



June 27, 2022

Mr. Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor, members of City Council and City Manager,

We commend the City for dedicating \$1.85 million dollars towards funding activities that address our climate crisis. This allocation appropriately recognizes the need to begin fulfilling Alexandria climate crisis commitments.

Specifically, in 2019, the City declared a Climate Emergency and also adopted its Environmental Action Plan (EAP) 2040 which established a target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50% by 2030 (based upon 2005 levels), and by 80-100% by 2050. In 2022, the City moved addressing the climate crisis/environmental justice from a priority to a guiding principle and elevating addressing it to one that integrates it across all areas, projects and plans for the City and Community.

During EPC's recent annual retreat, we agreed upon recommending the following list of projects/programs for funding with the \$1.85 million reserved for climate/environmental justice initiatives. We note that, since the City contributes only 4% to the problem while 96% of Alexandria's emissions comes from the Community, it will be impossible for the City to achieve **real results** if the Community does not contribute its fair share to address this crisis. Given this, **we urge the City to focus the vast majority of the funding on reducing GHG emissions from the Community, rather than the City.**

| # | Initial Amount | Recurring Amount | EAP Chapter reference | Brief Description  |
|---|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | \$250,000      | \$100,000        | 3.1.8+                | Incentive to improve Energy efficiency in existing buildings                                   |
| 2 | \$50,000       | \$50,000         | Various               | Environmental Justice funds as determined by disadvantaged community members                   |
| 3 | \$100,000      | \$100,000        | 2.3.2                 | Promote use of C-PACE for existing buildings   |
| 4 | \$200,000      | \$50,000         | 10.1.1+               | A more robust outreach campaign to engage all City community in combating climate crisis       |
| 5 | \$100,000      | \$50,000         | 10.1.3+               | Initiate collaboration with school to create or adopt a plan to teach about the climate crisis |
| 6 | \$100,000      | \$50,000         | 10.1.4+               | Create & Fund robust Green Building Recognition  |

|        |  |             |                  |   |
|--------|--|-------------|------------------|---|
|        |  |             |                  | program*  |
| 7      | \$100,000                                  | \$50,000    | 10.1.5+          | Establish robust voluntary program for residents, schools and business to report their successes in reducing environmental impact on Community and recognition for efforts* |
| 8      | \$150,000                                  | \$150,000   | Chapter 10       | Fund & create 1 new FTE for Communications person on climate issues – mimicking what has been done with flooding the communications person                                  |
| 9      | \$100,000<br>20 x \$5000 each =<br>100,000 | \$100,000   | Chapter 3<br>new | Perform energy audit on all public bldgs. starting with first 20 which use most energy and aren't already on list for rehab in next 5 years                                 |
| 10     | Very low or no cost                        | Low/no cost | Chapter 1&2      | Explore option of spending REC funds to instead invest in the direct purchase of solar panels for public or public financed buildings                                       |
| Totals | \$1,150,000+                               | \$700,000   |                  |   |

\* Combing items 6 and 7 due to their similarity might enable some of their funds to be used elsewhere. However, we left them separate as listed in the EAP2040.

## Background

The City of Alexandria has taken great strides over the last several years to address the crisis where it has influence or control including with the three largest contributors:

- 1) New buildings - by requiring all new public buildings to be net zero energy, and updating the Green Building Policy in 2019,
- 2) Transportation – by supporting the addition of a new Metro station, a fare-free DASH bus system, a plan to replace all buses with electric ones, and adoption of its Mobility Plan that especially improves options for non-auto travel, and
- 3) Existing buildings – by the adoption and support of a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) system that supports low-cost loans to modernize and reduce the energy burden of business owners, thus enhancing their bottom line so they can thrive.

The EPC applauds the City and all of its residents who supported these initiatives, and now believes we must focus on ways to encourage and incentivize the Community to match the City's response to the climate crisis. Here is our list and our reasoning:

1. \$250,000 one-time, plus \$100,000 recurring – Section 3.1.8+ from EAP2040. Create and fund an incentive program that encourages green building and energy efficiency renovations for

existing buildings, including a green bank and Community Choice Aggregation Program. This is beyond that suggested under EAP Section 3.1.8, which we do not believe provides the funds necessary to effect the urgent change required.

