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Spotlight on The Little City

A School within a School
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Old School Dancing
Metro & HOT Lanes Update

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and more...



We spotlight...

The locale we call Tysons Corner is really just an area where McLean, Vienna, and Falls Church meet, at least the mailing addresses. Like our incorporated neighbor, the Town of Vienna, to the southwest, drive east down Route 7 and you soon enter our other incorporated neighbor, the City of Falls Church.

At just 2.2 square miles and about 12,000 residents, the City of Falls Church is a small enclave sitting within our huge metropolitan area. A quieter, close community that has everything a larger municipality offers, but at a scale more manageable, less sterile, and most

of all more welcoming. It has what every other city has: government and services, a school system, arts and entertainment, parks and recreation, a variety of housing as well as a variety of businesses. The Metro, the proximity to DC, I-66 and other major arteries make it an ideal location.

Essentially, Falls Church has most of the benefits without many of the drawbacks such as crime, noise, congestion, and impersonal government. This is why

"The Little City" brand fits so well.

In 2009, local marketing firm Smith-Gifford was awarded the task of finding a brand to give the City a personae. Falls Church didn't really fit into any one category. Was it a village, a crossroads, a neighborhood, a vibrant community? There were plenty of opinions, but what could everyone rally behind? Ask Matt Smith how The Little City concept came about and he thinks it was obvious.

"A city has everything in one place. Falls Church is five miles from DC, two square miles surrounded by 'urbanesse.' It truly describes this

place more than anything else."

"The City of Falls Church is a small place on purpose," explained Amanda Hurt of Smith-Gifford as she presented her Power-point to the City Council in 2009. "We are enthusiastically small. We are a small town oasis in the midst of a big city, and are happy to be that way. We're a mere 2.2 square miles, but we are not trivial."

The problem with a brand is it has to be embraced, there has to be a buy-in, by both the residents and the business community. Unfortunately, that takes money, a downside of being "little."

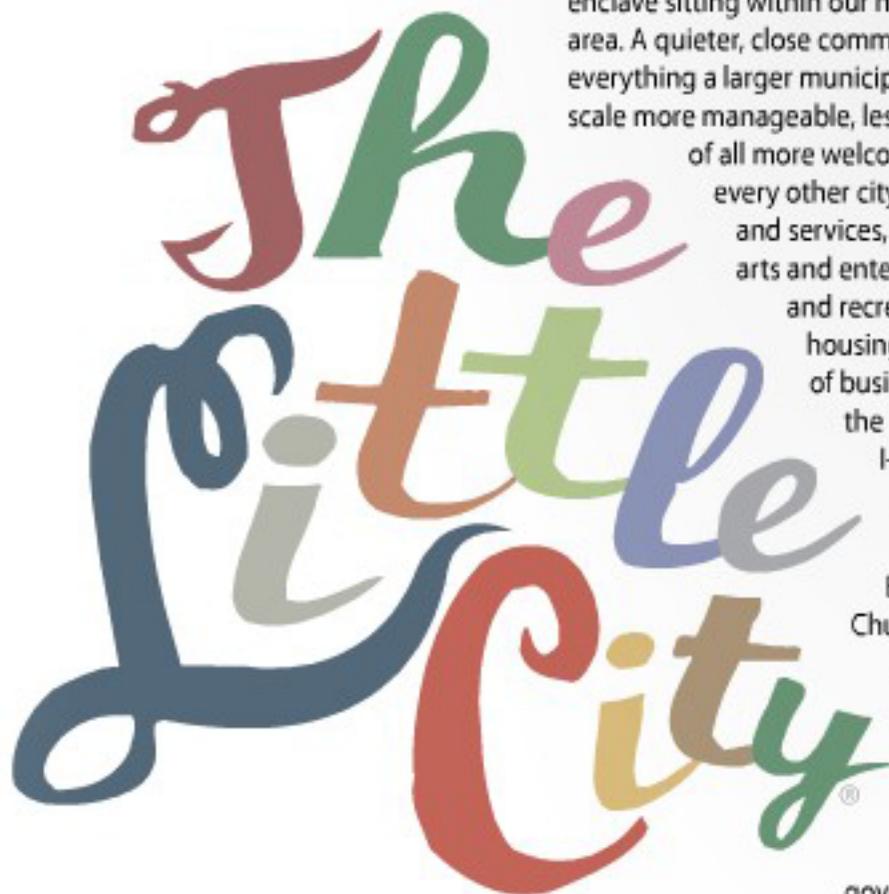
So the brand is used on letterhead and event banners and flyers and brochures and other inexpensive ways. It will get embraced at some point, it is what Falls Church truly is. Taking a look at The Little City, we can find all the components that make it what it truly is.

