



April 30, 2018

Dear Mayor Silberberg and Members of Council:

The Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) is in the middle of a two-year process, working in close collaboration with City staff and the public, to update the City's Environmental Action Plan 2030 (EAP). This is the first update of the plan since it was approved by Council in 2009. While we have made progress in several areas since then, it is our strong belief that we must recommit ourselves to the principles of the Eco-City Charter and renew our leadership role, not just regionally but nationally, in the area of sustainability and environmental protection.

To that end, the EPC is pleased to share with you our attached recommendations for the Phase 1 update of the EAP. The recommendations include goals, targets, and short term actions that cover the five year period from FY2019 to FY2023. The purpose of these recommendations is to codify the City's sustainability priorities over the next five years to inform programs and budgets, and to provide the City and the public with a clear scorecard to track performance.

We refer to these recommendations as the "Phase 1" update of the EAP as they only include short term recommendations in the areas of energy, climate change, green building, open space/land use, and solid waste. These recommendations will be the subject of the first ever joint work session between Council and the EPC tentatively scheduled for May 22. We very much look forward to discussing these with you in greater detail and appreciate your consideration. Next year, we will present Council with our "Phase 2" recommendations. These will include short term recommendations in the other areas covered by the EAP, including water, transportation, air quality, public health and cross cutting issues, such as quantitative metrics for measuring our performance and communications/outreach. Phase 2 will also include medium and long term recommendations for all of the issue areas covered by the EAP.

We started the update process at our retreat in early September 2017 and have had three well-attended public meetings to gather input, including a kick-off meeting in early December, a retreat in early February, an Eco-City Café on a Saturday in March, as well as the first ever Joint Work Session with the Planning Commission. We have held numerous meetings with City staff to refine our proposed goals, targets, and actions. City staff has also solicited input from the public via a public survey and through the City's website. The rich discussion with staff and input we received from the community was invaluable in shaping our recommendations.

The ambition of our recommendations is grounded in the practical realities of local governance, but is not limited by current city practices and processes. We have asked ourselves what

actions the City can take that will have the greatest impact on the environment that are within the City's control. The City should, above all things, first lead by example. However, we have also asked where the City needs to influence others, whether developers or state lawmakers, to achieve our objectives. Thus, you will see recommendations to advance our goals by supporting legislation in Richmond, incentivizing developers, working more closely with other jurisdictions, and engaging more with members of the community.

You will also see one pervasive policy theme throughout all of our recommendations and that is the fight against global climate change. While some may argue that climate change is a federal issue or an issue outside of the City's control, we do not accept either assertion. Climate change is the global environmental issue of our time, and has direct consequences for our City, whether in the form of increased flooding on our waterfront, more power outages and economic damage from extreme weather events, or new strains and higher incidences of infectious diseases. There is plenty that we can do here in Alexandria, including making sure that the City is procuring 100% carbon free energy, increasing tree canopy to reduce the heat island effect, and integrating carbon accounting into our budget process so that we can quantify the climate impact of our investments.

Some of our recommendations may surprise you. For example, we recommend eliminating glass from the City's curbside recycling program and temporarily lowering City's recycling rate target. It turns out that we don't actually recycle the glass today because there is no market for it. In fact, we claim it against our 50% recycling target even though it ultimately ends up in a landfill. If we want to recycle glass to lower greenhouse gas emissions, then we will have to convince citizens to drop off glass at designated recycling centers throughout the City. Leadership requires facing the facts. It also has the additional benefit of saving the City money.

We are very appreciative of City staff's collaboration and support in this process across multiple departments, which we do not think would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our new sustainability coordinator, Ellen Eggerton. We appreciate that you funded her position's creation two years ago, and I assure you that the investment is paying off. Thank you for your time and consideration, and for your work and commitment to improve the natural environment in Alexandria for present and future generations.

Sincerely,



Jim Kapsis
Chair
EPC