

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

14  
3-26-02

DATE: MARCH 19, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF ALLOCATION OF HOUSING TRUST FUND MONIES FOR ALEXANDRIA CHRISTMAS IN APRIL PROGRAMS

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of an allocation of \$42,000 in Housing Trust Fund monies to Alexandria Christmas in April (ACIA) to purchase supplies and materials for National Rebuilding Day on April 27, 2002, and to support the organization's new year-round Emergency Repair Fund.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council approve the request from ACIA (Attachment I) for a grant of \$42,000 in Housing Trust Fund monies, of which \$30,000 will be used to purchase supplies and materials for National Rebuilding Day 2002, and \$12,000 will be used to support the organization's new year-round Emergency Repair Fund.

**BACKGROUND:** Alexandria Christmas in April (ACIA) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization that renovates and repairs the homes of elderly, disabled or low-income Alexandria homeowners to help them maintain safety, security and independence. ACIA also assists with the repair of non-profit facilities that serve Alexandria residents in need. These services are provided by ACIA at no cost to the beneficiaries through its annual National Rebuilding Day and through the Emergency Repair Fund.

National Rebuilding Day is an annual, national one-day repair and renovation program that uses volunteer labor to provide structural repair and renovation services to income-eligible homeowner-occupants and to eligible non-profits. This program is supported by volunteers (including skilled laborers) who donate time and labor to the effort, as well as by local businesses and other sponsors that donate needed supplies and grant money to purchase needed supplies. Applicants for the program are screened on the basis of need and on the work that can be accomplished by volunteers in one day. The national Christmas in April organization traditionally sets aside the last Saturday in April for this event. In FY 2002, National Rebuilding Day will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2002.

ACIA recently established an Emergency Repair Fund to carry out their repair and renovation mission on an on-going basis. The Emergency Repair Fund provides free year-round home repairs to elderly, disabled and low-income owner occupants in the City.

**DISCUSSION:** On National Rebuilding Day 2001, ACIA volunteers repaired or renovated 66 structures in the City. The organization expects that about 70 structures will be approved for assistance through the program in FY 2002. ACIA has already approved requests for assistance from 44 City homeowners, many of whom are elderly. The organization is requesting \$30,000 in grant fund to assist with National Rebuilding Day 2002 activities.

While the National Rebuilding Day program is an eligible activity under the federal CDBG and HOME entitlement programs, staff does not recommend funding ACIA's request from these sources. Experience funding the program in FY 2000 exposed significant constraints in the use of federal funds, most notably in relation to environmental review documentation and the time frame for implementation. Such constraints were taken into consideration during FY 2001, when instead of allocating CDBG or HOME monies to ACIA, the City allocated \$33,000 from the Housing Trust Fund to purchase supplies and materials for rehabilitation activities at 11 City residences with substantial repair needs.

The recommended allocation of \$30,000 to support National Rebuilding Day 2002 will fund substantial repair needs (such as roof replacement) at approximately six City residences and provide adaptations (such as the installation of grab bars, non-slip strips in bathtubs and ramps) to increase safety and security in the homes of approximately 20 elderly and/or disabled City residents. The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee's approval of this allocation included a stipulation that the Housing Trust Fund monies be used only for the purchase of supplies and materials.

ACIA also seeks grant monies totaling \$12,000 to support its Emergency Repair Fund for 12 months. Since ACIA cannot rely on skilled labor volunteers to perform regular emergency home repairs, the organization provides emergency repair assistance by paying for professional services. Expenditures from the Emergency Repair Fund to cover the cost of such services are estimated at \$1,000 per month. With the approval of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, staff is recommending that a \$12,000 grant to subsidize ACIA's Emergency Repair Fund be fully supported from the Housing Trust Fund.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Approval of this request would result in the expenditure of \$42,000 in grant monies from the City's Housing Trust Fund.

**STAFF:**

Mildrilyn Stephens Davis, Director, Office of Housing  
Bob Eiffert, Deputy Director, Office of Housing  
Marcy Meyer, Housing Analyst, Office of Housing

**ATTACHMENT:**

Attachment I: Alexandria Christmas in April (ACIA) Funding Request

# Alexandria Christmas In April

2210 Mt. Vernon Avenue  
Alexandria, Virginia 22301

(703) 836 1021  
(703) 683 1793 fax  
[www.alexchristmasinapril.org](http://www.alexchristmasinapril.org)



January 17, 2002

Midrilyn Davis, Director  
City of Alexandria  
Office Of Housing  
City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Davis:

Enclosed please find the Alexandria Christmas in April grant proposal requesting funding for housing and community development activities. Our proposal reflects the City's Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development because our program directly benefits low income families as well as the elderly population we serve.