Let's start with its citizens. Falls Church has a very impressive demographic. Recently claiming the title of the highest median per capita income in the country topping out at over \$113,000, as well as one of the most educated communities in the country, over 70% of the residents of a bachelors degrees and 40% have a graduate degree. This makes for a pretty good base for a successful city.

Looking at Falls Church's government, they are organized by a city manager form of government that is found in most small municipalities. The city council is elected by the citizens, who then elect a mayor from themselves. the City Manager actually runs the government based on the rules the council passes.

Being a small town means that access to the government is easy. Most know the council members personally or at least knows someone who does. It is easy to engage in the process. Anyone can be heard on most any matter, it's the nature of being small.

Not only is it easy to be heard, but the City Council appoints about 135 residents to sit on committees, boards, commissions and other



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

volunteer positions to ensure that policies are properly followed and developed.

One of the most attractive assets of Falls Church is their school system. As with the government, it is easy to engage. With two elementary schools, a middle school and high school that make up one of the most respected systems in the country.

Falls Church took control of their schools shortly after becoming independent in the late 1940's. Parents wanted to raise the standards of their schools and gaining more control was the means to that end.

Every school in our area has their community that supports them, but Falls Church takes it to a higher level. As a small town, like the City Council, the school board is accessible. An educated community, many of them having moved here for the school system, is involved to ensure that the quality of the education system remains high.

So we have a highly educated, pretty wealthy population that has the ability control their own community. Falls Church has their own police department, parks and recreation, water and sewer service, public works, library, and more (they share fire service and are part of the court system with Arlington County). Good, bad or indifferent, it is how small towns work. The unique aspect of this particular town is that is smack in the middle of a dense metropolitan area where government and services, for the most part, are controlled by larger, less accessible, or at least less personal entities.

Vice Mayor David Snyder agrees on the three things that attract people to Falls Church: quality schools, convenient location, and small town civil engagement both in government is in community.

So we have an organized active government and an excellent school system. But what really gives this Little City the charm and character we hear so much about? The residents of Falls Church stay active with their community

through charitable causes, community events, the arts, and other endeavors like historical preservation and, of course, green concerns. For a town of this size, there are as many organizations and groups as there are opinions.

For example, take the active Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society. For the last 125 years their goal has to preserve the historic structures of the city, and to work to beautify the city through preservation and planting of trees. The arts play into their organization by sponsoring unique home concerts, intimate small gatherings, at various homes in the City as well as the concerts at Cherry Hill Park.

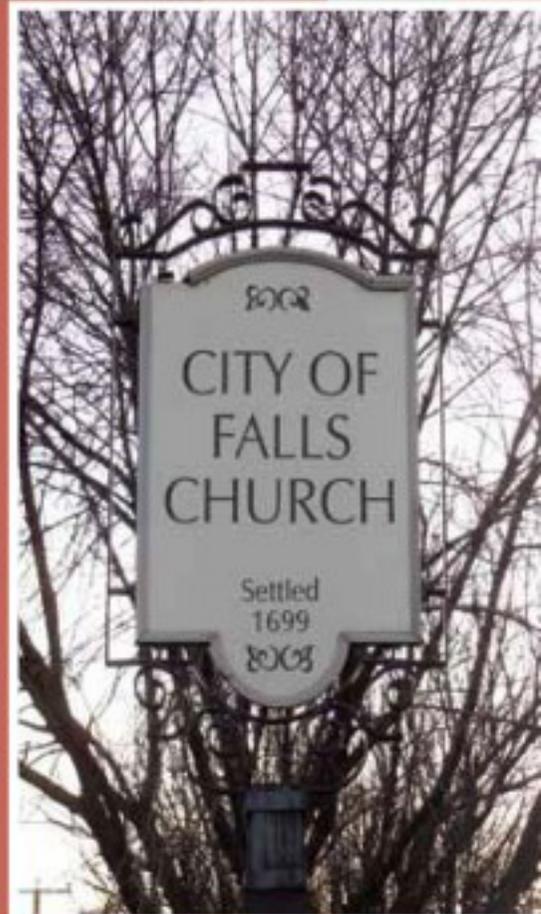
Sit with resident Barbara Cram for few minutes and you'll hear most everything worth hearing about community events in Falls Church. She is a former business owner and one of the many residents that love to give back. The list she is involved in is impressive. The nationally renowned farmers market, the New Year's celebration Watch Night, she is a benefactor at Falls Church Arts, and more. We spotlight a few of the many events on the next pages.

