



What's Next Alexandria Community Poll Verbatim Comments Submitted

The Community Poll, hosted by ACTion Alexandria in partnership with the City of Alexandria, was open from September 20 through October 25, 2012. 1558 community members responded to the poll online; 81 community members submitted printed copies of the poll that were available in community locations. Summary and discussion of the results will take place at the November 15 Community Dialogue. All materials will be posted to alexandriava.gov/whatsnext.

This document compiles all of the individual responses to the "Other" category for each question. Personal attacks on specific individuals are not published in this document.

Questions regarding the Community Poll results can be directed to Carrie Beach, What's Next Alexandria Project Manager, at carrie.beach@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.3853.

Question 1: What is your connection to Alexandria? [Select all that apply, and/or fill in "other"]

- I grew up in Alexandria
- worked for ACPS 38 years
- I am active with the nonprofit community.
- I have children in public school. I attend church here.
- I live in Fairfax County, just west of the city line, and shop and dine in Alexandria quite a bit, and am affected by development in the West End
- I have a child in ACPS, I am locally active
- I worked here until I retired.
- I temporarily live overseas, but I will return to Alexandria in 1-2 years.
- It's my hometown
- Lived here for 25 years - still live and work nearby
- Kids in school in Alex
- Kids in school in Alex
- both live here and have a business here
- I do my volunteer work here as well.
- Serve on two commissions
- And my son goes to public elementary here--MVCS
- I have had a store on King St for 23 years now 1400 King St Gold Works
- I'm very engaged in the city
- I attend school here. (Virginia Tech)
- A married daughter and her family live here.

- Our family has been in Alexandria for over a hundred years.
- I own a rental property here too
- I own a home and am temporarily living abroad for work
- Own a house
- Own a condo in Alexandria
- My children will attend school here.
- Community Groups
- I am President of the Alexandria Arts Forum and Music Director/Conductor of Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Assoc. located primarily in the City
- Graduate of Alexandria school system and employed in Alexandria until retirement.
- I am a City employee
- My child attends school at ACPS.
- My kids attend ACPS, and I serve on various boards, commissions, and committees
- I own a home but currently live abroad on overseas assignment
- I used to live there now in Fairfax
- I also worked here for 10+ years
- I raise children here.
- member of a commission and coalitions in the city
- Our daughter and grandson live in Fairlington
- And I love my hometown.
- This is my home town and my official residence since 1951.
- I live and work in Arlington, but represent a business that has ties to Alexandria.
- Child is in preschool here and Nanny lives here
- I own property here
- I have a home-based business and am sole proprietor
- I was also raised in Alexandria, went to elementary and high school there.
- Student - Does not live in Alexandria full-time, parents reside in Alexandria
- Live in FX County, we eat and drink in Alexandria.
- A non-profit
- Used to live here, still own property.
- I'm a student in the ACPS system.
- was born and grew up here
- I play here
- Engaged in cultural/community activities
- My children attend public schools and participate in daily Rec programs.
- I have an Alexandria address, but live in Fairfax
- We live in Alexandria, Fairfax County
- I reside in Alexandria, Fairfax County, but frequent Alexandria City daily.
- I used to live in Alexandria, and most of my friends still do
- Heavily engaged in civic affairs.

- Live here AND volunteer here.
- Ruby Tucker
- Learning Center (Ruby Tucker)

Question 2: What is your age? (No written comments included)

Question 3: What methods do you use to get information about the City? [Select all that apply, and/or fill in “other”]

- Patch.com sites
- electronic media
- The Patch
- Neighborhood email
- Alexnet
- Local newspapers--Gazette and Examiner
- text messages and e-mails
- emails
- Del Ray Patch articles
- Comcast channel not available on DirecTV
- I write (the Arlandrian, Greater Greater Washington) for and read (DC Mud, Growler, other urban planning, bike, etc. blogs).
- The newsletter the City mails
- Rosemont listserv.
- Parker Gray Growler, Alexandria Patch
- Department meetings
- Citizen Association News letter
- Patch
- Alexandria Packet
- TES Facebook
- Old Town Crier and other local papers
- TES Facebook
- Neighborhood association listserv
- My Civic Association and my neighborhood list-serve
- Alexandria
- Personal interaction with City agencies.
- I am an employee of the City of Alexandria
- Gazette
- local organizations like Alexandria chamber of commerce
- Del Ray Citizens
- neighborhood list serve
- neighborhood list serves
- The PTA meeting is also very informative i.e. budgets, demographics...

- Community organizations (e.g., Del Ray Artisans, Art League, Northern Virginia Bird Club)
- delray.patch.com
- Listserve
- Husband is on Board of Directors at Watergate, and we get information relative to the area
- Neighborhood listserves
- Community list serve - DelRayCitizens
- Del Ray Patch
- neighborhood listserv
- neighborhood listserve
- listserves (Eco-City Alexandria, Alexandria BPAC)
- Neighborhood email lists
- Patch
- neighborhood listserves (delrayparents)
- del ray listserve
- Community association managed website.
- Community association managed website.
- Beverly Hills List Serve and folks who show up at the local Saturday markets (in my case Mt Vernon Ave. and City Hall).
- postal mailings
- Neighborhood Association Listserv, Old Town Mom's Listserv
- Beverly Hills Listserve
- City emails and e-news
- Cameron Station newsletters and emails
- Alexandria city library
- Community email group
- Federation of Civic Associations
- e-mail
- Patch
- Chamber of Commerce
- Old Town Crier
- community organization
- Old town path and del ray patch
- Blogs
- Civic Association News
- Del Ray Patch
- Old Town Patch
- Access to information through work as a City employee
- Northern Virginia Magazine
- patch emails
- ACTion Alexandria

- Patch, Alex Times, Washington Post
- Delray Patch
- Del Ray Citizens newsletter, also yahoo groups
- Del Ray Patch
- Civic organizations
- George Washington Middle School
- email
- Alexandria PBAC
- newsletter from condo manager
- Alexandria
- the patch
- The Rosemont listserve is only method. Otherwise, I would never know what u r doing, whether there are meetings or hearings. It's remarkably opaque what city is up to, even for this avid newspaper reader. How about adding a weekly digest that u email?
- Del Ray Listserve, Del Ray Patch
- I participated in Leadership Alexandria several years ago
- Alexandria
- other social media e.g. multiple Yahoo listserves
- Web searches
- Chamber of Commerce
- State Delegate's e-news (West End)
- Flyers posted at the library, dog park, local businesses, bus stop, school signage area, etc.
- Listserve, blogs
- Neighborhood list serves
- I am a member of the Alexandria Democratic Committee
- oldtownmoms yahoo group, MVCS rec center
- local listserves
- professional network
- professional network
- Coworkers and official work channels
- Alexandria Gazette
- Google News, Gazette, Alex Times
- email newsletters
- North Ridge Citizens Association
- The Compass (Cameron Station newsletter)
- Old Town and Del Ray PATCH
- Condo association & North Old Town newsletters
- Alexandria
- Alexandria PATCH
- mailings, phone calls from ACPS
- Social media sources are from local reporters or civic groups, not City of Alexandria

- City of Alexandria Employee
- Del Ray Patch
- Citizens association listserv is a main way that I learn of things
- network of neighbors and friends
- Watch Council meetings on TV.
- Patch
- old town Alexandria patch.com
- E-mail alerts from City, ACPS and Rec Dept.
- media email newsletters
- Patch Alexandria website
- Civic association website, particularly NOTICE
- Alexandria
- Patch news
- Patch
- visitalexandria.com
- Patch
- Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Civic League
- Del Ray Patch
- E-mail from Coalition for Smart Growth
- Old Town Alexandria Patch
- my community, Cameron station keeps me informed
- Cameron Station Newsletter, emails
- Condominium
- Del Ray Citizens Association web page and yahoo groups listserv
- Leadership Alexandria alumni 2010
- neighborhood e-mail list
- neighborhood listserves
- Local library
- Old Towne civic association
- School that my kids attend
- Neighborhood listserv
- Neighborhood list serves
- Neighborhood Listserve
- Community list serves
- DelRay Listserve
- Email from various city organizations
- ACTION Alexandria
- Patch sites
- local listserves

- PTA
- School
- Old Town Moms/Rosemont Moms List Serv.
- Through AlexNet and City email

Question 4: How do you participate in the public decision making process? If you answered other, please explain.

- I have done most of the above, but not regularly...only as issues come up of interest to me.
- Conversation with other residents
- Serve as an election official
- Have participated in city council meeting only to have no resolution
- Occasional e-mail or webform to city officials.
- DRCA Newsletter - DRCA Member
- Political candidate
- Work in City government
- Campaigning against incumbents that poorly represent local communities
- church activities
- Attending school board hearing
- giving opinions to Youth sports leaders and hoping it gets passed up the chain
- neighborhood listserves...that is how I saw this survey
- I also send a couple of emails to Del Pepper, but just about 3 a year.
- Paying Taxes and using social media
- via social media
- Alexandria Specializes in "meeting people to death" pretty discouraging overall
- Occasional local civic association meetings; plan to attend upcoming debates.
- talking to friends/neighbors
- Emailing city staff and elected officials
- Sending emails directly to the city council members on Facebook
- election officer
- election official 2012
- Member of Federation of Cities representing my community. Active committee member in my community.
- service projects
- Neither my spouse nor I are able to attend anything regularly because of family so word of mouth and eNews are most frequent.
- My participation, so far, is largely as City staff, not as a City resident
- Emailing the City about issues I feel are important.
- Participation as a staff member supporting community groups and activities.
- I have, in the past, been a member of city boards and advisory groups and an officer in civic associations. I wouldn't rule out future formal participation but I'm not currently an officer or advisory group member.
- employee
- previously served on City board/commission and was involved in PTA when my children were in local schools
- Rarely know in advance
- I just moved here. I haven't had an opportunity yet.

