

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 21, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER *RM*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR AN ARCHITECTURAL FIELD SURVEY OF THE OLD AND HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT

ISSUE: Consideration of four grant applications to conduct an architectural field survey of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) Approve the submission of the grant application to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant Program, not to exceed \$25,000.
- 2) Approve the submission of grant application to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) Cost Share Grant Program, not to exceed \$9,000.
- 3) Approve the submission of the grant application to Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Conservation Grant Program for a Professional Services Grant, not to exceed \$25,000 in services.
- 4) Approve the submission of the grant application to Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF) for survey equipment, not to exceed \$5,000.
- 5) Authorize the City Manager to execute all the necessary documents that may be required.

DISCUSSION: The Department of Planning and Zoning proposes to use the CLG, ESRI professional services, and HAF grants to develop a software application and provide equipment that will allow teams of trained volunteers to perform a digital architectural survey of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. The grants will also support project-related modifications to the City's existing GIS website to make this survey data readily available to multiple City departments, the general public and to VDHR.

These grant requests are part of a local, state and federal architectural survey pilot program spearheaded by the City of Alexandria, in cooperation with Environmental Systems Research

Institute (ESRI), the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the National Park Service (NPS). The grant is supported by the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review (BAR), the Office of Historic Alexandria, and the Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF). The need to identify architectural resources is stated in the Historic Preservation Chapter of the 1992 Master Plan and section 10-101(E) of the zoning ordinance.

Unlike the Parker-Gray District National Register survey and nomination completed in 2007, (1,200 resources, \$100,000 project), there has never been a comprehensive survey of the 4,000 architectural resources within the Old and Historic Alexandria District. The utilization of newly available mobile digital technology such as smart phones and tablet PCs, along with local, State, Federal, and private company resources, will enable this survey to be executed utilizing trained volunteers with a minimal amount of City staff time and at no additional fiscal impact to the City. The proposed survey will be performed over a five year period. Once the mobile field survey software is developed and tested in the first year, subsequent survey phases will be accomplished by local volunteers with no additional grant funding required.

Property owners will benefit from the survey data which will be imported into an enhanced City website and made available for public viewing. City Staff will utilize the data for future preservation planning efforts, to improve the accuracy and reduce the time required to research BAR staff reports, and to manage and share the information about historic resources among multiple City departments. The information will also be shared with the National Register of Historic Places (NPS) as well as the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). This expanded data sharing among agencies will provide expanded public access to the information, potentially assist in emergency management, and provide the City with new planning tools.

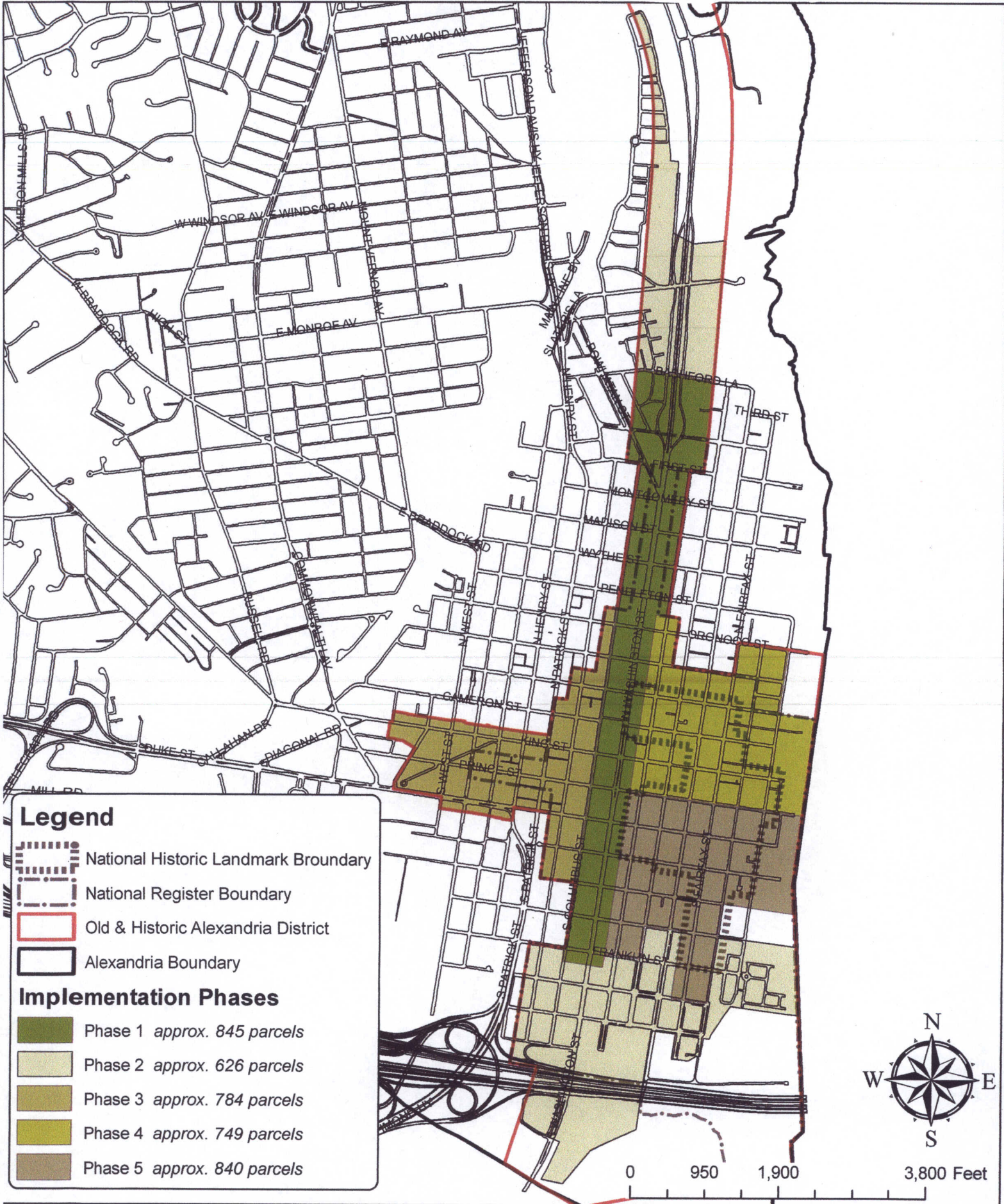
FISCAL IMPACT: The Department of Planning and Zoning is requesting grant awards not to exceed \$64,000 in total. If awarded, ESRI's professional services grant will be utilized as matching funds for the State of Virginia's Certified Local Government (CLG) grant. The City will meet the cost share requirement of the CLG grant by leveraging an additional \$13,885 in staff time and \$4,640 in volunteer hours. The HAF's one-time grant for equipment will be used through all five survey phases.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Illustrative Map of Survey Area
Attachment 2: Letter of Support: National Park Service

