



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** JUNE 21, 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:**

2022 City Council Priorities, Housing and COVID-19 Recovery Business Plans.

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of the Housing and COVID-19 Recovery Business Plans.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council discuss and consider the Housing and COVID-19 Recovery Business Plans, in alignment with the City Council Priorities approved on March 22, 2022.

**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.

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 (which will be reported quarterly), the business plans describe how the City will ensure each priority area is well run and the community receives quality services.

**DISCUSSION:** As shown in Attachments 1 and 2, and below, the business plans for the COVID-19 Recovery and Housing priorities show the initiatives underway to meet city goals. The initiatives are cross-departmental and require alignment across plans to implement.

## **RECOVER FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:**

**We will advance the policies, practices, and resources needed to ensure a health, resilient, and equitable recovery for all residents and business.**

***Goal #1: Focus on public health needs to mitigate future emergencies, including severe cases of COVID-19, in ways that are culturally appropriate, normalized, and aligned with regional efforts.***

- a) Continue to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and plan for robust surveillance of other potential viruses and public health threats.
- b) Continue equitable outreach and engagement to ensure residents are up to date on all vaccines.
- c) Provide mental health treatment team supports, including the Court Mental Health and Developmental Assets Builder Program that will respond to the growing need for trauma-based crisis intervention and resource navigation for supportive services.
- d) Expand the Alexandria Co-Response Program (ACORP) and implement the Marcus Alert System to provide an appropriate behavioral health response to behavioral health emergencies.
- e) Continue to monitor progress of tactics in the Community Health Improvement Plan (AHD) that aim to address the root causes of chronic, preventable diseases and health disparities, including poverty, mental health, and housing.
- f) Work with ACPS on integration of recently expanded school-based mental health professionals to address student crisis intervention and support.
- g) On-going implementation of the Children and Youth Community Plan initiatives that support mental health and wellness, including free trainings and technical assistance for program providers and caring adults on how to build positive and supportive relationships with youth.
- h) Reduce chronic, preventable diseases and health disparities that lead to more severe cases of COVID-

19, through development of a Community Health Worker Program that engages, educates, navigates, and empowers residents where they are.

**Goal #2: Businesses throughout the City will recover from the pandemic and thrive.**

- a) Expand advertising to customers, speeding small business recovery and the negatively impacted tourism and hospitality industry.
- b) Continue to expand recent Black Travel and Spanish language campaigns to grow visitation and ensure an equitable approach to supporting the hospitality industry.
- c) Implement the Virginia Tourism Recovery Program to provide long-term critical assistance to the small business sector and will help support increases to the City's consumption tax revenues (lodging, meals and sales) by way of tourism marketing.
- d) Transition small business support from recovery to growth and profitability.
- e) Launch efforts focused on supporting entrepreneurs in new industries and underrepresented demographics to ensure an equitable approach to supporting existing and future small, women- and minority-owned businesses.
- f) Provide Foundational Support for Business Organizations to support programs associated with immediate economic recovery efforts and long-term financial success conducted by organized business association.
- g) Provide outreach to businesses in all sectors with applicable public health safety, energy efficiency, and environmental guidance, including promotion the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy program.
- h) Deliver major infrastructure projects including, Metro, Waterfront, Transit Initiatives so that businesses and visitors are attracted to the City.
- i) Through the Unified Early Childhood Workforce Stabilization Initiative, address the childcare resource gap, assuring operators can provide service at hours and locations needed to support a diverse workforce.

**Goal #3: Everyone's basic needs are met and recovery lifts all.**

- a) Continue support for the Eviction Prevention Task Force, including easily accessible and culturally fluent assistance with housing and resource navigation and housing relocation when necessary.
- b) Establish two community food hubs and continue support of pantry networks and food delivery for seniors to advance the City's food security system and ensure healthy and affordable food is accessible across the city.
- c) Consolidate DCHS, AHD, Neighborhood Health and West End Service Center to ensure convenient access of co-located services to residents.
- d) Implement a Guaranteed Basic Income program that provides direct, recurring cash payments of \$500 a month, with no restrictions on use, giving participants more freedom, dignity and self-determination to make choices for their financial well-being.
- e) Implement the Healthy Homes Initiative to assist with improving home conditions, including air quality, that contribute to poor health outcomes.
- f) Develop a Digital Equity Action Plan, provide a community help desk through Computer Core, and continue lending technology through libraries to pursue digital equity for all residents.
- g) Continue coordination with DASH to implement the 2030 Alexandria Transit Vision Plan Network, including route realignments, major frequency and span improvements, and expansion of electric bus infrastructure, ensuring safe and equitable access to public transportation.
- h) Develop the Open Space Policy Plan to increase access to quality outdoor spaces and tree canopy that furthers physical, social, and mental well-being.
- i) Complete an extreme heat vulnerability analysis to identify areas that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change relative to the rest of the City and inform future policy decisions.

