

INTRODUCTION - Please introduce yourself and describe why you are seeking to be Mayor of the City of Alexandria. For this question you are welcome to submit a brief video.

(Video)

2. COVID-19 RECOVERY – Please share your thoughts on what economic recovery looks like for the City, particularly its businesses.

Alexandria has historically relied on consumption as a cornerstone of our local economy. The pandemic has hollowed those revenues, especially dining tax, transient lodging (hotels), sales and BPOL. Those impacts have carried over to commercial real estate valuations, leading to severe impacts on the City's economic fortunes. Our restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues have shouldered a disproportionate burden of this impact, but the pandemic has impacted businesses in every sector.

Recovery for Alexandria is a restoration of our hospitality industry, facilitating transition for stranded commercial real estate and capitalizing on the economic benefit of new public health and resiliency investments.

While we must restore what we have lost due to the pandemic, it is also important that the City stay on the offense during the recovery. There is economic advantage to be sought for the City by ensuring that new economic growth and investments made in response to the pandemic create jobs and economic vitality in our community.

3. COVID-19 CHANGES – The City has relaxed a fair number of regulations to allow for businesses to operate under COVID-19 protocol. Which of these loosened restrictions would you like to see in perpetuity? Are there any you would like to roll back?

Alexandria has led the way in the region in deploying regulatory flexibility to support our small businesses. We have used a myriad of public space (roads, sidewalks, parking lots, etc) to facilitate safe commerce and keep our businesses afloat. We successfully worked with Richmond to liberalize alcohol laws to ensure that our restaurants could pivot. We have deployed millions of dollars of small business grants to keep businesses afloat during this time.

As we roll out of the pandemic, we not only need to maintain the flexibility we have extended, but also look for new ways to balance commerce and our quality of life in our community. The residents of Alexandria have rallied to support the businesses that build our community and they support changes to help them thrive in the future.

I will look for ways to extend the pedestrian-only zone we have created in Old Town, find ways to make new outdoor dining locations permanent and work to ensure that state reforms will endure.

In addition to the substance of the policy changes we have implemented during this past year, we must also take lessons from the speed with which we made those changes. We have proven that change need not take years and as we return to normal we must replicate that efficiency.

We have used this crisis to experiment and those experiments have been wildly successful.

4. EQUITY & INCLUSION - There is a broader conversation about equity in relation to COVID-19 as well as racial justice in response to recent events throughout the country. Alexandria demonstrated a commitment to advancing equity in its work with the addition of the Race and Social Equity Officer. As an elected leader, working in concert with the Race and Social Equity Officer, what ideas do you have to help Alexandria, particularly the business community, work towards being more inclusive?

Equity in Alexandria means attacking the structural disparities that exist in our City, whether they be in health, wealth attainment, educational achievement, housing, or the criminal justice system. The pandemic has been an object lesson for our community in how those inequities can be deadly, as segments of our City have not experienced the pandemic equally.

The business community of our City can be critical partners in our efforts to attack inequity. Through partnerships in workforce development, policy advocacy, community investment and more, those who advance commerce in our City can be vital partners with our government to address these persistent inequities.

5. CITY ISSUES – What do you feel are the three (3) most pressing issues facing the City of Alexandria today?

Leading the regions recovery from the pandemic requires that we support our children, invest in our infrastructure and expand our economy.

The pandemic has hit our entire community hard, but none harder than our children. We must find the resources necessary to address the academic, social and emotional loss that our children have suffered. As we return our children to school buildings, we must ensure that the facilities they return to are worth the wait. We have budgeted funds for 5 new schools over the next decade, but we also must expand investments in existing facilities to reduce energy costs, increase capacity and extend use.

Flooding, school capacity challenges, pedestrian safety concerns, and the 2019 Metro shutdown all highlight the perils of deferring investments in our basic infrastructure. We cannot continue the cycle of deferral and delay. Maintaining our infrastructure in a state of good repair is good for our City, good for our environment and good for our economy. The new infusion of Federal money into our City gives us a unique opportunity to accelerate our investments in what makes Alexandria work.

So many of our small businesses were unable to survive this past year. Our government has extended flexibility and funding to keep them afloat. Now we must invest in building an economy that will thrive in the new normal. I will work to use new Federal resources to create and fund Business Improvement Districts, help small businesses scale and market to bring our customers back.

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

Perhaps the most acute challenge facing the region has been the lack of adequate housing supply to support the work force of this region. The region's employers have spoken quite clearly as to housing constraints acting as an inhibitor to growth. I was a member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) committee that developed the new regional housing creation goals and I was proud that Alexandria was one of the first jurisdictions in the region in endorse those goals. For the first time,

they represent a regional commitment to using housing supply as a tool to address our housing affordability crisis. This is an economic imperative as much as it is a human imperative for our community.

Additionally, I believe the pandemic has highlighted challenges with the Commonwealth's tax structure. BPOL, the business personal property tax, and various consumption-based taxes are poorly structured and focus their burden on some aspects of our economy, while ignoring others. It is long-overdue for the General Assembly and the Governor to take up comprehensive tax reform, to ensure that we have a fair, equitable and competitive tax structure throughout the Commonwealth.

Finally, I have worked to highlight the need for the Commonwealth to provide meaningful financial participation in the construction and maintenance of school facilities. It has been 25 years since Richmond last provided significant resources for school construction. Local governments throughout Virginia are grappling with the expenses from overcrowded and aged school facilities. Partnership from Richmond can help us face this issue head-on.