

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 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.

Susan for Arlington
Susan Cunningham
Candidate for Arlington County Board
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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?

The Missing Middle process was a mess, with unclear goals and mixed messages. Moving forward, it is crucial that the County Board monitor closely and refine the policy over the first few years of monitoring. In particular, I do not support expanding this upzoning to allow 7-to-8-plex units by right.

My top priorities for housing policy:

1. **Make a plan.** We need an updated comprehensive plan that includes schools, parks and infrastructure. Serving on the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission and 26th & Old Dominion Task Force highlighted continued gaps in our long-range planning for community infrastructure needs, schools, and transportation. We need a clear vision and a realistic plan,

including near- and long-term costs and benefits, and specific community benefit priorities. We need to do the math and be transparent about our work.

2. **Really listen.** Our model of community engagement needs to be retooled. We spend millions of dollars on public meeting processes that leave residents feeling exhausted, unheard, and disconnected. We need transparent data and analysis; open, tough, and real dialogue about priorities; consistent fiscal impact analyses, and robust independent auditors to hold us accountable.
3. **Maximize community benefit.** We missed the opportunity to refresh our housing policy to consider all community impacts. For climate resilience, we must look at issues like lot coverage, stormwater mitigation, tree canopy protection, and Chesapeake Bay Ordinance review. In addition, to best manage embodied carbon, we should incent reuse of existing structures through competitive awards, accelerated site plan review, or tax credits. Finally, we should prioritize a pilot community land trust program to support legacy residents in Hall's Hill/Highview Park and Green Valley.

I would change the Missing Middle policy to require upfront scenario analysis of long-term costs, environmental impact, and income diversity and shape a phased pilot to test those assumptions.

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?

The commercial vacancy rate remains above 20 percent and will likely climb as additional leases are not renewed. This could have an enormous impact on the tax burden for residents, as commercial taxes have historically covered about half of Arlington's budget. In 2024, residential real estate taxes are projected to climb to 57% of revenues. Over time, additional commercial vacancy will create a larger tax bill for residents. For every 1% of office vacancy rate, that's a \$3M reduction: approximately 25 teachers or our entire eviction prevention budget. While this reflects a national shift in work patterns and business operations, Arlington's office vacancy rate is higher than other area jurisdictions - perhaps due to higher

cost of site plan review, higher rents, and declining value of proximity to downtown DC.

I support incentivizing and easing adaptive reuse of these buildings for schools, recreation, and live-work spaces. In addition to directing any County space needs to these locations, we can encourage subleasing, loosen regulations around temporary occupancy, and invite creativity through national innovation competitions to redesign and reuse space. Finally, we need to streamline our site plan review process and accelerate reimagining and redevelopment of these spaces. Piloting these changes and investments in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor, where vacancy is highest, would also help stabilize metro ridership.

Even with these changes, to keep the tax burden reasonable, we need to continuously examine our spending. What value are we getting for each dollar spent, what priorities can we drop, where can we improve customer experience with county services. We need to be constantly pushing to learn what we can do better and what we no longer need to be responsible for, so that we keep Arlington County government services highly efficient, effective, and fine-tuned for the needs of the community.

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?

We are long overdue for a 30-50 year vision and plan and I share Member Garvey's view. As an engineer, I have been trained to support a thoughtful, systematic, and transparent planning process that prioritizes reuse of existing buildings, sustains current residents, and welcomes new residents and businesses. Most other jurisdictions did this planning work well before, or concurrent with, considering Missing Middle up zoning. A vision and plan would have helped guide Missing Middle policy and community dialogue to be more productive and less divisive.

Unfortunately, but perhaps understandably, this type of planning has not been a priority for the current County Manager, due to the pandemic emergency. But it's time to make this a priority and the Board must be stronger and more clear in their expectations of the County Manager in addition to aligning this effort with the next transition of the County Manager.

To start, we should complete an initial fiscal impact analysis to identify what unfunded mandates we have already committed to. We should then host conversations with a random selection of residents, each asked a specific set of questions to test values and vision. Done right, this will restore trust in government, build community connections, and establish a long-term vision that inspires a great future.

Finally, we should look for low hanging fruit to align and deploy resources better. For example, we saw during the pandemic and in recovery how quickly shifting work and recreation patterns can provide us opportunities to learn how we can use existing resources more fully and smooth out demand. Let's combine ART/school buses and activate recreation centers, libraries, and schools with expanded access and hours to meet whole community needs and provide gathering spaces throughout the County.

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?

I see several risks to the current community benefits process during site plan review:

- Unclear priorities: Right now, we provide no clear prioritization or baseline of benefits or 'table stakes.' Have we provided all infrastructure costs needed, including parks, schools, etc?

- Financial tradeoffs: Is there a quantification of the cost-benefit, either near term or long term?
- Lost time and value. The site review process is unpredictable and costly thereby reducing the value available to invest in community benefits.
- Trust. Because we lack transparency, consistency and accountability, there has been an increased lack of trust by communities and developers.
- Enforcement. Today, there are limited enforcement mechanisms and rare enforcement. This has to change in order to build trust in our communities.

A common sense pay-as-you go approach or proffers system would help to reduce or eliminate these risks. Fairfax County tracks proffers closely and shares them openly by project. Falls Church also uses a proffers system. Montgomery County's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) requires the Planning Board to determine whether "public facilities (transportation, water/sewage, schools, police/fire) are adequate **before** allowing development. There may be some cases where this should be the exception, but at the very least, I support:

- Setting clear priorities and goals for community benefits upfront
- Calculating the near and long-term costs and tradeoffs
- Sharing both transparently and making them available to the public
- Adequately funding infrastructure costs of existing development as a core government service, not dependent on additional development
- Grounding development decisions in a long-range comprehensive plan, including climate/environment resiliency, transportation, diversity, equity, parks, schools, and public facilities.