

# Arlington County Board Candidates Questionnaire on Environmental Issues

Name: Adam Theo

**1. Achieving the County goals for renewable energy and carbon neutrality:**

This year has seen some of the most brutal heat waves of all time across the globe, massive wildfires and unprecedented flooding in the United States and around the globe, all tied to climate. How should Arlington address climate change and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to achieve its goals of 100 percent renewable electricity by 2035 and carbon neutrality by 2050 and what policies would you promote to meet those goals?

Although I'm skeptical of fluffy goals made by politicians who know they won't have to be around to figure out how to actually deliver on their big promises, implementing 100% renewable energy, expanding our tree canopy and open spaces, and mitigating stormwater surges are extremely worthy efforts to fight for anyways. Climate change is real, our actions are creating it, and it's our responsibility to fix the mess we've been making.

For immediate solutions that can be stood up right now, I'm a big fan the C-PACE program, which has the county acting as a "matchmaker" between private or other sources of financing and businesses that want to install solar panels to operate their properties. This is a great way to install renewable energy on private property without using taxpayers dollars. It's also most effective for existing buildings, not relying on new developments to be built.

For longer term fixes, entering into partnerships for large scale solar power such as the new "Amazon Arlington Solar Farm" project in southwestern Virginia is key to success. That project will provide approximately 80% of the current energy needs for county buildings. Helping large and small businesses in Arlington band together to do the same through our BIDS and maybe even the Chamber of Commerce would be a way to expand this effort to the private sector.

**2. Incorporating nature into development and protecting green spaces: As**

Arlington develops, the detrimental impact to our tree canopy, streams and waterways, and open spaces is increasing. In 2020, Arlington joined the Biophilic Cities Network, committing to integrate nature into its urban environment. What

strategies and policies would you pursue to improve and protect Arlington's natural resources, expand its tree canopy, and incorporate nature into its urban design and how would you ensure equitable access to these resources for all Arlingtonians?

We need better development and more development. We also need to protect or even expand our tree canopy coverage and green spaces. These things do not have to be in opposition to each other. In fact, one of the great benefits of denser developments is to allow more people to live, work, and play using less land.

The key is to remove barriers and provide incentives for developers and better incorporate environmental concerns into our sector (neighborhood) planning. Just as we provide building height bonuses to developers who provide affordable units (a system which is flawed and needs serious reform, but that's another topic), we should provide similar bonuses to developers who set aside green space and plant trees at or near the property. Use the county's growth and desire for urban living as a mechanism for preserving green space, rather than set it up as a competitor in a "winner take all" battle royale.

- 3. Moving to more sustainable transportation options:** Transportation accounts for almost 40 percent of Arlington's greenhouse gas emissions. How can Arlington meet the transportation needs of those who live and work in the County while reducing the climate and environmental impacts that current transportation modes create?

The county really needs to convert its fleet over to Electric Vehicles (EV) as quickly as possible. Thankfully this is starting, although with a grant from the commonwealth of Virginia. We can't rely on grants and increasing taxes to fund our conversion. Environmental sustainability and fiscal sustainability must go hand-in-hand. Instead county leadership needs to prioritize electrifying our public transit buses, school buses, police vehicles, Department of Environmental Services trucks, and other fleets over luxury amenities and subsidies to Fortune 500 companies.