



# 2024

## LOCAL

### POLICY POSITIONS

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# Introduction Message

To the Arlington County Board, School Board, and local government officials,

Arlington remains a world-class community and a premiere location for businesses and residents, but no locality can ever take such success for granted. A strong and vibrant business community underpins the creation of economic opportunity for all Arlingtonians and will help our community address pressing issues such as the historically high commercial vacancy rate and the rising cost of living, in addition to pre-existing challenges such as housing affordability and inequity.

It is therefore imperative that Arlington build a positive and welcoming climate for business. To this end, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce is pleased to share our public policy priorities in furtherance of our mission to strengthen businesses and the economic environment for those who work, live, and do business in Arlington. We recommend all of the policies in this document and call particular attention to these top priorities for Arlington’s economic wellbeing:

- **Building and maintaining strong partnerships** between local government and the business community with a disposition toward leading with “yes,” an emphasis on treating businesses as customers seeking a service, and proactive engagement on policy with affected businesses.
- **Expanding housing opportunity in Arlington** by reducing policy-driven costs on residential construction, providing incentives to increase the supply of housing for all Arlingtonians, and completing studies that will remove barriers to housing development.
- **Continuing to prioritize economic development**, taking steps to alleviate Arlington’s all-time high office vacancy rate, as well as supporting small- and medium-sized businesses, and entrepreneurship by members of our community underrepresented in business creation.
- **Allowing flexibility in public processes**, reducing the burden of development by streamlining processes and regulations to encourage growth.
- **Sustaining a robust public infrastructure**, focusing on the transit services provided by ART and Metrobus along with Metrorail as key components of Arlington’s travel network.

The Chamber’s Board of Directors adopted these policy priorities following their development by the Chamber’s Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee. **We thank the many Arlington elected officials and senior government staff members** who have visited with our Government Affairs & Economic Development Committee and who participated in Chamber events throughout the year to discuss the issues facing Arlington. Their support and insights assisted our members in preparing this document.

We thank you for your consideration of these proposals.



Tina Leone  
2023 Chair



David Kinney  
2024 Chair



Kate Bates  
President & CEO



## Government and Business Climate

The Chamber calls on Arlington County to continue to work **towards instilling an emphasis on business attraction and accommodation throughout its organizational culture**, which is necessary for attracting and retaining commercial investment in Arlington. The Chamber encourages Arlington County to foster a collaborative dynamic between the public and private sectors, recognizing the importance of the business community in creating and maintaining Arlington as a world-class community with exceptional services and amenities. We encourage Arlington County to view the Chamber and the Arlington business community as a true partner.

Essential to a strong partnership between local government and the business community is a disposition toward leading with “yes.”

Arlington County should continue to examine and to redesign its regulatory processes to achieve their purpose while minimizing the regulatory and administrative burden placed upon businesses seeking to invest in Arlington.

In the past year, businesses and residents have expressed concern with the service provided by customer-facing departments. Specifically, businesses have struggled with securing and obtaining permits, and have been frustrated by the lack of timely responses for permit services. **Arlington County should ensure timely and complete application responses through Permit Arlington.** The Chamber requests Arlington County to provide sufficient in-person staff at the Permit Arlington Center. The need for available in-person staff is a key part of customer service and delivering a service to customers, in this case businesses. We ask Arlington County to re-examine regulations, policies, and processes on a regular basis to identify procedural

chokepoints, and ease regulatory burdens on the commercial sector. Furthermore, we urge Arlington County to ensure that permitting costs and timeframes are competitive with those in the region.

Arlington Economic Development is well-placed within the Arlington County government operation to provide insights into the impact that regulations, policies, and processes may have on the business community. **The Chamber encourages the County Board to include both the separate viewpoints of Arlington Economic Development and those of the Economic Development Commission in its policy and process reviews.** The Economic Development Commission works closely with Arlington Economic Development, but its recommendations and viewpoints are its own, and should be considered independently. The Chamber further supports process revisions to incorporate economic impact analyses into staff reports to the County Board, where appropriate.