One aspect of Falls Church that cannot be ignored is its history. "There is a sense of history that goes back 300 years that brings a richness to the people working and living in the area," explained Vice Mayor David Snyder, who loves to delve into the area's fascinating past.

The date 1699 was found inscribed on a chimney from Big Chimney's House, now a park on Annandale Road, and the date is used as the date of the first settlement of Falls Church. The name Falls Church comes from The Falls Church which was constructed in 1732. The area grew when the capital of the country was moved to Washington. With an influx of Northerners settling the area in the 19th century, the township's vote for Virginian secession was about 75% for, 25% against. Like many towns in the area, Falls Church changed hands several times during the war.

The earliest known instance of U. S. wartime

>>>Continued



Previous page top: Federal troops occupy The Falls Church in 1862. Middle: All thoroughfares welcome you to 300 years of history. Bottom: View down Broad Street in 1910.



The red, white and blue square dancing at the annual Falls Church Memorial Day parade. This annual event draws the community together for a fun, hokey, beautiful, diverse, home town nostalgic event. It is a true commemoration of the local veterans and the sacrifices they have given. Parade participants are not only living veterans, but also representative marchers dressed in authentic uniforms of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The City's diversity was displayed at the parade as Bolivian dancers adorn the streets with music and dance, showcasing their culture. This will be the 30th year of Memorial day festivities.

aerial reconnaissance was carried out from Taylor's Tavern at Seven Corners by aeronaut Thaddeus S. C. Lowe of the Union Army Balloon Corps. When Confederates took Falls Church, the town became one of the earliest targets of aerially-directed bombardment, with Lowe operating air reconnaissance from Arlington Heights and directing Union guns near the Chain Bridge by telegraph. A re-enactment of Lowe's balloon reconnaissance will be part of an upcoming sesquicentennial commemoration.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Falls Church was the largest town in Fairfax County. Due to enacted residential segregation, the first rural chapter of the NAACP was formed in 1915. This was a difficult divisive time for the City. Though the segregation laws were repealed by the State in 1917, Falls Church never formally recognized the repeal for decades.

In 1948, Falls Church became an independent city in order to control its municipal services, including the school system.

The local business community not only embraces the character, charm, and history of this Little City, but its proximity to transportation and DC, the range of housing options for its employees, and on the educated, affluent, and loyal demographic.

The last couple of decades have seen a boom in businesses, restaurants, entertainment and new development to this city.

The examples are easy to find. The State Theatre that was renovated into a regional music venue in the 1990's has inked Falls Church as a destination. Events such as the recent WAMMIES event draws a large outside crowd. How do you build on that to benefit the City? There were successful meet-and-greets with many of the performers at area restaurants before the show, so that attendees would mingle and eat, and see what else the City had to offer.

More regional music can be found at venues like Bangkok Blues, Dogwood Tavern, Clare and Don's and Ireland's Four Provinces.

The restaurant scene has improved as well. The new Mad Fox Brewery has become a destination for those inside and outside the City. Argia's, Pizzeria Orso, and La Caraquena are a few of the newer restaurants that complement the long time favorites like Anthony's, and the original location of Elevation Burger.

The Eden Center (few realize it is part of the City) accounts for almost a third of the restaurants in Falls Church. This center is the most visited location in the City attracting nearly a million visitor per year. Other ethnic choices abound in the City from Crisp and Juicy, and Super Chicken, to Panjshir, to Luzmila's to Thai Pilin and Hoang's.

