

Audrey Clement Responses to ASF Questions

Question 1 -Strategic Planning for Growth and Development

Since 2018, Arlington County has:

- changed zoning in multifamily areas so the Board can permit unlimited density for affordable housing complexes;
 - added automatic bonus density into the Zoning Code for senior housing;
 - added automatic bonus density into the Zoning Code for LEED silver and platinum construction in new buildings;
 - awarded Amazon 1.6 million square feet of bonus density and undervalued the community benefits by up to \$400 million;
 - dramatically increased the use of special GLUPs, which were supposed to be rare tools to increase density in areas without sector plans;
 - approved the Missing Middle upzoning that allowed a nearly six-fold increase in density (R5, R6, R8, R10, R20 zones, essentially eliminating single-family zoning countywide;
- At no point before making these changes to add density did the County define the capacity of CURRENT zoning (i.e. how many units can be built under by-right zoning.)

Would you agree as a new board member to publish -- before approving any new sector plans, land use or zoning amendments:

- **The projected 10-year Arlington operating budget with CURRENT zoning and land use?**
- **The demographics and median incomes that can be accommodated with maximum buildout under current land use and zoning? Would you agree to use this baseline to measure against all future zoning and land use changes before they are approved?**

Audrey Clement

I definitely agree to the publication of current zoning, land use and demographic breakdown statistics as part of Arlington's 10-year operating budget. But statistics are useless unless the County actually uses them to assess the need for future growth.

What the County needs is a policy that requires staff to conduct a fiscal impact analysis to assess both the costs and benefits of a proposed development or GLUP amendment to assure that its net tax impact is positive. Unlike its sister jurisdictions Arlington County doesn't do this. Instead it focuses exclusively on the supposed benefits of a project or plan.

Fiscal impact analysis is a necessity not an option. Not only should a rigorous analysis of the demand for and cost of public services attributable to future development be available, it should be required for every major County facility and site plan development project.

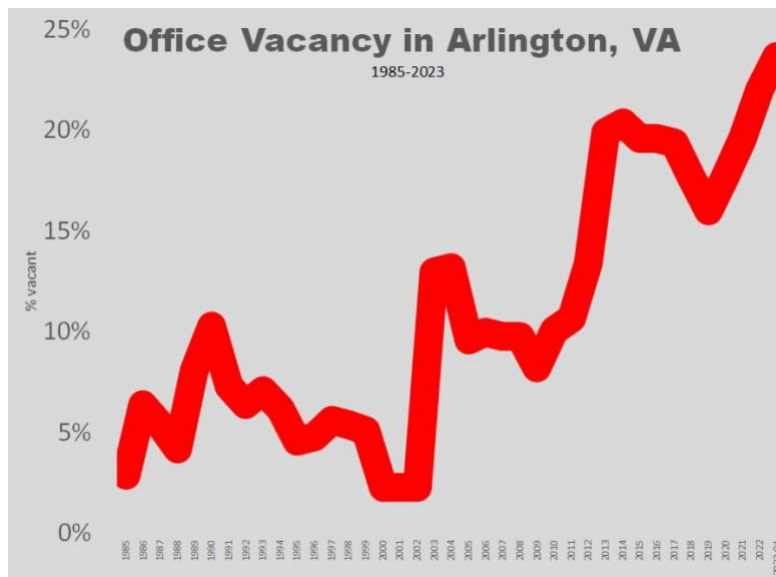
The question isn't whether Arlington County should do it. The question is why the County isn't doing it already. All or most of the surrounding jurisdictions utilize some version of

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.

Question 2 - Commercial Property Vacancy

Arlington County's office vacancy rate hit 23.7% ([link](#)) this year, the highest we've ever seen. This reflects a 20-year trend; notably, the amount of vacant office space today is equal to every single square foot built here since 1999.

How would you address this problem as more leases are coming due and the work from home trend continues? Given Arlington had fewer affordable housing units in 2022 than in 2000, despite a 24% population increase, why isn't the County keeping up with other jurisdictions (Washington DC, New York City, Alexandria) that are doing more on Office-to-Residential conversions? As a Board Member, would you require County workers to come back into the office?



Audrey Clement

To reduce Arlington's office vacancy rate, I will persuade the Board to insist that federal agencies in the DC area comply with Executive Order 12072, issued by Jimmy Carter in 1978 to revitalize and strengthen the nation's central cities. The Order stipulates that whenever a federal agency relocates, it must give priority to an available space located in a city's central business district rather than in a suburb.

