



PROPOSED COORDINATED COMMUNITY RECOVERY PLAN

October 27, 2020



Purpose



This proposed plan envisions that the current and future services the City provides will not only support vulnerable populations through the current crisis, but will lift them above the pre-COVID baseline, ensuring:

1. They are prepared to quickly overcome challenges if a similar situation were to arise again
2. They can build opportunities for themselves and thrive in our community.



Purpose



- Many of these services already exist or had been planned prior to Spring 2020
- COVID has elevated the need for some services to either be enhanced through interdepartmental and partner collaborations or elevated as a higher priority
- The proposed plan also highlights areas where services may be lacking or issues of inequity



Process



An interdepartmental team, established in June 2020, developed the plan by:

1. Defining the project purpose, focus areas, and “vulnerable populations”
2. Reviewing existing city plans to identify recommendations already approved but under resourced
3. Receiving strategies from departments that would improve focus areas for vulnerable populations
4. Identifying and prioritizing recommendations
5. Developing plan and next steps
6. Began to identify external funding sources to address recommendations, such as the NACTO Grant for the Four Mile Run Park Plaza.



Focus Areas



- Economic Stability, Security and Mobility
- Access to Medical/Behavioral Health Care and Disability Services
- Basic Necessities
- Transportation



Vulnerable Populations During COVID-19



- Households below the ALICE Threshold (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)
- Homeless
- Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Minority and immigrant business owners
- Individuals with pre-existing health conditions
- Individuals who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).



Recommendations (1 & 2 of 10)



1. Develop a Digital Equity Plan

- Survey the community and conduct outreach to understand the needs throughout the City
- Prioritize how to invest in bridging the divide while seeking to expand affordable, high-quality Internet access through strategic partnerships
- Launch digital literacy innovation programs and test new ways to provide technology training and support in high-need communities.

Next Step: IT and OPA is currently working on a scope for a digital divide survey and stakeholder outreach. The plan will determine larger scale resource needs.

2. Develop IT Strategy for improved electronic client documentation

- Multiple needs to improve electronic documentation for DCHS clients, including resources to be able to expand telehealth opportunities.
- Purchase and use program for client signatures would expand health care options
- Comprehensive approach to a health services documentation would bring together and integrate client and service data.

Next Step: Inventory the client documentation needs to develop a full scope of work.



Recommendations (3 & 4 of 10)



3. Collect a Minority and Immigrant Owned Business Inventory

- City currently does not have an inventory of the minority and immigrant owned businesses in the City, making it difficult to ensure program implementation, such as the Back to Business Grants, reach these owners.
- Project would develop a mechanism for collecting and mapping minority and immigrant owned businesses in order to provide greater assistance and track metrics.

Next Step: Office of Racial Equity will work with finance to determine if this can be tracked through business licenses or other methods.

4. Maintain an advance supply of PPE for city childcare and health care workers

- Ensure a supply of PPE is efficiently procured, appropriately stored and accessible, should the need occur again, will be necessary to maintain essential functions and human services.

Next Step: Through after-action reporting of the current crisis, the City should develop a strategy for determining inventory needs and standard operating procedures for distribution.



Recommendations (5 & 6 of 10)



5. **Coordinate Inter-departmental outreach strategies for various population segments**

- Many city services are targeted towards similar population segments, though each department has its own various outreach strategies
- A crisis, such as COVID-19, demonstrates the need for a centralized approach to outreach, as our residents need to be reached quickly without confusing messaging.

Next Step: Compile best practices learned through outreach from COVID Joint Information System and develop metric of baseline for engagement. Equity Officer, in coordination with stakeholder departments, to lead this initiative.

6. **Increased access to ESOL services:**

- Expanding access to quality ESOL services will go a long way in removing barriers to individual and household employment
- Strengthening existing services and increasing resources will be critical in this regard.

Next steps: Compile resources and ensure outreach regarding services available. Continue and expand funding for ESOL services from the Alexandria Fund for Human Services targeting immigrant and refugee residents of Alexandria.



Recommendations (7 of 10)



7. **Maintain and expand resources in the FY21 budget to ensure rental assistance and alternative housing are available beyond December 31, 2020;**

- The demand for eviction prevention and housing stability assistance is expected to continue to grow with the gap in extended unemployment benefits, particularly after the CDC moratorium on evictions ends after 2020
- The City will potentially need to provide financial assistance through supplemental resources once CARES ACT and CDBG COVID grant funds are depleted. This may include:
 1. Providing city support for distressed, COVID-19 impacted homeowners through extensions of property tax due dates or other relief;
 2. Enhanced access to counseling and assistance on behalf of borrowers to secure loan modifications;
 3. Local funding to continue the emergency rental assistance programs established through the CARES Act funding allocations;
 4. Enhanced landlord-tenant counseling, mediation and housing information and referral services for renters; and
 5. Continued support of DCHS's Eviction Prevention and Housing Stability Assistance program. Without continued assistance, the City's most vulnerable populations face dire instability and potential loss of shelter.

Next steps/Resource need: Identify funding and policies to relieve housing burdens caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Recommendations (8 of 10)



8. Establish community wellness hubs in city facilities, such as recreation centers

- Many of our city facilities are suited to serve as community wellness hubs by leveraging their role as trusted gathering places
- Community wellness hubs meet the unique needs of their communities through a variety of ways including access to healthy foods, physical activity, social connections and connection to nature.
- While Alexandria may not have the physical space to dedicate towards all these resources, we can have “wellness center hours” at three recreation centers that have the great community need: William Ramsay, Chick Armstrong, and Charles Houston.

Next Step: Through community engagement, develop an understanding of the types of services and space requirements needed in hubs. Once complete, departments would need to develop a plan to re-deploy staff with rotating hours to provide services at these locations. Additionally, self-service kiosks for service applications could be deployed to these City Facilities. AHD and DCHS would lead the process to determine the services needed in facilities.

This recommendation should be included in the Joint Facilities Master Plan for future site renovations of city facilities and school sites, preparing for flexibility of spaces that allow for private counseling.



Recommendations (9 & 10 of 10)



9. Advance ATV 2022 Bus Network to increase frequency of bus service focused on ridership needs.

- Increase investment in routes with the highest ridership, primarily on the West End and in Arlandria.

Next Step: Apply for operational funding through I-395 grant for AT9 and AT1 routes. Dash has started to create plans based on ridership levels and will continue to increase service to pre-COVID-19 levels and will evaluate additional next steps.

10. Ensure food security beyond the end of the calendar year

- The initial CARES allocation by City Council for food security was \$2.4 million which funded the distribution of groceries and the distribution of grocery gift cards.
- Council has approved an additional \$1.53 million of CARES funding to continue the food security programs through the end of 2020. However, following December 31, the current source of funding will be unavailable.
- The City should continue to work with community partners to seek out and implement long-term food security strategies and to continue to build economic security approaches.

Next Step: Document current partnerships and systems for distribution, determine monthly costs since March (including partners and ACPS) to identify financial resources, whether through the city general fund or grants, needed beyond December 31.



Follow Up



- The Coordinated Community Recovery Plan Team will solicit quarterly feedback from department leads on each of the recommendations
- Feedback will allow the team to evaluate and measure progress
- First evaluation period will be the first week of January 2021
- Continued discussion on this proposed plan at the upcoming Council Retreat on Nov. 7
- Achievement of goals subject to funding





Questions?