

## County Board Candidates Address Affordable Housing

The Alliance for Housing Solutions asked the 3 candidates running in the special election for Arlington County Board to respond to 3 questions about affordable housing. The candidates were informed that answers would be posted in their entirety and that notice of the posting to the AHS website would be sent to the AHS list serve and local press.

1. What do you rank as the highest priorities facing Arlington County in the near future? Where do you place maintaining/increasing the supply of affordable housing in Arlington in the list of priorities, and why?
2. For several years Arlington has had a target of increasing the supply of Committed Affordable Housing Units (CAFs) by 400 annually. However, this target has most often not been met. In your view, why has the County failed to meet its target? What can be done to reach the target, or do you see a need to modify the target?
3. What specific actions do you think the County should be taking to help preserve/increase the supply of affordable housing, including both CAFs and market-rate affordable units?

No edits have been made. Candidate responses appear below in the order in which they were received. More information can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.libbygarvey.com>

<http://www.audreyclement.org>

<http://kellyforarlington.com>

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<b>Libby T. Garvey (D)</b>	Affordable housing is one of my top priorities. If we are to preserve Arlington as a diverse and vibrant community we need to have people from all income levels living and working here. This is an increasingly large and difficult challenge in a community like Arlington. The fact that we've lost about 2/3 of our affordable housing since 2000 should concern everyone. This affects not only those on the lowest economic level, but median income people who are the backbone of any community: people like our police, firefighters and teachers. My work over the past 15 years has made me quite aware of this issue. Our schools, the heart of our community, are perhaps more affected than any other sector by these changes. The redevelopment of older	In answer to your first question, this is an extremely difficult issue given the constraints the state of Virginia puts on local governments trying to influence development. This is a "by right" state and people can do pretty much what they want with their property. Most people want to maximize their profit and that does not lead easily to providing affordable housing here. Market forces are against us. That said, I believe we, as a community, are not clear about how important affordable housing is for Arlington. We need to incorporate affordable housing into an overall strategic plan for Arlington. If we do not set affordable housing as a clear priority for Arlington, it is all too easy to lose focus and let this important need slip through the	There are a number of tools the County can and does use to do this. These include supporting non-profit organizations like APAH and local churches like Macedonia Baptist that help provide affordable housing, as well as negotiating with developers to provide affordable housing in return for increased density. As mentioned above, as housing stock committed to affordable housing ages out, we need to renew the commitments and look for more opportunities to work with the owners of these buildings so they can get sufficient income to maintain affordable rates. This could include financing help with tax incentives or tax credits and loans. As development continues, we need to work hard to get

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<i>Garvey, cont.</i>	<p>multi-family dwellings is very destabilizing and stressful for many of our students and their families as they continually move to find affordable housing within Arlington. It affects our employees as well. Some teachers, especially newer teachers, often have difficulty finding an affordable place to live and often commute long distances to work. At some point, employees find it is just too expensive and too difficult to work in Arlington. Finally, many of us who have raised families in Arlington are finding that our own children cannot afford to live here, or struggle to do so. It is distressing when Arlington's children who grew up here and went to our schools cannot live here. Maintaining and increasing the supply of affordable housing is crucial to maintaining the Arlington we know and love. Doing so is one on my highest priorities.</p>	<p>cracks. In answer to your second question, I do not believe we should modify the target, at least not without extensive public input and discussion about how important affordable housing is to Arlington. We need to be honest with ourselves about how important affordable housing is to our community and what it will take to provide sufficient affordable units. We need to have this conversation as a community and set long term goals for the amount of affordable housing we want Arlington to have in the future. As I outlined above, that discussion needs to happen and our commitment made clear if we are to reach the goals we set. We are falling considerably short of the target by about 150 CAF's on average per year. There are a number of aging buildings with affordable units in the Ballston-Rosslyn corridor and along Columbia Pike. In order for us to reach the target of increasing 400 CAFs, it will be important for Arlington to maintain as much as possible the CAFs we do have. We must not only look to add CAF's but also extend the commitment to affordable housing for those units we have already which are ready for renewal and reconstruction.</p>	<p>commitments from developers to significantly support building CAF's either directly or indirectly with TIFs, site plan conditions and bonus density. As a member of the County Board, I will be looking for other creative ways to meet this important need. There have been some few discussions with schools about affordable housing and I think those discussions should continue to see if there is a way to work together on this issue.</p> <p>I think the most pressing issue is the need for more intentional and transparent systems for planning and improvement to manage growth: an overall strategic plan with clear priorities for the County as a whole, and monitoring systems to see if we are progressing towards our goals and working as efficiently as possible. This planning should involve citizens and I am sure affordable housing would be a top priority. The overall goal should be to preserve what is most important to us about Arlington and ensure that our core services and our safety net are properly supported as we grow and develop. I believe both the safety net and what is most important to us about Arlington includes affordable housing.</p>
<b>Audrey R. Clement (G)</b>	<p>Over the last decade Arlington County has experienced unprecedented economic growth characterized by a substantial increase in population, an influx of new employers and a major building boom.</p>	<p>There are several reasons why County Government has not met its goal of 400 new CAFs per year: first, failure to ensure that new multifamily units include on-site CAFs; secondly, County Board has not</p>	<p>If elected to County Board I would place a housing authority referendum back on the ballot and lobby the voters to support it. The principal benefit of such an authority would be to take the</p>