- Talking to my City Council Members, providing input when the City asks for it.
- Participate in, and support, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce initiatives and Government Relations Committee projects.
- personal contact with officials, media, community interests
- Contacts with City staff, outreach to community members
- I just moved to Alexandria, so I would like to get involved.
- Through the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
- Served 15 years on BFAAC
- Through the Chamber of Commerce
- I also serve on a business association board, which has not been included in any of the options above. Please don't forget that business owners are also important and have been left out of the discussion in the past.
- Mentoring and encouraging others (especially under-represented groups) to get involved in the process
- Informal neighborhood communication and 1:1 conversations with City Council and school board members and officials.
- Attending public meetings involving city/staff & observing public frustration at not being heard
- the local business association
- Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
- Writing mayor/city council
- Through leadership in my condo association.
- Haven't found my participating to mean anything to this city, favoritism is very strong here.
- Engage in local politics.
- Would attend more-transportation issue
- Recently moved here so nothing yet!
- Participate in local election campaigns
- please post
- Calling/talking to Council members/aides
- I just bought a house in Potomac Yard and look to attending functions in the near future.
- Just bought at Potomac Yard
- Make recommendations/provide feedback as Rec Dept./City Staff
- I am employed as a City planner for Alexandria
- Actually, just getting more personally involved
- Letters to the editor of local newspapers
- It is part of my job to be informed about the government and community; however, because we receive city funding, I am reluctant to be vocal on personal opinions
- ad hoc citizen efforts
- Would like to know more about how to participate in other ways
- Neighborhood Listserve
- School Voting

Question 5: Would you increase your participation in the public decision making process if you had different participation options available? Please provide additional comments here:

- Web based.
- We have far too many public meetings - usually by 2 -3 different departments + 2 -3 commissions on the same topic. We need to "right-size" public participation and have ONE joint commission hearing and ONE large community meeting. Every time we do this, it wastes staff time. I would hope we come up

with an M.O. for community decisions, that City Council would start making the hard decisions and sticking by them so I can have some of my own time back.

- Depending on the options obviously. Online or mobile options preferred.
- Electronically would be a great way to increase my participation. For example, you made it easy to answer this survey because all I had to do was click a button.
- Online options would be welcome (streaming, WebEx forums, etc...)
- I would attend more planning meetings or board meetings if they were available to participate online or through a webinar. They often start at 6 or 7 p.m. and I am not home from work by then.
- "It would depend on the issue.
- It would depend on the other options available. At this time, I personally believe there are plenty of options available for participation.
- Would like to see a live video conference call option for meetings. Something you could sign up ahead for.
- Online information and feedback mechanisms are the most efficient and helpful for me.
- The West End (particularly Cameron Station, Eisenhower West, and Landmark area) really needs more attention.
- The web site should be easier to use/navigate and citizens should be able to submit comments via e-mail.
- Difficult to attend meetings because of my work schedule, but I like to use on-line options for participation.
- Lots of busy folks live here. I already serve on the Board of my Association and am involved in other activities. Not sure I have the bandwidth for much more, regardless of venue.
- Truly it depends on the action. I would love a website showing current events and activities. If the situation requires my input, I'll speak up. If things seem to be running along fine without me - I'll leave it alone.
- I intend to get more involved in the public process
- It is difficult as someone who just WORKS in the city but is not a resident to get involved...so perhaps some new ways to engage commuters can be considered.
- It's always helpful when the meetings have child care. And, it would be nice if the meetings were only an hour or maybe 1-1/2 hours so they let out before 9:00.
- I'm happy to do what I do, but can't commit to more!
- Many of us lead busy lives and it is hard to get more involved beyond attending an occasional meeting or reading about issues in the paper.
- depends on the options offered and on what the issue is
- "It is very difficult to influence City staff and elected officials on major efforts. The Beauregard Small Area Plan, BRAC are examples. Any changes made through the process were marginal, on the edge. There was little understanding of anything close to a collaborative approach, mainly because of a rush to judgment. Some of the decisions made regarding the transit corridor do not make sense regionally or economically. There is a lack of trust and a feeling that citizen efforts are futile.
- Another issue impacting citizen involvement relates to the uncivil approach taken by citizens at public meetings. Some of this may represent anger toward City officials and staff. "
- If time permitted
- Many who work in Alex live elsewhere. Many who live here work elsewhere. We pass each other at Braddock Station etc. Tapping the energy of BOTH groups is important, perhaps crucial.
- Since I, as well as many other Alexandrian citizens, do not work a traditional 9-5 job, it is difficult to attend evening and weekend meetings which seems to be the primary way that City Hall prefers to solicit citizen comments. It would be nice to have more surveys that can be filled out at one's leisure.

Also, I would encourage more print communications as having access to computers or the internet is also not as ubiquitous as City Hall wants to believe.

- I believe City Council should periodically hold meetings (town halls) in different neighborhoods.
- The options made available by the City and by ACPS for public participation are generally good and do not require fundamental modifications.
- I feel that every time I've participated in Alexandria City government (i.e. contacting an office via email or phone; speaking at a hearing; requesting service) the answer is "no" or "not funded" or "not our responsibility" or "wrong department/email/person". Alexandria leaders allow residents to voice opinions and concerns, but the deck is already stacked, the politics are already in place, the secret handshakes have already been completed. Citizen request and concerns are secondary to the politics. I moved here from Arlington 5 years ago, and I felt that Arlington was much more open to citizen input than Alexandria seems to be. My participation in Arlington was welcome, where as I don't have that same feeling in Alexandria.
- If you had an online forum or Facebook page I would post my ideas.
- Online options would be best/easiest to use.
- It is very difficult to serve on a board or commission in Alexandria. I have applied multiple times and have been turned down. It appears that people are just reappointed to fill vacancies. The message is the Alexandria government does not welcome new people who want to serve on a board or commission.
- Return to the Ward system. I want to elect a neighbor, someone to whom I can speak about issues impacting our community
- The city council and city manager should use neighborhood civic association as their primary conduit to reach citizens. Doing so will enhance the stature of these neighborhood groups while also ensuring a far broader community input than is now the case. "
- I already so as much as I can.
- I'm already involved with the Alexandria E.M.S. Council, the Holmes Run Park Committee, the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations, Agenda:Alexandria, and volunteer at the Police Department. I would be willing to do more if the opportunity arises, as it did when I participated in the Beauregard Small Area Plan process.
- I've always thought that Alexandria offers many and incredibly diverse options for participation.
- I would welcome the opportunity to be engaged earlier on the planning process. It feels like often, when the public engagement process is initiated a lot of the 'big moves' have already been worked out with developers/planners/government agencies and the public engagement process is being conducted to satisfy a requirement in the CDC or NEPA process. This may not actual be the case and may be a perception issue. If it is a perception issue, improving the breadth and depth of communication is needed.
- Between volunteering, meeting, organizing volunteer activities, blogging, and public participation as described above, I spend a tremendous amount of time on civic issues. I don't have much additional time to spend.
- I have lived in Alexandria a total of 15 years. I love the city, but I also have many concerns about its management and direction. I want to be more active, but as a working parent, there are only so many hours in a day. Meetings are difficult for me to get to. I appreciate this survey as a quick and easy way I can provide input when and where it is convenient for me. I would love to have more opportunities like this.
- It would be a good idea to get more input from the community before decisions are made that affect the populace.
- Too many community meetings are held in difficult to access locations I don't drive so places like Dora Kelly and Hammond middle school are out of the question. City Hall, Hilton, John Adams work well)

- This is a city council that likes to spend other people's money. They can always out talk and out spend so no matter the imprudence, they steal more of our money for their pet projects and their delusions of grandeur.
- For example, for planning projects, I would like to receive something like a survey that would solicit my input about a planned project in my neighborhood. Preferably, this would be received by email.
- I'd like to engage in the decision making process, but don't have a lot of spare time. A digest email of events, meetings, hearings, decisions, news, etc. would be appreciated.
- The problem is not that there are not enough participation options -- it's that the decision have been made before people start to participate.
- Participation is most meaningful when it allows people to engage in efforts together in which they have a shared interest/momentum.
- I am already actively participating.
- Depends on what the options are.
- More "town meetings and forums"- more lead time to plan attendance.
- Before I became fully disabled, I was very active in my local community. My life is very different now, and most of my time is spent at home. I have wanted to volunteer on committees re senior/handicapped populations, but that has not been possible as I have both neurocognitive and physical disabilities.
- I have not explored my options enough to know but I would like to. Perhaps this initiative would provide an easier way of participating.
- I do not want to increase my participation I want my participation to have an impact . . . too many meetings have resulted in nothing or the opposite of what those meeting wanted.
- online polling best, with feedback
- Would provide suggestions and ideas via computer. That way, I can login after work and the weekends to not only read proposals, but to provide feedback (I work full-time).
- I stopped participating due to the fact that the city has been listening to the wrong people. A handful of haters that have made all processes nightmares. Also, the incompetence of some high level employees is destructive to our city.
- citywide votes on planning issues would be fun
- "Public announcements by the city a very detached & impassive - which I understand is the proper format.
- Yet, be good to have a forum where views can be expressed without ridicule.
- I work full time and have a toddler; it is hard to fit anything else in!
- Pandering to the few and permanent malcontents has ruined the democratic process (the squeaky wheel syndrome) and has caused me to reconsider my participation. I also resent the patronizing way I am treated by many city employees at all levels.
- I have served on a commission for the past 6 years, and it has become increasingly difficult to obtain Staff support for the already established rules and legal guidelines for community input for this particular community in the City. I recognize that Staff is under significant pressure with all of the projects on their agenda, but it appears from this perspective that Staff sometimes does itself a disservice by not utilizing some of the "planning tools" for community input and support that it already has at its disposal. When viewed from the lager perspective of what has been occurring in other parts of the City, this situation is troubling.
- Maybe the city should solicit comments by stating real impacts to scare people so they are motivated to comment. So often people do not object until a decision is made. But we do have a representative style of government so maybe there is too much comment.
- While perhaps less than ideal, I find that I am most willing and able to participate via online means. Honestly, I'm too tired after work to attend meetings or any sort of forum, and am just more likely to voice my concerns and opinions online.

