Overview

NINE Roundtable Conversations

“How Should Arlington Grow?”

Hosted by Arlington County Board Members

Facilitated by Community Leaders

Neighbors Talking to Neighbors
Who Participated?

Over 250 Participants

52 Neighborhoods

Locations Across the County

- Langston M. Brown Community Center
- Charles Drew Community Center
- Arlington Mill Community Center
  (w/ Spanish Translation)
- Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
- Lubber Run Community Center
A Focused Conversation

Three Key Questions:

What Makes Arlington, Arlington?

What Does Growth Mean for Arlington?

What Can We Do to Shape Our Future?
Conversation 1: WHAT MAKES ARLINGTON, ARLINGTON?

1.1 Great services for residents, including transportation, utilities, trails, recreation, parks, libraries

1.2 Excellent schools offering high quality of education

1.3 Neighborhoods offer unique character and a sense of community-in a mix of urban and suburban settings

1.4 Sense of diversity in Arlington County

1.5 The proximity to Washington, D.C. and all that is offered in our nation’s capital (government, art, music, theater, monuments, museums, etc.)

1.6 Extensive planning principles

1.7 Engaged and participatory form of government with active citizen
Conversation 1:

WHAT MAKES ARLINGTON, ARLINGTON?

“Supportive communities”
  “Great services”
  “Lots of resources”
  “Love the diversity”

“Diverse and accepting community”

“Excellent public schools”

“Growing youth population”

“Near to a lot of great things to see and do”

“Suburban and urban mix”
  “Accessible and safe”
  “Neighborhoods with character”

“Focused investment on transportation”

“Highly intelligent and highly engaged residents”
Conversation 2: IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT DOES GROWTH MEAN FOR ARLINGTON?

2.1 Changing demographics seems to be impacting level of diversity (e.g., age, race, income, ethnicity, etc.) in Arlington

2.2 Fear about the impact on the level and amount of services that are required, including schools, transportation, trash, clean water, utilities, etc.

2.3 Recognition that growth may be coming; but with mixed views –representing a range from anxiety to enthusiasm--about what it means for density, costs, services, and open space in Arlington

2.4 Lack of affordable housing units available; and expensive housing costs that make it less likely for young professionals, service workers, and older adults to live in Arlington

2.5 Seek opportunity to identify innovative policies, programs and practices to advance co-location, mix used housing, and other creative strategies that balance growth, density, and housing affordability

2.6 Some participants concerned about growth expressed a desire for policy changes
“As a younger person, I think growth can be good but what we see here is no inclusive growth—it tends to displace people.”

“It’s concerning that Arlington’s rate of growth outpaces our facilities and spaces.”

“We need to find policies to support the people who live here, or else we are intensifying stresses on the environment and transportation.”

“Having a range of housing prices is critical. The average doesn’t reflect the full situation.”

“This idea of ‘neighborhood character’ is focused on single-family homes. If that’s our vision of Arlington, not many people will be able to afford to live here”

“Are our planning processes nimble enough? Do they expand enough to include more out of the box ideas?”
Conversation 3: WHAT CAN WE DO TO SHAPE OUR FUTURE?

3.1 A desire to confirm Arlington’s vision and strategic direction for the future with thoughtful considerations for how to balance and manage potential growth in Arlington

3.2 Interest in aligning Arlington’s planning process and related policies to establish opportunities for maintaining mixed use housing and advancing social equity principles

3.3 Align policies and practice that balance and maintain neighborhood characteristics

3.4 Strengthen economic development with focused support and opportunities for local businesses

3.5 Continue to maintain excellent services (schools, transportation, parks, etc.) that offer a high quality of life to all who want to live, work, and play in Arlington

3.6 Continue to advance public engagement and communication strategies that balance diverse voice, participation, experience, and perspective in community processes
“It’s nice to have these planning models but we might be building for today but not for 50 years from now.”

“Be flexible. Be willing to lose a little control over what we’ve done in the past. Understand the fundamental goals and values you want to put into the planning process be able to live with uncertainty and flexibility.”

“Environmentally friendly urbanization is important.”

“How do we emphasize to the rest of the developers—both single-family and high-rise—the importance of embrace social responsibility?”

“The biggest public facilities are streets. We should talk about streets and sidewalks as a public facility to get us what we need.”

“Build on the ‘Big Idea’ forums. We need resilience. Create Big Idea hubs in community centers for people to talk or draft in and tables with newsprint and crayons […] Get ideas from people you don’t live next to.”
Next Steps

Protecting Arlington’s Diversity as We Grow

- Prioritize inclusion and equity in Arlington.
- Explore how principles of inclusion and equity can more effectively guide planning and decision-making in Arlington.
- Continue these important conversations that advance opportunities for inclusion and equity.

Inclusive Housing

- Advance housing affordability and better match the supply of housing types to the demands of our changing demographics.
- Allow or Incentivize a wider menu of housing designs and layouts.
- Inventory tools to advance affordable housing and “missing middle” to facilitate a framework for mixed-use housing in Arlington.

Planning is Never Past Tense

- Continue to update our strategic and guiding documents to align with the pace of change.
- Continue to update elements of the County’s Comprehensive Plan elements and sub-elements.