

**DRAFT
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Local Groups Call for Improving Falls Church Environment

A new report by two local groups calls on the City of Falls Church to expand efforts to sustain and improve environmental quality.

The report, announced as part of the annual celebration of Arbor Day in Frady Park, defines goals for environmental improvement in five key areas:

- Increase tree canopy;
- Increase residential solid waste recycling;
- Reduce the release of greenhouse gases causing global warming;
- Increase green or “pervious” surfaces; and
- Promote sustainable building standards.

The report is a joint effort by the Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS) and the City of Falls Church Environmental Services Council (ESC). The ESC is established by the City and provides advice on a wide range of City environmental matters. VPIS is a local non-profit organization that supports cultural, historical, environmental programs and development engagement in the City.

“Falls Church has a history of strong environmental programs, but renewed effort is needed to respond to challenges ranging from rapid development to climate change,” said VPIS President Keith Thurston.

The report assesses progress under the five key areas first identified in a 2009 report by VPIS. VPIS and the ESC found that progress toward the goal of increased solid waste recycling has been substantial. In three areas – tree canopy, green surfaces, and environmental building standards – progress has been moderate. In the case of the goal for reducing greenhouse gases, the groups found progress to be limited.

The report identifies long-term targets for measurable improvement under each of the five goals and describes steps the City should take to accomplish this progress. For example, the groups recommend that the City:

- Use stormwater funds to expand tree canopy;
- Broaden the range of materials that are recycled;
- Re-establish the City climate change task force; and
- Adopt incentives for environmental building standards.

ESC Chair Ray Arnaudo noted that the ESC members unanimously approved the report at a March 19 meeting. “We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the development of the *Five Environmental Goals for Falls Church: Progress Report for 2015*. We look forward to working with VPIS and the City to make progress towards achieving the goals contained in the document.”

The Chair of the City of Falls Church Tree Commission, Larry Dorr reported that the Commission reviewed and approved the report and thanked "VPIS for recognizing tree canopy as an important environmental indicator and for continuing to support the need for a strong urban forestry program in Falls Church. Tree Commission supports the goal and the report.”

The ESC and VPIS indicate that they will promote adoption of these goals and the implementation of programs needed to assure their attainment. Both organizations intend to monitor progress over time and provide periodic progress reports.

The full report can be found on the VPIS website: www.VPIS.org.