

## 2024 Greater Greater Washington Alexandria Mayor + Council Questionnaire

Greater Greater Washington is endorsing applicants for Alexandria Mayor and City Council 2024. We will endorse candidates primarily based on their responses to our questionnaire, which addresses the issue areas we work on: housing, affordable housing, transportation, and land use. Completing GGWash's endorsement questionnaire is a prerequisite to be considered for our endorsement, and [we publish all responses on our website](#) as a publicly available resource for voters.

If you wish to be considered for an endorsement, please fill out the questionnaire by 8 pm on Thursday, April 25, 2024. Due to the compressed timeframe of the appointment process, we will not extend the deadline and are not able to grant individual extensions due to extenuating circumstances.

All questions are required. SurveyMonkey will not save your answers; I recommend drafting your responses in a separate document, then copying and pasting them into the SurveyMonkey form to submit.

If you have any questions, please contact Dan Reed, GGWash Regional Policy Director, at [dreed \[at\] ggwash.org](mailto:dreed@ggwash.org).

### \* 1. Contact information

Name: **Canek Aguirre**  
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### Housing Production

\* 2. Alexandria needs about [20,000 additional homes by 2030](#), according to a study from the Urban Institute. As of 2019, Alexandria committed to building 3,000 more units in addition to original projections. Where in the county do you think density should be increased to accommodate the construction of new housing? Select all of the options that apply. If you don't think density should be increased in Alexandria, please select "I do not think density should be increased anywhere in Alexandria."

- New housing should be concentrated within transit oriented, amenity-rich areas, including Potomac Yard, the Eisenhower Valley, Landmark/Van Dorn and Beauregard.
- New housing should be built throughout existing residential neighborhoods in duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and small apartment buildings.
- New housing should be built on the site of aging commercial properties, like shopping centers and office parks.

- I do not think density should be increased anywhere in Alexandria

**For the record, Alexandria is not a county, we are an Independent City in the Commonwealth of Virginia that performs the duties of both a city and county. As a member of the Alexandria City Council, I have consistently advocated and voted to increase housing opportunities across the city and will continue to do so if re-elected.**

\* 3. How many additional units (including the aforementioned 20,000) do you think should be built here by 2030?

- Between 20,000 and 30,000
- Between 30,000 and 40,000
- More than 40,000
- I do not support another housing production goal for 2030.

**I'm not going to speculate on numbers. Despite being a small jurisdiction in comparison to others in the region, Alexandria has been fully committed to building our share of housing and then some during my time on Council. Other larger localities in the region need to pull their weight.**

\* 4. The [recently passed Zoning For Housing changes](#) will allow up to four units on lots where previously just one single family home could be built, and offer developers a density bonus if they set aside one-third of units in a development as affordable housing. Do you support this?

- Yes
- No

**This question is conflating two separate policies and is not an accurate depiction of the changes that were made with the passage of Zoning for Housing. Our density bonus policy was created separately for the specific use of adding affordable housing. It does not apply to the new zoning opportunities in single family zones.**

\* 5. The Mayor and City Council has a variety of tools at its disposal to increase housing production, from land use changes to legislation and budgeting. Please rank the following policies that would increase housing production in the order that you would request the relevant City agencies pursue, if elected. If you would not request that City agencies pursue a specific policy, please select N/A. (This list is purposefully not inclusive of policies that are specific to affordable housing, which are addressed in subsequent questions.)

*Ranking orders are 1-5 and N/A is other option*

- Expanding Zoning for Housing zoning changes to allow up to six homes per lot
- Incentivizing the conversion of older office buildings, shopping centers, etc. to residential properties
- Reducing or removing parking requirements in new construction

- Legalizing and incentivizing housing above public facilities, such as libraries, recreation centers, and fire stations
- Build and maintain housing for a mix of incomes

We are actively doing all of these except for the first bullet point which we won't look at until after analyzing data from the initial Zoning For Housing progress report. Every scenario is different, therefore, you must use the most appropriate tool in each scenario. This is why ranking these items does not make sense.

