



July 14, 2023

To whom it may concern:

As Chair of Alexandria's Environmental Policy Commission (EPC), whose Council-appointed unpaid members advise our Council on environmental issues, we are writing to support the application from the Housing Alexandria/Build Our Future (the "applicants") for the US Department of Energy Buildings Upgrade Prize. The EPC sees this proposal as critical to taking advantage of the recent major climate legislation along with exceeding the Justice40 Initiative proposed by this administration to enhance the livability of current affordable units in Alexandria while also meeting our climate and equity principles. If approved, the results could systematically change not only affordable housing in the City but applied across all expanding redevelopment in Northern Virginia increasing the resulting benefits of this proposal.

The City of Alexandria is one of the densest cities in Virginia. Over half of all its current housing units are contained in multi-family buildings. However, finding safe, healthy, and affordable housing is still a challenge for many Alexandrians due to a lack of supply and because of institutional barriers to equitable access. To address this issue, Alexandria is working on an initiative to change its zoning rules to allow more multifamily units to be developed throughout the City. Equally important is the need to upgrade the current existing dedicated affordable units to make them more comfortable, more affordable (by reducing energy costs), more resilient during power outages, while also improving indoor air quality. Upgrading these buildings will help the City meet its 2030 target of reducing GHG emissions by 50% and address the City's environmental justice and equity principles that all projects must address before approval.

The applicants for this prize have proposed an initiative to develop a comprehensive and replicable approach to electrification, energy efficiency, renewable energy and resilience for the broad spectrum of Alexandria's affordable multi-family housing portfolio. In their proposal, the applicants have chosen to focus in Phase 1 on two different types that will allow lessons-learned from these building types to apply across all other building types in the City's portfolio.

Phase 1 will first evaluate the existing buildings, create baseline energy models, identify ways to replace and expand current systems while evaluating the cost vs. performance of various options for each building type. Interwoven with the energy modeling will be a review of the financial timing of existing systems and the sourcing of various funding resources available to meet the needs of these buildings. Later phases will use this information to replicate and scale up the information to enable its application to all of other affordable buildings as well as shared with developers considering deep retrofits on other existing multi-family buildings in the City.

The EPC sees this as an extremely valuable effort for the community, creating scalable and replicable solutions to decarbonize existing multifamily assets based on actual buildings in our City. While we are eager for Housing Alexandria to learn from and act on the studies for the two assets, this is also a great educational opportunity for the broader multifamily sector in Alexandria. We expect Phase 1 of this project to address some of the many barriers that multifamily owners face in implementing deep energy retrofits: education on necessary improvements in different building types, modeling to show the specific cost and carbon savings associated, and financial strategies to pay for the implementation.

We are committed to continuing our support for the City of Alexandria affordable housing and the rejuvenation of these valuable existing buildings in order to enhance health, comfort, affordability for residents, as well as improving their environmental performance in this era of climate emergency while strengthening equity in our community.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the application for the Buildings Up prize from Housing Alexandria and Build Our Future. Should you have questions, please contact Kathie Hoekstra at 571-388-9423 or email kathlynhoekstra@icloud.com.

Sincerely,

Kathie Hoekstra

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Environmental Policy Commission Chair
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