

**CITY OF FAIRFAX**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**  
**2014 ANNUAL REPORT**



**Committee Members:**

Judy Fraser (Chair)  
Tom Kennedy  
Tim Killian  
Bruce Knight

Susan Crate  
Matthew Cooper  
Chris McGough  
Jon Buttram  
Kevin Lowery



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## INTRODUCTION

**This report summarizes the Environmental Sustainability Committee's (ESC) areas of focus in 2014, identifies current programs and initiatives related to the City's environmental sustainability and makes recommendations for the year ahead.**

During 2014, the ESC solidified partnerships within the city, most notably with its closer ties with the City School Board through the creation of a permanent voting position to a designated member of the School Board. The ESC continued to develop community relationships through participation in the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan process, participation on the zoning rewrite advisory Committee and attendance at the Vision Fairfax Mason charrette. The ESC supported City school environmental programs, and collaborated with several area non-profits including Lands and Waters, LEAP-VA and Transition Fairfax. The City Council adopted a resolution that created the ESC in 2009 and this past year the committee reviewed the original resolution and proposed changes based on its experience of the past five years.. The ESC submitted an amendment to the resolution to the City Council which was adopted on November 18, 2014.

## COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

With the addition of City School Board representative Jon Buttram the ESC now has nine voting members. In October 2014 the ESC also welcomed a student representative from Fairfax High School for the 2014-15 year. The ESC also benefits from the input of several citizens who attend the ESC meetings on a regular basis. Stefanie Kupka, the City's Sustainability Coordinator, is the ESC's staff liaison.

At the revisions to the ESC's resolution that the City Council adopted included several minor changes to the Committee's structure, including adding an elected vice chair position, making the School Board member a voting member of the Committee, and adding the student liaison position. ESC members attended several Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) meetings on an ad hoc basis in an informal liaison capacity. The ESC met with the City Council for a work session in February 2014 to present the 2013 Annual Report and stormwater update.



## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The ESC's outreach initiatives this year included the fourth annual Earth Art Show, Earth Day proclamation, the 4th of July parade and an informational booth at the Fairfax Fall Festival.

This year the Earth Art Show included over 75 pieces of artwork from Daniels Run, Providence and Lanier. The ESC awarded prizes to two students from each school, and with the help of Cameron's, a city bakery, and city staff, held a reception in honor of the artists in our schools.



For the 4th of July parade, the ESC coordinated with Lanier’s Eco Club and the non-profit group, Transition Fairfax, to highlight the importance of pollinators. Ted Britt Ford provided an all-electric Ford Focus for the parade.



The ESC’s Fall Festival booth was popular with festival visitors. ESC members and citizen supporters distributed handouts on stormwater and pollution concerns, recycling information, free reusable shopping bags and dog waste bags. One noteworthy and popular draw to the booth was a demonstration beehive thanks to ESC volunteer Frank Linton. Mr. Linton spent the day educating visitors about the importance of bees to our environment and food crops. The ESC also provided space for the FHS Green Club and Transition Fairfax, whose volunteers helped staff our booth.





The ESC encouraged citizens to sign up for the new City Alert email, text and phone service and also maintains a page on Facebook as a tool for reaching citizens in addition to the official City website.

City Sustainability Coordinator Stefanie Kupka will be developing and launching a web-based Neighborhood and Workplace Sustainability Challenges in cooperation with several cities across the country under an innovative grant award. The challenges will encourage and recognize residents and businesses for being green, healthy and involved in the community. The development of the challenge website and implementation plan is currently in progress.

## SCHOOLS

With the recent appointment of Jon Buttram as the School Board liaison to the ESC, the Committee looks forward to collaborating with the School Board on promoting stewardship of our environment, energy efficiency, and resource protection. Fairfax High School students have re-instituted a Green Club and are executing awareness raising projects for recycling. The non-profit group Lands and Waters is partnering with the high school's Advance Placement (AP) Environmental Studies teacher, Bradley Webster, to support division instruction and experiential learning about stormwater. The goal is to involve students in planning and implementing projects that will reduce the stormwater runoff from the school property.

The ESC is proud of the many environmental achievements and awards garnered by the City's schools including the Virginia Naturally School award, national and regional environmental-related competitions, and local school initiatives, culminating in the school division's second place (Silver Award) for the 2014 Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Green Schools Challenge for all Virginia School Divisions with less than 5000 students. The Green Schools Challenge is a friendly competition designed to encourage implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that reduce carbon emissions.



## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The impact of stormwater on our streams, parks and on city coffers remains of utmost concern. The Committee continued its work to both understand and improve awareness in the City of stormwater issues and programs. The ESC used the Fall Festival as an opportunity to increase awareness about the impact citizens have on stream health through proper disposal of pet waste and use of low impact design methods, such as rain barrels and rain gardens, on their property. The city will be hosting a rain barrel workshop on April 11, 2015.