We are requesting a total of \$42,000, which will be used toward the purchase of supplies and materials for National Rebuilding Day, April 27, 2002, as well as our year-round emergency relief fund. These funds will be combined with countless volunteer hours and private contributions. Of every dollar Alexandria Christmas in April raises, ninety five cents goes directly to home repair efforts.

Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at:

Alexandria Christmas in April  
2210 Mount Vernon Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22301

Phone: 703/836-1021  
Fax: 703/683-1793

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eileen Ahern".

Eileen Ahern

# APPLICATION FOR FUNDING FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

## CITY OF ALEXANDRIA OFFICE ON HOUSING

### I. Project Description

**Provide a detailed description of the proposed project. Identify the project type (such as rental, homeownership, rehabilitation), location, the short and long term goals of the proposed project, and the target population being served.**

The Alexandria Christmas in April (ACIA) program renovates and repairs the homes of elderly, disabled, and low-income homeowners who reside in the City of Alexandria. ACIA is an affiliate of a national program serving more than 500 communities. Our mission is to help those in need to maintain their safety, security and independence by repairing or remodeling their residences. Eligible homeowners are those who are unable to take care of the repair or remodeling work themselves—financially and/or physically. Our goal is to identify these homeowners and their needs, then to coordinate the skilled labor, other volunteers and material support in order to make the repairs or remodeling necessary to rehabilitate homes.

Each year, the Board of Directors determines the number of houses to be repaired after accounting for donations received and total funds available. To do so, it is necessary to raise sufficient funds to assist all deserving applicants.

The strength of ACIA lies in its volunteers. With only a staff of two part-time employees, this grassroots organization thrives because of a strong commitment on the part of the Board of Directors and the individual volunteers who give so generously of their time. Volunteers include the teams who renovate the houses, the skilled professionals who act as team leaders, and the members of the Board of Directors who solicit donations.

**Describe the type of housing or service to be provided through the proposed project. Indicate the number of units and unit sizes to be provided. If a homeownership project is proposed, indicate the proposed sale prices. If a rental project, describe the number of affordable units and the proposed monthly rents for each unit.**

For the 15th consecutive year, on April 28, 2001, more than 1,000 volunteers renovated and repaired a total of 66 structures, including 62 homes and four non-profit organizations' facilities. Repairs and renovations included such items as new flooring, guardrails, handicapped ramps and roofs. We also repaired plumbing, heating and electrical problems. We repaired and painted damaged walls and ceilings, installed doors, weather stripping, and smoke detectors.

Over the years of service to Alexandria residents, we have confronted many challenges. Last year, for example, roof and home repairs were needed. ACIA replaced or repaired a record twelve roofs.

To date, we have requests from 44 homeowners for our 2002 Rebuilding Day. Many of the requests are for home modifications for their elderly residents. To complete these updates, approximately \$1500.00 is needed per client; we are asking for funds to meet the needs of 20 such clients. These modifications will increase the safety and security of our elderly residents.

Some of these adaptations include installing or securing stairway railings, changing door knobs to lever handles, installing smoke detectors, replacing shower heads with a handheld model and adding grab bars and non-slip strips in bathtubs. These are just a few of the solutions offered by Rebuilding Together with Christmas in April.

It should be noted that Board of Directors members who are team leaders, regularly attend professional development seminars at Rebuilding Together to update their skills. Recently, they have learned about the Elderly Modification Program so as to better serve our clients.

## **II. Project Budget**

**Provide a detailed description of the proposed financing for the project, which identifies other funding sources to be used, including any in-kind contributions to be made available for the proposed project. Identify specifically how City funds will be used (such as pre-development, construction, homeownership or rent assistance).**

We request a grant of \$42,000 from the City of Alexandria's House Trust Fund. The monies will be used in two ways.

First, a grant of \$30,000 will be designated to purchase supplies and materials to address needy elderly residents who need modification to their homes in order to ensure their continued safety. The request is based on 20 residencies approximately \$1500.00 each.

