

TO: Budget and Finance Committee
FROM: Lisa Parks, City Administrator
DATE: August 21, 2024
SUBJECT: Executive Department FTE Adjustments and New Position: Economic Development Coordinator.

1) Recommended Action:

Approve establishment of a new position titled Economic Development Coordinator with a 2024 salary range of \$6,049 to \$7,368 (Grade 54); and confirm the departmental FTE count for the Executive Department to be seven (7).

2) Background:

The City has had trouble filling the position of Economic Development Program Manager since Austin Ramirez left earlier in the year. When he left, Austin proposed a series of adjustments be made to better reflect the actual working conditions of this position, including the type of work being done and the most effective reporting structure. Specifically, there were adjustments made to the class specification (job description), and the position was moved from the Community Development Department to the Executive Department, as a direct report to the City Administrator. Austin also recommended an additional position be created to help advance the brownfield redevelopment initiatives that have recently emerged as economic development strategies, and to address the associated workload, including managing the Federal and State grants the City has received, as well as managing and coordinating the consultant team and stakeholder collaboration involved in these projects.

Despite a robust recruitment process, including finding two potential candidates who were offered the position and declined it, the City has been unable to fill the Economic Development Program Manager position. To ensure the important economic development functions of the City can progress, staff is proposing a new approach to implement many of Austin's recommendations, and to broaden both the appeal for the work and the pool of applicants from which the City can choose to complete the work. The new approach includes two basic components:

1. Fill the existing Assistant City Administrator position after adjusting the class specification to include oversight and management of the City's economic development programs, among its other duties; and,
2. Create a new Economic Development Coordinator position to support the Assistant City Administrator, with a specific emphasis/focus on brownfield redevelopment. This position is proposed to be created at a level below that of the Economic Development Program Manager, consistent with other coordinator positions in the City, such as the Sustainability Coordinator.

The second component requires Council action to create the new position and approve a salary range. Council action is also being requested to affirm/confirm the number of FTE's within the Executive Department to be a total of 7, which is inclusive of both positions. Neither of these two components require a budget adjustment because there are available savings in the currently approved budget to adequately cover the costs of these positions.

Austin was instrumental in kick-starting a proactive economic development program within the City, including his success in obtaining both the EPA Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grant (\$500,000) and the Washington Department of Ecology Integrated Planning Grant (\$200,000). Since Austin's departure, grant agreements have been executed, a consultant team has been hired, and the amount of work associated with the City's economic development initiatives has increased, exponentially. Currently, the new work associated with these grants is being undertaken primarily by the Community Development Director and, to a lesser extent, by the City Administrator. Neither of these positions have available capacity to sustain/advance the overall economic development initiatives the Economic Development Program Manager was overseeing, nor are they able to manage the significant additional workload associated with the brownfield redevelopment activities related to the two grants. The proposed new approach is integral to the successful implementation of the City's Strategic Priorities and Goals related to community and economic development.

3) Policy Support:

Strategic Priorities and Goals 2025-26: Pursue and Support Targeted Community and Economic Development Opportunities.

4) Alternatives:

☐ Do not recommend

5) Fiscal Notes:

Based on savings realized throughout the current biennial budget – including salary savings from various unfilled positions, including the Economic Development Program Manager – there are available financial resources to cover this approach for the remainder of calendar year 2024. Additionally, these positions are included in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for the 2025-2026 Biennium that is currently being developed.

6) Attachments:

A. None