

DRAFT Planning Commission Letter to City Manager re: FY 2024 Budget

December 7, 2022

To: James Parajon, City Manager

Re: FY 2024 Budget

Mr. City Manager:

This letter summarizes the Planning Commission's guidance regarding the City of Alexandria fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget, in response to your recent request for recommendations from commissions to help inform City budget priorities and decision making.

The Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program prioritizes the City's planning activities, and seeks holistic solutions to challenges facing the City such as the climate emergency and housing availability and affordability and availability crisis. The FY24 work program is likely to prioritize several important long-range planning efforts led by the Department of Planning and Zoning, including acceleration of the Zoning for Housing program and completion of the Alexandria West Small Area Plan update. The work program will also include several other important plans and implementation activities, including activation of the new Office of Climate Action.

In addition, Planning and Zoning staff support current development activities, including review of developer plans for several key developments in the City in the Potomac Yard, Old Town North, Eisenhower East, Eisenhower West, and West End neighborhoods.

The Planning Commission seeks to ensure adequate budget to fully fund the planning activities anticipated in the year ahead. We recommend that the City provide sufficient budget for all staff positions as well as consultant support to carry out the anticipated work program.

In addition, we encourage the City to evaluate and adjust the compensation of staff engaged in planning activities to provide salaries and benefits competitive with other government agencies and private employers in the Washington metropolitan area. We note the departure of several capable staff members in recent years who might have been retained had the City's compensation kept pace with regional market conditions. Efforts to reward and retain staff will promote a high-caliber workforce and facilitate development and implementation of the City's plans.

Finally, we strongly encourage the City to avail itself of grant funding available to support planning activities. The Federal Transit Administration's [Transit Oriented Development Planning Pilot Program](#) funds TOD planning in areas where new fixed guideway or core capacity transit capital investment is planned. Given plans for enhanced transit in the Duke Street corridor, this program could potentially fund the City's small area planning in the area. Grants typically range between \$500,000 and \$1 million in size, and the program tends to be under-subscribed, so nearly every applicant has historically received a grant.

We appreciate your consideration of our input regarding the City's FY 2024 budget, and look forward to supporting the City's planning activities over the coming year.

Sincerely,

Nathan M. Macek, Chair
Alexandria Planning Commission