Furthermore, we request \$12,000 for our Emergency Repair Fund. Every month we receive calls from clients needing assistance. Last month, for instance, one client called about a leak in her basement. Skilled labor, not volunteer labor, was sent to her home. They learned the sewage system was backed up and about to burst. The services of a plumber were required. ACIA reached into its Emergency Repair Fund to pay the bill. We need approximately \$1,000 a month for our Emergency Repair Fund, since we cannot not rely on volunteers to perform professional repair services during the year.

Our funding cycle runs from early April through March. By March of each year, we are able to assess how many homes we can actually repair based on sponsorships and grant funds received. Although we have been fortunate to enjoy an increasing trend of volunteer participation and homeowners assisted, we are still forced to deny help to some applicants every year. There are always more requests for assistance by homeowners than there are financial resources available. We currently have no loans or debts outstanding. Ninety-five cents out of every \$1.00 raised goes directly to home repair efforts.

Alexandria Christmas in April is a grassroots organization supported by a variety of business, civic groups, churches, and individuals, as well as United Way. All believe in helping their less fortunate neighbors. A few of our current local sponsors are Colonial Parking, Washington Gas, Christ Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Temple Beth El and the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association.

### **III. Project Schedule**

**Indicate the proposed schedule for completion of the project.**

Since September, ACIA has been reviewing applications, inspecting homes, meeting with civic groups, fundraising and recruiting volunteers.

Our Timeline for the next six months is as follows:

**January**—house previews; begin to send accept or reject letters; pay insurance applications required for volunteers and homeowners; volunteer recruitment; sponsorship fundraising; outreach to nonprofits; recruit skilled house captains and team leaders; order smoke detectors from fire department; order first aid kits from the hospital

**February**—house previews; house captain and team leader recruitment; fundraising follow-up, final house decisions made; background checks on homeowners; set up buy nights and make arrangements with Home Depot; order sponsorship signs

**March**—liaison with Home Depot; fire/police arrangements made; skilled tradesmen assigned, recruit volunteers; make group assignments; continue fundraising; volunteer release forms and homeowner release forms ready; purchase cleaning supplies; hold house captains' meeting; distribute cleaning supplies

**April**— final confirmations to homeowners; team leaders meeting; house captains meeting, hold Buy Nights at Home Depot, purchase supplies and materials for all confirmed home sites, arrange for and coordinate delivery of materials to homes; distribute waivers to all volunteers.

April 28, 2001 – National Rebuilding Day

**May/June**—Evaluate program; assess results and improvements; thank volunteers and sponsors; complete accounting and finalize all program execution reports.

### **IV. Organizational Structure and Capacity**

**Describe your organization and provide a brief summary of your experience working in the City of Alexandria. Describe the mission or purpose of your organization and a summary of existing projects or programs developed or administered by the organization. Include copies of your organization's last two independently audited balance sheets statements and operating budgets.**

Alexandria Christmas in April is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to renovating and repairing the homes of elderly, disabled and low-income homeowners in need, in order to help them maintain their safety, security and independence. ACIA was founded in 1986. We are part of a nationwide program providing home repairs one day per year on the last Saturday in April. ACIA was one of the first affiliates to be founded. Now there are more than 500 affiliates nationwide.

For the first Home Rebuilding Day, held in April 1987, 10 homes and 2 shelters were repaired. Since that time, on the last Saturday in April, teams of volunteers have provided home repairs that allow homeowners to stay safely in their homes.

The mission of ACIA is to provide safety, security and independence to homeowners in need. Our goal is to provide needed home repairs and renovations.

The 2001 Paycheck to Paycheck Report by the United Way of the Nation's Capital Area lists the three greatest needs for the rising number of low-income elderly in the City of Alexandria. The second item listed states "service that encourages community involvement and permit the elderly to remain in their own homes for as long as possible needs to be encouraged and expanded."

Alexandria Christmas in April fulfills that need. Our typical client is an elderly female, living alone, on a fixed income under \$15,000, with health problems. Eligible homeowners own their home and are unable to take care of the work themselves. Our Board of Directors screens applicants and selects qualified homeowners based on need and on work that can be accomplished by our corps of volunteers.

With only one year-round, part-time staff person, the Executive Director, and one part-time six-month assistant, ACIA relies heavily on volunteer support to assure the success of the program. ACIA has a 14-member volunteer Board of Directors, a paid part-time Executive Director and paid part-time Executive Aide, and incredible volunteer involvement. Last year, more than 1,000 volunteers participated in National Rebuilding Day 2001.