

2025 County Board Candidates Questionnaire

This February, the County Board adopted a [Climate Action Resolution](#) that calls for a whole-of-government, whole-of-community comprehensive energy and environmental strategy to address the climate crisis. With the federal government retrenching from its climate commitments and state actions stagnating in recent years, local action is critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building more resilient communities. County Board members will be expected to lead efforts to mitigate and adapt to these changing conditions. To assist voters in assessing how candidates will advance the County's climate goals for carbon neutrality, resiliency in the face of more extreme weather, and protection and enhancement of tree canopy coverage and natural resources, EcoAction Arlington and Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions request that you complete this questionnaire, which we will share with our membership and the public at large, by Friday, September 19.

Instructions - Please provide your name and answer to each question below and email to office@ecoactionarlington.org.

Name Audey Clement

1. With Arlington already experiencing higher temperatures and more erratic rainfall (both heavy rains and weeks-long drought), the need to rapidly phase out fossil fuels, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and shift to more environmentally sustainable lifestyles is critical. What three strategies would you pursue to accelerate the County's transition to a carbon neutral community? How would you ensure that everyone in Arlington benefits from this transition while addressing past inequities that disproportionately burden disadvantaged communities with the environmental impacts?

The 3 strategies I would pursue towards achieving carbon neutrality are:

I. Stop Missing Middle Upzoning.

Not only do the multiplexes contemplated by Missing Middle complicate stormwater management, they promise other adverse impacts like excessive runoff, heat islands, loss of tree canopy, lack of parking, increased congestion and more kids in trailers.

The County has denied these impacts, because the lot size of a six-plex is same as the lot size of a SFH. Yet Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future (ASF) has demonstrated that a typical six-plex will dwarf the typical McMansion on any given site, and the environmental impacts will be much greater, because a typical six-plex will be constructed to the “build to line”, whereas the typical SFH has a yard. It will also house up to 6 times as many people, yet require no upgrade to the existing utilities, including stormwater and sewer infrastructure.

II. Stop Greenwashing.

Nowhere is the County’s commitment to greenwashing more evident than its embrace of an erosion control technique called Natural Channel Design. In March, 2021 the County authorized the destruction of 83 mature trees on either side of Donaldson Run Tributary B as part of a Natural Channel Design project. It also permitted clearcutting on both sides of Gulf Branch as part of a so-called “stream resiliency” effort. The object was to promote the award of Chesapeake Bay Act pollution reduction credits, but the outcome will be more runoff, erosion and heat absorption, and less carbon uptake.

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 damage to the County’s credibility.

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

III. Lobby State Corporation Commission to deny Dominion permits for 10 new methane gas plants.

Dominion has announced the construction of ten methane power plants around the state to meet increasing demand for electricity driven by the explosive growth of data centers in Virginia. If elected I will urge the County Board to tell the State Corporation Commission that construction of these plants not only defeats the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) mandate to phase-out methane gas-fired power plants by 2050, it is also unnecessary to meet demand if renewable energy and battery storage are added to the mix of energy solutions.

2. In July, the County Board adopted the [vision and goals](#) for the updated Master Transportation Plan, calling for a transportation future when ***“People of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can move safely, comfortably, and seamlessly in Arlington. Everyone can rely on a variety of high-quality, sustainable transportation options to get them where they want to go, when they need to be there, with desirable choices beyond using a car.”*** What strategies would you pursue and how would you prioritize investment to advance this vision and to decarbonize the transportation sector, which currently accounts for about 36 percent of Arlington’s greenhouse gas emissions?

As an avid biker, I am all for the decarbonization of the transportation sector but not at the expense of safety on the County’s bike trails. I support the Vision Zero Action Plan to eliminate traffic fatalities in the County and applaud the reduction in fatalities reported in 2024. However, given the emergence of e-bikes and other motorized vehicles on County bike trails, I am concerned about the hazards on bike trails.

The [2024 Vision Zero Annual Report](#) indicates that a lot has been invested in bike trail improvements. but there’s been no study of

what's actually happening on the trails. This is most unfortunate since motorized vehicles travel on narrow, crowded trails at up to 20 mph, which is enough to cause serious injury or death when crashes occur. In light of the ever increasing number of trail users, I want the County to reduce the speed limit of e-bikes and other micro mobility devices from 20 to 10 mph on County bike trails.

I'm also an avid ART bus rider and view ART as the key to decarbonizing the county. Unfortunately aside from ART buses that service the Pike, most of them ride empty most of the day. This is as much a reflection of car culture as County's lack of incentives to get people out of their cars.