- I would definitely give consideration to the different participation options before deciding and in the event I chose not to, it would not affect my current level of involvement w/my community.
- I would participate in a City Blog.
- "I would very much be interested in on line Town halls/city-sponsored meetings/events, where I can participate in the discussions from home or other location. This would be a big help! Thanks! Jim
- My family and I have owned a home here for more than 20 years. It's become abundantly clear that the City Council is primarily (if not only) interested in the views (and money) of developers, banks, and big business. The City does not have the infrastructure (including roads) for the development that has occurred and the quality of life here and of City services has suffered, while our real estate taxes have gone up, up, and up. When I have taken the time to comment on things, I don't feel as though anyone in power/management really cares.
- Smart phone apps would be great.
- If I could have voting power for some decisions, I would feel like I was participating in the process. Now I only feel like a voice. And sometimes a frustrated, unsuccessful voice.
- I am a parent of three young children. My guess is that when they are slightly older, I'll increase my participation regardless of the options because I will have more time to do so.
- We would probably do most anything to benefit the West End, i.e., Landmark, Van Dorn, the Duke Street intersection at Beauregard. We just feel like we pay the same taxes and we are left with the Detention center and low cost housing. No one who bought here in the 70 or 80s would ever dream this is what our neighborhood would become. There is very little hope in our direction.
- online polls such as this one are accessible and convenient for me
- I am already very involved, changing participation options would not increase my level of engagement.
- I'm often unaware of public hearings or events/elections that I should participate in. If they were more accessible, publicized, etc. I would probably be more likely to participate.
- Providing more opportunity for online participation would be helpful as it is frequently difficult to make it to community meetings.
- Online forums or polls like this one.
- I would love to have the option of completing a survey online to provide input on the issues that are important to me. I also think you would have a lot more participation and could follow up with individuals for additional information if needed. There would need to be a way to make sure that only people that live or own a business or property in Alexandria participate, but that shouldn't be too difficult by setting up some sort of registration process.
- I'm already far more involved than your average citizen.
- I am on 3 boards, Government Relations committee. and am an ACA Commissioner
- My lack of participation currently is not a reflection of lack of options or access to those options. I'm just swamped between my 9-5 job plus working on a graduate degree. I participate as I'm able. I think the City provides a wealth of opportunities for residents to participate in decision-making - more than any other place I've lived before, I think. My only recommendation for increasing participating would be to offer options in as many formats as possible - don't limit participation on any issue to just in-person forums. The more options, the better!
- Seriously, there are already a gazillion meetings to go to!
- I think Alexandria gives residents plenty of options for engagement. For me, it's been an issue of not having enough hours in the day.
- As a full time employee going to grad school and with a baby at home, my involvement is limited mostly by constraints on my time.
- It's incredibly difficult to find out what's going on, especially that's geographically localized to my block.

- "I wish to be authorized to be a member of more than one board or commission. As it stands at the moment, residents can only sit on one board, or commission at a time. Residents, who are of the ""willing"" should be allowed to sit on more than one board.
- Just my idea.
- For some of us residents it isn't possible to take time away from work/family to make a meeting/hearing. It would be great if there were more surveys, like this, to get detailed feedback from our community.
- Suggestion boxes in Chinquapin would be useful (do they exist?).
- More opportunities for virtual meetings like Google Hangout, webinars, etc., that help people get involved without necessarily traveling to participate.
- Would like to see more accessible channels of participation like town hall meetings or local (precinct level) meetings. These would, of course, need to be carefully planned to ensure they would not devolve into whining session. I also like the web site for Alexandria.gov. I think it could be used more effectively to communicate timely information. Finally an important communication tool for me is Frank Fannon's monthly newsletter. I don't always agree with Fannon, and I did not vote for him. Other city leaders could follow by example.
- If I could participate online at my convenience I would be more active.
- I wish there were forums to educate interested citizens about issues that affect them without the political overtones of groups claiming to represent citizens. Would like to see panels of experts with different views on issues well moderated and keeping those citizens who have to weigh in on everything from taking the talking stick.
- Having assurances that my participation actually would make a difference and seeing evidence to support those assurances would encourage me to participate more.
- this survey is one good way
- This is a very open city, where participation is everywhere encouraged. One could go out practically every day or night and attend some sort of community event, meeting or committee activity.
- This is a very open city, where participation is everywhere encouraged. One could go out practically every day or night and attend some sort of community event, meeting or committee activity.
- Public discussion meetings with council members.
- I would like more social media based fora
- I think it would be great if all citizens who were willing provided their emails so that issues and ideas could be put out that way. My information source is my local list serve and I can't even keep up with that every day so it is hit or miss if someone posts something about the city and I get it. Also hit or miss if I have time to read the local paper. I do, however, check my email every day.
- If there were other online opportunities, I would participate more.
- It is disheartening that we have spent THOUSANDS of hours---literally---participating in city meetings over the last 4 years, and the City continually turns a deaf ear. We've gone to hearings like the Waterfront that run 8-10 hours and the Council doesn't even bother to offer any substantive amendments that reflect extensive community input and written comments. We have been totally ignored on the extensive public participation on Landmark, the Waterfront, Arlandria, Corridor C, transportation plans, Open Space, suggestions on height and density, and especially the Beauregard Small Area Plans. It is obvious the Council and staff work for developers, not for us.
- More/easier opportunities for online submission of comments, not just showing up in person at meetings. Polls would be good, but all public hearings should have a period for online comments before the public meeting, and the sponsoring department should address the online comments during the meeting if they are not also brought up in person. There should also be a short follow-up period for public comment submitted in writing or online so that you can react to reading the minutes of the meeting if you couldn't be there. (Minutes should be posted within 24 hours! Maybe the comment period would be 1 week on either side of the meeting date?)

- It depends what they were.
- This poll is a great idea! Do more polls to gather the opinion of people who can't get to the public comment meetings.
- They would have to be convenient and easy to access
- I thought when I moved here three years ago I would be active in the civic process. I attended the Citizen's Academy last winter. I care about what happens. And yet I am not as active in the process as I should/could be. I seem not to make the effort to find out what is going on and how I can offer my input. I subscribed to the local paper for a year and did not find it helpful.
- I think there should be opportunities during "normal business hours" vice every meeting late at night or on weekends.
- I recently found time to volunteer.
- I have recently decided to get involved by attending city council meetings and such, so will naturally increase as the months go by.
- Low participation due to lack of time, not lack of options.
- I would participate if I had more information on how to get more involved in the decision making process. Hunting Creek has a neighborhood association, but there is very little participation by the residents. Just a president who is self-appointed every year and who only shares what she feels like sharing with the residents, and this is not a true neighborhood association.
- I would like to participate more. Work schedule makes it difficult to do as much as I would like to. Also, a feeling of not knowing where to start and feeling a bit like a fish out of water when it comes to politics.
- City commissions and boards are overly restrictive on exact membership (i.e., "one seat open for self-employed" or "one seat open for person in medical care field"). I have a hard time finding any board/group vacancy I fit the requirements for. Also thing boards need term limits. People get on and never leave!!
- I love being involved!
- I'm not in a civic group. My homeowner's association is very poor on engagement. So if the city is reaching out via civic groups and HOAs how will my voice be heard? Also, I have spoken at a public meeting (Planning Commission), and it's not an easy experience.
- Perhaps options to comment and offer suggestions via social media or quick polls.
- More informal ways to participate - neighborhood coffees, etc.
- I have not done anything in the past, but my interest is growing towards wanting to be involved, I just don't know how yet.
- There is no civic or homeowner's association in my neighborhood. If we had such an association, I would certainly join it.
- "Meetings sometimes start too early in the evening for me to attend. I would like to be able to watch the meeting at home (within a short window after the meeting) and provide for informal feedback short of a formal comment letter.
- Even for in-person meetings, I would like to see more use of anonymous audience participation polling (with voting devices/clickers). Sometimes a vocal minority will dominate a meeting, and it can be difficult to share a view contrary to one's neighbors. "
- More online polls, restricted to residents.
- More opportunities to provide comments and feedback online
- So wish the City of Alexandria had better television programming on cable. There needs to be more coverage, more variety, and an actual division within the city to run a station. I mean come on - if the City of ROCKVILLE can have a television station and staff - why doesn't Alexandria? This would provide much needed diversified city coverage and reporting - and lasting impact.
- "Utilize other forms of communication including the internet.

- Send a letter/emails to City residents. Ask if the resident is interested to receive information about proposals and items the voted upon by the City Council. This group can also include City boards and commissions, non-profits, and City staff. While, there is a comments section on the City website, this email will serve a dual purpose - notice and opportunity to comment.
- Advertise - it may be too late to organize: Voters who walk out of the polls could be asked if they want their email address added to this group.
- When input is needed, send an email to the group. Ex. the email could be an informative email or the email could include a link to a survey.
- To ensure the individual is a resident, if a resident adds input, their name and an attestation stating he/she is a resident of the City of Alexandria could be required. "
- I've found that contacting our delegates and state representatives has no effect on our situations. It also saddens me when I contact the main office, and the VA office of the NAACP that no one returns any of my phone calls.
- Public hearings are too long, inefficient and time consuming. My observation is the most effort of opposition is generated by those with little or no economic interest but feel a need to be important by self-importance. Being opposed to forward thinking economic development is trendy for those who have nothing at stake except their residential interest. In Alexandria as in much of America today capitalism, economic development and an expanding economy are not popular. The "keep it like it is" mentality is smothering to building a strong economically forward thinking community.
- I am a new mom and am looking to participate more. My biggest concern is the public schools.
- "The processes are jury-rigged, for show only.
- It doesn't matter which additional "participation option" you add. Only a change in City policy!"
- I am not certain because I do not know what "different participation options" may be available.
- I just moved to the area and I haven't decided exactly how to increase my involvement
- I need more information to come via the web. The city web site is too "busy" for me to spend time on it unless I am looking for something very specific. Perhaps someone could see how Arlington communicates with its' citizens. I do like the Gazette Packet but it is not delivered to Park Fairfax and not many businesses near me get it anymore. The subscription arrives after many of the happenings have happened!
- Surveys similar to this one might help to increase participation.
- From the brief interactions I've had with City Council, my concerns have either gone unanswered or have been shuffled off to someone else who also tries to shuffle them off. Providing other options to participate seems like another opportunity for the City to brush off citizen concerns.
- Funny, I don't feel particularly listened to. In fact, I consider that a major factor in wanting to move out of the city to an area with more responsive government – think Arlington.
- There is a big difference between letting the public talk and taking in to consideration what is actually said. Zoning and development is skewed in favor of the business that can shell out for a lawyer, etc...long and deliberate is not necessarily democratic.
- Yes, if I get notices about how to do it in one place because there is not time or I do not know where to look for that information.
- what do you mean by participation options?
- I would be active in my participation IF I felt it might make a difference - that someone in mayor's office or city council would listen. I hate BRAC and the ensuing traffic and feel that most of the time, the city does not recognize the west end - it's always about Old Town or "trendy" Del Ray.
- It all depends upon our schedules. Spouse is active duty, I am reserve, 3 kids (2 with special needs) - time is the issue, even on weekends.
- Notification and awareness of what the city planners are considering is an issue. The city plans well in advance, it seems, but rarely invites citizens in at the beginning. Issues appear to be fully vetted by staff

and then presented late to citizens who don't have the luxury to create or collect data to refute staff. Please stop thinking up what you consider good for us...invite us in when you develop the plans and we'll gladly let you know what's important up front.

