

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 20, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
THE HONORABLE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION

THROUGH: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: EILEEN FOGARTY, DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND ZONING



SUBJECT: PLANNING WORK PROGRAM PRIORITIES

ISSUE: Consideration of Council priorities for planning projects to be undertaken as part of the Department of Planning and Zoning's FY2006 and 2007 work program.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council, after discussion with the Planning Commission, adopt the following as the planning priorities:

<u>Planning Area</u>	<u>Anticipated Start Date</u>	<u>Estimated Completion Date</u>
Route 1 Corridor	September 2005	March/April 2006
Waterfront	January 2006	April/May 2007
Eisenhower West	June 2006	Oct/Nov 2007

The Waterfront and Eisenhower West are both large planning efforts that involve significant Department resources. The proposed timing of these new large planning projects takes into account the large planning efforts underway in Landmark/Van Dorn (completion June 2006) and Braddock (completion February 2006), with the start dates structured to coincide with the estimated completion dates of the current efforts. Since both the Waterfront and Eisenhower West are high priorities for the City, the Council and Planning Commission may wish to move either or both of these plans to earlier start dates in the Fall or Winter. In such case, the Department will be somewhat taxed, requiring some additional resources and/or more extended time periods for completion of the projects.

With respect to the Neighborhood Infill Study the Planning Commission has requested that staff prepare a generalized analysis of the issue and outline options and approaches that could be used by the City. This report will be prepared for consideration by the Planning Commission in the fall.

We will report back to Council with the Planning Commission's recommendations.

DISCUSSION: This memorandum is provided to follow-up on the discussion at the May 17 City Council/Planning Commission work session regarding the work program priorities for future planning projects. As was discussed in the work session, much of the current development in the City is located within already planned areas, including Eisenhower East and Potomac Yard. The most immediate development pressure is the Braddock Road Metro area. Developers have expressed interest in over 900,000 square feet of new development, representing almost half of the potential new development in the Braddock area. The timing here is critical – the area needs to be planned in an expedited manner in order to have the principles and tools to address this development head on and to ensure that it meets the vision of the community. Initial work on this planning effort has begun and is expected to be completed in February 2006, if the schedule is accelerated.

The future planning projects for inclusion in the Department's work program are briefly discussed in the following paragraphs:

Waterfront Area

The waterfront is a special place for the entire city, and undertaking a waterfront plan presents the opportunity to make the waterfront a desirable and usable public environment. The Open Space Plan and the priorities established by the Open Space Steering Committee express the importance of the waterfront to the City's quality of life. With its importance to the entire community, development of a waterfront plan should be one of the City's highest priorities. With respect to scheduling the start of the planning effort, the waterfront area does not have the development pressure of some other areas. Thus, adjustments in scheduling for a brief period should not adversely affect achieving the community's goals and staff recommend that work on the plan commence in January 2006.

Eisenhower West

The Eisenhower West area is currently experiencing some development pressure. While the area is zoned for medium and high density commercial and office uses, there is very limited demand in the marketplace for office use. Many of the existing industrial and service uses in the corridor are currently "holding uses," waiting for a stronger market. The strong residential market in the City is restricted in this area due to the 1999 zoning change which requires an SUP for residential use and the City's expressed position against new residential development along the Eisenhower West corridor. Recent development applications are focused on two sites (the Tauber site at 600,000 square feet/1 million square feet with structured parking and the WMATA site at 450,000 square feet). These are site plans for office uses, where there is not as great an opportunity for discretionary public input into the proposed development as with the SUP process.

The intersection of Clermont and Eisenhower (at the exit from I-495) is a key intersection along the Eisenhower West corridor. Future land uses at this intersection need to be evaluated, particularly in light of recent redevelopment interest. Development of the plan for the Eisenhower

West area provides real opportunities to address land use and open space issues, provide pedestrian connections to Metro, within the area and to Cameron Station, develop approaches to capitalize on the location of the Van Dorn Metro station, and establish guidelines and standards to ensure that new development reflects the quality envisioned by the community.

