

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2003
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND
ANNOUNCEMENT OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ISSUE: Report on the Neighborhood Partnership Grant Program to date and issuance of a new Request for Proposals for funding through the Neighborhood Partnership Grant Program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive this report.

BACKGROUND: In 2002 City Council implemented the Neighborhood Partnership Grant (NPG) Program. This program encourages residents to play a greater role in determining how to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Grants are limited to \$5,000 to maximize neighborhood and resident participation, and residents are required to develop and implement their projects.

This NPG program was developed by looking at what other cities across the United States and in the Washington D.C. area have undertaken in the neighborhood improvement arena, and then combining some of the best practices with how the City has successfully handled competitive grant awards processes (such as the Community Partnership Fund and the Children's Fund).

DISCUSSION: In July 2002, the City issued a Request for Grant Proposals for the first round of funding through the NPG program. We received 23 preliminary proposals from 15 organizations throughout the City. Of those, four submissions were denied eligibility to submit applications, primarily because they were on private property. The RFP will be modified in the future to clarify this stipulation. In the second phase of the process, 12 projects were submitted for consideration and ten were approved. One project which was denied funding was deemed inappropriate for the program due to the size and scale of the proposed project, and one was denied funding due to the amount of City staff time and City funding associated with the proposed project. Of the ten successful applications, two include several significant stipulations. Staff has discussed the issues with these two applicants. One has declined funding at this stage and will submit a revised application for consideration in subsequent funding rounds. Staff is awaiting the decision from the other applicant. A list of the ten projects that were selected is attached (Attachment 1).

The FY 2003 budget includes \$50,000 to fund another round of grant funding. (Money budgeted in FY 2002 was carried forward to FY 2003 due to the length of time required to implement the program.) The following timeline is proposed for FY 2003 grants:

- Monday, February 24 - Request for Grant Proposals will be issued and grant applications will be available (Attachment 2).

- Friday, April 11 - Deadline to submit project proposal form for review by City staff to determine compliance with program guidelines, City Master Plan and other City regulations. Staff will discuss any concerns with applicants by May 1.

- Friday, May 23 - Deadline to submit completed grant application for evaluation by a joint City staff - Citizen committee

- Monday, June 30 - Notification of successful grant applicants

Staff in the Office of Management and Budget will continue to serve as the primary point of contact for applicants. The Departments of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Transportation and Environmental Services, Planning and Zoning and the Offices of Management and Budget and the City Manager will each have an identified staff person who will field department-specific questions regarding grant applications and proposed projects. This group of departmental staff will also review the project proposal form to determine if the application meets the requirements of the program. Staff will review proposals for compatibility with existing City plans, and will identify concerns with materials, costs and project feasibility. Some proposals may be eliminated during this review process if the project does not comply with the program specifications or current City regulations. It is staff's intention to work with applicants and to provide feedback to enable the greatest number of applicants to participate in the complete grant application process.

Following the pre-application review, applicants will submit a completed grant application which will be evaluated by a joint City staff - citizen committee (appointed by the City Manager) based on the following criteria:

- Neighborhood benefit
- Project feasibility
- Community support/involvement
- Matching resources
- Innovation of proposal

Successful applicants will have one year to complete their projects, and projects will be monitored by the City through the year to ensure that they are completed as proposed and within the deadline. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to maintain a completed tangible

project. The City will not provide any ongoing financial support. Applicants of projects that are not selected will be given an opportunity to understand why their application was not selected and will be advised of other opportunities that may be available to them or how they can improve their chances in future years.

Staff will provide a report to City Council in July to announce the selected projects and to provide a status report on both groups of projects.

FISCAL IMPACT: The FY 2003 operating budget includes \$50,000 in budgeted money, which will be awarded this spring and \$50,000 in money carried forward from FY 2002, which was awarded in January. As with the first round of funding, grant awards will be limited to a maximum of \$5,000 and applicants will be required to identify matching resources, including cash and in-kind contributions. Project fund management will be the responsibility of the applicant. In most situations, the City will reimburse an applicant for expenses incurred during the course of the project, although in some circumstances the City may advance funds to successful applicants.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment 1. List of Projects which have been awarded and are accepting Neighborhood Partnership Grant Funding

Attachment 2. City of Alexandria Neighborhood Partnership Grant Program Request for Grant Proposal document

STAFF:

Kendel Taylor, Budget Analyst, Office of Management and Budget
Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services

City of Alexandria
List of Projects Selected to Receive FY 2002 Neighborhood Partnership Grant Funding

Applicant	Proposed Project	Funding Requested/Awarded
Federation of Civic Associations	Web site for members of the Federation of Civic Associations	\$1,000
Del Ray Citizens Association	Replacement trash cans	\$5,000
Old Town North Community Association	Informational sign box in Montgomery Park	\$1,800
Mt. Jefferson Civic Association	Electronic newsletter/web site for the civic association	\$3,165
Cameron Station Citizens Association	Trees in dog park adjacent to Beatley Library	\$1,000
Mt. Jefferson Civic Association	Beautification of Clifford Avenue	\$2,165
Rosemont Civic Association	Community garden	\$400
Rosemont Civic Association	Park benches	\$700
Rosemont Civic Association ¹	Neighborhood-identifying pillar, interpretive signs and garden in Rosemont	\$4,000
Parkfairfax Condominium Association ²	Gateway entrance landscaping and irrigation	\$5,000

¹ Staff met with the President of the Rosemont Civic Association to discuss the stipulations for grant funding. The Association has opted to submit a revised application in the next round of funding.

