



A Smart Growth Platform for Arlington Fall 2015

Smart growth in Arlington has been good for the environment and human health, improved transportation, supported good fiscal health and enhanced economic competitiveness.

Beginning with forward-thinking decisions to spend more to put the Metro Orange Line underground while focusing development around the stations in the county's two Metro corridors, and continuing through Arlington's investment in new transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, energy efficiency, parks and schools, Arlington has achieved great success:

1. The County successfully fought back against the inner-suburban decline typically seen in older inner suburbs when a region sprawls outward.
2. As much as fifty percent of the property tax base has been generated from the two Metro corridors occupying just 11.7% of the county's land, helping to fund services throughout the county.
3. Traffic has been flat and even declined at key intersections in the Metro corridors, even while adding millions of square feet of development and billions of dollars in investment.
4. The county has a high number of green, energy efficient buildings, much lower rates of driving and much higher rates of transit, walking, and bicycling -- combining to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
5. The county has become among the most attractive places in the nation to live for both young professionals and downsizing empty nesters.
6. Thanks to the efficient infrastructure of compact development and the attractiveness of walkable urban living -- the county has a strong tax base to support new and renovated schools, a high quality of education, and high-quality services -- retaining and attracting families.

But challenges remain:

1. The Defense base realignment hit Arlington harder than just about any other jurisdiction in the nation, taking thousands of jobs and leaving significant office vacancies. Government sequestration has further reduced office demand.
2. The success of Arlington has meant rising residential real estate prices and rents, making finding housing that is affordable an increasing challenge, particularly so for lower income residents.
3. The pace of change and the cost of continued investment in infrastructure have made some nervous.

Why should we continue on the smart growth course?

1. It's the best way to handle growth in a way that reduces the amount of driving and traffic.
2. It's key for attracting the next generation workforce and companies to support the tax base.
3. It's good for the environment.
4. It offers more transportation and housing choices.
5. It contributes to health by creating walking and bicycling-friendly neighborhoods



Here are key policies and approaches to support:

1. Keep investing in making Arlington a great place to live including parks and recreation, schools, walking and bicycling, and other public services.

Examples include protected bicycle lanes, road diets that make streets safer for children, seniors, walkers, bicyclists and drivers, expansion of parks and inclusion of parks and public spaces in new development, and continued investment in new and renovated schools.

2. Implement the new master plan for housing affordability, combining public and private resources and strategies to ensure that housing is affordable and available for all levels of the workforce. Without housing for all levels of the workforce, companies won't locate in Arlington and traffic from commuters would be even worse, and without a secure place to live, children cannot focus on learning and achieve success.

Examples include more public funding for a housing trust fund, incentives for inclusion of affordable units in new projects, tying revitalization of corridors like Columbia Pike to preservation and addition of affordable housing.

3. Invest in new, high-quality and frequent transit services, including in partnership with surrounding jurisdictions, to reduce the amount of driving and vehicles that would otherwise add more traffic and undermine quality of life.

Examples include funding 8-car trains for Metro and finding a Rosslyn Metro tunnel fix, more express buses for commuters from surrounding jurisdictions, enhanced transit on Columbia Pike, Route 50, I-66, Lee Highway and Glebe Road, and adopting the VDOT I-66 inside-the-Beltway package including peak hour HOT lanes and HOV in both directions, along with public ownership so revenues go to more transit.

4. Ensure robust and in-depth public involvement in planning for the future of our community.

Examples include the Columbia Pike community charrettes, the planning for Clarendon and Courthouse, and the current public facilities needs discussion.

5. Focus on the details that create a great sense of place, community interaction, healthy living and connections to the outdoors.

Examples include active public plazas, parks and connected green spaces, bike and walking trails, street art, outdoor cafes, farmers markets and festivals.

For the Future:

With growth continuing to come to our successful region, it's best to focus it where we can provide high-capacity transit in a walkable environment, minimizing driving -- in Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax and other area jurisdictions.

Investment in transit-oriented development can pay back the taxpayer many times over as it has with the Metro corridors. And, if we care about the environment, smart growth means we can reduce driving and the resulting air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, save parks and forests, and fix old stormwater problems to restore our streams.