

It has been an honor to represent this community. Arlington is an incredibly dynamic community and our trajectory over decades has been truly remarkable.

There is wide agreement that Arlington is a great place to live, work, play and raise a family, and further; there is our commitment that those benefits be enjoyed by persons of all ages, backgrounds, and identities. Much of the work of our county government and considerable constituent efforts go towards preserving that shared community vision.

And, this attention is needed more than ever to address the central challenge of our time: How to include all in this vision of Arlington —those who, through no fault of their own, have been unable to share in the fruits that this vision has produced; “new neighbors” who will join in and enhance this vision; and ensuring that those who have contributed their time and talent to this community continue to see Arlington as home. In other words, how do we become an Arlington that provides opportunity for those who have been burdened and who are missing while continuing to enhance the lives of those who have benefitted.

We are better equipped to address this challenge through our commitment to Equity. Four years ago, we began, in earnest, to translate rhetoric into action by establishing equity as a core principle of our government and community. I’m proud of the work to date which has been focused on ensuring that our government enterprise is competent in taking actions that are mindful of and address equity considerations.

As our capability matures, I expect to see equity as integral to every aspect of government.

This will be especially important in a year where the fiscal outlook requires us to make difficult budget choices and where continued uncertainty and challenges in the office market and transportation sector leave us unable to confidently project our budget outlook several years ahead.

Amid this admittedly grim outlook is a real opportunity to intensify our focus on plans and priorities that are the path to a better Arlington today and a more sustainable Arlington tomorrow.

Housing remains a central challenge - where and how to increase supply, and how to assure a range of affordability and housing choices - issues the community wrestles with constantly. Today, and during my year as Chairman, I plan to lead the community through the development of a set of housing policies to meet the challenge of this generation to make Arlington a place for young families, for seniors and for everyone in between.

I suggest that our Housing policies be guided by five principles where I believe there is broad agreement.

- First, Arlington should be open to all. Inclusive communities are dynamic and best positioned to be resilient. Barriers to entry should be identified and dismantled. This is a foundation principle.
- Second, our planning for the future should, as always, be community based, and that means engaging all stakeholders in our community and incorporating all thoughtful views.
- Third, planning should be iterative, allowing us to course correct when necessary and evolve over time.
- Fourth, to the greatest extent practicable, living anywhere in Arlington should not be determined by income levels. Our attention to vibrant and diverse communities should span across all our 26 square miles.
- Fifth, planning to meet our housing goals must be integrated with our interconnected priorities of: creating transit and active transportation-oriented communities that are safe for all users; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and attracting and retaining employers that support good jobs for workers.

As I have done regionally, I will work to ensure that Arlington achieves success in each of our priority areas by pursuing the solutions that emerge when we see how housing intersects with transportation and mobility and where they both intersect with improving our resilience to climate change.

These principles for responsible, inclusive, and managed growth are not exclusive to, but certainly apply to our Missing Middle conversation—a concept that has activated and engaged our community in ways that both inspire me and give me cause for concern. It has been truly exciting to see so many people thinking deeply about housing policy, no matter their stance on the details. Being invited to homes to meet a “few” neighbors that ultimately resulted in over dozens attending, neighborhood walking tours where attendance grew every block, standing room only forums in houses of worship, structured community conversations and thousands of other contacts through email, in-person and virtual meetings and chance meetings at coffee shops—the engagement on these issues has been and will continue to be vitally important in shaping the best public policy.

But I recognize there are significant emotions that people bring to this policy discussion. Some homeowners are anxious about what changes may bring to their neighborhoods and fearing the worse, want to leave things be, while many others are impatient with the status quo and eager for expansive changes to create more opportunity to remain in the community they have come to cherish.

What causes me concern is not that this issue has created extreme polarization, but that for some there is a seeming lack of appreciation for the legitimacy of policy positions that are disparate from theirs and worse, a disregard for the humanity of those who hold those positions.

I am convinced that Arlington can do better. My pledge to you is to forge a path on Missing Middle and all other questions concerning growth and change, that reflect principles in the framework I outlined earlier, and I ask that our community engage not through the zero-sum lens of “my way or else,” but rather with an eye towards holding us, the County Board, accountable for moving forward thoughtfully and reasonably given all the positions that may be held on any given issue.

A perspective, no matter how sincerely or strongly held, is not the way forward for Arlington if it fails to account for the needs of all Arlingtonians.

So, while the Missing Middle conversation has laid bare that there are competing priorities demanding our attention and different visions of Arlington’s future that we must consider, I ask that we don’t lose sight of what unites us—a vision of an Arlington community that delivers excellent services and facilitates the community conditions where everyone can thrive and that provides opportunity for future generations. Even among those I know may be diametrically opposed on an issue like Missing Middle, I believe we share these core aspirations. I look forward to working with my colleagues to do our part in moving closer to fully realizing that vision.

You have my sincerest wishes for a fulfilling 2023.