Enforcement of EO 12072 would reduce Arlington's office vacancy rate. Yet most federal agencies have ignored it. For example, GSA has announced plans to relocate FBI headquarters to a suburb, and the only question is which one. Arlington County itself has never invoked EO 12072 to get federal agencies to relocate or remain here. If elected I am going to insist upon it.

Another way to fill vacant offices and an attractive alternative to divisive and expensive Missing Middle that I will advocate, is office to residential conversions (O2R), as other area jurisdictions are doing. Recently [Fairfax County announced an O2R conversion at Tysons Corner that will provide 250 housing units in a converted 10 story office building.](#)

I will also lobby to restructure the GLUP and Zoning Ordinance to enable additional uses of existing office buildings, including but not limited to: schools and day care facilities; sport and fitness facilities and urban agriculture spaces.

It is doubtful that County Board can order staff to return to work. But if elected, I will lobby the County Manager to adopt a hybrid schedule for County employees.

Question 3 - Plan Langston Boulevard

Plan Langston Boulevard was launched in 2015; it may go to a Board vote in 2023. What was originally a plan for low-to medium density along 5 mixed use nodes has morphed into a nonsensical phased "Vision" that will lock in much higher density but leave critical gaps in the plan. (Cherrydale and East Falls Church as two of the 5 nodes are now removed!) Massing and density have escalated from early drafts, with the current vision showing 5-6 stories along most of the boulevard and leaping to 10-15 stories at the three remaining nodes, with site plans potentially increasing this even further). PLB will add 15,000 residents beyond the 23,000 who lived here in 2017, a precipitous increase that would necessitate extensive infrastructure that the plan does not satisfy.

Community engagement was complicated by Covid and engagement on other development issues (Missing Middle, VHC, Firehouse 8, Donaldson Run, etc.) And while there was strong interest in better traffic management and open space by residents, both are deferred or omitted from the current vision. The county has not explained key requirements by VDOT, which administers Langston Blvd as a major commuter and evacuation route. Nor has the County explained why the percentage of affordable housing units will *decrease* as a percent of total units, even while it uses affordable housing to justify the Rossly-level of density it is introducing outside the Metro corridors. Most important, the County has failed to square the PLB plans with the tectonic shifts in the regional and county circumstances, to wit:

- Decline in Arlington's population from 2019-2022;
- Fiscal and land constraints on ability to construct public facilities such as community centers, parks, rec, libraries, public safety facilities, and schools;
- The impact of sorely-needed office-to-residential conversions (see question 2);
- Increasing impacts of climate change;
- Decline in use of existing mass transit (see Question 5 below);
- A 5.1% apartment vacancy rate; , primarily unwanted small apartments, which PLB will add to this market;
- Missing Middle approval and potential ability to deliver the "new housing types" that PLB also promises inside the same planning area, and MM impact on existing housing stock for those earning 30-120% of area median households

Do you agree that PLB should take these planning parameters into consideration? Would you approve the plan in its current form, with current heights and densities, and the omission of Cherrydale and East Falls Church?

Audrey Clement

While I agree that all of the above should be taken into consideration, I am particularly concerned that PLB has deliberately excluded the impact of Missing Middle rezoning in its assessment of the need for massive redevelopment along Route 29 in Arlington County.

In fact the [2022 Plan Langston Boulevard Preliminary Concept Plan Report](#) “removes ‘missing middle’ housing types and forms as a specific component (p.15)”. My question is how can a serious planning document not include discussion of the impacts of a massive countywide rezoning?

Regarding PLB, one resident remarked: “In reading this, if the plan is to have on average 4-7 story development (mostly residential on top of commercial and some areas will go up to 15 stories) and it will add thousands of housing units, then where is the shortage needed by MMH? Again, PLB is steaming ahead as . . .we talk MMH. . . The numbers seem astronomical along Langston Boulevard in terms of new housing. Has the issue of coordination or "choice" of the two plans been discussed in any materials or meetings?”

While the County insists that Missing Middle is part of the PLB mix, it is evident from its own report language that this is not the case. I do not approve PLB in its present form.

Question 4 - Missing Middle of Enhanced Housing Options

Arlington residents are challenging the County’s EHO/ Missing Middle upzoning in court.

If the court overturns or stays EHO programs, what would you do? What specific changes in process or substance would you promote? Do you believe the current county tracking system is adequate to judge whether stated goals are achieved? How will you define "success" of EHO if it continues in current form?

Audrey Clement

If the court overturns the EHO ordinance, I will convene a task force of stakeholders, including neighborhood civic associations and local architects and economists to consider an alternative zoning scheme released by the [Laboratory for Architecture in a 12-point plan in January, 2023](#).

