

EPC/Planning Commission

DRAFT Joint Letter – for review and discussion

December 20, 2022

Dear City Council:

The Planning Commission and Environmental Policy Commission have been jointly working to identify opportunities to better link the City's energy, climate and environmental plans and policies to the City's entitlements approval process for new development. We are concerned that a rapid and effective update to our process for approving new development is necessary to respond to ALEXANDRIA'S 2019 DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY, because the City presently lacks adequate policies to require or encourage new development to meet leading standards through its entitlements process.

We believe that the following integrated refinements to strategically-selected aspects of our planning processes may serve as a framework for directly linking climate policy with the entitlements approval process for new development. As our letter outlines, however, sufficient staff and/or consultant resources are required to further develop and implement these concepts.

REFINEMENTS TO PLANS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

1. MASTER PLAN

Community wide environmental goals are not effectively addressed by the MASTER PLAN.

Proposed modifications:

- A. *Establish a mechanism by which ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN greenhouse gas reduction goals become binding on new development.*
- B. *Require CARBON NEUTRAL BUILDINGS by 2030 and CARBON NEUTRAL SITES by 2040.*

2. GREEN BUILDING POLICY

Energy, emissions, and resilience are not effectively addressed by current GBP requirements.

Proposed modifications:

- A. *NET ZERO ENERGY performance for all new buildings above a given size, by a date certain.*
- B. *ENERGY USE INTENSITY requirements by building type, with progressive reductions in EUI targets over time.*
- C. *RENEWABLE ENERGY requirements for onsite energy generation and onsite electrical storage, with progressive increases in requirements over time.*

3. COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

Energy, emissions, and resilience are not addressed by current CONCEPT DESIGN requirements.

Require an *ENERGY + RESILIENCE CONCEPT* which includes the data necessary to evaluate these elements:

- A. *ENERGY USE INTENSITY*

B. SITE WIDE ENERGY DEMAND + EMISSIONS

C. ON SITE DISTRICT ENERGY

D. ON SITE RENEWABLE ENERGY + ELECTRICAL STORAGE

E. BUILDING TO GRID INTEGRATION

F. EMBEDDED CARBON

4. DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL USE PERMITS

DSUP SUSTAINABILITY CONDITIONS are effective at incrementally improving project performance. Continue their purposeful evolution:

- A. ALL ELECTRIC BUILDINGS : Proceed to the complete elimination of fossil fuel exceptions as quickly as possible.*
- B. RENEWABLE ENERGY : Determine the submission requirements for, and the date by which, 'Solar Operational' replace 'Solar Ready' requirements.*
- C. ENERGY USE INTENSITY : Require projected EUI performance and energy modeling at the Concept stage.*
- D. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS : Require projected GHG emissions at the Concept stage.*
- E. OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE : Expand reporting requirements for actual energy use after construction.*

IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS

In order to implement these concepts, further investment is urgently required by the City to provide the support necessary to launch this effort and sustain its implementation. This effort must be informed by research into the appropriate standards to enact as City policy, to maximize the climate and environmental impacts of development, in balance with other city plans and priorities. In addition, legal and policy advisors may inform which performance standards may be legally required versus those that may be strongly encouraged, as well as potential changes to recommend as part of the City's annual legislative package to enable new approaches.

Our commissions believe that the City should budget for permanent, ongoing support linking climate policy with the entitlements approval process for new development. This role could be assigned to the Department of Planning and Zoning, coordinated with the new Office of Climate Action, but must be standing effort of the City's Interdepartmental Long-Range Planning Work Program, regardless of the assigned department.

We strongly encourage Council's leadership to devote the necessary time and resources to support this effort, to address the urgent need to address the climate emergency.

Sincerely,

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