

JD Spain's Responses to the EcoAction Arlington 2024 County Board Candidates Questionnaire

1. Arlington continues to face significant development in residential and commercial sectors. While new buildings can be more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable, the tear down of existing structures have significant climate impacts and community displacement. Given private developers rights and significant leeway in choosing how to develop land parcels, if elected, **what specific solutions and policies would you endorse that would better ensure a more climate solution and equitable outcome to the county's residential and commercial development?**

In support of Arlington's sustainability and development goals, I am dedicated to promoting sustainable development in various ways, including shifting towards renewable energy sources, integrating leading sustainability measures into building codes, and strengthening enforcement for new buildings to adhere to these standards. Recognizing and highlighting buildings developed sustainably can boost positive publicity for developers, providing further incentives for sustainable practices. Additionally, I am committed to advocating for development and transportation infrastructure that supports sustainable modes of transportation for all Arlington residents. I firmly believe that sustainable transportation options should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their lifestyle or mobility needs. This is why I am a staunch supporter of environmentally friendly rideshare services, which can effectively reduce our reliance on privately owned vehicles and the emissions associated with them. I wholeheartedly endorse the Blueprint for Better Transportation in Northern Virginia, as it offers a clear vision for change and provides crucial recommendations for local transportation planners. As a member of the County Board, I am unwavering in my commitment to prioritizing transit-oriented development and making sustainable transit options more feasible for all Arlingtonians.

2. How can Arlington County best lead by example in phasing out fossil fuels, reducing its carbon emissions from facilities and operations, and advancing its zero waste goals? How can the County use the annual budget, the Capital Improvement Plan, and internal policy guidelines for construction, purchasing, and operations to advance a whole of government approach to addressing the climate crisis?

The County Government's sustainability efforts are praiseworthy and deserve recognition. Achieving 100% renewable energy usage by 2023 is a remarkable feat, but there is still room for improvement. The latest IPCC report emphasizes the urgency of immediate action in the coming years. Therefore, I strongly advocate for the County Government to accelerate its carbon neutrality targets, pushing us to continually challenge ourselves to do more at a faster pace. In addition to enhancing our efficiency, we must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels to achieve net zero emissions. Exploring emission reductions through electric heat pumps is a promising avenue, and I fully support conducting further analysis of the latest technology and accompanying data in consultation with sustainable building and energy experts. This will help identify the most viable solutions for reducing Arlington's emissions while meeting our current energy needs. Arlington has the potential to be a leader by drawing insights from other cities and sharing our successful initiatives to achieve our common environmental goals. By uniting our efforts, we can make a positive impact on the environment and build a healthier community for ourselves and future generations.

In terms of zero waste goals, I am committed to supporting adequate staffing and funding to implement the Solid Waste Master Plan. Furthermore, it is imperative to educate county residents and businesses about the importance of waste reduction. To achieve this effectively, collaboration with local non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, and the Chamber of Commerce is essential. By working together, we can reach people where they are and help our community achieve its waste reduction goals. Leveraging all available tools, such as the annual budget, the Capital Improvement Plan, and internal policy guidelines for construction, purchasing, and operations, we can make sustainability-oriented updates to demonstrate to the world that Arlington is dedicated to a cleaner, greener future.

3. Achieving the County's goal for carbon neutrality, zero waste, tree canopy coverage, and other environmental goals requires actions and behavior changes by residents and businesses. **What strategies, policies, and programs would you pursue to promote and incentivize the private sector to reduce their carbon footprint. In particular, how can Arlington County promote reduced energy use and electrification of both buildings and transportation, encourage use of transit, biking, and walking over single occupancy vehicles, foster waste reduction, reuse, composting, and effective recycling?**

Electric power is the future for Arlington. It is a powerful tool in reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, improving air quality, and cutting direct emissions. It is

also a reliable way to address greenhouse gas emissions, with the transport sector being the second-highest emitter in Arlington, after buildings. We must seek more renewable energy sources and ensure we have the infrastructure and capacity to effectively incorporate electric vehicles into Arlington's fleet. I have been collaborating with unions and other allied organizations at the local and state level to advocate for democratic, public ownership and control of electrical power generation and distribution, recognizing it as a crucial element of energy transition, sustainable development, and an end to energy poverty worldwide.

