

2023 County Board Primary Candidates Questionnaire: Climate Change and Sustainability

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- I. **Addressing Climate Change** *In its March 20 report, the International Panel on Climate Change stated “There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all (very high confidence).” The scientific consensus is that GHG emissions must be reduced by 50% by 2030 to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. As a County Board member what policies and initiatives would you pursue to ensure that Arlington rapidly reduces its GHG emissions?*
- a. Transit that decreases our reliance on individual cars and allows everyone to take advantage of public transportation, biking, and walking
 - i. One of our biggest energy uses at this point is transportation and the 2019 Community Energy Plan roadmap indicated that the largest portion of our carbon reduction would come from sustainable transportation. People rely on cars because the other options don’t serve their needs right now.
 - ii. This means investing in our ART and WMATA systems so that service is timely and reliable, and developing neighborhoods with density that supports frequent and reliable public transit. Additional investments need to be made in ART to increase the number of service routes and the frequency of service.
 - iii. The Zero Emissions Bus (ZEB) demonstration project is a good start to electrification of our bus system, but we should be pursuing fully electrifying all County and School transportation. Simultaneously, we need to invest in bikes and e-bikes. I would love to explore e-bike rebates and continue to expand the Capital Bikeshare e-bike fleet.
 - b. Addressing sustainability of new and existing buildings, including energy sources
 - i. Buildings, which were 60% of Arlington’s energy usage in 2019, that are approved/constructed today are still going to be in use for many years to come and if they do not meet the standards necessary for carbon reduction or neutrality, they will work against our decarbonization goals.
 - ii. I think that higher site plan requirements/incentives for both commercial and residential buildings are necessary in order for us to meet our goals.
 - iii. Since residents do not have an option of who their utility providers are or what source of energy they use, we will also need to work with Dominion Energy in order to transition our energy usage. We should invest in solar production using the roof space of publicly owned buildings and ensure that Arlington businesses/residents are aware of the options to participate in existing renewable programs with Dominion.
 - iv. Additionally, with the historic investment in climate and green infrastructure from the federal government Arlington should leverage the available funding to build our local green infrastructure as soon as possible.

2. ***Sustainable Development*** *How would you advance urban development in Arlington that supports less energy intensive lifestyles and helps advance our housing affordability goals while protecting tree canopy, providing equitable access to open spaces and nature, and effectively managing stormwater runoff?*

As a County Board member, I would focus on our need to plan for the long-term needs of our community. This means breaking down the silos of our planning process and expanding transportation, housing, county services and infrastructure in intentional and proactive ways to meet the needs of the community. By planning around expanding transportation access - and in turn, planning our housing development around expanded transportation - we can make investments in sustainable alternatives to driving. Arlington has historically been a leader in smart growth/transit oriented development and we need that tradition to evolve with us and create a wider vision of where public transit belongs.

Arlington can't address everything piece by piece—we need a complete, concrete strategy. This has been important for me to talk about for the campaign because so many people view increased density and development as diametrically opposed to greenspaces. It is crucial to me that people understand we can and must do both if we want Arlington to thrive as a community. Parks, trees and all other forms of greenspace have both direct environmental impacts and personal well-being impacts. Mental and physical well-being has been connected to proximity/availability of greenspaces, but they also impact our ability to remove carbon from the air, handle floods and erosion, as well as the health of our watershed. As we continue to develop and plan for the future, preserving and expanding the tree canopy needs to remain a top priority. Stormwater management is a major concern for a lot of people and I've spent time reviewing the upcoming stormwater tax/fee changes and I think it is excellent to help push people to think about how their individual choices impact our larger community. We also need to address by-right development processes that have resulted in clear cutting of private trees and create a process that encourages or incentivizes preservation.

However, we also need to look at equity when it comes to access to greenspace. As an apartment dweller and renter, I have little control over my surrounding environment. Trees and parks cannot just be concentrated in single family neighborhoods among people with the greatest financial resources. We need to make plans to ensure that everyone in Arlington has real access to greenspaces - including considering acquisition of new land for longer-term parks planning.

3. ***Decarbonization of Transportation*** *Transportation accounts for almost 40 percent of Arlington's GHG emissions and contributes to poor air quality and congestion. What would be your plan for creating more sustainable transportation options that would sharply reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles with shifts to biking, transit, and zero emission vehicles?*

Transportation is critical to reducing carbon emissions. I think we need to dig deeper into the Transportation Master Plan and General Land Use Plan's role in/interaction with the CEP. Since COVID, people have dramatically changed their habits and routines. We need to consider how we can align public transit and other multimodal transit options with new patterns of use. The 2019 CEP says that we will achieve our vision by "effectively blending Master Transportation Plan (MTP), General Land Use Plan, and Community Energy Plan implementation" - however, I

am not aware of any studies or resources that outline the level of alignment of these three plans.

The most critical piece is creating a transit system that meets and serves the needs of as many people as possible so that it is as easy and natural to use as driving a single-occupancy vehicle. Investing in electrification where possible is a good way to enhance what we're already doing – and we should continue to pursue it as quickly as we're able – but even if we fully electrify our public transportation we will still need more people to actually use the system in order to cut down our emissions. Focusing on increased frequency and reliability, adjusting times of service, and looking at changing our adding routes to ART bus service can help us to make sure that people have options that fit their needs.

Additionally, we need other options like walking, biking, and scooters/other mobility devices to be safe options and accessible if we would like people to use them. That means fully supporting the Vision Zero initiative to make our streets safer for everyone.