STAFF:

Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning and Zoning
Steve Chozick, Division Chief, Geographic Information Systems
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager





United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

7 March 2012

Charles Convis
ESRI Conservation Program Coordinator
380 New York St
Redlands, CA 92373

Charles,

The National Park Service Cultural Resource GIS Facility (CRGIS) would like to express our support of the City of Alexandria, VA proposed project exploring the use of GIS and mobile technology to foster the cooperation of Federal, State and local governments to improve their ability to incorporate cultural resources into planning efforts. Designated through OMB A-16 as the lead Federal agency for the cultural resource spatial data theme nationwide, CRGIS has been leading efforts through the Federal Geographic Data Committee to create and foster data exchange standards that would allow Federal, State, Tribal and local governments to share critically important cultural resource data since 2002. As part of this effort, the National Park Service has adopted its own cultural resource spatial data transfer standards to assist NPS data exchange, as well as exchange of data between the NPS, States, Tribes and local governments particularly related to managing cultural resources as part of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The proposed Alexandria project takes advantage of new mobile GIS technologies to leverage volunteer support to survey some of the most architecturally significant historic districts in the country, cataloguing important condition and integrity information never before collected and desperately needed to improve the overall planning process in the City of Alexandria. This digital collection of descriptive information, combined with the power of GIS to analyze and fully integrate cultural resources in the planning process will better protect the resources and provide critical tools for the City in managing their Nationally and locally significant historic districts.

Using the NPS cultural resource spatial data transfer standards in the GIS data creation process through this project will allow the City to share information regarding resources contributing to historic districts in the City to be exchanged with the NPS National Register of Historic Places, as well as the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Sharing data among all of these agencies will provide expanded public access to the information, potentially assist in emergency management, enhance the ability of the NPS to administer grants and tax credits to resources in the historic districts as well as provide the City with new planning tools.

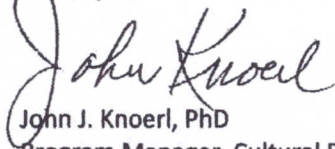
The flexibility of the proposed project to accommodate and customize survey and data collection techniques through GIS mobile technologies offers even greater promise for expanding such a digital survey process and GIS data exchange mechanism to other local governments who cope with the same challenges as the City of Alexandria as they work to meet similar goals. Generating an adaptable methodology to provide this type of detailed data to the National Register, and to State Historic

Preservation Offices such as the Virginia Department of Historic Resources will greatly expand the capabilities of National and State programs to provide information to the public and better manage their resources. Adapting a common methodology for digital, mobile GIS data collection, exchange and use to other jurisdictions will help to expand the services local, State and National agencies can offer related to cultural resources.

The City of Alexandria proposed project includes participation from all levels of government and can serve as a model for other local governments as GIS mobile technologies grow and expand. Leveraging the power of these technologies to allow volunteers to assist in their own communities will raise the profile of cultural resources at a local level and passing the information gathered on to State and National levels will greatly increase the amount of data the public can access. The City of Alexandria proposed project will be a model of how data can be exchanged from local to State and finally National levels that other communities can base their own practices on.

The Cultural Resource GIS Facility looks forward to working with the City of Alexandria and the State of Virginia to explore these technologies and how they can be applied in coordination with the existing NPS cultural resource spatial data transfer standards.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John J. Knoerl". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John J. Knoerl, PhD
Program Manager, Cultural Resource GIS Facility
National Park Service