Staff proposes that this plan start in June 2006 with completion in October/November 2007.

Route 1 Corridor

The Potomac Yard development is moving forward and as it does, the character of Route 1 will be significantly altered. Currently, the west side of Route 1 has a variety of industrial, service and other commercial uses, and some sites, such as the old Del Ray Glass site, are experiencing redevelopment pressures. The early phasing of the Main Street retail on Block G in Potomac Yard, as well as the planning activities along Four Mile Run, provide an opportunity for the creation of a vision for the future redevelopment and reorientation of the Potomac Yard shopping center. From the Planning and Zoning Department's standpoint, it is an opportune time to undertake the Route 1 planning effort, particularly with the on-going discussions of transit usage along Route 1, the proposed relocation of the bridge at Monroe Avenue, and the city-wide review of industrial activities. With the timetable set for the development of infrastructure to support Potomac Yard, there is a strong need to plan the remainder of the Route 1 corridor now in order to integrate an overall vision for the area with eminent plans for the reconstruction of Route 1.

Staff proposes to start this plan in September 2005 with completion in March/April 2006.

Duke Street (East)

The Duke Street planning effort represents an opportunity to address long-standing issues related to the quality of the streetscape, from both an aesthetic and pedestrian safety standpoint. Presently Duke Street offers an unappealing entryway to the eastern portion of the City, as characterized by small sites, with numerous curb-cuts, mixed commercial uses, little or no landscaping and an overabundance of signs. Part of this area provides a location for industrial and service uses for the community. The City is planning a complex of public facilities in this area between 2008 and 2010, including the public safety center, recreational fields, DASH maintenance facility and other City functions, which are the subject of on-going community meetings. In addition, there is currently some expressed redevelopment interest on sites near the eastern side of the proposed City facilities. Planning for this area could be deferred while other higher priority areas are being addressed.

West End – West of I-395

The City is seeing selective development on scattered sites in the West End area, west of I-395. While most new construction is through site plan and SUP applications within the context of existing zoning, there is some expressed interest in intensification on assembled tracts of land. Such intensification would require rezoning and an involved community process. This area, with the scattered nature of the potential sites, does not lend itself easily to a focused planning process. As a legislative change would be necessary for any major change in the area, evaluation can be

done on a case-by-case as a special site-specific study and/or the area explored more comprehensively with the overall Master Plan update.

Neighborhood Infill

A study on neighborhood infill, to address the issue of construction of larger, often incompatible, buildings in established neighborhoods, has been considered for some time. The challenge is in creating a neighborhood-sensitive approach that maintains the character of the neighborhood, while not prohibiting reasonable additions to existing single-family dwellings. A key issue leading to property redevelopment is the rising real estate values in the City. With increasing land costs, developers and new homeowners need to maximize the size and price of properties in order to maintain the land-to-building value ratio expected by financing institutions. Many of the houses in the City are underbuilt with respect to the allowable zoning envelope. The extent to which real estate values remain high affects whether the problem will continue to grow. Undertaking a City-wide study will be extremely time-intensive, as it will need to be neighborhood-specific and will involve analysis of existing buildings in terms of design and zoning, in addition to the extensive amount of community involvement that will be needed. A more limited approach could be to undertake a pilot program in one or two neighborhoods to explore the issues and potential design and zoning approaches. The results of the pilot program could then be used as a template for analysis, community involvement and potential approaches in other areas of the City.

Clearly, the neighborhood infill issue is of pressing concern. The Planning Commission has requested that staff prepare a generalized analysis of the issue, and outline options and approaches that have been used by others and which may be appropriate for the City. This report will be prepared for consideration by the Planning Commission in the fall. Further consideration of this issue should be made following the Planning Commission's consideration of the analysis and options report to determine the best approach to this effort.

We look forward to working with you in establishing your priorities for upcoming planning activities.

