



FY 2021 Budget Engagement Summary of Feedback February 2020

Overview

To inform the County Manager's FY 2021 Budget Proposal, Arlington County reached out to residents to gather early feedback from November 7, 2019-January 19, 2020. This early stage of FY 2021 Budget Feedback included options to participate in up to three different areas of budget engagement: (1) What do you like about Arlington? (2) Play Budget Director; and (3) Remaining Diverse and Inclusive.

FY 2021 Budget Feedback Questions

Each of the three focus areas included multiple questions; and additional resources about '[how the budget works](#)' were available to help interested participants learn more about the budget process and unique aspects of the operating budget.

Focus Area 1: What do you like about Arlington? This first question was intentionally broader to attract residents and other stakeholders who wanted to provide feedback but did not necessarily have time to reflect on deeper levels of budget priorities, line items, or funding categories. This area included three unique questions: (1) In a few words, what do you like most about living or doing business in Arlington; (2) Tell us one thing you wish the County would change about the programs and/or services it provides; and (3) If a friend or relative were looking for a place to live or to open a business, would you recommend Arlington?

Focus Area 2: Play Budget Director. This section provided interested stakeholders an opportunity to provide more specific feedback to inform the County Manager's FY 2021 Budget proposal. Questions included: (1) If you were budget director, what would you recommend as investment priorities for FY 2021? (2) Broadly speaking, if the County faces a budget shortfall for FY 2021, which of the following best describes how you would approach balancing the budget? (3) Is there a different budget approach you would take?

(4) If the County faces a budget shortfall for FY 2021, how would you approach balancing the budget? This last question offered an opportunity to provide responses related to 12 different funding categories.

Focus Area 3: Diversity and Inclusion. This area offered just one overarching qualitative question: What ideas do you have for helping close the gaps and improve outcomes for all?

Data Collection

Residents could respond [electronically through an dynamic online platform](#) that offered residents the option to respond to one or all three of the key focus areas: (1) What do you like about Arlington? (2) Play Budget Director; and (3) Remaining Diverse and Inclusive. To expand opportunity for individual stakeholders who might not have access to computers or internet connections, paper/handwritten submission forms were available in English and Spanish—at 15 locations placed throughout the County in libraries, community centers, Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) and other target locations. (See [Appendix 1](#)).

Data has been extracted from both the online as well as the paper/hand written budget engagements responses. Responses for each engagement topic have been disaggregated and tagged for analysis.

Demographics

Participation in the FY 2021 Budget Feedback process was voluntary, and respondents had the opportunity to provide demographic information, which yielded 1,646 participants well distributed across the County (See [Appendix 2](#): Number of Participant Responses per Zip Code). Arlington County is focused on diversifying voices of people with different backgrounds, experiences, race, and age in the process. Of those participants who provided demographic information, 37% of respondents indicated they live in an apartment or condominium; and an additional 11% who live in townhomes.

Home Type	# of Responses	Percent
Apartment or condominium	591	37%
Single-family, detached home	819	51%
Townhome, attached to other houses	177	11%
Other	24	1%
Military Housing	0	0%
Totals	1611	100%

Table 1: Respondents housing types

Individual participants also had the chance to share their age range, which resulted in 53% of respondents sharing they are under 50 years old; and 46% being above 50 years.

Age Range	# of Responses	Percent
<20	23	1.50%
20-29	138	8.97%
30-39	346	22.50%
40-49	314	20.42%
50-59	291	18.92%
60+	413	26.85%
Didn't Provide	13	0.85%
Totals	1538	100%

Table 2: Respondents ages

The demographic questions also included a voluntary opportunity to provide race information. As Table 3 shows, 72% of respondents were white, compared to only 25% overall from other races. This baseline information will help lead to strategies for reaching a broader and more racially diverse audience that offers greater alignment with the County’s overall demographic ratios.

Race	# of Responses	Percent	County Demographics
Asian or Pacific Islander	110	6.58%	9.6%
Black or African American	60	3.59%	8.2%
Hispanic or Latino	135	8.07%	15.1%
White	1210	72.37%	64.0 %
Other	116	6.94%	3.0%
Prefer not to respond	41	2.45%	
Totals	1672	100%	

Table 3: Respondents by Race

Data Analysis

As indicated in Table 4, the number of submissions differed for each of the three levels of engagement. As indicated, the broadest level question focused on “What do you think about Arlington?” yielded the greatest number of responses. The number of submissions for the subsequent questions were reduced each time.

