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Workforce* Housing Questions

1. **Priority.** How important is workforce housing to Alexandria and to you? What steps do you see as critical to maintaining a range of housing options?

Workforce housing is extremely important to Alexandria and to me. The lack of workforce housing is a contributing reason why our only 11% of our City staff can afford to live in Alexandria. In addition, it is why a number of businesses are struggling to retain employees who live in close proximity to their business. We must maintain a range of options for housing including incentive programs for teachers, first responders and city staff.

2. **Targets and Tools.** Will you support a plan and implementation tools for an Action Plan for housing, with numerical preservation and new unit targets, administrative/staff changes, and the creation of a “YES” team to get the job done. How will you get City staff to implement it?

I will support a plan and implementation tools for an Action Plan for housing. While we have a number of items on the table that relate to housing, we haven't done a good enough job in formulating a strategy. We need to use the Office of Housing in a more strategic manner that includes feedback from community stakeholders and a clear promotion of program offerings. This implementation needs to be part of the responsibilities of the Housing office staff and built into their annual performance evaluation. I believe this approach begins to create a culture of accountability, which in the end will ensure results.

3. **Accountability.** Would you support requiring the City to provide an annual report, stating units lost, preserved and added to the housing stock that could serve constituents such as firefighters, police, teachers, senior citizens? If not, do you have a better idea?

I believe accountability needs to be at the core of what we do as a city government. The lack of transparency in this and other areas is troubling. I would definitely support requiring the City to provide an annual report that states units lost, preserved and added to the housing stock. As mentioned before, I really believe annual employee evaluations must be linked to performance outcomes in order to create an accountability culture throughout city government.

4. **Opportunities.** Will you support density increases if properly planned and coordinated with open space, transportation mitigation and mixed use?

I agree with housing experts, developers, financial specialists and others who point out that Alexandria must offer higher densities in carefully designated areas to achieve significant amounts of workforce housing. What is disappointing about the current state of our planning and development process is that it is in direct conflict with the stated strategic plan this City Council adopted several years ago. We MUST be consistent with what we say and

what we end up doing as it relates to development. For this City Council to say they support density around transit and then approve project after project that is counter to this irresponsible. Council should review existing policies and make revisions as needed in order to accomplish this goal.

5. **Funding.** Will you commit to continued City funding to support workforce housing? What means of funding do you favor? How will you ensure that dedicated funds from the property tax are used to keep Alexandria diverse?

I am committed to continuing the City's funding for the support of workforce housing. The current 1 cent set aside is a good start, but I think we need to do more. I would support creating public/private partnerships with various companies/organizations in order to widen our options. Thinking outside of the box in this manner, including looking to faith-based and community organizations who have successfully partnered with other cities is the way to go. The budget also needs to be reviewed to determine where additional resources could come from to support this initiative.

6. **AHDC.** After almost two years, the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation has not funded a single unit of housing. Should the City widen its options by working more closely with other nonprofit and for-profit housing developers?

This again comes down to accountability. We need to continue to speak loud and clear about our expectation for this Corporation to live up to their charge and get things moving. If this pattern continues, I would support going to the drawing table to determine how to dissolve the Corporation and create a plan that will ensure results. Again, I would also support us thinking outside of the box, including looking to faith-based and community organizations who have successfully partnered with other cities. Lastly, I believe the budget needs to be reviewed to see where additional resources could come from to support this initiative.

7. **Policy and Preservation.** Will you commit to a tax policy for workforce housing that uses an income-based valuation that would then moderate property tax burdens? Will you commit to further exploring ways that property tax relief or delayed payment of property taxes might allow homeowners (condos included) to remain residents of Alexandria? Finally, if Alexandria does not have the authority, will you support legislation that would allow the City to provide tax abatement for the rehabilitation and preservation of workforce housing?

I will commit to a tax policy for workforce housing that uses a variety of vehicles to relieve the tax burden felt by moderate property owners. I really do think we need to further explore ways that property tax relief or delayed payment of property taxes might allow homeowners (condos included) to remain residents of Alexandria. We need recognize these individuals are responsible for making our community what it is today. To do nothing is to say we don't value you as members of our community. I do not believe Alexandria has the authority at the moment to provide tax abatement for rehabilitating and preservation of workforce housing. I certainly would want to explore legislation that could support these efforts.