

The Uneven Opportunity Landscape In Northern Virginia

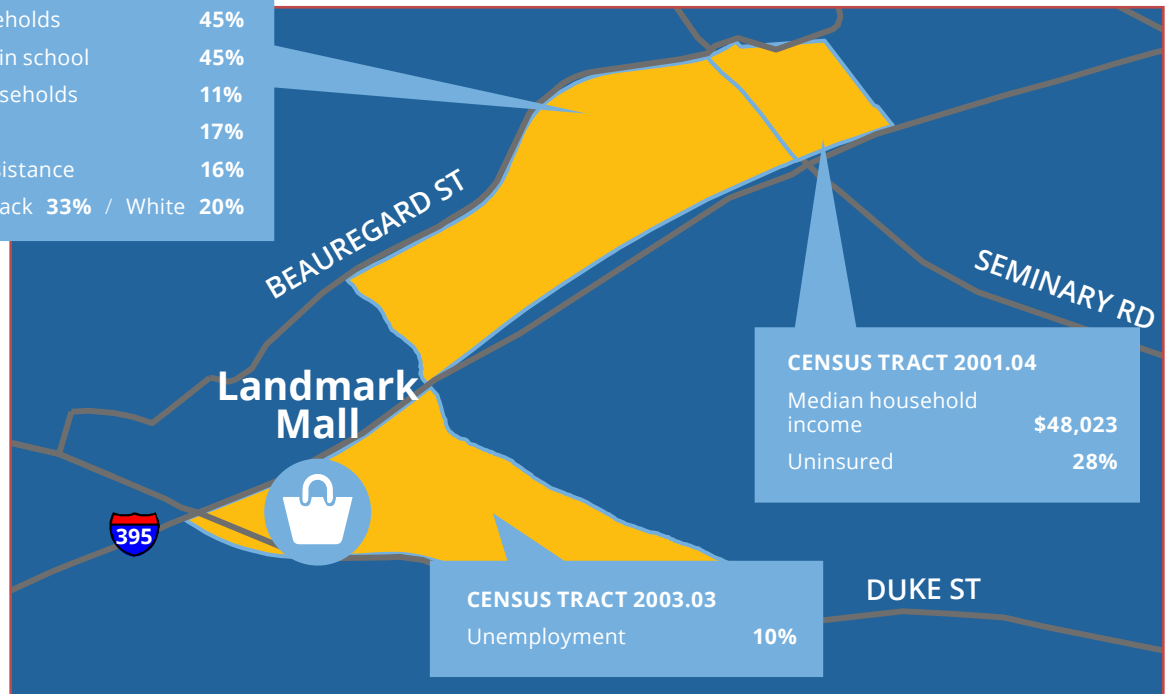
Alexandria

The health of adults and children varies dramatically across Alexandria. Life expectancy (how long a newborn baby can be expected to live) varies by as many as 8 years across the city, from 78 years in parts of Arlandria to 86 years in the downtown area of Hoffman Town Center. What determines our health also determines our ability to “get ahead.” Social and economic advancement—like health—depends on a good education, income, housing, transportation, safety, and other living conditions.

Although the quality of life on average is excellent in Alexandria, the opportunity landscape is uneven. We examined 2013 data from the American Community Survey for more details.



CENSUS TRACT 2001.04	
Single-parent households	45%
15-17-year-olds not in school	45%
Limited English households	11%
Poverty rate	17%
Receiving public assistance	16%
Hispanic	34%
Black	33%
White	20%



In three disadvantaged census tracts near Landmark Mall, a population of approximately 14,000 persons had limited education, insufficient economic resources, and inadequate living conditions to meet basic needs or help their children attain a better life.

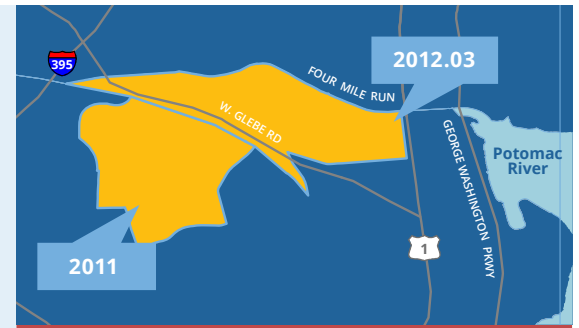
The population exposed to these conditions was largely Hispanic and African American.

Alexandria Statistics (county averages)	
High school education or higher	91%
Bachelor's degree or higher	61%
Median household income	\$85,706
Poverty rate	8%
Child poverty	14%
Receiving public assistance	5%
Living in overcrowded housing	3%
Limited English households	5%

In Alexandria, and throughout Northern Virginia, areas of wealth and disadvantage existed in close proximity. For example, affluent tracts in historic Old Town—where the average home value in one census tract was \$935,000—were blocks away from low-income tracts to the immediate north and south. The poverty rate in one nearby census tract was 23%, and 58% of the children lived in poverty.

Throughout Alexandria, neighborhoods separated by one thoroughfare often had very different demographics, housing, and socioeconomic resources. A striking example was near Arlandria, where residents in two census tracts on either side of West Glebe Road—tracts 2011 and 2012.03—faced very different living conditions (Figure right). In census tract 2011, south of West Glebe Road, median household incomes exceeded \$165,000 per year and three out of four adults had a Bachelor’s degree or higher education.

Just north of West Glebe Road, in tract 2012.03, only 31% of adults had a Bachelor’s degree and 43% of children lived in poverty. Low levels of education and income also existed throughout West Alexandria, where in some tracts 12% of residents lived in overcrowded housing, 56% of households with children had single parents, and as many as 27% of residents lacked health insurance. Hispanics and African Americans accounted for a disproportionate share of the population exposed to these adverse conditions.



Census tract	2011	2012.03
POPULATION		
Total residents	3,226	6,011
White	78%	19%
Black	4%	11%
Asian	<1%	0%
Hispanic	7%	63%
Foreign-born	5%	55%
Limited English households	0%	25%
EDUCATION		
Age 3-4 not enrolled in school	17%	85%
High school or higher	99%	62%
Some college or higher	93%	43%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	77%	31%
ECONOMIC RESOURCES		
Median household income	\$165,921	\$49,370
Poverty	2%	23%
Child poverty	0%	43%
Public assistance	<1%	11%
Single-parent households	9%	41%
HOUSING		
Renter occupied housing	33%	84%
Rental housing problems	18%	60%
Overcrowding	<1%	12%
Vacant housing	3%	21%
HEALTH & TRANSPORTATION		
Uninsured	2%	45%
No vehicle	3%	23%

Closing The Opportunity Gap

Improving the conditions that shape health and wellbeing in Alexandria requires not only better access to health care but also to other basic needs, like education and affordable housing. In today’s knowledge economy, advancement requires better access to education—from preschool through college—and economic development to bring jobs with livable wages to disadvantaged areas. And it requires an investment in the infrastructure of neglected neighborhoods, to make the living environment healthier and safer, to provide transportation, and to improve public safety.

What is good for our health is also good for the economy and will make Alexandria a stronger community for all of its residents.

To learn more about the conditions in Alexandria and other areas of Northern Virginia, visit novahealthfdn.org.