So how do the merchants and restaurants feel about being in Falls Church? It can cost more to be in a smaller

municipality and your competing with other areas in regard to sales tax.

"As the DC area becomes more of a foodie town, the suburbs are reaping the benefit of that trend," says James Roth, owner of the gourmet shop Red, White, Bleu (his brother Adam is a partner up the street at Argia's) "This town is loyal to its small businesses. I would guess that 75% of my customers I know by first name."

David Tax and his sister Rebecca own Clare and Don's and Mike's Deli/Lazy Sundae. "This is a small town. Think Mayberry between Arlington and Fairfax. It is a family friendly community that we embrace. On any given night you'll see someone you know," says David.

Next door at Argia's, co-owner Aimee Suyehiro says she caters to families as well. "It has a small town feel, with a variety of clients that range from the sweats and t-shirt to the suits." She features local artists in her restaurant where their work is available for sale.

Not everyone is as enthusiastic. Hugh Brown is someone who has seen Falls Church for a long time. His Grandfather started Browns Hardware about in the same location since 1883. "Falls Church used to be very self sufficient. There was a women's clothing shop, a grocer, a shoe store... you never needed to leave." In any case, he feels the new restaurants and businesses are good for the City by bringing more people in town. He has had a loyal following for over a century.

The City has obviously changed over the years. An important part of any city is how to manage growth in order to sustain the community. As the case with many strategic issues, everyone has an opinion. Many think it should stay more residential and quiet, others want to see more commercial growth.

Speaking with Mayor Nader Baroukh, he explains the goals for development of the City. With the guidance of Jim Snyder, the new Planning Director, the aim will be to do more sector planning, smaller parcels at a time. They don't want to see the density Arlington has, but there will be more density close to the Metro stations.

"Commercial development is the way to sustain the City. Residential development does not have enough tax base," says Nader.

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The cost of services for new residents is high, particularly with families due to the cost of the school system. That may sound a little harsh, but as older residents move away and are replaced by younger families, the service requirements stay relatively flat.

That policy is reiterated by Rick Goff, the City's Director of Economic Development. He refers to expanding the "day population" of the city that will support the retail and restaurants. This is the exact opposite of what is happening in Tysons. Tysons is trying to expand a weak residential component in order to support new community retail.

The Atlantic Realty's new city center development, that will probably soon go to site plan review, has requirements to boost the commercial tax base without adding too much to service needs. The residential component is for an aged restricted building, there will be a Harris Teeter, a fine dining restaurant, and office uses that will add to the sustainability to the tax base.

Other projects in the works include Falls Church Gateway and Northgate on N. Washington Street that will have some residential components, but for a younger professional market, not families, along with a large office piece.

As a small town, the City tries to attract good businesses to locate here. Chris Bergen, president of Tax Analysts consolidated about 200 professionals in his non-profit advocacy company in the City.

"When Tax Analysts decided to consolidate its operations, we knew we wanted to stay in Falls Church. It was a wise decision. We picked the perfect developer and the Falls Church City staff helped us secure an industrial revenue bond. We are very pleased with our new building and its proximity to shopping, dining, and service providers and in being a member of the Falls Church community."

>>>Continued

Top: Historic Cherry Hill as seen from the Daughter of the Revolution Garden. Built in 1845, the Cherry Hill Farmhouse is a Greek revival-style framed home of its period. Adjacent to City Hall and Cherry Hill Park, Cherry Hill Farm was once a thriving 73-acre farm. Although it was repeatedly overrun, raided, and requisitioned during the Civil War, it survived almost entirely intact. The property also has a barn, maintained by the Friends of Cherry Hill Foundation, that is part of the now peaceful and wooded public park that hosts summer day camp programs. The Barn houses a 19th century tool collection. The space is a gem with numerous activities and events and it is also available for rent for private affairs.

Middle: Member's show at ArtSpace Falls Church. Opened in 2009, ArtSpace Falls Church is a flexible art space that features a permanent gallery and a 95-seat performance space and provides an artistic home for two non-profit organizations, Creative Cauldron and Falls Church Arts. It's located at 410 S. Maple Avenue. A true community gallery, studio, and theatre venue.

