

January 15, 2025

Honorable Takis Karantonis, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Suite 300  
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center  
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Forestry and Natural Resources Commission 2025 Work Plan

Dear Chair Karantonis:

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) submits the following update on the 2025 work plan, including priority areas along with ongoing objectives. The implementation of the newest element of the County's Comprehensive Plan, the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP), provides an overall framework for the commission's work plan, and where relevant, the specific FNRP Strategic Directions are noted.

### Planning

- Ensure that the potential benefits of trees are considered and harnessed in *all* County policies and decisions. The update to the Community Energy Plan is a prime example of a policy document that must incorporate the benefits of trees for the direct relationship in the reduction of the heat island effect and reducing energy demand for cooling. In addition, as the County updates the Transportation Plan, the FNRC will document how increasing the number of street trees would not only create more desirable places for walking and biking, thus reducing the need for other forms of transportation, it would also have a substantial traffic calming effect, helping the County meet its Vision Zero goals. Likewise, trees and other vegetation support erosion control and filter stormwater, taking pressure off aging gray infrastructure. (FNRP SD 1.1.6)
- Monitor and provide feedback to the ongoing study of potential changes in zoning and allowable lot coverage. Reducing the area that is allocated to built structures and impervious services is crucial for improving the County's resilience and the future health and well-being of our citizens. (FNRP SD 1.2.3)
- Continue to participate actively in Site Plan Review Committees to ensure the preservation and expansion of tree canopy and natural areas. Push for the landscaping/Biophilia topic to be first on the agenda, rather than relegated as an afterthought at the end of the process. (FNRP SD 1.2.3 and 1.2.9)

### **Commission Members**

Caroline Haynes Chair  
Bob Benson  
Bill Browning  
John Carey  
Elizabeth Gearin  
Josh Handler  
Noreen Hannigan  
David Howell  
Neal Hunter  
Phil Klingelhofer  
Mikaila Milton  
Stephen Sockwell

- Advise on green infrastructure as solutions to current problems such as stormwater management, heat mitigation, pollution control, and equitable distribution of natural resources. Consideration of credits for maintaining mature trees as well as the funding for planting and maintenance of new trees, meadows, and natural areas will be investigated. (FNRP SD 1.3.1 and 1.4.1)

### Partnerships

- Work more closely with Arlington Public Schools to make better use of APS properties for growing the urban forest, creating more diverse habitats, and then using these natural resources to enhance school curricula, thus maximizing both the ecological and educational value of these large amounts of land. (FNRP SD 1.1.7 and 1.4.4)
- Work with the Assistant County Manager for Climate Policy to explore and to take advantage of the substantial opportunities for using trees and natural spaces to both mitigate climate change and adapt to climate change. The many benefits of greater tree canopy coverage and more green space area include reducing the urban heat island effect, reducing flood threats from more extreme storms, reducing energy consumption and bills, and reducing current inequities. In just one example, the net reduction in carbon emissions because of carbon sequestration by trees and vegetation should be included in formal calculations of the County's greenhouse gas emissions in the Energy Plan. (FNRP SD 2.1 and 2.2)
- Reach out to volunteer groups such as Arlington Regional Master Naturalist, Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, Park Stewards and others to learn about the many volunteer efforts taking place in the County, and to request input on how to improve their impact and reach, as well as explore potential collaboration. (FNRP SD 1.1.8 and 1.4.3)
- Monitor and comment on the County's ongoing efforts to control the deer population. (FNRP SD 4.1.6 and 4.1.8)
- Seek out ways to educate the public on the importance of our tree canopy and the many benefits it provides, the value of natural landscaping and pollinator habitat, the scourge of invasive species, and how to help care for our natural community. Work with interested volunteer organizations and Commissions to leverage our areas of expertise. (FNRP SD 1.3.2 and 1.4.5)
- Encourage increased resources to be made available for eradication and control of invasive species; collaborate with other groups to expand public education and awareness as to which species are invasive, and how to handle them on private property. (FNRP SD 3.2)
- Strengthen oversight of the Tree Canopy Fund and the cooperation with EcoAction Arlington.

### Legislative, Administrative and Budgetary Authorities

- Continue to pursue legislation that would grant local jurisdictions greater flexibility to set higher tree canopy coverage requirements than currently allowed. Such legislation passed last year but was vetoed by the governor. (FNRP SD 1.2.1)
- Provide specific suggestions for interpreting, implementing, and enforcing existing laws and ordinances in ways that better protect and grow our invaluable urban forests and natural spaces. (FNRP SD 4.6.1)
- Review and disseminate the results of the ongoing study on the success or failure of the current tree replacement policy. If the data show that new developments from previous years are failing to stay on track for the target of 20% tree canopy coverage in 20 years, then develop and propose policies that could address the problem. Possibilities include requiring new homeowners to post bonds for trees as part of getting an occupancy permit or providing incentives like tax breaks for greater canopy coverage.
- Continue to review and submit recommendations for the Annual Budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Recommendations include emphasizing the importance of valuing natural capital; ensuring adequate staffing levels; increasing the planting and care of trees on public property; preserving and acquiring more natural areas; reaching out to residents concerning the care of trees; and supporting educational efforts to build appreciation of our natural resources, including the work done by our Nature Centers. (FNRP SD 4.5)

The commission looks forward to another full and productive year working with the County Board and staff to realize the vision of holistic conservation and management of Arlington's natural resources and ecosystems across both public and private property.

Sincerely,



Caroline Haynes, Chair  
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board  
Members, Planning Commission  
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager  
Jennifer Fioretti, Assistant County Manager for Climate Policy  
Samia Byrd, Director, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development  
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Greg Emanuel, Director, Department of Environmental Services

