



Legislation Text

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File #: 23-0195, Version: 1

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

**FROM:** DANA WEDELES, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OFFICER, CMO

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Youth & Families and Community Engagement Business Plans and Housing and COVID-19 Recovery Business Plan Updates.

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of the Youth & Families and Community Engagement Business Plans and updates in the initiatives in the Housing and COVID-19 Recovery Business Plans

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Discuss and consider the Youth & Family and Community Engagement Business Plans, in alignment with the City Council Priorities approved on March 22, 2022; and
- (2) Receive updates on the COVID-19 and Housing Business Plan Initiatives.

**BACKGROUND:** On January 29, 2022, the Alexandria City Council held a retreat to develop expectations and priorities for its 2022 work program. On March 22, Council approved the priorities, as follows, and directed staff to develop business plans for each.

- 1. Recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic:** We will advance the policies, practices, and resources needed to ensure a healthy, resilient, and equitable recovery for all residents and businesses.
- 2. Provide Diverse Housing Opportunities:** We will reconsider our zoning model and pursue other tools to facilitate an Alexandria housing economy with the necessary range of price points, safe and sustainable housing options, and the associated services to meet the needs of a thriving city.

3. **Define our Community Engagement Approach:** We will use both new and traditional outreach methods to ensure that engagement is efficient, effective, and accessible to all stakeholders, creating a clear connection between community input and its impact on policy decision, infrastructure needs, and financial considerations.
4. **Support Youth and Families:** We will explore how to expand academic, social, and emotional services and physical supports to all youth during the out-of-school time hours.
5. **Foster Economic Development:** We will seek out and consider budgetary, land-use, and regulatory tools to foster sustainable and equitable development, diversify revenue, and allow greater investment in our infrastructure.
6. **Develop a Compensation Philosophy:** We will establish a new compensation philosophy to ensure we are the preferred workplace of choice and that our employees feel valued.

City Council expressed that the priorities must be consistently viewed through the lenses of equity, environmental justice, civility, transparency, respect, and service. In developing the initiatives for each goal of the plans, staff has asked:

1. **Equity:** Will these initiatives identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers in our City's systems and services?
2. **Environmental justice:** Do these initiatives provide equitable access to a healthy environment and take proactive measures to mitigate and adapt to future climate change?
3. **Civility & Respect:** How do we ensure that all interactions associated with these initiatives are done so in a way in which there is a healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives?
4. **Transparency:** Are we operating in a way that is easy for others to see and understand what is happening in these initiatives?
5. **Service:** Do these initiatives put the public's interest first and make a difference in the community?

Since March, staff have been developing business plans for each of the priorities with the intent to report to Council on two of the six plans per quarter, as follows:

June 2022: Covid-19 Recovery and Housing

September 2022: Community Engagement and Youth and Families

December 2022: Economic Development and Compensation Philosophy

The business plans provide the framework for an interdepartmental approach to achieving city goals. By consolidating recommendations and planned initiatives with key indicators, the business plans describe how the City will ensure each priority area is well run and the community receives quality services.

In addition to the business plans, each quarter, for one year, staff will provide an update to Council on the initiatives in the business plans. Attachment #1 shows a report with the status of each initiative identified in the COVID-19 Recovery and Housing business plans.

City Council will re-evaluate the needs and priorities in December 2022 in anticipation of the year ahead and the FY24 budget.

**DISCUSSION:** As shown in attachments 2 and 3, and below, the business plans for Support Youth and Families and Community Engagement show the initiatives underway to meet City goals. The initiatives are cross-departmental and require alignment across plans to implement.

The Youth and Families Business Plan is approached in a way that differs from the other five business plans. This plan is anchored in a nascent partnership with the Youth Services Network (YSN), through Act for Alexandria (ACT). Through this partnership, the YSN will conduct a Landscape Scan of the City's out of school time needs and the demand/interest from city families, shown below as Goal #1, Initiative a & b (1a & 1b). The City and ACT are currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding to memorialize the roles, responsibilities, and scope of work.

The data from that scan will be used to inform almost all of the other initiatives in the business plan. The initiatives below 1a & 1b that are dependent upon this data are noted with a (D) at the end for "dependent on data" and the initiatives with an (I) may be conducted independently. The Landscape Scan will begin in October 2022 with completion planned for spring 2023. Data collected throughout the year will allow incremental implementation of some initiatives while the scan is underway.

**SUPPORT YOUTH AND FAMILIES:** We will explore how to expand academic, social, and emotional services and physical supports to all youth during the out of school time hours.

