



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA  
MAYOR JACQUES M. ROY

FOR IMMEDIATE STAFF USE AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

March 18, 2015  
Office of the Alexandria Mayor  
Alexandria, Louisiana

## ATTACHMENT A—DISCUSSION MEMORANDUM

### Responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### 1) What is the actual budget for this Project?

**Answer:** The City envisions a total project value of more than \$40 million over a meaningfully connected period of core projects, with public investment in infrastructure of at least \$8.6 million over the next 10 years, with the first \$4 million being made available in the next two to three years. This encompasses the City of Alexandria’s local match and does not limit the inclusion of other public matches, such as federal transit funds, UDAG funds, etc. This is a transformative undertaking composed of multiple “nodes” of development and core-area infrastructure projects.

#### 2) How do developers and respondents know the City is committed to funding the Project?

**Answer:** The answer to this is to view the City’s commitment to past large-scale projects, most particularly the City’s SPARC initiative ([www.sparccommission.com](http://www.sparccommission.com)). The City already has placed significant dollars in actual budget line items to begin funding in year one—with \$1,573,660 of its public match in segregated capital funds (Project #051103 Red River Improvement Venture)(City of Alexandria, Annual Budget 2015-16, Section VI.1). This means these dollars are available now for use. Relatedly, the City recognizes new revenue in the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2015, totaling an additional \$2.65 million in funds for the companion Community College Initiative located within the same downtown target area. These funds would be enhanced by the \$20 million community college campus scheduled for build out as part of this initiative, which is funded by bond proceeds sold by the state of Louisiana



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during 2014 as part of Act 2013, *No. 360* and includes an additional \$2.54 million in City match dollars already provided to a foundation partner. Another component of the City's commitment includes additional capital dollars in the amount of \$750,000 budgeted and dedicated to the Alexandria Riverfront Center (Project #051502 Riverfront Improvement)(City of Alexandria, Annual Budget 2015-16, Section VI.1).

The City's commitment is real, it is significant, and it is provided for by legislation and can be viewed in the City's municipal capital outlay budget.

**3) What are the differences between and among RFIs, RFPs, and RFQs?**

**Answer: RFI (Request for Information)**

The R.I.V.E.R. Act RFI/RFQ is *neither* a Request for Proposals ("RFP"), *nor* a stand-alone Request for Qualifications ("RFQ"). It is a Request for Information/Qualifications ("RFI/RFQ"). Based on the RFI/RFQ findings, an additional RFQ *could* be issued to find appropriate consultants or experts to craft an eventual RFP (seeking formal proposals leading to bids for construction), or to further hone the process for additional information or qualifications requests.

An RFI is a business process to gather information about ideas, concepts, and products from different vendors, services, or stakeholders. An RFI serves as the "preliminary" stage and can be very informal when compared to RFPs and RFQs, since the City is seeking new ideas and options for consideration. The City intends to use this RFI to solicit potential suppliers, develop strategy, and prepare for an RFP or RFQ, as well as gather information that will help the City determine what steps to take regarding this project.

This RFI process is an interaction between the City of Alexandria and stakeholders to determine community needs, desires, and expertise by responding to feasibility questions and to determine next steps. It also will provide information

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about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the overall concept.

This RFI is neither designed to supplant nor be a requirement for private-sector development in the downtown; instead, it is designed to ensure public and private development work together, when that benefits and is desired by the public, and to provide opportunities to create a first-class downtown arts, retail, food-and-beverage, residential, and quality-of-life venue in part by leveraging recent investment. On the public side, examples of large infrastructure investment involve the **Downtown Hotels Initiative, Downtown Community College Initiative**, and the related acts to coalesce and create the **Riverfront Improvement Venture and Essential Recreation** initiative. More importantly, on the private side, the investments in hotels, retail, restaurants, the arts, and residential uses indicate the emergence of a willingness to invest privately in a new vision embracing the revitalization of historic Downtown Alexandria.

The RFI seeks community guidance on how all of these assets can and should work together.

**RFP (Request for Proposals)**

Usually an RFP is a later phase of a procurement procedure, which would seek finished design proposals for actual development. These proposals include the City's wishes and requirements for solution products and services; or in this case for completed project proposals, financing, designs, and implementation models.

The RFP process brings structure to the purchase or project green light decision and provides parties with identifying benefits and risks in advance.

The City may issue an RFP representing detailed proposals for award, the most formal step in the process.

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### **RFQ (Request for Qualifications)**

A Request for Qualifications is a process whereby professional qualifications are submitted following vetting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats posed by RFI conclusions.

