



The Fairfax County Tree Commission
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703.324.1770

June 24, 2020

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk to the Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 552
Fairfax, VA 22035

Re: Solar Panels in Parking Lots

Dear Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors:

The Fairfax County Tree Commission is pleased at the progress being made to install solar panels at government buildings including schools. We believe that installing solar panels at government facilities—including parking lots—is an important step towards reducing Fairfax County's carbon footprint.

In this context, the Tree Commission considers solar canopy installations to be most appropriate for parking lots without existing tree cover. We note that trees are important for mitigating climate change (by absorbing and storing carbon) and for adapting to it (by absorbing stormwater and reducing the urban heat island effect). As stated in the 2019 Tree Action Plan, Fairfax County has a key goal of no net loss of tree cover.

For these reasons, the Tree Commission recommends that Fairfax County prioritize the placement of solar canopy installations or similar facilities on those parking lots which currently lack tree cover. If any parking lots with existing trees were to be considered for locating such facilities, it would be important for County staff to carefully consider the economic and ecosystem service values of the existing tree cover, including calculations of lost carbon storage and uptake if trees are removed, the costs associated with tree removal, the community benefits provided by well-located shade trees, and any related economic or environmental analysis. It will be especially important to avoid the removal of healthy, mature trees from parking lots or their edges.

The Tree Commission recommends including these provisions in the County's solar program and looks forward to a successful reduction of the County's carbon footprint.

Sincerely,

Catherine C. Ledec, Chairman
Fairfax County Tree Commission