

## County Board Democratic Primary Candidates Address Housing Affordability

April 14, 2016

The Alliance for Housing Solutions (AHS) asked the two candidates running in the June 14, 2016 Democratic Primary for the Arlington County Board to respond to three questions about affordable housing, in 350 words or fewer per question. The candidates were informed that answers would be posted on the AHS website without editing and that notice of the posting would be sent to the AHS list serve and local press.

1. **What are your top two priorities for implementation among the “Potential Tools” identified in the Affordable Housing Implementation Framework?**
2. **What should be done to ensure that the Affordable Housing Investment Fund is funded adequately to help meet the goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan? Do you support a dedicated source of revenue?**
3. **Identify two specific and new policies that the County should undertake in support of the AHMP goal to enable Arlington residents to age in the community.**

No edits have been made. Candidate responses appear below in alphabetical order.

Question	Libby T. Garvey	Erik Gutshall
<p><b>1</b> <b>Top two priorities for potential tools</b></p>	<p>The two tools that I think are most important both come under the Land Use and Regulatory category: preserving existing market-rate affordable units (MARKs) and changing zoning to encourage more flexible living arrangements like home sharing, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units.</p> <p>I have asked our staff to focus on preserving MARKs because losing MARKs is the major challenge we face in maintaining affordable housing in Arlington. One challenge to preserving MARKs has been developers replacing existing MARKs with townhouses that are not affordable at market rates, but which current zoning allows in the same location by right. I am focusing on changing zoning in some areas so that we no longer allow townhouses by right in those areas. This will help discourage replacing existing MARKs with expensive new townhouses. Westover is an immediate concern in this regard and I believe we need to move relatively quickly on this. This is an area where existing market rate apartments can be bought and, by right,</p>	<p>As an employer and father who hopes to live his life in Arlington, I am firmly committed to the goals of the AHMP. As with all Arlington plans, success requires a focused, extended commitment to follow-through on implementation. Fortunately, the Implementation Framework includes important existing tools, including the bedrock Affordable Housing Investment Fund, and exciting new opportunities to expand the means and methods of increasing the supply of affordable housing. On the County Board, I will strongly support our nonprofit partners and citizen advocates pushing for any and all of the available tools at the appropriate opportunity. There are two tools in particular I believe would have wide impact, are no-cost and, with thoughtful leadership, would be welcomed by the broader community as important early initiatives:</p> <p><b>1. Affordable by Design – Building the “Missing Middle”</b> Recognizing the housing affordability challenge across incomes is fundamentally supply vs. demand, I am excited</p>

<p><b>1</b>  <b>Top two priorities for potential tools</b>  <i>continued</i></p>	<p>replaced with townhouses that would provide a good profit for the developer.</p> <p>We need to consider changing zoning regulations that prevent home sharing in its many forms, including: two families co-owning a home; people sharing their home with renters both long and short term like AirBnB; modifying a “non-conforming” home to allow older residents to age in place; and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The latter are allowed, but with so many restrictions that only a handful have been built in 10 years. These restrictions are due to the public outcry when allowing ADUs was proposed. That debate highlighted the political difficulties of changing zoning in single-family neighborhoods to allow for flexibility. We need to work diligently to build support for home sharing and possible zoning changes. We must have a community conversation first to build support for such changes.</p>	<p>by the opportunity to harness market forces to expand the supply <u>and</u> mix of housing types achieving goals for walkable, livable, vibrant neighborhoods.</p> <p>With opportunities in Lee Highway and Four Mile Run planning, “Affordable by Design” offers Arlington the chance to rethink future development. Our zoning and land use policies have resulted in a split housing distribution: high-density, large multi-family buildings in our transit corridors and predominantly low-density single-family neighborhoods. There is little new housing in between – the “missing middle.” Medium density development has lower construction costs and offers greater flexibility in housing types, increased walkability; lower parking demand, and less dependence on automobiles. Consequently, it can meet the needs of those who cannot afford a single family home but do not qualify for housing assistance.</p> <p><b>2. Enable Home Sharing</b>  Arlington’s population reflects the dramatic shift in demographics nationally, having both a concentration of Millennials and topping the list of places to retire. It’s time we updated our zoning ordinance with an inclusive definition of family. Whether two single-mom households pool resources or a senior welcomes a family to share her home, we can remove a very real barrier to affordability consistent with our values and the character of our neighborhoods.</p>
<p><b>2</b>  <b>Ensuring funding for AHIF</b></p>	<p>I support dedicating developer contributions to AHIF and I support regular funding for AHIF. I also support applying one-time money to AHIF when it is available, but I believe that any such available money needs to go through the budget process, as it is this year. At time of writing, we are about to adopt our FY’17 budget, which includes \$12M for AHIF.</p> <p>AHIF is a revolving fund. One of its strengths is that it</p>	<p>AHIF is one of the most powerful tools in Arlington’s housing policy, leveraging other funding at a ratio of 1 to 3. However, the goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan can only be achieved if we adequately fund AHIF over the long term. Unfortunately, the AHMP Implementation Framework does not identify potential sustainable funding sources. Therefore, on the County Board, I will work to identify, build community support for, and enact a stable funding source for AHIF.</p>

