

Civic Engagement Toolkit

Key Messages

Arlington is changing fast.

- **Our population is expected to grow from 216,700 to 283,000 people by 2040.**
 - As our population continues to grow, our 26 square miles will not.
 - A growing population means increased demands for public services, community facilities and open space.
- **The Community Facilities Study is an opportunity for us to take a step back and look at the big picture.**
 - It considers where we are headed over the next 5, 10 and 20 years.
 - It is a collaborative effort between the County, Arlington Public Schools (APS) and the broader community.
 - Our 23-person Study Committee and more than 250 members of our Resident Forum, have worked since January to evaluate County and School resources, prioritize challenges and draft recommendations.

We're looking for long-term solutions to meet our community's needs.

What strategic community challenges are there that, if unaddressed, could threaten Arlington's overall sustainability?

- This is one of the most important questions we are tasked to answer.
- We have identified five key challenges that we believe are the most pressing for immediate attention.
- Our final reports will include recommendations organized around these key challenges.

1. Strengthening community dialogues

- Arlington has a long history of citizen-led land use planning.
- However, civic engagement efforts still do not reach all segments of the population.
- We need to rethink how we communicate and engage the whole community in more transparent planning.

2. Sustaining Arlington's economic model

- Arlington has a well-diversified tax base with a 50/50 split between commercial and residential real estate taxes.
- However, the local office market is changing. A shrinking federal presence, shifts in the way businesses use office space and competitiveness in the region affects these changes.
- We need to strategically react to downturns in the office market, because it directly affects revenues. Historically high vacancy rates result in \$34 million in lost annual tax revenue and shifts the tax burden to residential property.

3. Land - Arlington's scarcest resource

- Arlington and Public Schools own 2.2 square miles for all schools, parks, police and fire stations and more.
- However, we are experiencing increased demands for competing priorities. For example, we anticipate seeing 7,800 additional students enroll over the next 10 years.
- We need to carefully consider solutions such as vertical growth, shared uses and public/private partnerships.

4. Planning for change

- Arlington is a well-recognized model for growth planning along transit corridors.
- However, population, demographic and employment changes will affect public service delivery and facility needs.
- County and Schools need to closely collaborate on innovative solutions to meet future needs.

5. Embracing diversity

- Diversity is one of Arlington's greatest strengths.
- However, it has been decreasing in recent years.
- We need to plan for neighborhoods, services and amenities for residents at all ages and stages of life. This includes students entering the workforce, young families just starting out, seniors who wish to age in place and hardworking, low-wage employees.

You should get involved, because this affects every Arlingtonian.

- **All Arlingtonians have a stake in the outcome of this Study.**
 - Will Arlington continue to be the exceptional community I want to live in?
- **This is an important first step, but there is still work ahead to improve how decisions are made.**
 - We hope our recommendations will be a catalyst to strengthen how core needs are met.
 - We will present two reports to both the County and School Boards in September and November of this year.
- **Stay informed and share your input.**
 - Visit the study website for meeting dates, materials and contacts; subscribe to email updates; contact me.