

## Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2)

Summary of Dec. 18, 2023

Hybrid meeting (2hr 5m)

**Members Present:** Joan McIntyre, chair; Carrie Thompson, vice-chair; Mark Greenwood, Cindy Lewin, Kevin Vincent (V), Eric Gibbs, Stephen D'Alessio, Mikaila Milton, Rob Sandoli, Elizabeth Whitney, David Evans, Suzanne Swink, Doug Snoeyenbos, Johnathan Morgenstein

**Members Absent:** Majdi Shomali

**Guests Present:** Takis Karantonis (Board)

**Guests Virtually:** Joe Trivette (public), Bernie Berne (public), Olivia Sontag (CPHD), Matt Mattauszek (CPHD)

**Staff Present:** Jenna Peabody (DES-AIRE)

### Public comment

Bernie Berne noted to please consider in the Red Lion letter that the building lacks setbacks from the sidewalk that could contain biophilic elements including ground level plantings that are attractive and support the county's declining populations of Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. A portion of the Fairfax east lobby area contains an above ground planter box. This is not enough. Most of the Fairfax peer street boxes or open areas can accommodate native plants that support monarch butterflies and other pollinators. The planted areas on the building's upper levels are too small to provide any such benefits. The building also needs a planted green roof. There's too much pavement and far too little green space next to the sidewalks in the private amenity 10 terraces facing 16th St. North and in the three buildings 3 courtyards and on the observation deck. The submission contains a plant list that shows US species, shrubs, perennials, and ground covers.

However, most plants in the list are cultivars and/or are not native to Northern Virginia. Many are wind pollinated grass and sedges that don't produce the nectar that butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, and some species of flies require wind pollinating plants when that's all they can feed on. There is no common milkweed (*asclepias syriaca*). This is the only plant on which monarch butterflies prefer when laying eggs and which survives well in Northern Virginia. I've sent these comments about these deficiencies to the applicants but have received no response. In summary, the project lacks biophilia. It does not just deserve the LEED gold. The project needs a green roof with plantings that seed pollinators. Native plants whose fall flowers produced nectar should hang from the roof terraces and the courtyard that faces Olegon Blvd. And should climb on trellises between rows of windows. They should also hang from balconies.

The street contains too much pavement. It needs more planting boxes and tree trenches with common milkweed and other plants that feed pollinators.

The commission agreed to consider his comments.

### **Review October and November summaries**

Reviewed October. All approved.

Reviewed November. All approved.

### **CPHD Presentation**

Olivia Sontag and Matt Mattauszek presented on Green Building Standards Columbia Pike Form Based Code. Reference to Presentation on website. The board approved a request to consider zoning ordinance amendments to Appendix A&B, which are the Columbia Pike commercial and neighborhood form-based codes to update the green building standards for development projects that opt to use that zoning tool. And then the proposed amendments will go back to the board in February of 2024 for consideration.

Presented form-based code boundaries. The blue and yellow areas represent the commercial and neighborhood form based code boundaries. If a property is located within any of these areas, they have the option to either redevelop using the underlying zoning or they can apply for a Form based Code Use Permit where they must comply with the prescriptive requirements of either respective code. And then the idea being that expectations are kind of preset and unlike site plans they do not have the option to earn additional density or negotiate their community benefits. But like site plans form-based code use permits include a very similar set of standard conditions of approval which is how, for example, green building standards are enforced and monitored.

So, the county's green building incentive policy does not apply to the form-based code boundaries and the intent of this amendment is to require green building standards for Columbia Pike development. So the Commercial Code which was adopted in 2003 does not currently have any minimum green building requirements although we do require submission of a LEED scorecard and as you'll see in the report, we've had a few proposals to voluntarily pursue certification.

The neighborhoods Code, which was adopted 10 years later in 2013, requires as high as LEED Silver depending on the building envelope designation. So review of the form-based code green Building standards began earlier this year with Green Building Program staff and we've arrived at a staff recommendation to update the standards in both the codes. So, we arrived at this recommendation after consultations with the county's Inspection Services Division, housing staff, and current planning staff on the Site plan Review team.

And then CPHD also spoke with some staff members in neighboring jurisdictions and some industry professionals, specifically those that were familiar with form-based code development projects along the pipe. There is a summary of some of the green building certifications that have been achieved on the Pike. This first area here, these four projects are within the Columbia Pike, the commercial form base code where there again are currently not any requirements.