<p><b>2</b>  <b>Ensuring funding for AHIF</b>  <i>continued</i></p>	<p>replaces itself as loans are repaid so that a single AHIF dollar leverages other affordable housing dollars. However, while AHIF is an important tool, we must balance budget needs. Many of our taxpayers are struggling themselves to pay their taxes and to afford to continue to live in Arlington. Because AHIF is spent down as projects become available, it is possible to have large amounts in AHIF waiting to be spent. We must be careful to avoid large reserves waiting to be spent if we are to maintain community support for affordable housing. The best way to maintain that support is for taxpayers to see that the Board supports affordable housing in a sustainable way that ensures a balanced approach to meeting all our budget needs, including not raising taxes whenever possible. I believe we do this best by using the transparent budget process for adding to AHIF with funds as we have been doing this year. In addition, the Board has other means to raise large funds for a necessary purchase through revenue bonds as it did with the Buckingham development. This is not a desirable way to purchase property, but it is available if necessary and allows us to avoid keeping large unspent funds on hand in case such an opportunity should arise.</p>	<p>However, even with sustainable funding, it's imperative that we maximize the yield on every AHIF dollar invested. That's why I support creative approaches to make AHIF revolving loan funds even more effective:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I support the work of the current Notice of Funding Availability working group, which is looking to increase competition among developers of affordable housing, and ensures that Arlington gets the best deal for our AHIF dollars.</li> <li>2. Tax Increment Financing supports both housing and the necessary infrastructure investment that accompanies affordable housing development.</li> <li>3. We should continue to explore "right-sizing parking requirements" for affordable housing projects, to ensure that AHIF dollars are used to create housing and not parking spaces that may or may not be used, especially when housing is placed in well-served transit corridors.</li> <li>4. I support strengthening regional cooperation in order to pool funding resources targeted to increase the region-wide Affordable Housing supply and leverage additional funding.</li> </ol>
<p><b>3</b>  <b>Two new tools to support "aging in community"</b></p>	<p>As I mentioned in #1 above, we need to change zoning rules that prevent people from improving their homes so they can age in them. Some homes do not conform to our current code and therefore cannot be enlarged. This means that sometimes a homeowner cannot make needed changes, such as putting a bathroom on the ground floor, because our zoning regulations do not allow it. Simply adding flexibility to our rules and processes so that we can consider context and resident needs, would give seniors more options for remaining in their own homes. Similarly, we need to make it easier for people to share their homes either to allow a caregiver family to live with them or to gain</p>	<p>Arlington is a great place to age. Few communities in the nation have such a strong track record in caring for and delivering such a high quality of life to their aging population. In addition to the policies aimed to create an adequate supply of affordable housing, I propose:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arlington County should collaborate with the current citizen-led effort, Blue Ribbon Arlington Group, to identify changes to our zoning ordinance to make it easier for seniors to age-in-place. For example, we could ease zoning barriers that make it more costly or impossible to retrofit a home for accessible, single floor</li> </ol>

**3**  
**Two new tools to support “aging in community”**  
*continued*

income from rent while living in their homes. In sum, we need to give residents have more options in their living arrangements so they can age.

I also believe we need to increase our real estate tax deferral program both with more financial support, more flexibility in qualifying criteria, and more efforts to make sure residents know of the program. Many of our longer-term residents own their homes outright, but rising tax bills caused by the appreciation of their homes and property make it hard for them to afford to remain there, especially for people on fixed incomes. Expanding our deferral program could mitigate this burden for a larger share of our residents.

living. Another option to explore is enabling the creation of multi-generational housing that allows for the privacy and independence of a separate suite while providing the cost savings, safety, and support of having family within the home.

2. Arlington County should encourage and support the community-centered Arlington Villages program that leverages additional community assets to support aging-in-place for low and medium income seniors. The collaborative, non-profit partnership structure of this program greatly supports and enhances the effectiveness of affordable housing tools in meeting the needs of our aging community members. It further empowers them to participate and actively shape current and future policy. I’m equally supportive of the Vertical Village Program that provides services and supports aging in place for Senior Citizens who live in multifamily properties.

Arlington should not wait to implement effective policies designed to meet the housing needs of seniors.