	Online Engagement (English)	Paper Submission (English)	Paper Submission (Spanish)	Total
What Do You Think About Arlington?	1620	61	25	1706
Play Budget Director	627	66	6	699
Diversity & Inclusion	311	39	3	353

Table 4: Submissions received for each question online and by paper.

- *Individual Comments:* There were multiple examples of submissions entered that included multiple points related to different topics. These submissions were disaggregated to allow for a more comprehensive analysis of comments.
- *Themes and Like Responses:* Each unique comment submitted received a tag. Once all the tagging was complete, comments with similar tags were grouped together, and these tagged groups were rolled up into themes. Comments were reviewed by two different people to confer on appropriate level tags and themes.
- *Common Themes across questions:* There were responses that had similarities across all of the engagement categories (e.g., what do you like, play budget director, diversity). As such, readers will notice common themes emerging to all the engagements.
- *Mixed Perspectives:* Respondents offered a mix of perspectives related to different themes (e.g., housing, services and amenities, taxes/fees). To the extent possible, those with varying views are noted at points throughout the narrative*** and the excel worksheet.

The Tables on pages 6-7 offer a summary of key themes that surfaced in each of the focus areas. For readers interested in viewing all of the comments and tags, they are available in the [FY 2021 Budget Feedback Workbook](#). The workbook is organized by worksheet in [Appendix 3](#).

FY 2021 Budget Feedback: Emerging Themes/Top Tagged Categories

<i>Playing Budget Director: Budget Priorities</i>	infrastructure (maintenance, updates, roads, stormwater, pedestrian/bike)
	schools (APS, expand schools to accommodate growth, facilities)
	transportation (public transit, improved metro and buses, bikes/pedestrian safety)
	housing (affordable housing, housing affordability for middle income, housing types)
<i>Playing Budget Director: Alternative Budget Approach</i>	taxes/fees*** (lower taxes/fees, increase taxes fees, tax Amazon)
	government*** (government efficiency, budget, increase/decrease gov't employee salaries)
	reduce spending*** (reduce wasteful spending, reduce services)
	government efficiency*** (increase efficiency, conduce project/performance reviews, remove unnecessary projects)
<i>What Do You Like About Arlington?</i>	services and amenities (libraries, public services, parks and recreation, open/public spaces, senior citizen services)
	proximity (proximity to DC/work, proximity to MD and NoVA, close to metro, accessible location)
	community (neighborhood, great people, family-friendly, urban yet connected, diverse community)
	connectivity (walkability, bike friendly, convenience of public transit, ease of moving around county with vehicle)

FY 2021 Budget Feedback: Emerging Themes/Top Tagged Categories (Cont.)

<i>What Would You Change About Arlington?</i>	housing*** (affordable housing, affordability, renters, housing affordability for middle income)
	transportation*** (public transit, metro improvements, bus services, pedestrian/bike safety, traffic/congestion)
	government*** (reduce spending and waste, fiscal responsibility, focus on cores services only, open communication)
	services and amenities*** (improved core services, improved snow removal, improved leaf pick up, specific services--childcare, English classes, recycling services)

<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i>	housing*** (affordable housing, housing affordability for middle income, renters)
	not a priority for the County*** (does not support County prioritizing diversity and inclusion)
	schools (school integration, diversity in schools, quality education)
	services and amenities*** (access to services, cost of services, specialized services for diverse population)

***mixed perspectives

Appendix 1

List of Stations Around the County with Paper Engagement Forms (English and Spanish)

