

On 14 Mar 2023, the General Membership, under a Suspension of the Rules, held a vote with the options Revised Final Resolution, Revised Amendment in Nature of a Substitute, Abstain. The vote was Revised Final Resolution, 71 (70.3%); Revised Amendment in Nature of a Substitute, 30 (29.7%); Abstain, 8.

An AMENDMENT in the Nature of a SUBSTITUTE to be offered in discussion of the ‘Resolution to Restore Public Confidence in Arlington County Governance’

FINAL REVISION, 4 March 2023

Whereas, a signature feature of Arlington County governance is the “Arlington Way,” which relies on bottom-up community engagement to build consensus and make policies with community support.¹
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Whereas, in keeping with the Arlington Way, the County must ensure that its engagement methods adequately inform residents of policies in development and fairly capture the range of diverse views within the community.^{3 4}

Whereas, on September 14, 2021, the Arlington County Civic Federation approved a Resolution observing that “the perspectives of all communities including all racial, cultural, philosophical, and economic backgrounds, all sexual orientations, and all capabilities have not been historically represented in the viewpoints in civic engagement.”^{5 6}

Whereas, the Missing Middle Housing Study and other land-use planning initiatives have highlighted

¹ Abbott Bailey, *Mapping the Arlington Way: Understanding the System of Citizen Participation in Arlington County* at 7 (June 2000), available at <https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2022-10/2022-10%20CivFed%20Res%20Bailey%202000%20Mapping%20the%20Arlington%20Way%20Understanding.pdf> (describing “the Arlington Way” as “a model that maximizes the use of citizens in the decision-making processes as a means for developing the best policy with the most community support”).

² Ron Carlee, *The Arlington Way: Public Engagement as a Community Expectation*, National Civic Review (Spring 2019), available at <https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/ncr-article/the-arlington-way-public-engagement-as-a-community-expectation/> (“[T]he Arlington Way means engaging with the public on issues of importance or concern (not always the same) in an effort to reach community consensus or, in the lack of consensus, a shared understanding and an opportunity for everyone to be heard.”).

³ InsideNova, *Uniquely Arlington: ‘The Arlington Way’ remains elusive to define* (Oct. 5, 2015), available at https://www.insidenova.com/news/arlington/uniquely-arlington-the-arlington-way-remains-elusive-to-define/article_0bf65318-6b4f-11e5-bffd-7b81d88da822.html (quoting former Arlington County Board Chair Mary Hynes that the “success” of the Arlington Way “depends on inclusive, accessible, respectful, constructive and persistent, purposeful dialogue between government and those who live here and work here”).

⁴ John Kelly, *Interested in Arlington history? This is the place for you*, Wash. Post (May 30, 2015), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/interested-in-arlington-history-this-is-the-place-for-you/2015/05/30/6f092a0a-0611-11e5-8bda-c7b4e9a8f7ac_story.html (“There is no dictionary definition of ‘the Arlington way,’ but this is pretty close: Decisions that will affect the community are made only after input from all the voices in the community.”).

⁵ Arlington County Civic Federation, *Resolution to Affirm the ACCF’S Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging* at 1 (approved Sept. 14, 2021), available at <https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2021-09/2021-09%20ACCF%20DEBI%20Resolution%20APPROVED.pdf>.

⁶ Jo Devoe, *CivFed Resolves to Diversify Its Ranks, Broaden Its Outreach*, ARLnow (Sept. 29, 2021), available at <https://www.arlnow.com/2021/09/29/civfed-resolves-to-diversify-its-ranks-broaden-its-outreach/> (quoting CivFed’s then-President Allan Gajadhar as lamenting that “[t]he representation in the CivFed isn’t fully representative of racial and ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of Arlington” and stressing the importance of “giving voice to people outside of traditional power and interest groups”).

shortcomings of the County’s methods of engaging residents.^{7 8 9}

Whereas, these shortcomings have given many residents the impression that the County pursues predetermined outcomes, stifles public feedback, ignores criticisms of policies in development, and makes far-reaching decisions without incorporating residents’ views, addressing their concerns, or reaching community consensus.^{10 11 12}

Whereas, the County can increase public confidence in County governance by providing more opportunities for two-way conversations, improving accessibility of information about policies in development, explaining how public input shapes those policies, and engaging with more residents—including renters, lower-income residents, disabled residents, parents of young children,

⁷ Arlington County Staff, *Missing Middle Housing Study: Expanding Housing Choice - Phase 2 County Board Work Session at 12* (July 12, 2022), available at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/housing/documents/missing-middle/cb-work-session-mmhs-phase-2-2022-07-12.pdf> (documenting the extreme underrepresentation of people of color, young people, renters, and multifamily dwelling residents among respondents to the county’s missing middle survey).

⁸ Compare Arlington County Staff, *Missing Middle Housing Study: Expanding Housing Choice - Phase 2 Analysis and Draft Framework at 4* (May 2, 2022), available at https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/housing/documents/missing-middle/mmhs-phase-2-public-presentation_05.02.pdf (listing the missing middle “Study Goals” as “Increase housing supply” and “Diversity housing types”) with Arlington County Staff, *Community Conversations Notes* (Oct. 28, 2022), at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/county-board/documents/misc/notes.missingmiddle.communityconversations10.28.22.final.post.pdf> (comments at county-led community conversations include: “Most residents don’t even understand this is going on”; “What this proposal is trying to achieve?”; “What is the problem that Missing Middle is trying to solve?”; “I really don’t understand what the goal is. What is the goal?”; “What is the problem we’re solving?”; “What problem is MM supposed to solve?”).