The role of the Business Ombudsperson should be empowered to be a strong, independent voice for the business community and a systemic change agent in the Arlington County government. The Chamber encourages the County Manager to **strengthen the Business Ombudsperson position as a true ombuds role to be a systematic problem solver and empowered change agent within the Arlington County government for businesses and commercial interests and not a spokesperson for the County government to businesses.** We request that the Business Ombudsperson be equal in status within the County Manager’s Office with the Resident Ombudsperson, and that the Business Ombudsperson has the sole role of being an ombudsperson to the local business community, rather than serving both businesses and residents.

Bringing proposals to the business community only when they are fully formed or being presented for County Board

consideration often limits the ability to offer input. This summer when Arlington County first presented the full details of the permanent outdoor dining regulations on such a short timeline before the impending expiration of temporary outdoor dining rules provided stakeholders with little time to offer feedback or input. Therefore, the Chamber **calls upon Arlington County departments to engage proactively with and to seek the input of affected business sectors from the beginning of policy development processes**, which provides the greatest opportunity for recommendations to have the greatest impact.

A strong participation by Arlington businesses in our community's civic life ensures that the vital role businesses have as part of this community and the distinct perspectives of Arlington businesses are heard during policy formulation. The Chamber **applauds the County Board for increasing the appointment of business community representatives to relevant Boards and Commissions, and encourages the continuation and expansion of this practice**, and thanks the County Board for reaching out to us as a source of recommendations for prospective commissioners. The Chamber further encourages the Arlington County Economic Development Commission to advise the County Board regularly on the economic impact of policy proposals, and to recommend proactively those actions which it believes will benefit Arlington's economy.

The Chamber encourages Arlington County to continue to embrace partnership with the private sector, including with public-private partnerships like the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and partnerships and with individual businesses and developers, to drive economic and community development goals. The role of the BIDs and partnerships should be enhanced, including expanding their authority, resources, and ability to be flexible in anticipating and responding to changing market environments within their district overlays. **The Chamber encourages Arlington County to source new ideas from its partners and to give partners latitude to determine how best they can contribute to achieving shared goals, rather than trying to press partners to take specific actions for which they may not be well suited.** Arlington County has already received considerable community benefits from its businesses and developers, beyond those traditionally included as community benefits in planning conditions and should account for these benefits in assessing project proposals.

**The Chamber supports maintaining the integrity of the Dillon Rule.** Specifically, the Arlington County government should not undertake to coerce businesses, of any size, to provide specific wage levels, benefits, or working conditions, outside of the framework of applicable federal and Virginia law. Moreover, tax and regulatory consistency across jurisdictional boundaries promotes economic growth throughout the Commonwealth.

Safety in our neighborhoods and central business districts is a critical factor to our economic vitality. Businesses in Arlington understandably want to keep themselves, their employees, and their customers safe. The Chamber encourages all stakeholders within the government and business community of Arlington to collaborate on measures and policies that can be practically implemented to promote public safety.



## Economic Development

A thriving office and commercial real estate sector serves Arlington's well-being and overall quality of life as a key source of the tax revenue base. Property taxes from commercial real estate (excluding apartments), mostly generated by office buildings, comprise more than 14% of Arlington County's general fund revenues, making it an essential source of tax revenue for Arlington County.

The Chamber calls on Arlington County Board to continue to prioritize economic development, including a focus on competitive incentives, tied to strong benchmarks both to attract and to retain businesses, and support for existing and growing businesses in Arlington.

The aftermath of the pandemic has presented challenges to Arlington, and especially for smaller service and retail businesses. Arlington's commercial vacancy rate has increased to a historic high of more than 20% this year. Tackling the commercial vacancy crisis in Arlington will be a primary focus for not only Arlington Economic Development (AED), but all of Arlington County going forward. The Chamber supports the efforts by AED and the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development to make regulatory changes to allow for market-based solutions, such as the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative. The Chamber additionally supports the recommendations of the Economic Development Commission's Commercial Vacancy Working Group. **The Chamber encourages Arlington County to promote office occupancy as a Policy Goal that would guide County activities, policy making, decision making, and implementation strategies.**

The Chamber supports increased investment in the preservation and expansion of the commercial revenue base through the marketing, business attraction, and business retention efforts of AED. Business recruitment and retention is an investment; money budgeted for business attraction pays for itself for many years in the form of taxes paid by the businesses and employees recruited to Arlington. Additionally,



retaining existing businesses is as critical as attracting new businesses because both have the same impact on the overall economic and fiscal position of Arlington County.