2. \$50,000 one-time, plus \$50,000 recurring for addressing Environmental Justice – Perform outreach to determine what is most important to and impactful for the existing disadvantaged communities and provide funding or seed money for funding their top priorit[y]ies. There is a critical need to dedicate a specific focus on supporting the City’s development of materials and engagement with vulnerable, frontline, and low-income communities who will be most affected by changing climate conditions and are already subject to the inequalities that exasperate climate impacts.
3. \$100,000 one-time, plus \$100,000 recurring – Section 2.3.2 from EAP2040. Market and fund the City’s ongoing C-PACE operations that encourages businesses to finance increased energy efficiency, renewable energy, and stormwater management/resilience without adding additional financial burden to business operators due to the cost savings accrued by changes. The program will only be successful if businesses and commercial owners/operators participate.
4. \$200,000 one-time, plus \$50,000 recurring – Section 10.1.1+ from EAP2040. Fund the creation of a robust outreach campaign to engage residents, businesses, staff and Commissions to adopt emission reduction strategies, plus environmental efforts related to the EAP, and opportunities for involvement – the City’s Eco Ambassador and library program are just not sufficient. The budget estimated in the EAP is lower than the EPC thinks is necessary to make an impact.
5. \$100,000 one-time, plus \$50,000 recurring – Section 10.1.3+ from EAP2040. Initiate the planning process for a collaborative effort with schools in teaching about the climate crisis. We are disappointed that ACPS students are not learning about the climate crisis and see this funding as an opportunity to start addressing that deficit.
6. \$100,000 one-time, plus \$50,000 recurring – Section 10.1.4+ from EAP2040. Select and launch a Green Business Recognition Program or certification in collaboration with local business community and using a third party rating system that is broader and better funded than the one listed under 10.1.4. Because the City cannot mandate such activities, the voluntary recognition program encourages greater action than business-as-usual.
7. \$100,000 one-time, plus \$50,000 recurring – Section 10.1.5+ from EAP2040. Establish a robust voluntary program for residents, schools and businesses to report efforts in reducing their environmental impact and receive recognition for their efforts. It has been proven that measuring and benchmarking is the first step to managing and improving environmental performance. Since the City cannot currently mandate a benchmarking ordinance, this voluntary program is an important step in the right direction.
8. \$150,000 one-time, plus \$150,000 recurring – from EAP Chapter 10 - NEW – Fund and hire 1 FTE to mimic the Communications person currently working on flooding – but this person should be devoted to climate crisis issues. Additional staffing such as this is necessary in the Office of Energy Management to support delivery of energy management, energy programs, climate action, resiliency, engineering, and regulatory and policy engagement services to a broader umbrella of public-sector organizations including ACPS, ARHA, and to Alexandria Renew Enterprises for cost reduction and climate action coordination.

9. \$100,000 one-time, plus \$100,000 recurring – from EAP Chapter 3 – NEW - Perform an energy audit on all public buildings including schools starting with the first 20 that use the most energy and are not on the next 5-year's list for major rehab (20 x \$5,000/audit). Energy audits reveal opportunities to improve a building's environmental performance and are an important step for the City to walk-the-talk on existing building decarbonization.
10. \$- low or no cost – from EAP Chapter 2 – NEW - explore the possibility of redirecting current City funds spent toward buying Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to offset the City's energy costs to instead investing in the purchase of solar panels or other added costs to make affordable housing in Alexandria more energy efficient and sustainable thereby reducing the energy burden on its residents.

The above funding totals equal \$1,150,000 one-time funding with \$700,000 from recurring funding. Most of these items are not new or novel; they are sourced from the EAP itself, from the City Energy Manager's FY23 supplemental budget submission, and from proven programs and practices implemented elsewhere in the country. The cost estimates are not firm, but are realistic, and are meant to cover both program implementation costs and staffing costs.

The EPC looks forward to substantive collaboration with members of Council, the City Manager, City staff and City community members in the hopes we can work toward a final list everyone can enthusiastically support. We believe each of the above will make a difference in addressing the climate crisis and will help demonstrate the City's and Community's commitment to being a caring, kind, compassionate, fair, just, and equitable city that encourages people to live, work and play here.

Sincerely,

*Kathie Hoekstra*

Kathie Hoekstra  
EPC Chair