- Options would have to be carefully constructed so that those who yell the most or have the most money can't hijack of the process.
- Love survey and on line access to information. Would prefer NOT to go to another meeting. I go to too many. Would be glad to vote on line about city subjects.
- I think there are plenty of opportunities to participate in most of the decisions made. The problem may be how information about those options is spread. There is also the problem that there will always be someone who said they didn't know about a decision process no matter how much it is publicized. There may also be those who don't think there has been enough discussion as long as the decision is going in a different direction that they want. Sometimes you just have to stop talking and decide!
- I don't know if more options are needed or if I just don't know what all the options are, e.g. knowing when there is going to be a City meeting on a topic of interest to me.
- I find that meetings are generally scheduled for times I cannot attend - i.e., before 7:30/8 on weeknights.
- I'd be happy to provide comment on issues relating to the City when I have the option and am able to (e.g., this poll that a colleague forwarded to me). I love Old Town, own a townhome here, and plan to make it my home for a long time. Thus, I have a vested interest in making it as good as it can be.
- I don't know what "different participation options" would entail - if that was defined - I could possibly answer more definitively.
- It would depend on what the different options were.
- My participation is based on work assignments and attendance at work-related events/meetings.
- Surveys, such as this, are a quick and easy ways to give feedback and to share opinions.
- Social media is a great way to feed relevant information to subscribers; however, folks need to know that someone is tweeting, Facebooking, Google Plus-ing, etc. on a reliable basis and where to find it.
- I am now timid about participating in community meetings and hearings because I have been verbally attacked and bullied by neighbors (who don't share my same view point) for sharing my opinion. I often feel that other residents and decision makers could care less about my opinion because I am not a property owner. The leadership of Alexandria needs to recognize that property ownership is not accessible for many Alexandria residents. Even though I can't afford property, I still care about my community and am invested in it. The voices of all residents should matter.
- I have applied for open positions on City Commissions before but in each case have been passed over because the incumbent returns. While I know the value of experience, the mentality of passing over new faces/voices stifles the involvement of others.
- Sometimes meetings for public comment conflict with my work and/or family schedule. If there were ways to participate using technology, I think that would increase resident participation.
- Depends on the options. Right now am satisfied though I'd note as the father of a young child evening meetings are difficult for me. I can choose either to go straight from work to council/board/civic association meeting which means I don't see my daughter or show up around 8:30 PM.
- Would like to see more opportunities for civic engagement of young people. There are notable examples, such as the new student seats on the school board, but a broader effort to engage young people (not necessarily at that level of time commitment) would be a very positive development.
- It is so difficult to keep up with the many initiatives and projects going on in Alexandria. While I think the city's website is useful and holds much information, many people who are impacted by city projects do not have access and can not attend meetings to get needed info. Even with access to Internet, development project files are often immense and not feasible to download. This issue is not unique to Alexandria but definitely restricts and impedes civic participation.

- If I could provide input electronically I would increase my participation in the public decision-making process.
- More web-based participation with a moderated city forum with participatory voting on ideas and concepts much like Reddit.com or other participatory online polling for more popular ideas. Another good example of this is Capital Bikeshare's crowd-sourced map whereby the public could identify new station locations. <http://www.bikearlington.com/pages/bikesharing/capital-bikeshare-crowdsourcing-map/>
- Biggest barrier is time. I'm retired, and probably should work since my fixed income is starting to pinch with the increased cost of so many items of daily life. As it is, I volunteer in one Alexandria non-profit, am a volunteer at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, and also am a volunteer in my church which is located in Falls Church.
- I would utilize Google+ Hangouts for Town Hall-type opportunities to share my thoughts on issues.
- I just moved to Alexandria in April, so I'm not sure what role I want in public decision making.
- "Online surveys like these are great tools to offer for this purpose.
- Just moved to Alexandria in May 2012. Still getting my bearings on how to participate.
- Most likely would increase my participation
- Too many people have input into the decision-making process in Alexandria based on my experience as a former civic organization board member. People who do not allocate enough time to understand issues or do not have a skill set that allows them to properly evaluate issues should not make decisions.
- If I felt different participation options would be more effective than current options, I would be more inclined to participate.
- on line comments and opinions would help in that they do not require in-person attendance at public hearings (which are often at the end of long work days, and may be held when I am traveling)
- "The official meetings at city hall are too cumbersome and lengthy - I've given up trying to participate. Localized, smaller meetings seem to work. I also think that more on-line interaction like this survey is terrific.
- I like the Alexandria Facebook postings.
- elections are very important to many of us"
- I guess it would depend on the type of options made available.
- Given my intense involvement already in civic and political issues, it is difficult to see what new option would make a difference. It certainly would not change the too often dismissive attitude of City Staff, especially Planning and Zoning, T&ES and the City Attorney.
- I think I am already actively involved and informed about local issues
- There is no, or very little, critical, disinterested reporting on city government or school board activity, so it is hard to determine accountability. Perhaps the city council and school board could publish and put on-line the minutes of their meetings for the public to read. The minutes should at least highlight the issue, major points of the discussion that affected the decision, and how officials voted on each issue.
- Where and when are City meetings held in West Alexandria?
- My income is only 700. I am trying to get an apartment in Alexandria or Arlington. It is not happening
- "If I could teleconference or Skype into meetings I'd be more able to participate. The logistics of getting a babysitter are too hard to listen in or comment on a meeting. Maybe a dial in line for listening, and an e-mail one could use afterward to send in comments and questions.
- I would increase my participation if more of the "public" meetings & hearings were held in the evening, and if I saw that the city actually takes community input into consideration when making decisions.
- I look forward to increasing my participation more in the future. In the past I have served on boards and committees and will again.

- I am fairly engage in the public decision making process and I believe the City of Alexandria permits it citizen to engage in public decision making.
- Alas, the time it takes for this and many other activities...
- As noted, I would participate more if I knew of things in advance. Please model ACPS and develop a daily or weekly email giving news and announcing coming public meetings, board vacancies etc.
- Better online options for participation--e.g. online broadcast of planning events and options for commenting and submitting input online when attendance is impractical.
- We are very active now. The City provides an opportunity for those that can, to participate. Often this results in a loud minority voice. It is usually easier and more passionate to be against. I believe in representative democracy. I would be concerned that polling on every issue would result in a distortion towards negative views. It will be interesting to see the results of this survey.
- "I am a female Hispanic Alexandrian. I have lived here for more than 20 years.
- As the city improves its effort into making it a modern and successful place to live, it is pushing all of us minority families out and down.
- Not only is it a city official thing, all of these changes and improvements leaves other citizens feeling over privileged and downright nasty when it comes to interacting with people like myself. I do not feel welcome to a community meeting or activity when my family and I are only 2 of the 5 non-white families there.
- I am still hoping and wishing for the day that city officials make it ok and accept people in Alexandria with names such as Francisco and Mohammed, and not just creating special grants and funds for low income families, but really try to engage and make everyone feel like a real Alexandria family."
- We are relatively new to Alexandria, having moved here from the Far West in 2010. We are concerned about the BRAC decision and the process underlying that decision. We are also concerned with the debate on development of the waterfront. Lastly, we are concerned with the state of the public schools and would like to see public education strengthened.
- This survey, for example, is a great idea. And I'd provide input via the City website if that were possible. I have tried to use the City website, both to understand, and to provide input on, various planning issues such as the waterfront, Beauregard, Arlandria. But I can't understand the maps etc. (maybe my computer is not sophisticated enough?), and there does not seem to be a way to provide input there, or even to get a message through as to what I'm seeing there. I have, in the past, participated in study groups, and would welcome the opportunity to do that again.
- Yes, I would if the participation options were convenient and if input were solicited electronically, in the form of surveys for example.
- Don't feel the City listens to citizen input
- If there were a "satellite" City Hall, or multi-use facility, west of 395, it would make participation much easier. Prince William County, for example, has such facilities, which can be shared with various local governmental departments (e.g., Health, Planning and Zoning, Police, etc.), and would help tie this end of the City to Alexandria. Would not have to be an extremely large or expensive space, but it would help. Maybe even in a new Landmark development, eventually. (Not west of 395, but close enough!)
- Through social media.
- "It depends upon what "participation" means. If "city officials" would interact more, I would participate more. But three minutes a month, at both Council and Commission meetings, to be told nothing more than "thank you, next speaker is..." or "we'll have staff look into it" (and little ever happens) does not encourage participation. Similarly, public hearings where the resident is 180 seconds and done seems little more than patronizing while the applicant, staff and officials can continue on at length missing the point(s), misstating facts, etc. with the resident unable to say anything further.
- It would be nice to have interactive "community" discussions with officials.

- Unfortunately there are only so many hours in the day but if there was an efficient, easy & quick new way to increase my participation, I would consider it.
- I would be more inclined if there were shorter meetings with a beginning and end time and if public comment is allowed to keep it to a set time per person, similar to City Council
- I would definitely consider it. Besides voting, the options available are not that convenient.
- I would go to neighborhood discussion groups.
- I feel the city council acts on its whim and does not consider public opinion.
- There are many opportunities to participate already. I use most of them in one way or another.
- I have experienced years of frustration at the seeming lack of respect given the enormous amount of work done by many intelligent and conscientious citizens.
- Remote participation for those with disabilities.
- In fact I am on the verge of decreasing my activity. When the choice falls between residents or revenue, I sure quality of life will be sacrificed in favor of business interests. That's a way to maintain low real estate taxes. Ignore our 'Strategic Plan' that calls for encouraging multi-modal transportation, and ask a business (even one that requests repeated parking reductions) to install bike racks, it is considered an undue burden on their 'small, neighborhood serving' business. I've lost faith in the City's ability to abide deliver on promises due (For example: establishing share parking programs and fully implementing Wayfinding before eliminating parking requirements for all small businesses).
- Pervasive impression that decisions are made by a few individuals/organizations. Political and development leadership tends to overrun smaller groups and individuals.
- Increased presence by Alexandria on social media, internet, and other mass communications. Alexandria must make all residents aware of the options to receive communications regarding Alexandria.
- The option of emailing to city officials, commission and task force members is helpful to participating in the process.
- The City has too many Boards, Commissions and Committees, each dealing with a specialized issue or concern. The nature of the process and in some instances, even the meeting times discourage public participation. Recommendations are made outside of public view and with inadequate opportunities for broad community input. Having served on a number of committees, I feel that basic structural change is needed. In a City that spends an inordinate amount of money on consultants, I feel employing professionals to review where we are and to propose improvements (or radical changes) would be a worthwhile expenditure. ICMA, APA and others document "best practices". Maybe it's time to look at what has worked elsewhere.
- The genius store called, they're running out of you.
- I already do a lot, so I would need to feel that the options were more efficient, more informative, or more consequential.
- I live in Fairfax county
- There are already a plethora of options to participate.
- I would participate more if I took the time to get city meetings on my personal calendar and had a better way to keep up with goings-on. For example, I am very interested in the waterfront project, but can't find the time to get updates on meetings, progress, issues etc. I recall signing up online for updates at some point but never seem to get them.
- If those additional participation options are internet-based, I would increase my participation. If it involves even more public hearings than the absurd number we already hold in this city, then I would not increase my participation and might even decrease it. Public outreach is no substitute for leadership.
- There has to be a way to contact every person so that public input does not come from a few self-selected people.
- Just looking for an advisory board or commission that fits my talents... as soon as I find one, I'll be in deeper :)

