



**ASF QUESTIONS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY BOARD JULY 7 SPECIAL  
ELECTION CANDIDATES  
MAY 28, 2020**

**KEY ISSUE #1: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Question 1 (two parts):**

**Cost-Benefit Analysis for New Development** - Reflecting a key recommendation of the 2015 Community Facilities Study, our County Board in 2017 directed the Manager to study options for county performance of cost-benefit analyses for new site plan projects. Such analyses, done by many jurisdictions, quantify likely tax and revenue income generation per site plan, as well as potential incremental costs on nearby schools, parks, water/sewer and other community infrastructure. So far, the Arlington County Board appears to have done little or nothing to implement this recommendation. What would you do, if anything, to move forward on this directive?

**Population Density** - Our county board currently supports very high growth/density rates. (Estimated U.S. census growth from April 2010 to July 2019 was 14.0%. U.S. census density in 2010 was 8,309 people per square mile, the highest of any county in Virginia.) If you are elected, would you support growth/densification at the same, a greater, or lesser pace and why?

**Takis Karantonis response:**

I am a strong supporter of the work done by the 2015 Community Facilities Study group. I have been frustrated by a seeming lack of support among School and County Board members for the thoughtful recommendations in that study. I believe in using balanced data to guide decision making - the planning and zoning decisions that underpin our Metro corridors were informed by data developed by Price Waterhouse AND by robust civic engagement in the 1970s. I support bringing regular, deeper economic analyses to ALL that the County does - not just to site plan projects - and would advocate for adding this to appropriate Board reports. I will also promote transparency to the community and will work hard to elevate the voices of

those who have not been participating or have found it difficult to participate in our civic processes.

I do not see high growth as a policy of the County Board. In fact, growth and change are inevitable and can best be managed with thoughtful long-range and short-range planning.

For decades, planning has been our forward-thinking community's best tool for managing growth while creating great places for residents. As a Board member I would strive to use our economic development and physical development actions to help Arlington return to the 50/50 balance between residential and commercial tax revenue that we enjoyed for decades.

As Executive Director of the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization for more than 6 years, the corridor community I led worked hard to ensure that plans for the Pike and its neighborhoods provided ample space for parks (significantly improving the status quo ante), access to good transit, a variety of housing options and access to jobs. Given Arlington's position in the region and Amazon's arrival in our community, Arlington will need more housing for workers and eventually more commercial square footage. If we are clear about our community values and our community needs as we work with landowners and tenants to plan for the next generation of growth and change, I believe additional density will not harm, but enhance, our quality of life.

## **KEY ISSUE #2: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

### **Question 2 (one part):**

**Trees** - Residential and commercial development are putting major stress on Arlington's tree canopy, now hovering near 40%. What specific steps would you take to stabilize and expand Arlington's tree canopy

### **Takis Karantonis response:**

As a former Board chair of Arlingtonians for Clean Environment (ACE), now EcoActionArlington, I know that trees are an important part of Arlington's ecosystem and are a front-line response to climate change. As fortunate as Arlington is to have 40% canopy coverage (a higher percentage than many comparable Virginia communities), we must be vigilant in our protection of this resource.

As a Board Member I would actively support:

1. **Increasing funding for open space acquisition**, aggressively seeking out parcels for purchase, and proactively planting significantly more trees on Arlington public lands and rights-of-way each year than are lost to disease and construction. We need to replenish the canopy every year so that, in the long run, Arlington will continue to have sufficient

tree canopy.

2. **Evaluating plans for construction or expansion of all public buildings** to ensure that they are done in the least disruptive manner possible. As an example, as a BLPC member, I argued for re-using an existing privately-owned parking garage next to the Career Center, rather than building a new one on open green space adjacent to the Montessori Public School. I would also work with School Board colleagues to preemptively preserve trees to the greatest extent possible in their projects, and, where preservation is not possible, add tree groves and other accumulations of trees to their sites, acknowledging that increasing school space is a key priority for our community.

3. **Establishing a *Dashboard for Natural Resources*** that would focus on metrics like tree preservation, un-programmed open space and stream valley habitat protection. This publicly available source of information would inform County Board decisions and allow citizen activists to monitor our financial and personnel efforts in this important area of community sustainability.

