


City of Alexandria, Virginia

4-14-09

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 8, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF THE PROPOSED DRAFT ALEXANDRIA URBAN FORESTRY MASTER PLAN

ISSUE: Proposed Alexandria Urban Forestry Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council:

- (1) Receive the draft proposed Alexandria Urban Forestry Master Plan (Attachment 3), submitted by the Urban Forestry Steering Committee;
- (2) Authorize staff to distribute this draft plan to the Planning Commission, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Environmental Policy Commission, the Open Space Advisory Group, and to the public for comments;
- (3) Request that the draft plan be docketed for Planning Commission and City Council public hearing and consideration in June of 2009, as an amendment to the City of Alexandria Master Plan; and
- (4) Thank the members of the Urban Forestry Steering Committee (Attachment 2) for their efforts on behalf of the City.

BACKGROUND: In January 2004 at the request of Councilman Rob Kupricka and then Councilman Andrew Macdonald, then City Manager Phil Sunderland met with a group of City residents and staff to discuss current City policies and procedures for the management and preservation of trees on both public and private property. Specific concerns included an increase in the number of trees being removed on public and private property, utility line clearance practices, and the replacement and planting of new trees. As a result of that meeting, the City Manager recommended and City Council approved in May 2004 the appointment of a 12 member Urban Forestry Steering Committee to develop and present a comprehensive Urban Forestry Master Plan for the City of Alexandria. The mission of the Urban Forestry Steering Committee and goal of the Urban Forestry Master Plan was to characterize and quantify the current state of Alexandria's Urban Forest, and to identify strategies to improve its density, health and diversity (Attachment 1).

The scope of work for the Urban Forestry Steering Committee included five primary areas of interest that were identified through meetings and input from City staff, as well as the goals and strategic recommendations set forth in the *Alexandria Open Space Plan* and *The City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Strategic Master Plan*. They are to:

- Review City policies, programs and services for the planting, maintenance, and removal of publicly owned trees located along City streets, in parks, and on other public lands, and recommend needed changes;
- Review City ordinances, regulations and procedures that address the protection and preservation of trees located on public or private land and recommend changes;
- Promote programs that will enhance the public's awareness of trees and the benefits they provide to all of us individually, and as a community;
- Assist in the implementation of Goal 12 of the *Alexandria Open Space Plan*, Expand Citywide Street Tree Program and Protect Existing Trees and Woodland Areas: and
- Protect, restore and enhance the Urban Forest and beautification of the City, Strategy Recommendation Policy 1.5 presented in *The City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Strategic Master Plan*.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan produced by the Steering Committee includes specific recommendations for policies and regulations regarding the maintenance, management, preservation and protection of the City's trees on both public and private properties. Draft program recommendations are prioritized, and performance measures are proposed. Recommendations to expand existing programs and new initiatives include performance measures, as well as cost estimates required for implementation.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan presents 52 short, mid, and long-term recommendations to stem the decline and loss of the City's tree canopy and to improve the City's Urban Forest. The recommendations were developed in response to key challenges identified by the Urban Forestry Steering Committee with the assistance of The Davey Resource Group, interaction with City residents, and the cooperation of City leaders, administration, and staff in the Departments of Planning and Zoning, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and Transportation and Environmental Services. The key challenges identified include: the City's decreasing tree canopy cover; development and other pressures that are negatively affecting tree health and longevity, and further limiting the space available for trees to be planted and grow to maturity; the absence of a Citywide tree management plan that has goals, objectives and performance measures; a current City program that is reactive not proactive, including a planting and tree care program that is limited and primarily focused on street trees; and a lack of sufficient public education and outreach.