Arlington County Community Centers

- Arlington Mill
- Walter Reed
- Langston-Brown
- Drew
- Thomas Jefferson

Arlington County Human Services

- Sequoia Building #1
- Sequoia Building #3

Arlington County Government Offices

- Ellen M. Bozman Government Center

Arlington County Libraries

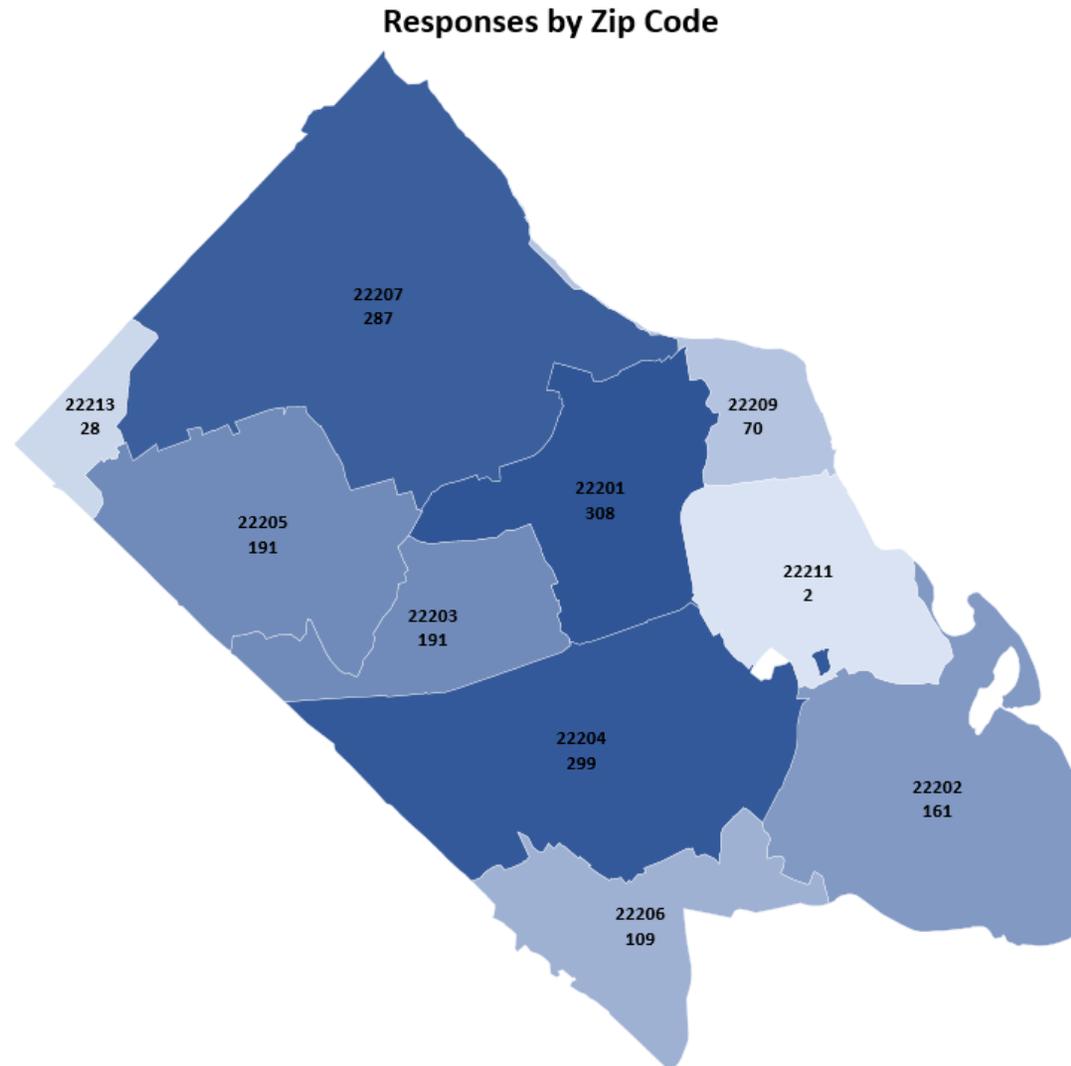
- Central
- Columbia Pike
- Shirlington
- Aurora Hills

Community Partners

- Arlington Food Assistance Center
- Gates of Ballston (Arlington Housing Corporation property)
- Columbia Hills (Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing property)

Appendix 2

Number of Participant Responses per Zip Code



Appendix 3

For readers interested in reviewing specific comments submitted, this is a list that includes a description of each tab/worksheet found in the [FY 2021 Budget Feedback Workbook](#).

- Overview
 - Tab 1: Summary of Participation and Key Themes
 - Tab 2: Demographics
- What Do You Like About Arlington
 - Tab 3: What do you Like-Analysis
 - Tab 4: What Do You Like About Arlington: All Comments
 - Tab 5: What Would You Change About Arlington: Analysis
 - Tab 6: What Would You Change About Arlington: All Comments
 - Tab 7: Would You Recommend Arlington: Analysis
- Play Budget Director
 - Tab 8: Budget Priorities: Analysis
 - Tab 9: Budget Priorities: All Comments
 - Tab 10: Comments on Budget Priorities: All
 - Tab 11: Balance Budget Approach: Analysis
 - Tab 12: Alternative Budget Approach: Analysis
 - Tab 13: Alternative Budget Approach: All Comments
 - Tab 14: Spending Categories: Analysis
- Diversity and Inclusion:
 - Tab 15 and 16: Diversity Analysis