



June 11, 2019

Honorable Mayor Justin Wilson and Members of City Council
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Proposed Environmental Action Plan 2040

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC), I am writing to share our comments regarding the proposed Environmental Action Plan 2040 (“EAP 2040”) proposed by staff.

The members of the EPC greatly appreciate the time and effort that staff across multiple city departments have devoted to working with us and our community in this process. The staff proposal reflects a broad consensus¹ between EPC and staff developed over two years of close collaboration, several public meetings and comment periods, and joint work sessions with the Planning Commission and with Council.

Most notably, the EAP 2040 represents an increased commitment by the City toward mitigating Alexandria’s contribution toward climate change. Children born in Alexandria under the updated EAP will be the first generation whose life expectancy spans beyond the year 2100. For them, climate change represents an existential threat. Addressing it on their behalf is the challenge of our generation, and we must rise to face it.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would need to be reduced 45% by 2030 and to net zero around 2050 to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius.

The EAP calls upon Alexandria to contribute our share by **reducing community-wide GHG emissions 50% by 2030, and 80-100% by 2050**. By starting down this path with the adoption of the EAP 2040, we will return Alexandria to a regional and national leadership position on environmental sustainability.

We echo the words of our predecessors who wrote to Council when the City’s first EAP was proposed in 2009: “Given the overwhelming evidence, it is clear that we cannot afford to continue business as usual. Consequently, the basic assumption upon which the EAP rests is that the City will change what it does – including spending priorities, staffing decisions, policies and regulations, internal processes, and planning criteria – and will also motivate its residents, businesses, and visitors to adjust in order to meet this epic challenge. We cannot look to Washington or Richmond to address these issues: each one of us must do our part, as must each level of government, and we must all start our work immediately... The EPC encourages City Council to adopt and *embrace* the proposed EAP as a framework for moving aggressively to respond to the environmental issues facing our community.”

¹ The EAP 2040 sections on Green Buildings and on Land Use and Open Space will be reviewed by the Planning Commission on June 25 prior to coming to Council for approval. The EPC may have additional comments on those sections pending the outcome of the Planning Commission meeting and the final staff proposal on those topics.

The proposed EAP 2040 directs the City to use its authority to reduce emissions associated with buildings and transportation, two sectors which together represent 93% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the City. Proposed actions within the City's authority include creating a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program to incentivize building owners to invest in energy efficient retrofits, setting a goal in the proposed Green Building Policy for all new public buildings to be net zero energy, and transitioning all city fleets, including all DASH buses, to zero emission vehicles as soon as practicable.

The EPC applauds Council for already taking a major step forward by approving a budget this spring that will offset 100% of the City's electricity use with Renewable Energy Credits. The proposed EAP 2040 will ultimately transition all City operations to 100% carbon-free energy. We urge the City to expand this commitment to include Alexandria City Public Schools and AlexRenew, which use more electricity than the rest of City operations combined.

EPC looks forward to working closely with staff and Council on the implementation of the EAP 2040, including its continued consideration in prioritizing the annual budgeting process, setting the Capital Improvement Plan, and in developing the Interdepartmental Long Range Work Program. We believe it is critical that the City maintain visibility into the scorecard metrics proposed to track progress against the plan and to hold ourselves accountable to fulfilling our sustainability commitments. Finally, given the City's limited authority to drive emission reduction across the entire Alexandria community, we look forward to working with Council to advocate for legislative changes in Richmond that will give the City more authority to achieve the EAP 2040's most ambitious goals.

EPC appreciates Council's consideration of our input and your commitment to a sustainable Alexandria.

Sincerely,



Praveen Kathpal
Chair
Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission



Jim Kapsis
Vice Chair; Chair 2014-2019
Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission