

---

**Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**May 27, 2025**  
**7:00 p.m.**

---

---

*This meeting was a hybrid virtual/in-person public meeting held through electronic communication means.*

---

**Planning Commissioners in attendance:**

- Sara Steinberger, LRPC Chair (in-person)
- Daniel Weir (virtual)
- Devanshi Patel, (absent)
- Eric Berkey (absent)
- Jim Lantelme (in-person)
- Karen Guevara (absent)
- Nia Bagley (virtual)
- Peter Robertson (absent)
- Tenley Peterson (virtual)
- Tony Striner (in-person)

**Other Commission/Advisory Board Members in attendance:**

- Arlington Commission for the Arts and Public Art Committee, Alyssa Tope (in-person)
- Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee, John Kirkpatrick (virtual)
- Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission, Rob Sandoli (virtual) and Liliana Diaz (in-person)
- Commission on Aging, Kathy Cameron (virtual)
- Commission on the Status of Women, Caroline Romano (in-person)
- Disability Advisory Commission, Marilyn McAlice (virtual)
- Economic Development Commission, Matthew Weinstein (virtual)
- Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission, Gillian Burgess (virtual)
- Forestry and Natural Resources Commission, David Howell (in-person), Caroline Haynes (virtual) and Bob Benson (virtual)
- Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board, Alex Foster (in-person)
- Housing Commission, Kellen MacBeth (virtual)
- Information Technology Advisory Commission, Michael Cornfield (virtual)
- Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Pamela Van Hine (in-person)
- Public Facility Review Committee, Nia Bagley (virtual) and Tony Striner (in-person)
- Tenant-Landlord Commission, Andrew Ferreira (in-person)
- Transportation Commission, Sohail Husain (in-person) and Meg Flores (virtual)

**Staff in attendance (CPHD Planning):**

- Natasha Alfonso-Ahmed, LRPC Coordinator and Principal Planner (in-person)
- Rana Abu Ghazaleh, Project Lead, Principal Planner (in-person)

- Jennifer Smith, Comprehensive Planning Manager (in-person)
- Emily Garrett, Associate Planner (in-person)

### **Comprehensive Plan Update LRPC Meeting**

Commissioner Lantelme opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Lantelme recognized staff members and members of other Arlington County Commissions and Advisory Boards in attendance.

A staff presentation was provided by Rana Abu Ghazaleh on the County's effort to update the Comprehensive Plan including the scope of work, timeline and community engagement strategy, as well as an update on the recent community focus group discussions. It was noted that the purpose of this initial meeting is to 1) explain the role of the extended LRPC group, which includes representatives of other Commissions and Advisory Boards, in the Comprehensive Plan update; and 2) gather feedback on the preliminary American Planning Association (APA) guiding principles. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session to respond to clarifying questions about the presentation, and a discussion around the preliminary six APA Guiding Principles.

### **Presentation Q&A**

Staff responded to questions about the presentation which focused on:

1. Community Engagement – Will there be outreach to groups who normally participate, such as the Civic Federation and Langston Boulevard Alliance? How are we recruiting people to the focus groups and is there a standard set of questions and format for all groups? *Staff clarified that the County recruited the help of its partners to identify people to participate in the focus groups, which included up to 15 participants in each setting. The focus groups included representatives of multiple racial and ethnic groups (Black and African-American, Hispanic and Latino, Middle Eastern); community groups, businesses, development organizations (i.e., Civic Federation, Langston Boulevard Alliance, and Business Improvement Districts); lower income renters; teens and college students; and the elderly and persons with disabilities. While the questions were standardized across all groups, the format was tailored slightly to accommodate the groups' preferences for providing feedback. The materials were translated to the top 5 languages in Arlington and interpretation services were provided in the meetings where there was a language barrier. The Hispanic and Latino focus group presentation and discussion was delivered/conducted entirely in Spanish. It was noted that staff will be working on a newsletter to provide information on the process and encourage people to engage.*
2. Online Engagement – What was the format of the online engagement (virtual groups or survey) and the response rate? *Staff clarified that the online engagement is a feedback form with questions designed to gather input from the community on the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. This form will remain open until the end of June, therefore, the County does not yet have statistics on the number of respondents.*
3. Introductory Chapter – What is the purpose of the new Introductory Chapter and what impact will it have on decision making? *Staff clarified the purpose of the new chapter is to include: 1) data about existing conditions in Arlington; 2) an overview of the County's strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities; 3) new people-centric guiding*

*principles to update the existing goals and objectives, established over 50 years ago; 4) the process for future updates to the elements of the Comprehensive Plan; and 5) how the elements align with the new principles. It was noted that the new chapter will allow us to demonstrate how the 12 elements of the Comprehensive Plan are connected and coordinated, and how they support the overarching goals and vision of the County.*

*Additionally, it will allow us to incorporate emerging priorities or unaddressed issues like racial equity, climate change, public health, and economic resilience. The principles, which will be influenced by community input, will provide high-level guidance for decision making.*

