ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3E

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Carbon Neutral Ideas DC

Dear Mayor Bowser/DC Council,

We commend the District for taking steps to reduce global carbon emissions, in particular standing by the Paris Climate Accord even when our nation's leader failed to lead in that regard. We applaud you for taking steps to improve the city's carbon footprint with measurable goals and a timeline to achieve them.

DC goal is to be carbon neutral by 2050, with emissions cut in half by 2032. We believe that we can and must do better. DC's goal of having car 100% of registrations be electric by 2045, heat and water be 100% electric by 2036, and carbon net zero new homes and buildings by 2026 should be accelerated and more aggressive. We are glad that President Biden has committed to rejoining Paris Agreement, but we can and should do more starting locally. ANC 3E is committed to examining this issue and pushing for change using the levers available to us.

For the coming two-year ANC cycle, 3E commits to incorporating aggressive climate change action in its review of all materials that come before us where we opine with great weight. This includes:

- Development applications seeking any relief, whether a planned unit development or otherwise;
- Homeowner requests for relief; and
- Community organization requests for funding.

In addition, ANC3E plans to partner with the local community to make change locally, including eliminating non-recyclable plastic packaging and plastic bags from local merchants.

The District has at its disposal a number of tools to change behavior. We encourage the Mayor and the Council to take action this year to incorporate levers of change into District-wide policy. Below are city-wide steps that the Council and City Administration can take to encourage and effectuate local change.

Rethink financial incentives in what we build.

First, we ask that the Mayor and DC council examine how best to use tax incentives to change behavior and modify the tax code this budget cycle to accomplish those goals. For example, make certain tax incentives available only for achieving the highest LEED standard of Platinum and LEED Zero. Conversely, the city could increase tax burden on buildings that do not meet LEED minimum standards. DC could consider a sliding scale of incentives to encourage building owners to transition to net zero carbon footprint.

Two national examples include, the City of Cincinnati, Ohio which adopted a measure providing an automatic 100% real property tax exemption of the assessed property value for newly constructed or rehabilitated commercial or residential properties that earn a minimum of LEED certification and

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Nevada, which exempted construction materials for a qualifying LEED building from local taxes. We would press the city *to only provide such benefits for organizations pursuing the most aggressive levels of change.*

The city could also consider phasing in a surtax for non-carbon zero buildings; this tax could be added on to the property tax, assessed on energy consumption or some other mechanism.

Smaller ideas that show commitment to these goals would include charging more for building permits for commercial construction that does not meet carbon zero goals or residential construction that does not incorporate certain environmentally friendly design elements into a project.

DC could also change mortgage requirements to allow homeowner financing of the cost of fitting an existing house with solar panels, electric appliances, boilers, etc

Educate the community.

Require mandatory education on climate change and steps that can be taken immediately to help address it for certain businesses operating in DC, whether commercial or residential, including HVAC companies, real estate brokers, building contractors, developers, and landlords. This education should be required in order to conduct business in the District, and enforceable through a tax penalty added on to property taxes in the case of developers and landlords, and business taxes for others.

The education should encompass ways each organization can contribute to lowering emissions and waste, and ways the organization can engage customers to partner in making that change. For example, real estate brokers could provide information on the carbon footprint of the residence, basic features of the residence that could be modified to reduce consumption/carbon footprint (solar panels, electric rather than gas appliances), and financing options to address those issues on sale/purchase. Educated HVAC companies could work with commercial and residential customers to better present more efficient options for heating and cooling systems.

Developers and landlords should be required as a condition of obtaining or renewing a business license in the District to attend mandatory annual training on best practices, develop a plan to meet certain goals, and hold businesses accountable by refusing to renew licenses, or providing a tax penalty of those who do not meet goals. Contractors should be required as a condition of obtaining or renewing their license to attend training on materials, techniques, types of products, and other building activities that contribute to reducing carbon emissions of construction projects.

Disclosure to the public.

The city should also require disclosure to business customers or buyers or renters of housing of energy use and associated climate change issues. For example, each new home purchase should come with required disclosure of the home's carbon footprint and steps the new homeowner can take to reduce it (solar, convert appliances from gas); renters should be presented with information on their building's

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carbon footprint and how the landlord/owner ranks on achieving carbon reduction goals compared to others; HVAC companies should be required to inform customers of DC's move to reduce emissions, benchmark for achieving that, and carbon reducing features and comparative benefits of various HVAC options. Businesses should be required to post visibly for customers the company's carbon footprint, any change in the footprint over time, and how the business ranks compared to other DC enterprises.

Commercial real estate owners should be required to post such information visibly as well. It is time to change the notion of commercial real estate simply holding buildings as an asset for profit; these businesses should come to the table and ensure their holdings are moving toward our City's collective goals.

Use transparency to bring change.

Publish an easily accessible list on DC's website ranking businesses based on their success in making change. Require business owners to post data and information on their footprint and plan to address climate change on their front door. Grade businesses on their performance meeting benchmarks and publicize that effort (think New York City's grading of restaurants). Ensure any website or database is easily searchable by sector, building owner, corporate owner (if applicable) and other criteria to enable the public to hold entities accountable for their progress on climate change. DC should publish an overall report card for the largest contributors of carbon to the local environment, including physical plant, transportation, and other factors.

There are many other activities DC could pursue to make change. For example, change the vehicle registration fee structure to reduce fees on electric vehicles. Include a pop-up window on the DC DMV on-line registration window showing the cost differential over time of owning electric versus gas powered vehicles. The city could charge higher registration fees for cabs, Uber, etc. that are not operating electric vehicles. To address non-recyclable waste, DC could implement a 100% excise tax on products in bad packaging (plastic six-ring can holders, aluminum-lined potato chip bags) with no exemptions. The District should increase its plastic bag fee to at least 50 cents per bag.

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