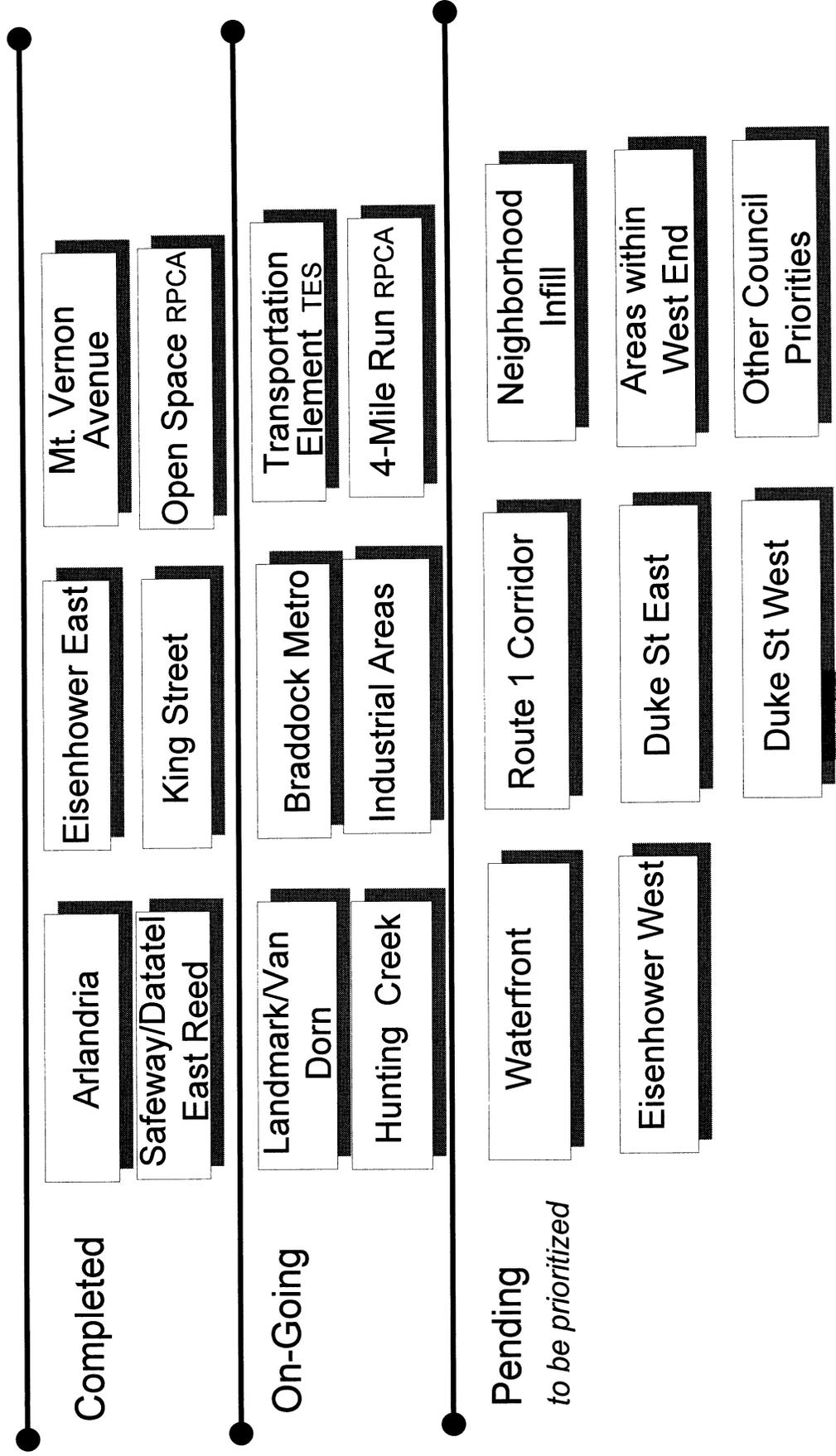
ATTACHMENT: Planning Initiatives

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Kimberley P. Fogle, Division Chief

Department of Planning & Zoning Planning Priorities

Planning Initiatives



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