In order to meet these challenges, the Urban Forestry Master Plan recommends that the City adopt American Forests' tree canopy goal of 40%, plant more trees, provide better care for existing and new trees, create a proactive and accountable management program, and to provide public education and outreach that encourages the preservation and expansion of the urban forest. Many of the recommendations presented can be implemented at little or no cost to the City. Other recommendations including the planting of an additional 400 trees annually, pruning an additional 4,000 trees annually, hiring additional tree and horticulture crew staff to meet the maintenance demands identified in the City's parks and school grounds, and the development and presentation of public education opportunities will require a significant increase in the level of funding provided for the City's arboriculture and horticulture programs of an estimated \$1.1 million annually. The recommendations are ambitious, but realistically achievable over time. Some need immediate attention, whereas other recommendations can be phased in over time.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan addresses one of the critical issues first identified for action during Alexandria's first Environmental Summit held in 1997. Every year, the City of Alexandria loses tree canopy because of development, storms, aging, and urban pressures. If the City is to achieve the environmental, economic and aesthetic benefits of our urban forest, it should manage it and invest in its maintenance and preservation. The proposed draft plan responds to these issues by identifying and assessing current conditions, and by recommending actions to address these conditions.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Urban Forestry Master Plan recommends four new and expanded programs. The cost of these programs is included, in part in the FY 2009 Budget. Additional costs to implement these programs total \$1.1 million annually.

The Urban Forestry budget for FY 2010 is \$1.8 million which is a \$0.3 million proposed reduction from \$2.1 million in FY 2009. While a reduction of the Urban Forestry budget is not something that is a preferred option, FY 2010's overall Citywide severe funding constraints made this reduction necessary. It should also be noted that City staff proposed that City Council consider a restoration of \$100,000 of this reduction in Budget Memo #73 sent to City Council on April 3, together with other possible "adds" to the FY 2010 budget. While it is recognized that this cutback makes the implementation of the recommendations more difficult, it is hoped that as funding constraints lessen in future years that significant elements of this proposed Urban Forestry Master Plan can be implemented. As is the case with many of the City's Master Plans, these plans are prepared as vision and long-term goal documents, and that each year's budget considers funding of elements of each Master Plan in competition with other short and long-term City budget needs.

Although there are proposed Urban Forestry budget reductions in FY 2010, the FY 2009 budget retains an unallocated \$80,000 in Contingent Reserve for Urban Forestry. These funds were set aside in anticipation of the Urban Forestry report recommendations and can be used towards meeting Urban Forestry needs.

Fiscal Budget Impact of Proposed New and Expanded Programs

Action	Estimated Annual Cost	FY 2009 Budget	Added Cost
Increase Tree Canopy	\$177,750	\$105,000	\$72,750
Five Year Pruning Cycle (as part of) On-Going Tree Maintenance Program	\$976,945	\$496,945	\$480,000
Reorganize Arborist/Horticulture Section	\$2,007,476	\$1,596,476	\$411,000
Educational Opportunities and Public Outreach	\$95,000		\$95,000
Total	\$3,257,171	\$2,198,421	\$1,058,750

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1. City Council Docket Memo #21 5/25/04: Approval of the Establishment of an Urban Forestry Steering Committee as a City Manager Committee, and the Development of a Comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan

Attachment 2: Urban Forestry Steering Committee Roster

Attachment 3: Urban Forestry Master Plan

STAFF:

Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

John Noelle, City Arborist, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Bethany Carton, Park Planner, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

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5-25-04

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 19, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *ps*

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN URBAN FORESTRY
STEERING COMMITTEE AS A CITY MANAGER COMMITTEE, AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE URBAN FORESTRY PLAN

ISSUE: Approval of the establishment of an Urban Forestry Steering Committee as a City Manager Committee, and the development of a comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the establishment of an Urban Forestry Steering Committee as a City Manager Committee; and,
- (2) Support the development of a comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan for the City.

BACKGROUND: At the request of Councilmen Krupieka and Macdonald, a meeting was held with staff and interested citizens on January 13, 2004, to discuss City policies and procedures for the management and preservation of trees on public and private property. The recommendation to establish an Urban Forest Steering Committee and to develop an Urban Forestry Plan to guide our tree preservation and expansion efforts in the years ahead, is a result of this meeting, and subsequent discussions with Council Members and staff.

