

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 1, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 40 : EISENHOWER WEST SMALL AREA PLAN

This memorandum is in response to Councilmembers' questions about the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan raised during the March 23, 2010 work session on the Department of Planning and Zoning's (P&Z) FY2011 Work Program. These questions include:

- What will the consulting funds be used for?
- Why is the process shown as lasting 16 months? Doesn't the fact that the City has already conducted an Eisenhower West Industrial Land Use Study mean that the process can be shortened?
- What Eisenhower West planning activities can be started sooner than January 2011?

BACKGROUND: The Eisenhower West Small Area has been one of the small area plans in the long range work program of P&Z since the Department produced the "Plan for Planning" in 2001. Eisenhower West is last major plan on the "Plan for Planning" schedule.

During last year's discussion of the P& Z work program, the Planning Commission and the Council discussed the timing of the Eisenhower West plan. The timing that was selected was for the staff work on the plan to begin in April 2011 and the public process to begin in June 2011. There were a number of reasons why this timing was chosen:

- A decision that two small area plans for the West End should not occur simultaneously because there are a large number of stakeholders who are interested in both plans. The Beauregard Corridor Plan, particularly with the BRAC-133 issues included, has a relatively intensive public meeting schedule.
- The expectation was, at the time, that consultant funds would not be available in FY2011 for the Eisenhower West plan. The schedule anticipated that consultant funds would be available in FY2012, which is why the public process was not scheduled to begin until then.
- Because, the findings of the Eisenhower West Industrial Land Use study, that the market will not support redevelopment of the four key sites (Virginia Paving, Vulcan Materials, the Norfolk Southern ethanol transloading facility, and the

Covanta Waste-to-Energy plant) except over the long term., there was no perceived rush for development.

Related to the timing of the plan, there is a provision in Virginia Paving's Special Use Permit (SUP) which states that about 3 years after the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan is adopted, the Council will make a determination about whether the continued operation of Virginia Paving is consistent with the small area plan. Delaying the completion of this Plan would also delay the date when the Council can consider Virginia Paving's SUP as it relates to consistency with the small area plan.

Because the City Manager's Proposed FY2011 Operating Budget includes \$100,000 in consultant support for the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan, P&Z is able to accelerate the start of the plan from April 2011 to January 2011.

DISCUSSION:

Use of Consultant Funds

The Eisenhower West Industrial Land Use Study¹ conducted analysis of the local and regional development market, of redevelopment financials (potential for profit), of environmental conditions and impacts, and the costs and benefits of redevelopment to the City. Much of the material is easily applied to other sites in the plan area, and as a result, the City will not need to conduct those analyses again.

The main additional consultant work will be transportation-related, and the traffic analysis will be a major element of the transportation work. The transportation consultant support for the Beaugard Corridor plan is \$140,000. The roadway network in Eisenhower West is complicated by proximity to the Beltway and other factors, but there is already a Metrorail station in place and the issues are not as complex as in the Beaugard Corridor. The constrained width of the plan area may require some level of engineering beyond the typical of a small area plan in order to ensure that proposed plan elements are feasible. Investigating ways to provide better access to the Metrorail station, and other means to take greater advantage of the station, may also involve consultant support.

If there is money available beyond the transportation analysis, it would be used to evaluate the potential for redevelopment of the area to pay for needed public facilities and to address environmental/stormwater/floodplain issues beyond those addressed in the previous studies.

¹ Located on the web at: <http://alexandriava.gov/IndustrialStudy>

Beginning of the Eisenhower West Planning Process

The proposed P&Z work program discussed by the Council on March 23 shows the staff work for the plan starting in January 2011 and the public process beginning in April 2011.

Staff work includes assembling all of the relevant background material for the plan area (such as property ownership, locations of floodplains and Resource Protection Areas, SUPs and other regulatory issues), identifying stakeholders, developing the scope of work and schedule, tentatively identifying the main issues and goals for the plan, and putting together an advisory group.

The Eisenhower West Plan is shown as starting in January because the Waterfront and Beauregard Corridor Plans are scheduled for adoption in the fall, freeing staff capacity for Eisenhower West and for Arlandria. No other major plans are anticipated to conclude in the fall.

Rather than make a commitment to accelerate the start of the plan in a significant way, staff will look for opportunities to begin work on the initial plan elements in the fall if/when staff capacity is available. Certainly the staff work can be started in December 2010, rather than January 2011, and staff will look for ways to supplement staff with unpaid internships, etc.

Length of the Eisenhower West Planning Process

The proposed P&Z work program discussed by the Council on March 23 shows the plan process starting in January 2011 and being adopted in April 2012, which is 16 months. Council members have asked if the process could be shortened.

It is very likely that process can be shortened. The current Beauregard Corridor Plan, which is likely to be considerably more complicated than the Eisenhower West plan, is now scheduled to be completed with a public process of about a year. Reducing the public process to nine months for the Eisenhower West plan is feasible.

If the plan were to begin in December 2010, rather than January 2011, and if the public process were to run nine months instead of twelve, the plan would be ready for consideration by Council in December 2011.

There are challenges to successfully involving the public in plans that come before the Council in December and January. Members of the public have advised staff that they are not able to be fully engaged in review plan documents between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Because the Planning Commission's January public hearing is very early, members of the public would be completing their final reviews of the proposed plan in the last week of December, which many are reluctant to do.

Staff will work toward a goal of accelerating the plan process further. Staff will schedule one or more mid-plan work sessions or otherwise communicate with the Planning Commission and Council, during which we will report on our progress in accelerating the plan. By then, too, the range of plan issues will be clearer.