

Environmental Action Plan Update 2018

Topic/s: Climate Change

Accountable City Departments: City Manager, T&ES, P&Z, OMB

Goal: Institutionalize procedures to facilitate meeting the City's goals for mitigation of community greenhouse gas emissions

Target: By 2022, reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions in Alexandria to 10 metric tons per year. After 2022, achieve annual emissions reductions of at least 4% in order to meet the City's longstanding goal of reducing emissions 80% below 2005 levels by 2050.

Short Term Actions:

1. By 2019, City to establish a Climate Change Coordinating Commission (including but not necessarily limited to city staff and members of the Environmental Policy Commission, the Transportation Commission, the Planning Commission, the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee, and the Public Health Advisory Commission) to make recommendations specifically on community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions. The Commission will advise City Council, carry out policy analysis, and provide community engagement.
2. By 2020, the City Manager's office, with advice from the Commission, will determine appropriate policies and guidelines for estimating the long-term costs associated with greenhouse gas emissions and for estimating projected GHG impacts of capital improvement projects and city programs likely to have a significant impact on community-wide greenhouse gas emissions.
3. By 2021, the Commission will recommend actions, including financing mechanisms, that will achieve community-wide GHG emissions reductions over the subsequent five years consistent with the city's goal of reducing emissions 80% below 2005 levels by 2050.

Implementation Assessment: The City's ability to implement the short-term actions is "HIGH"; the main constraint would be dedicating city staff time and resources. Although community-wide GHG emissions are affected by federal and state governments and private actors (e.g. Dominion Energy), Alexandria has substantial influence over transportation and building energy use, which are major sources of GHG emissions. Recommended policies from Action 3 could include items within full city authority as well as items requiring lobbying of state government.

Justification:

1. *80% GHG emissions reduction by 2050 is necessary to uphold our stated commitments¹ and live up to our identity as an environmental policy leader.* GHG emissions must be rapidly reduced to avoid a greater than 2°C increase in global average temperatures.²
2. *The Environmental Policy Commission does not have the capacity to study emissions reductions in necessary detail.* Quantifying how city actions impact community emissions would necessitate ignoring water treatment, solid waste, air quality, and other vital issues. The District of Columbia, in order to meet its emissions reduction target, found it worthwhile to establish an initiative focused solely on GHG mitigation.³

¹ 382 US Climate Mayors commit to adopt, honor and uphold Paris Climate Agreement goals. <http://climatemayors.org/actions/paris-climate-agreement/>

² See climate change mitigation pathways in Chapter 14 of the Climate Science Special Report: <https://science2017.globalchange.gov>

³ Climate Action Planning is an initiative under Sustainable DC: <https://doee.dc.gov/service/climate-change>