The Chamber encourages AED to take a broad approach in its business attraction and retention efforts to ensure that Arlington's employer base is as diverse as possible. While efforts to attract large businesses to locate to Arlington grab the headlines—and the Chamber supports continuing these efforts—the Chamber also emphasizes the importance of supporting small- and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurship by members of our community who are underrepresented in business creation. Smaller companies have growth potential, providing immediate return and continuing returns over time for investments made today. The Chamber supports fully utilizing tools to help startups grow and foster a culture of innovation in Arlington, such as the Innovation Fund Catalyst Grant Program. The Chamber also encourages Arlington County to study the tools that other localities utilize to relocate businesses within Arlington when they need to relocate from their current location and wish to remain in Arlington County.

The Chamber also recommends that **Arlington County continue harnessing relationships with BIDs and partnerships to enhance community economic development.** These organizations were able to provide rapid responses throughout the pandemic, bringing to fruition ideas that they developed in collaboration and consultation with their respective constituents. The BIDs and partnerships can continue to play a similar role in supporting and growing businesses beyond these urgent responses.

To continue to attract a diverse workforce that allows businesses in Arlington to compete on a national level, the Chamber supports a business environment that protects the rights of all individuals, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, or mental or physical abilities or disabilities.

Regional cooperation and collaboration in economic development will continue to be essential and mutually beneficial as we work to deal with economic issues, such as our historically high office vacancy rate. The Chamber encourages AED to continue to partner with economic development agencies throughout the region, as appropriate.

# Housing Affordability and Workforce Housing

Growing and maintaining a diverse housing stock is critical for economic development.

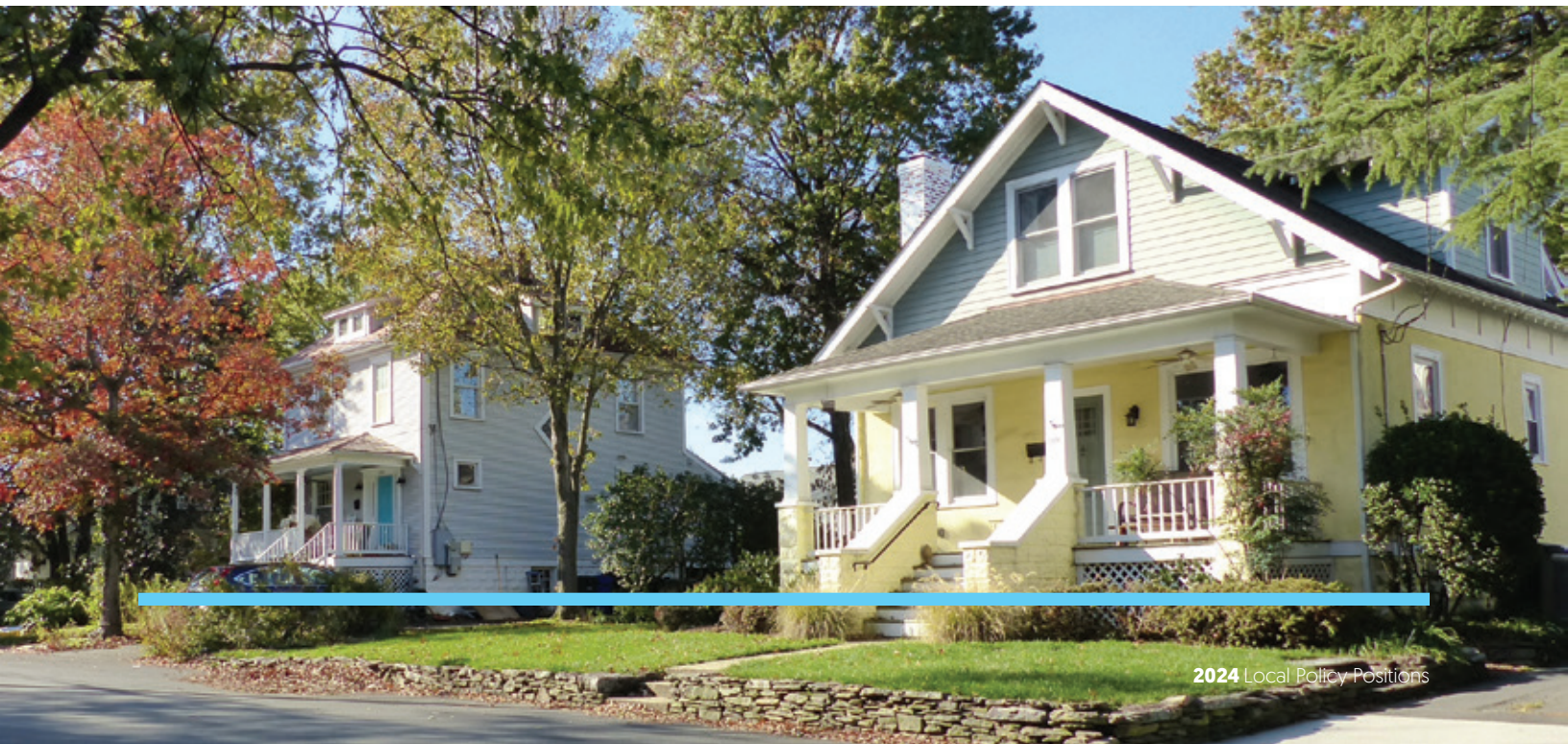
Businesses, especially those in the service sectors, look for the availability of workforce housing as a factor for location.