- Absolutely! Especially in terms of the Capital Bike Share locations (we need some on the south side of town - Washington & Jefferson, please!!) and other transportation means.
- I'm highly involved in public meetings and discussions, but my frustration is always that individual citizens and citizens groups get a lot of attention from staff and public officials, but the businesses are very neglected. Whether they are also residents or not, business owners feel they have very little voice in public discussions. Many small business owners are hesitant to speak up because they don't want to antagonize their customers and clients. Lip service is given to improving the climate for business, but in fact, there is no forum where business owners can work with the City, unless they are before Planning Commission or Council with a specific request, and then, public officials are thinking only of keeping citizens happy, not about what is and is not economically viable for the business.
- I can't say for sure, but honestly, probably not. I'm not convinced it would make much of a difference. If one's views aren't aligned with those in a position to make the final decisions (who, let's face it - already know full well what they want the future of the city to be) - it feels like your opinions are just ignored anyway.
- Right now I do not participate as much as I would like due to time limitations. If an urgent issue arose, I would probably change my priorities and try to participate more. Hence, I am not sure if it is the lack of options that affect my low level of participation.
- Do not appreciate stakeholder consensus events where consultants come from distant areas to 'take charge' to engineer the event whereby a determined goal is to be reached - the goal has generally been pre-programmed, and participants elect/select a set of criteria to reach the engineered conclusion.
- I am the parent of two young children and work full time so it is difficult to participate fully in meetings, especially those convened in the evening. It would be helpful to be able to vote or add input via technology. It seems as though a limited number of people leverage the system because many of us don't have the time to dedicate to all the various meetings. It would be good to streamline some of the overlapping efforts, too. For example, with the addition of the new children, youth and family collaborative commission, do we need as many separate groups as we have? Every time we add something, we should try to take something else off the plate ... I'm sure the staff people who have to attend so many community meetings would appreciate the change, too. I don't think I could participate any more than I already do, but Smart Phone technology could help some under-represented groups participate more easily, too.
- Could this be run as an online meeting with simulcast on local TV and radio?
- I participate passively now (visit City website often, read dockets and minutes, subscribe to eNews, read local papers and news), but I would engage more directly if that engagement was (1) real, and (2) easier, e.g. online. (So long as online exchanges are not built on data-mining platforms, such as Facebook.) Online would work for me, but not for all.
- If the results reflected the input - with quantitative evidence of what is influencing outcomes. This is absent now.
- Anything I can do digitally or remotely!
- If I were asked via email for opinions or comments -- either directly or by visiting a website, I would provide them.
- Really just depends what the options were - I'm certainly open to the possibility!
- I do not favor an expanded local government. I believe that government is best which governs least and it seems your initiative works on the opposite principle. Every time the government opens an initiative or begins to plan to reconstruct it costs the taxpayer. We do not need more bureaucracy; we need less government regulations, rules, etc., which thwart economic growth and personal satisfaction.
- Direct emails or small group forums
- I am currently over booked for meetings and for Commission obligations. I would only be interested in being closer to the council or the manager's office for consultations

- It is very difficult to show up to public meetings with family/work commitments. Childcare is one option that should be considered (although would still be difficult to attend evening meetings because of early school bedtimes), but options like online community input and virtual participation would make it much easier to voice my concerns and then hopefully sign up for an email list to hear back on the process and results. Currently it is difficult to keep abreast of the ongoing meetings for input and then find the right point of contact and email address in the City to whom comments can be submitted.
- I talk to council members all the time. Not sure what else I can do
- There are plenty of options available. I would participate more only if I thought there was real value to it. For the most part decisions appear to be made before there is meaningful public participation.
- I'm very happy with the level of opportunity for participation in local government that I've been afforded as student at T.C. Williams, but I think that to encourage a wider range of students to get involved, a list of board and commissions in the city that are seeking youth members should be available either in the college and career center or on Blackboard.
- Yes, if there were more neighborhood or school organized options.
- It would be helpful if the city made more events known via local news programming.
- Would really like to see public meetings/council meetings online with live participation.
- I feel like I am increasingly interested in participating; until now, I haven't felt very connected to the city, so to speak. My point is, over time I may, on my own, participate more. On the other hand, different options might move that process along a little faster.
- If the city did proactive outreach rather than fulfilling its minimal legal obligations to notify the public, I would likely be more responsive.
- I would like to participate in more neighborhood/community association meetings and planning meetings if they were more conveniently scheduled. For example, a lunchtime webcast would be helpful since many of us work downtown and are not able to get home in time for live evening meetings.
- Have online meetings and in person public meetings during the day lunch hours. A chance to send comments online about proposals and decisions.
- If there were web-based meetings and decision-making processes, it would be a lot easier. I have a full time job and cannot attend many of the hearings in person.
- Polls like this are one way that I would participate. It's quick and easy!
- "Depends on the issues, how important they are to me and also how seriously I think my input would be taken.
- I would like to see more education and interaction on budget issues. The city currently provides no education on the budget or city budget priorities and provides minimal opportunity for citizens to become involved in helping to develop or review the budget. In addition, the budget itself often provides little context to understand changes over multiple years. The budget doesn't often reflect key priorities. For example, the City Council has passed an Environmental Action Plan and an Urban Forestry Master Plan in recent years, but it is not clear if any funding is being provided to implement these plans. How are overall priorities being reflected in the budget?
- Please provide online options.
- I would like to know how to get in touch with lawmakers. Is there an alternative to attending city meetings? The meetings I hear about and am interested in are always on Wednesday evenings, and I am unable to attend.
- Depends on the options
- Have local topic discussions in areas within the City at a place easy to access.
- I think the city needs to improve awareness of opportunities.
- I try to stay abreast of civic issues, but feel that I have participated in the past a great deal. Now it's time for others to step up. This will not deter me from keeping up with what is happening in our city.

- Would engage more in decision making process if, for issues other than elections, physical attendance at event was not required. Council meetings available via webcam, or minutes of meetings available via RSS or newsletter? Knowledge of what issues are being discussed, and where these meetings are taking place/where is difficult to come by; getting there in person even more difficult.
- E-Town Halls
- My answers to question 4 cover my three decades of living in the city.
- After the BRAC fiasco and the elevation of the waterfront redevelopment process over the West End redevelopment process, I have no faith in City government.
- This proposed road running parallel to Beauregard on Duke Realty's property approved by City Council came as a real surprise to those of us who will be most affected and hugely negatively impacted. The 3 residential neighborhoods and John Adams Elementary School employees bordering this proposed road / bike path were not considered in this plan. This sort of thing should not be happening in a City that claims to care about its residents.
- I feel I already participate enough and make a concerted effort to remain well-informed
- I would increase my participation if my neighborhood association (Hunting Creek) president were responsive to the issues (crime, parking problems, neighborhood eyesores) affecting the neighborhood. She has made herself president for life without any election during the past several years.
- How about watch meetings on TV and text or email in questions.
- I expect to become more active when I retire.
- Would depend on what the alternatives were and if I thought they were of use.
- I was more active when I had children in the public schools. I was active in PTA. Since then I have been less active.
- I am new to the area and plan to participate more in the future.
- Not sure how to go about how to participate
- On-line meetings, comment periods, etc. would be beneficial.
- Make comment process easier, e.g. online or teleconference. Attending meetings in person is difficult for parents, especially on school nights.
- I'm new to Alexandria and not aware of sources of information beyond the online Alexandria Times and Patch. I haven't yet explored more but have in the past been very interested in local decisions / policies and programs.
- Webcasts of meetings?
- Possibly. I travel a lot for business so my time is somewhat constrained.
- Here is what I would like to see: Informal voting online (such as this poll) would be a good means for soliciting public opinion on matters before or after public meetings.
- Here is what I would like to see: Informal voting online (such as this poll) would be a good means for soliciting public opinion on matters before or after public meetings.
- Transportation at reduced rates as well as varying event sites
- I would like there to be more interactive tools on the website for providing feedback on proposed initiatives. On the main page of the City's website it would be helpful if there were an Issues list and ways for people to comment on what is important to them (about a topic in general or a specific proposed initiative). I consider myself pretty involved and informed, and there are still so many things that seem to pass me by, that I wish I knew when Council was considering them, or how to provide input to planning processes.
- "This is new. If I thought the city cared enough about what I have for a vision for the future of my home/family, I would engage more. The city should look at certain residents who are long-term, have raised families, are active, and committed to Alexandria - use them to form a City Focus Group...and pulse them for ideas, input, public policy perspective.

