

1. My name is Mark Leo Shiffer. I'm a former Computer Science professor with degrees in Math, Computer Science, and Computational Neuroscience. With a successful career across multiple industries in innovative technology including Big Data and Artificial Intelligence. I'm an entrepreneur as well, having co-founded the Cambridge Climate Institute with my wife. Born in New Orleans, I've also lived in New Jersey, New York, California, and Massachusetts before settling in Alexandria with my wife and two children (both in ACPS). Being from Louisiana I've seen racism, including members of my family disowning my mother because her partner is an African American. I've experienced food and housing insecurity when my single mother lost her job. Having experienced these things first hand gives me an understanding and empathy for those still struggling with these issues. I'm seeking a seat on Alexandria City Council because I believe that my experiences and skills would make me an effective champion of our diverse residents. I'd like to help empower them to overcome the challenges facing our city and make Alexandria and even more wonderful place to live and do business.
2. Covid-19 has turned the world sideways for our residents and our businesses. Navigating these challenging times has been difficult, but the resiliency and adaptability of our business leaders in collaboration with the city government has greatly reduced the devastating impact of the virus on our community. As we move toward the end of this crisis, we are seeing seismic changes not only in how we do business, but in consumer habits as well. To fully recover we will need to look at re-zoning of commercial properties and develop new regulations for businesses to allow the innovation that we've seen continue, benefiting businesses and the community alike. Before the pandemic office space was overbuilt in the city – this will have to be addressed in a way that will bring new businesses and new economic vitality to the city.
3. All of the changes that have been made (intentionally) since the pandemic has begun have had a positive effect on life in the city and engagement between customers and businesses. I would like to see them maintained along with further expansions which would only benefit the city. I would support increasing the area of King St. beyond the 100 block dedicated to pedestrians. As many restaurants derive a large proportion of their income from deliveries, I would support permanent dedicated parking for delivery drivers and outdoor dining. There are many other ways the city can create a more attractive environment to increase consumer traffic and help our businesses recover. The only change that I would consider rolling back would be hours of operation enforcement where residents are negatively impacted.
4. The subject of inclusivity in the business community requires support from all stakeholders. From access to capital, to help navigating the city bureaucracy, to being welcomed into the business community by other business leaders. With the addition of the Race and Social Equity Officer to staff, that office should be tasked with implementing the ALL Alexandria Resolution in coordination with our business community. Creating a partnership with the business community on this front can have an outsized impact on issues of racial justice and equity, and ensure that the business community has support from the city in implementing these goals.
5. The most pressing issue facing the city is the need for infrastructure investment to address flooding and school capacity. Nuisance flooding not only causes direct economic damage, but makes areas of the city less inviting – compounding the economic impact. Short-term and long-

term solutions for this problem have to be funded and implemented as this is a core city competency that must be done better.

The second most pressing issue is workforce affordable housing and child care. I have a proposal for a public/private partnership that will not only provide workforce housing, but help those using the program to build equity so that they can eventually buy rather than continue to rent. In addition, more readily available and affordable childcare, including universal pre-k will allow greater flexibility to the workforce benefiting not only parents, but the businesses they work for. These, along with expansion of innovative and loosened business regulations will help not only our workforce but businesses themselves by ensuring that their staff can lead happier more productive lives within the city.

The third most pressing issue is the economic recovery from the pandemic. If we do not have a thriving economic base, the city will not be able to afford the investments necessary to get the flywheel spinning at full force. As previously mentioned, this will take continued innovation and loosening of regulations as well as creativity around zoning so that the space that we have, public and private, is put to work generating a vibrant Alexandria.

6. The biggest state and regional issues facing Alexandria are around the issues detailed above, and transportation. As a Dillon rule state, it is hard for Alexandria to be as nimble and as innovative as we could be if we had complete autonomy and authority to implement policies. I would work with our state legislative partners to have the state grant more flexibility to the city to address the issues we face, including turbocharging Alexandria's economy. In addition, state funding will be critical to the success of our initiatives including funding transportation projects that help bring visitors and workers into and out of our city and around the region.