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<p><i>Clement, cont.</i></p>	<p>This growth has been attended by gentrification or the recycling of moderate income residents out of the county as demand for housing by an influx of upscale wage earners has caused housing values and rents to sky rocket.</p> <p>AHS itself reports that two thirds of the affordable housing in the county was lost during the last decade. While County Board has paid lip service to the problem, its policies run directly counter to its stated goal of preserving affordable housing. Nowhere is this more evident than in its plans to redevelop Columbia Pike, the centerpiece of which is the Columbia Pike Trolley. Developers want the trolley, because they've determined that they will have to triple housing density along the Pike in order to realize a suitable return on their investment, and the trolley will serve as a draw for new tenants. County Board's consultant, Dover Kohl, issued a report last year that demonstrated that the County would have to subsidize rents to the tune of about \$300 million to preserve the remaining affordable housing along the Pike, a staggering sum that the County clearly doesn't have. Thus it is fair to conclude that while County Board talks a good game, the redevelopment of Columbia Pike will drive out a large portion of the remaining moderate income dwellers in that community.</p> <p>In addition to advancing development policies destined to accelerate rents, County Board refuses to take any significant measures to reduce pressure</p>	<p>adequately funded the AHIF (Arlington Housing Investment Fund); and finally, the County has not used its broad land-use powers to preserve existing moderate income apartments (such as historical designation).</p> <p>The county government is not using its leverage over the site plan process to extract additional CAFs (5 percent of on-site units) from multifamily developers who need site plan approval. Many developers choose to pay a low fee in lieu of adding committed apartments on their new building site, a fee too low to actually purchase an apartment elsewhere in the county. The fee should be raised annually to reflect the actual cost of purchasing an existing apartment in the county. Nevertheless, fewer than 50 units annually can be obtained through this process in any event.</p> <p>Secondly, the County has not significantly increased its AHIF subsidy over the past ten years from its current annual level of about \$4 million. Each CAF costs the county from \$50,000 - \$100,000; 400 CAFS then would cost from \$20 million to \$40 million. Thus, a \$4 million AHIF is able to finance only about 40-80 CAFS annually, and some of these are expiring CAF units that otherwise will disappear without additional subsidy. It is folly to pretend that anywhere near 400 CAFs can be added annually without five to ten-fold more funds available in the AHIF.</p> <p>Finally, County Board has not used its full</p>	<p>pressure off rents by increasing the supply of low and moderate income housing. One a housing authority was established, I would have it prioritize the construction and retention of rental properties for public employees such as fire, EMT, teachers, and nurses, who live in Arlington.</p> <p>In addition, Arlington should join a regional housing authority composed of Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria, and the City of Falls Church (each of these jurisdictions already have functioning housing authorities) that would issue bonds, underwrite and plan joint affordable housing efforts, such as along Columbia Pike for example. This outcome would benefit not only low income residents, but higher wage earners who will not have their rents escalate every year.</p> <p>A regional housing authority could also reduce the cost of obtaining and preserving affordable housing units in Arlington, by increasing competition among the nonprofit housing organizations and reducing county staff costs. This would reduce the cost of adding CAFs and increase efficiency. Better transparency, centralized housing administration, lower cost of floating and raising capital, and regional coordination are the means to reduce the cost of each unit added.</p>

