

CITY OF FAIRFAX
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Committee Members:

Tim Killian (Chair)
Bruce Knight
Susan Crate
Toby Sorensen
Alice Lippert

Adam Basinger (Vice-Chair)
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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the areas the Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) has focused on in the past year, identifies current programs and initiatives as well as unmet challenges that the City faces.

During 2017, the ESC focused on renewable energy, energy efficiency, tree management, stormwater management, development reviews, and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Several of our committee meetings were used as a platform for expert speakers in the areas stormwater management and renewable energy. In addition, we received briefings on the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and the Paul VI High School Property Redevelopment. ESC members provided extensive input to the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and participated in Planning Commission Joint Working Sessions. Tree City USA responsibilities were transferred from the Community Appearance Committee to the ESC beginning in 2018.

COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

The nine-member Committee is currently complete as the two vacancies during 2017 were filled with two new members (Alice Lippert and Toby Sorensen, School Board Representative) who were both appointed in July and August, respectively. In June, Tim Killian was re-elected by the Committee to serve in the role of ESC Chair for a third term. In addition, Adam Basinger was elected to serve as Vice-Chair. Stefanie Kupka, the City's Sustainability Coordinator, is the ESC's staff liaison and provides administrative support to the committee. In addition, the Committee includes a student representative from Fairfax High School, Marianna Lipold.

The ESC met with the City Council for a work session in July 2017 to present ESC 2017 Key Activities and discuss City priorities (e.g., stormwater management, stewardship of natural resources, environmental education, and other City initiatives). In addition, the ESC met with City officials and other working groups for briefing and discussions on topics including 2035 Comprehensive Plan and stormwater management. Satoshi Eto provided an overview of his responsibilities as the City's Stormwater Program Specialist. Several ESC members attended the June Planning Commission Joint Working Session on the "Natural Environment" and "Sustainability Initiatives" content areas of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

As part of its outreach efforts, the Committee sponsored the seventh annual Earth Art Show, supported Solarize NoVA through participation and yard signs, provided funding for Bike to Work Day and the Earth Day event, and had an informational booth at the Fall Festival.

This year the Earth Art Show was held at City Hall from April 20 to May 4 and included pieces of artwork from Daniels Run, Providence and Lanier. The Committee recognized two artists from each school. The ESC hosted a reception on April 25 in honor of the artists and invited families, teachers and city dignitaries.



The ESC's Fall Festival participation was a great success due to a well-attended booth. The 2017 theme focused on the recycling of plastic waste, invasive plants, solar power, energy efficiency, composting, and native plant and wildlife species. ESC members and citizen supporters distributed handouts on stormwater and pollution concerns, recycling information, composting, and invasive plant species. Ten taxidermy specimens of wildlife native to Northern Virginia on loan from the Department of Interior were on display allowing attendees to obtain a firsthand look at these species. The ESC booth featured a recycling game where residents identified where certain plastic waste could be recycled (e.g., home or



grocery store). In addition, Fairfax High School Green Club participants dressed up as the “bag monster” in an effort to share environmental concerns presented by plastic bags.



A Rain Barrel Workshop sponsored by the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District was offered on April 15 at the Green Acres Center where participants learned to build and took home a rain barrel, and learned how to care for and maintain it.

A Celebrate Earth Day event was held on April 22 at Daniels Run Trail. Activities included learning how to help clean the trail, making bird feeders from recycled products, decorating reusable bags, and learning about waste reduction.



The Anthropologist, the Oscar-nominated documentary on climate change, with city resident (and Environmental Sustainability Committee member) Susan Crate and her daughter Katie was presented on April 23 at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center.

The City of Fairfax achieved a silver certification in the 2017 Green Government Challenge held by the Virginia Municipal League. The Green Government Challenge is a friendly competition designed to encourage implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that reduce the carbon emissions generated by both the local government and the broader community. The City of Fairfax is aiming to achieve a gold certification in 2018.



