
2022 Community Development Budget - Discussion Document

Community Development provides land use planning-related services for the City, as well as supervisory services for the Building Department. Planning-related activities are conducted primarily through the City’s Planning Commission, in coordination with the Budget and Legislative Committees, engineering consultants, and administrative and public works staff. Building Department activities are conducted primarily through department staff. (The Building Department budget discussion document was prepared and submitted separately, so this document will primarily address Community Development opportunities.)

PBB Inventory & Costing Estimate

Program	hrs/yr	%
Planning/Zoning	1196	14%
Land Use	1196	14%
Building Code Consultation	1040	13%
Building Plan Review/Permit Issuance	1664	20%
Site Inspection	1040	13%
Construction Stormwater Management	416	5%
Contractor Education	208	3%
Rental Registration	520	6%
Nuisance Enforcement	832	10%
Housing/Loans	208	3%
Total	8320	100%

Based on 4.0 FTE – Community Development Director, Building Official, Building Inspector, and Administrative Assistant (Planning and Building). The third Inspector/Trainee is not included in this estimate.

Opportunities:

One of the prime responsibilities of administrative staff in any organization is to ensure continuity of services, and full (timely) administrative support. The Community Development Division has primarily relied on only a full-time Director (for land use/planning activities) even prior to its conversion from “City Planning Department”, with the two notable exceptions of when a full-time Assistant Planner was on staff. That position was initially filled by now-Administrator Marty Schultz, and when he transitioned to the position of Assistant City Administrator, the Assistant Planner position was occupied by now Assistant City Administrator/HR Director Karin Tank. Since Karin’s transition to her administrative and HR roles, the planning/zoning/community development functions have been adequately performed by the Division Director.

As the community continues to grow (both in population and in land area/development) the demands on administrative staff (including but not limited to Community Development) have similarly increased. Additionally, although the Division Director shows no signs of contemplating (or intentions of making) his own departure from the City, it should be noted that his thirty-seven years of City service and his attained age would position him to make such a departure. In order to maintain the continuity of service, the City may seek to consider the eventual implementation of a succession program in this Division.

Finally, as noted, the demands on administrative staff at all levels are increasing. One option for the City to consider is the reintroduction of a long-dormant position – that of Administrative Aide. This position was originally created in the early 1990's as support for the City Administrator and City Planner, with grant-writing responsibilities and project assignments to Parks, Streets, and other departments as needed. (The current Community Development Division Director was the original occupant of the Aide position. As he moved into the City Planner position in the mid-1990's, the Aide position was occupied by various others, including now City Assessor Reed Heidelberger.) A reintroduction of the Aide position or something similar could allow at least three administrative staff (the Administrator, Assistant Administrator/HR Director, and Community Development Director) to access additional hours while at the same time providing an opportunity for staff development in that new position. The Aide position would be attractive to any recent Public Administration or Urban Studies graduate, since it would involve a broad variety of duties and responsibilities including land use activities, possible nuisance complaint investigation and follow up, HR surveying and communication, general budgeting and cost allocation, etc., all of which may lead to further career advancement within the Division. (And again, who wouldn't want to make Alexandria the place they choose?)

Recommendations:

- Suggest more discussion between the members of the Administrative staff (those mentioned above) as well as possible discussion with Collaborative Leadership Team about the ways in which an Aide might be effectively utilized. **No budget allocation proposed for 2022.** As mentioned by Building Official Lynn Timm in her discussion, a part-time nuisance inspector was discussed for the previous budget year, but held off due to COVID-19 considerations. This has pushed back the City's action on the Aide opportunity. (Note for future reference: ZipRecruiter, Glass Door, and other hiring agencies currently post openings for an entry level planner with salaries starting at \$58,000 to \$69,000 in Minnesota.)
- Training and software needs are adequately addressed at current levels. No change recommended for 2022. **(Note Lynn's comments regarding the LOGIS contract.)**
- The City Hall Space Needs Assessment report (from mid-2019) does make recommendations for a relocation/realignment of the Division (including Building Department). As the Assessment report makes its way through the review and implementation process, it can serve as a guidepost for the staffing levels and responsibilities that may be shared.