## Affordable Housing

\* 6. I consider affordable housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):

- Means-tested or income-restricted
- Built by the government - **Affordable housing can be built by the government, but it doesn't have to be.**
- Cheap - **Is this referring to "cheap" as in cost to an individual or as built with poor material? Affordable housing should not be built with poor material, but should not burden a household financially.**
- Subsidized - **Affordable housing is typically subsidized during construction or funds are used to buy down units.**
- Rent-controlled - **Rent-control does not exist in Virginia.**
- Costing no more than 30 percent of one's household income - **Yes.**

\* 7. I consider market-rate housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):

- Not means-tested or income-restricted
- Built by private developers - **Not always.**
- Expensive - **This is a matter of personal opinion/economic means.**
- Unsubsidized - **It can be.**
- Not rent-controlled - **Technically it can be depending on your state. but again rent-control does not exist in Virginia.**
- Costing more than 30 percent of one's household income - **Not necessarily if a household has the income to afford it.**

\* 8. Alexandria has 1,378 committed affordable rental and homeownership units (with income restrictions). The City Council can approve [larger or taller buildings](#) than allowed by zoning in exchange for developers providing affordable units. This means that the larger a development is, the more affordable homes can be built. Conversely, if the initial density proposed by a developer is reduced during the approvals process, rather than maintained or increased, fewer affordable homes can be built. The Mayor and Council are likely to hear from some constituents concerned by a project's potential impact—real or assumed—on traffic, parking, views, and property values, and whether it fits the character of the neighborhood. If a development with affordable units came before you, what would you do, given the likelihood of at least some pushback?

- I would encourage developers to maximize the height and density of the project. **As long as all other matters were addressed around infrastructure needs and proximity to transit.**
- I would encourage developers to limit the height and density of the project.

\* 9. Alexandria City Public Schools spends an estimated \$244,000 of taxpayer dollars ([\\$18,816 per pupil, per year](#)) to educate a public school student from kindergarten through 12th grade. However, many children who grow up in Alexandria cannot afford to live there as adults. Should it be a priority for the City to ensure that a child it pays to educate can afford to live here as an adult?

- Yes
- No

**The housing issue touches all socio-economic groups, whether young people returning from college, those starting a family, or older residents aging in place. We need housing opportunities for all income levels and ages to support a vibrant, diverse community & economy. During my time on Council, I have worked to increase housing opportunities for all.**

### Affordable Housing

This is a chart of [Alexandria's income limits](#) for residents of permanently affordable homes. It shows the income level that corresponds with certain percentages of the median family income in Alexandria. The next few questions will refer to this chart.

ALL ABOUT AREA MEDIAN INCOME (2023)

**What is the Area Median Income (AMI)?**

AMI is the income value directly in the middle of the income set being (not the average or mean).

The 100% AMI value is calculated annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**How is the "area" part determined in AMI?**

A "metro" area is a city of 50,000 or more people, and includes outlying areas that commute to a common urban core.

In Housing Alexandria's area, income calculations are pulled from D.C., Maryland, and Virginia neighborhood incomes.

**How is the AMI used in affordable housing?**

AMI is used by affordable housing developers to set upper limits on household income for an income-restricted unit.

Different units go up to different income levels - most units are restricted to 40, 50, 60, or 80% AMI. A household's income must not exceed that level in order to be able to rent there. Income is calculated for all adults, and includes all benefits or income regularly received (i.e., Social Security).

Financing programs for affordable housing development, like the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, typically require certain ratios or numbers of 40/50/60/80% AMI units within the building.

Minimum incomes are often required; they are typically 2.5x the rent of a unit.

**Area Median Income Limits For Washington-Alexandria-Arlington, updated May 2023**  
 Numbers provided by Novogradac Income Limits Calculator (novoca.com) and HUD. Limits here are provided for your convenience; and are subject to change. Leasing officers at Housing Alexandria properties can help answer your questions and provide the final determination on your household's qualifying income.

