

The [Alliance for Housing Solutions](#) is a nonprofit organization in Arlington that works to increase the supply of affordable housing in our area. AHS was founded in 2003 by civic leaders who were concerned that Arlington was becoming a place where only the affluent could afford to live.

AHS has a tradition of asking candidates running for the County Board to answer a set of questions related to affordable housing. We post candidate answers in full on our website and publicize them through local media and social media channels. Because we do not support individual political candidates, AHS does not evaluate or rate these responses.

Arlington County has called a Special Election (to be held on July 7, 2020) to fill the seat vacated by the tragic passing of Arlington County Board member Erik Gutshall.

The Democratic primary candidates are: Chanda Choun, Barbara Kanninen, Takis Karantonis, and Nicole Merlene. To date, no Republican or Independent candidates have put their names forward. Nominations are due by May 8. The questions provided to the four candidates for the Democratic primary are:

1. Since adopting its Affordable Housing Master Plan in 2015, Arlington has only reached about half of its yearly goal of 600 new or preserved committed affordable rental units. What steps, if any, should the County take to meet this goal?
2. What are your top two housing priorities for the County over the next five years?
3. What kinds of other new ideas or innovative approaches could the County pursue to improve housing affordability in our area?

Each candidate’s responses to these questions are provided below in their entirety. For more information on the candidates please see <https://arlingtondemocrats.org/vote/candidates/>

| <b>Question 1: Since adopting its Affordable Housing Master Plan in 2015, Arlington has only reached about half of its yearly goal of 600 new or preserved committed affordable rental units. What steps, if any, should the County take to meet this goal?</b>  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Chanda Choun</b>  | <b>Barbara Kanninen</b>  | <b>Takis Karantonis</b>   | <b>Nicole Merlene</b>   |
| In accordance with the Arlington County Affordable Housing Master Plan, I would consider a menu of policy changes that altogether are projected to increase the production of committed affordable units production to meet the goal of 600 units per year. These policies are detailed in the December 2017 report – “Fulfilling the Promise: Meeting the Production Goals of Arlington’s AHMP” – created by a coalition of | The goal of 600 units is aspirational—an ambitious, stretch goal that requires multiple strategies to achieve. In addition to expanding the County’s AHIF production rate, the best solutions will include incentives to encourage the private sector to play a larger role in providing affordable housing:<br><br>1. Increase funding for the County’s Affordable Housing Investment Fund; | I want to begin by affirming my commitment to the County’s Affordable Housing Master Plan. Crafted with input from the community, it emphasizes the importance of collaboration among the public sector, housing services providers, the development community, and businesses to achieve our goals. I propose a review of the plan to assess which tools are | <i>Note: no responses were provided by the Merlene campaign</i> |

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>local housing experts and advocates, including reducing site plan conditions for new affordable housing construction, waiving permit and tap fees for affordable housing projects, reducing use permit conditions for rehabilitation projects, modifying bonus density policy, pursuing community-serving real estate opportunities, offering property tax abatements/exemptions, and expanding sources of funding for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund.</p> | <p>2. Boost outreach and incentives to private developers to engage them in affordable housing solutions;</p> <p>3. Consider changes to current formulas for affordable housing requirements in density bonuses and the affordable housing ordinance;</p> <p>4. Pursue creative strategies like master leasing that could quickly add to the inventory of affordable units;</p> <p>5. Streamline processes and remove administrative barriers to more participation in affordable housing programs; and</p> <p>6. Pursue these solutions within the framework of the Housing Arlington Initiative and the update to the Affordable Housing Master Plan to ensure that there is community engagement and support.</p> | <p>working and which are worthy of additional exploration.</p> <p>I would find fresh sources to increase our funding of the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF). AHIF is our revolving loan fund that provides gap financing for projects and is critical to our ability to deliver new units.</p> <p>I will make use of the recent zoning amendment that provides increased density within allowable heights, to incentivize the creation of more onsite affordable units on the land being developed.</p> <p>I would look at the Housing Conservation Districts (HCD) study, designed to minimize the loss of market-rate affordable units, to better align it with ongoing initiatives in our corridors.</p> <p>I would review the specific recommendations in the Fulfilling the Promise report and implement the most promising suggestions to increase affordable unit production.</p> <p>With Democratic leadership in the Virginia Legislature and the State House, I would work with developers and businesses to amend the Affordable Housing Ordinance to improve its effectiveness in delivering onsite affordable units.</p> <p>I would work with our State representatives to increase funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and target Northern Virginia as a recipient.</p> |  |
|---|--|---|--|

**Question 2: What are your top two housing priorities for the County over the next five years?**

| Chanda Choun  | Barbara Kanninen   | Takis Karantonis  | Nicole Merlene   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>My first housing priority is to update land use and zoning rules where reasonable and feasible to allow more diverse, affordable forms of housing such as multi-family homes, microapartments, accessory dwelling units and senior living centers.</p> | <p>Given the urgency induced by the coronavirus pandemic, we will need to balance priorities to make sure that nothing really gets left behind. But our top priority has to be basic survival – people need to eat and have shelter, and we need to provide support to our businesses that</p> | <p>Number 1: This is not a normal year, so I must put housing and household stability as the top priority during and after this pandemic. It will take us a few years to recover fully, and the County Board will need to take additional action to increase funding to programs and services</p> | <p><i>Note: no responses were provided by the Merlene campaign</i></p> |