Regional solutions will be necessary to meet housing affordability goals, as underscored by the adoption of regional housing targets by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. **The Chamber asks for dedicated funding for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund**, and an increase in its budget to a level that will provide support to Arlington. We recognize the need to think broadly about housing goals, and the Chamber supports efforts to convene all relevant stakeholders in conversations about policies aiming at achieving said goals.

Broadly, the Chamber calls on Arlington County to **consider the impact of its policies on the cost of residential construction, and to reduce those policy-driven costs**. Policy certainty is an important first step in helping developers to plan and to avoid the cost of planning for multiple contingencies. Furthermore, Arlington County should resist adding requirements and regulatory burdens, and should be mindful that regulations not directly tied to housing goals, such as green building regulations, can have the impact of raising the cost of housing construction and unintentionally exacerbating the housing shortage. The Chamber supports both ownership studies and policies aimed at promoting home ownership, as well as policies that create more rental units.

Flexibility is a key element in the reforms to existing housing policies that would help make Arlington more inclusive. **To increase the affordability of housing, Arlington County should remove barriers to the provision of housing supply. These barriers include, but are not limited to, limitations on density, limitations on height, or restrictive zoning**. Broadly, the Chamber supports policies that facilitate the construction of more multifamily housing, of varying sizes, in Arlington. The Expanded Housing Options (EHO) program has created a framework which allows for more housing diversity throughout Arlington County and can provide people more opportunities to find housing in neighborhoods that had previously been out of reach. Just a few months into the implementation of the EHO program, the number of permits received and approved for the smaller lots in Arlington is nearly at the capped limit. **As Arlington County has received strong demand for EHO permits, it should remove the cap on the number of permits allotted per year, thereby removing a constraint to the construction of multi-family units.**

The Chamber agrees with the direction adopted as part of the Affordable Housing Master Plan and Implementation Framework that **providing developers and property owners with incentives is the best way to obtain substantial additional units that are affordable to a broad part of the community and to preserve existing housing stock**. The Chamber encourages Arlington County officials to consider tax incentives and other solutions for preserving or creating affordable housing at different levels of affordability. The Chamber encourages Arlington County to focus on reducing these barriers and pursuing these incentives through the Housing Arlington initiative.



## Land Use, Zoning, and Planning

The Chamber supports additional commercial and residential density, especially in established and potential bus and rail transit corridors. The Chamber further holds that land use policy and regulations should be flexible in their codification to attract the investment of commercial and residential developers in Arlington. Such policies should incorporate incentives and avoid any undue or unnecessary restrictions, allowing the community process to foster innovative designs and solutions.

The Chamber supports a reasonable approach to the site-plan development process, allowing for flexibility for proposed projects which help Arlington County to achieve strategic goals, including the enhancement of the commercial revenue base.