4. **Adding tools to the County's toolbox to better balance the impact of single family developments** on the environment. Between the expanded footprint of many of these homes and severe weather events, many mature trees have been lost in recent years. New tools should include tax incentives for preservation of mature trees and strict enforcement, including fines, for violation of preservation goals.

### **KEY ISSUE #3: INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **Question 3 (two parts):**

**Stormwater Management** - Severe flooding of July 2018 and July 2019 caused massive property and environmental damage; climate change will trigger more such events. What should we be doing to factor in the adverse consequences of climate change in Arlington's stormwater management policies and capital projects, as well in private sector developments?

**Schools and Transportation Needs** - Planning and growth must also account for infrastructure needs of growing populations, whether schools, water, wastewater, fire/police systems, or transportation systems. Pre-Covid-19, schools and traffic had become major stressors for residents, yet the county takes ad hoc approaches, with school reshufflings and traffic jams increasing without meaningful steps to increase public transport use. Do you believe these are problems and what changes would you endorse?

#### **Takis Karantonis response:**

The floods of 2019 occurred in areas of the County that developed long before today's stormwater management requirements were enacted. As a homeowner in Arlington Village, which was constructed in the early 1940's, I -too- have experienced massive

flooding and know how disruptive it can be.

I will support the devotion of significant CIP resources to upgrade the stormwater management and storage capacity in these older parts of the County built on streams. I also support taking the necessary steps to ensure that Arlington, like many neighboring jurisdictions, can require redeveloped lots to manage their downstream run-off via easements. It is critical that ALL developers are intentional and responsible for managing the downstream consequences of new construction and I will be vigilant in requiring that all new development, including expanded single-family home footprints and public facilities, complies with the strict Chesapeake Bay Ordinance requirements.

To move beyond today and focus on a future more compromised by climate change, I will push for the creation of a Task Force of local civil engineers and other experts, charged with working with staff to validate DES plans and/or recommend additional state-of-the-art strategies and best management practices for remediation. With this public review, the Board can demonstrate to the citizenry that the County is dedicated to resolving the issues at hand.

I fully support the joint County/Schools Arlington Committee for Transportation Choices that brings staff and citizens together to coordinate multimodal transportation for schools. For every school, I support wide sidewalks that can accommodate the foot traffic of those who live nearby, sufficient bike racks in safe places for kids/parents to bike to school, and timing ART buses to arrive at schools near the start time of school. When new schools open, carefully calibrated family plans need time to adjust. I support providing trial runs in the weeks before school starts to be ready when schools begin. And we need to acknowledge that we will never eliminate the family car - sometimes the only option to successfully juggle school and work schedules is to drive.

#### **Key Issue #4: Diversity**

##### **Question 4 (one part):**

**Housing Affordability** - The county is losing demographic and economic diversity as a consequence of economic and development trends of the past two decades. ASF believes that key zoning decisions of past boards, and plans for denser zoning known as Missing Middle Housing, will only exacerbate these trends. How would you propose to address this challenge during your term in office?

##### **Takis Karantonis response:**

We are losing our demographic and economic diversity because the price of land and the cost of housing have risen astronomically since 2010. As Vice-Chair of the Alliance for Housing Solutions, I have been a strong supporter of the County's Housing Grant Program and have advocated of more funding in the Affordable Housing Investment Fund. Yet I

believe that these tools are insufficient to provide the housing we will need to ensure that our diverse community stays diverse.

A key solution to this crisis, given the law of supply and demand, is to build more housing where appropriate. During the nearly decade-long planning for a revitalized Columbia Pike we learned that, with the right mix of transportation options, density enhancements, public space, tree requirements and community engagement, it is possible to provide a wider range of housing affordability in a long-established corridor. I strongly support the planning led by the Lee Highway Alliance and will continue to advocate for a comprehensive solution on this key corridor.

As we look to the future, I am a strong advocate for the work being done on Missing Middle. After years of work on housing in Arlington, I am convinced that these housing forms, which provide gentle density and thoughtful transitions between neighborhood-serving retail and single family neighborhoods, will lead to a variety of housing options that are not currently present in Arlington today. These forms will help preserve our diversity as they provide choices in size and price for diverse Arlingtonians - especially young families and seniors who want to age in place in this community.