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>My second housing priority is to increase the number of Committed Affordable Units by aggressively working with community partners, developers and funding sources.</p> | <p>provide livelihoods for our residents. This means that:</p> <p>#1 -- We need to protect homeowners and renters who may be at risk because of loss of income. In the short term we must expand rental assistance programs and emergency homeowner loans so that no one loses their home. Moratoriums on evictions and foreclosures are good stopgap measures, but landlords are also businesses who have mortgages and bills to pay, so these are not sustainable strategies.</p> <p>#2 – We need to continue to diversify housing and promote missing middle housing across Arlington via land use policies. Again, this should be done within the context of the Housing Arlington Initiative and the update to the Affordable Housing Master Plan, to ensure community engagement and support. These are strategies that engage the private sector and have the potential to significantly increase the stock of housing that is moderately priced, without any cost to the County budget.</p> <p>#3 – As we recover from the budget crisis triggered by the pandemic, funding for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund should be increased.</p> | <p>related to eviction prevention, food distribution, and emergency assistance. This is an appropriate and critically important role of local government at this time.</p> <p>Number 2: I would concentrate on corridor development, and in particular I would prioritize the work of the Lee Highway Alliance. This land use study is identifying areas for increasing development and density to allow for more housing opportunities. Increased density, appropriately designed, can elevate quality of life. It has proven to be our most reliable tool in delivering a variety of housing forms and will leverage Arlington’s existing transportation infrastructure. It provides the pedestrian-friendly experience important to nearby retail and an enhanced public realm.</p> <p>The Missing Middle study is closely tied to the corridor development efforts. We should move forward on well-planned pilot projects to test concepts designed to deliver high-quality and visually interesting and varied architecture that reflects the character of the immediate community. Diversity of housing forms – such as stacked flats, duplexes and triplexes - is compatible with the gentle transition from our commercial corridors to our established neighborhoods.</p> |  |
|--|---|--|--|

**Question 3: What kinds of other new ideas or innovative approaches could the County pursue to improve housing affordability in our area?**

| <b>Chanda Choun</b>   | <b>Barbara Kanninen</b>   | <b>Takis Karantonis</b>  | <b>Nicole Merlene</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Arlington County needs more renter protections. Let’s work with the state on tenant empowerment, targeted annual rent increase caps and housing vouchers to give Arlington’s majority renter population peace of mind and prevent displacement of long-time residents.</p> | <p>The County should work within the context of the Housing Arlington Initiative and the update to the Affordable Housing Master Plan to identify approaches that will improve housing affordability, especially investigating strategies to promote more participation by the private sector. We need to not only create new housing, but also</p> | <p>The housing supply is closely tied to the cost and availability of land. I would encourage new policies that promote land banking and address the issues around the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) policies here in Arlington, to include a system for TDR banking or a certification</p> | <p><i>Note: no responses were provided by the Merlene campaign</i></p> |

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
|  | <p>conserve both the rental and homeowner housing we already have.</p> <p>Revising land use policies to allow greater density and more housing types in residential areas was a sound approach that Erik supported, and we should pursue it in his memory.</p> <p>Master leasing, where a nonprofit leases a block of units in an existing market-rate building for discounted rents, can quickly expand housing inventory and promotes a unique public-private partnership that benefits both tenants and landlords.</p> <p>Small loans to owners in condominium buildings to help with needed upgrades and repairs can help preserve the affordability of homeownership in older condo buildings, which are threatened by the aging housing stock and increased homeowner association fees and assessments.</p> <p>Lack of affordability is not just an Arlington issue. We also need more regional cooperation and should promote collaborative initiatives that involve other nearby jurisdictions.</p> | <p>process to make TDRs a viable option to fund housing development.</p> <p>I would identify additional areas for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Transit Oriented Affordable Housing (TOAH) opportunities. These tools work together to cover the infrastructure costs for an affordable development, ensuring the project stays below cost thresholds to access tax credits and outside funding streams.</p> <p>The creation of a new Form-Based Code for housing forms - microunits, stacked flats, duplexes, and triplexes - can be the outcome of Missing Middle pilot projects. Such housing forms provide the transition to commercial areas from neighborhoods and a code will lend a level of predictability.</p> <p>And while not new, our two Arlington funds - AHIF and the Housing Grant Program – are vital to the ability of low-income families to live in our community. The former is a revolving loan fund that allows developers to leverage between \$3-7 dollars of outside funding for every dollar awarded as AHIF. The latter provides grants to fill the rent gap for low income families to afford to live in affordable housing complexes. I renew my commitment to these programs and will search for new funding streams to increase the amounts of each.</p> |  |
|--|---|---|--|