



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0792, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 21, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: HELEN S. MCILVAINE, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HOUSING

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of an Application for Community Impact Grant Funding from Virginia Housing to Enhance Culturally Competent Outreach and Engagement in the Alexandria West Plan Area.

ISSUE: Grant funding of up to \$130,000 from Virginia Housing (VH) to support the City's community engagement and planning efforts related to the Alexandria West Small Area Plan ("Plan").

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Approve the City's application to Virginia Housing for Community Impact Grant Funding of up to \$130,000; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to execute the grant application and such documents as may be necessary to document support for the City's Community Impact Grant application to Virginia Housing for the Alexandria West planning process.

BACKGROUND: The City launched a small area planning process for the Alexandria West section of the City in mid-November 2022 (Attachment 1). Alexandria West is a large geographic area and includes nearly 20% of all of the City's residential units, including many multifamily complexes (both apartments and condominiums). The area is home to a very diverse population, including many immigrant households and households with limited English proficiency (Attachment 2). As part of the Plan launch, a community poll was widely distributed, with many responses identifying housing as a chief concern (affordability, security, cost, redevelopment/displacement, building conditions, landlord-tenant issues, aging-in-place, and affordable homeownership options).

To ensure that the City has resources to amplify its engagement and outreach efforts, Planning and Zoning (PZ) and Housing staff have submitted a grant application to Virginia Housing to help support outreach, meetings/listening sessions, and development of Plan materials, as well as the ability to provide stipends to reimburse community partners operating in the area to assist the City with outreach efforts, including sponsoring meetings in the plan area at sites convenient to residents. This model was used successfully during the Arlandria-Chirilagua Plan update, and will build on City-community partner relationships formed and/or strengthened during recent pandemic eviction prevention and emergency assistance relief efforts. The City has also asked for grant funds to help cover costs to provide interpretation at meetings and events and for translation of written materials into Dari and Pashto, which are primary languages for many new area residents. Costs for interpretation and translation into English, Amharic, Spanish and Arabic are already anticipated within the Alexandria West Plan budget.

DISCUSSION: Virginia Housing has indicated support for the City’s request (\$50,000 for community engagement; \$30,000 for translation/interpretation), citing the City’s track record (Beauregard Plan, South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy, and Arlandria-Chirilagua Plan) and leadership in developing new models of culturally competent outreach and engagement. Because of the number of housing issues anticipated to be addressed, they have also encouraged the City to apply for a grant to support housing and planning studies (\$50,000). In response, PZ and Housing staff are preparing an application to further focus on specific housing concerns, potentially a survey of national anti-displacement strategies, development of strategies to strengthen condominium communities and help them access funding for capital needs, etc.

Virginia Housing has confirmed that the City support already identified to conduct the planning effort, including the staffing effort of an interdepartmental team, as well as City budget resources dedicated for the Plan meet its requirement for local matching funds. PZ and Housing will lead, coordinate, and manage the grant within existing staffing resources.

FISCAL IMPACT: None beyond the dedication of City staffing and financial resources already committed.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Map of Alexandria West Plan Area
- 2) Graphic illustration of Alexandria West demographics and housing data

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Karl Moritz, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning (PZ)
Carrie Beach, Chief, Neighborhood Planning Division, PZ
Richard Lawrence, Principal Planner, Neighborhood Planning Division, PZ
Tamara Jovovic, Housing Program Manager, Housing
Kenneth Turscak, Housing Analyst, Housing