These four projects have voluntarily provided LEED building certification of 17 total that have been approved within the commercial form based code and then the neighborhoods form-based code has included those green building standards during the entirety since its adoption in 2013. So, these six projects have included a range of different certifications. So, from the consultations with staff in the county and with other staff at neighboring jurisdictions and some of those industry professionals, we learned that it'd be important to include a variety of certifications and then some flexibility for these certification options.

Also to include outcome-based standards rather than just prescriptive requirements and require Energy Star certification specific to projects on Columbia Pike. They typically score well in categories for transportation, location, development footprint and open space, which in the form-based code requires anywhere from 15 to 25% of the buildable area and then also scores well in rainwater management. We also heard from housing staff and affordable housing developers that Earthcraft Gold and LEED Gold are the minimum requirement to earn Virginia housing application points. For previous development projects, we've seen LEED certification and LEED silver targeted even without incentive. So, we know it's becoming increasingly mutually beneficial for developers. We're aware of the pending update to LEED version 5, but they're still in an unknown timeline.

So, this recommendation is based on version four. And then based on discussions with other jurisdictions and those industry professionals we talked to and reviewed previous project scorecards, we believe the 10-point gap between LEED Silver and LEED Gold is manageable when it's targeted early in the process. And then lastly, we've heard the LEED process can be lengthy and expensive which is why we've included Earthcraft as a certification option which is also currently offered in the GBIP. So based on all this feedback and analysis, the recommendation includes outcome-based standards rather than just the former prescriptive requirements. So for higher density sites, staff is proposing to elevate the green building standards in both codes to LEED Gold, Earthcraft Gold or an alternative certification path that's equivalent in stringency as would be reviewed by our green building program staff.

We are also proposing a requirement for Energy Star certification, energy optimization requirements and additional prerequisites which are modeled after the Green building incentive policy. For lower density site designations within the form based code areas, we're recommending LEED or Earthcraft certification or an equivalent certification and Energy Star certification. So again, this kind of summarizes all of the proposed updates. The energy

optimization requirements or options are reflective of those in the automatic update and the GBIP which took effect this June.

And then the additional prerequisites again are modeled after those existing in the GBIP right now for Energy Star appliances and fixtures, water sense plumbing fixtures, refrigerant linkage, equity diversity and inclusion program, energy benchmarking, air sealing and ventilation supply and exhaust, EV charging, human interaction with nature, bird friendly materials, renewable energy and light pollution reduction. So the proposal was presented to NAIOP (which is the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Commercial Real Estate Development Association) back in October, it was reviewed by the zoning committee in November and the form based code Advisory Working Group in November, all with very few questions and general support for the update.

And then following the December County Board meeting where the County Board approved the request to advertise. The proposed amendments will go to the Planning Commission and the County Board for consideration on February 24. Concluded presentation.

Question about Energy Star certification level required. Response to be confirmed with green building staff. Request to explain form-based code in layperson's terms. Response about the highest comparison between the two is that most zoning ordinances regulate properties. Most zoning ordinance language regulates what you can do with your property.

More questions and layperson answers about form-based code, including topics on: specific private property, public streets, redevelopment, zoning language, private land, Columbia Pike. Takis explained further about form-based code, explaining the traditional style and alternative. He discusses compliances. He discusses updating green building incentive policy minimums. The SPRC process was discussed. The Pike was mentioned to be developed. DES staff reviews these applications and works with each applicant to make sure that we're getting what we were supposed to. Joan requested a volunteer or two to work on doing a letter for next month so that we can have that before it goes to the board in February. They agree to come back to it at the end of the meeting. She mentioned we did not get to talk about the green building incentive policy changing.

### **Discussion with Takis Karantonis**

He thanks C2E2 for assessing 4.1 site plan projects even if this is sometimes considered as not complete or not perfect. He thanks the commission for clarity on goals and climate issues. He has two fixtures: climate and equity. He thanks C2E2 for raising these issues and questions around them. December is the second year of the CEP year 2 implementation. So going into the 3rd to 5th year, this is a big deal.

