

# Environmental Sustainability Committee

## 2018 Annual Report

# April 2019

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Environmental Sustainability  
Committee



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## INTRODUCTION

**This report summarizes the areas of focus for the Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) in 2018 and identifies current programs, initiatives as well as ongoing challenges the City faces with regards to environmental sustainability.**

During 2018, the ESC focused on renewable energy and energy conservation; tree management; development reviews; recycling and composting; and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Several of the committee meetings were used as a platform for expert speakers in the areas of tree management; tree committee responsibilities; and power purchasing agreements. In addition, the ESC Chair and Vice-Chair met with the City Manager to discuss City environmental sustainability priorities; and the City Planning Division Chief met with the ESC to discuss the development review process. ESC members continued to provide insights and comments on the 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Tree City USA responsibilities were transferred from the Community Appearance Committee to the ESC beginning in 2018.

## COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

The ESC is comprised of nine-members. In June, Adam Basinger was elected as the Chair of the Committee and Alice Lippert 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, Katie Lau.

The ESC met with the City Council for a work session in April 2018 to present ESC 2018 Key Activities and discuss City priorities (e.g. tree management; energy conservation and renewables; and solid waste and recycling).



## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The ESC's Fall Festival participation was a great success due to a well-attended booth. The 2018 theme focused on the composting, invasive plants, solar energy, energy conservation and efficiency, and native





trees. ESC members and citizen supporters distributed handouts on stormwater and pollution concerns, recycling information, composting, and invasive plant species. The ESC booth featured a composting game where residents identified which items could be composted at the City's new Composting Center. It also displayed a working solar panel, (on loan from Ipsun Power) which powered a string of lights, for passersby to see alternative energy in action!



A Rain Barrel Workshop sponsored by the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District was offered on April 14 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, tree planting, stormwater education, making bird feeders, native seed plantings, creating reusable bags from old t-shirts, and learning about native plants, local wildlife, solar energy, and composting and recycling.



The City of Fairfax achieved a gold certification in the 2018 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 platinum certification in 2019.

## ENERGY CONSERVATION AND RENEWABLES

The City teamed up with Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP) and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) to participate in a third Solarize NoVA campaign, which took place April 1 through



June 30, 2018. The Solarize NoVA program provided the community with free solar assessments and the ability to purchase solar photovoltaic systems at a discounted price and with a pre-negotiated rate. The City of Fairfax will be participating in the spring 2019 Solarize NoVA program, which is scheduled to run from April 16 through June 14.

In May, the ESC invited Jeremy Scharfenberg, Energy Manager at Columbia Association, who presented on their community's renewable energy program. Mr. Scharfenberg gave an overview of power purchase agreements (PPAs). The Columbia Association participates in a 2MW solar PPA through aggregate net metering. The solar PPA provides approximately 25% of their total energy consumption. Wind Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) are used to balance their electricity supply.

In late 2018, the Energy Subcommittee met with the City Communications Director, Mike McCarthy, to discuss various outreach and communications platforms for socializing and promoting ESC activities and priorities.

## SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

One of the new subcommittees that was formed in 2018 focused on solid waste and recycling initiatives within the City. The initial

36 Implement a "green" procurement and disposal policy for consumables and electronics. [See background materials](#)

focus of this subcommittee was born from the 2018 Green Government Challenge (Procurement, Item 36). This Green Government Challenges measure asks if the City will "[i]mplement a 'green' procurement and disposal policy for consumables and electronics." The City of Fairfax does not currently have such a policy that encompasses the entire city government. Input from the Mayor and City staff indicated that each City Department may have a policy or procedure with regard to procurement and disposal, but there is not an overarching City policy. The ESC plans to continue having conversations with City staff that would move in the direction of establishing a green procurement and disposal policy for the City of Fairfax government.

In 2018, the ESC used funding to support a request for a water bottling refilling station at Providence Elementary School. The ESC funded 50% of the cost of the station which is an effective strategy to reduce the amount of plastic bottle waste generated by the school.



In October 2018, the City opened a new 24-hour Composting Center at City Hall, adjacent to the Community Garden. Those who live and work in the city are invited to drop off food scraps in the composting carts at the center. The Composting Center is managed by The Compost Crew. More than 300 households are participating in the

composting program and over 13 tons of food scraps have been diverted from the waste system since the program launched (averaging 9 pounds per participant each week).

The ESC provided input to the Composting Center Acceptable Items Guide before public distribution. In addition, members supported the launch of the Composting Center through a successful outreach effort at the Fall Festival.

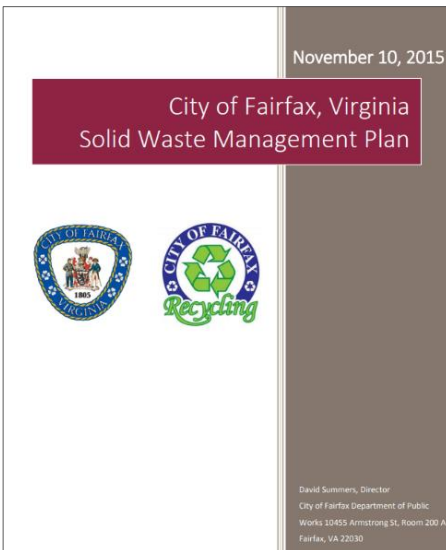
The ESC expresses continual support for the Solid Waste and Recycling Coordinator position identified in the November 2015 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). The SWMP was approved by the Mayor and City Council on November 10, 2015. Many of the ongoing, expanded, or new staff responsibilities described in the SWMP

Implementation Plan require new staffing as there is currently no appropriate staffer in the Public Works Operations Division. This position is critical for the implementation of the SWMP. The City is one of the few jurisdictions in Northern Virginia without a designated Solid Waste and Recycling Coordinator. 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 and a small portion of high priority tasks. For the SWMP to function as intended, this position must at least be filled by a 0.5 Full-Time Employee Equivalent (FTE).

