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Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management
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"Greening Washington and the National Capital Region"

Introduction

Good Morning Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Graves and distinguished members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Joan Kelsch and I serve as an Environmental Planner for Arlington County, Virginia, where I coordinate the County's green building programs. I am a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Accredited Professional and I also serve as the Chair of the Intergovernmental Green Building Group at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today to discuss Arlington County's vision, past and current efforts, and future plans to encourage green development in our jurisdiction, as well as the individual and collective efforts of many jurisdictions in the National Capital Region through COG.

Arlington County, Virginia and Green Building Activity

Arlington is an urban county of about 26 square miles located directly across the Potomac River from Washington DC. Arlington had an estimated population of 206,800 on January 1, 2008, reflecting a 9.2% increase since 2000. It is among the most densely populated jurisdictions in the country with a population density of almost 8,000 persons per square mile.

Although perhaps best known to visitors as the home of the Pentagon and Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington also boasts high quality residential neighborhoods and commercial hubs. Arlington's central location in the Washington DC metropolitan area, its ease of access by public transportation, and its highly skilled labor force has attracted an increasingly varied residential and commercial mix. Arlington has a carefully crafted General Land Use Plan which promotes high-density commercial and residential development around Metrorail stations in the Rosslyn-Ballston and Jefferson Davis Metro Corridors, while maintaining lower density residential neighborhoods in the rest of the County.

Arlington has more private office space than downtown Boston, Los Angeles, Dallas, and Denver. Construction continues at a high rate in Arlington, offering an excellent opportunity to green the County's building stock. For example, approximately 756,000 square feet of office space was completed in 2007 and approximately 878,000 square feet of office space was still under construction at that time.

Because of the continued interest in development in Arlington, the County is working to make its building stock as sustainable as possible. For the past 10 years, Arlington has used the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED Green Building Rating System to guide both public and private development in the County with the intent of reducing the environmental impacts of new construction. LEED offers specific standards that must be met in order to earn points. Projects complying with seven basic prerequisites and earning at least 26 LEED credits are eligible for LEED Certification at one of four levels.

Greening Public Facilities in Arlington

Arlington plans, designs, and constructs its public facilities using LEED as a guideline, with the goal of achieving at least LEED Silver Certification. The Langston-Brown School and Community Center earned the LEED Silver certification in 2003. Two other projects (a community center and an office/trades building) are awaiting final certification from the US Green Building Council. The LEED process provides invaluable guidance, structure, and third-party verification to the construction process.

Greening Private Development in Arlington

For private development, Arlington also uses the LEED green building rating system as a guide. Developers building large commercial projects and high-rise residential apartments and condominiums use LEED as a guide and report progress on green building components to the County throughout the construction process. Although formal certification by the US Green Building Council is not always required, the goal is to meet the seven LEED prerequisites and earn at least 26 LEED credits on all private development. Although the County does not require developers to officially certify their projects through the

USGBC, many developers are now choosing to do so because certifying their projects makes both environmental and economic sense.

Arlington also offers a voluntary green building density incentive program. Developers may request a small amount of additional square footage in their buildings in exchange for full USGBC LEED Certification. This program has encouraged more than a dozen projects to apply for the program and will result in Arlington buildings that are more environmentally responsible and offer the owners long-term value.

Finally, Arlington offers homeowners and single family home developers a voluntary Green Home Choice program. Based on the EarthCraft model from the Southface Institute in Atlanta, Arlington's Green Home Choice program offers specific green guidance and a checklist for construction and renovation of single family homes. As with LEED, the projects must comply with guidance and accrue points which lead to final Green Home Choice certification. Several dozen new homes and major renovation/addition projects have benefited from the Green Home Choice program.

Arlington's Commitment to Climate Change

In 2007, the County launched Arlington's Initiative to Reduce Emissions (also know as Fresh AIRE). The program focuses on reducing carbon emissions from five major sectors: green buildings, energy efficiency, recycling and waste reduction, transportation, and water conservation. In Arlington, existing buildings are responsible for nearly two-thirds of the County's carbon emissions. As such, County staff has developed programs to encourage existing building owners to improve energy efficiency through building retrofits and operational changes in an effort to reduce carbon emissions. Extensive community outreach and education have resulted in seven new Energy Star labeled buildings in Arlington since January 2007 (for a total of 18 Energy Star labeled buildings in the County).