DISCUSSION: The charge of the Steering Committee is to prepare a comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan for the City, and in doing so, to characterize and quantify the current state of Alexandria's urban forest and to identify strategies to improve its health, quality, density and diversity.

The Steering Committee's work will focus on three primary areas of interest that have been identified through our meetings and input from City staff, and are derived from the goals and strategic recommendations set forth in the *Alexandria Open Space Plan* (Attachment 1) and *The City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Strategic Master Plan* (Attachment 2).

The work of the Committee in those areas will be to:

1. Review City policies, operations, programs and services that address the planting, maintenance, protection and preservation, and the removal, of publicly-owned trees located along City streets, in parks and on other public property, and recommend changes;
2. Review City ordinances, regulations, procedures and operations that address the planting, maintenance, protection and preservation, and the removal, of trees located on private property, and recommend changes; and
3. Identify programs that will enhance the public's awareness of trees and their benefits to the community, will educate the public regarding the proper maintenance and protection of trees, and will encourage members of the public to preserve and enhance the health of trees on their property and to plant new ones.

The Urban Forestry Plan, which the Steering Committee will propose to the City Manager, will include proposed new or revised City (1) policies, (2) ordinances and regulations (that have undergone legal review), (3) procedures, and (4) operations, programs and services regarding the management, maintenance, protection, preservation and planting of trees on public and private property. Recommendations to expand existing programs and undertake new initiatives will include performance measures and cost estimates required for implementation.

The Urban Forestry Steering Committee will consist of twelve members: (a) one representative designated by each of the following commissions: the Alexandria Beautification Commission, the Environmental Policy Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Planning Commission; (b) four citizens who have significant knowledge and experience in the fields of arboriculture, horticulture, urban forestry or landscape architecture, or a demonstrated intense interest in the City's trees; (c) one representative from the Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria; and (d) three citizens at large. The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will provide staff for the Steering Committee, and will be assisted by staff from the Departments of Planning and Zoning, and Transportation and Environmental Services. The Steering Committee also will work collaboratively with the Open Space Committee toward the achievement of the goals set forth in the *Alexandria Open Space Plan*.

If this recommendation is approved by Council, we will form the Urban Forestry Steering Committee in late June so it can begin its work during the summer.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Steering Committee will determine, in the preliminary stages of its work, the need to retain consulting services to assist it in carrying out its charge. Any scopes of work and budgets for consulting services will be prepared by staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1. Goal 12. ALEXANDRIA OPEN SPACE PLAN

Attachment 2. Strategy Recommendation Policy 1.5. The City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Strategic Master Plan

STAFF:

Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services

Eileen Fogarty, Director, Planning and Zoning

John Noelle, City Arborist

CHAPTER 5 THE PLAN**GOAL 12. EXPAND CITYWIDE STREET TREE PROGRAM AND PROTECT EXISTING TREES AND WOODLAND AREAS**

Our City's beauty is created, in part, through its street trees, wooded properties and environmental corridors. The City has an active program to continue planting street trees and protect vegetation in its parks. The City should maximize opportunities to enhance its tree coverage and protect its natural woodland resources.

Recommendations for Goal 12

- Protect significant tree-lined arterials, parkways, thoroughfares, and boulevards, including:
 - Holmes Run Parkway
 - Taylor Run Parkway
 - Timber Branch Parkway
 - North Beauregard Street
 - Commonwealth Avenue
 - Ft. Williams Parkway
- Identify and address potential tree cover protection areas, including:
 - Beverly Hills
 - Episcopal Seminary / High School site

