



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 17-155, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 2/1/2017

TITLE:

Neighborhood Improvements Funding Initiative

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Discussion to clarify the purpose and proposed process for a new funding initiative to support neighborhood level improvements

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Walker, Catlin, Henry, Kilroy

PRESENTER (S): Lee Catlin, Trevor Henry

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Douglas C. Walker

BACKGROUND: During the Two Year Financial Plan process, the Board directed staff to allocate \$1.4 million in one-time funding to support neighborhood level improvement projects prioritized with community feedback and leadership from the County's Community Advisory Committees (CACs). Staff presented some initial concepts about how such a program could be developed as part of the Two Year Financial Plan work session on December 14, 2016. The Board provided feedback and directed staff to continue developing a proposed approach for further review and discussion on February 1, 2017.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Development Areas: Attract quality employment, commercial, and high density residential uses into development areas by providing services and infrastructure that encourage redevelopment and private investment while protecting the quality of neighborhoods

DISCUSSION: Staff has taken guidance provided by the Board during the December 14, 2016, discussion to develop a possible approach for implementing this new funding initiative. There were a range of opinions and suggestions that staff has attempted to incorporate into the proposed implementation approach, knowing that additional discussion and direction is necessary so that we can work towards clarity and shared expectations about the purpose and structure of the program. Staff desires guidance as to whether the Board's preferred approach to the program is understood correctly.

It is important to note that staff recognizes the Board's significant interest in urban revitalization efforts as described in the FY17 - 19 Strategic Plan, and understands the need to create capacity in the CIP through a variety of means to complete major projects. Further discussion on expanding the CIP's capacity through strategies such as service districts and transportation revenue sharing will occur over the next few months. Staff developed the approach outlined below to focus on smaller scale projects that improve neighborhood-level place-making or quality of life that do not traditionally compete well when ranked against other priorities in the CIP such as schools and public safety. This funding initiative program will provide a means to move these types of initiatives forward. If the neighborhood funding initiative program as outlined below and further presented by staff does not meet the intention of the Board, staff will welcome more specific guidance.

Neighborhood Funding Initiative Outline:

As mentioned on December 14, staff has conducted best practices research which is summarized as Attachment A that revealed that the majority of these types of community focused improvement funding programs fall into three basic categories: neighborhood matching grants; formal citizen involvement in capital planning; and citizen-driven Capital Improvement Programs. After hearing the Board's discussion, staff thinks that the third category may most clearly align with the Board's preferences, so the program has been designed along those lines. If the Board would like this program to be more closely incorporated in the already existing CIP review, evaluation and ranking process that would be another viable approach.

Goal - The intended goal of this initiative is to create a way to fund small scale neighborhood improvements (one time capital investments) that benefit place-making and/or quality of life, focused on immediate small scale "built environment" projects or schematic design efforts that position a project to be considered for full funding as part of the CIP review process along with other identified community needs.

Important Considerations:

- The process for determining community priorities should be transparent and inclusive
- The CACs perform a critical role, with continued focus on role as liaisons/conduits for their larger communities of interest
- The process is fair and equitable process and provides a guaranteed level of funding for each master plan area represented by a CAC
- Consistency with master plans and broader Comp Plan goals and objectives is maintained

Proposed Process:

1. Staff convenes CAC chairs to provide orientation on the process including providing list of projects already identified via other processes that are of a scale that could be funded by this program as a starting point
2. Staff hosts an orientation session for all CAC members to discuss the process and kick off the program
3. CACs work with staff to provide a community brainstorming opportunity to identify other potential project areas and provide feedback on prioritization,
4. CACs discuss projects and community feedback and create a top tier of two priority projects
5. CACs submit projects to staff for vetting/scoping to get sense of cost, regulatory impacts, other considerations, staff provides evaluation back to CACs including cost if not already available
6. Staff assessment is reviewed with CACs for final ranking, CACs provide written recommendation to Board of Supervisors
7. The Board of Supervisors approve final project(s) per area based on available funding

Funding Assumptions:

- \$1.4 million total allocated for program costs
- Each master plan area represented by a CAC receives a base amount of \$75,000 for equity
- Master plan areas receive additional funding by formula based on population (Chart of how that could be approached is included in Attachment B)
- Program costs associated with this funding initiative (project management, preliminary design/cost estimating, CAC facilitation) will come out of the \$1.4 million total unless an alternative funding source is identified by the Board

Outstanding Issues that Need Board Confirmation:

- Staff is currently approaching this initiative as a pilot project without necessarily creating expectations that this will be an ongoing funding source at this time.
- The \$1.4 million will be a dedicated item in the CIP. However, review of the projects will not be folded in to the regular CIP review process. If any conceptual design projects result in construction projects of a scale beyond what can be funded by this program, those projects will go through regular CIP review and will compete with other identified community priorities for funding.

- Staff resources - this program will be resource intensive in a way not anticipated by the current Two Year Fiscal Plan. Even if supported as a pilot project, additional staffing resources will need to be provided to support the many elements of implementation including community engagement, project development, project management, etc.

BUDGET IMPACT: The Board has directed that \$1.4 million in one-time funding be allocated to this program.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board consider the program process as proposed and offer feedback and additional guidance as warranted. When satisfied with the approach, it is recommended that the Board direct staff to initiate the Neighborhood Improvement Funding Initiative.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A - Best Practice Research

Attachment B - Potential Funding Allocations