Green Building in the Greater Washington DC Region

Through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), local governments in the DC region have joined forces to share information and develop a common set of goals for local government green programs. The Intergovernmental Green Building Group issued a report in December 2007 entitled, "Greening the Metropolitan Washington Region's Built Environment." The report examines the building issues facing our region and offers specific recommendations to local governments for developing regionally consistent green building programs for public and private development.

Specifically, the report recommends the following:

- Establish LEED as the region's preferred green building rating system for new construction. This offers consistency across the region so all building professionals know to expect the same standards regionwide.

- Governments should lead by example, by designing and constructing public facilities to the LEED Silver standard.
- Governments should establish green building programs for private development that encourage and/or require private development to achieve the LEED baseline certification (26 points) with a focus on addressing environmental issues of particular importance to the DC region including energy efficiency and on-site power generation, heat island mitigation, stormwater management, and construction debris recycling.
- Governments will coordinate education and outreach efforts regionwide to maximize the opportunities for innovation.

Several jurisdictions in the region have developed green building programs. A few examples include:

- The District of Columbia passed its Green Building Act in 2006. The Act requires all public facilities over 10,000 square feet to meet LEED Silver certification. By January 2012, all commercial buildings over 50,000 square feet must meet the LEED certification standard. The District government will offer expedited permitting to green buildings prior to 2012 and will provide resources and guidance for public and private construction.
- Montgomery County, Maryland, has implemented a comprehensive green building program addressing new and renovated public and private facilities. This Building Energy and Environmental Design program requires that all new public buildings over 10,000 square feet achieve a minimum of LEED Silver certification (or equivalent) and that private buildings achieve a minimum of the baseline LEED Certified (or equivalent). As an incentive, Montgomery County developed a Green Building Property Tax Credit that provides substantial tax credits for new and existing buildings that achieve LEED Gold Certification.
- Fairfax County, Virginia, has also adopted policies addressing public and private development. Public buildings greater than 10,000 square feet strive for the LEED Silver certification; smaller facilities strive for baseline LEED Certification. The County's Comprehensive Plan includes broad support for green building practices, particularly in the County's growth centers such as Tyson's Corner, where LEED certification (or equivalent) is expected for certain nonresidential and multi-story multifamily residential proposals. ENERGY STAR® Qualified Homes designations are expected for other high density residential development.
- Several other jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia require public facilities to meet specific LEED standards. Building codes are being addressed in several jurisdictions. Many localities provide green building guidance to private developers. Others offer incentives such as expedited permit review or reduced permit fees for green buildings.

Conclusion

Greening our nation's building stock offers one of the greatest opportunities to protect the environment and enhance energy independence. Nationally, buildings generate over one-third of the nation's carbon emissions, primarily through the use of electricity and natural gas. Despite rapid growth and acceptance of green building technologies and processes nationwide in all building sectors, green building today accounts for only a small fraction of new home and commercial construction. Additional vision, leadership, and action at all levels of government are needed to make sustainable green building practices the norm.

Local governments, non-profit organizations, developers, architects, engineers and other building professionals in the Metropolitan Washington area are working together to raise the bar for green buildings consistently across the region. Existing programs like Arlington's, are well-established and will continue to be evaluated and updated as the green building industry matures, as builders become more familiar with green practices and materials, and as building codes become more environmentally focused. Newer local government green building programs are incorporating the lessons of existing programs and creating implementation strategies that work for their specific jurisdictions.

While the transitions to more sustainable techniques and materials are continuing to emerge through building code updates and market forces, incentives have been very helpful in pushing the market toward more sustainable development. Local governments can offer incentives such as expedited permitting, density bonuses, fee reductions, education and training. Nonprofit organizations offer grants and educational support.

The federal government is critical and can play a catalyzing role in encouraging green building practices through leading by example with the Green the Capitol Initiative. Providing green building and/or energy efficiency tax credits would encourage the private sector to undertake green initiatives. Fully funding the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program would support critical efforts at the local and state level. Additionally, the federal government can play an important role in green building success by supporting EPA's ENERGY STAR benchmark system. Finally, there is a critical need for research funding to develop and test new green building materials.

Madame Chairwoman, Arlington County and the Council of Governments applaud your leadership in convening this hearing and we thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. Those of us working in local government are very encouraged by the increased focus of the Congress on addressing the challenges posed by our built environment (most notably climate change) and we look forward to being your partner in this important effort. Working together, we can create buildings that reduce environmental impacts and provide healthy indoor spaces for people to live, learn and work.

This concludes my testimony and I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.