Legend

- Streetscape Improvements/Street Tree Program
- Significant Tree Cover
- Parks

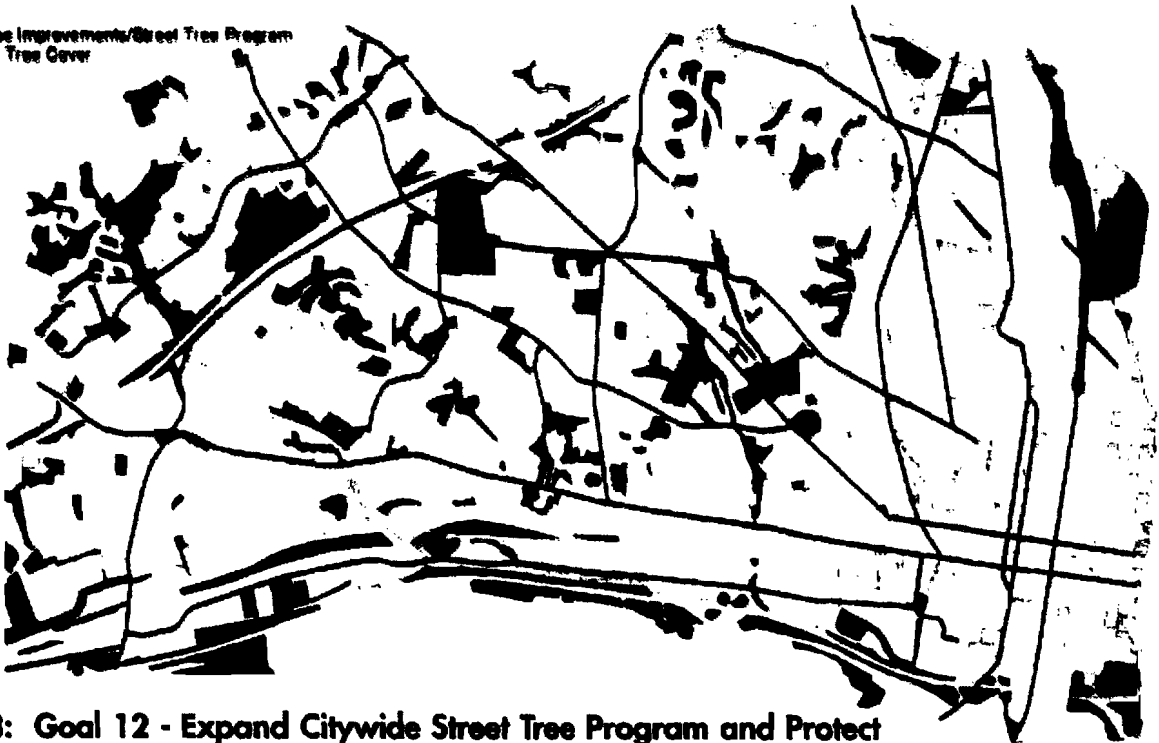
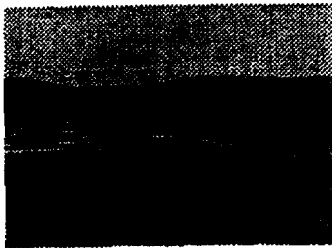


Figure 28: Goal 12 - Expand Citywide Street Tree Program and Protect Existing Trees and Woodland Areas



Woodland area

- Inova Hospital
- St. Agnes / St. Steven's School sites
- Rosemont
- Del Ray
- Park Fairfax
- Old Town
- Neighborhoods bordered by:
 - Seminary Road, I-395 and Fairfax County
 - I-395, King Street, Quaker Lane and Seminary Road
 - Braddock Road, Russell Road, Quaker Lane and Janney's Lane
 - Quaker Lane, West Glebe Road, Cameron Mills Road and Crestwood Drive
- Address stream valleys protection areas including:
 - Four Mile Run, Holmes Run, Cameron Run, Taylor Run, Old Cameron Run, Timber Branch, Backlick Run, Strawberry Run, Hooffs Run, Great Hunting Creek, and Lucky Run

- [See recommendations for specific streetscape programs below.]

