

ASF 2021 GENERAL ELECTION QUESTIONS FOR COUNTY BOARD CANDIDATES

Candidate Clement Response, Oct 11, 2021

1—PARKS, FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES:

A. The County's overdue updating of the Urban Forestry Master Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan is in full swing. What are your specific goals for this update, especially as they may relate to tree canopy, green space and the County's natural environment? Please be specific.

In its recently adopted Community Energy Plan (CEP), the County Board touted the importance of tree canopy.

<https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/09/Draft-CEP-Update-post-July-13-CB-mtg-marked-up-for-Sept-CB.pdf>

Yet it is estimated that 1,000+ trees have been removed from public land in Arlington County since 2013. It is difficult say which is worse--the damage to our quality of life or the County's doublespeak on the subject.

If elected, I will put a stop to the doublespeak and the clearcutting that goes with it.

B. Critics contend that both North Arlington's Gulf Branch Nature Center and South Arlington's Long Branch Nature Center have endured benign neglect by the County in recent years, with both facilities suffering from deferred maintenance and programming cutbacks. What do you see as the value of these facilities and what is the right amount of operating and capital expenditures for them?

According to the statistically valid 2016 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey, Arlingtonians value nature and wildlife habitat:

<https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2016/01/Arlington-County-Parks-Rec-Survey-Findings-Report-May-9-2016.pdf>

Yet, Arlington has repeatedly deferred maintenance and upkeep of these facilities and cut staff and funding.

If elected I will reverse previous nature center staffing and operating cuts and restore nature center operations to at least the level enjoyed in FY2009.

C. The County is not on track at this point to accomplish the Public Open Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) goal of adding 30 acres of public space in 10 years. What actions would you support by the Board to ensure meeting this goal?

Earlier this year, after sitting for 12 years on the recommendation of its own paid consultant to preserve the historic Febrey-Lothrop-Rouse estate, the County Board not only permitted the demolition of the architecturally significant house, it also denied historic designation of the site.

Moreover, the County Board and County Manager failed to include any NEW money for land acquisition in the last 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) or in any subsequent updates. Under these circumstances, it's pointless to recommend actions that might be supported by the Board to acquire public space. Our only option is to vote them out.

D. The County Manager has offered to APS a list of existing parks that could be considered for potential school sites. Do you believe that this was appropriate, and if so, how do you square that with the PSMP goal of adding 30 acres of public space in 10 years and in light of the dramatic growth occurring in our County?

In 2014, former County Manager Barbara Donnellan proposed converting public space at the following locations for potential school sites: Wilson School, TJ Middle School and the Career Center. This has been done.

<https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/release/arlington-county-manager-identifies-potential-public-land-sites-for-affordable-housing-schools/>

The result is more heat-trapping impervious surfaces, increased runoff, and a loss of natural space and tree canopy. If elected, I will challenge the ever-increasing densification of Arlington County that necessitates these land grabs.

2--COST/BENEFIT FISCAL IMPACT STUDIES:

In March 2021, the County entered into a contract with the TischlerBise consulting firm. The contract includes a provision under which TischlerBise will develop "methodologies for forecasting future demand for services and facilities from new development." Do you support requiring and publicly disclosing the results of such forecasts prior to approving major projects or major zoning initiatives, such as the "Missing Middle"?

Absolutely, yes. Not only should a rigorous analysis of the demand for public services attributable to future development be published, it should be required. A fiscal impact analysis should be required for every major development contemplated in the County, and those analyses should be used to produce a report on their cumulative impact on the demand for county services and facilities, along with an estimate of their cost. The question isn't whether Arlington County should do it. The question is why the County isn't doing it already. All or most of the surrounding jurisdictions utilize some version of fiscal impact analysis. Fiscal impact analysis is the sine-qua of good government. If elected, I will demand it and make its results available to the public.

3--PLAN LANGSTON BOULEVARD AND MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING:

A number of civic associations flanking Lee Highway, including Lyon Village and Donaldson Run, have gone on record to sharply criticize current planning efforts as leading to the widespread loss, over time, of small, locally owned businesses, the reduction of relatively modest single family homes, trees and greenspace, the addition of large, multi-story structures that would be

starkly out-of-scale with surrounding neighborhoods, and a sharp rise in property values that would induce gentrification of both residential and commercial development. Proponents argue that Langston Boulevard is ripe for redevelopment and that increased density would yield additional housing, commercial growth and amenities that would benefit all demographic groups and people of all income levels. Who is right and is the County on the right path or does it need to stop and reconsider?

I oppose efforts to upzone low-density “single-family” home neighborhoods under the rubric of “Missing Middle” housing. Upzoning will densify neighborhoods by replacing single-family homes with multiunit dwellings. While it will produce more net housing, that housing will not be affordable to anyone earning less than area median income, which is about \$120,000 per year.