**PROVIDE DIVERSE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES:**

**We will reconsider our zoning model and pursue other tools to facilitate an Alexandria housing economy that provides the necessary range of price points, safe and sustainable housing options, and the associated services to meet the needs of a thriving city.**

***Goal #1: Provide diverse housing options at a variety of price points to support a thriving and inclusive Alexandria.***

- a) Begin internal planning for the Housing Master Plan update beginning in mid FY24.
- b) Support pending and anticipated affordable housing projects: Seminary Road (AHDC); Mount Vernon-Glebe (AHDC); Parc Vue preservation and refinancing (AHDC); Parcview II and I (Wesley); Pendleton Boarding House preservation and renovation; Samuel Madden and Ladrey (ARHA); Whitter Place-2712 Duke Street (CHP); CLI-Elbert (CLI); Arlandria Assemblage (Wesley); Landmark Fire Station (FP-Enduring Housing); North Potomac Yard Block 23 (TBD).
- c) Support implementation of The Heritage redevelopment, including coordination with ACPS and the relocation team, in collaboration with developers, pursuant to tenant relocation plan.
- d) Establish Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (AHAAC) Investment Committee, to examine underwriting, due diligence and assessment criteria.
- e) Explore opportunities for development of mixed income-affordable assisted living facility (MIAALF) using a financially sustainable model.
- f) Finalize and launch Housing-Code initiative to provide education and training to City tenants, landlords and cadre of trusted partners and “tenant advocates” regarding their rights and responsibilities under Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA), as well as multilingual/culturally competent communications campaign to empower and support tenants in reporting poor building conditions.
- g) Develop and execute plan for rehabilitation of Pendleton Boarding House and coordinate with the Office of Historic Alexandria to memorialize the site’s cultural, historical and architectural significance to Alexandria’s black history.
- h) Continue feasibility evaluations of WMATA - Amazon Affordable Housing Initiative for Alexandria transit, Metro and HQ sites.
- i) Continue to evaluate and implement Zoning for Housing initiatives, including assessment of metrics.
- j) Annually inspect and monitor all affordable housing development in which the City has invested (including review of property financial statements) to track fiscal and physical conditions and conduct asset management to maximize loan performance.

***Goal #2: Support low- and moderate- income homeowners and renters to remain in safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, and efficient homes.***

- a) Continue the Home Rehabilitation Loan Program (including the Energy Efficiency Loan and Emergency Grant initiatives) and the Rental Accessibility Modification Program (RAMP).
- b) Expand use of Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and, as available, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Housing Innovations in Energy Efficiency (HIEE) programs to assist residents with energy efficiency and affordability.
- c) Continue promotion of Dominion Energy and Washington Gas energy efficiency programs and, also, advocacy of State Corporation Commission (SCC) proceedings to include energy efficiency programs that enhance energy and utility affordability.
- d) Continue partnership with Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), state agencies, and other organizations to promote SolarizeAlexandria and solar energy programs for low- and moderate-income households.
- e) Continue City partnership with Energy Masters to educate multifamily residents, including those residing in housing owned/operated by ARHA, on energy efficiency improvements to lower usage and

tenant-paid utility costs.

- f) Implement the Healthy Homes Initiative, including expanded environmental justice research partnerships, to engage and empower residents around housing needs and available services.
- g) Proactively educate landlords and tenants on the Rental Inspection Program and their obligations and rights regarding property conditions and maintenance.
- h) Support development and implementation of Ready to Rent Program framework to ensure all eligible applicants have access to new affordable housing resources in the City.
- i) Continue to coordinate State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) to provide eligible individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities access to rental housing so they can live as independently as possible.
- j) Provide Spanish and other language interpretation options in all housing-led engagement, meetings, and outreach, including AHAAC and Landlord Tenant Relations Board (LTRB).

***Goal #3: Ensure residents in affordable housing are supported by having easy access to programs, services, and amenities.***

- a) Develop a list of needed services by geographic location; approve agreements to provide specific services at housing units or apartment complexes.
- b) Continue to support the Arlandria Chirilagua Housing Cooperative (co-op), including completing a capital needs assessment to address prioritized improvements, facilitating governance training and capacity building, and memorializing co-op membership shares
- c) Continue coordination and planning for Arlandria flex space to improve neighborhood access to City and community services, including daycare, medical, pre-K, AHD, DCHS/benefit and workforce development, and housing/landlord tenant services.
- d) Support planning and incorporation of open space near affordable housing, including the Heritage/Wilkes Street Park Project, Mount Vernon Avenue and Glebe Road, and the Samuel Madden projects
- e) Continue implementing DASH and high-capacity transit improvements to ensure affordable public transportation options to residents.
- f) Continue annual fair housing testing and reporting and actions to address issues identified in upcoming Regional Analysis of Impediments.

**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](http://alexandriava.gov/Performance).

**Communications**

Throughout the Summer, 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 COVID-19 Recovery business plan and one from the Housing business plan. These will be shared widely in the upcoming weeks.

**FISCAL IMPACT: N/A**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- (1) COVID-19 Recovery Business Plan
- (2) Housing Business Plan

**STAFF:**

Dana Wedeles, Strategic Initiatives Officer, City Manager's Office  
Greg Useem, Director, Office of Performance Analytics  
Berkeley Teate, Strategic Communications Manager, OCPI  
Bill Eger, Energy Manager, Department of General Services  
Ellen Eggerton, Sustainability Manager, Transportation and Environmental Services  
Helen Lee, Environmental Program Manager, Transportation and Environmental Services  
Jaqueline Tucker, Race and Social Equity Officer  
Kim Hurley, Race and Social Equity Fellow  
Kate Garvey, Director, Department of Community and Human Services  
Chelsea Eickert, Management Analyst, Department of Community and Human Services  
Karl Moritz, Director, Planning and Zoning  
Patricia Washington, President and CEO, Visit Alexandria  
Tom Kaiden, Chief Operating Officer, Visit Alexandria  
Helen McIlvaine, Director, Office of Housing  
Tamara Jovovic, Housing Program Manager, Office of Housing  
Stephanie Landrum, President and CEO, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership  
Natalie Talis, Population Health Manager, Alexandria Health Department