- We have a wealth of highly educated and experienced citizenry that that city quite frankly ignores.
- Why should the future of my home, family, and life be relegated to a city official/bureaucrat who lives in Pennsylvania, Maryland, or some other far out rural area....
- What they think is acceptable levels of XXX; may be in fact unacceptable to me and others who actually live here and call it home."
- Mailings
- Online options only
- I am skeptical. I participated in the Waterfront planning process but was very disappointed in the outcome and the extent to which the city ignored citizen input. Hence, I am skeptical about the city's efforts in other areas.
- I would like to see the city innovate on democratizing decision-making to the fullest, crowdsourcing ideas for neighborhood development, public art, building stronger communities. Integrate of the work staff, consultants, commissions and general public
- Move everything online please, surveys, opinions, video, photos
- I've thought about attending various committee meetings, but it's difficult to determine what's an open meeting and what's closed.
- I rarely hear about meetings, and if I do it's one or two days in advance at a time I can't make on such little notice.
- I need to take advantage of the participation options available.
- I like the idea of attending Community Meetings but it is tough for me to attend during the week.
- Since I have become disabled it is difficult for me to get around. The use of online participation would certainly be helpful.
- All Citizens of Alexandria should be contacted to determine whether they want email alerts on (1) specific issues (e.g., schools, taxes, housing, transportation, development, etc.); (2) council meetings; (3) critical actions taken; (4) cultural activities, etc.
- A demanding job allows little time for anything more time-consuming than an on-line response. This survey is great, and I would respond to others like it.
- I volunteer 20+ hours each month on volunteer activities and really don't have time for more.
- I would participate in short-term, focused efforts if the scope and duration of the work were announced in local print and on-line news outlets. I would like the opportunity to be more involved with City and school topics. It would give me the chance to decide if I wanted to become more involved in broader efforts.
- I've been meaning to be more active by attending the city council debates, but I've been too busy. I also wish that there was a single calendar for these types of meetings (or if there is one already, please advertise it better!).
- My schedule prevents me from attending meetings. I have attempted to share concerns with city staff identified on the website, but just get voice-mail and my calls and email are not returned. I also have shared questions and concerns through city website forms, but I have never received a response (even when I request one). The city should solicit and accept written comments on proposals. Although individual city council members have in the past invited input that way, the city
- Greater use of online dialog, comments, polling...
- I would like more information and updates via email and other electronic means
- I'm heavily engaged already, so don't know whether different participation options would increase my participation--unless they were to reduce the time commitment required for effective participation!
- I would increase my participation if the participation options changed in this way. There were far more MEANINGFUL opportunities to provide input and exercise influence on decisions that had long-term consequences for everyone who lives in our wonderful city. Right now, we have lots of meetings which are more and more frequently turning out to be cover for either decisions that have already been made or

a philosophy of governance that will never evolve to meet the City's current needs. Right now there are so many opportunities to "participate" and so few opportunities to influence the future of a city governed by leaders with narrow interests and a dispiriting lack of creativity and sophistication. My view, in short, is that the public decision-making process will change only if the city's leadership is changed.

- There are already ample ways to participate, so I cannot think of a way to participate that hasn't been accommodated.
- I am just now getting interested in the future of Alexandria.
- "I would participate more if I knew when and where meetings were held or if I knew what other avenues were available to learn about issues and
- Be active in the community. "
- I've not been aware of many opportunities to participate in the public decision making process, but think I would participate if possible.
- I feel that the City provides ample participation options.
- Fundamentally, given I'm the parent of a preschooler, my schedule on Saturday mornings for council meetings is constrained, as is my time in the early evenings when most commission and other meetings happen. I'd probably spend more time on issues if there were options for telepresence such as a Go2Meeting session where question time could be arranged through a moderator so that in-person presence wasn't needed for citizen participation.
- I probably would not go to meetings because I am too tired after work. However, I really appreciate being able to give my opinion in polls like this. I feel like I haven't known what was going on in the city for the last few years. Twitter is about the only way I find out what's happening anymore.
- My schedule would determine my participation level. While attending school full time in the evenings, and working full time it would be difficult for me to attend meetings, since 3 of 5 weeknights would be spent in class.
- I believe the City provides enough opportunity for participation in decision making process. I don't feel additional meetings are necessary; people's lives are busy enough as it is.
- Being able to influence decisions and policy through online tools is very important to me. I am a very busy young professional and I can't usually make it to meetings, but would like to know what's going on in the city and would like to have a say.
- Online comments and discussions so that people who work during the day can provide comments.
- I am a small women own company in Alexandria, VA. My focus is my small business, however, I do participate on my local home owner association board, education board and local events. Living in the Huntington/ Alexandria Virginia area, I realize that it takes time for changes to happen based on politics and the likes. With that being said, I would like to see an aggressive effort of improvement in the Huntington areas.
- I find it difficult to participate or have friends and family participate because of my employment with the City.
- Depends on the ease of use of these options and the time commitment. Surveys can work. I think anonymity helps folks really say what they are feeling.
- I believe the information transfer is sufficient.
- Again, because I work with someone who receives funding from the city, participation would greatly depend on the options available
- "I would like to see more documents available on line and easy to find. For example, the budget for 2013 was a summary budget with little detail. I would like to know more where City money is spent. I'm not sure how to do it, but I am very interested in the issue of affordable housing, including ARHA, and have been looking for the new master plan for some time. It would be easier to find new items if there were a documents file up front on the website with headings under that for documents pertaining to Housing, Transportation, notices of proposed action, etc.

- My neighbors and I were blind-sided by very late learning about development near us several years ago. I think affected neighbors and neighborhoods should be notified by the City when there is a proposal that impacts them. "
- More online options and solicitation of feedback. Difficult for working parents to attend meetings.
- I would sit on an official board etc. if asked
- The city's work groups (waterfront, parking, traffic, etc.) meetings are very uninviting to non-workgroup members. Generally the audience is not recognized for comment/ until the end of a meeting - by which time the workgroup has already made up its mind. The Union St study workgroup was a perfect example of meeting format that discourages citizen participation. In addition - it is clear that most members appointed to these workgroups (or Commissions for that matter) are just led along by City Staff - who have clearly already made up their minds. The City needs to revamp the entire process. And please, do not name members to any Boards or Commissions or Workgroups who personally or through their employer do ANY contracting with the City.
- "More polls like this one would be great. It would be particularly interesting to have one where residents could have a total of, say, 100 points and then be able to allocate their points across issues that they care most about. For example, for me education and parks are extremely important because I have young children and am very dismayed that our school system and parks seem to be 1) very inconsistent and 2) lower quality overall than nearby systems like Arlington or Fairfax. (Which, to me, is a huge red flag since they are both similar to Alexandria -- so what have they figured out that we haven't?) So - if I had 100 points I might allocate 50 or more of my points to those two areas.
- Another thought is that it's not so much that I need more ways to participate -- it's more that I need to know how to take advantage of the ones that are already available. It would be interesting to hold a ""Civic Engagement in Alexandria 101"" online course or website. I feel I have no idea how things really work in this city, what the roles of the various officials or commissions or committees or whatever are. I need an org chart. I wonder how the budget process really works and the normal timeline. I'd like to know the best place to get information on 1) the biggest issues that the city is working to tackle (and why they have prioritized those issues) and 2) the actions the city is taking to address the issues. And who I'd need to engage with, how to get my voice heard. I imagine others feel the same way. If this info was available in a downloadable self-paced learning format or an easily navigable website that would be SO COOL."
- It's not a question of wanting to; it's a question of time. I'm a parent and work full-time outside the home.
- "Polls like this are a good way to get some input.
- Most meetings are not at an easy time/location to attend.
- email with summary of issue and soliciting input would work for me"
- Polls like this one are an easy way for the city to aggregate a large number of people's opinions on an issue, especially if there was a way to ensure people only voted once (e.g. with a SS#, or DL #, etc.)
- I suppose I would if I felt like the City would listen versus just wasting my time.
- Often the requests for comment is too short or the information is disseminated past the response due date. It would also be great to have Web based council and planning meetings where citizens can log on, pose real time questions and view the meetings they may be otherwise unable to attend.
- "I would increase my participation if I thought I could contribute. By this I mean that many aspects of the city and process are corrupt. People use connections, business, money, contacts, etc. to get their things done.
- City Code Inspection is in cahoots with builder, developers, designers, architects, construction. They help them out and ignore the average taxpaying citizens.
- City Council, Boards, and officials use part-time jobs, consulting, partnerships, and other means of in-kind benefits to curry favor amongst a small group of connected individuals.

- We need oversight, transparency, and full disclosure to see if the city is really working for the little guy or is on the take to help the small vocal and connected. "
- Boards were easier to participate. I do not like our civic association and must be a member to be heard.
- I have a very busy life with work and family. I have to trust my elected officials to act daily in ways that match my values and needs.
- You have to pick and choose where you can spend your discretionary time. I try to stay plugged in via friends that stay informed and through reading and internet. I doubt at this point in my life I would commit to anything more - but perhaps after my daughter is off to college.
- Depends what.
- Earlier notice of upcoming issues so that I could lend my voice on line to issues I care about.
- Online voting with registered I'd and ability to " speak" online or at least write a few words
- "Online options/webcasts/ability to teleconference in to meetings from home or work would all be helpful.
- It would depend on what those options were, however I am happy with my current level of participation.
- More ability to participate through online fora, more meetings at some time other than weeknights.
- It would depend upon what other options were offered. Sufficient parking near meetings & hearings also important, especially in areas with insufficient public transportation. Meeting likely to run long in the evening favor parking because public transportation may be running too infrequently or not at all.
- Depends upon the different options offered. Timing of meeting impact senior citizens as well as transportation to various locations.
- Depends on convenience/amount of effort involved.
- Depends on what they are
- I do not live in Alexandria
- Not sure because I don't know what the public decision making process is
- I am not aware of the public decision making process.
- Because of my work schedule
- I am already engaged but I'd participate even more if you could participate via Skype or listen in via conference calls.

Question 6: The City often holds community meetings to solicit public feedback and create a community dialogue as part of the decision making process. Which of the following community meeting characteristics would make you most likely to attend (by importance)? Please provide additional comments here:

- I would prefer an online webinar or more surveys like this to participate. I can't think of anything worse than being stuck in a small group discussion just for the sake of participation.
- I am a single parent with a full time job and a disabled son at home so my time is very very limited.
- I think it would be far more efficient to solicit opinions online instead of having people sign up and then have to wait their turn to present in person. Online options eliminate the need for most of the logistical issues you mentioned above- childcare, convenient time, refreshments, transportation.
- But, it's vital that there be clear understandings about ground rules for participation, and how a person's input would be used. "
- Anything earlier than 7pm is out of the question with the way traffic is these days.
- Multiple dates.
- Previously posted online materials = always appreciated and usually quite important!