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<i>Clement, cont.</i>	<p>on rents. For example, in 2008 the Arlington Green Party placed a referendum for a housing authority on the ballot that garnered 33% of the vote. The next year County Board quashed another such referendum by lobbying the state legislature to pass a law increasing the signature requirement for housing referendums from 100 qualified voters to 2% of the registered voters in the county or 3,000 signatures. County Board's promotion of that onerous measure alone proved that its commitment to affordable housing is strictly token, as the consolidation of the County's non-profit housing programs under one umbrella would not only have cut costs, it would have leveraged more money for affordable housing by enabling it to qualify for HUD grants.</p>	<p>powers to preserve existing moderate income apartments. For example, it chose NOT to designate Buckingham Villages 1-2-3 as historic, and thus about 460 affordable apartments were lost. County Board could use its broad zoning powers to block demolition. Instead it invokes the "Dillon Rule" as an excuse for inaction, implicitly encouraging developers to destroy existing apartments.</p>	<p>I would also stipulate that developers pay a higher share of infrastructure costs as part of the site plan development process. This would not only realize significant community benefits, it would discourage rampant development and the attendant pressure on rents.</p> <p>As mentioned above, the county government must increase the funding for the AHIF from its current level of about \$4 million to beyond \$20 million annually.</p> <p>Finally, the county should aggressively use historic preservation law to keep key garden-apartment complexes threatened with demolition or gentrification. Once it becomes clear to land owners and developers that the county government will block such activities, preservation of existing market rate units will become much easier.</p>
<b>Mark D. Kelly (R)</b>	<p>Arlington's future is important and worth fighting for, and we deserve leaders who will listen to community concerns. In these uncertain economic times, we need to craft more responsible budgets, build a comprehensive economic strategy and develop real-time transparency and accountability from our government.</p> <p>As I talk to voters throughout Arlington, I hear the same thing from Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike—</p>	<p>Given the current tools available, the current Arlington County Board cannot redevelop our neighborhoods fast enough nor raise tax rates high enough to meet the target of 400 Committed Affordable Housing Units on an ongoing basis. Current policy tools available are tied to negotiations with developers seeking county approval for a project. We need a comprehensive approach to affordable housing that will protect a wide variety of housing for residents of all income levels.</p>	<p>Civic leaders in Arlington should show the political courage to use the Arlington Housing Investment Fund to serve the most vulnerable residents and not as an ineffective program to attempt to off-set the negative effects of current and past development plans on middle income residents.</p> <p>Previous discussions about increasing CAFs and market-rate affordable units have concentrated on command and</p>

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<p><i>Kelly, cont.</i></p>	<p>they want a bigger focus on core functions of their local government and less on “vanity projects” like the Artisphere and the proposed Columbia Pike trolley. As a 12 year homeowner in Arlington, I could not agree more.</p> <p>We should focus on infrastructure, education, public safety and deferred maintenance needs of our existing assets over things like new theaters.</p> <p>I have called for complete transparency for all county spending—opening up our checkbook by putting every penny online in near real-time. I also support the proposal of the Civic Federation to hire an independent Inspector General to audit our county government.</p> <p>I support the continued development of a rapid rehousing strategy, and an ongoing partnership with A-SPAN and non-profit affordable housing providers. On the matter of the homeless shelter, in the time the current County Board has spent studying locations the county could have retrofitted the existing winter shelter to provide a year-round space for the delivery of services to the most vulnerable among us and be up and running this summer instead of engaging in a protracted fight to place where the community and neighbors don’t think is the best place to locate a year round low barrier shelter.</p> <p>Maintaining and increasing the supply of affordable housing in Arlington requires</p>	<p>A better goal that defines my approach to affordable housing is to attempt to achieve zero net loss of market rate affordable housing. This is a tougher goal than committed affordable units because it takes a comprehensive approach to evaluating the merits of developments, housing density and the mix between commercial and residential property.</p> <p>This includes recognizing the effects of current and future development decisions on market rate affordable rental units. The impact of redevelopment on middle income residents requires restraining and reevaluating the scale and speed of wholesale redevelopments along Columbia Pike and Lee Highway and in East Falls Church, Pentagon City and Crystal City where that development would effectively push middle income residents out of Arlington.</p>	<p>control. I will work to develop policy tools to protect current affordable housing and approach housing and development decisions from a perspective of a net-zero loss of market rate affordable housing goal.</p> <p>Additional actions should include exploring the application of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) policy framework currently being used for historic preservation to protect market rate affordable housing across the county. Applying this framework to preserving market rate affordable housing would allow developers seeking to secure additional development rights to purchase a development right from an owner of a current market rate affordable owner in exchange for a commitment to maintain that market rate affordability for a significant period of time into the future.</p> <p>Arlington is a great place to live and it will continue to be a place where people move to build their careers, start a family and join a community. I need your help on March 27th to make Arlington an even greater place to live, work and raise a family, not just for the people that currently live here but also for our children as they start to build a career and an independent life of their own here in Arlington. I want to make Arlington a place where middle income residents can thrive so that generations can continue to build a great community here.</p>

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<i>Kelly, cont.</i>	taking a broader view of affordable housing than the narrow view of affordable housing as a safety net service. Currently a significant portion of these safety net services serve residents in the 70 and 80 percent of a 2012 Area Median Income of \$107,500.		

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