**Arlington County will benefit from reducing the burden of its planning processes.** Establishing and using rapid, administrative processes for routine changes will allow planning staff to focus most of their time on major projects without stalling simple applications. A streamlined site plan process will facilitate investment and projects in Arlington. Allowing for flexibility and openness to developer proposals, the Chamber encourages Arlington County to outline its priorities for a site at the start of the site planning process. Moreover, the design and application of the site planning process should be appropriate for the project, rather than

applying the same process to all projects, regardless of size and scope.

Arlington County government was proactive about streamlining development processes in the mid 2010's when Arlington's office vacancy rate last rose above 20%. However, the time for review of some development applications has increased in recent years, including reviews that precede the formal site plan process, such as sector plan updates and special GLUP studies. Now that Arlington's commercial vacancy rate has increased to more than 20%, **the Chamber encourages Arlington County to incentivize the repositioning of older and obsolete commercial office space.** Repositioning or repurposing existing site plan buildings, a process that will only get more common, should not have to go through the complete site plan process. Expediting the process would increase the speed of these developments reaching the market.

The innovations necessitated by the pandemic for online gathering of feedback have allowed Site Plan Review Committees to be more streamlined and to focus on critical questions and differences, and not to spend valuable time discussing areas of broad agreement. The Chamber encourages Arlington County to retain these innovations and to continue adapting the review process to make it less onerous for all participants. However, the Chamber cautions that online feedback gathering is not a substitute for open, consultative processes and direct engagement by Arlington County staff with interested groups, including, but not limited to, the Chamber's Government Affairs and Economic Development Committee.





We continue to anticipate a considerable number of development projects over the next several years in Arlington. Ensuring that development continues is an investment in Arlington and will secure Arlington County's future fiscal position. **As such, the Chamber encourages Arlington County to ensure adequate funding and staffing for the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development to process development applications in a timely manner.**

Moreover, it is vital that the Planning Division's work plan be scoped to include timely reviews of all planning applications and associated studies. These studies, such as sector plan updates and Special GLUP Studies, will be more common as Arlington continues to grow beyond its 1970s-era growth plans and require new planning. **The Chamber encourages the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD) to explore how to make such studies less time- and labor-intensive if it is not able to complete them swiftly with current processes.** We encourage CPHD to consider engagement with relevant BIDs and public-private partnerships on planning studies.

**Allowing flexibility in Arlington's planning documents** will support both creative development and streamlined development processes. The Chamber has supported the first phase of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative which modernized the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate land uses that the original Zoning Text did not envision. We look forward to the second phase of the Initiative and hope that it will further reform the process for existing development uses and create flexibility for utilization of commercial space. The Chamber supports efforts to **revise the Site Plan Amendment system and allow for more uses to only require an administrative or minor Site Plan Amendment** as opposed to a Major amendment.

Flexibility in planning also denotes minimal requirements for expensive components of development, such as parking. The Chamber requests that **Arlington County eliminate mandates for a specific amount of parking for buildings within 1,000 feet of a Metrorail station**, not just the uses specifically listed in Section 14.3.6 of the Zoning Ordinance. Permitting developments to build the amount of parking that the market dictates supports both commercial and residential development.

The replacement of the Ground Story Use Table in the Columbia Pike Form Based Code with a restriction on noxious uses will allow novel uses and eliminate the need to update the table as new types of uses are devised. The Chamber encourages similar flexibility in planning reviews and maintaining a strong business voice in the planning processes for the Langston Boulevard and Richmond Highway corridors.

Signage in Arlington County remains a critical issue impacting Arlington businesses. The flexibility Arlington County offered during the pandemic has demonstrated that it is possible for Arlington to streamline its signage regulations for greater flexibility and to be less of a burden on Arlington's businesses, and to apply such streamlined regulations both to new development and to sites planned under older approaches to signage. **The Chamber continues to urge the County Board to prioritize an overall reform to increase signage and to evaluate signage for areas across the community**, including for small businesses, business districts that are not regional shopping centers, and unique situations such as subdivided space. Allowing non-commercial wayfinding signs to be updated through an administrative process would be increasingly valuable to our residents and businesses.