Bottom: A painter in Cherry Hill Park during the Farmer's Market Plein Air Festival. After a month of painting in Falls Church City, plein air artists entered their work in Falls Church Arts's "Scenes in the City" competition in May. 'Falls Church Farmer's Market' by Isabelle Babington won. (see the painting on the next page)



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As pictured above, Watch Night is the City's New Year's Eve celebration organized and funded for the most part by the volunteers and businesses of the City. It all started back in 1998.

The "Star" had been illuminated every Christmas season since 1948, when the Town of Falls Church became a City. Built by Dixie Sheet Metal of Falls Church, and designed by local architect, Victor Spector. Don Frady and his Public Works crews hoisted and secured "the star" annually on the water tower behind 422 N. Washington Street. Through the years it had reached iconic status and was missed after "the star" and "the tower" were removed to make room for the townhouse office development being constructed very close by. On several occasions, long-time citizen, Len Mickelowski would ask Robert Goff, Director of Operations for the City, what happened to "the star"? So, one day Robert Goff pulled "the star" out of hiding.

Coincidence would have it that Robert Goff ran into Barb Cram at the West Street 7-11 some weeks before the Holidays, and

he said that maybe there is a building, or somewhere it might look good. Barb had an idea, as she was working on Watch Night preparations (like arranging for the Northern Lights Orchestra seen at the bottom right), that perhaps if enough people could be persuaded and details worked out it could be our Times Square type finale. Falls Church style with a meaningful and historic touch....so appropriate for our special town, nearly 60 years since "the star" was first high above the town. It will be raised and lowered again in the 10th Annual Watch Night Grand Finale.

Thanks to Len Mickelowski, Robert Goff, Guy Brady who did the refurbishment (as seen below left), Adam Schulman and Bill Rickardt of Atlantic Realty who have helped to arrange and donate the crane and operator for the event we now have a very special countdown event, meaningful to all, bringing back memories of another time.

"The Star", a message for the New Year--we can all refurbish a little and take on a new life! Happy New Year!



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In 1999, the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation erected a fifteen foot monument, constructed of pink granite, honoring the men and women of Tinner Hill who formed the first rural branch of the NAACP. The Monument that stands at the corner of South Washington Street and Tinner Hill Road. The organization is a member of the Virginia African American Heritage Trail. In 2006 the Tinner Hill historic site were awarded a Virginia State Historic Marker. It is one of only two state historic markers in Falls Church City.



Corey Harris and Phil Wiggins at the 2010 Tinner Hill Blues Festival

Tinner Hill

The Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation was founded in 1997 to preserve the early civil rights history of Falls Church and vicinity. The history of Tinner Hill is about civil rights, location, and a few brave people who defended the Bill of Rights. It is about hard work and perseverance. E.B. Henderson, Joseph Tinner and numerous others who lived on or around Tinner Hill had to outsmart and outflank the rulers of this rural area and they did. Today, we all reap the benefits of this almost forgotten battle, and up to the eighth generation of these families still live on the hill.

The Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation has two, close-in-proximity properties that, remarkably, survive from the post Civil War period. Both properties are intimately tied to the history of Falls Church and to the struggles of African Americans to attain their rights and freedoms, from the period of Jim Crow through the Civil Rights Movement. The existence of the two properties presents the City of Falls Church and, in fact, the state and

the nation, with a rare opportunity a) to preserve vernacular places not grand in stature but immensely important in the evolution of this freedom-based democracy, b) to acknowledge the importance of these places by making their presence central to the City's development projects. (At present, these planned developments—commercial and residential buildings—surround or are visibly near the two African American sites.) In 1999 THHF constructed the Tinner Hill Monument located near both properties.

Tinner Hill Blues Festival: A Tribute to John Jackson

The festival features blues music, all over town, in a weekend in mid-June. Poised to become the premier blues festival of the region this is a weekend long event featuring outstanding national regional and local blues performers, historic displays, family activities, vendors, food, carnival games. is a day long concert in Cherry Hill Park.



A variety of vendors can be seen every Saturday. There is a always a loyal crowd to pickup fresh produce and much more.