Alexandria provides free bus service and I would lobby for Arlington to do the same, but for the major budget crunch that the County now faces due to federal budget cuts, which have already had a drastic impact on County residents and threaten to impact County operations. In the meantime, I want the County to mount an advertising campaign posting ads on buses and in Metro stations to promote ART.

3. Arlington continues to face significant development in residential and commercial sectors. While new buildings can be more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable, the tear down of existing structures have significant climate impacts and community displacement. Given private developers rights and significant leeway in choosing how to develop land parcels, if elected, what specific solutions and policies to the county's residential and commercial development would you endorse that best aligns with the County's climate goals and vision for a resilient and equitable community?

The key to sustainable development in Arlington is its recently adopted Adaptive Reuse policy, which promotes the conversion of existing buildings to other uses rather than tearing them

down. The primary incentive for developers offered by this policy is simplification of the permit review process. While the primary benefit to the County is a reduced office vacancy rate, the environmental benefit from reduced landfill waste is probably even greater.

4. Arlington's tree canopy and green spaces have been significantly diminished by rapid development, while stormwater impacts from impervious surfaces are increasingly severe. Site development, whether commercial or residential, usually results in clear cut lots and limited replacement of mature shade trees. The Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, adopted in 2023, calls for restoration of a 40% tree canopy cover and overall improvement in our natural resources. What "new" approaches are needed to reverse the tree loss trends and gain the greater climate resilience benefits that mature tree canopies provide, particularly in Arlington's more disadvantaged neighborhoods?

First, the County needs to rethink its stormwater management policy. The County's initiative to purchase and tear down structures on improved lots to stave off flooding is prohibitively expensive. It would be totally unnecessary but for the fact that it has promoted zoning policies that all but assure the destruction of its mature tree canopy, which is the first line of defense against flooding.

For example, In 2021 Arlington Public Schools (APS) clearcut a grove of hardwoods behind Cardinal Elementary School in Westover to make way for the construction of a stormwater retention vault following a flash flood in July 2019.

Underscoring the perverseness of this decision, in [2023 the County purchased for demolition a \\$1.5 million house at 5840 18th Street N.](#) across the street from Cardinal Elementary School to provide overland flood relief at the site. The County evidently never considered that preservation of the hardwoods behind the

school could have achieved the same objective at no cost to the taxpayers.

Second, Missing Middle Upzoning has got to go. According to a [recent report by the Green Infrastructure Center](#), Arlington tree canopy coverage is only 33 percent. (p. 12), down from a 2017 County estimate of 41 percent. Unless Missing Middle is scrapped, that percentage is going to drop even more due to the clearcutting of existing tree canopy for infill development.

Third, something has to be done about the County's tree steward program, whereby hundreds of trees planted along County roads are dead due to drought by the end of the growing season. If the County doesn't have the money or the manpower to irrigate saplings, it shouldn't plant them. Instead it should devote its resources to maintaining mature trees.

5. In the US (and Arlington is typical) over 4.5 pounds of trash per person per day is generated and 30 percent of food produced is never eaten: this waste contributes to a significant portion of GHG emissions, exacerbates environmental pollution, and increases demand for water and other scarce resources. What steps can Arlington take to reduce this waste and promote reuse, effective recycling, and the transition to a circular economy that meets its aspiration for a zero-waste community?

County staff have observed that half the waste in a typical apartment dumpster is recyclable material. I can confirm this estimate from the dumpster on my own rental property. One thing the County could do is toughen up its waste ordinance and cite landlords who do not recycle a significant percentage of the waste disposed on their property. But that would prove unenforceable if only for want of the manpower to do the inspections. Improved sorting and dumping machinery at the landfill location might prove to be the only viable solution to this intractable problem.

6. Gas-powered leaf blowers create excessive noise which exceeds Arlington's noise ordinance, and has been associated with numerous health impacts, particularly with vulnerable workers. But anyone in close proximity, including homes, also suffer. In addition, these machines emit excessively high levels of greenhouse gas and other pollutants. Alternatives are readily available including quieter battery electric blowers, an old-fashioned raking, or just leaving leaves and other plant litter to decompose and mulch where they lie. Nearby jurisdictions have begun banning, including D.C., Montgomery County, and most recently Alexandria City. What is your position on gas-powered leaf blowers, and what steps should Arlington take?

As an apartment dweller in a complex that employs a landscaper to run gas powered leaf blowers on a weekly basis 9 months out of the year, I can attest to their obnoxiousness. Yet Arlington can do something about gas powered leaf blowers by simply banning them. Why it hasn't done so already beats me.