

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 27, 2023
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: KARL W. MORITZ
THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER

DOCKET TITLE:

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FY 2024 Long-Range Planning Interdepartmental Work Program.

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ISSUE: What planning work priorities should be established for FY 2024 - FY 2025?

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council review and approve the FY 2024-25 Long-Range Planning Interdepartmental Work Program and consider a recommended adjustment to the Work Program process.

BACKGROUND: Each year, City departments involved in long-range planning and implementation jointly prepare a Long-Range Planning Interdepartmental Work Program (Work Program) for the upcoming fiscal year and beyond. The work program includes the completion of plans and studies underway, new plans scheduled to begin, and implementation of previously approved plans.

The draft Work Program is presented for Planning Commission and City Council feedback and guidance early in the calendar year to help inform development of the City Manager's Proposed Operating Budget as well as development of a final Work Program docketed for City Council approval in May/June. This annual review ensures coordination of work, staffing and financial resources, and the opportunity for Planning Commission and City Council to ensure alignment of proposed planning work across departments with the City's Strategic Plan and City Council Priorities.

DISCUSSION:

The sections below highlight departments' major projects, new proposed projects, or updates to projects. For a complete listing, see the Work Program Bar Chart in Attachment 1. Descriptions of all projects proposed in the work program are provided as Attachment 2.

Department of Planning and Zoning

In FY 2024-5, the following major planning processes and zoning initiatives are being prioritized.

Alexandria West Plan: Launched in Fall 2022, this effort is engaging the community to create a shared vision for the future of Alexandria West, addressing topics such as equity, housing, mobility, land use, parks, infrastructure and safety. Creating an updated community vision for the future allows us to proactively plan for change and prepare for challenges and opportunities in the years to come. This 18-month planning process will update and combine the 1992 Alexandria West Small Area Plan (SAP) and the 2008 Beauregard Plan and is anticipated to be complete in June 2024.

Zoning for Housing/Housing for All: In November 2022, the City Council endorsed a recommendation to move forward with a comprehensive proposal of zoning reforms with the goal of expanding housing production and affordability and addressing past and current barriers to equitable housing access. The effort was launched in March 2023 with the goal of completion at the end of 2023.

When the above two initiatives are complete, the next two major planning projects anticipated are a new “Vision Plan” and an update to the Duke Street Small Area Plan. The Vision Plan will be an opportunity to engage the community in documenting and updating City policy established through the City’s Small Area Plans since 1992 and the policy that will inform the City’s future growth and challenges. The draft work program presented in January 2023 proposed a summer launch for this process and indicated staff would evaluate the feasibility of that timing and provide a recommendation as part of the final work program in June. Based on community planning work already underway, Staff is recommending public launch of the Vision Plan take place *after* completion of either the Zoning for Housing or Alexandria West Plan update. This schedule change recognizes community members are very much involved in Alexandria West and Zoning for Housing/Housing for All at this time and will find it challenging to fully engage in the Vision Plan at the same time. The change will also ensure adequate capacity from a staffing and resources standpoint. Staff has allocated approximately one year for the process.

The other future land use update that will follow current planning work will be a comprehensive review and update of the 1992 Duke Street Small Area Plan. This update will integrate the recommendations of the recent Duke Street in Motion planning process and update the land use concept for the plan area last comprehensively updated in 1992. The intent is to apply for grant funding (federal and potentially other sources) to support the planning effort. Staff anticipates this plan update will take 18 months.

Office of Climate Action

The Office of Climate Action, in partnership with Planning & Zoning, Housing, and other departments, will review the **Green Building Policy** for its ability to achieve the goals set forth in the Environmental Action Plan 2040 and the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan. It is anticipated that a Task Force would be established to determine an appropriate scope and recommendations would be submitted to the City Council for consideration.

In the creation of the Energy & Climate Change Action Plan, the City investigated the heat vulnerability of residents across the city. A new **Climate Heat Vulnerability Assessment and Planning** effort will work across departments to explore what areas experience the most significant heat vulnerability, identify potential adaptation solutions to address heat vulnerability in the immediate-term, and develop programs to mitigate and eliminate heat vulnerability in the long-term.

Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (TES)

Several years ago, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) initiated a **Flood Insurance Study and Floodplain Remapping** to update the City's current floodplain maps as part of their periodic review and update. Preliminary Maps and a new Preliminary Flood Insurance Study were published in September 2020, with new maps scheduled to take effect in late Fall 2023. Prior to the final maps taking effect, residents will be invited to participate in a review and appeals process and the City's Floodplain Management Ordinance will need to be revised.