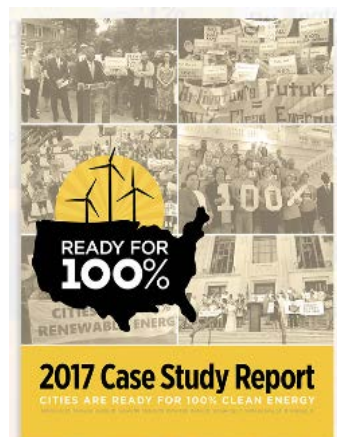
RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The City of Fairfax received a “Bronze” designation from the national program SolSmart for taking bold steps to encourage solar energy growth and removing obstacles to solar development. The City was presented the award at the City Summit of the National League of Cities. To grant the city this recognition, SolSmart awarded points based on the City’s actions to reduce barriers to solar energy development, and evaluated the city’s efforts to assist solar companies in greatly reducing the cost of installations, ultimately benefitting the consumers.



The City teamed up with Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) to participate in a second Solarize NoVA campaign, which took place April 18 through June 30, 2017. The Solarize NoVA program provided the community with free solar assessments and the ability to purchase solar Photo Voltaic systems at a discounted price and with a pre-negotiated contract. Several ESC members took advantage of the free solar assessments for their homes and featured signs in their yard promoting the program; and 96 residents signed up for a free solar assessment. The City of Fairfax will be participating in the Spring 20178 Solarize NoVA program, which is scheduled to run from April 2 through June May 31.

The ESC organized an information meeting in September with a representative from Arlington’s 100% Clean Electricity by 2035 team and the Virginia Sierra Club Chapter “Ready for 100 Community Outreach Coordinator. The guests briefed the ESC on actions and challenges to bring the City up to par with the nationwide movement toward clean energy. The Arlington and Alexandria Ready for 100 Campaigns are part of the Sierra Club’s national Ready for 100 Campaign. Launched in January of 2016, the national Ready for 100 Campaign seeks to empower localities around the country to build on the momentum of the national and global movement for localities leading the charge on clean, renewable energy.



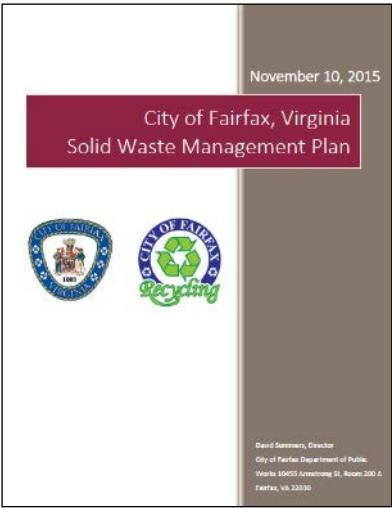


The first Zero Energy Ready home was built in the City of Fairfax on corner of Sager Street and Addison Road. In April, the Fairfax Scene released a video with a tour of the home and helpful tips in making your home more energy efficient.

RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE

In 2015, the City of Fairfax contracted Gershman, Brickner & Bratton, Inc. to develop a new Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). The SWMP was approved by the Mayor and City Council on November 10, 2015.

The ESC expresses continual support for the Solid Waste and Recycling Coordinator position identified in the report. Currently, the City Sustainability Coordinator serves in this role but is only provided the hours needed to address the mandatory reporting requirements to the State of Virginia. For the SWMP to function as intended, this position must at least be filled by a 0.5 Full-Time Employee Equivalent (FTEE). If the City Sustainability Coordinator was increased to a full-time position, she could fulfill both roles.



The City of Fairfax is considering the initial implementation of a composting program. This could start as a drop off program and become a curbside collection program. In preparation for a future City composting program, the ESC was briefed by GMU Student, Katie Russell, on the City could create a curbside composting program. Potential costs, benefits and options for starting a composting program were discussed.