- It would be great if these community meetings were also streamed on the Internet so that those of us who can't attend physically can at least see what is presented and hear the feedback of those in attendance.
- Thanks for including tenants in this survey. We do live here and are part of the tax base. Too many municipalities exclude tenants on false grounds. Does Alexandria actually count what tenant residents say - I hope so, I fear not.
- Small group discussions do not allow the whole group to hear what everyone says. We need to keep opening forums.
- A short, clear and concise meeting is good - meetings that drag on too long are not as useful.
- "We have a well educated citizenry. They have professional experiences that can be utilized in analyzing issues and working with staff, reaching well thought out decisions. We need a more interactive, collaborative approach where groups attempt to reach consensus on transportation, transit, economic development, and land use issues. In many instances decisions have already been made, and the process is geared to informing the citizens, not engaging them.
- We need to get away from the thought that the number of meetings is an indicator of success. "
- My work often ends at 5 or 6pm. That is a time when I might attend a meeting or participate in a task force. This may be hard for residents working in DC.
- Please refer to my response to comment 5.
- Weekday meetings
- I think the whole group needs to focus on the project at hand. Small group discussions can be very good, but more often fall flat depending on who is participating, and the group discussions are often not well heard or coordinated. "hands-on" projects (sticking pins in maps, etc. usually work very poorly.
- I'm mostly happy with the current state of community meetings and involvement. The one thing that must be done to make citizens input feel more important is to maintain a running list of action items from one meeting to the next. If that is done, it's seldom clear. Often, it's hard to tell where input goes. It seems that the City takes decisions (whether community influenced or not), and executes them or discovers they are not feasible, but even the involved citizen can often does not learn about how the decisions were made or what actions are being taken. The biggest hole is in providing feedback that says, "You asked for X, we have not gotten to that yet, but it's still on our list." Or, "we studied X and it's not feasible because of [cost, property rights, etc.], but we're looking into this other option instead."
- Knowing I would get accurate information, debated by both sides or presented by opposing sides with immediate refuting if info isn't correct. Biggest problem is the info that gets spread around town is not typically correct or only presents a skewed version of the whole thing.
- There is no "dialogue" between "the city" and the residents: if there was we would not have over-development, abysmal landscaping in public areas and on city streets, and architectural standards that are laughable. Not to mention granting of every variance requested on almost every development project. Not exactly motivation to attend community meetings.
- Process for participation must be simple and participant must know the purpose and feedback on outcomes.
- Important: Convenient parking
- suggest web based interactive "meetings"
- Most important is that I feel that my input will be considered and used. I have attended meetings, in particular school board meetings, where I do not at all feel like that is the case. It feels like decisions are predetermined and meetings are just for show. I have very big concerns about the ethanol transloading being conducted in the city and do not remotely feel the city is addressing the public safety concerns.
- Far too often city sponsored events are just PR and I feel like I'm being lectured to about matters in which officials have already made up their mind. Also it really ticks me off to hear some city bureaucrat get up and swoon after, praise, and profusely thank council at these meetings for two reasons; it's

councils job and they should be there or get out of office, and 2 expectations for counsel performance should be high, it's the job!!!

- None of the above. I think the city should cut its meetings and committees down to two or three. The rest should be strictly private efforts not funded by the taxpayer. We have far too many meetings about how we will spend other people's money and it always costs.
- While a few items (food, transportation, etc.) are currently less important to me, they are critical to getting full participation in the community. My answers are for myself only, but I would encourage those things to ensure that the process is inclusive.
- I like viewing meetings on TV and would provide comments if a way was made to receive them (by mail, phone/text, email, etc.).
- The city does a good job at soliciting citizen input. In fact, it sometimes slows things down too much to take in too much input.
- A real sense that the community feedback is weighed, incorporated rather than superficially considered.
- I have done this all before and it never seems that the city cares what anyone thinks. These engagement activities always appear to be staged. I never have felt that the city was serious about listening to opinions; civic meetings are just one of those activities the city does because they are supposed to do it and not because they intend to use anything we say. It all feels like hype.
- "Public forums - some people are very rude if you speak against their position.
- Unfortunately that tactic has worked and a handful of people can have their way."
- "Putting citizens in the position of balancing many needs to reach a decision might make them more supportive of Council decisions. People who truly understand an issue must be invited to participate loudly and clearly.
- Have attended work group sessions at TC Williams in the past which gave a sense of city participation and helping to make a difference. Also open presentations by guest speakers on smart group and sensible development.
- The City community meetings to solicit public feedback are fraudulent. The decisions have already been made. The purpose of the meetings is to persuade the public that their views were considered.
- Virtual meetings that allowed two-way interacting would be very important. Not just the ability to view the proceedings, but actually be included in the process. The current system does not allow easy access to working parents who have to take care of their families during the evening and are not able to attend the various night meetings. Because of this, many people are less likely to be involved and there is a tendency for the same handful of people for which the current system allows them to be a very powerful group that steers many of the City's decisions on important matters.
- I don't appreciate being drawn into participation in a meeting regarding a city issue if the input is not used in a meaningful way. I don't need to have a meeting just to feel as if I have talked. I also don't like the polarization and attitude that permeates citizen discourse recently. At city meetings, someone in charge should make some remarks at the beginning reminding participants that we are all fellow citizens and everyone is entitled to their opinion. Everyone is entitled to say what they think and then the city council will make a decision based on all factors. Those who don't agree should not revile or personally attack other citizens or groups that don't agree with them. Citizens who care enough to say what they think and advocate for a position should not have to experience personal criticism and retaliation from those who have a different position.
- I can do online meetings, but I do not have time for in-person meetings.
- Many public forums turn into shouting matches. Those are a waste of my time.
- Please see my comment above. I don't feel as though the powers that be in the City really care what we think.
- Make it clear how the City is going to use the info

- I do NOT want one cent of my tax dollars used to pay for child care or refreshments. If Alexandria was a county it would be the 7th wealthiest in the nation and we act like we are one of the poorest. This city needs to remember those of us that pay the taxes and think of our needs as much as they do the people with their hands out.
- Given the size of the city, many individuals will opt to drive to such meetings. Although I am a solid proponent of using mass transit, I often opt to drive because 15 minutes by car is much more preferable than 30 to 60 minutes by public transit because such trips often involve a transfer. As such, adequate parking is a big consideration.
- Just regular updates on the West End via email would be beneficial. Most of the time news from the City doesn't include our area.
- "Attention should be made to future budgets, city borrowing and school expenditures and future development that impacts on the need for additional
- City services.
- Finding and paying for childcare is my mine reason for not attending more functions.
- I think the city should create more forums about issues that really matter and focus the meetings on those issues. For example, if the city was going to increase property taxes (again) -- why is it doing it? These are great break out topics for public input. For example, one reason could be more resources for schools. Do the schools need more resources? Why? Are existing resources being well managed? How? They need to be tight and not a lot of political grandstanding BS. Bring the policy wonks and administrators.
- The majority of city discussions (usually ACPS) that I've been to do not value, respond to, or generally consider public input. Instead, it is a box being checked. I want to know the agenda for the meeting in advance, have access to supporting docs in advance, know that I won't have to listen to an hour of bloviating before getting to the subject matter, etc.
- Participation in the past usually seems like it is just going through the motions... getting a bunch of people together for a forum and then not having it organized so that it can really extract critical public comment. People need to be engaged in aspects of the project important to them. I have participated in many public forums, and it just becomes a watered-down sort of exercise. I am asked to give my opinion on aspects that are not important to me, watering down the input from those persons where that particular aspect is critical. Likewise, others who's interest is marginal is having the same input as myself for something that is planned across the street from me and is very important to me, and for someone else, even someone who resides just a few blocks away, the issue takes on a completely different importance.... but their input is counted none-the-less the same.
- I went to a recent community meeting for the recreation department and there was a very generous buffet of food available. I don't think people expect this (I had dinner before I went), and I don't think it's a good use of city funds. If you want to have food available, you could invite a club at T.C. Williams, or a middle school band, or some other school organization to sell food as a fundraising activity.
- Weekends would be preferable.
- See my comment for answer 5
- I feel that contractors and the city just hold so many meetings and then pull occasional bait and switches. Honestly, the elections and creating a two party system are becoming a more important means of trying to make changes. So many subtle things are just the tip of the iceberg. It is pretty depressing that developers from outside of the city are pushing hyper development and we are continually losing green space and quality of life in Alexandria. Honestly, it is 2012 and we have slow internet no FIOS, overcrowded streets in which the city thinks traffic engineers hope that nodes and road tightening will move traffic more effectively, and we have little city sponsored recreation and less and less green space, mostly located near highways. We could have retained Cameron as a large parks and recreation area

and yet, more concrete. Waste water is getting to cost more than drinking water. It is truly absurd the direction that this wonderfully historic city is taking. I used to be proud to be an Alexandrian and despite the hoopla of the local govt. politicians, it is no longer a place that old people or children can get around easily and safely. Honestly, stop inviting more hyper development.

- I would like more certainty that when a group meets regularly for a long time and puts forth a plan and it is approved, in the end, by Council, that then something would actually happen. What are often missing are a funding allocation and a firm time line for implementation. Why spend time and money on consultants and staff participation if none of it comes to pass? See: Windmill Hill Park, North Washington Street plan; Marina improvements and seawall, etc.
- "The city frequently holds meetings at times of day that are inconvenient. I work in DC and do not leave work until 6:30 pm. It is very difficult for me to attend meetings on weekdays that start before 7:30 pm. I'm also transit dependent and live in Old Town. It's important for City departments to host meetings in places that are transit accessible and work with providers like DASH to ensure reliable transport is available to get people home.
- I'd also like to see an effort to ensure that everyone who attends a meeting has an opportunity to participate. I've sat through too many meetings where a select group of attendees have dominated discussion, interrupted presenters, filibustered, or attempted to intimidate attendees who did not share their points of view. Very frustrating to sit through a meeting in which you don't receive ample opportunity to participate or you feel like your comments are not being listened to. "
- Not sure what you mean by interactive, hands-on work. Also, small group discussions would be interesting but mostly if there was some way to have the results if there were any funneled into the general process whatever that was. Convenience is always important -- but since I work part time versus full time I have more flexibility.
- Enforcement of ground rules is extremely important so that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and respected.
- Sometimes small groups are merely a distraction since the City has already decided what to do, and this is in the guise of "public participation." Very phony.
- Small group discussions, child care provisions, etc. and other specifics of the meeting formats would necessarily vary as the topics for gatherings dictate the likely community participants.
- If I trusted that the public process wouldn't be ignored, I'd be likely to participate more. Time after time I have seen developers promise to do something as a result of the public process, but then they come back for an amendment to their approved application and there is no opportunity for public input regarding the change - the City just gives the developer whatever they ask for. I'm disgusted.
- We need events designed around design thinking. Bring residents or community "leaders" from diverse perspectives together and throw big issues into the center of the table. Have them come up with concepts and alternatives to solve the issues using their multiple perspectives. Have business, non profit, transportation, law enforcement, education, citizen, senior citizen, young person, etc... All represented so you see the issues from all different angles. A lot of people (like me) are isolated from community activism because we are not on a board or commission...don't have time to sit through city council meetings waiting for our turn at the mike...and don't have children.
- How do I not know when and where these meetings are? I am not a property owner, I rent in Old Town. Do property owners get communications that renters don't get?
- Knowing that what the public says will actually be considered. I have not always felt that has been the case in Alexandria. Officials do what they want regardless of public opinion. That is the biggest problem in this city.
- While I personally don't require translation services I recognize the importance of offering so more non native English speakers feel welcome at the table.
- Well run and efficient use of time.

