White Paper: The Government Buildings Efficiency Ordinance and its Alignment with Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government's Climate Commitments

In support of the ordinance proposed by The Environmental Commission of Lexington and Fayette County, this paper outlines the strategic importance of a Government Buildings Efficiency Ordinance for the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG). This proposed ordinance would serve as a crucial, implementable component of LFUCG's broader climate goals, specifically the city-wide commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. By setting this standard, this ordinance will showcase Lexington's leadership and commitment to a sustainable future.

Strategic Alignment with LFUCG Goals

The proposed ordinance directly supports and operationalizes the goals laid out in key LFUCG-approved documents and plans.

Comprehensive Plan

Theme B, Goal 2 of the Comprehensive Plan commands LFUCG to "Identify and mitigate local impact of climate change by tracking and reducing Lexington-Fayette County's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, and commit to community-wide net zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050." This ordinance implements the plan as is required by law in the areas of both reducing and tracking the city's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. It also implements portions of the plan's Pillar II Sustainability, Sustainability Policy #2.

Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

The LFUCG, as the lead city government for the Lexington-Fayette Metropolitan Statistical Area, has developed a PCAP and is in the process of finalizing a CCAP with federal funding. These plans identify near- and long-term strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A government buildings efficiency ordinance would provide a specific, high-impact measure to address emissions from the public sector, which is a key component of the overall city-wide inventory.

Empower Lexington Plan

Empower Lexington encourages energy efficiency and sustainability across the city. By mandating it for its own facilities, LFUCG would lead by example, providing a model for businesses, institutions, and residents to follow. While some of the framework exists in an incentivized structure to begin these reforms, there are no mandatory mechanisms for implementing our aspirations. The ordinance's focus on deep retrofits and electrification aligns with the plan's goals to reduce energy consumption and transition to a cleaner energy grid, especially through city facilities.

Net-Zero Emissions by 2050 Resolution

The Urban County Council's unanimous vote to commit to net-zero emissions by 2050 is a landmark declaration. This ordinance translates that aspirational goal into a concrete, measurable, and enforceable policy. Reducing energy consumption and transitioning away from fossil fuels in city buildings, and pointing toward sustainable technologies, is a direct path to lowering city emissions and demonstrating progress toward this ambitious target.

Policy Framework and Implementation

The ordinance is designed for a forward-thinking yet practical approach, balancing ambitious environmental goals with the operational realities of city staff. It explicitly addresses the need to move beyond single projects to a continuous, policy-driven approach.

- **Policy vs. One-Time Initiatives:** While LFUCG has completed successful one-time energy projects in the past, such as lighting and HVAC retrofits, this ordinance creates a durable policy framework. It establishes a consistent mandate for future improvements, ensuring that energy efficiency remains a core operational principle rather than a sporadic effort. The ordinance's required benchmarking and performance standards will help identify new opportunities as technology evolves and as building stock changes. Financial planning within this framework will emphasize measuring savings over a long timeframe (e.g., 30-year lifecycle) to accurately quantify returns.
- **Building Performance Standards (BPS):** The core of the ordinance is a BPS, a policy that requires buildings to meet certain performance targets, rather than mandating specific

equipment or actions. This flexibility allows for innovation and cost-effective solutions while ensuring consistent progress.

- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Inspired by other successful programs in cities like Louisville and Cincinnati, the ordinance establishes a benchmarking requirement. By mandating the annual tracking of energy and water usage, the city can create a clear baseline, identify the most inefficient buildings, and prioritize investments where they will have the greatest impact. It is important to note that energy data is currently being measured and supported, utilizing Energy CAP for Energy Use Intensity (EUI). This data is essential for transparent reporting and for city staff to effectively manage the program.
- **Forward Thinking to Reduce Later Costs:** Creating solar-ready guidelines and promoting energy efficiency at the outset greatly reduces the future cost of a solar installation and the need for efficiency changes later in a building's life; at the design stage, these changes are often cost neutral.
- **Dedicated Resources:** A key to success is a dedicated City Energy Manager position. This person would enforce the standards specified in this ordinance. This person would serve as the subject matter expert, guiding departments, conducting audits, and managing the project pipeline. Crucially, the success of the financial component relies on staff dedicated to calculating savings.The long-term energy savings from this role would far exceed the cost of the position, making it a sound fiscal decision.