4. Housing – Where does housing (and housing affordability) fall on the chart in slide 8 (Conceptual Framework Approach for Comp Plan Elements, Cross Cutting Issues/Emerging Priorities and APA Guiding Principles)? *Staff clarified that in addition to housing affordability being addressed in the Affordable Housing Master Plan, it can fall under the APA Guiding Principles for Livable Built Environment, Interwoven Equity and Resilient Economy.*
5. Community Vulnerability Index Map (CVIM) – What is it? *The CVIM is a tool that helps the County identify areas in Arlington with higher concentrations of vulnerable populations to better understand disparities and where additional assistance and services might be needed. This tool looks at a number of indicators, in addition to race and income.*

### **Discussion on Preliminary Six APA Guiding Principles**

Staff asked Commissioners to answer the following questions for each preliminary principle:

- Are the preliminary APA Guiding Principles appropriate for Arlington?
- Is there something missing in each of the Guiding Principle statements to make it unique to Arlington?

#### **1. Livable Built Environment**

- Appropriateness
  - “These are good Guiding Principles and create/demonstrate a 'web of concepts' that help connect them together, which can be mutually reinforcing.”
  - “I really love this statement, but I have some concerns. These are all terms that read in different contexts, different environments, different times, can and have been used to argue for exclusion instead of embrace.”
  - “I would think we want everything to be livable... and not to be limited to the built environment...about transportation and land use but also things like the school system and parks programs.”
- What’s missing?
  - "attainable" [housing] - more than just “affordable” in Arlington context
  - "welcoming" - visitors are a big part of local economy
  - "quality" before transportation and infrastructure
  - "natureful" instead of "green"
  - “equity”
  - “biophilic design”, which is the relationship of nature and humans – “So it’s available to everybody where they live; Doesn't negate the principle of Harmony with Nature. A little bit of intentional redundancy is not a bad thing.”
  - "abundant", “plentiful”, “myriad” - even more than "welcoming" with overtones of quantity, to emphasize Comp Plan “envisions and intends to build a community that is livable for more than the 240,000 people who live here now”.

- “smart infrastructure” – “Want to see smart infrastructure in housing, energy and transportation that is sustainable and resilient.”
- “accessibility” when referring to the disabled community
- Other
  - consider the Vision work coming forward with the MTP Update
  - consider where “preserving existing (and welcoming new) cultural narratives” should be recognized

## 2. Interwoven Equity

- Appropriateness
  - “citizens” – “Is limited. I think we mean all people who are here, whether they're citizens, visitors or residents.”
  - “We're looking at it much broader than just racial equity, which obviously is incredibly important, but it's equity for all the different groups.”
  - “I disagree with word ‘groups’. I am thinking here of [groups like] the KKK and don't think we want *fairness* for them.”
  - “livelihood” - in terms of economics is appropriate
- What's missing?
  - “education and learning for youth and adults”
  - reference to all different groups including: LGBTQ+ community; the very young, old and frail; the disabled and impaired - mental, emotional and physical
- Other
  - consider holding a focus group with LGBTQ+ community

## 3. Harmony With Nature

- Appropriateness
  - “natural resources” – not appropriate because it implies oil and coal to some people, which are not resources Arlington encourages using; consider “natural environment” instead
  - statement needs clarification - “We're talking about the things that create the character of our space and the quality of our space.”
  - “primary objective” - makes it sound like this is more important than other goals. “We want equality among the principles; This can't be a reason that we're not going to add more development because housing is an important priority.”
- What's missing?
  - “respect for nature, biophilia, recognition of climate change, and trying to minimize our contribution to climate change while also adapting to it.”
  - “respect for native species” – recognizing its value
  - “contributions of nature and its ecosystem to human well-being” - maintaining, restoring and preserving nature is a priority
  - “accessibility” - when referring to the disabled community
- Other
  - consider providing definitions and examples of biodiversity, ecosystem, sustainability, biophilia, and climate change so everyone can understand what we mean

- consider how the Comprehensive Plan can provide guidance for balancing and choosing priorities among the different elements, principles and goals

