



SPEAK OUT ON SUSTAINABLE BUILDING DESIGN

Buildings constructed now will play an important role in determining whether Arlington County will achieve its goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. EcoAction Arlington has recently taken an active role in the County's Site Plan Review process to encourage developers to adopt sustainable building design. Citizen participation in this process is an effective way to let developers, County staff, and County Board Members know your values and hopes for our communities.

The County's ability to mandate measures such as greater energy efficiency in support of the [Community Energy Plan \(CEP\)](#) is limited. "By right" development requires that builders only need to comply with the State building code, which in Virginia is fairly lax in these areas. However, developers who seek changes to zoning for increased height or density are required to submit to Site Plan Review. The Site Plan Review Committee oversees the public engagement on these projects before submitting them to the Planning Commission and the County Board for approval. This process allows the County to negotiate various community benefits and offers an opportunity for citizens to comment. These benefits include parks, transportation upgrades, and affordable housing, as well as sustainability goals that exceed code requirements.

Projects reviewed by EcoAction Arlington include several sites in Crystal City/National Landing, Courthouse, and Rosslyn. These projects are large commercial and multifamily residential developments that will have a notable impact on surrounding areas. Energy efficiency, a shift to all-electric systems and appliances (i.e., no onsite use of natural gas), and the inclusion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure are our primary focus. We also examine project proposals for other sustainability goals such as stormwater management, alternative transportation, and biophilia. The developer's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Scorecard and project presentations are generally the most useful documents in assessing these projects. The LEED rating system ranks projects in various sustainable design categories, including prerequisites and optional points based upon US Green Building Council criteria. Project teams use this tool to identify and track sustainable strategies as a design develops, to aid decision-making in pursuit of their stated goals (Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum level certification).

The County lists projects currently under review on its website [here](#) providing specifics on the process and links to individual project information. The public comment process is now fully online and includes limited windows of time when anyone can post comments. Projects are also discussed at several Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meetings before going to the Planning Committee and the County Board. All meetings (currently virtual) are open and accept public comments. Your participation in these reviews will strengthen our collective voice and influence developers to increase investment in clean energy and other sustainability measures.