

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 60 : COMPREHENSIVE WAYFINDING SIGN PROGRAM

This memorandum is in response to Councilman Krupicka's question : Could the proposed City sign program be spread over a longer period of time in the CIP, or would that add to the overall cost and effectiveness of the program.

A total of \$2.3 million over three years has been budgeted in the Proposed FY 2006 - FY 2011 Capital Improvement Program for a City-wide Coordinated Sign and Wayfinding System (\$400,000 in FY 2006; \$900,000 in FY 2007; and \$1.0 million in FY 2008). The proposed Coordinated Sign and Wayfinding Program was one of the outcomes of a study to evaluate the need for a new City visitors' center. This study concluded that a major weakness in the City is an ineffective and inadequate sign program to direct visitors around the City. Informational and directional signage for tourists, as well as citizens, was found to be a weakness. An important conclusion of the study was that Alexandria needs to be more proactive in orienting and informing visitors, motivating them to go out and find historic sites, and making it easier to find one's way around the City in general.

This project would provide for the comprehensive design of a signage, wayfinding and identity system that will project a consistent image for the entire City, reduce clutter, promote walking and mass transit, and be sustainable as well as expandable. The system, upon implementation, should be a complete navigational system within the City's boundaries. Tourism is a significant economic component and revenue source to the City, and with the increasing amount of regional competition, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure that visitors and local area residents can find City attractions and destinations in an effective way. Implementation of this program, whether on a city-wide or localized scale, has been recommendation in both the Mt. Vernon Business Area Plan and the King Street Retail Strategy.

The initial design phase will involve significant community input and the development of a full design pallet for all the signage. It is desirable that this design phase be done in a coordinated manner, in a more concentrated one year time frame, for both an ideal continuity of effort, and from a cost standpoint. However, it would be possible to phase the design over two fiscal years, allowing the

process to begin later in one fiscal year and continue early into the next fiscal year. The total design estimate is \$300,000, with implementation estimated at \$2.0 million spread mostly thru FY 2007 and FY 2008..

The actual construction and implementation of the proposed designs could be extended over more than the planned three years without substantially affecting the effectiveness of the program. It would be possible in the design stage to establish a phased approach to implementation, using themes, geographic locations, or other criteria, so that the most immediate needs are addressed first in the implementation. Further phasing in the actual construction, installation and implementation of the signage program should not significantly affect the cost of the project or the effectiveness of the program.