

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission
c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 705
Arlington, Virginia 22201
August 24th, 2015

The Honorable Mary Hynes
Chairwoman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Re: Draft Affordable Housing Master Plan (May 2015) and Draft Affordable Housing
Implementation Framework (May 2015)

Dear Ms. Hynes:

The Environment and Energy Conservation Commission offers these comments on Arlington County's Draft Affordable Housing Plan (Plan) and Draft Affordable Housing Implementation Framework (Framework). We have reviewed the drafts and were recently briefed on both by Arlington County staff. Our comments are limited to those elements of the Plan and Framework that bear on the focus of our commission, energy and environmental sustainability, and we support these aspects of the draft plan and framework. Overall, we support the current direction of and content in both documents, and think that the documents adequately address overlap between the County's long term affordable housing, energy, and environmental sustainability goals.

With respect to the environmental and energy features of the drafts, we support the four "environmental sustainability practices" described in section 3.3 of the Draft and in the Framework's Land Use and Regulatory Strategy I. ("Community Energy Plan Goals and Targets.") Both drafts set forth, as County policy, the goals of (1) encouraging energy efficiency in new and existing housing; (2) encouraging water conservation in affordable housing; (3) encouraging the conservation of natural resources by reducing waste during the building's life-cycle; and (4) educating landlords, tenants and homeowners on energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling and waste reduction. Energy efficient operation will contribute to overall housing affordability by lowering the costs of utilities for occupants. At the same time, the incorporation of environmental sustainability practices into urban design and construction standards will reduce waste and associated costs.

We commend the draft Plan for committing to educate landlords, tenants and homeowners on energy efficiency and on federal, state and local incentive programs. The Community Energy Plan noted that, "it is vital that incentive programs (for energy efficiency) are available to people at all income levels in the County" and the County should continually evaluate them for equity and promote their use. Given the number and ever-changing eligibility rules of energy incentive programs, such education has become increasingly important to ensure their availability and

efficient use. We also support the recommendation, in the draft Implementation Framework, that the County consider expanding the density bonus potential associated with developing affordable LEED or other green certifications. We agree with staff that such incentives may encourage builders and developers to achieve exceptional energy efficiencies in affordable housing.

The draft acknowledges the difficulty of locating affordable housing in transit corridors, where land is often very expensive. As the Community Energy Plan acknowledged, Arlington has been and continues to be a leader in transit-oriented development with consequent reductions in its carbon footprint. Yet the Plan also cautioned that transit options for low-income residents are limited and that “consistent with its philosophy of ‘affordable living’, Arlington will remain mindful” of the needs of all of its residents. We understand that reaching affordable housing targets in transit-oriented neighborhoods remains a serious challenge, but support strengthening transit opportunities for all residents, including affordable housing communities.

Not addressed in the draft are objectives relating to green space and parkland. While developing affordable housing the County should maintain parklands and continue to look for ways to increase green space to keep pace with population growth. Low-income residents also need open-space, parkland and outdoor recreational opportunities and this should be figured into the siting of housing plans.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft Plan and Implementation Framework.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Dicke".

Scott Dicke

Chair, E2C2