



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Vienna's new economic development manager plans 'listening tour' to shape vision for vitality and viability in Vienna**

Natalie Monkou has just joined the Town of Vienna as its first economic development manager, but it may be a challenge to find her in her office on the second floor of Town Hall. You're more likely to find her on Maple Avenue or Church Street visiting Town of Vienna businesses as Monkou undertakes a "thorough listening tour" as one of her initial priorities.

"I need to understand what has come before me and what expectations, needs, and concerns are out there," she says. "I plan to get feedback from as many community stakeholder groups as possible.

"There is so much change happening in Vienna and around the region right now," Monkou adds. "Because the area is transforming, it's definitely an opportunity to think strategically and creatively about what economic development and viability will mean for our community and how we can remain competitive and be inclusive and strong."

Monkou's listening tour fits in with Vienna Town Manager Mercury Payton's initial goal for the new position, which is to connect with existing Town businesses – "all of them" – to learn how the Town can, as much possible, better serve existing businesses' needs. He also sees Monkou's role as a relationship-builder, helping to connect property owners with perspective businesses and business managers with assistive resources as well as collaborating with Fairfax County's Economic Development Authority.

"This is an exciting time for the Town," says Payton. "Having a strong person in this new and critical function may be a catalyst to achieving levels of success that the Town hasn't yet experienced."

Monkou stood out amongst a very competitive pool, says Payton. He wanted a candidate who would not be intimidated by the pressures of the Northern Virginia region and who could be effective almost immediately. He was impressed by Monkou's economic development experience in Prince George's County and Arlington, where she was part of a team that, he says, had "headline-grabbing economic development wins."

In Arlington County, where she worked for four years, Monkou served as a liaison between the county and three business improvement districts, strengthening good governance practices, and served on the teams that landed Amazon's HQ2 in Arlington as well as attracted the March of Dimes and Nestle to the region. Prior to working in Arlington, Monkou was the special assistant to Prince George's County's deputy chief of economic development. She has an undergraduate degree in English and a master's degree in public administration, both from the University of Maryland.

An Annandale resident, Monkou enjoys traveling outside of the country at least once a year, spicy food, and brunch. She says that she's excited to be Vienna's first economic development manager. "It is truly a blank canvas. And more than that, I have a fresh start in a place that people already really love."

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