As part of the City's Flood Action Alexandria initiative and broader climate change impacts beyond extreme weather events, a new **Flood Resilience Plan** will look holistically at the stresses the City faces and create a plan to implement creative solutions that will allow the community to adapt and thrive, even under challenging conditions. This planning process will outline the City's approach to managing the risk from extreme rain events and the worsening of average conditions, identify at-risk infrastructure, identify hazards, create a plan for the future, and consider revisions to existing ordinances, policies, and procedures to achieve a more resilient Alexandria.

The Draft work program presented in January included a new project to study the feasibility of an **I-395 Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge**, pending grant funding. The City did not receive the funding so the study will not proceed at this time.

The **Duke Street in Motion Transitway planning project** commenced in June 2021 with a visioning and planning phase to create the concept for the transportation elements of the corridor, focusing on transit and access to the transit system. The current focus of the effort is City Council review and adoption of a preferred concept design for the Duke Street Transitway, which can make the whole corridor more convenient, efficient, safer, equitable, vibrant, and sustainable. After Council provides direction on the concept design, full design will begin along with continued public engagement.

The **Lower King Street Closure** project will include conceptualization and implementation of a redesigned concept for the Unit and 100 blocks of King Street, which were recently closed to traffic. The primary objective of this project is to harmonize with other enhancements along the Waterfront, specifically focusing on stormwater management initiatives. Currently, staff is collaborating with a dedicated Lower King Street work group to ascertain the design components for both temporary and ultimate designs for the location.

In coordination with the Alexandria West planning process, staff is working with a consultant on the **Beauregard Ellipse and Pedestrian Safety Improvement Analysis** to evaluate potential

improvement alternatives for the Seminary Road and N. Beauregard St. The evaluation considers updated travel data and expected land use development. The study aims to investigate alternative designs that can effectively handle projected traffic conditions while prioritizing multi-modal accommodations and safety. Additionally, this project will assess nearby intersections like Seminary Road/Mark Center Drive and provide recommendations for potential improvements.

Office of Housing

In FY 2024 the Office of Housing will continue collaboration on **ARHA's Master Plan Sites**, focusing on Ladrey Senior Highrise and the former ARHA HQ building. Also in FY 2024, Housing staff will be studying the **feasibility of affordable housing development at/near the Van Dorn and Eisenhower Metro Stations**, funded by a grant awarded by COG. These are internal processes; any City decision to move forward, including in partnership with WMATA through a joint development RFP, would include a public, community process. It is noted that the studies being undertaken now are similar to one already completed for the Braddock Metro Station area in 2021.

Housing has begun internal staff work to prepare for the **update of the Housing Master Plan (HMP)** originally adopted in 2013. Topics to be studied are being developed; funds to study a local housing voucher program were approved as part of the FY 2024 City budget and will be part of a contingency reserve that may be used for other consultant work related to the HMP Update, if available. It is anticipated now that public process associated with the HMP Update will not start until Fall 2024 to allow completion of the Zoning for Housing/Housing For All Initiative and Alexandria West Planning process first.

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Resources

In FY 2024, RPCA will wrap up work on the **Public Open Space Policy Plan** and begin updates to the **Urban Forestry Master Plan** and **Citywide Parks Improvement Plan**. In addition, RPCA will begin planning for the **Eisenhower East Park**. Pending completion of the Eisenhower East CDD update, this process will engage the community to design the park envisioned in the Eisenhower East Plan that will convert the parking lot under the WMATA Metrorail Tracks into a community park.

In FY 2025, RPCA will initiate **Old Town North Linear Park Planning**, pending completion of due diligence and acquisition of the Norfolk Southern rail corridor. The timing of this effort is dependent on the timing and outcome of that process. The park planning work will engage the community to create the future design of the Old Town North Linear Park recommended by the 2017 Old Town North Small Area Plan to convert the former Norfolk Southern rail corridor into a new public park.

Process Update Recommendation

Since FY 2011, the Work Program has been approved on an annual basis, which has included a review of the draft in January and the final in May/June. Staff is recommending a shift to a two-year process. Because most of the projects over the upcoming fiscal years are multi-year and/or there are projects lined up to follow them, staff recommends that the work program currently under consideration be approved for FY 2024-25, and that the next review take place in spring 2025 for a FY 2026-27 work program. The process change recommendation for FY 2024-5 could be considered a pilot, and if determined effective, could become a permanent shift to a two-year Long Range Planning Interdepartmental Work Program.

PLANNING COMMISSION: The Planning Commission public hearing occurred on June 22, so the action was not available at the time of City Council docket preparation. Staff will provide an update on the Planning Commission's action as part of City Council's June 27 Legislative meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: Work program items proposed for FY 2024 have City or grant funding identified.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. FY 2024 Interdepartmental Long-Range Planning Work Program ("Bar Chart")
2. FY 2024 Project Descriptions

STAFF:

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