Implementation Strategies for Goal 12

- Establish an aggressive campaign to involve community organizations in protecting existing trees and planting new trees within each neighborhood. Provide incentives for the planting and maintenance of trees on private property.
- Strengthen existing tree protection regulations. Establish a City Tree Plan and identify areas for increased forestation.
- Support and strengthen the newly established Arlington and Alexandria Tree Steward Program to assist in tree maintenance, planting, and public education.
- Request the Department of Planning and Zoning to research the feasibility of establishing a Tree Cover Overlay District. This designation would provide an additional means of protection for trees in areas of the City where these are essential to their quality and character. Distinguish between areas where tree crown cover is provided on private versus public lands.
- Amend City's landscape and streetscape guidelines to improve tree planting areas (e.g., continuous trenches, enlarged planting areas, greater soil volumes, irrigation and drainage) and increase tree coverage requirements for new developments where possible.
- Strengthen the City's ability to maintain its existing tree inventory (e.g., institute a watering program for new trees, etc.).

CHAPTER 5 THE PLAN

- Evaluate existing City tree crown cover based on current American Forests recommended standards for residential and commercial areas.
- Create specific agreements with VDOT for maintenance of wooded areas along highways through the City.

The City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Implementation & Vision Matrix

		the City. Strategically seek and develop additional funding sources that will allow the City to realize the recommended strategies for creating open space opportunities and maintain existing open space.			
Strategy Recommendation Policy		Tactics	Operational Impact	Staff Group Responsible	Start Date End Date
1.5	Protect, restore and enhance the urban forest and beautification of the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an urban forestry plan for the city. • Seek council approval for funding the plan. • Implement a work plan that is 70% planned work and 30% reactive work. • Protect existing trees and woodland. • Expand city wide tree planting program. 	Coordination with Community Groups, Planning and Zoning Department, VDOT Potential additional funding required	City Manager's office, City Arborist, Private consultant to assist in developing urban forestry plan, Office of Management & Budget, Planning & Zoning	Spring 2003 Spring 2004
Strategy Recommendation Policy		Tactics	Operational Impact	Staff Group Responsible	Start Date End Date

URBAN FORESTRY STEERING COMMITTEE

Tuppence Blackwell

Henry Brooks

Marian Clarke

Cindy DeGrood

Patrick Hagan

Bill Hendricksen

Tina Kulinski

Skip March

Deana Rhodeside, Chair

Jim Snyder

B. J. Sullivan

Paula Sullivan

John Komoroske, Former Chair

City of Alexandria Urban Forestry Master Plan



Growing Concerns about City Policies and Procedures for the Management and Preservation of Trees on Public and Private Property



- Trees being removed on public and private property
- Utility line clearance practices
- Replacement and planting new trees

Council Action May 2004

- Establishment of a 12 Member Urban Forestry Steering Committee
- Charged to Prepare a Comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan
 - Characterize and quantify the current state of Alexandria's urban forest
 - Identify strategies to improve the health, quality, density and diversity of the urban forest

Scope of Work

Review , revise and recommend new:



1. Policies, operations, programs and services
2. Ordinances and regulations
3. Public awareness

Scope of Work



Provide:

1. Cost estimates
2. Performance measures

Process

- City Green Canopy Study
 - 34% tree canopy cover in 2001
- Davey Resource Group (August 2005)
 - On Site Evaluation
 - Interviews: Mayor, CMO, Directors of Recreation, Transportation & Environmental Services, Planning & Zoning
- Public Meeting (January 2006)
- Online Survey (January 2006)
- Tree Canopy Study Update Alexandria GIS Division 2008
 - 30% tree canopy cover in 2007

