

Sustainability Commission Comments on the Land Use Chapter of the August 25, 2022 Draft Comprehensive Plan

Whereas, the Prince William County Sustainability Commission provided comments on an earlier draft of the *Pathway to 2040: Comprehensive Plan Update* via a resolution entitled “*Sustainability Commission Recommendation to Align the Land Use, Housing, and Mobility Chapters of the Draft Comprehensive Plan*,” dated August 25 2022, and the Planning Office released an updated draft of the Land Use chapter that same day.

Whereas, the August 25, 2022 draft Land Use chapter incorporates several significant improvements that are in accord with the Sustainability Commission’s recommendations on the earlier draft, while leaving room for further improvements.

Whereas, the Board of County Supervisors has endorsed the Metro Washington Council of Government (MWCOG)’s climate action goals in November 2020 ([MOTION: \(pwcgov.org\)](#)), and has set forth these goals:

- Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 50% below baseline 2005 levels by 2030
- Achieving 100% renewable electricity in Prince William County Government operations by 2030
- Becoming a Climate Ready Region and making significant progress to be a Climate Resilient Region by 2030
- Sourcing 100% of PWC’s electricity from renewable sources by 2035
- Achieving 100% carbon neutrality in Prince William County Government operations by 2050.

Whereas, MWCOG developed a GHG inventory for PWC, covering a base year of 2005, plus 2012, 2015, and 2018 (the most recent year available), and the results indicate that PWC’s emissions increased 19% between 2005 to 2018. Thus, to hit PWC’s 50% GHG reduction goal, we will need to reduce emissions by 58% compared to 2018 levels, which will require coordinated, urgent actions.

Whereas, currently a comparable inventory of energy use and climate resilience actions does not yet exist for PWC, the Sustainability Commission anticipates that it will also take coordinated, urgent actions to attain the renewable energy and resilience goals.

Whereas, the Sustainability Commission does not anticipate being able to review a draft Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan (CESMP), which will be prepared by a contractor with oversight from County staff, until 2023, and the Sustainability Commission recommendations to the BOCS will be developed shortly after that, in the meantime, the BOCS will be making decisions on many land use, housing, and infrastructure (water, transportation, energy) issues that could significantly affect GHG emissions, energy use, and climate resilience. Many of the policies required to attain the goals of the climate mitigation and resilience resolution are likely to take years to take effect.

Whereas, Prince William County is completing an update of the Comprehensive Plan, which will help guide future Planning decisions in the county by updating specific plan chapters including Land Use, Housing, and Mobility.

Whereas, the Sustainability Commission has reviewed the revised (August 25, 2022) Land Use chapter, and found that the Comprehensive Plan has been significantly fortified through

- The inclusion of the county’s Climate Mitigation and Climate Resilience Goals in Land Use Policy 18 (Encourage a land use pattern that incorporates and protects environmental features in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Environment Plan of the Comprehensive Plan, Prince William County’s 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, and contributes to the County’s Climate and Resiliency goals); and
- the addition of Land Use Policy 19 (Encourage sustainable land use development that reduces greenhouse gas “GHG” emissions and the carbon footprint of development), with supporting action strategies.

These improvements also substantially improve the alignment of the draft Land Use Chapter with the climate- and sustainability-related concepts and policies contained in the Mobility and Housing Chapters.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that while awaiting the development of the CESMP, it is the recommendation of the Sustainability Commission that the Prince William County Planning Office, working with the Planning Commission and subject to final approval by the Board of County Supervisors, further amend the August 25 2022 Land Use Chapter as follows, to more fully incorporate climate mitigation and climate resilience measures in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Add a new action strategy under LU19: Promote reforestation rural, semi-rural, and suburban areas to store forest carbon and restore watershed integrity, and promote tree planting to increase tree canopy in urban areas to combat the urban heat island effect. [Note: this is complementary to action strategy 18.3.]
- Add a new action strategy under LU19: Require new commercial buildings to submit an energy plan that includes measures to use renewable energy, and encourage existing commercial buildings to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing the carbon intensity of their electricity and other energy use.
- Fortify the language in action strategies related to climate and sustainability so that the strategies require action when possible, rather than just encouraging or aspiring to action.

Be it further resolved that the Sustainability Commission recommends that the Comprehensive Plan explicitly note, in not only the Land Use Chapter but also the Mobility and Housing Chapters, that the Comprehensive Plan (CESMP) must be consistent with the Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan once the CESMP is published and accepted by the Board of County Supervisors.