



Legislation Text

File #: 14-2580, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 21, 2014

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER/s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Approval of the FY 2015 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning and Plan Implementation Work Program.

ISSUE: Approval of the Interdepartmental Long Range Planning work program for FY 2015.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council approve the FY 2015 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning work program reviewed at their January 2014 work session, as revised by staff to reflect updates to the schedule.

BACKGROUND: As in previous years, City departments and agencies that are engaged in long range planning and plan implementation jointly prepared a preliminary Interdepartmental Long Range Work Program for the upcoming fiscal year. This preliminary work program was shared with the public and reviewed with the City Council at a January 14, 2014 work session.

At the work session, no potential changes to the proposed work program were articulated by Council, however, a number of comments relevant to the upcoming and future work programs were provided for staff direction, as follows:

- Rezoning in Old Town North that are proposed prior to initiation of the Old Town North Small Area Plan shall be brought through the normal process for consideration.
- While funding from developers for staff or consultant resources to fund planning efforts is welcome and appreciated during constrained budget times, the City needs to ensure that a clear firewall is established between the funding and the process to provide confidence that developer payment is not influencing the outcomes of the planning processes.
- Majority of growth should continue to be in the “growth crescent” following the transit corridors and Metrorail Stations.
- City should continue to seek a better balance of commercial and residential development.

- Continue to look for opportunities to accelerate the Eisenhower West Plan.
- When the Braddock Metro site is addressed, it should be coordinated with ARHA redevelopment at Adkins.

The FY 2015 draft work program largely represents a continuation and completion of plans and studies begun in FY 2014, and therefore does not require any major choices on the part of Council at this time.

BUDGET IMPACT

On May 1, 2014, the City Council approved the FY 2015 General Fund Operating Budget and FY 2015 to FY 2024 Capital Improvement Program. This proposed work program can be accomplished with the resources provided by the approved city funding for FY 2015, as well as by private contributions, as specified below.

The FY 2015 Operating Budget provides budgeted staff resources and \$50,000 for technical expertise needed for special planning projects. The Capital Improvement Program for FY 2015 provides \$150,000 for consultant funding for Phase 2 of the Parking Study. Additional outside funding is being provided by landowners associated with two FY 2015 planning processes, the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan and Transportation Study in the amount of \$440,000, and the Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Study in the amount of \$277,000. The Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for each of these agreements clearly establish a firewall so that the funding provided has no bearing on the outcomes of the planning processes.

DISCUSSION

Preparing the FY 2015 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning Work Program

Although the Council's action is to approve the FY 2015 work program only, the accompanying bar chart/timeline covers the period from mid-FY 2014 to FY 2017 to give a broader picture of the proposed schedule of major planning projects, and the potential projects that will be considered in future years. In addition, the chart shows work associated with plan implementation, which continues to occur after each plan is adopted.

The preliminary work program coordinates the planning work programs of the Department of Planning and Zoning; the Department of Project Implementation, the Office of Housing; the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services; the Office of Historic Alexandria; and the Department of General Services, as well as the ongoing redevelopment activities of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA). Potential work program elements are evaluated by the above departments with the City Manager's Office, the Department of Code Administration, Alexandria City Public Schools, the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association.

The proposed work program reflects the City Council's Strategic Plan, the interdepartmental nature of the planning program, and the resources needed to complete each project at the recommended level of effort on each project. As is usually the case, there is greater demand for work to be undertaken and completed than there are staff and technical resources to devote to it. The work program endeavors to balance demand for interdepartmental planning and development review with staff, community and city council decision making capacity to do so, while also taking advantage of market opportunity and capturing future real estate tax base growth and developer contributions toward public benefits.

Evaluating Potential Planning Projects for FY 2015

The basic approach to developing the proposed work program involves some constants from year to year: projects that have been started must be completed, adopted small area plans may be followed by plan implementation, and there will be projects led by one department that will require contributions by other departments.

For FY 2015, there are no decisions to be made in terms of selecting one plan over another. The projects approved in the FY 2014 work program have begun and will be continued and completed in FY 2015 and beyond. In the fall of 2015, in advance of the City Manager's proposed budget for FY 2016, staff will begin the work of developing the FY 2016 interdepartmental work program. For FY 2016, there will be choices to be made, particularly during the current constrained budget environment.

The challenge and opportunity is that Alexandria continues to be a highly sought-after development location, with projects moving forward in Potomac Yard, Braddock, Old Town, Carlyle/Eisenhower East, Landmark and Beauregard. Moreover, there is a long list of proposed plans and development projects in the queue - a longer list than can be managed by current staff and non-staff resources. These projects represent significant potential additions to the tax base but require staff resources to move the projects from proposal to reality.