**Goal #1: Support the development and alignment of equitable access to high-quality out of school time programs**

- a) Work in partnership with the Youth Services Network (YSN) to build a network of out of school providers to develop a Landscape Scan that coordinates an understanding of current and future out of school time needs and program design for all providers within the City
- b) Identify strategies and solutions to expand middle and high school student engagement in out of school time and community-based formal and informal programs and safe spaces
- c) Using information gathered from the Landscape Scan, evaluate issues of equity in out of school time registration systems and policies, including appropriate fee assistance and sliding scales for out of school time programs and transportation options that are available to students (D)
- d) Evaluate need for more flexible drop-in programs and spaces, such as library locations, with trained staff and no financial or registration barrier (D)
- e) Expand LINK club sites, including six new programs on the west-end and four new middle school sites (I/D)
- f) Hire multi-lingual out of school time staff to improve accessibility for families who are speakers of other languages, including onsite instruction and material supports at existing community hubs and safe spaces (I/D)

**Goal #2: Ensure availability of space and staff to accommodate demand for after-school needs**

- a) Using information from the Landscape Scan, determine physical space needs for after-school city supported programs and facilities, including academic enrichment programming (D)
- b) Coordinate future out of school time program needs for capital projects, such as George Mason and

- Cora Kelly, based on demand data from Landscape Scan (D)
- c) Understand and adapt to new childcare licensing requirements for after school programs, and identify where capacity exists in the city to meet these requirements (D)
  - d) Implement compensation strategy for RPCA out of school time staffing, including full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff (I)
  - e) Map and analyze open space near providers to identify needs for outdoor space and recreational opportunities and ensure access (D)

**Goal #3: Expand academic, social, and emotional support during out of school time to ensure that kids know where to safely go to be heard by a trusted listener and that the city can appropriately respond to their specific needs**

- a) Support Out of School Time providers by offering access to training in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and Developmental Assets programs and sharing best practices for trauma-informed practice (RAISE) and develop training standards for all city-supported program staff (D)
- b) Recruit more mentors through the efforts of the new Alexandria Mentoring Partnership Coordinator, support enhancement and expansion of mentoring programs, and establish comprehensive training opportunities for caring adults (I)
- c) Implement recommendations based on the youth safety and resilience work (I)
- d) Conduct a Civics Academy for Youth this Fall, in partnership with U.S. Government and Civics teachers of ACPS. The Academy is seven weeks long and introduces a range of City departments to students. This program, which has the potential to reach hundreds of students throughout the year, will also be an opportunity to hear feedback from youth on what support they need. (I)
- e) Pilot of a “Resource Corner” at George Washington Middle School, exploring the use of dedicated space at the school where middle school students can meet with service providers on a rotational basis to learn about the resources available to them. If successful, this model could be expanded into other schools and recreation centers after school. (I)
- f) Conduct a needs assessment of professional learning opportunities with staff involved in Division-wide after school programming to collaborate with ACPS for academic services during Out of School Time. (D)

**DEFINE OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH:** We will use both new and traditional outreach methods to ensure that engagement is efficient, effective, and accessible to all stakeholders, creating a clear connection between community input and its impact on policy decision, infrastructure needs, and financial considerations.

**Goal #1: Focus on communication strategies that promote trust-centered relationship building, equitable engagement, and meet people where they are.**

- a) Increase awareness and reiterate expectations for community engagement, as outlined in Alexandria’s Civic Engagement Policy (2014), including updating the Boards and Commissions Staff Liaison Handbook so that members of the community are actively, constructively, and meaningfully involved in the public decisions that affect them.
- b) Administer strategies that remove barriers to participation in long-term planning efforts and engage a demographically representative sample of the community. This includes meeting people where they are by hosting meetings on various platforms (in-person, virtual, informally, etc.), engaging existing community leaders and networks, as well as providing necessary supports for participation, such as food, transportation, childcare, translation, and interpretation, including the processes for:

- Citywide Vision Plan 2040
  - Alexandria West Plan
  - Housing Master Plan Update
  - Duke Street Transitway
  - Alexandria Libraries 5-year plan, including libraries as Community Hubs
- c) Recruit and employ neighborhood communicators within Alexandria that have the language skills, cultural humility, and diverse backgrounds to build long-term trust, a reliable presence, empowerment, and responsiveness with residents, particularly in historically marginalized, underserved, and hard to reach communities. This includes:
- Deployment of centralized grassroots organizers to initiate and support equitable resident engagement.
  - Community Health Worker initiative focused on reducing inequitable health outcomes through culturally competent engagement, navigation, education, and empowerment.
  - Employment of Youth Ambassadors through the Workforce Development Center to engage with peers and give voice to youth issues.
  - Oral History Program Manager to engage with and gather stories from Alexandria residents.
- d) Utilize neighborhood outreach strategies focused on building authentic relationships, including:
- Develop and implement a Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) community engagement plan to promote recreation services and financial assistance opportunities.
  - Establish targeted outreach for grant programs accessible to minority-owned small businesses in the West End. This outreach will prioritize the provision of materials in multiple languages, assistance in filling out applications, and regular communications.
  - Through the Office of Human Rights, hold regular, small, community listening sessions at accessible and convenient locations to facilitate discussion on how to continue to combat discrimination, increase equal opportunity, and protect human rights for persons who live, work, or visit Alexandria.
  - Advance youth safety and resilience efforts through initiatives like the "Youth Speak Up" event series hosted by ACAP, SAPCA, and the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission, as well as regular Teen Block Parties and other teen events hosted by RPCA.
- e) Use neutral third-party facilitation to help with consensus building when necessary, including:
- Ad-Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee
  - Torpedo Factory Stakeholder Task Force

**Goal #2: Share and receive information in an accessible, effective, and dynamic way**

- a) Establish a city-wide communications plan to tell the story of the community and its residents, and that supports major City priorities. The plan will include a strategic approach to integrating and coordinating the initiatives in this business plan.
- b) Integrate new web editor at the Office of Communications and Public Information to create and increase access to information, as well as enhance user experience.
- c) Develop a centralized Language Access Program to implement policies on language services, cultural fluency, and meaningful representation of the City's primary languages, as well as the deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. This is supported by the hiring of a Language Coordinator and Bilingual Writers.
- d) Receive, review, and manage Alex311 calls and performance indicators to proactively identify trends and opportunities for community engagement, outreach, and response to targeted issues in the community.
- e) Disseminate information from technical subject-matter-expertise (SME) utilizing communications tools that emphasize storytelling techniques like infographics and testimonials from residents. Specific initiatives

include: Flood Action Alexandria, Duke Street Transitway, Recurring Seasonal Operational Initiatives (e.g. Inclement Weather, Leaf Collections, Paving, etc.), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Projects Communications and Project Management

- f) Advance digital content creation and implement strategies that increase the quantity and quality of social and web engagements, and measure effectiveness. Specific initiatives in the upcoming year include Flood Action Alexandria, RPCA Connect with Us, the Alexandria Library System, and Historic Alexandria's digital content.
- g) Offer free, educational programs to residents that promote City government operations, services, and programs, including City Academies, building code trainings, environmental workshops, and library conversation clubs.

**Goal #3: Be proactive in promoting City programs, services, and accomplishments**

- a) Boost multimedia production, including visual message delivery and accessible educational materials, with quicker and consistent outreach.
- b) Establish versatile messaging through non-traditional marketing tools, including a podcast, live platform streaming and influencer marketing.
- c) Expand outreach to ESL and Under 40 populations through prominent digital tools including TikTok, WhatsApp, Discord and NextDoor.
- d) Integrate the City's Editorial and Media Manager to build relationships with media reporters and pitch stories to regional and national news outlets.
- e) Promote the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, a city-wide initiative dedicated to helping Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes, to local, regional, and national media. This will advance the City's goal of building a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion.
- f) Use the City's upcoming 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (2024) as an opportunity for collaboration and storytelling of our organization and community.
- g) Employ multimedia production to showcase internal City services, including the Office of Performance Analytics, Internal Audit, and the R.I.S.E. Leadership Academy.

**Indicators**

The impact of these initiatives will be monitored by tracking indicators that ensure we are moving towards an identified target. The indicators will be available, and regularly updated, for the community as part of the City's commitment to public transparency on the City's website located at alexandriava.gov/Performance.

**Communications**

Throughout the Fall, the Office of Communications and Public Information (OCPI) will promote many of the initiatives listed above to ensure that the community is aware of these services. This will also be an opportunity to demonstrate the work the City is doing, through the lens of those impacted. Testimonials and information about the services will be shared through social media and OCPI will work with local organizations to further distribute information. OCPI also developed two videos centered on the impact of an initiative from the Youth and Families business plan and one from the Community Engagement business plan. These will be shared widely in the upcoming weeks.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** N/A

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- (1) Status updates from the COVID-19 Recovery and Housing Business Plan
- (2) Youth and Families Out of School Time Business Plan
- (3) Community Engagement Business Plan

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