	100% AMI	30% AMI	40% AMI	50% AMI	60% AMI	HUD 80%*	MATH 80%*
1 person	\$106,500	\$31,650	\$42,200	\$52,750	\$63,300	\$66,750	\$84,400
2 people	\$121,700	\$36,180	\$48,240	\$60,300	\$72,360	\$76,250	\$96,480
3 people	\$136,900	\$40,710	\$54,280	\$67,850	\$81,420	\$85,800	\$108,560
4 people	\$152,100	\$45,210	\$60,280	\$75,350	\$90,420	\$95,300	\$120,560
5 people	\$164,300	\$48,840	\$65,120	\$81,400	\$97,680	\$102,950	\$130,240
6 people	\$176,400	\$52,470	\$69,960	\$87,450	\$104,940	\$110,550	\$139,920

\*What is "HUD 80% AMI" and "Math 80% AMI"?  
 The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulates the 80% AMI level in high cost-of-living areas, such as the D.C. metro, in order to bring the local 80% AMI level for rental housing programs closer to the national median. Some programs, like Housing Alexandria's homeownership program, may use the mathematical 80% instead of the HUD 80%. Ask each different property leasing team for more information.



\* 10. How will you ensure that there is housing in Alexandria for residents who make between 50 percent AMI (\$52,750 for a household of one) and 80 percent AMI (\$66,750 for a household of one)?

**My track record speaks for itself. Before my time on Council, I organized, spoke and fought for affordable housing projects and policies and my votes while serving on Council have only reinforced my positions. I have been a champion for increasing housing opportunities in the City of Alexandria at all levels, including homeownership opportunities.**

\* 11. How will you ensure that there is housing in Alexandria for residents who make between 80 percent AMI (\$66,750 for a household of one) and 100 percent AMI (\$106,500)?

**This already happens regularly with new housing projects. What is needed and what I continue to advocate for is housing under 80% AMI.**

\* 12. Alexandria currently has an [Affordable For-Sale Unit program](#) in which homes are set aside for moderate-income households to buy at reduced prices, with covenants that require them to stay affordable long-term. As of April 2024, there were just 7 for-sale homes in the program. Would you support expanding this program to include more for-sale homes?

- Yes
- No

## Transportation

\* 13. Do you think there are not enough cars, enough cars, or too many cars in Alexandria?

- Not enough cars
- Enough cars
- Too many cars

**This is a matter of personal opinion and personal preference.**

\* 14. The [Alexandria Mobility Plan](#) has a goal to increase high quality transportation options to discourage private vehicle trips. About half of city residents drive to work by themselves today. Do you agree that incentivizing residents and visitors to drive less should be an explicit policy goal of the City?

- Yes
- No

**Part of my focus during my time on Council has been to invest in a 21st century multimodal transportation system that provides options that are safe, reliable, and efficient for all users. I championed equitable distribution of scooters and Capital**

**Bikeshare, in addition to fare-free DASH bus service and sustainable funding options for WMATA.**

\* 15. Internal data for WMATA estimates that bus delays cost the system about \$14 million per year. Buses are primarily delayed by sitting in single-occupancy vehicle traffic. Bus riders are more frequently Black and brown, and less affluent, than rail riders and drivers. Would you support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for dedicated bus lanes, which make bus service faster and more reliable?

- Yes
- No

**I support improvements that can make travel more efficient for buses.**

Transportation

\* 16. If yes, how do you think the Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) should prioritize repurposing street space to create dedicated bus lanes?

- T&ES should prioritize repurposing existing parking lanes.
- T&ES should prioritize repurposing existing travel lanes.
- T&ES should repurpose whichever lane its staff believe is best on any given street.
- I do not think that T&ES should repurpose street space for dedicated bus lanes.

Transportation

\* 17. A 12-year study, published in 2019, found that protected bike lanes drastically lowered fatal crash rates \*for all road users\* in Seattle (-60.6%), San Francisco (-49.3%), Denver (-40.3%) and Chicago (-38.2%), among others. Would you, as a Planning Board member, support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for protected bike lanes?

