

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2024 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 4, 2023

Question: What would be the costs associated with implementing an annual or semi-annual rental inspection program for rental properties in Alexandria? What additional staff would be necessary to inspect and report (not in response to complaints but on a proactive calendar basis) on existing rental inventory and expected rental inventory with currently approved or proposed development and conversions? Are there any opportunities for state or federal funding to support a rental inspection program that evaluates living conditions in rental properties? Are there local models and/or past programs that provide guidance on such a program?

Response:

It would cost approximately \$136,000 annually (covered by the City's Code Special Revenue Fund) to add a Proactive Rental Inspection Program Manager (GS 22) in FY 2024. This position would perform two primary functions: (1) Significantly increase community awareness and multilingual customer outreach about the City's existing program and (2) Optimize available resources to proactively increase by 15% the frequency of non-compliant unit inspections in FY 2024.

Virginia State Code section 36-105.1:1 sets the statutory requirements for the frequency of inspections with which the City must comply. The city's existing Rental Reinspection program (RRI) is responsible for 4,048 multifamily and some single-family rental properties to promote safe, decent, and sanitary housing for tenants. The City inspects approximately 1,210 units annually and is currently structured to align with state law regarding inspection interval frequency. In short, state law limits inspections of compliant units to once every four years. However, in locations where units are not compliant after initial inspection, follow up inspections are required to ensure the noncompliant elements are addressed. These follow-up inspections (or additional unit inspections) can be performed on a more frequent basis.

The addition of a Program Manager will enhance the RRI unit's operational effectiveness and increase the number of follow-up inspections. In addition, the position will enhance the City's proactive public outreach by attending civic association meetings to respond to community concerns, provide multilingual resources for programs, and develop and maintain social media footprints in coordination with OCPI. Staff would create a webpage dedicated to RRI resources and information, and improve communications to promote safe, decent, habitable, and sanitary conditions for tenants.

The Special Revenue Fund could support the position in FY 2024. Staff anticipates that a planned fee schedule update in FY 2025 could provide significant, possibly full, cost recovery for this program addition.

Staff is not aware of any current opportunities for federal or state funding to support programs for rental inspection programs. However, staff continue to work with the City's grant resources and federal lobbyists for funding opportunities. Staff also communicate and collaborate with other jurisdictions who perform RRI's to exchange best practices on methods or processes that can be of mutual benefit.