To promote sustainable transportation, I strongly recommend reallocating current street space to support speedy transit, building a comprehensive bike network that is accessible to all ages and abilities, and ensuring safe and complete sidewalks and trails. I also support full funding for public transit and implementing last-mile solutions to further facilitate the use of public transit by Arlington residents living farther away from bus or Metro stations.

In addition to increasing outreach on proper recycling and composting protocol, I advocate for evaluating commercial reuse policies and easing them where possible. Promoting, or in some cases, requiring, more sustainable take-out practices is one tangible and visible way to reduce waste altogether. Building on the state's ban of polystyrene foam food packaging by 2025, this could involve adjusting policies around everyday items such as single-use coffee cups, plastic grocery bags, and take-out containers/cutlery. I also support making composting easier for apartment residents and working with apartment building owners to develop more sustainable waste management solutions.

Montgomery County, MD has banned styrofoam, plastic straws, and non-recyclable plastics for take-out, and while enforcement is not perfect, it has made a significant impact. They also require a small fee for plastic bags, and neighboring counties have banned plastic bags entirely, encouraging people to bring their own reusable bags. Another idea that requires a medium level of effort is creating a sustainable business list and publishing it online and/or having symbols establishments can post on their doors to signal to the public that they're meeting certain sustainability standards.

4. Arlington's tree canopy and green spaces are in crisis, while stormwater impacts from impervious surfaces are increasingly severe. Site development, whether commercial or residential, usually results in clear cut lots and limited replacement of mature shade trees. Yet the County Board has made climate resilience and mitigation a top priority. With the recent adoption of a new Forestry and Natural Resources Plan that calls for restoration of a 40% tree canopy cover, **what “new” approaches are needed to reverse the tree loss trends and gain the greater climate**



resilience benefits that mature tree canopies provide, particularly in Arlington's more disadvantaged neighborhoods?

I applaud Arlington's progress in laying the groundwork to equitably preserve and add trees. However, we still need to do more to address the current environmental injustices throughout our county and ensure a more sustainable and climate-friendly future for all. Some Arlington residents have a 10-year difference in life expectancy correlated with varying levels of tree canopy cover, making this a very important issue to prioritize. To that end, I will analyze all prospective policies through an environmental justice lens to ensure that our policies and projects are working together for our county's shared goals, rather than against each other.

While new site development is necessary to support the county's current needs and anticipated growth, we have the opportunity to proactively do that in an equitable, sustainable manner. First, I will encourage the use of vacant spaces to meet project needs rather than resorting to new builds. For new builds, I will explore requiring public publishing of tree loss estimates before any project begins and encourage developers to choose locations with the lowest amount of tree loss that also meet the goals of the developer, its intended beneficiaries, and the local community.

I will continue to proudly support EcoAction's Tree Canopy Equity Program, maintaining partnership with the Arlington County Forestry and Natural Resources Commission and the Arlington County Parks and Recreation Department. In addition to trees, I support the equitable planning of native tree plants and adequate funding for the Parks & Recreation Department so Arlington's existing beautiful natural spaces can be maintained.

Furthermore, I am a passionate advocate for equitable environmental sustainability and have been actively involved in various organizations and committees to that effect. Through my membership in the Sierra Club and EcoAction Arlington, as well as serving as Chair of the Arlington NAACP's Environmental & Climate Justice Committee from 2023 to the present, and President of NAACP Arlington from 2018 to 2022, I have significantly contributed to creating a more sustainable future. My leadership and environmental policy ideas have garnered recognition and endorsements from the Sierra Club (2023 & 2024) and Sustainable Mobility for Arlington County (2023; 2024 pending). In October 2023, I organized a meeting with nearly 100 community citizens featuring Director Abre' Conner, who is the National NAACP Director for the Center for Environmental and Climate Justice Strategy. The meeting focused on highlighting the importance of environmental and climate justice and how we can work together to make a positive impact. The event also drew in the participation of Arlington's Climate Policy Officer, Bill Eger, and EcoAction Arlington, who discussed the impacts of environmental and climate justice and how citizens can get involved. Lastly, I had the opportunity to interview with GrayTV where I talked



about Tree Equity & Heat Islands in Arlington. By speaking out and raising awareness about these issues, I hope to inspire more people to take action and work towards building a cleaner and more sustainable future for all.