² Staff conducted a conference call with a representative of the Parkfairfax Condominium Association to discuss the stipulations for grant funding. The stipulations and options, including reapplying in the next round, were slated for discussion at a recent Association Board meeting. Staff is awaiting the Board's decision.



**City of Alexandria
Neighborhood Partnership Program**



**Request for
Proposals**

Neighborhood Partnership Grants

\$50,000 total funds available

**Pre-review deadline is 4 p.m., Friday, April 11, 2003
Final applications are due at 4 p.m., Friday, May 23, 2003**

**APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED AFTER 4 P.M.
WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED OR ACCEPTED**

Submit applications to:
Kendel Taylor, Office of Management and Budget
301 King Street, Suite 3600, Alexandria, VA 22314
or fax to (703) 706-3991

**For more information call (703) 838-4806, ext. 382 or e-mail
kendel.taylor@ci.alexandria.va.us**

Purpose

In FY 2003 City Council approved funding to continue the Neighborhood Partnership Program to improve the neighborhoods of the City by encouraging citizen participation and responsibility in the planning, implementation and maintenance of neighborhood improvement projects.

What kind of grants?

The City of Alexandria is offering matching grants of up to \$5,000 for small neighborhood physical improvements and community-building events that benefit Alexandria residents. Proposals must be for capital projects or one-time events, not on-going services, and applicants will be required to maintain a physical project once it is completed. Examples are identified, but proposals are not to be limited to these projects. Traffic calming initiatives, such as speed tables, are not eligible for grant funding. Projects must provide public benefit and be on public property. No improvements on private property, regardless of the number of people who can access the property will be considered. Proposed projects will be identified and judged against similar projects according to the following categories:

- Tangible capital improvement projects -trash cans, benches, street lighting, bus shelter
- Tangible beautification projects - trees and flowers, community gardens
- Community building projects - neighborhood clean up, web sites or newsletters

Please note that benches and trash cans must comply with current City specifications. Any bench must include a concrete pad to minimize theft and water pooling. Any request for trees must include the cost of a "gator" watering bag (\$30). The type and placement of trees and plantings must be approved by City staff and maintenance, including watering is the responsibility of the applicant. Applicants requesting community gardens will be required to sign an Adopt a Garden agreement with the City.

Who can apply?

This grant program is open to any organized neighborhood civic association within the City of Alexandria. Organizations formed specifically for grant application purposes are ineligible to apply.

What is the match?

City funds must be matched by at least the same amount of cash donations, donated materials and supplies, or volunteer labor. The applicant's match may not include resources from other City programs or departments. Documentation of the match must be submitted with the application. Volunteer labor will be valued at \$10 per hour. The value of professional services counted toward the match shall be based on the reasonable market value of the service. Time devoted to planning the project, preparing the application and fund raising cannot be considered part of the match. Staff assistance from the City of Alexandria cannot be considered as a match.

What City staff assistance is available?

Contact Kendel Taylor for information or assistance. She can be reached at (703) 838-4806 or e-mail kendel.taylor@ci.alexandria.va.us.

How does one apply?

A pre-application review is required. Please submit the attached project proposal form (Attachment 1) to the Office of Management and Budget by April 11, 2003. The purpose of submitting this form is to enable City staff to review a very brief summary of the proposed project and then to provide guidance to applicants as to the eligibility of the project for this program or any concerns staff may have. The project proposal will include the name of the applicant, a brief description of the proposed project, the estimated project cost, proposed match (and source of funds, if applicable), the number of households impacted by the proposed project, and a description of how the project will benefit or improve your neighborhood.

City staff from the Office of Management and Budget, the Departments of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Planning and Zoning, Transportation and Environmental Services, and the City Manager's Office will review proposals for compatibility with existing City plans (compliance with the Master Plan and zoning requirements). Staff will also identify any concerns with materials, costs and project feasibility. Some proposals may be eliminated during this review process if the project does not comply with the program specifications or current City regulations. It is staff's intention to work with applicants and to provide feedback to enable the greatest number of applicants to participate in the complete grant application process.