**Yes! Compost these items!**



**No! Don't compost these items!**



## TREE MANAGEMENT

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. As part of its commitment to overseeing the City’s participation in the Tree City USA program, the ESC created a tree subcommittee whose members will formulate recommendations for the structure and methods of a sustainable and impactful tree management program in the City.



In 2018, the Tree Management subcommittee focused on securing support and funding for an Urban Forester position for the City of Fairfax. The ESC believes the position is needed to provide a coordinated and effective urban forest management plan between City departments that have overlapping land management responsibilities.

At the April ESC meeting, Jim McGlone, Urban Forest Conservationist at the Virginia Department of Forestry, presented information on how the ESC can become an effective tree board. He discussed strategies for how the ESC can help support the preservation and enhancement of City's urban forest.



With the able assistance of staff from the Public Works and Community Planning and Development Departments, the ESC held the City's 2018 Arbor Day Celebration at Fairfax High School on April 27, 2018. Students from the high school Green Club and Environmental Science classes participated in the planting of a Pin Oak on the school grounds. In attendance were City Council members, School Board members, City of Fairfax Schools Superintendent and Fairfax High principal and teachers, and volunteers. The event was officiated by Jim McGlone.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The ESC provided input, recommendations, and comments throughout the year on the "Natural Environment", "Sustainability Initiatives" and "Infrastructure and Utilities" content areas of the Comprehensive Plan. These comments were submitted to the Planning Commission and incorporated into subsequent versions of the plan.

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

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 2018 to review the various resubmission of plans for the **Paul VI High School Property Redevelopment**. 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.



Below is a list of the comments from the ESC as per the committee's mission to promote a greener City.

#### 1 / WALKABILITY & GREEN SPACE

- A - The development plans **DECREASED** as to their effect on the City's walkability.
- B - The development plans **DECREASED** as to the developer's commitment to promoting access to public transit.
- C - The development **DECREASES** green space continuity.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:** Pedestrian connectivity is a priority in the City. How does the City ensure that sidewalks in the development are accessible and comfortable for all pedestrians? Similarly, the City has made a lot of progress in becoming more bike-friendly. How does this project accommodate "Your Shared Trips," how does developer intend to encourage public transit use?

**ESC RECOMMENDATIONS:** Connection between University and Chain Bridge Walkways, clear indication of public access, ADA compliance, eg a ramp access in addition to or in place of stairs, bike-friendly transit roadways and access points.

#### 2 / TREE CANOPY & NATIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

- A - The development **DECREASED** the City's tree canopy.
- B - The development plans **DECREASED** as to methods for establishing and sustaining long term tree health.
- C - The development plans **DECREASED** as to the commitment to utilizing native species in the tree and landscaping plan.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:** In development of this property will landfills, develop native and established trees (the current location destroys all the trees on the property). Under the current proposal the tree canopy will go from 50% to 0 connectivity, and then over a two year period grow back to approximately 70% only if the proposed landscaping performs as promised. How will the City address the loss of canopy? (LOSS) of tree canopy?

**ESC RECOMMENDATIONS:** More green space, contiguous green space, native and appropriate tree species, tree preservation, types of landscaping, funding for city-established tree bank for city-wide tree planting, improved tree care recommendations and requirements on public and private property.

The result of the 2018 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.

## 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 ninth year, the ESC has become better known and more visible throughout the community, but the members see that much greater awareness 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.

Although our 2019 priorities are primarily centered around 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 will rely ultimately 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 Mayor and City Council 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.





## 2019 WORK PLAN

The mission of the ESC is to provide advice and council on matters of the environment and sustainability to the Mayor and City Council. The ESC is staffed by the City's sustainability coordinator who provides committee support and guidance on various city programs and activities. These programs and 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 work closely with the Mayor and City Council to review and assess the staffing and program needs to further the environmental and sustainability goals outlined in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan.

In 2019, the ESC will build on the environmental and sustainability priorities from 2018. These priorities and activities, for the most part, are aligned with its subcommittee structure. They are as follows:

- **Tree Management**

- ◇ Strengthen the City's commitment to the Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA standards and programs
- ◇ Promote education and outreach about tree care and tree planting, including educational projects such as those highlighted in the Tree City USA Growth Awards.
- ◇ Support the development of an Urban Forestry Management Plan.

- **Energy (Conservation and Renewables)**

- ◇ Power purchasing agreements
- ◇ LED street lights
- ◇ Electric vehicle charging stations
- ◇ Solarize NOVA
- ◇ 100% renewables goals/target (Comprehensive Plan Action)
- ◇ Education and Communications

- **Solid Waste/Recycling**

- ◇ Support the development of a green procurement and disposal policy
- ◇ Composting (centralized and curbside)
- ◇ Recycling carts
- ◇ Supporting full-time Solid Waste and Recycling Coordinator

- **Go Green Government Challenge**