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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 18, 2017
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of Designated General Services Administration (GSA) Central Business Areas.

ISSUE: Under new national policy, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has requested that localities designate Central Business Areas (CBAs) defined as the “general areas in which Federal agencies must give first consideration to locating.”

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council adopt, for the purposes of Federal agency location decision making, the proposed boundaries for a Central Business Area (CBA) in Alexandria, Virginia as depicted on Attachment 3.

BACKGROUND: In October 2015, GSA adopted ADM 1097.1, “Incorporating Principles of Sustainability, Economic Development and Efficiency into GSA Business Practices and Location Decision-Making,” requiring that federal agencies consider the following when making location decisions for its facilities:

- Support local and regional planning and economic development goals;
- Support local sustainability and transportation infrastructure and plans;
- Prioritize location decisions in areas that will be well-served by new and existing infrastructure; and
- Include areas which ensure the protection of the natural environment.

This initiative, provided as Attachment 1, will expand CBAs beyond the District of Columbia, currently the region's only designated CBA. GSA has enlisted the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to aid in the production of a composite map of CBAs of its member jurisdictions, based on the submission of each jurisdiction's locally defined CBA boundaries. It should be noted that all jurisdictions, including Alexandria, will be free to submit at anytime any future CBA amendments directly to GSA, as necessary.

DISCUSSION: The guidelines in ADM 1097.1 closely follow the smart growth principles championed by Alexandria's planning initiatives, encouraging federal facilities to locate in proximity to existing infrastructure and transportation. Additionally, COG has encouraged local jurisdictions to consider incorporating their Regional Activity Centers into the new CBA boundaries. Alexandria's Regional Activity Centers, depicted in Attachment 2, are located near existing or planned high occupancy transit and where future employment and household growth will likely be concentrated.

Staff recommends that a CBA be established in Alexandria incorporating the Regional Activity Centers and connecting transit corridors, creating a crescent-shaped CBA, hugging Alexandria's east, south, and western boundaries. The proposed CBA, provided as Attachment 3, would include recent planning areas that the City has designated for future economic development such as Potomac Yard, Eisenhower East and West, Beauregard, and Landmark/Van Dorn.

Because GSA has mandated that federal agencies must first consider locations within a CBA, the proposed boundaries are generous, so as not to exclude any potential GSA tenant. GSA has tenants of many sizes and needs, including small to large office, storage or warehousing, and scientific laboratories; therefore industrial areas and the non-traditional office locations should also be included in the City's CBA. For this reason, areas such as Mount Vernon Avenue, Old Town, Fairlington, and portions north of Duke Street have been included. Although, there are some residential areas within the proposed CBA boundaries, inclusion in a CBA does not change the underlying zoning and small area plan/Coordinated Development District (CDD) restrictions and requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no negative fiscal impact associated with designation of a CBA for the City. However, this designation may increase opportunities for location of federal agencies within the City, with the associated positive impacts of new jobs, tax revenue, and vitality to the community. Under the new national mandate, federal agencies must first consider locations within a designated CBA and as such, Alexandria must designate a CBA to remain a possible location for future federal tenants. By establishing a CBA with broad boundaries focused around its existing and planned infrastructure and activity centers, Alexandria can remain a competitive location for federal tenants.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. ADM 1097.1, "Incorporating Principles of Sustainability, Economic Development and Efficiency into GSA Business Practices and Location Decision-Making"
2. Map of Regional Activity Centers
3. Map of the proposed CBA in Alexandria

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