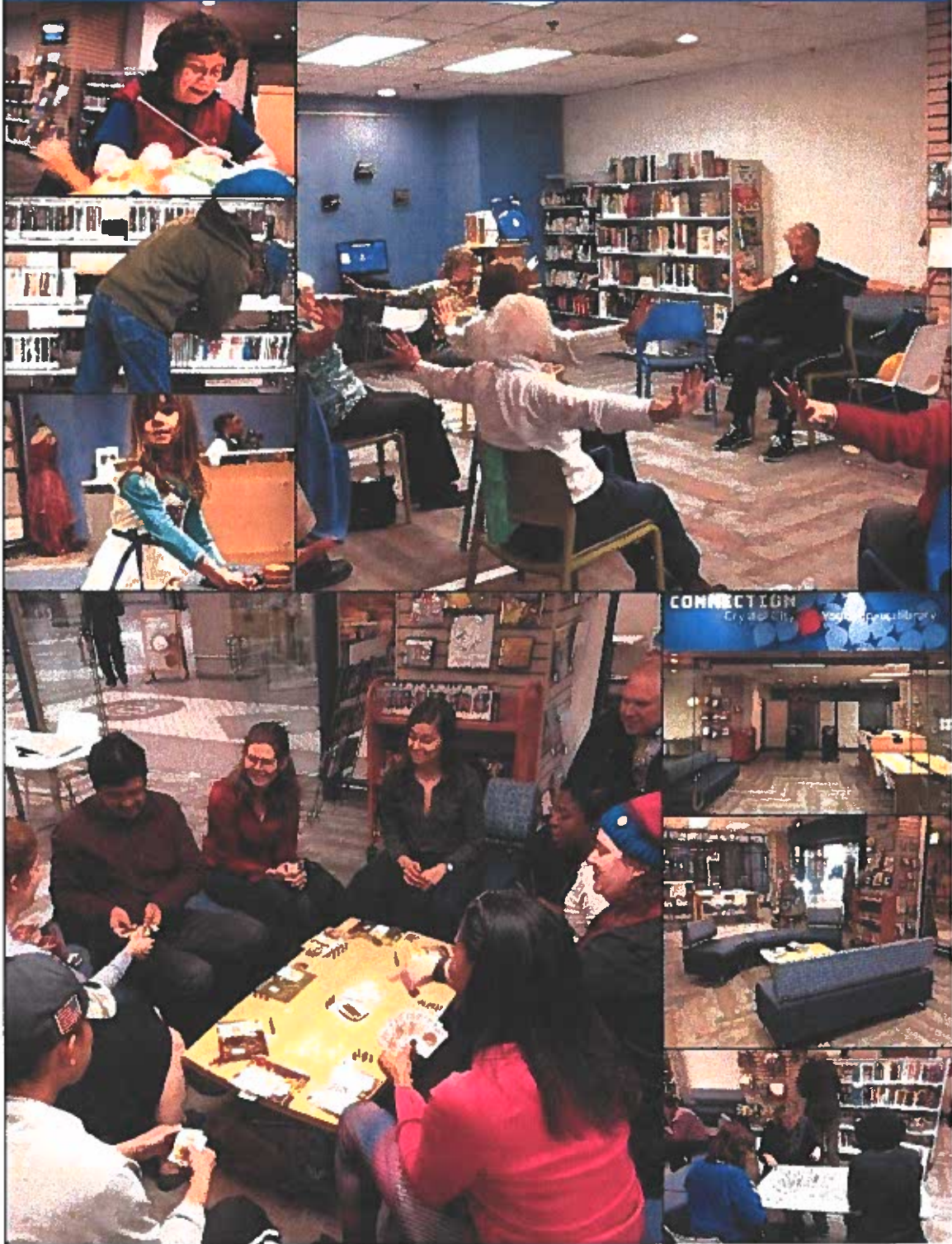
# Forecast Population Growth and Pop-Up Library Locations

## Forecast Population Growth 2010-2045



Source: Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development; Department of Libraries

Connection: Crystal City Pop-Up Library



## Arlington Mill Pop-Up Library



## The Alcove



## Media Coverage Connection: Crystal City



CITIES + TOPICS + NEIGHBORHOODS

CRYSTAL CITY NEWS

### Crystal City's pop-up library to remain open through June 2018

*This innovative, popular space will continue to offer books and a space for public gatherings.*

By Michelle Goldchain | @goldchainm | 10/27/2017 1:46 PM EDT



The Connection Crystal City. Photo by JBG SMITH Development.

Since September 2016, there has been a pop-up library in Crystal City, called "The Connection: Crystal City," **designed to integrate library services into the daily lives** of Arlington, Virginia, residents. Originally, The Connection was only intended to stay open until the **summer of 2017**, but, thanks to an "overwhelmingly positive" community survey, the pop-up library will stay open until June 2018.

The location of the library is inside the Crystal City Shops at 2100 Crystal Drive, only a few blocks from the nearest Metro station. It offers not only books, but also audio visual materials, games, and tech access. The Connection has also been a space for community meetings, workshops, and book groups as well as art exhibits.

In a statement, **JBG SMITH** Executive Vice President of Development Andrew VanHorn said, "The revitalization of Crystal City is a top priority for JBG SMITH. The Connection is a prime example of the placemaking efforts we are employing throughout the area, in that we are finding creative ways to provide value and utilize space."

The Connection is open for a **minimum of 30 hours per week**. For all of the details on how much the Arlington County Board is paying per month for maintenance, utilities, and the connection to the Crystal City Shops, check out ARLnow's article [here](#).