

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

October 7, 2025

Honorable Takis Karantonis, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Site Plan Conditions and Green Building Incentive Policy

Dear Chair Karantonis and Members of the County Board:

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) is excited about the forthcoming update to the Green Building Incentive Policy (GBIP) and the opportunity to encourage developers to build more sustainable buildings that enable the County to reach its climate and energy goals. We strongly believe that a critical part of increasing uptake of the GBIP by developers is to decrease the "gap" between (i) the floor set by the County's current standard site plan conditions and (ii) the minimum requirements of the GBIP. We believe standard site plan conditions should accurately reflect community needs and the expectations of developers in light of Arlington's climate and sustainability goals. We urge the Board to direct County staff to strengthen the sustainability requirements of the current site plan conditions in conjunction with introducing the GBIP update.

The current [standard site plan conditions](#) ("Standard Site Conditions"), Section 18, do not incorporate the advances in technological solutions and industry standards for electrification and energy efficiency that the marketplace is reflecting, as we have seen in recent projects that have been through the SPRC process. These areas need to be updated.¹ For example, Standard Site Conditions were intended to track the baseline energy efficiency level of GBIP but have not been updated to reflect the 4 percent increase in efficiency required by the GBIP since 2023. This not only results in less efficient projects, but also provides an unintended incentive for developers to not participate in the GBIP. Similarly, site plan projects today are choosing to offer more EV parking and electrification of hot water and HVAC systems than in years past, even without participating in the GBIP, but nothing is required in these vital areas by the Standard Site Conditions.

Alexandria has recently released its proposed [2025 Green Building Policy](#), which is comparable to Arlington's Standard Site Conditions in that the policy is not an incentive program but instead sets forth intended minimum requirements for all new construction. As you are likely aware, the policy generally sets significantly higher standards than Arlington's Standard Site Conditions in critical areas such as

¹ We note that many of the Standard Site Conditions are already aligned with what C2E2 looks for in our scorecard, such as Energy Star appliances and WaterSense fixtures, and do not mean to suggest that all Standard Site Conditions need to be made more rigorous.

energy efficiency, building electrification, renewable electricity and EV parking. We understand that County staff is already examining the Alexandria policy and we believe it is a very helpful model of minimum standards, subject, as always, to site-specific negotiation.

Specifically, we would like to see the Standard Site Conditions establish the current version of LEED Silver as the Standard Site Conditions (as of now, LEED v5 is the current version), perhaps requiring specific criteria within LEED v5 that have the most impact for achieving Arlington goals consistent with the Climate Action Resolution adopted by the Board in February 2025. In our view from a climate change lens, the areas that focus on decarbonization are the most important (although we note the high importance of many other categories, particularly biophilia). In achieving LEED Silver, we suggest mandating that developers earn points by achieving at least the following: Electrification (3 of the max 5 pts), Efficiency (4 of the max 10 pts), Renewable Energy (2 of the max 5 pts), EV Parking (2 of the max 2 pts), and Embodied Carbon (2 of the max 6 pts). That is only 13 required points out of the 50-59 points for Silver.

The use of LEED Silver would provide a foundation for then using LEED Gold or Platinum as the framework for the GBIP update, with such required focus areas as County staff might decide to include.

In sum, in our view, strengthening the Standard Site Conditions is essential in its own right to meet Arlington's needs, and also is a key part of ensuring that the GBIP is attractive and effective. It makes little sense to offer "bargain basement" Standard Site Conditions to developers who choose not to opt in to the GBIP. Establishing a higher floor through the Standard Site Conditions baseline reduces the sustainability "first cost" differential between the established baseline and the minimum GBIP requirements and thus makes it easier for the County to incentivize developers to go beyond that baseline.

We look forward to reviewing the GBIP update later this year. Our continued thanks to the Board for adopting the Climate Action Resolution, hiring an Assistant County Manager for Climate Policy, making the GBIP update a priority, and continuing to strive toward the far-reaching climate and energy goals the Board has set for Arlington County.

Sincerely,



Cindy Lewin
Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

cc: Anthony Fusarelli, Director, Planning Division, CPHD
Jennifer Fioretti, Assistant County Manager, Climate Policy
Jason Papacosma, Division Chief, Sustainability and Environmental Management, DES