

Good Evening and Happy New Year,

It's safe to say that the two biggest issues of the first six months of 2023 will be the housing policies considered through missing middle and the FY 2024 budget. I'd like to begin by sharing a few big picture thoughts.

1. We must work to build consensus. Consensus is NOT unanimity but it respects the voices of all and looks to serve the greatest good. While not everyone will be happy with any particular decision, our community as a whole should feel heard and understand the reasoning that prevails in votes taken by the Board.
2. Civility will be more important in 2023 than it has ever been in my time on the Board. Let's debate the policy AND avoid casting aspersions on neighbors' motives.
3. The details matter. Your questions, our answers and our conversation are the heart and soul of our civic life.

On housing and missing middle, my views are nuanced, so I will be working toward a thoughtful missing middle policy that builds consensus.

My re-election was neither a mandate to enact the full staff proposal nor unrelated to missing middle. Some say that my 60% and Mr. Adam Theo's 10% mean that 70% of Arlingtonians support missing middle. I disagree. I campaigned on other issues, my views on missing middle were and are not the full staff proposal, and I believe there were many factors involved in Arlingtonians decision last November. We have additional responsibilities: to care for our climate and parks, our infrastructure, and our neighbors who struggle with hunger, poor health, and poverty. While Missing Middle is certainly significant, we cannot and should not lose our focus on other critical issues.

Also, we cannot delay for delay's sake. Some are already asking that we delay what is called the "Request to Advertise". I disagree. If you have read the December 7th set of options that will form the bulk of what we consider later this month, you know that the options in it could lead to very different policies. The purpose of the RTA and the 60-day period of consideration thereafter is to allow for a more specific conversation about details.

On our budget, February through April will be dominated by one of the most difficult budgets we have faced in my time on the Board. The fundamental shift in our office market will make this challenging. We must be fiscally smart, balancing the long-term positives of our community's priorities with our charge to be careful stewards of your dollars.

My top budget priorities, beyond meeting the collective bargaining agreements, are funding our schools and combating climate change.

On schools, this is only the beginning of a multi-year effort to make Arlington Public Schools the best in Virginia for every child. My funding priority addresses the single biggest factor in our children's success in school - our teachers. I will also work assiduously with our School Board colleagues to support educational equity.

On climate, I am looking for transformational decisions that can help us get on track to hit our 2035 goal of 100% renewable electricity in Arlington. More than ever, we need bold and innovative ideas that will make Arlington an example for other localities around the country in this next decade. I am determined to work with our Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy leadership to help transform our County as we strive to do our local part to save our planet.

Looking past the budget and missing middle, I'll be focused on several other priority areas:

They start with **inclusive economic growth**. Our office vacancy rate is above 21%. We must recognize that our economy has undergone a fundamental shift due to the pandemic—working from home in some form is here to stay. Our property owners, managers, and County leadership must focus our energy on fully adapting to this reality. I will make myself available to our new Arlington Economic Development Director Ryan Touhill and the excellent team of professionals at AED.

In addition to our office vacancy rate, adopting a **thoughtful Plan for Langston Boulevard as soon as possible** must be a top priority because this plan has a big upside for our economy. Our outreach and engagement efforts are ongoing and will contribute greatly to the adoption of a deliberate and lively Plan. Specifically, I will be pushing for adoption as soon as is reasonable this summer. The Plan will be my top CPHD priority; the implementation framework must move forward in our work plan, and the planning frameworks for thoughtful development must be completed as soon as possible, with full engagement.

On hunger, I'm excited that the Manager will be reporting our community's progress on the Food Security Strategic Plan at our regular January meeting. Moving forward he'll be working with a Food Security Coalition made up of residents, non-profits and County staff to keep this key issue moving. I look forward to learning more about next steps, including recommendations on how we might, as a government, help address the growing cost of food.

On housing, I'm committed to affordable housing for those most in need and finding creative solutions to address the funding gaps in affordable housing construction. This is a critical but distinct step from missing middle which addresses, in my view, a different issue—housing affordability—and a different slice of our housing market. I DO support dedicating resources to serve those at 30% of Area Median Income as a general county-wide policy priority and specifically at Barcroft. I also support a

Community Land Trust and working on the next steps on the Homeownership Study released in October.

On transportation and pedestrian safety, we must lead on safety. Our Vision Zero team is proactively addressing infrastructure hotspots, and I will be pushing for policies that better quantify the risk of accidents and serious injuries in order to move us as quickly as possible toward zero pedestrian deaths. We can both recognize that there are better ways to serve our residents and respect the efforts our staff takes. On our transportation system, I will better engage with our community to help move us to a 21st Century multi-modal transportation system that is safer for all users.

Last, but not least, equity. I am committed, as I know my colleagues are, to building a more racially just Arlington, in every part of our County. Equity must continue to be a part of every discussion that we have. In addition, as the months and years pass since May 25, 2020 when George Floyd was murdered, this Board has an obligation to work with our Chief Race and Equity Officer and to ensure that the Police Oversight Board is fully operational and does the work we set out to do, working to make measurable progress in reforming Arlington's criminal justice system.

That's an ambitious set of priorities. Here's hoping my work this year lives up to them.

Happy new year!