2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The ESC provided input, recommendations, and comments throughout the year on the draft goals and outcomes for the “Natural Environment” and “Sustainability Initiatives” content areas of the Comprehensive Plan. These comments were submitted to the Planning Commission and incorporated into subsequent versions. Several ESC members attended the June 12 Joint Working Session with the Planning Commission to discuss the Environmental Sustainability; Infrastructure and Utilities; and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Chapters of the Plan.

Later in the year, the ESC offered comments and recommendations to the 2035 Comprehensive Plan’s draft actions and metrics of the “Natural Environment”, “Sustainability Initiatives” and “Infrastructure and Utilities” content areas.

City of Fairfax 2035 Comprehensive Plan
Environment & Sustainability Chapter - Draft Goals, Outcomes, Actions and Metrics

Natural Environment Content Area

2035 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement. *Fairfax City is a vibrant, livable 21st century community with a strong, sustainable economy that supports walkable, safe and convenient access to the natural and built environment.*

Natural Environment Guiding Principle. *In 2035, Fairfax is a city with a healthy ecosystem of naturally flowing streams, native plants, wildlife, contiguous natural habitat areas and a healthy tree population.*

Natural Environment Goal 1. **Preserve and promote a healthy environment through policies and programs that improve the quality of the City’s natural resources.**

Sustainability Initiatives Content Area

2035 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement. *Fairfax City is a vibrant, livable 21st century community with a strong, sustainable economy that supports walkable, safe and convenient access to the natural and built environment.*

Sustainability Initiatives Guiding Principle. *In 2035, Fairfax is a city with sustainable practices that preserve, conserve, use and recycle resources.*

Sustainability Initiatives Goal 1. **Increase the use of sustainable practices, technology, design and materials in the City.**





DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND COMMENT

The ESC continued to seek and take advantage of the opportunity to review and comment on proposed City redevelopment projects. In addition, the ESC standardized our review process with the finalization of the Development Plan Review Checklist. The committee reviewed the Generalized Development Plan for the Davies Property at 4131 Chain Bridge Road and the Paul VI High School Property Redevelopment.

Members of the ESC met in at various times throughout 2017 to review the various resubmission of plans for the **Davies Property Project**. The committee’s focus during these reviews was to assess the projects overall impact on the City’s:

- Walkability and green space;
- Tree canopy and native species management;
- Stormwater management; and
- Energy and green building practices.



Similar reviews were undertaken on the **Paul VI High School Property Redevelopment**. After the initial ESC review of the redevelopment plans, questions were submitted to the City of Fairfax Stormwater Engineer, Christina Alexander, for an increased understanding of the stormwater management and flood plain designation issues inherent at the site. Guests from the IDI Group, Christopher Consultants, and Blank Rome LLP attended the December meeting to update the ESC on the proposed development. The ESC offered recommendations, such as planting native trees; achieving green building standards (e.g., LEED); improving connectivity; using solar energy; and incorporating LED lighting into the planned development.

The result of the 2017 development reviews was a greater understanding that a need exists to see each individual redevelopment project through the prism of its overall effect on the environmental balance of the City. As a result the committee’s development checklist was further refined in an attempt to help the Mayor and City Council consider the environmental impact of each proposal presented to them in this more holistic light.

In 2018, the ESC welcomes further reviews of future development/redevelopment projects in support of the City’s environmental and sustainability goals. In addition, we will work to address the challenge of the timing of the ESCs submission of comments and the generation of new

versions of development plans. In a few instances, the ESC had prepared comments and/or used the checklist pursuant to the review of one set of plans only to find out that a new set of plans was about to be released.

TREE CITY USA

As part of its goal to promote education about the City's natural resources, the ESC had internal discussions about how to increase knowledge about the importance of trees and good tree care. The ESC identified the City's participation in the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program as a valuable framework for increasing awareness and appreciation of trees. Historically, the City has achieved the



Tree City USA designation for 31 years and counting, and signage is proudly displayed at the entrances to the City that celebrates the achievement and at the same time reminds us of our commitment to Tree City USA program requirements.