Important guidance in terms of prioritizing interdepartmental planning is provided by the City's Strategic Plan; the preliminary work program includes projects that pursue outcomes closely aligned with all seven strategic plan goal areas:

Goal 1: Alexandria has quality development and redevelopment, support for local businesses and a strong, diverse and growing local economy.

Goal 2: Alexandria respects, protects and enhances the health of its citizens and the quality of its natural environment.

Goal 3: A multimodal transportation network that supports sustainable land use and provides internal mobility and regional connectivity for Alexandrians.

Goal 4: Alexandria is a community that supports and enhances the well-being, success and achievement of children, youth and families.

Goal 5: Alexandria is financially sustainable, efficient, community oriented and values its employees.

Goal 6: The City protects the safety and security of its residents, businesses, employees and visitors.

Goal 7: Alexandria is a caring and inclusive community that values its rich diversity, history and culture, and promotes affordability.

In addition to alignment with the Strategic Plan, the interdepartmental long range planning team each year identifies themes that it uses to make choices for the work program. For FY 2015, the themes include:

- Continuing progress in updating the City's small area plans;
- Implementing within approved budget resources the principles of civic engagement and the planning process framework created by the community;
- Sustained and expeditious progress in plan implementation, which is a large and increasing element of the work program;

- Continued attention to historic resources;
- Planning for long term environmental sustainability, and complying with state and federal environmental requirements;
- Planning for long term facility and infrastructure needs, from schools to sewers, meeting future needs as efficiently as possible;
- Pursuing transportation policies that emphasize non-auto forms of travel; and
- Serving both existing and growing neighborhoods on issues such as the environment, open space, and public art.

Proposed FY 2015 Work Program Items

The work program for FY 2015 represents a continuation and completion of projects begun in FY 2014. Attachment 1, the interdepartmental work program bar chart, shows 12 major work program items and 19 ongoing implementation efforts of previously approved plans. The projects are listed below and described in more detail in Attachment 2.

Long Range Planning Projects and Studies

- Continue the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan and Transportation Study (anticipated completion fall 2015)
- Complete Phase 1 of the Parking Standards for New Development Study (anticipated spring 2015); begin Phase 2
- Continue the Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Study (anticipated completion fall 2015)
- Complete the Public Art Master Plan (anticipated completion fall 2014)
- Complete Del Ray Historic Preservation Plan (anticipated completion spring 2015)
- Complete Long Range Education Facilities Plan (anticipated completion spring 2015)
- Continue Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan update and Complete Streets Design Guidelines (anticipated completion late 2015)
- Continue work on the Stormwater Management Phase I plan (anticipated completion of technical analysis and public engagement April 2015, plan approval June 2015)
- Continue work on the CSO Plan (anticipated completion of the Combined Sewer System Long Term Control Plan Update by August 2016)
- Continue work on the Transit Corridor C/West End Transitway Alternatives Analysis (anticipated completion early 2015)
- Continue work on the Neighborhood Park Improvement Plan (anticipated completion fall 2015)

Ongoing Implementation

- Complete the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Draft EIS document, Council selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative, and begin drafting Final EIS document;

- Continue work on implementation of the Waterfront Plan;
- Continue work on specific action items to implement the Arlandria, Beauregard, and Braddock Plans, including staffing of advisory groups;
- Continue implementation through development review of the Landmark/Van Dorn and Eisenhower East Small Area Plans;
- Continue implementation of the Citywide Parks Plan and Open Space Plan;
- Complete transit project implementation for Transit Corridor A; service anticipated to begin summer 2014;
- Continue implementation of the Wayfinding program and Eco-City initiatives, including Green Building Phase II and Energy and Climate Change planning;
- Continue implementation of the Housing Master Plan and the ARHA Strategic Plan/Redevelopment RFP; and
- Continue to conduct 2010 Census data analysis, reporting and forecasting.

Interdepartmental Development Review

On the development side, the number of known major redevelopment projects that will require significant staff resources from multiple departments in FY 2015 is anticipated to be very high. A number of projects will require a level of effort that is well beyond the average development case, including considerable additional public engagement. These include:

ARHA Redevelopment: ARHA released in January an RFQ for redevelopment partners for seven of its public housing sites throughout the City. ARHA has begun to winnow down the redevelopment partner submissions, and this will result in the selection of redevelopment partner(s) in 2015. Each site will have its own set of issues that will be very important to the surrounding neighborhood, as well as the issues that are common for every public housing redevelopment project. In addition, there will have to be sufficient redevelopment potential to accommodate for one-for-one replacement of the public housing units.

Robinson Terminals North and South: The two terminal properties will require significant staff resources and community engagement because Waterfront redevelopment is extremely important and highly controversial. The experience with the Carr hotel strongly suggests that the redevelopment proposals for the two Robinson Terminal sites, both much larger and more complex than the Carr hotel, will consume considerable staff resources in FY 2015.