Public art contributes to Arlington's vibrancy, and so the Chamber supports the broad goals of the Public Art Master Plan. However, Arlington County's public art policies should not favor County-curated art over privately-curated art or ignore the creative potential of short-term installations, signage, and placemaking, or discount such projects when calculating contributions to public art requirements. Furthermore, Arlington County should work to minimize the cost burden of public art contributions to promote development and investment in Arlington.

The Chamber remains disappointed with the process that led to the creation of the Housing Conservation Districts, and the lack of engagement or progress in Phase 2. Reframing the second phase as a "Multifamily Reinvestment Study" and expanding its scope delayed any development incentives that were promised. The staff-driven nature of the study has led to few advisory group meetings and little proactive outreach by Arlington County staff to share proposals with the business community. **The Chamber calls on Arlington County to prepare and to refine the Housing Conservation District Plan/Multifamily Reinvestment Study in an open process that engages with the business community.**

This past year Arlington County enacted a permanent regulatory framework that allowed for operators of Temporary Outdoor Seating Areas (TOSAs) to apply for those areas to be permanent additions to their restaurant space. The expansion of outdoor dining has been very beneficial to the streetscape of Arlington as well as to restaurants, many of whom rely on outdoor dining revenue. We hope that Arlington County builds upon this experience to consider new and innovative policies that benefit both businesses and consumers.



## Transportation

A robust and reliable transportation infrastructure is crucial to the workforce, economic development, and quality of life of Arlington.

Metrorail in particular serves as the backbone of Arlington County's transportation management program and as a primary driver of economic development in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. ART and Metrobus are also critical connectors with the Metrorail system and include routes that connect Arlington residents to business and commercial areas within Arlington. **The Chamber encourages Arlington County to work to ensure the strength of these transit services, and to prioritize enhancements that will provide reliable service for riders.**

The Chamber applauds recent commitments to improve transportation connections in the Richmond Highway corridor and asks Arlington County to **endeavor to secure the funding necessary for improvements to address the current and forecasted need for mass transit services** in the Rosslyn/Ballston, Columbia Pike, and Langston Boulevard corridors. Additionally, we request that Arlington County consider transportation equity plans as part of future transportation planning for these corridors.

As WMATA considers long-term plans for the future of Metrorail, we support the creation of a second Rosslyn tunnel. Alleviating the bottleneck of public transit from Arlington into the District is important for the long-term vitality of Arlington as a place to live, work, and do business.

The Chamber encourages **the addition of mass transit systems (bus rapid transit or similar) in the Langston Boulevard and Columbia Pike corridors** and believes that Arlington County should view the transit from Potomac Yard to Columbia Pike as a single corridor when planning transit upgrades.

**A road network that functions for all users and all modes, including transit, cyclists, riders of shared mobility devices, pedestrians, and automobiles, is essential for mobility within Arlington.** Transportation planning should account for each of these modes and all different use cases. The Chamber calls for continued partnership among Arlington County, Rosslyn businesses, and residents in securing the reconfiguration of the street grid in Rosslyn to effectively promote vitality of our mixed-use districts. Moreover, a diverse transportation network includes support for sustainable vehicles, and increased infrastructure for cyclists and riders of shared mobility devices. The Chamber further urges Arlington County to continue to take a light-handed approach with any shared mobility device regulations and consider dexterity in the wake of a dynamic and fluid business sector.

The Chamber also urges Arlington County to work with the federal government, Commonwealth of Virginia, and District of Columbia to enhance connectivity within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. The Chamber joined the Coalition to Protect America's Regional Airports in 2023. We support a sustainable and thriving Reagan National Airport that is complimented by Washington Dulles International Airport. We appreciate the strategic investments that will help support our airports and related infrastructure in the coming years, such as the Crystal City Intermodal Connector to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (CC2DCA). Furthermore, **we hope to see in the coming years improvements to Memorial Bridge, the new Long Bridge, Amtrak regional service to Crystal City, cross-river MARC/VRE operation, and the improvements to Richmond Highway.**

## Business and Community Infrastructure

A strong infrastructure is essential for businesses to grow.

The Chamber supports investments to maintain and to improve Arlington's public infrastructure to sustain our economic engine.