This plan would rezone the county neighborhood by neighborhood rather than wholesale, using a floor area ratio approach to determine allowable density. Unlike the current Missing Middle ordinance, affordable housing would be incentivized by awarding bonus density to developers providing such units.

If the court stays the EHO ordinance, I will encourage affected parties to exercise the legal provisions of any covenant held on the property. If the covenant disallows multi-family units on a lot, then I would encourage neighbors to enforce that provision in Arlington Circuit Court.

Natalie Roy, editor of EHO Watch, reported in EHO Watch #8:

For developers, the County says there is "no fee for an EHO permit" and it will approve them in about 30 days. For the public, however, the County posts very little information on its interim "EHO tracker." Instead, residents must file a Freedom of Information Act request to see the EHO applications. The County is charging \$75 just to see the first week's applications and taking 11 days to release them.

This doesn't meet my definition of transparency, but it is par for the course with Arlington County.

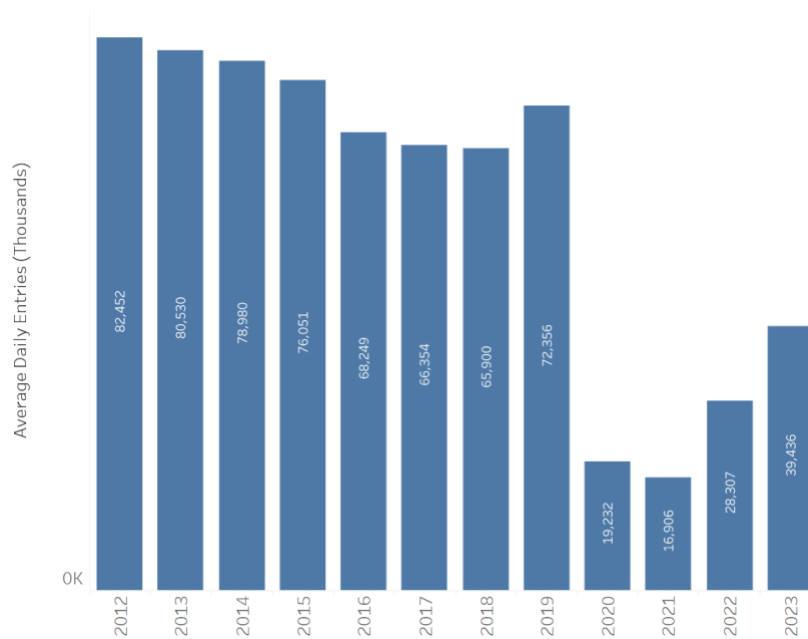
The only EHO ordinance that would meet with my approval is the one proposed by the Laboratory for Architecture described above.

Question 5 - Metro Funding Crisis

Much of Arlington's growth and development paradigm has rested on our two Metro corridors. Pre-COVID, ridership at Arlington's Metro stations declined 20% from 2012-2018 (chart below), even as County population rose 7% (mainly near Metro). Since 2019, daily ridership is down 45%. Metro now faces a \$750 million deficit.

What steps must Arlington take -- with other jurisdictions or alone -- to help fix this funding gap? How does your vision for Arlington take into account the long-term decline of Metro ridership in the County?

Average Daily Rail Entries by Year



Audrey Clement

I'm not shy about criticizing Arlington County government, but neither Metro itself nor any of the jurisdictions that fund Metro—including Arlington--are responsible for Metro's deficit. While a pandemic inspired change in work habits accounts for most of the recent precipitous decline in Metrorail use, the bar chart above shows that Metro ridership had already declined significantly through 2019, as people sought alternative transportation options, including e-vehicles and rideshare.

Arlington County can help reduce Metro's deficit by forgoing any significant transportation capital projects—such as funding for the second entrance to the Crystal City Metrorail Station that it recently approved, or the west entrance to the Ballston Metrorail Station that's been on the drawing board for years—until Metrorail use revives.

Arlington can also offer to expand ART to cover bus service cutbacks necessitated by Metro's budget shortfall.

But the crux of the matter is that people refuse to get out of their cars. This is as shortsighted as it is environmentally unsustainable. Transit is the preferred alternative for anyone seeking a safe, affordable and comfortable ride to and from any destination within the metropolitan area. I don't own a car. I depend on my bike, the bus, Metrorail and rideshare to get me where I want to go, and I can vouch for its safety, convenience, economy and general reliability. It's time for other Arlingtonians to give transit a trial run.