WMATA Royal Street Bus Garage/Other Old Town North Projects: A developer for WMATA's Royal Street Bus Garage will be solicited and selected by WMATA and will begin the development process in FY 2015. Engagement with a large number of neighborhood groups in this location and a potential rezoning will require significant staff involvement in the redevelopment of this city block. The Giant site and other Old Town North properties are also likely to submit development applications in FY 2015 in advance of the update to the Old Town North Small Area Plan.

WMATA Braddock Metro Station RFP: WMATA plans to issue an RFP in FY 2015 for redevelopment of their Braddock Metro Station property. The RFP and development application resulting from the RFP will be a major

planning effort in this part of the City.

Tauber Property: This former hospital site at the corner of King and Beaugard Streets will be processing final site plans and begin construction in FY 2015, requiring significant staff resources to review final site plans, permits and site inspections.

Beaugard Town Center Development: This project, a major focus of the Beaugard Small Area Plan, will be under review and likely complete hearings in FY 2015, involving substantial outreach efforts by the developer and city staff.

AHC/Fillmore Project: This combined market rate and affordable housing project in partnership with the City at Echols and Fillmore Avenues will require significant coordination with City staff regarding the housing program and development review.

National Science Foundation/Eisenhower Avenue: NSF is now under construction and potential new projects on Blocks 1, 11, 12 and 28 may be in the development process in FY 2015, including two hotels and several residential, high-rise buildings.

Landmark Mall: Although progress for redevelopment of the Mall has been slower than many expected, there are indications that the project should actively move forward with a construction start early in FY 2015. Development review to promote the success of this effort continues to be a priority.

Oakville Triangle: It is anticipated that this project will begin the development review process in late 2014 after completion of an extensive community planning process to develop principles for a master plan amendment.

Alfred Street Baptist Church: A major expansion, including existing affordable housing within the redevelopment site, will likely be in the development review process in FY 2015. Neighborhood outreach and review will be significant.

Process Improvements

In FY 2015, Staff will initiate a review of Zoning requirements and the Special Use Permit (SUP) process to examine options for simplifying overall land use policies and the SUP process and requirements affecting small businesses. Similar to the improvements made several years ago to allow for administrative SUPs, the new SUP effort will look at whether additional uses could be considered for administrative approval, as well as whether some might be appropriate for Planning Commission review alone, rather than requiring review by City Council as well. Staff will develop a more detailed work plan for this effort over the summer, with a proposed civic engagement strategy to ensure, to the degree feasible given approved budget resources, that appropriate stakeholders, such as small business owners and members of the community at large, have an opportunity to provide their input. Staff will return in the winter with a review of the City's SUP process and data, best practices from other jurisdictions, and recommendations for Planning Commission and City Council consideration.

Preliminary Discussion of FY 2016 Work Program

Old Town North has been identified as the priority small area plan for the FY 2016 work program. Staff has begun the process of considering prioritization of other additional planning and study needs and requests for the future. In addition to Old Town North, planning efforts that are under consideration for FY 2016 and beyond

are listed below and described in further detail in in Attachment 2.

- North Potomac Yard re-planning
- Strategic Update to the Mount Vernon Avenue Business Area Plan
- Industrial Use Study
- Duke Street Corridor
- Fairlington/Bradlee

Long range planning capacity (and the ability to engage in multiple large planning efforts at a time) is constrained by a variety of factors, chief among them staff capacity and budget resources for consultants. However, bandwidth for planning projects is also limited by decision-making capacity (senior City staff, Commissions, and City Council) as well as the community's capacity to engage on multiple planning processes. While current planning efforts in Eisenhower West and Oakville Triangle have utilized developer funding for staff or consultants, and this has been an excellent way to accelerate these two efforts, this is not always an appropriate or available option, as some staff functions and review cannot be funded by developer contributions.

For FY 2016 and beyond, staff will sequence the projects as strategically as possible, based on community interests and objectives, timing opportunities and constraints, potential dollar value to the City, whether the project can wait or if it cannot, and the extent to which the project supports the City's strategic goals and objectives. Ultimately, developing the FY 2016 work plan will require some of the following tradeoffs for addressing the imbalance between demand for planning and capacity to do so, including:

- Prioritizing certain types of projects over others;
- Delaying some projects until others can be completed;
- Reducing the scope of work of a project;
- Achieving significant developer contributions for both staff and outside technical assistance for their projects; and/or
- Authorizing additional staff resources.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Bar Chart: FY 2015 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning work program
2. Project Descriptions: FY 2015 Interdepartmental Long Range Planning work program
3. Project Descriptions: Potential projects for FY 2016 and beyond

cc: Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
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