The Chamber supports broad-based approaches to selecting and funding infrastructure projects. While spending tax dollars wisely is always a priority, the Chamber would be remiss if we did not note that infrastructure projects benefit businesses and workers along with Arlington residents. The Chamber is pleased that Arlington County resumed the ten-year timeline outlined in the adopted Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2023-2032.

To remain competitive in this region, Arlington residents and businesses will expect that our local telecommunications networks will be able to provide the capacity and connectivity that they demand as early adopters of new technologies, such as 5G, Smart Cities, and the Internet of Things (IoT). The collaboration by JBG SMITH and AT&T to install a 5G network in National Landing with existing County

infrastructure is an example of a project working to deliver these services in Arlington. **We encourage Arlington County to follow through on its streamlined permitting and fee structure for small wireless facilities and to approve fiber deployments in a timely manner aligned with partners' expectations and national standards**, as these actions will help create a communication network that meets consumers' expectations in Arlington. Moreover, the Chamber opposes establishing public internet authorities, which could limit the ability of private innovators to serve communities throughout Arlington.

The Chamber encourages Arlington County to recognize land swap deals as a community benefit of equal importance to other community benefits. The Chamber also believes Arlington County should proactively seek out opportunities to advance the interests of Arlington's residents and businesses on projects run by other jurisdictions. While the Chamber recognizes the importance of infrastructure to Arlington's vitality both as a community and governing entity, **we strongly condemn the use or threat of eminent domain against Arlington property owners.**

# Energy and the Environment

The Chamber supports the broad policy goals of the Community Energy Plan. The Chamber supports the broad policy goals of the Community Energy Plan. The target of net-zero CO2 equivalent emission by 2050 is aspirational and can be an impetus for innovation. But there is also the risk of losing the plan's sensitivity to individual circumstances if its implementation is too prescriptive. **Arlington County should ensure sufficient flexibility in implementing the plan so that it is viable and economically feasible for businesses and residents, including the availability to consumers of a diverse range of energy choices in meeting growing energy needs.**

It is important to take a holistic view of local priorities and the 11 elements of Arlington's Comprehensive Plan, recognizing that sometimes goals can be in tension, and that it is not always possible to achieve an ideal outcome across all objectives. When considering energy and environmental regulations and projects, Arlington County should take into account factors including supply, affordability, reliability, resiliency, equity, and the impact on economic development, as well as reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Incentives also work best when they are designed to provide a meaningful return for the extra investment they will require on the part of applicants; setting requirements too high or returns too low can discourage use.

The Chamber encourages Arlington County to engage stakeholders when increasing any energy or environmental requirements or terms for incentives.

The Chamber further encourages Arlington County to take into account the potential impacts of its environmental policies on housing affordability for all residents. For that reason, the Chamber supports incentive-driven approaches to tree canopy preservation, but is wary of mandates to the same effect. Moreover, the Chamber believes that environmental policies and goals should be neutral in terms of technology and fuel-type.

# Taxes and Fiscal Policy

The Chamber supports a rational balance of the tax burden among businesses, residents, and users of services.

The Chamber strongly urges that **Arlington County seek and adopt additional savings and economies of scale before considering any increase in the real estate tax burden.** The Chamber also strongly requests that the business community be included in fiscal prioritization conversations.

In keeping with the emphasis on economic development and expansion, the Chamber encourages a **local study of comparative tax rates between Arlington and surrounding jurisdictions to discover specific tax rates and impact fees that put Arlington at a competitive disadvantage** in attracting and retaining certain segments of the business community. Moreover, the Chamber supports exploring changes in how user fees and business taxes are assessed to lessen the burden on small businesses.

The Chamber believes that service fees, if necessary, should be tied to the services being delivered. Fee increases should align with improved efficiency and a reduction in service response times. **Arlington County should not use fees to balance its budget or to pay for activities that are priorities for the government, but not for the customers being serviced by the departments charging the fees.** Moreover, Arlington County should not charge fees for core services that are essential to any well-functioning government, as those are appropriately funded by tax revenues in the General Fund.

As Arlington County shifts its funding model for stormwater facilities from an ad valorem tax on real estate to a utility fee based on impervious area, Arlington County should take care to apply fees equitably on all users who contribute to the stormwater run-off. The Chamber supports reasonable approaches to help residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations whose charges stand to increase with the funding model shift, but any such support should be broad-based and borne by the entire Arlington community.

