



June 19, 2016

Honorable Mayor Allison Silberberg and Members of City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Environmental Sustainability in the Fiscal Year 2017-2022 Strategic Plan

Dear Mayor Silberberg and Members of City Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) to recommend that City Council include a strong commitment to environmental sustainability when formulating the City of Alexandria's Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2022 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan), including incorporating sustainability into its specific goals and objectives. The EPC is pleased that Council and staff are engaging Alexandria's citizens to chart the strategic direction for the City through 2022, and we would like to work with you to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan are clearly aligned with the City's commitment to environmental sustainability. The City's 2009 Environmental Action Plan (EAP) serves as the roadmap for city leaders, staff and citizens to implement the sustainability vision and principles set forth in Alexandria's Eco-City Charter. The EAP mid- and long-range goals and actions (2012-2030) already specify several objectives that can be leveraged by the Strategic Plan.

Through initial scoping and public engagement, City staff has identified eight broad themes that establish the organizational framework for the draft Strategic Plan. These broad themes will eventually be used to outline more specific goals intended to guide the City's budget priorities and strategic direction. While EPC appreciates the City's inclusion of sustainability in various themes, currently none of the eight themes focuses solely on environmental sustainability. Instead, "sustainability" is scattered across multiple dissimilar themes. This approach would not provide the needed focus on environmental issues in future City decision-making, would be a step backwards from the progress made to date under the Environmental Action Plan 2030, and would fail to live up to the principles set forth in Alexandria's Eco-City Charter.

The Commission has two specific recommendations that can help ensure that these important issues receive the proper attention in the final Strategic Plan:

1. **First, maintaining and improving the quality of the natural environment should be its own discrete theme in the Strategic Plan.** In short, this issue is both sufficiently broad and important to require its own theme. A strong focus in the Strategic Plan on improving and protecting the natural environment will be essential for articulating actionable goals and objectives in later, more-detailed iterations of the Plan, and will

place renewed emphasis on these issues for the City in keeping with Alexandria's Eco-City Charter.

2. **Second, the Strategic Plan should include specific, actionable, and forward-leaning objectives to guide City decisions related to improving the quality of the natural environment.** A discrete theme focused on the natural environment would allow for a new layer of specificity in the Plan with respect to actionable goals, which should be grounded in the existing EAP. For example, some goals from the 2009 EAP that the Plan might include are:

- Reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below 2005 levels by 2020;
- Implementing the Urban Forestry Master Plan, achieving 40% tree canopy coverage by 2020, and promoting tree planting on public and private properties, including during in planning, to produce a multi-aged and diverse tree community;
- Requiring all new buildings achieve LEED Gold standards by 2020, requiring 60% of all existing buildings achieve a 20% energy consumption reduction by 2020, and ensuring that all new construction, especially affordable housing, maximizes future potential for renewables and includes energy choice for buyers and renters;
- Increasing the electricity offset or generated by City government from clean and renewable energy sources to 25% of the City's energy portfolio by 2020;
- Retrofitting 70% of feasible City storm water facilities with best management practices by 2020, and exploring water reuse and green infrastructure options.

The Environmental Policy Commission appreciates the opportunity to help develop the City's Fiscal Year 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. We will provide additional information, consultation, and input on the draft Strategic Plan throughout the development process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jim Kapsis
Chair
Environmental Policy Commission