

Justin Wilson 2018 Candidate Survey

1. INTRODUCTION - Please introduce yourself and describe why you are seeking to be Mayor of the City of Alexandria.

Elections are about the community we want our children to inherit. My vision of the Alexandria my children will inherit is one where our fiscal future is secure, our youth having every opportunity at success, and our basic infrastructure able to support the City of our future.

The fundamental choice before our community over the next two decades is not whether we grow, but moreover, how we grow. With responsible budgeting, coordinated economic development, infrastructure expansion and remediation, as well as educational excellence, Alexandria can lead the region's recovery.

By protecting our long-term fiscal and physical infrastructure, expanding transportation options, ensuring the success of every child, Alexandria can be the place where my children will want to raise their family two decades from now.

I am now completing my second stint on the Alexandria City Council and have served for a total of nearly 8 years.

During this stint on Council, I have served on the City-Schools Subcommittee, the Long Range Educational Facilities Work Group, Visit Alexandria Board of Governors, the Potomac Yard Metro Implementation Group, the City's Audit Committee and the Quality of Life Committee. During my previous stint on the Council, I served on the Youth Policy Commission, the Commission on Information Technology, the Alexandria Library Board, and as the City's representative on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Human Services & Public Safety Policy Committee.

Prior to and between stints on Council, I was the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Alexandria Transit Company (DASH Bus), the City's representative to the Board of Directors of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, a member of the Alexandria Transportation Commission, the City's Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee and a two-term President of the Del Ray Citizens Association.

I was appointed by Governor Warner to the Virginia Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice, and twice appointed by Governor Kaine to the Virginia Board of Juvenile Justice.

I have been active in the City's non-profit community as well, serving as a member of the Board of Directors of Computer C.O.R.E., which provides computer training to low-income adults, and the Board of Trustees of Hopkins House, an early childhood education provider.

I have lived for seventeen years in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria with my wife, and now with our two children. When not performing Council service, I am the Senior Director of Information Technology Supplier Management for Amtrak.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Business Information Systems from Virginia Commonwealth University, and I am a Fellow of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia.

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

Alexandria's work in diversifying the economy of this region will determine whether we can support the services our residents expect and demand long into the future. By deploying a coordinated approach focused on capitalizing on existing business clusters, investing in growth-oriented infrastructure, and simplifying our processes and financial incentives, Alexandria will be successful in bringing new employers to our community.

We must put aside parochial concerns and partner with our neighbors in Arlington, Fairfax and beyond to successfully coordinate economic attraction efforts. The City has been blessed by largely organic development of clusters of business sectors that have found Alexandria an ideal location for commerce. This includes financial services, research and intellectual property, consulting services and healthcare. Using these sectors as building blocks can help us attract similar businesses, as well as grow those that already make their home inside our City.

We must transition the incentive component of business attraction efforts away from the arbitrary, "case by case" discussion that exists today. I believe a more transparent, consistent and carefully tailored efforts can be most effective in attracting new businesses to our City.

We must also expand our economic development capacity. We invest far less than our neighbors in attraction and retention..

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?

Cities that have been around for a while, like Alexandria, constantly evolve and reinvent themselves. The City stands at a unique inflection point as the sheer quantity of redevelopment activity planned or contemplated over the next two decades stands to reshape our City. How we implement the plans that have been adopted will shape our economic future and affect our quality of life for generations to come.

The next Council will have the opportunity to formalize an approach to residential conversions and adaptive re-use. With aged office space vacant in many areas of our City, pressure to convert space to residential uses will persist. Policies, incentives, fee structure and strategy for these conversions will need to be advanced. I believe this conversion activity should be viewed as an opportunity for our City, not a threat.

Bringing Metro to Potomac Yard gives the City a once in a generation opportunity to make Potomac Yard the focus of commercial development in Alexandria. While demand for office space is down across the region and across the nation, the new office space that will be developed will be in close proximity to transit. With the addition of Metro and BRT, Potomac Yard will be the focus of mixed use economic growth in our City.

With the stars aligned for Landmark Mall redevelopment to finally proceed, adoption and implementation of a feasible plan for the future of that site, as well as appropriate infrastructure support will be critical.

Ensuring productive use of the Victory Center property will provide a shot in the arm for the ongoing Eisenhower West Small Area Plan. Successful implementation of the newly adopted plan will create true mixed-use development that has long been the desire of residents and businesses on the City's West End. It will evolve this portion of our City from heavy industrial uses to land-uses that represent the economic growth that will benefit our City in the future.

The recently adopted Old Town North Small Area Plan presents another opportunity to provide orderly redevelopment for existing commercial and residential uses, as well as shape the future for one of the largest (to be) vacant properties in the City, the existing power plant site.

The next Council will look at changes to our existing Eisenhower East plan to determine the appropriate land-uses in an area where office is in transition.

Yet the key to a sustainable and growing City is not approving plans, but implementing them faithfully and in coordination with each other. As we finalize these new plans, they must be woven together with the existing Waterfront, Braddock Road, Beauregard, Mount Vernon Avenue, Arlandria and Eisenhower East Plans.

Done properly, we can utilize this redevelopment activity to increase the level of commercial activity in our City and ease the burden of taxation on our residential taxpayers.

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?

Throughout my tenure on the City Council I have worked to simplify and improve our processes to ease the red tape and facilitate business opening and expansion.

I believe we have continued opportunities for improvement. In the next term, I would like to see the Council take on:

- *Expanding administrative special use permitting, which has been proven to streamline business opening and expansion.*
- *Reviewing existing standard conditions to ease the regulatory burden in the special use permitting process.*

- *Expanding permitted uses, to avoid the use of special use permits for most retail and restaurant uses*
- *Reviewing and reconcile developer proffers to ensure a competitive posture.*
- *Refining City policies and incentives governing commercial to residential conversions.*
- *Updating business tax systems and procedures.*

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

As a small jurisdiction in a large region, Alexandria's fate will continue to be shaped by policies crafted nationally, regionally and across the Commonwealth.

Federal budgetary austerity will dictate the economic growth and sustainability of our region and our City. Working with our Federal partners to protect and expand the Federal footprint in this region will be important as our region's economy continues its transition.

By far, the most significant challenge regional policymakers must continue to address is the current state of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). With new dedicated funding now in place, attention must shift to administrative reform as well as long-term capital planning to protect the system for decades to come.

While the state dedicated funding package presented great opportunities for Metro, it did so at the expense of regional transportation funding, including significant impacts to Alexandria's West End Transitway. Working with the General Assembly to restore the regional transportation funding that will support quality of life and economic growth in our region is vital.

Our priorities in Richmond must continue to be infrastructure-focused, ensuring state funding for school construction and rehabilitation, sewer and clean water improvements and transportation investments.