

Subject: Support for Restaurants in Arlington County
Related Department: AED

FY 2026 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up

4/2/2025

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Ms. Cunningham at the work session on March 31, 2025, regarding the following question:

With the proposed increase in the meals tax, what more can we do to support restaurants? i. e., marketing support or other types of support?

Marketing & Promotion

Arlington Economic Development (AED) currently markets and promotes restaurants through our small business and tourism related activities. Through the small business program, this includes social media posts and promotional videos for individual businesses, grand opening events, and paid business spotlights in ArlNow. Under tourism, the All in Arlington ad campaigns, website content (www.stayarlington.com), e-newsletters and social media regularly include local restaurants spotlights in its promotions targeted to visitors and meeting professionals nationwide. AED's marketing and promotion of local restaurants also builds on robust efforts by each of the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Neighborhood Partnership Organizations which also do considerable promotion of businesses within their boundaries. In addition, AED currently invests in the Open Rewards program which funds direct cash rewards to customers for shopping at local participating businesses.

Additional funding for AED's existing marketing and promotion activities could have the most direct impact on local restaurants in terms of driving additional customers to businesses. This could include:

- Additional rewards funding and promotion for the Open Rewards program.
- Increased general operation funding for the Arlington Convention and Visitors Service's tourism efforts.
- Funding for new marketing and promotion program targeted at highlighting local restaurants.

Regulatory and Permitting Policies and Constituent Services Support

AED and CPHD continue to work on updates to the county's regulations to help large and small businesses like restaurants thrive. This includes recent and ongoing work through the Commercial Marketing Resiliency Initiative (CMRI) and topical areas of concern to businesses such as outdoor seating, live entertainment, signage, parking,

Subject: Support for Restaurants in Arlington County

etc. In addition, AED team members provide hands-on constituent services support for businesses seeking information about how to obtain necessary permits or otherwise navigate different county processes. Continued funding of staff for these roles and the office of Constituent Services remains an impactful way to support restaurants in Arlington.