The Tree City USA program has been stewarded by the Community Appearance Committee (CAC) for many, if not all, of the 31 years. In July 2017, the ESC voted unanimously to offer to oversee the program and the committee chair reached out to the CAC chair. Both committees recognized that the ESC's focus on the natural environment made it a good fit for overseeing the Tree City USA program going forward. The transfer of duties was finalized in December, with both committees voting unanimously to transfer the responsibilities for overseeing the Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA program obligations from the CAC to the ESC. The chairs of the CAC and ESC provided the Mayor and City Council with a letter describing the committees' joint recommendation.

The ESC appreciates the CAC's steadfast commitment to the Tree City USA certification and the ESC will continue the City tradition of the celebration of Arbor Day at a City school. Beginning in 2018 ESC members will familiarize themselves with the components of the certification process and the obligations for the annual renewal of its Tree City USA designation. Plans for Arbor Day 2018 (April 27, 2018) are underway.



CONCLUSION

The Committee members are residents and/or business members who have volunteered to serve on the ESC to help the City improve its environmental sustainability. In its eighth year, the ESC has become better known and more visible throughout the community, but the members see that much greater awareness of issues of environment and sustainability issues is needed to encourage additional active partners to protect and support our natural resources. We welcome more opportunities to review and comment on proposed development projects in the City. Further, we look forward to involvement early in the process.

The ESC looks forward to its new role as the Tree Committee for the City and plan to learn quickly all the duties that come with those new responsibilities. We anticipate continued involvement in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan offering our input and recommendations to the “Natural Environment” and “Sustainability Initiatives” content areas.

Although, our 2018 priorities will be tree management, energy (conservation and renewable), solid waste and recycling, and the Go Green Government Challenge, we will continue to share our insights and raise awareness about other environmental issues including stormwater management, local effects of climate change, invasive plant species and other issues and challenges that affect our City’s sustainability goals.

The City’s sustainability ultimately will rely on proactive leadership and an engaged and informed citizenry. The Committee appreciates input from residents and welcomes all interested parties at ESC meetings. We thank the City Council and Mayor for their continuing support and staff members for their attentiveness to our concerns as we all work together to improve the current and future sustainability of the City and its residents.

2018 WORK PLAN

There are certain key activities inherent in the ESC charter and in consideration of our support to the City's Sustainability Coordinator that will be on our agenda for 2018. These activities involve items that continue to be and will likely always be recurring on our yearly work plan such as support of school environmental programs at all the City schools, reviewing and commenting on land use and development proposals, and taking advantage of any outreach and education opportunities to interact with City residents.

The ESC will continue to play a role on the Advisory Committee for integrating sustainability into the 2035 Comprehensive Plan. The ESC will advise Mayor and City Council on budget considerations such as the hiring of a Solid Waste and Recycling Coordinator as identified in the Solid Waste Management Plan and a full-time Arborist.

The ESC 2018 environmental and sustainability priorities are:

- **Tree Management**
 - ◇ Arbor Day Tree Committee Responsibilities
 - ◇ Support City Arborist Position
 - ◇ Invite Jim McGlone, Urban Forest Conservationist with the Virginia Department of Forestry
- **Energy (Conservation and Renewables)**
 - ◇ Power Purchasing Agreements (Customer First Renewables)
 - ◇ LED street lights
 - ◇ Electric vehicle charging stations
 - ◇ Solarize NOVA
 - ◇ 100% renewables goals/target (Comprehensive Plan Action)
- **Solid Waste/Recycling**
 - ◇ Composting
 - ◇ Recycling carts
 - ◇ Solid Waste/Recycling Coordinator
- **Go Green Government Challenge (use as a framework or roadmap for the ESC)**