Following the pre-application review, applicants will submit a completed grant application form (Attachment 2) which will be evaluated by a joint City staff - Citizen committee based on the criteria described below.

What is the time line?

The time line for this year's program is as follows:

- Monday, February 24, 2003 - Applications available
- Friday, April 11, 2003 - Pre-review deadline: submit project proposals to the Office of Management and Budget by 4:00 p.m.
- Friday, May 23, 2003 - Application Deadline: submit completed grant applications to the Office of Management and Budget by 4:00 p.m.
- Monday, June 30, 2003 - Applicants notified about which projects were selected.

How will projects be selected?

The proposed projects will be rated between 1 and 100 points based on the following criteria. The criteria listed below outline the basic components the committee will evaluate.

Neighborhood benefit

30 points

How will the project improve the health, safety or quality of life of the residents?

How will the project result in a physical improvement to the neighborhood or a measurable change in sense of local community or the identity of the neighborhood?

How many people will be impacted by this project?

Has the need for the project or the desire of the applicant been previously identified or documented through other City forums?

Project feasibility/organization

20

Does the submission clearly identify the project being proposed, the time line for completion and a project manager, financial manager and/or grant administrator?

Are long term benefits and outcomes of the project clearly identified and justified?

Is the project ready to proceed once funds are awarded?

Is the applicant capable of completing the project, and where applicable, maintaining the completed project over time?

Is the time line (completion in one year) realistic?

Are maintenance costs and responsibilities clearly identified and addressed?

Community support/involvement

20

Is there broad neighborhood awareness and support for the proposal? (Submissions should include copies of petitions, flyers, newsletters and other forms of publicity of the neighborhood proposal.)

Was there broad involvement or collaboration in the planning of the proposal by neighborhood residents and groups?

Matching resources

20

Are the matching funds and in-kind contributions accurately identified and reasonably committed to?

Are the inkind contributions costed out at the rates identified (\$10 per volunteer hour)? (Submission should include pledge sheets indicating volunteer time.)

Are donated materials realistically budgeted?

Innovation of proposal

10

Does the proposal demonstrate particular innovation or creativity on the part of the applicant either in its planning and gathering of community support, in its solicitation of matching funds and volunteer hours, or in the project itself.

What happens if my project is selected?

The project leader/grant administrator will sign a contract with the City agreeing to certain stipulations, including:

- Grantee will have a tax identification number and a bank account
- No work, additional funding or maintenance will be provided by the City of Alexandria
- Project will be completed in one year
- Project status is subject to City review
- Grant award will not exceed \$5,000

Projects will be monitored throughout the year to ensure that they are completed by the one year deadline. Project fund management is the responsibility of the applicant. The City will normally provide reimbursement for expenses incurred during the course of the project, although in some circumstances the City may advance funds to the successful applicants. Capability of fund management should be demonstrated in the application, in addition to sources of matching resources.

What happens once my project is completed?

The applicant will be required to maintain the completed project if it is a tangible project. The City will not provide any ongoing financial support.

What happens if my project is not selected?

Applicants not selected will be given an opportunity to understand why their application was not selected, and will be advised of other opportunities that may be available to them or how they can improve their chances in future years.

City of Alexandria
2003 Neighborhood Partnership Program Grant Application

Please type or print clearly answers to the following questions.

A. Name of Organization _____

B. Grant Administrator (Individual responsible for grant management)

1. Name _____

2. Mailing Address _____

3. City, State and Zip Code _____

4. Phone _____ Fax _____

5. Federal ID # _____

6. Email address _____

7. Signature and title of individual authorized to sign contract with City:

C. Funds

1. Amount of Grant Requested

\$ _____

2. Amount of Match

Cash _____

In-kind _____

3. Total Project Cost

\$ _____

D. Project description

E. Location of Project (for community building events please identify the facility where the event will occur)

- F. Describe the nature and extent of the neighborhood benefit that the project will produce. (include the number of households that will be impacted, and explain how the number has been determined.)
- G. Provide a timeline for completion of the project. (All projects must be completed within 12 months of the announcement of grant awards.)
- H. Attach a project budget with your submission. (The budget should be a detailed, line by line breakdown of projected expenses and revenues and identify a source for each item [contractor's estimates, price quotes, etc].)
- I. Provide evidence of financial support and matching efforts. (City funding can only account for up to 50% of the cost of the project. Volunteer hours are valued at \$10 per hour. Donation of professional services must be budgeted at fair market value.)
- J. Provide evidence that neighborhood input was solicited in the selection of the project. (List dates of meetings and the number of attendees, provide samples of flyers, door to door surveys)
- K. Identify the specific maintenance requirements of your project and explain how these will be fulfilled.
- L. Identify the members of your project team and explain your capability to implement this project.

This form is due in the Office of Management and Budget, 301 King Street, Suite 3600, Alexandria, VA 22314, or fax to (703) 706-3991, by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 23, 2003.