

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 23, 2002

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 42: WELCOME PACKAGE FOR HOME BUYERS AND CUSTOMER EDUCATION IN REGARD TO CITY REGULATIONS RELATED TO HOME RENOVATIONS (COUNCILWOMAN WOODSON'S REQUEST)

Q: It has come to my attention that many residents are confused by the process required to make changes to their property, particularly those who live in historically preserved areas. I would like to recommend a welcome package for home buyers to be received at settlement (avoids postage). We could engage the real estate community to assist us with distribution. The package could include a "how to" guide, as well as the "Know Your City" book and other information about Alexandria (ACVA material). I also think a "how to" renovation package should be available for all homeowners applying for permits that describes the process, the language, and the limitations for historic zones. Both of these ideas are good examples of friendly government at work; additionally, the information could be provided on the web site.

A: There are a couple of activities already planned in this area.

- (1) The City Manager's Office plans to have its summer intern help research, write and edit an information brochure for new Alexandria residents. The brochure will include basic City information that is helpful to new residents, such as recycling and trash pickup, school registration, recreation programs, car licensing requirements, etc. The intern will coordinate translation of this document into Spanish, and possibly other languages; and assist in design and layout of brochure and oversee production.

Distribution of the information brochure will be through a variety of venues, including the Citizen Assistance Office, the Chamber of Commerce, and possibly the school system. Copies will also be made available to realtors to provide to their clients at settlement, or at other appropriate times, and to apartment complexes. City staff will also look at what other material would be appropriate to include in a "welcome package" to new residents.

- (2) The Department of Planning & Zoning is planning a Development Review Process brochure which should be ready in the late fall. The department also recognizes the need for a short brochure that would make it easier for homeowners and small businesses who are contemplating relatively minor renovations to understand various City processes, such as historic district, zoning and building code requirements. While this type of information can be very helpful, the staff resources to develop it are limited given the substantial workload that Planning & Zoning will be handling for the foreseeable future. The development of these brochures could be accelerated with the addition of \$10,000 to the Planning & Zoning budget to contract with a consulting firm familiar with the City's processes to help develop the brochures.

cc: Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
Eileen Fogarty, Director, Planning & Zoning
Barbara Gordon, Public Information Officer