The Falls Church Farmers Market

A notable gem of Falls Church, the farmers market was recently voted as the number one medium sized market (31 to 55 vendors) by the American Farmland Trust. Ask anyone around town (and many that travel here), what is your favorite Saturday morning activity? Easy, supporting local producers at the Farmers Market.

The Falls Church Farmers Market is open every Saturday, and during peak seasons more than 40 vendors offer fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables, cheeses, meats, baked goods, plants, and wine. Master gardeners also staff a booth at the Market to answer gardening questions. The Falls Church Farmers Market is open from 8 a.m. until noon (9 a.m. in the winter months) in the parking lot of City Hall, 300 Park Avenue and is sponsored by the Falls Church Recreation and Parks Department.



The painting of the market is by Isabelle Babington who won 1st Place in the Plein Air Art Festival put on by Falls Church Arts.



The Falls Church

The Falls Church is the namesake of The Little City. It served Truro Parish, which was established by the colonial Virginia Assembly in May 1732. The original wooden church was replaced in 1763, when George Washington and George William Fairfax were appointed church wardens with responsibility to contract for a new

building.

Tradition holds that the Declaration of Independence was read to local citizens from the steps of the south doors. During the Civil War, the church was used by Union troops as a hospital and later as a stable.

An active congregation has worshipped here continuously since about 1873.

Prior to 2007, there was one congregation known as The Falls Church. In 2007, what is now known as The Falls Church (Episcopal) was disaffiliated by a vote, resulting in the original church affiliating with Convocation of Anglicans in North America. There are still legal disputes.

The Falls Church is an historic establishment dating before the founding of the United States.

The Eden Center

The Eden Center is modeled after Saigon's Ben Thanh Market and is named for the 1960's Saigin arcade Khu Eden. It is a great example of the diverse cultures represented in Falls Church.

Located on the East end of the City by Seven Corners, it is home to dozens of Asian restaurants ranging from simple delis and pho shops to white table cloth establishments. There are also dozens of stores that cater to the Asian community particularly Vietnamese.

The City's Economic Development commission considers it the most visited tourist destination in the City. You only need to try to park there to figure that out. Total tax revenue from the Eden Center represents



over 2% of the total City of Falls Church tax revenue.

Emerging in 1984 as the Vietnamese-American community in Northern Virginia grew following the Vietnam War. The site was formerly known as the Plaza Seven Shopping Center. Many Vietnamese-American events are held at the Eden Center. each year.

Rick Goff expands on how The Little City Brand is getting the right businesses. "Our goals are to attract more of the right type of businesses and to articulate an identity and personality that is appealing in order to attract non-residents to visit and residents to embrace."

One example would be Pizzeria Orso that opened in the Atlantic Realty development on South Maple. Another example would be the Mad Fox Brewing Company that opened in the Spectrum Building. There has been debate about the lack of originality on that building, but no one disputes the need for that type of in-fill mixed use development. The addition of Mad Fox has been a success for the City and its residents.

"Falls Church City was fantastic to work with," says Mad Fox CEO Bill Madden. "The community has been very receptive. The worse thing I can say is our soft opening failed to stay soft. There was a great deal of pent up demand for this type of restaurant."

Goff says that, physically, the City is pretty much built out. New developments will be made as in-fill and higher density in nature. "It's our challenge to shape new development to enhance our quality of life, to make it a privilege to live in a quiet neighborhood within walking distance of a diversity of vibrant activities."

New commercial development is key to a city like Falls Church, but it needs to serve the needs of the community as well. It should bring new venues for artists to display their works, musicians to play their music, and public spaces to enhance all the activities the numerous community groups plan. The developments need to be dynamic and original in order to keep the City unique and maintain its small town character, all while attracting productive businesses. Ambitious goals, but that is what makes this town succeed.

It's this balance, the proper planning that will keep the charm found in this Little City. Though the battles at City Hall may show divisiveness on the surface, it is evidence of an engaged community that wants to ensure that their City is managed to maintain the small town lifestyle, but with big city services, in order to keep the quality of life high.

This Little City didn't happen by accident. Its long history, its independent character, its dedication support to arts, culture and preservation, and the participation of its citizens in all aspects of civic life truly make Falls Church, The Little City.

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