It should be noted that this process—the RFI/RFQ—is geared toward the RFI side of the house. Alexandria is currently in the *information-gathering stage*, but does not desire foreclosing qualified narratives based on developed ideas. The most likely scenario is an RFI followed by intense public input, a second-stage RFQ for qualified professional assistance, and then core projects through individualized RFPs. The reason for this approach is because redevelopment on this scale faces numerous logistical, financial, and environmental obstacles.

In this RFI/RFQ, Alexandria allows for a more nimble approach by way of community input *and* the submission of *early* qualification narratives by professionals, firms, or persons wishing to respond, now. Citizens, professionals, and community stakeholders (with their own professional teams) may respond. This hybrid version focuses on community information gathering, allows for efficiencies if the right plan emerges early, and protects the process for additional input and process. While it carries additional risks for the professional respondent, it could reward the “early bird with the worm.”

A full RFQ response, for example, might be submitted early—at the RFI/RFQ stage—and be used throughout the process; or, the City may only treat the submissions as information. The City reserves the right to carry forward on additional processes or, if information is detailed enough, to make partnering and proposal decisions in a more immediate fashion.

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**4) What is the expected length of time for this Project?**

**Answer:** The City anticipates that all of 2015 will be focused on information gathering up to and through initial core projects and designs. The City anticipates the engagement of qualified expert planners, design teams, and private-sector partners. In 2016, final design and implementation would begin with alterations to the built environment to commence in 2016. Due to the scale of this project, however, it is anticipated that this is a multi-year commitment encompassing three to ten years. The impact of public infrastructure is expected to affect redevelopment investments in the private sector for the next ten to twenty years.

**TIMELINE OF ACTIVITY**

**Phase I: Information Gathering**

The City recognizes that development of downtown Alexandria's riverfront requires robust public engagement seeking input from many voices, inviting open and direct dialogue, and encourages participation throughout this process.

The City intends to use this RFI to solicit ideas, develop strategy, and prepare for an RFP or RFQ, as well as, gather information that will help the City determine what steps to take regarding this project.

Common themes and ideas would be determined from this stage. During the RFI period, parties will help determine the specific responses required for any further RFQ narrative. This RFI/RFQ's qualifications narrative is generally outlined to aid the parties in their determinations and provide a glimpse of what a narrative may require in an eventual RFP.

The diversity and creativity of Community contributed ideas provides a source of insight and priorities for this process. Common themes and ideas could be identified from this stage.

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**Phase II: Conceptual Design Phase**

Guiding principles/design goals would then be established based on common themes established in Phase I to capture key civic goals and objectives that would shape the creation of the new public spaces on the Riverfront and future project phases.

Identified core projects would collectively make up an early phase of riverfront development weaving together open spaces, ranging in scale from small and intimate to large and civic.

These places relate to nearby existing destinations to form synergies of audience and program. Together, these elements create a dynamic urban district, filled with cultural, social, and recreational activity on the riverfront.

**Overview:**

**PHASE I**

- Gather information
- Identify Common Ideas Themes

**PHASE II**

- Establish Guiding Principles
- Develop Core Projects

**2015 Timeline of Activity**

<b>March 26</b> LOI/Submit Questions	<b>May 15</b> Feasibility Responses	<b>May 29</b> Professional Narratives	<b>July 24</b> Official Responses	<b>July 24</b> Additional Processes	<b>August- September</b> Announce		
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**5) What are some resources to help jumpstart discussions? What resources have the City considered important in setting policy? What legislation and planning already exist? And, in that regard, how can a city, and in particular our city, help with this crucial future-proofing for our region?**

**Answer:** The City considers a model for discussions about downtown redevelopment the Brookings Institute’s Turning Around

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Downtown; Twelve Steps to Revitalization  
(<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2005/03/downtownredevelopment-leinberger>)

A Manual for Small Downtowns by The University of Pennsylvania  
(<http://sandpointurbanrenewal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Small-Downtown-Manual.pdf>)

The Council has adopted master planning to facilitate immediate development to increase the guarantee of long-term success as provided by studies and plans commissioned by Alexandria—e.g., selected material from Jacques Roy for Mayor Campaign and Transition Team Reports (2006-2007); the “Alexandria Developmental Strategic Plan” (McElroy and Associates); the City of Alexandria’s study known as the “Ruston Foundry Superfund Site, Pilot Project” (Slater-Midboe Group, Moore Planning Group); the “Alexandria Urban Master Plan” (Moore Planning Group); and, the study known as the “Interstate 49 Urban Corridor Enhancement Program” (Moore Planning Group). These constituted formal legislative findings of fact and allowed for cooperative development and partnering for a public purpose and specific return on public investment. See Alexandria City Council Resolutions, Nos. 8561-2009 and 8562-2009 (relative to findings of need).

