

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 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?

Candidate Jonathan Dromgoole Answer 1.

I did, and do, support expanded housing options across the county. Despite being the smallest county in America we are one of the most desired places to live in the nation. As a renter and an immigrant, I want the American Dream of buying into a community to be accessible and within reach of everyone who wants to call our community home and benefit from the opportunities that exist here.

Expanded housing options will do that first and foremost – it will create an array of housing across our community and further drive Arlington's mission to be a "diverse and inclusive world-class urban community". As we begin

to see an uptake in this policy and the creation of more housing options, I want us to track the types of homes that come out of this to ensure that they are not either all townhomes or all 6-plexes but truly a diversity of housing.

Second, expanded housing options will seek to end restrictive zoning practices that have continued to segregate communities of color and low-income communities to certain areas of the county. My hope is that as the policy goes into effect and housing expands we will see more people of color have access to the entirety of the county.

Lastly,

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?

Candidate Jonathan Dromgoole Answer 2.

Arlington's commercial vacancy rate presents a problem to our budget as they represent about 1/3 of the county's tax base. This means we have seen many of these economic burdens transitioned over to our residents regardless of if they own or rent in the county. We need to find ways to bring diverse businesses into the county, especially small, independent, and minority-owned businesses. We should work to resolve the limitations that currently exist for a small business to set up shop in our county. Most often this is due to the inability to take on the risk of such high rents when a business is starting out, especially given the large lot sizes.

We have already taken steps to approve a more diverse array of business operations from indoor farming, pet boarding, and microbrewery. We can take look at these zoning regulations to see how we could further expand on services currently available and what we are missing for an area such as ours.

Vacant spaces should be consolidated into single buildings where possible in the county. We can do this by providing transition assistance to the businesses and encouraging them to relocate to newer and greener buildings. Truly vacant buildings could then be assessed for redevelopment that could include housing options in already high-density areas. As we

explore the consolidation and redevelopment of businesses we can push for more greenspaces at the same time. As someone who grew up surrounded by greenery in Austin, Texas I know the importance of thinking ahead and planning for a sustainable and environmental future. Every mile of Arlington does not need to be converted into housing or commercial property and we can explore the benefits of adding multiuse greenspaces for 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?

Candidate Jonathan Dromgoole Answer 3.

We can certainly take a strategic look at what the next 20 years could look like for Arlington and this would not necessarily be something new for the county. I would say that we could even be looking at the next 50 years. We only have 26 square miles and need to be strategic about how we ensure that we are achieving our vision for the county. By being future thinkers and looking toward we can be strategic and goal-oriented with our growth.

At the same time 5, 10, and 25-year plans allow us to have check-in points and asses our progress giving us time to pivot and course correct. If we have learned anything in the last 5 years is that plans change sometimes in fundamental and unforeseen ways and we can always be doing more to mitigate these risks.

A multi-decade strategic plan would need to focus and look at key indicators of success for the county. We need to reverse the decreasing diversity in the county that we have seen over the last decades as communities of color are being pushed out. A long-term plan would also need to have the environment as a key pillar and measure of success. Finally, we need to ensure that as we grow we are being economically responsible to sustain this growth.

Long-term planning needs to be transparent, and easy to understand by all residents, especially their impacts on the environment, financing, and impacts on marginalized communities. We are constantly hearing from our neighbors that they don't feel included in the process, and with a strategic-community-oriented growth plan we can work towards ensuring that diverse voices are part of and invested in the future of our 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?

Candidate Jonathan Dromgoole Answer 4.

We need to look for better ways to assure that the community will benefit from the proposed developments, and I would be open to considering alternative funding systems for new developments.

I was a renter in Pentagon City and saw the start of the developments around Pen Place for the upcoming HQ2. My husband and I along with friends and neighbors put up with the noise, construction, dust, and overall disturbance to our lives during the pandemic because we hoped that in the end we would see some benefits from this construction. While certain parts of Crystal and Pentagon City saw road improvements, new businesses, and some other changes many of the community parks within walking distance were closed due to the construction. Ultimately prices went up and we decided to rent elsewhere in the county.

Now with Amazon pausing construction on Phase 2 there have been concerns for the community benefits primarily the financial commitment to affordable housing and the new Arlington Community High School. While I understand that the site for the high school is located on the site of Phase 2 I would push for this to be the first piece of construction as part of Phase 2 in preparation for the next school year. These students deserve to finally have a permanent location.

With any development plan, there are hundreds of jobs on the line as part of the construction phase, many of which are done by communities of color and marginalized communities. When projects get stalled or called off folks are having to go without wages for an uncertain period given the delays. Amazon has now applied for the first round of incentives promising to open and retain or exceed the 8k jobs by June of this year. Let's hope, and hold them accountable for doing so.