⁹ Mary Rouleau, *Progressive Voice: Time For an Arlington Way 2.0?*, ARLnow (Dec. 3, 2015), available at <https://www.arlnow.com/2015/12/03/progressive-voice-time-for-an-arlington-way-2-0/> (“It strikes me that so much energy goes into a typical Arlington study process on the front end that little remains for the rollout. Yet for many people, the rollout is the first time they become aware that change is happening.”).

¹⁰ Arlington County Staff, *Introducing Arlington’s Race and Ethnicity Dashboard* (last accessed Feb. 12, 2023), at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Data-Research/Demographics/Race-Ethnicity-Dashboard/Arlington%E2%80%99s-Race-and-Ethnicity-Dashboard> (noting that certain residents “raised concerns about lack of transparency associated with community engagement and public decision-making”).

¹¹ Alex Koma, *Nauck Residents Blast County’s Handling of Four Mile Run Valley Planning, Feel ‘Ignored’ and Excluded*, ARLnow (Sept. 19, 2018), at <https://www.arlnow.com/2018/09/19/nauck-residents-blast-countys-handling-of-four-mile-run-valley-planning-feel-ignored-and-excluded/> (“As Arlington officials continue to chart out the future of the Four Mile Run valley, some community leaders in [Green Valley] feel their concerns are being ignored by the county and are demanding a louder voice in the proceedings.”).

¹² See Arlington County Civic Federation, *Resolution to Extend the Missing Middle Housing Framework Public Comment Period* (May 10, 2022), available at <https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2022-05/2022-05%20ACCF%20PSCComm%20Res%20Extend%20Missing%20Middle%20Comment%20Period%202022-05-10%20APPROVED.pdf> (urging the county to “extend the public review period for the Missing Middle Phase 2 concept plan”).

non-native English speakers, and residents of color.^{13 14 15}

Therefore, let it be resolved, the Arlington County Civic Federation calls on the County Board and the County Manager to improve their engagement with the public and prioritize these actions:

1. Recommitting to the Arlington Way by publicly pledging to improve the County’s methods for engaging with its residents, in collaboration with the Arlington County Civic Federation and other community groups;
2. Hosting more public meetings with opportunities for live, two-way conversations with County Board Members, the County Manager, and County Staff, including by holding some regular meetings of the County Board and advisory groups in neighborhoods of historically marginalized residents and at more convenient times;
3. Responding promptly to public feedback on County policies in development, with sufficient specificity and clarity that the community can understand whether, how, why that feedback will shape policy;
4. Investing more resources in comprehensive planning and developing a more sophisticated, data-driven toolkit for anticipating, addressing, and communicating likely impacts from County policies;
5. Updating and maintaining the County’s website to fix broken links promptly, highlight major initiatives, and make pertinent information about County policies more accessible;
6. Presenting feedback opportunities that minimize jargon, allow expression of a wide range of viewpoints, and generate participation from residents representing Arlington’s diversity;
7. Ensuring that minutes and recordings of meetings of the County Board and advisory commissions are prepared and posted within 24 hours to the County’s website;
8. Reinvigorating County advisory groups by advertising vacancies more prominently, sharing more information about selection criteria, selecting candidates to capture the diversity of residents’ views

¹³ Jo DeVoe, *Is the ‘Arlington Way’ Too Narrow to Include All Residents? Some Say ‘Yes’*, ARLnow (Oct. 5, 2021), at <https://www.arlnow.com/2021/10/05/is-the-arlington-way-too-narrow-to-include-all-residents-some-say-yes/> (“[T]raditional engagement processes privilege those with the time, resources and connections to invest in discussions about projects, studies and policies. That leaves out a growing segment of the population outside that mold: renters, parents of young kids, people who work non-traditional hours, people without access to reliable and affordable transportation, and those who are not fluent English speakers.”).

¹⁴ Krysta Jones, *Community Matters: The ‘Arlington Way’ Must Continue to Incorporate Anti-Racist Practices*, ARLnow (June 9, 2020), at <https://www.arlnow.com/2020/06/09/community-matters-the-arlington-way-must-continue-to-incorporate-anti-racist-practices/> (proposing “to incorporate anti-racism in the ‘Arlington Way’”).

¹⁵ Jane Green, *Making Room: Show Renters the Arlington Way in 2020*, ARLnow (Jan. 6, 2020), at <https://www.arlnow.com/2020/01/06/making-room-show-renters-the-arlington-way-in-2020/> (explaining how the county’s “reliance on resident voices ... does not reflect Arlington’s diversity” and encouraging the county “to bring more renters into the civic engagement process”).

and backgrounds, and updating and training on handbooks for members and staff liaisons;

9. Conducting retrospective studies on major County policies to determine whether they achieved their goals or had unintended consequences, and publishing the results;
10. Enabling free public access to all data, third-party analyses, and other information relied on to develop policy recommendations, without requiring FOIA requests; and
11. Making real-time language translation services more widely available at public meetings.