

**Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Economic Initiatives Committee (EIC)
J. Hamilton Lambert Conference Center (Room 11)
September 19th, 2023**

Meeting Summary

Board Members present: EIC Chairman Supervisor John W. Foust, EIC Vice-Chairman Supervisor Daniel G. Storck, Board of Supervisors (BOS) Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay, BOS Vice Chairman Penelope A. Gross, Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw, Supervisor Walter L. Alcorn, Supervisor, Rodney L. Lusk, Supervisor Pat Herrity, Supervisor Dalia A. Palchik, Supervisor Kathy L. Smith

Chairman's Opening Remarks and Approval of Meeting Summary

Supervisor Foust opened the meeting with a review of the agenda. Three agenda items were discussed during the meeting: the Commercial Revitalization Murals Program proposal, Investor-Entrepreneur Forums Program proposal; and an update on the Department of Economic Initiatives programs and projects.

Item 1. Commercial Revitalization Murals Program

The first agenda item was a presentation of the proposed Fairfax County Commercial Revitalization Murals Program. Elizabeth Hagg, Deputy Director, Office of Community Revitalization and Jenee Padmore, Placemaking Planner, Office of Community Revitalization presented the proposal for Board consideration. The mural program has been developed as a facet of the Office of Community Revitalization's creative placemaking efforts to promote vibrancy in the county's revitalization districts (CRDs). The proposal requests \$300,000 to implement a pilot program to fund the installation and maintenance of two murals in Fairfax County's CRDs for five years.

Mural site and location selection will be overseen by a Site and Artist Selection Committee (SASC). The committee's standing members will be comprised of the program manager, a representative from Arts Fairfax, and the Community Revitalization Section (CRS) Director. Rotating committee members will include the property owner, a representative from the corresponding Supervisor's office, a district revitalization program manager, and a representative from a revitalization partner. The program's structure was developed through research, discussions, interviews, and benchmarking. Staff used academic research to better understand best practices for creative placemaking. Staff engaged ArtsFairfax in discussions to learn more about their knowledge of artist recruitment and retention strategies. Local artists were interviewed to better understand their preferences in public art processes. As part of the program development, the Office of Community Revitalization has also benchmarked and established relationships with other national creative placemaking programs to realize the costs and determine the program's requirements.

Supervisor Foust opened the discussion with a question if community groups, not comprised of paid artists (ex. student groups), might be engaged in the program. Staff clarified the program's intention to create a database of artists and artist organizations capable of doing the work. Chairman McKay remarked that a student engagement piece would promote Fairfax County Public Schools' arts programs and help students develop a "vested" interest in their communities. Supervisor Lusk also asked staff to leverage the talent of student artists in the county. Chairman McKay asked whether the proposal addressed challenges faced by other creative placemaking programs and recommended that any related property owner agreements be flexible. In response, staff clarified that elements of the proposal related to artist compensation, mural maintenance, and property owner engagement, were incorporated in response to their benchmarking and research findings.

Supervisor Gross questioned how the murals will avoid or comply with zoning requirements for signage, the dimensions of a small and large mural, whether county facilities would be eligible for the program, and what explanations would accompany the installations. Small murals have been defined as 200 square feet or smaller, and large murals are those that exceed 200 square feet (based on an \$8000 budget estimate). County facilities would be eligible for murals under the program. Supervisor Palchik suggested that the proposed timeline could be revised to collect community feedback earlier in the program process. Palchik also remarked that non-art focused community organizations could be included in the rotating SASC membership.

Supervisors Gross and Palchik offered ideas for guided walking tours to engage the community and encourage buy-in. Supervisor Lusk spoke to the transformative impact that murals have had on the Franconia district. Lusk also asked what will happen to the program's murals beyond the five-year commitment, to which staff stated that that element of the program had yet to be decided. Supervisor Herry inquired about the portion of the budget allotted to the program manager's salary and the potential return on investment. Supervisor Storck expressed his appreciation for the work that has gone into the research and program planning. A board matter will be prepared to request that staff continue its research and to identify the budget source.

Item 2. Investor-Entrepreneur Forums Program Proposal

The second agenda item was the Investor-Entrepreneur Forums Program proposal, a regional initiative led by Fairfax County and George Mason University. Paula Sorrell, Associate Vice President of Innovation and Economic Development, George Mason University delivered the presentation to the Board. As part of the Economic Opportunity Reserve (EOR) process, the item was brought to the committee meeting by a board matter request. The Investor-Entrepreneur Forums Program has been developed after research conducted by George Mason University, Fairfax County, and Go Virginia's Regional Entrepreneur Initiative indicating opportunities and needs for this initiative.

The proposed program includes quarterly convenings developed to support: relationship development between technology entrepreneurs and investors; growth potential identification and financial risk assessment; and increase founder access to resources and capital funding. The program will showcase key angel investment groups, better prepare local founders for the annual Accelerate conference, encourage collaboration across the ecosystem, and increase regional deal

flow. The Investor-Entrepreneur Forums Program will consist of three investor pitch events per year and accept submissions from high-growth innovation and technology companies in Northern Virginia. Through company and investor outreach, the program will leverage community expertise to provide mentorship and guidance to companies. The initiative has garnered the support of Prince William and Arlington counties, who plan to provide financial support should the program be approved. The proposal requests \$450,000 to fund the program's three-year start up period.

Supervisor Foust asked staff to address the Board's questions about regional participation and redundancy. Staff will follow up on the Board's questions and gain consensus, before preparing an action item. During the discussion, Chairman McKay encouraged staff to explore whether Loudon County should be included as part of the regional effort. McKay also asked if a formula had been used to determine the financial contributions of each locality. Supervisor Lusk inquired about the business support services and mentorship that would be available to entrepreneurs participating in the forums. Lusk expressed his excitement in the potential interest that the program may garner from investors outside of the region. Supervisor Smith sought to better understand the proposed cost of the program, particularly Fairfax County's portion of the budget. Staff clarified that Fairfax County's financial contribution could decrease if other localities join the initiatives. Supervisor Herrity recommended that Alexandria be included in the initiative and encouraged staff to include investor education as a forum feature. Supervisor Storck suggested that the team consider alternative strategies to engage non-tech-oriented entrepreneurs.

Item 3. Local Economic Initiatives Project Status

Rebecca Moudry, Director, Department of Economic Initiatives gave an update on the economic initiative programs and projects underway. The projects verbally highlighted in the presentation included the Fairfax THRIVE Small Business Technical Assistance Program and Fairfax CORE (Connecting Opportunities & Resources for Entrepreneurs). The Fairfax THRIVE Small Business Technical Assistance Program is an American Rescue Plan Act funded program created to support small businesses in their post pandemic recovery efforts. Moudry spoke to the status of the program's implementation phase and shared next steps in the program process. The Fairfax CORE initiative will be an online small business resource to help Fairfax County businesses access support. The resource is expected to offer business guides, referrals, and access to more than 70 resource partners, and counting. Staff expect the resource to be available in the Spring of 2024.

In the brief discussion, Supervisor Storck asked staff for a one-page list of the Department of Economic Initiatives resources. Supervisor Palchik asked if the department had investigated local business owners' needs for functional and industrial office spaces. Moudry shared that space will be a topic of discussion, as Department of Economic Initiatives staff develops its continued work to understand long term economic opportunities and risks to the county.