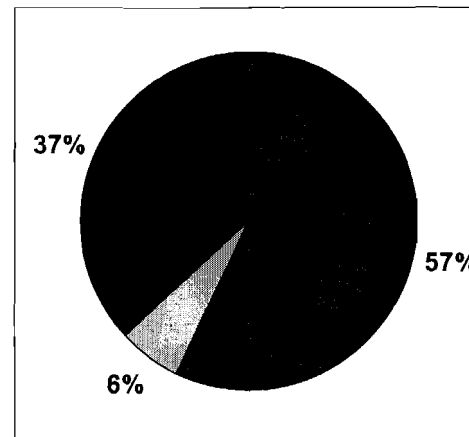
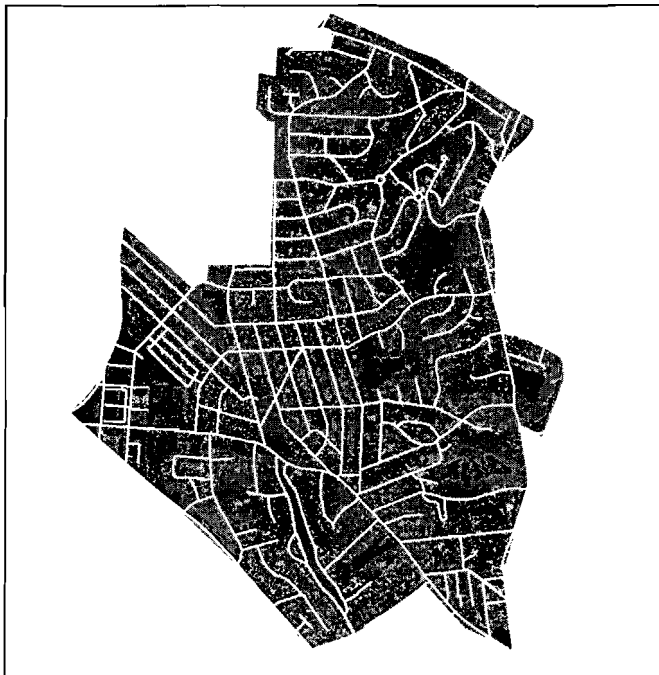
Key Challenges Identified

- The City's tree canopy cover is decreasing
 - In 2001 34% (City Green study)
 - In 2007 30% (Alexandria GIS Division study)
- Development and other pressures.
 - Negatively affecting tree health and longevity.
 - Limited space for new trees to be planted.
- Aging stands of trees

Key Challenges

- The City's tree canopy cover is decreasing

Northridge Study Area



Other Challenges Identified

- The current program is reactive not proactive
- Planting and care of the tree is limited and focused on street trees
- Need for citywide management plan and adequate resources to carry out the plan
- Lack of public education and outreach

Alexandria's Urban Forest is:

- **Extensive** – Tree planting is maximized, to the extent practical, on public and private land.
- **Healthy** – All trees are properly planted and well maintained
- **Highly Valued** – Citizens recognize the environmental benefits of trees and their contribution to the City's livability, reflected in the taxpayer support for significant public funding

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- **Healthy** – All trees are properly planted and well maintained
- **Highly Valued** – Citizens recognize the environmental benefits of trees and their contribution to the City's livability, reflected in the taxpayer support for significant public funding

Recommendations



1. Plant more trees.

- Adopt American Forests' recommended tree canopy goal of 40%
- Plant 400 additional trees annually
- Develop master landscape, planting and maintenance plans for all public properties
- Create ways to promote tree planting on private properties; such as grants, a tree bank, tree sales

2. Provide Better Care For The Trees We Plant And The Trees We Have.

- Five year pruning cycle for existing trees
- Three year establishment program for new trees
- Employ new methods of planting and installation.

3. Improve How We Manage The Urban Forest

- Transform program for reactive to one that is proactive and accountable.
- Develop a management plan and provide additional resources.
- Establish benchmarks and report progress in an annual State of the Urban Forest Report to City Council

4. Provide Public Education And Outreach

- Encourage the preservation and expansion of the urban forest.
- Develop and implement an effective public outreach and education strategy
- Rededicate Fort Ward Park as the City's Arboretum
- Build an effective website
- Fund an additional extension agent

Estimated Costs

Fiscal Budget Impact of Proposed New and Expanded Programs

Action	Estimated Annual Cost	FY 2009 Budget	Added Cost
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Take Action

- The recommendations presented are ambitious, but realistically achievable
- Short and long term; some recommendations can be acted on immediately; some are already being implemented
- Given the constraints of the current fiscal environment, implementation of many of the recommendations will be subject to the ability to provide funding.

