December 2, 2025

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

Commission Members

Caroline Haynes, Chair
Bob Benson
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John Carey
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Lisa Marcellus
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Stephen Sockwell

RE: Green Building Incentive Program

Dear Chair Karantonis,

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) has followed closely the development of the updates to the Green Building Incentive Program (GBIP), and received a short briefing on the update in October 2024. The Commission was surprised and disappointed with the recent version of the update, recently presented to the Planning Commission and scheduled to be considered by the County Board in December, which differs dramatically from what had been proposed last year.

The Commission views both the process and the product of the most recent update as a missed opportunity. The current update appears to be linked primarily to LEED version 5 and PHIUS; the previously proposed climate adaptation pathway with a focus on green infrastructure and sustainability is completely absent. Given the closely held and truncated engagement process with a small hand-picked group on the most recent version of the GBIP update, the Commission was also denied an opportunity to provide input on the development of this update.

As an incentive program, the GBIP also serves as an education tool that should reflect community values. The Commission is concerned that this version may not accurately reflect the County's much more holistic focus on sustainability as embodied in adopted resolutions and planning documents such as the Biophilic Cities Resolution, the Climate Action Resolution, and the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, all of which recognize the critical importance of green infrastructure in our built environment.

The 2024 draft GBIP highlighted the importance of issues such as vegetated roofs, the percentage of landscaped areas, the use of native vegetation to support native pollinators, adequate tree planting areas, retained use of stormwater, bioretention, bird friendly glass, and Dark Skies lighting. This version focuses almost exclusively on energy issues with barely a nod to green infrastructure.

We urge the Board to consider this update as only an initial phase and continue to pursue the broader sustainability objectives in the next round of updates to the Green Building Incentive Program.

Sincerely,

Caroline Haynes

Caroline Haynes, Chair
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Planning Commission
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jason Papacosma, Division Chief, Sustainability and Environmental Management, DES