

**2018 Alexandria City Council Candidate Survey**  
**Canek Aguirre for Alexandria City Council**

**1. INTRODUCTION - Please introduce yourself and describe why you are seeking a seat on the Alexandria City Council.**

I am running to improve housing opportunities, education, and health outcomes for all Alexandrians. On a daily basis I work in the trenches and find that many times there is a disconnect between the policy makers and what's happening on the ground. I believe I can help bridge this gap due to my experience and close connections working within the community.

Over the last 7 years, Alexandria has become my adopted community and I am proud that my entire time here has been one of service. This city has invested in me and I will continue to invest back in the city. I believe I would bring a unique perspective to city council as I've worked and/or advocated on behalf of Alexandria families in all three areas of my platform: housing, education, and health.

My leadership experience includes serving as Chair of the City's Economic Opportunities Commission, President of the Tenants and Workers United (TWU) Board of Directors, and Vice Chairman of the Health Systems Agency of Northern Virginia (HSANV) Board of Directors as well as on the Leadership Council for the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP). Additionally, I currently serve on the Steering Committee for the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria and in 2016, was appointed to the Virginia Board of Social Work by Governor Terry McAuliffe.

In my professional capacity, I work to increase access to care and improve health outcomes for Medicaid populations throughout Northern Virginia. Prior to this, I spent three years serving students and families in Alexandria City Public Schools.

As a new homeowner West of Quaker, I would like to see the economic growth of Del Ray and Old Town extended to the West End. On Council, I would support initiatives that promote strategic economic development and increased transportation options for West End residents and businesses.

**2. ATTRACT- How do you think the City should approach attracting new businesses to locate in Alexandria?**

We need to listen to our business community to see what is working and what needs improvement. If we need more streamlined processes then the question becomes what proposed achievable measures have been put in place and how will they be tracked to show improvements are actually occurring. I believe it is essential that the City works to ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to attract business as well. Ensuring we have a reliable multi-modal transportation system, a variety of housing opportunities, world class public schools, and broadband infrastructure are crucial to being an attractive place for businesses to locate.

Alexandria is a very welcoming community, but unfortunately we get a bad rap when it comes to being business friendly; we need to work to turn this around. I believe we have a great business/community framework to tap into in Alexandria to address this very issue. It's important that the City, the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, Visit Alexandria, the Chamber and our local business associations all work collaboratively to achieve our common goals.

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**3. SUSTAIN – How do we maintain and enhance Alexandria’s position as a complete community with thriving commercial and retail businesses, highly ranked schools, workforce and affordable housing, vibrant and walkable neighborhoods and open spaces for recreation?**

We all know that Alexandria has a lot to offer, but we also know that there are needed investments to improve our public schools, create housing opportunities, sustain open green spaces, and improve our transportation infrastructure. It is important that the City works jointly with Alexandria’s business community on these efforts because improvements will benefit both our resident’s quality of life and established/prospective businesses.

One of the biggest issues facing Alexandria is how we can continue to pay for all our needs and services. As I’ve said throughout my campaign, I am in favor of adopting the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee’s recommendation for a Revenue Master Plan to help the City explore additional options for new revenue sources. I believe we should also be looking at multi-year budgeting.

Additionally, there are empty storefronts on King Street and office vacancy in the West End. Different tactics are needed for different parts of our City, but it will require a collaborative effort between the City and all stakeholders to achieve our shared goals. Public-private partnerships will be important in many of our endeavors and it will be incumbent upon the City to facilitate these when it makes the most sense.

**4. CITY PROCESSES – What’s your plan to simplify City government processes that affect the ability of businesses to invest, open, operate, and be successful in Alexandria?**

This is an area that I will look forward to learning about -- from City staff and from the business community. From my conversations with local business owners, I understand the permitting process could be better streamlined. I’d like to have further discussions to learn more about other pressing issues when it comes to starting and maintaining a business in Alexandria. I would be willing to “tag along” on the process, if feasible and appropriate, to learn more firsthand of the challenges business owners in different sectors may experience as they navigate through City government. One thing I believe is certain is that we need to ensure there remain affordable online options in order to save time and improve efficiency for business owners. I would also like to see a “City Hall” satellite office in the West End for residents and business owners to access City services and make payments. In addition, I know the current Council may potentially add a Summer public hearing to the schedule, and I would be in favor of this change.

**5. STATE AND REGIONAL ISSUES – What do you feel are the most pressing state and regional issues effecting Alexandria?**

**Transportation** - Our transportation woes are no secret in Northern Virginia and this is where we need to not only be working collaboratively as a region, but also in the concept of a super-region from Richmond to Baltimore. For the last four years, my current job has required me to travel almost on a daily basis all across Northern Virginia. I know and experience firsthand the

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transportation issues we face regionally six days a week. From a lack of sidewalks and bike lanes in portions of Greater Prince William, to the lack of public transportation in Loudoun and parts of Fairfax County, to the congestion that stifles the Town of Dumfries along Route 1, and to the cut-through traffic impacting Alexandria, transportation infrastructure is critical for getting all of us to work, school and conducting business daily. We cannot simply “build” our way out of this with more roads, we must be investing in the infrastructure necessary to support timely, efficient, and affordable multi-modal transportation options. In Alexandria specifically, I believe we need to look at improving usage of our metro stations/ensuring completion of Potomac Yard (with a southern entrance or pathway) and restoring funds from NVRTA that were diverted to WMATA. Regional collaboration is essential and Alexandria must have a strong voice in these conversations. Additionally, housing is a major component to reducing congestion overall in the region and it needs to be strongly factored when looking at traffic solutions.

**Housing** - This is a regional, state and national crisis. We must work to ensure a variety of housing opportunities within City limits, but also in the region as this will help maintain a diverse workforce and help sustain healthy economic growth. I do not believe the housing crisis is an issue that can be tackled alone. As with our transportation issues, it will require that we work collaboratively with other localities within our region to find solutions. We must also look to the State for additional support. I believe zoning ordinances to allow for density bonuses and potential “granny flats” are a start, but there needs to be adequate funding and community buy-in that recognizes that we need these housing opportunities not just for quality of life of our residents, but also to remain competitive in the region to attract business and their employees.

**Combined Sewer Outfalls Deadline** - As a City, I believe we need to work with our State Delegation and Richmond to see how we can acquire additional funding for our sewer outfalls. It is our moral obligation to mitigate our environmental impact, but we also need additional funding in order to meet our 2025 deadline.

**Dillon Rule** - As a City, I believe we need to work with our State Delegation and Richmond to identify possible exemptions to the Dillon Rule that will allow for alternative revenue streams. We have a very unique community here in Alexandria and we cannot fully address the issues we are facing without having some additional autonomy to meet our current and future needs.