The Chamber conditionally supports the real estate tax surcharge on commercial real estate to support the development of transportation infrastructure as authorized by the Virginia General Assembly. The Chamber is pleased by Arlington's willingness to provide information on how funds raised through the surcharge have been spent to date. The Chamber continues to believe that **revenues from**

**the surcharge on commercial and industrial properties should be directed towards projects that directly affect those businesses subject to the tax.**

The Chamber commends Arlington County's recognition of the importance of increased business representation on the Board of Equalization, and looks forward to continuing to provide recommendations of members of the business community to serve. The Chamber additionally supports the transfer of the Board of Equalization from the County Assessor's office to the Office of the Commissioner of Revenue, to achieve greater independence from the County Board.



## Education and Workforce Development

The local economy is fueled by a highly skilled and educated workforce.

The Chamber recognizes that a strong K-12 school system and strong post-secondary and trades education is a key component in providing a base of qualified employees that serve as a focal point for businesses looking at Arlington County.

The whole community has a role to play, and so the Chamber supports establishing consistent and ongoing communication and collaboration among education providers serving students at all stages of life and the private sector.

Safe and affordable access to early childhood education is critical for parents to participate fully in Virginia's economy, and for children's development. The Chamber promotes and **supports Arlington Public Schools offering universal, quality pre-K**. The Chamber supports the study the County is undertaking to consider bonus density in exchange for the provision of child care facilities or services. Furthermore, **the Chamber encourages the County to exclude the child care facility space in eligible buildings from the Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The Chamber also urges Arlington County to allow day care or child care as a permitted use in the S-D Special Development zoning district, alongside schools, hospitals and senior housing**. The Chamber urges Arlington County to find new ways to help child care providers navigate the sometimes restrictive regulatory systems they face both at the state and county level.

The Chamber supports initiatives and programs to maintain Arlington's school system through efforts to **provide the**



**necessary infrastructure to align training and educational programs with projected workforce needs**, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This should include Career Technical Education (CTE) that is focused on professional and technical skills-based training.

The Chamber encourages **establishing incentives to motivate employers to develop workplace learning opportunities for high school students** to allow school systems to align with the "Profile of Virginia Graduate."

The Chamber further supports **competitive compensation for educators** at all levels of the public education spectrum, and supports **continuing, collaborative initiatives to provide opportunities for dual-enrollment college credits for all Arlington students** as a part of their high school program of studies.

Beyond conventional K-12 systems and universities, the Chamber additionally **supports the expansion of work-based learning programs such as apprenticeships, internships, and experiential learning opportunities** as means to meet the Commonwealth's workforce demands. These apply to both young people beginning their careers in the workforce as well as incumbent workers improving their skillsets and improving their own competitiveness.

The Chamber supports maintaining a Regional Workforce Council dedicated to Arlington and Alexandria, distinct from other regions of Northern Virginia. The Chamber supported legislation this past General Assembly to create a consolidated Department of Workforce Development and Advancement. We look forward to the implementation of the Department, and hope to see less red tape at the Commonwealth level to the benefit of regional and local workforce programs.

# Hospitality and Tourism

Prior to the pandemic, travel and tourism accounted for more than 27,000 jobs and \$3.5 billion of commerce in Arlington.

While travel has resumed to nearly pre-pandemic levels, the tourism and hospitality sector in Arlington is still dealing with a labor shortage, supply chain issues, and an uncertain economic forecast.

**The Chamber encourages Arlington County to maintain hospitality-specific programs to support hotels and their workforce through these challenges.**

The Chamber fought hard for the full resurrection of and the removal of the sunset provision on the surcharge on the transient occupancy tax. The Chamber does not want to see the tax used merely to send other budgeted funds out of Arlington Economic Development. We also commend Arlington County for its Letter of Agreement with the Chamber to ensure hospitality industry input into the efficient use of those funds.





[advocacy@arlingtonchamber.org](mailto:advocacy@arlingtonchamber.org)  
[703] 525-2400  
[arlingtonchamber.org](http://arlingtonchamber.org)

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