



November 1, 2023

Mr. Jim Parajon,
Alexandria City Manager
City Hall, 301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Manager,

The EPC urges the City to invest \$400,000 in FY25 planning funding for Housing Alexandria to work with several highly respected companies that promote energy efficiency to help the City meet its EAP2040 emission reductions, support the 2023 City's principles of equity and environmental justice and its strategic priorities of economic development and local sustainability jobs. **2030 is only 5 fiscal years away.** Implementing energy efficiency measures could save up to \$200/month in energy costs helping to increase the affordability of any housing unit.

After 30 years working for the federal government and the last ten leading multi-million dollar projects, I can tell you the most critical aspect of a project is its planning. Poor planning can result in cost overruns, failed deadlines, or failed objectives. That is why the EPC is asking the City to fund a planning process to help determine how best to upgrade the City's affordable housing stock to make it consistent with the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan (ECCAP) requirement of retrofitting thousands of housing units by 2030 to make them more energy efficient. Instead of higher-cost, individual planning, this project's design will cover the widest range of housing units across the City – saving money.

As the City prioritizes methods to increase affordable housing, funding this project will further the City's principles of equity, environmental justice and service. It will also meet its strategic priorities by helping to plan for a future with more diverse housing opportunities and tools to foster economic development by reducing the energy burden and health impacts on our most vulnerable residents. Funded this plan can also serve as a pilot/demonstration project for future non-profit, PPP, and market-rate, high performance building retrofits in our City. We must seize this opportunity now to combat the climate crisis and make this investment today to support a safe, vibrant and livable community.

The attached letter provides the specifics about the project, however to summarize Housing Alexandria recently sought funding for a project to determine how best to upgrade the energy performance of its units. As proposed in the application, it would partner with the Passive House Institute US (PHIUS), BlockEnergy, and other consultants to determine optimal strategies for energy efficiency, electrification, and microgrid retrofits—from both a technical and financial perspective—for two aging complexes representative of buildings within the agency's portfolio and our region:

Lacy Court – a 44-unit complex of 3-story garden apartments built in the 1950's, including 18 apartments available at 50% of the area median income (AMI) and 26 apartments available at 60% AMI; and

Parkstone – a 326-unit, 17-story high-rise constructed in 1989, including 130 apartments serving families making under 60% of AMI, 114 apartments for those making under 80% AMI, and 82 apartments available at market rates.

These buildings were selected by Housing Alexandria following community engagement, discussions with Tenant Advisory Boards, and reviews of utility cost trends.

Both EPC and the City's Office of Climate Action wrote in support for the Housing Alexandria proposal, but unfortunately the project was not selected, however the urgent need for it continues given the scale and complexity of the retrofit work needed. Completing the planning process must come first to best take advantage of future assured government rebates and tax incentives.

Therefore, we urge you to include funding for carrying out the Housing Alexandria project in order to develop an intelligent, cost-effective approach to launching energy efficiency improvements and electrification of our built environment that will serve as a model going forward to retrofits required to "move the needle" and achieve the ECCAPs action requirements. With a high-powered team including PHIUS and BlockEnergy, Alexandria has a chance to be among the first cities in the Mid-Atlantic region to benefit from new retrofit planning software, and to pilot a multifamily microgrid system. With millions of dollars becoming available from the Inflation Reduction Act and a relatively steep learning curve in substantially improving the energy and greenhouse gas emissions performance of existing buildings, we believe this project would be an exceedingly wise investment.

Thank you for your consideration and if you have any questions, please contact me.

Kathie Hoekstra

Kathie Hoekstra
EPC Chair

Cc: City Council members