

Forestry and Natural Resources Commission Charter **Adopted XXXX**

Introduction: The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) is an advisory body by the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia. The Arlington County Board initially established the Urban Forestry Commission by adoption of a charge on June 10, 1990.

Mission: The Commission shall be advisory to the County Board, and in that capacity shall provide the Board with information, advice and recommendations to improve the health and sustainability of Arlington's urban forests and natural resources, and to enhance the availability of nature for all residents. The scope of mission includes advising on:

- plans, programs and policies for the maintenance and enhancement of all natural capital in the county, including trees, riparian ecosystems, meadows, and other natural resources on public property
- preservation and enhancement of trees, other native vegetation, biodiversity, and ecological sustainability in conservation areas, parks, and other County-owned natural areas
- preservation and enhancement of trees, other natural resources, and natural features associated with development and infrastructure projects on public and private property
- promotional and educational activity to support the preservation and enhancement of trees, native plants, and natural habitat on private property to provide biophilic, economic, social, and environmental benefits for individual property owners and the County as a whole

The Commission may undertake studies, develop recommendations, conduct public meetings and educational programs, hold hearings, prepare reports, and appear before public bodies to further the objectives stated above.

Governing Documents: Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, Public Spaces Master Plan and other relevant elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Functions and Scope: The functions of the Arlington County Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall include:

1. Overseeing implementation of the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, including a key recommendation to achieve 40% tree canopy
2. Overseeing implementation of the Tree Preservation Ordinance and other current and future ordinances and authorities that pertain to urban forestry and natural resource concerns
3. Overseeing administration of the Tree Canopy Program, which is implemented by the non-profit organization EcoAction Arlington
4. Jointly with the Park and Recreation Commission and the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission, provide FNRC representation on the Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group
5. Monitoring efforts to control invasive species and other natural and human threats to wooded parks and natural areas, and making recommendations

regarding the scope and nature of those efforts

6. Advising on the acquisition and creation of natural spaces, including acquisition of privately-owned woodlands, natural areas, and restorable spaces in the built environment
7. Recommending tree canopy, natural resource, and ecological goals for the County as a whole, for individual neighborhoods, and for portions of the County covered by area or sector plans
8. Participating in the updates to the elements of the Comprehensive Plan and other County planning processes to ensure adequate tree canopy goals for lots and street trees, and other natural resources, and advising on biophilic design and other ecological and biodiversity and climate resiliency interests
9. Monitoring the inclusion of Arlington's Biophilic City indicators as key elements in County plans and policies
10. Participating in the site-plan review process, and making recommendations concerning tree preservation and planting, natural resource priorities, biophilic strategies and features, and ecological sustainability in site-plan projects
11. Making recommendations concerning elements of the County budget and Capital Improvement Plan that relate to the urban forest, natural resources, ecological sustainability, and natural capital generally
12. Collaborating with Arlington Public Schools and the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Sustainability to enhance the school system's management of its natural spaces
13. Participating in a variety of outreach and education activities, including Arbor Day Ceremonies and Tree City USA awards
14. Participating in the Champion Trees program and the Notable Trees selection process, working with staff and volunteers to identify candidate trees and selecting some for designation
15. Participating in the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable, fostering exchanges of information with other jurisdictions, and working to enhance urban forests across the region
16. Preparing an annual work plan for the Commission in consultation with the County Board

Membership: The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall be comprised of fifteen (15) members. These members are drawn from:

- One member from the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission;
- One member from the Park and Recreation Commission;
- One member from the Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (ARNAC);
- Twelve members appointed at-large, including individuals with direct knowledge of urban forestry, natural resource and urban ecology matters, either from their professional background or from training and volunteer activities in such programs as Tree Stewards or Master Naturalists.

In addition, the Commission may designate non-voting members to represent organizations with an interest in Arlington's urban forest, natural resources and urban ecology. These include state organizations such as the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension; County organizations such as Arlington Public Schools; and non-profit organizations such as EcoAction Arlington.

The County Board will appoint and maintain a roster of members including contact information, official affiliation, appointment dates, reappointment dates, and expiration dates of terms.

Members will be appointed for three-year terms. All members serve at the pleasure of the Board. Forestry and Natural Resources Commission members are expected to serve a liaison function to interested parties in Arlington

A member of the Commission who fails to attend three (3) Forestry and Natural Resources Commission meetings in a single year without providing advance notice to the Chair or staff, may be asked to resign his or her remaining term on the Commission. The Commission Chair, after consultation with the County Board liaison, shall notify the member if such an action is warranted.

Chair, Vice Chair (if applicable) and Committees (if applicable): The County Board shall appoint a Chair lead the Commission. Also, one member of the Commission may be appointed by the County Board to serve as Vice-chair when the Chair is unavailable.

Committee Membership: The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission may create committees, as are necessary, to accomplish specific Commission functions or projects and the Chair shall appoint committee leadership. Committee membership may include persons who are not on the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission.

Staff Liaison: The County Manager shall appoint a member of staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation to serve as liaison to the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission.

Meetings: The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission will meet as needed to adequately fulfill its role and responsibilities outlined in this charter. Meetings typically will be held on a monthly basis, with the possible exception of an August meeting.

All meetings will comply with Virginia Open Meeting requirements and the Freedom of Information Act. Agendas and meeting minutes will be made available to the public in a timely manner.

The Advisory Group Handbook provides additional information on the conduct of meetings as well as communication protocols that should guide all members in their advisory group work.

Reporting to the Board: The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission will provide recommendations to the County Board about the preservation, enhancement, and management of Arlington's urban forest, natural resources, and urban ecology. The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission will at a minimum submit an annual report to the County Board after consultation with the Board Liaison.

Update of this Charter: From time to time, the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall review this charter to assure that it meets current needs. Any

requests for changes must be processed through the Board Liaison.

Definitions:

Biophilic Community: A place that cherishes natural features that already exist and works to restore and repair what has been lost or degraded. A place that emulates nature by incorporating natural forms into its cityscape and buildings, and plans and designs in conjunction with nature. A place that facilitates connecting humans with nature. (2019 PSMP)

Ecological Sustainability: Maintaining natural resources and ensuring the viability of future generations of all organisms and natural systems.

Natural capital: The natural environment, and the biodiversity contained within it, and is generally considered to comprise three principal categories: natural resource assets, land and ecosystems. All are considered essential to sustainability for their provision of beneficial functions. Valuing natural capital enables governments to account for nature's role in the economy, environment and human well-being.(2023 FNRP)

Natural Resources: Those natural biotic and abiotic components, such as trees, other woody plants, herbaceous plants, wildlife, streams, wetlands, ponds and natural geological features, and the unified and inter-related system that they comprise.

Urban Ecology: The relation of flora and fauna with each other and their surroundings in the context of our urban environment.