

**City of Falls Church
Environmental Sustainability Council
2021 Annual Report**

This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the City of Falls Church Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) in 2021, and sets out its goals for 2022. The ESC advises the City Council on environmental issues affecting the City and its residents. It meets monthly and has nine positions, all of which were filled throughout 2021. Andrew Young served as Chair until the end of the year, when he stepped down to continue as a member. We thank him for his strong leadership. Joseph Schiarizzi became the new chair of the ESC as of January 2022, and Stacey Evers continued as the vice chair until April 2022.

Three ESC sub-committees support our environmental policies and programs: the Energy Transition Subcommittee (ETS), led by Jon Ward; the Habitat Restoration Task Group (HRTG), led by Amy Crumpton, and the Education Task Group (ETG), which runs Operation EarthWatch, led by Naomi Goodwin. Membership in these subcommittees is open to any City resident. Kate Walker, the City's Environmental Programs Coordinator, serves as staff liaison for the ESC and its subcommittees.

2021 Accomplishments

The ESC and ETS successfully advocated for improvements to the Zoning Special Exception criteria (Section 48-90 of the City Code of Ordinances) supporting sustainable development. The changes made following our recommendations include a specific requirement for environmental sustainability; a statement that green infrastructure rather than grey should be used for stormwater management where possible, and the encouragement to achieve LEED Gold and a minimum 20% improvement in energy performance. The results of these amendments have been evident in subsequent submissions from developers, which have all committed to LEED Gold and improved energy efficiency, as well as extensive use of green roofs and bioretention for stormwater management.

The ESC provided detailed comments and recommendations regarding the One City Center and Founders Row II private development projects, both at the preliminary public meetings and formally in writing during the later Board and Commissions review process. The ETS provided a detailed memorandum regarding the provision of electric vehicle charging stations in major development projects, including use projections and advice to help developers plan for future needs.

At the request of City Council, ESC conducted a review of the equity impacts of our duties and goals, and of the City Council Work Plan. While much of our work provides benefits fairly to the whole community, we did identify improvements to be made, particularly in the areas of awareness, community participation and communication.

The ESC also provided input to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board on the Park Master Plan for the Fellows Property, recommending passive recreational use and exploring in detail the possibilities for urban agriculture and environmental education programs. We reviewed and commented on the FCCPS Strategic Plan, and provided recommendations to the City Council

Legislative Committee regarding proposed environmental legislation in the 2022 General Assembly.

Energy Transition Subcommittee

In addition to advocating for the improved Special Exception criteria and concessions discussed above, ETS members also supported staff's outreach at the Fall Festival promoting electric vehicles. The ETS spurred greater involvement of the Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP-VA.org) in providing free and subsidized energy-efficiency upgrades to income- and age-qualified residents and in affordable housing in the Virginia Village area.

Habitat Restoration Task Group

In Spring 2021, following strict COVID protocols, the Habitat Restoration Task Group assisted City's Greenspace Manager Jeremy Edwards in Habitat Restoration Team volunteer events. After the City lost its greenspace crew, members of the HRTG, working with City Arborist Charles Prince and consent from Recreation and Parks Director Daniel Schlitt, organized additional events in Fall 2021 to continue to promote a sense of community responsibility for the health of our parks. In total, 289 volunteers donated 546 hours of their time in 2021. Volunteers included local community members of all ages; Boy Scout, Cub Scout, and Girl Scout troops; Meridian HS student groups; church groups; and business groups. A special thank you to Melissa Teates, HRTG Communications coordinator, for creating Sign-Up Genius registration for volunteers and publicity flyers.

Sandy Tarpinian, the City's liaison with the National Wildlife Federation, obtained Certified Wildlife Habitat certification for Madison and Herman E Herman Parks, and new signs were placed in all six of the City's certified parks.

Sandy offered two composting workshops through the City's Recreation and Parks programming, and was joined by Amy Crumpton to create online talks via the Mary Riley Styles library, on gardening for pollinators and wildlife and conservation landscaping practices.

Education Task Group

During the 2020-2021 school year only 25 students completed the Operation EarthWatch program. All received free t-shirts thanks to our community sponsors. Due to COVID-19 there was no end-of-year picnic or Memorial Day parade participation. However, there was a Drive/Walk-By Parade at what is now Oak Street Elementary School to celebrate participants.

2022 ESC Goals

The 2040 Vision of the City of Falls Church affirms that the City will strive to be a leader in environmental sustainability. One element of achieving that goal is to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, as committed to by City Council in 2017 and reaffirmed in 2020. The City is currently not on track to meet our own, or regional, emissions reduction goals. The ESC believes the City of Falls Church and its community need to do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by planning for and implementing significant changes in the ways we travel, the places we live and work, and our way of life. At the same time, greater emphasis should be placed on developing climate resilience, the ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to the effects of climate

change. In order to support the City and community in addressing these challenges, the ESC will focus on the following goals in 2022:

1. Reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions

- Continue advocacy for policies and actions to support increased use of alternatives to fossil fuel powered single occupancy vehicles, including improved transit options, and safe routes for cycling, microtransit and walking around the City. The ESC is already working with CACT and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for protected bike lanes.
- Support staff education and outreach efforts to assist homes and commercial properties with EV charging infrastructure installation.

2. Support sustainability and resilience in the built environment

- Conduct a robust review of SE criteria and voluntary concessions to determine how to more strongly prioritize environmental sustainability.

3. Climate Change Mitigation Energy Action Plan

- Support staff's development and execution of the Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Action Plan through continued assistance with data analysis, plan review, input and public outreach.
- Assist in development of a strategy for government operations that would ensure all municipal energy use (including schools) comes from renewable energy sources, through power purchase agreements, shared solar programs, or on-site installations.

4. Green Space

- Work with Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) and Planning department to explore options on goal-setting for green space.

5. Stormwater

- Work closely with Public Utilities Commission and UFC to ensure stormwater management code updates address the use of green infrastructure (including trees).
- Advocate for stormwater management update in line with climate/stormwater flow predictions.

6. Consumption and Waste

- Support development of a new Solid Waste Management Plan for the City incorporating zero waste principles.

Subcommittee Goals

Energy Transition Subcommittee

- ETS goals are incorporated with those of the ESC as a whole.

Habitat Restoration Task Group

- HRTG will seek permission from the City arborist and Recreation and Parks director to

- schedule events, at least three in the spring and three in the fall.
- Sandy Tarpinian and Amy Crumpton will arrange talks at the Mary Riley Styles Library on using native plants in container gardens, ideas for managing stormwater in residential yards, and seed saving.
 - HRTG is also considering planning for a public garden tour of residences that have installed rain gardens and use conservation landscaping techniques to address stormwater management.
 - Sandy will offer composting workshops again in spring.
 - Fellows Park Master Plan: HRTG members will continue to participate in the public planning process to advocate for environmentally sustainable uses of the space.

Education Task Group

- Partly as a result of COVID-19, Operation EarthWatch participation in 2020-2021 was down by 50%, and at the end of the year the majority of volunteers resigned. A replacement was recruited for St. James' 2021-2022 program, but the key focus for 2021-2022 is to ensure the program runs for the entire year as intended and to engage more volunteers who can carry the program forward.