

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 3, 2002
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #49: PROPOSED \$50,000 ADDITION TO THE BUDGET OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING (COUNCILWOMAN EBERWEIN'S REQUEST)

What Alexandria looks like in 10-20 years, the way its citizens experience the City, its climate for business, and the quality of life for its residents will be shaped by today's planning efforts. In adopting the Plan for Planning, City Council established the framework for the City's planning efforts over the next several years. It provides the roadmap for the process of consensus building for those geographic areas in the City needing attention. The Plan prioritizes those areas experiencing development or redevelopment pressures, as well as areas that should be targeted for development incentives.

Within this context, the City Council's mandate to the Department of Planning & Zoning has been to: (1) prepare mid and long range planning strategies to define and enhance the quality of future development and redevelopment in the City; (2) work with the development community and citizens to improve the development review process from the initial application to final review; (3) increase citizen involvement in both neighborhood planning and development review; and (4) ensure that the visual and design aspects of new development will be an asset to the community. The professional services account was established to carry out these multiple mandates. The completion of this work is predicated upon the use of professional consultant services and experience. Specifically:

1. Planning Initiatives

The planning initiatives, which respond to the City priorities identified in the Plan for Planning, all require extensive community outreach coupled with market, land use, urban design, and traffic circulation analysis. In this coming fiscal year, Eisenhower East and Upper Potomac West will be completed. For Eisenhower East, this will include an economic/marketing analysis, a parking/transit program, urban design guidelines for public infrastructure and private development, final reports with zoning strategies, and public/private implementation. Bringing the Upper Potomac West Plan to completion will include a business retail strategy, redevelopment strategies for the larger parcels and adoption of a final concept plan with zoning and overlay districts.

With the completion of Eisenhower East and Upper Potomac, planning for Mt. Vernon Avenue and the City's industrial lands will be initiated. The Mt. Vernon Avenue Plan effort will include a market/retail analysis, shared parking strategies and design analysis to ensure compatible infill development that may involve extensive community facilitation. After an assessment of the City's industrial land base, the Eisenhower West planning effort, with both economic and transportation analyses, will proceed.

In addition to these geographic studies, there are several City-wide planning issues to be addressed. They include parking standards (particularly for areas around the Metrorail stations), open space requirements for private development, and standards to reduce the impact of infill development on existing neighborhoods. Further, there are a variety of quick-response studies that arise during the year, such as neighborhood redevelopment, rezoning analyses and ordinance modifications that will require professional expertise.

## 2. Development Standards and Guidelines

The Department must prepare "tools" for guiding and managing development. In the absence of standards and criteria for much of the City, each project must be negotiated with the applicant on a case-by-case basis. A very high priority for FY 2003 is the preparation of the standards and criteria necessary to establish both a framework and clear expectations for development applications. Streetscape plans must also be developed, starting with the Washington Street corridor.

## 3. Development Review Process/Procedures Implementation

In response to the development community's request, we are establishing procedures and guidelines to facilitate the development review process. This will include the creation of internal procedures to coordinate with all City departments, and an applicant's guide to the planning processes.

## 4. Urban Design/Historic Preservation Analysis

To address the continuity and quality of our urban streetscape for new and proposed developments, professional expertise in the areas of historic preservation, landscape architecture and urban design are utilized in evaluating complex public and private projects. This expertise has enabled the City to offer design solutions that ensure long term compatibility and higher quality projects.

**BUDGET:**

The proposed FY 2003 budget provides to the Department of Planning & Zoning \$200,000 for Professional Services to assist in this work. A one-time federal economic development grant of \$150,000 has also been made available to the Department for the preparation of a comprehensive plan for Mt. Vernon Avenue, a business development and retail strategy for King Street, as well as an Upper Potomac West business enhancement study.

The \$50,000 identified in the City Council's budget Add/Delete list, if funded, could be used to retain professional services to assist in implementing the new development review process, which was discussed at the work session on April 23. This would include assistance in preparing a comprehensive development review manual for developers and builders which would contain the rules, guidelines and procedures applicable to each development and building approval required by the City, and an informative development review guide that would lay out for the community these various approvals and their processes. Those funds could also be used to secure assistance in addressing the issue of infill development in existing neighborhoods and in studying the Duke Street and Route 1 corridors.

cc: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Planning & Zoning