

# ASF | ARLINGTONIANS FOR OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

April 6, 2023

Please reply in no more than 300 words per each of the 4 answers, inserting answers directly below questions as shown. Please send your replies to [asf.virginia@gmail.com](mailto:asf.virginia@gmail.com) by COB on Friday, April 14. All candidate answers will be posted to the ASF website and shared with ASF subscribers via email. Please read the full questions to ensure you capture all intended elements of the query.

## Questions for Candidates in the June 2023 Primary for Arlington County Board

**Question 1.** If you supported the County's recently-approved Missing Middle rezoning, what are the top 3 goals you think it will achieve and how will we track those? If you did not support it, how do you think the community should be approaching housing policy and what are the top 3 needs and some solutions you'd offer? **For all candidates**, what would you change about Missing Middle if you could?

*I think it will increase duplex units, semi-detached units and three-unit townhomes. Increasing housing inventory for 3-bedroom homes. In the long-term it will help fill this gap. I would leave it in place as it was approved and adjust it as appropriate once we see where the most permits are pulled. Realistically, the 2024 Board regardless of composition is incredibly unlikely to walk back the missing middle rezoning efforts. I believe it is important that we do not let this issue continue to eclipse the rising office vacancy rate, which I believe is one of the most important current challenges the Board & County face.*

**Candidate (Tony Weaver) Answer 1.**

**Question 2.** The county-wide commercial vacancy rate is at an all-time high of over 20%, which is more than **double** what it was from 2007-2011. What is the impact on our budget and what are your plans for addressing this gap?

This is one of the biggest challenges/threats facing Arlington County and I propose a number of solutions:

*The first solution involves making it easier for business tenants to lease. The Arlington County Board should put forward amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to include an exhaustive list of business activities that covers as broad a set of reasonable business activities as possible. This will dramatically increase the number of businesses that could potentially use commercial office space. Further down the road we need to change the Zoning Ordinance away from a prescriptive approach and instead limit nuisance activities. This will create flexibility in the code to accommodate innovative new business activities as they are invented.*

*The second solution involves reducing regulatory costs to improve older office buildings to make them more desirable for tenants. The current regulatory process associated with changing the exterior aesthetic and interior use of a commercial building is time-consuming and expensive. By improving the process by allowing expedited approval for smaller projects such as exterior renovations and relatively minor structural changes, building owners will be able to achieve a return on investment for relatively minor changes and modifications to buildings that would make the building more rentable and increase the value of other nearby buildings.*

*Finally, we need to rethink how we use buildings in Arlington. We need to incentivize the conversion of office space to residential and educational purposes. Incentives such as bonus height and density could be employed to encourage universities to redevelop existing office buildings for educational and housing use.*

*I put out a press release on this topic. See below:*

<https://bluevirginia.us/2023/04/arlington-county-board-candidate-tony-weaver-proposes-innovative-solutions-to-combat-arlington-countys-record-high-office-vacancy-rate>

**Question 3.** Board member Garvey has expressed interest in the past year in reviving long-term planning for the county, a 20 or more year look ahead (similar to the Missing Middle efforts of both Portland and Minneapolis.) One of ASF's key platforms is the need for the County to proactively plan *and budget for* infrastructure and services for new residents. Do you share the Garvey view and what are 2-3 concrete steps you would propose as a new board member?

*I think long-term planning is certainly important and a strategic plan would be beneficial to the County. Although the comprehensive plan is good. The broad nature of the document lacks a focused vision. I feel a focused vision, that includes electrification of vehicles, reorientation of how space is used, reducing office space inventory, and increasing housing inventory while doubling down on education is critical to making Arlington County the county of the future.*

*Furthermore, I believe that we should provide simplified procedures within the site plan process to approve 4–6-unit buildings in targeted geographic areas around transit locations. In addition, we need to expand infrastructure associated with stormwater management, and resiliency.*

**Candidate (Tony Weaver) Answer 3.**

4. We have recently seen high-profile site plan projects stopped in their tracks (Pen Place, Marriott redevelopment). Both projects had promised "community benefits" as part of Arlington's site plan review system and these are also now on hold. Do you think this "community benefits" system has any inherent risks? Would you consider some type of a "pay-as-you go" funding system for new development, or a proffer system as we see in other nearby jurisdictions, if you are elected to the board?

**Candidate (Tony Weaver) Answer 4.**

*Macro level conditions have dramatically shifted the demand for office space and residential homes in Arlington County. The County should incentivize the conversion of office space to residential. In addition to cost,*

*one major hurdle to developers pursuing such projects is the risk and uncertainty associated with such conversions. The County should encourage non-profit developers to pursue such conversions and establish best practices within the County's regulatory framework. This will reduce risk and uncertainty for for-profit developers and increase the likelihood of their pursuing such projects. In addition, the County should work within the community benefits framework to adjust concessions to an appropriate level to ensure that for profit developers continue to have a compelling business case to complete projects.*