We will talk about energy assurance, real greenhouse gas emissions accounting both in the public sector and the general community sector. This is reflected already in your draft priorities about how we position Arlington as the best possible way to be a recipient of

significant federal money that is now flowing into programs. Discusses how we are going to work through the regional partnerships that we have, especially with Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments that is a leading institution here in A and the entity that represents the metropolitan region to the federal agencies.

Progress includes a coordinator in the county manager's office and strengthening the portfolio of the AIRE team. C2E2 holds Arlington County accountable. The board and staff have quarterly meetings to discuss energy. Climate policy will be successful if we take people with us on the journey to rapidly reduce our collective carbon footprint. Provides anecdotes about working with COG.

Next year he has two plans, number one, to bring more people with us. And this is basically everything, whether it is our schools, where it is our transportation system; sometimes they think that social services are not climate relevant. We have this common goal to rapidly, very rapidly with huge energy and an urgency to reduce our carbon footprint collectively and individually. It is politically more important for me to see as many solar rooftops as humanly possible.

Takis noted the importance of how we can make the installation of rooftop solar possible for those who cannot afford it. The MCOG has set a really gross and simple goal of 250,000 rooftop installations in 2030. Community Choice Aggregation is another opportunity for addressing both climate and equity. Discussed the importance of making low-income housing more energy efficient. We are woefully as a nation, and especially on the East Coast, behind in solar. Our appetites still are growing and therefore our carbon footprint is growing, but at the same time Dominion Power is talking about maintaining coal power plants rather than phase them out to meet peak demand for the data centers.

Doug Snoyenbos brought to Takis' attention the issue about the estate tax exemption for solar projects and that was the first time Takis had heard about that issue, and Takis expressed a moderate amount of interest, saying he would follow up with the county manager.

Mentions of LEED Gold, Silver, retrofitting, and electric buses. Decisions on fuel cell electric buses will be the first issue for new County Board members.

### **Finalize 2024 Plans and Priorities and Meeting Schedule**

Approved schedule for next year – changed April date. All approved.

Elect Chair: Cindy will assume the role in March (likely). For the time being, Joan was re-elected. All in favor. Will revote for Cindy later.

Reviewed Plans and Priorities document. Objectives, outcomes and actions and activities were reviewed. Trying to get to a level of specificity. We want to be more actionable and track more. Question: are we going to try to determine with any specific causality to that

outcome, assuming that we're progressing towards decarbonization, what are we doing that's actually resulting? Try to have higher level metrics that are related to these key topics, so that efforts show under each of the categories.

How well is the County measuring energy and GHG emissions from buildings approved through the SPRC process? The AIRE team is working to update their inventory of greenhouse energy related greenhouse gas emissions. Current inventory is for 2016 and thus outdated. What should be C2E2's desired outcomes for updating the CEP or shifting to a climate action plan or a framework that defines what is required and how we can measure progress.

We want to show we are on the path to decarbonize buildings. But the things we do in the activities can get us on that path. Revisit language in columns to be specific and actionable. Less influence which is unclear or more so list a specific action. Lots of vagueness currently. C2E2 reviewed boxes. Be more transparent, and include metrics. Make checklists in the language. Will review and redline the document and get back to it at the end of January/February.

## **Approve letters**

### **ART Feasibility Study Assessment**

Doug Snoeyenbos led the discussion, noting that John Bloom deserves credit for his input and raising his concern that the problems with methane buses and their role in GHG emissions are understated..

Edits were made. The letter was approved unanimously. A quick conversation was shared about different technologies, an annual technology baseline, long haul sweepers, and battery electric versus hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

### **Red Lion Project**

Rob led comments. Score was a 69 on this checklist. Commission reviewed the key sustainability elements, including LEED Gold certification, EnergyStar targets, HVAC systems, and biophilia. The letter was approved unanimously.

## **Updates**

Jenna sent Grant's recording (that Demetra spoke about) to the group. Joan asked for updates around the table. Joan shared her initial impression of the Goodwill site. The Forestry and Natural Resources Plan passed on Saturday. Efforts to develop a deer management plan will continue starting in January and several County Commissions, including C2E2, have called on the County to begin looking at the setbacks and the lot coverage issues in the zoning as part of the plans implementation. And a final announcement and a very sad one but we're going to

lose 2 commissioners at the end of this year, which is Steven, who's going off to Graduate School, and Carrie. J Meeting adjourned.