Critically, Alexandria recently completed a resiliency analysis of the entire City, called *ThinkAlex* ([www.thinkalex.org](http://www.thinkalex.org)). This unique opportunity offers the potential developer fresh, evidence-based insight identifying the need, appropriateness, and viability of downtown mixed-use development and housing.

According to two recent *Brookings Institution* reports, for the first time in decades, large metro areas grew more than the combined suburbs of those areas. The “suburbanization” desires that characterized development for the last better-than-half century has yielded to city living. “This new tipping point clearly has its origins in the downturns in the national housing and labor markets for the past five years. Young people, retirees, and other householders who might have moved to the suburbs in better times are unable to obtain mortgages or employment.” Frey, William, Senior Fellow,

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“Demographic Reversal: Cities Thrive, Suburbs Sputter,” Brookings Institution, Series: State of Metropolitan America, No. 56 of 56 (June 29, 2012); and “The Demographic Lull Continues, Especially in Exurbia,” Brookings Institution (April 6, 2012).

Future proofing describes the process of trying to anticipate future developments so that action can be taken to minimize possible negative consequences, and to seize opportunities. Resiliency, though neither synonymous nor sufficient to describe future proofing, is a major component as is sustainability. In planning terms, we need to think about what the demand-driven needs are today, tomorrow, and then into the distant future. What are the ways we can program for “knowns” now and ensure the best opportunity for growth relative to “unknowns”? A specific example: where and how to locate fiber backbone?

More to the point, the City has invested largely in recreation-related infrastructure on the riverfront. The next large-scale public-sector investments should focus on infrastructure that supports private-sector development, friendly toward our existing cultural- and recreation-centered assets. The City also is awaiting what appears to be the first private-sector housing developments within the historic downtown, most particularly condominiums, loft-living, and above-retail apartments.

Against this backdrop, the potential is incredible for redevelopment of the river and connected downtown areas. Alexandria has resources to aid in offering and expanding opportunities to citizens and stakeholders throughout Central Louisiana and the State, while simultaneously reinvigorating its downtown and creating a more usable and contributive riverfront.

**6) How important is the location of this project to the largest population center?**

**Answer:** Alexandria is the only metropolitan area in a radius of 110 miles. As such it offers the amenities and job opportunities that people in this area need. With medical, government, recreational, tourist, convention, arts and entertainment, events, and educational opportunities in the downtown, any enhancements



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and development to the riverfront and downtown area will serve everyone in some way.

Alexandria is growing, according to Census numbers from 2010, and reaches a population in this metropolitan area of more than 153,000 people. It actually services a population of nearly 400,000 people, which is eight times larger than the city itself. Alexandria is the center of a region that brings thousands of people to its downtown daily for health care, legal and governmental business, events, nightlife, dining, arts, tourism, education, and conventions.

**7) What makes the riverfront development feasible with regard to location and programming for our particular needs and region?**

**Answer:** The Alexandria Riverfront and Downtown finds itself at a time of revitalization on a large scale in particular corridors of the City. The Downtown welcomes the opportunity to serve all its citizens, its regional population and tourists with an enhanced riverfront and downtown that will support events and activities as well as downtown living and private sector investment. After first reviewing the needs in terms of feasibility, development of the riverfront should enhance and attract people and investment. This is an opportunity for the downtown and a community seeking stabilization and growth. The riverfront, once optimized, would support many additional food and beverage outlets, housing choices, and ultimately retail destinations. It is an appropriate and timely goal of the City.

**8) What do I do if my team has a finished product or project it wishes to propose for inclusion and vetting, now?**

**Answer:** Provide responses in compliance with the technical aspects of the RFI/RFP, now. If such a plan is provided, it might be assimilated into the public discourse, but it will be at the risk and peril of the proposer. Feasible plans, on the other hand, are subject to award and selection to potentially provide professional services.

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Alexandria seeks a flexible approach by way of community input *and* the submission of *early* qualification narratives by professionals, firms, or persons wishing to respond, now. Citizens, professionals, and community stakeholders (with their own professional teams) may respond. This RFI/RFQ hybrid version focuses on community information gathering and allows for efficiencies if the right plan emerges early.

**9) Will there be community input sessions?**

**Answer:** Yes, the RFI is the most critical community input to guide the rest of the process. But, this is because of the wealth of information and community input possessed from past processes and comprehensive planning.

Following the RFI process, the City will continue its community listening meetings—several already having occurred with mainly merchants and occupiers of the downtown spaces—and will likely include a combination of city and professional facilitation. It is critical to note that multiple comprehensive plans include more than 20 years of community listening sessions, and are being included in this process. Community listening sessions will continue all the way through the RFP process.

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