For proof, look no further than a tear-down development on N. Dinwiddie Street in the traditionally black High View Park neighborhood, where in 2018 two duplexes were built each priced at \$1.2 million or double the assessed value of the single-family home they replaced. A similar development is ongoing in the traditionally black Green Valley neighborhood, where a couple of single-family homes were torn down to make way for 8 new townhouses, each priced at over \$800,00, or \$125,000 more per unit than the original homes.

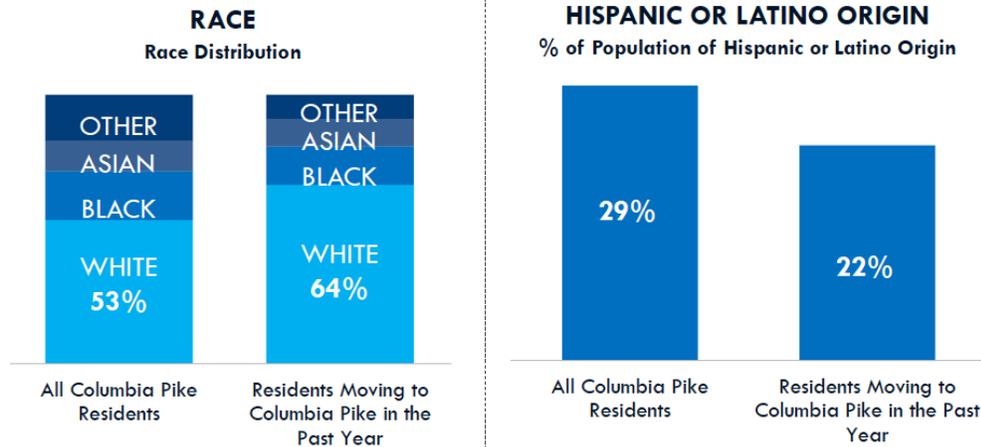
<https://www.arlnow.com/2021/03/10/peters-take-arlingtons-missing-middle-housing-is-high-end-housing/>

Furthermore, a recent paper published by researchers at NYU demonstrated that upzoning neighborhoods in NYC between 2000 and 2007 resulted in an increase in the white population of these neighborhoods of up to 9 percent. In other words, the principal beneficiaries of upzoning were whites not minorities.

https://www.thewagnerreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Team-1_Final-Version_v2.pdf

For those who are concerned about the impact of redevelopment on the Langston Boulevard corridor, one need look no further than the impact of upzoning and redevelopment on the Columbia Pike corridor. According to the county’s own 2019 Columbia Pike Commercial Market Study, the Pike is adding residents who are younger, more educated and less diverse:

https://www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com/AEDMura7/assets/File/Columbia%20Pike%20Study/Columbia%20Pike%20Commercial%20Market%20Study_Final.pdf



4--LARGE SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT:

Arlington loses over 200 older single-family homes a year to redevelopment, with often modest ramblers, bungalows and split levels--and the mature trees that often surround them--bulldozed to yield much larger, much more expensive, and less affordable homes that tower over and cast shadows upon their neighbors, feature greatly expanded footprints and impervious surfaces, and no mature landscaping. Is it time to dial back what a private property owner can build on their land and still be sensitive to private property rights? Why or why not, and if so, how would you accomplish that given Virginia property laws?

The teardown McMansions that dominate North Arlington today are the result of incremental changes in the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance since 2003 that have decreased setbacks and increased building heights in single-family zoned neighborhoods. Once zoning restrictions are relaxed, it is very difficult to reduce a property owner's ability to develop privately owned property under Virginia law.

However, there is at least one existing state statute that could give Arlington the flexibility to reduce building footprints, enact more stringent land-disturbance restrictions, and reduce lot coverage as part of its stormwater management program, which would reduce runoff and mitigate flood risk while, perhaps, reducing the financial incentives for tearing down existing homes.

Virginia State Code § 62.1-44.15:33.[1] provides for a waiver that could give Arlington the authority to enact stormwater-management ordinances that are more stringent than the State Water Control Board's "minimum regulations" in order to correct "excessive localized flooding within the watershed."

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title62.1/chapter3.1/section62.1-44.15:33/>

I advocate reviewing existing state laws and regulations to identify new avenues that would support preservation of existing homes, which oftentimes represent some of the last remaining truly "affordable" housing in Arlington.

Obviously, the current County Board has shown no interest in exploring ways to rein in developers, because it is committed to densification as a way of life. Densification generates the bump-ups in revenue needed to pay for the Board's priorities—like the Long Bridge aquatic center and its million-dollar bus stops. Never mentioned are the long-term obligations to provide services and infrastructure to support an exploding population, obligations that exceed the revenue generated by this new, dense residential redevelopment. It's that simple.

To reverse the current trends, a new board with fresh perspectives is needed, one that is committed to preserving what's left of Arlington's natural environment, cultural heritage and architectural legacy.