- Yes
- No

**I am running for re-election to the Alexandria City Council, not the Planning Commission. You can have both parking and protected bike lanes as seen in a variety of places in the region.**

\* 18. Reducing traffic fatalities and injuries will not only require incentives for people to drive less and nudges to make them drive better. It will also require policies that actively reshape the City's transportation systems and its landscape to decrease single-occupancy vehicle trips, and to slow down the speed of those trips when people do make them. To that end, please rank the following policies in the order that you would pursue as Mayor or City Councilmember. If you would not pursue a specific policy, please select N/A.

*Ranking orders are 1-5 and N/A is other option*

- **Installing red light cameras in more locations**
- **Installing speed cameras in school crossing zones, as allowed in Virginia since 2020**
- **Removing minimum parking requirements in new developments near transit**
- **Implementing road diets on arterial streets**
- Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free
- **Building more housing and affordable housing in the County near transit and job centers**

**Alexandria is already doing options 1 through 4 and 6. Again every situation calls for a different approach so ranking them does not make sense to me as it all depends on what conditioning will work best for a stretch of road or an intersection. .**

\* 19. On-street parking occurs in public space, which means that an on-street parking spot cannot belong to a specific individual, and people park in different places at different times. What do you consider a reasonable threshold for evaluating if street parking is sufficient in any given neighborhood?

- A resident is able to find an available public street parking space within 100 feet (about a 30-second walk) of their residence's entrance, most of the time
- A resident is able to find an available public street parking space on their residence's precise block (about a one-minute walk), most of the time
- **A resident is able to find an available public street parking space within one block in any direction of their residence (about a two- to four-minute walk), most of the time**
- A resident is able to find an available public street parking space within two to three blocks, in any direction of their residence (about a five- to seven-minute walk), most of the time
- A resident is able to find an available public street parking space within their neighborhood, in any direction of their residence, (about a ten-minute walk), most of the time

\* 20. Alexandria's [Environmental Action Plan](#) goal to be carbon neutral by 2050 requires most of the reduction of its transportation emissions to come from residents turning existing single-occupancy vehicle trips into transit, walking, and biking trips. Please describe at least one trip you currently take by car (even if you, yourself, are not driving) that you can commit to taking on foot, by bus, by train, via a mobility device, or by bike instead.

**I live in the West End and can take the bus to and from Council meetings at City Hall and will continue to try to do so more frequently.**

## Community Input

\* 21. Alexandria, like other area jurisdictions, has started to expand its toolbox of outreach methods in order to hear from a broader variety of community members. The following is a list of potential sources of feedback for a hypothetical project or initiative coming before the board, such as a master plan. Rank how important each of these sources would be to your decision-making process.

*Ranking orders are 1-6 and N/A is other option*

- Comments from residents at a city staff presentation to a civic association
- Door-knocking in an apartment complex
- Online survey of 500 residents
- Pop-up event at a community festival
- Booth at a farmer's market
- Letters, emails, and calls from neighbors adjacent to the site

**I have completely changed the City's communication and engagement models to be more inclusive, including expanding our office of communications and engagement to meet the demands of our multicultural community. Because of my efforts, City pop ups at bus stops, laundromats, and grocery stores and multilingual surveys are more commonplace and capture more accurately the sentiments of all Alexandrians.**

22. Last month, a proposal to build a basketball and hockey arena in Potomac Yard fell through. What's your vision for the future of this 12-acre property, where the City previously approved a [mix of housing, office space, and retail](#)?

**My vision for the site remains the same as outlined in the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan that was approved prior to my time on Council. We envision a high activity center that is a destination point for the region and the nation.**

23. [Eighty-two percent of the City's tax revenue](#) comes from residential properties, including both single-family and multi-family homes. How would you encourage a more diverse tax base?

**I will continue to encourage economic development projects that are beneficial to our community and that can help expand and diversify our commercial tax base while also working to retain our existing commercial tax base.**