



Environmental Wins in Alexandria—and the Push for More

By Carolyn Lyle

Alexandrians for the Environmental Action Plan (Alex4EAP) is a group of Alexandria residents who support and monitor the progress of the City's 2040 Environmental Action Plan (EAP) goals on Climate Change, Energy and Transportation. Specifically, we advocate for the City's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 50% over base year 2005 levels by 2030 and up to 100% over base year 2005 levels by 2050.

We began as part of the Sierra Club's national [Ready for 100](#) campaign in 2016 and evolved into the Alexandrians for the EAP in 2019. The Alexandria Ready for 100 group worked alongside the city's Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) for the successful completion of the [Environmental Action Plan](#) (EAP) which established greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

With the passing of the EAP, we turned our focus to monitoring the City's promised action plans to accomplish the short-term goals for Climate Change, Energy and Transportation. We've been involved with the City's budget process, new building projects, transportation electrification, and state legislative opportunities. Our strategies include

- speaking at meetings of the City Council, School Board, EPC, DASH Board, Alexandria Transit Company, and at community meetings on development projects such as North Potomac Yard and Oakville Triangle
- meeting with City Council members, other local officials and City staff
- writing letters
- holding information sessions to learn about opportunities and barriers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and
- communicating with various Alexandria citizen groups.

Fast forward to November 2020, and we can report examples of the positive results we've contributed to:

- The EAP short term Climate goal of creating an Energy and Climate Change Task Force was salvaged despite COVID 19 impacts. We testified in front of City Council to ensure that the funding for the task force was preserved and we worked closely with City staff as they designed the process, set the timetable and communicated to the public. Additionally we advocated for the stated mission of the task force : produce specific,

measurable, time-bound steps to implement the EAP 2040 aspirational targets on energy, climate change and transportation.

- Through our constant presence at the community hearings about the North Potomac Yard Project (28 buildings, 7.6 million square feet, 65 acres) we contributed to the EPC and PC successful efforts to get the developers to conduct a zero carbon analysis of the district in Phase One to evaluate project for electrification, energy cost savings, renewables and more, all within a designated time frame.
- In collaboration with the EPC and attendance at the community meetings about the Douglas MacArthur Modernization Project, we were able to get the School Board to approve a LEED Gold net-zero energy building with installed solar panels.
- To the credit of many of our members, the Virginia General Assembly passed the Solar Freedom Bill and the Clean Economy Act among other environmentally sound bills.
- The City has met or exceeded the short term EAP goal for electric passenger vehicle pilot programs for DASH, ACPS and the City fleet and for installing vehicle charging infrastructure, thanks in part to the advocacy and monitoring efforts of our members.

Going forward we remain focused on ensuring that the goals of Alexandria's Environmental Action Plan are met through effective and realistic action plans. We are currently developing and implementing strategies for the items below:

- Monitoring the process to establish Energy and Climate Task Force ensuring that task force members are appointed and meeting dates are established.
- Establishing priorities for the revised Energy and Climate Change Action Plan and planning to advocate for those priorities at the public meetings of the Task Force.
- Ongoing work to understand and improve relevant City processes that impact accomplishing the Climate Change, Energy and Transportation goals of the EAP.
- Creating a website to help us recruit more advocates and make our work more visible.

We hold monthly virtual meetings on the third Thursday of each month and are looking to involve many more interested residents of Alexandria. Please contact Carolyn N. Lyle, Coordinator at lylecnl@gmail.com to get involved.

This content originally appeared in the November 2020 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. Opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Mount Vernon Group or the Sierra Club. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/.