

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: Takis Karantonis

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?

[I had the honor to co-author and present the Climate Action Resolution for adoption this past February 2025. The resolution lays out three tracks of action:](#)

- a. **Comprehensive Climate Strategy:** An integrated energy (detailed in our Community Energy Plan) and environmental strategy that commits Arl. County Government (but also incentivizes private action):
 - i. It is critical to continue advocating for expansion of industrial scale photovoltaic capacity and off-shore wind generation in Virginia, as well as continuing to advocate for lifting legal barriers that make Community Choice Aggregation less viable.
 - ii. It is further critical to pursue significant expansion of urban solar installations here at home and be leaders on achieving the regional goal of 250,000 installations by 2030 - a goal that I proposed and got passed as Chair of the MWCOG-CEEP in 2023 - and is designed to offer opportunities for advancing environmental equity - especially with coop financing, in which Arlington County Government in collaboration with non-profit partners can play a catalyst role. (note: I am a strong advocate for green banks)
 - iii. Decarbonizing all public buildings and facilities (including APS')
 - iv. Advance the electrification of all transportation (including building out public EV-charging infrastructure).
 - v. Investments in Stormwater infrastructure are much more effective when complemented by private storm-run-off reducing measures.
- b. Promote **collective action** by emphasizing climate-responsive livability and prioritizing environmental justice as driving value. A prominent example for this are programs like the Tree-Canopy-Fund. Further, applying biophilic principles in urban design aimed to reducing heat-islands and improving access to natural spaces in our more income- and natural space- challenged neighborhoods is a priority.
- c. **Green Budgeting** - which means that all budget appropriations will have to be assessed on, short- and long-term, environmental impacts and on the question on whether or not they advance our GHG-reduction goals (100% renewable energy supply for government use by 2025 (achieved in 2022), 100% renewable generation for the entire County by 2035, and 100% CO2 carbon neutrality by 2050) allowing for a clear accounting of the same.

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?

Putting Pedestrians first, and in consequence, changing street design, to become less dominated by private car mobility is a stated priority of mine. In Arlington we can demonstrate that reducing car-dependency is not equivalent to having less mobility choices. My priorities are:

- Continue investing in pedestrian and safe and protected cycling infrastructure.
 - Support and fund Public Transit. We need to prioritize sources of revenue that are dedicated, dependable and bondable. At the same time we should strive to integrate fares and inter-connectivity between transit-operators region wide. Supporting Commuter-rail and Bus (VRE and OmniRide) in our region reduces emissions in our region and in Arlington in particular.
 - Continue supporting the expansion of the Capital BikeShare network for all.
 - Continue investing in our metropolitan bike-trail network.
 - Continue supporting iRide and strategically pursue the transition of student ridership (especially in Middle and Highschool) from our Schoolbus-system to our regular bus systems. Both, btw. should be set in a trajectory of decarbonization - their partial integration comes with significant
 - Pursue flexibility in parking requirements. Minimum parking requirements tend to accommodate car-dependency in addition to their significant cost.
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?

I have been a strong advocate of adaptive reuse as a key strategy aimed to preserve housing, transform obsolete office space into other uses (preferably housing) and significantly preserve embodied carbon. In the last 5 years Arlington has progressed significantly in making adaptive reuse a competitive development scenario in our corridors and, progressively, beyond. I am a proponent of the Commercial Market Resilience Initiative, that includes compelling adaptive reuse incentives.

Adaptive reuse offers significant decarbonization advantages, especially when paired with robust energy upgrades. However, I continue to believe that the introduction of voluntary but standardized monitoring and building energy-performance certifications for public and private buildings will greatly help to incentivize investments in upgrades (such as high efficiency heat-pump installations, or envelope insulation).

Finally, I support that Virginia returns as a full participant in RGGI, which would specifically unlock funding for improvements in older legacy marketrate and committed affordable housing.

Finally I see untapped potential in complementing adaptive reuse with residential and commercial C-PACE.

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?

The single most effective measure that would support the preservation of trees on private property is extending regulatory jurisdiction over trees to Arlington County. This is a legislative goal I have supported and advocated for and will continue to advocate. Clear cutting for new development accounts for significant tree-loss on private property, but it is in conjunction with the lack of clustered vegetation that generates systemic weaknesses in the ecosystem of the urban forest.

I have been a major advocate of Arlington's tighter Land Disturbance Regulations and also support regulating a minimum plantable percentage per lot. The latter is currently under study. I expect it to result in meaningful regulation that will significantly reduce the incentive for clear-cuts and save many trees that are currently cut to make space for extensive patios, swimming pools or driveways.

I further support policies that will re-naturalize parts of our urban environment by adding street-trees and allowing for pocket-park groves in neighborhoods where miniparks still

exist. I further support open-data monitoring, providing accurate, regular reports on the health and quality of our urban forest.

During my tenure as Chair of the MWCOC Climate Energy and Environmental Policy Committee (2023), I worked on best conservation practices for our region. A significant product of this work is the "[Tree conservation cookbook](#)", that represent the first region-wide attempt to establish robust Tree-preservation practices in local government.

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?

I worked to pass [Arlington's zero-waste plan \(full document\)](#) in 2024. I believe these documents provide a detailed pathway for achieving zero-waste and [include a strategic list of actions](#) the progress on implementation of which is also publicly monitored ([dashboard](#)).

I continue to believe that we can do more at the state level. Such as:

- Banning entirely thin film, one use, plastic bags
- Banning polystyrene in all commercial applications.
- Introduce compulsory deposit fee for bottles and cans - along with an obligation for retailers and manufacturers to take back and recycle all packaging
- Disallow any commercial product design that allows that polyethylene caps can be separated from PET bottles.

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?

The County Board announced at its September recessed meeting that it intends to ban Gas-powered leaf blowers and for that it has instructed Staff to start a public outreach and education campaign. I remain optimistic that the Board will be able to regulate phasing-out gas-powered leaf-blowers by the end of this year or early in 2026. For equipment owned and operated by Arlington County the transition to battery-powered tools has been completed this year.

While I have worked to achieve this, I continue to believe that a robust educational effort is needed in order to reduce leaf-blowing as a general landscaping practice to a minimum.