#### 4. Healthy and Safe Community

- Appropriateness
  - “safe neighborhoods” – is too limited, “safe spaces” is better; safety should not only refer to crime. “Do people feel safe? Are LGBT couples able to be who they are and walk with their partner holding hands?”
  - “ensure” - is not the correct term as the County cannot ensure public health or food. It can only support. “Access to opportunities” is better.
  - “Is this principle trying to say we should have access to all of our healthcare needs in Arlington? Right now, that’s not true.” – clarification is needed including which healthcare services should be in Arlington and which we should have access to within the region
- What’s missing?
  - “good housing”
  - “mental health” - at all stages of life and particularly teen age
  - “access to safe third spaces” - particularly for teens and kids
  - “access to other health care services” - not just public
  - “access to, or opportunities for, physical and recreational activities in quality spaces for people of all abilities”
  - “accessibility” - when referring to the disabled community
  - “disparities” – across several indicators, so we are not just looking at the community as a whole, which indicates on average things are getting better but in reality it’s getting worse for some people
  - “personal safety and security” – from theft and reckless driving
  - “walkability” – people on the street creates a safe environment; walking is a physical activity that most people can do
  - “mitigating public health risks” - Police, fire, ambulance, emergency response, weather emergencies, tornadoes and even pandemic response
  - “access to criminal justice system” – affordable services for pre/post trauma/emergencies
  - “inclusive” in the title
- Other
  - Consider distinguishing the services the County is responsible for providing (including infrastructure to support the services) versus what we are promoting

#### 6. Resilient Economy

- Appropriateness
  - “This is an odd principle because we don't have a stand-alone Economic plan in the Comp Plan. As a PC member evaluating development proposals, it is irrelevant if developer is making a profit and/or the proposal contributes to the overall economic development of the County.”
  - “Resilient *government*” is better framing – “Arlington needs to be in a good space to be able to endure a lot of change...making sure that the County is prepared to provide a sustainable economy or an environment for economies to thrive”; County needs to plan for good and bad times; “resilient community” is also good.

- “Resilient economy makes sense because in my relatively short lifespan so far we've had terrorist attacks, recession, a pandemic and who knows what's going to happen” – should be framed in terms of investments that the County makes
- “Resilient economy in the face of climate change means we can absorb the shocks and respond to it.”
- “Green business growth” - is oddly specific and is missing “small” business; This should be about “facilitating an environment where people have the opportunity to participate and the economy is accessible and inclusive, without barriers.”
- What’s missing?
  - “diverse multiple businesses and industries” we can rely on
  - Principle is not people-centric like other principles – “making sure Arlington is an attractive place for business owners to start a new business (and keep their business) and providing jobs/investment opportunities and places for renters to live, so that our commercial tax rate is able to support our community.”
  - “fiscally responsible government”
- Other
  - Consider that resiliency, in general, applies to both the economy and built environment, and across many other elements.

## 7. Responsible Regionalism

- Appropriateness
  - “As written, the principle seems to say we will do whatever the region wants” - we want to work with the region but not give up our power.
  - “adjacent should be omitted” – jurisdictions we work with are not always adjacent
  - “support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions” – need to acknowledge others may not be supporting us; “collaborate with other jurisdictions” is better.
- What’s missing?
  - “collaborative” – we need to be working together with our regional partners on issues like housing, health, environmental protection and transportation, including “agreeing to a funding mechanism that would give Metro stability”; “big problems require big solutions and thinking big and thinking regionally.”
  - “guide” - need to be cognizant we are the geographic center of a larger area and what we do in Arlington impacts the region
- Other
  - n/a

## Discussion on Additional Guiding Principles

Staff asked Commissioners the following question: What additional Guiding Principles do you suggest we include?

- Additional Principles
  - None were proposed
- Other concepts to emphasize
  - interconnectedness and whole government approach – “interconnectedness of the issues and need for collaboration among Arlington County's different departments and offices for solving a lot of the challenges that we face in the County”

- evidence-based and data-driven goals – for transparency and implementation (like approach for MTP vision/goals)
- collaboration with private/non-profit partners
- Other
  - consider public engagement with kids and elderly – “please go talk to children. They’re in schools. They’re a captive audience.”
  - consider how the Comprehensive Plan can provide guidance for balancing and choosing priorities among the different elements, principles and goals – “Comprehensive plan is hard to use when making a budget because there’s no priorities in it. There are just silos, and when you have limited resources and you have to make choices among those limited resources, our Comp Plan does not do a great job on guiding that.”
  - consider adding metrics in the Comp Plan to measure achievement of goals and guide decisions about funding
  - “I hope that this effort isn’t just adding a layer of administration on top of an already siloed Comp Plan, because the Comp Plan is hard to work with.”

### **Public Comment**

- Climate Action Plan underway - climate and emissions reduction initiatives should be very visible in principles
- Racial Equity – “Drop the word racial. There are many ways to analyze the groups in the County. That narrows it unnecessarily.”
- “Ensure” – “Implies an obligation and County has limited resources. We are trying to accomplish what is important to the County.”
- Principles limiting the County’s flexibility - “To me they are community values. I’m a little bit concerned about tying them to our Comprehensive Plan. You’re not going to get broad community involvement if this falls under planning.”
- Density - is needed for all principles
- Responsible Regionalism – “Something that benefits the region may not be as beneficial for Arlington. Like Principle, but think it is more applicable to suburban counties and jurisdictions who tend to extract value from urban areas.”

### **Next Steps**

The LRPC expressed appreciation to staff for their work and commissioners/advisory board representatives for their participation and input.

-----

Chair Steinberger adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:00 p.m.