Developing adequate sources for stormwater funding continues to be a significant challenge for the City. The ESC recommends that the City develop a clear policy on the appropriate use of stormwater funds and continues to recommend that the City separate maintenance funds from environmental mitigation funds in the expenditure of the stormwater fund. In 2014 staff received grant funding for extensive stream restoration work and City Council approved matching funds. The ESC fully supports the restoration work and encourages the City Council to maximize the benefit of the work by encouraging other protection measures of adjacent and upstream stream areas. The ESC further encourages the City to investigate how other jurisdictions are funding stormwater management projects and TMDL commitments.

## RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE

Recycling efforts have ramped up in the City this year with the Parks and Recreation Department receiving funding for beginning a recycling program in the City parks and adding a part time position to help with recycling in the parks. Initial responses from residents and park users have been positive, and the ESC supports expanding efforts to encourage recycling and additional methods of reducing waste in and around City parks and properties.

Our staff liaison, Stefanie Kupka, is managing the development of a new Solid Waste Management Plan. This Plan will be used to chart a course for administering solid waste programs and policies for the next twenty years. The ESC looks forward to the successful completion of a newly updated plan in 2015.



## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND COMMENT

The ESC recommends that environmental issues in redevelopment proposals in the City should be addressed early in a proposal's review period. The ESC offers its services to comment on proposed development and redevelopment projects in the City or assist in other ways. Members of the ESC participated in the Vision Fairfax Mason Charrette held on November 6-8, 2014. The ESC looks forward to working with the Mayor, City Council, and staff on ways to address environmental and sustainability issues of proposed development.

## PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

The ESC participated in the Parks and Recreation master plan process. Several concerns of the ESC were addressed in the strategic plan. For example, many of the City parks abut streams and thus play an important role in buffering and protecting our streams. Erosion, loss of vegetative areas, and impervious surface area are some of the most important factors to address. A second concern of the ESC is the extent to which invasive plants have overtaken many of our natural areas and are threatening the viability of native plants and ecosystems. The ESC supports the use of City park environments as optimal locations for raising awareness and education in our community, such as the Daniels Run Elementary habitat restoration. Finally, some of the buildings that Parks and Recreation oversees are aging and the ESC strongly supports energy conservation improvements and safe removal, containment, and disposal of toxic materials (e.g., lead-based paint, asbestos). The ESC looks forward to working with the Parks and Recreation Department staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in developing implementation steps for the approved strategic master plan that will further sustainability goals and achievements of the Parks and Recreation Department.

## TREES, LAND AND PARK STEWARDSHIP

In September the ESC met with the City's manager of Parks, Gregg Tonge, and Public Works staff member and certified arborist, CJ Crabtree. The ESC appreciated the time of these staff members to help the ESC understand better how the City's publicly owned land is managed. While recognizing that the two departments, Public Works and Parks and Recreation, have separate missions, the ESC strongly supports the creation of a full time arborist position to assist both departments with the care and management of City owned trees, and who would be tasked with creating a common set of tree management guidelines. Similar coordination of the care and management of public land, including mowing, planting, integrated pest management, mulching, water management and resource protection will prove worthwhile for maximizing the value of City expenditures and labor.





## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The City teamed up with a non-profit group, LEAP-VA to offer homeowners low-cost energy home checkups or audits. Over 30 homeowners participated in the program. The ESC looks forward to analyzing the results of the program during 2015.

## CONCLUSION

ESC members are residents who have volunteered to serve on the ESC in order to help the City improve its environmental sustainability. At the close of its fifth year, the ESC has become better known and more visible throughout the community, but the City's sustainability ultimately will rely on proactive leadership and informed citizenry. To these ends, the ESC recommends greater outreach on issues of the environment and sustainability that will encourage the City and its citizens to become active partners in protecting and supporting our natural resources in the local ecosystem. The ESC 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 attention to our concerns as we all work together to improve the current and future sustainability of the City and its residents.



## 2015 WORK PLAN

In 2015 the ESC plans to address the following priorities:

- Increase stakeholder knowledge of the city's natural resources
- Current and future stormwater management actions and policies
- Development and implementation of an invasive plant species management plan
- Alternative energy and energy efficiency education and opportunities to citizens such as the LEAP audits.
- Identify more opportunities to educate citizens on environmental and sustainability issues. For example, stormwater management, invasive plants, non-native plants, low impact landscaping, and recycling
- School environmental program support
- Better bike facilities including marked lanes, paths and convenient bike parking
- Support for beekeeping and native pollinator programs
- Support the Sustainability Challenges grant implementation
- Review and comment on City policies such as the revision to the City's zoning code, and development of the new Solid Waste Management Plan, and land use and development proposals
- Identify ways to reduce the use of bottled water and one-time-use shopping bags in the city