- Web-based tools for access and comments
- If my friends and neighbors were going
- Items I marked s "not important" apply to my situation, but I know they would be important to any others.
- I think ground rules for participation are very important. And I need to know that my input will be honestly considered. The challenge that any government faces is not asking for input. The challenge for a government is showing that the input from everyone -- even when someone is speaking as an individual -- is given careful consideration.
- real not symbolic discussion
- "Although ""regular"" City meetings often start at or shortly after 7 pm, many of the citizen sessions designed to get feedback start earlier than this. It is difficult for me to attend a meeting that starts before 7 pm. Also, meetings held by Departments other than Planning & Zoning are often not well advertised. I do not always find out about the meeting with enough advance time to adjust my schedule.
- Small group discussions can be useful, but it is not always clear how the information discussed in the small group makes its way into staff's overall view of community feedback.
- VA is concerned about business, not its residents. How does someone make VA stand up, and become responsible for its citizenry, and how do we make them accountable?
- I have found that certain people will monopolize the floor when I attend the Federation meetings. I also attended the meetings on the new Safeway on King St. and liked how they were run but it was a different type of meeting. I have also attended session of the Transportation Board just to listen.
- Small group and interactive sessions that I have been part of all have an 'answer' that we are steered to.
- I need notice in advance at least 2 weeks to be able to plan to attend.
- major issues need forums for public debate
- Some method of accountability for the city to demonstrate that my input mattered
- Too often, citizen voices seem to be disrespected or ignored
- It is important that elected officials take control of their jobs and don't always have citizens second guessing them, it is also important the city officials give some time & parameters & guidelines to citizens. Once the time period has ended when all have met, the elected officials must give a decision to the community and move on and enforce the results. Like waterfront.
- Although I don't require childcare, translation or transportation support, I think these are good to offer to increase opportunities for engagement with residents who are not well represented now. Most City meetings are attended by the white, middle-aged, homeowner demographic who means there is less diversity of perspectives.
- For some things small groups may help focus ideas. For others large groups are a better way to be certain everyone hears the same thing. Often problems arise if many groups are putting out information - some more accurate and others less accurate - that is not consistent. People should make decisions and form opinions based on the same set of facts.
- Transit accessible is important, and with all the public transportation options in Alexandria, shouldn't be hard.
- N/A
- Some of these meetings are not accessible due to the vocabulary and content of the meeting. Many community meetings and hearings use vocabulary that is not common to the average citizen. The city should take strides to break down the material in terms which everyone can understand. I have been to meetings in which acronyms and ordinance numbers are thrown around as if everyone knows what they should mean and many people in the meeting feel as if they have been left behind and have nothing to contribute because they can't even understand what is being said.

- Parking availability. A downtown Alexandria meeting where parking is not readily available for the public to attend, for free, limits involvement. People are discouraged to attend if the getting there only raises their blood-pressure.
- The city puts on a good show of asking for public input/comment, but it rarely seems to seek true guidance/leadership from citizens beyond elected/appointed officials. See Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Civic Participation as reference -- <http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html> -- I would say that at best, Alexandria's efforts at incorporating citizen input are on rung 5 (Placation). And that isn't really good enough, and I think it leads to civic disengagement.
- "The logistical issues are most crucial in my opinion -- child care and at a time of day that works for a range of people.
- Most never know about the meetings until the last minute or not at all; too many conflicts in scheduling; parking in Old Town is not the most convenient
- I feel there is adequate and ample opportunity for me to make my feelings/wishes known about City issues
- Always announce the agenda in advance of the meeting.
- "I have lived in West Alexandria for six years. The only time a City representative ever met with folks in my neighborhood was at a meeting for condo construction next to my home. From the representative's comments, she really represented the new condo developers. Based on passed experience, I do not expect anything from the City other than tax payment requests.
- The problem with meetings in the past is that they are usually while I am at work or commuting home from DC.
- I need a house
- Large groups tend to minimize the opportunity for individuals to participate. Sometimes
- Make everyone's opinion count, not just the amount of dollars put in it, or the name of the person who has suggested it.
- Merely providing the illusion of public input without a commitment to act on it is not useful. Complete openness and input before the issue has been significantly structured by the City department involved would be most beneficial.
- Agendas need to be strictly enforced. Also, especially where planning is concerned, active public participants need to be RESIDENTS OF ALEXANDRIA, not Woodbridge, Fairfax, D.C., etc., unless specifically invited for regional issues or specific expertise as GUESTS. Speakers also need to stick to the point, and this should be enforced. This is one of the main reasons people lose interest in public meetings, and the primary reason why such meetings rarely finish on time. (This point is not lost on many of the speakers; it is a deliberate tactic, and needs to be stopped.)
- The biggest driver for me is how much I care about the issue.
- Interactive is important. We have far too little of it.
- While I no longer need childcare or transportation or translation, those certainly are critical parts of getting participation from the wide community so the way this questions was asked made it tough to answer. I think those are important but they do not make it more likely that I would attend.
- at times public input is overrated -- I prefer hearing from experts
- I think people will be increasingly LESS likely to participate if it is basically lip service like the waterfront meetings and hearings. This is particularly true if the city is not forthcoming with the data as in the case of NOT taking into account both Carr Hospitality properties that are to be hotels and NOT counting the National Harbor hotel rooms. Railroading things through just makes people ticked off and discouraged.
- I think generally ample opportunity exists to make one's opinion heard. The complaint seems to be if you don't get the results you want, the reason is no one (city staff, city council, mayor) is really listening. After weighing many factors, decisions have to be made and our elected officials seem to want to please

everyone. This is not possible. We elect them to weigh the pros and cons and vote, not postpone or create another committee. Start early in the process, hire the best consultants when necessary, open up the discussion, weigh the input, make recommendations and then move on...

- "Alternate means of participating in person, e.g. Skype, teleconference - Important for the parent with techno advantages, I've been told.
- A new public hearing practice is to deny an opportunity to speak if you hand in a speakers form AFTER the item is called. Bad, bad, bad practice unless you prefer not to have public participation - you've managed to alienate citizens who did care enough to participate.
- Childcare: My civic group discontinued the practice. It seems a majority w/children did not participate in civic meetings (exception - PTA) even when offered childcare.
- Convenient time of day - Convenient for who? Me? If yes, then not scheduling multiple meeting on the same night or in conflict with civic association meetings would help too.
- I bring my own water.
- Transit is important if you don't have a car OR you have lots of time to get to the meeting.
- Typically I'm clear how my input will be used. I'm not clear that it has.
- Ground Rules are only as good as the Leader willingness to enforce them. The best public participation process I've attended was run by Stu Dunn (Infill Regulations).
- Ample opportunity is important only if there is ample notification in a consistent, clear, concise form from a consistent source provided in a timely fashion. Having access to dockets/agendas, and related reports, the week of a meeting does not meet my criteria of ample opportunity.
- A charrette with dots? No. Several of the Eco-City events I found trite. (Work sessions where the audience can't hear the presentation speakers are annoying too.)
- Small group discussions are helpful when: participants have at least basic knowledge on which to base their opinion; the group does not become dominated by a single member; the discussion stays on focus."
- Interactivity through web services.
- engage the average Joe to get real answers/solutions"
- The genius store called, they're running out of you.
- "It is important that dissenting, contrary, off-the-wall, etc. comments and input be maintained.
- It is important that the public comment/discussion be part of the record and used in a consistent fashion.
- It is very frustrating when public comment/discussion will be used when it is convenient and discarded/downplayed when inconvenient."
- The problem with many city planning events are the loose nature in which they are controlled, the contempt displayed by elected officials attending
- The city holds too many community meetings. Most people do not have time to attend them all, so only a few activists with ample time on their hands attend. They typically do not represent the community as a whole, yet our elected and appointed officials act as if they do.
- It is important for civic associations to be evenly distributed and for each person in geographical civic association to be counted -- civic associations can thus be empowered and have genuine input
- Alternating in locations including the West End
- There is currently a disconnect between citizens and the City over public meetings. Decision making should not be made based on who speaks loudest or who can be most intimidating or rude. Many citizens seem to think that decisions should be made based on how long or how loudly they express their opinions. They discount the value of engineering studies, traffic experts, trained professionals of all kinds, and that leads to poor decisions. Public meetings really don't reflect what the citizenry thinks, since many people are hesitant to speak in public if they don't agree with those who are willing to be loud or unpleasant. Sometimes I think there are too many public meetings and too little real thought being given to issues, especially development.

- In the few community meetings I've attended, public input is often dominated by a few outspoken participants. There are many people who feel extremely uncomfortable (if not "terrified") at public speaking, if only for a few minutes to ask a question. Also, people may wish to make comments and ask questions anonymously. Some other forums I've been in allow people to submit questions by text. While useful, that still excludes many people, (including myself), who don't use that medium. Perhaps question/comment boxes could be set up at locations in the back of the meeting, and checked periodically or at the end of the meeting. The meeting chairs could read and answer the questions during the meeting. That would allow more introverted people an opportunity to participate. I'm not sure how that would work; it's just a thought.
- See above comments.
- "Translation is not something that I need personally, but something I value in order to make sure we involve all citizens. Also, child care is important but also needs to be engaging and provided by people who are qualified. This is an example of when we should partner with other groups with expertise ... recreation and child care providers might like the opportunity to partner with other groups on this kind of thing.
- Transportation is something I try to help other parents with whenever possible. I have transportation but I have seen others struggle with this, having to walk home with young children late in the evening following PTA meetings where the leaders are oblivious and then complain that under-represented groups don't show up in the large numbers they would like to see. "
- This should begin with a future vision of the city. Arlington has done this very well! They based their vision around the Metro and leveraged its power.
- How is the city ensuring minority/disaffected groups are heard?
- This survey is an example...what if I do not have a computer? How will my voice be heard?
- Also, if you know how to navigate city hall, you got it made...if you don't you are screwed.
- City talks about affordable housing, protecting the little guy and original residents, but in reality, gentrification, neighborhood cleansing, and developer prioritization takes place.
- Local lawyers whore themselves to make money at the expense of local residents and change neighborhoods and residents lives with no regard.
- By right development while destroying neighborhood character, makes Alexandria the chump of the region.
- City employees don't live here, and make arbitrary staff decisions with no neighborhood input. How can they know what is good for Alexandria when they only work here, then go back to their redneck areas of rural VA, MD, PA, and even DE!
- The city's statements that "hundreds" of meetings have been held often seems like an effort in counting meetings, not in truly responding to citizen concerns. There needs to be a scientific means of capturing and showing a correlation to results in order to banish the perception (reality) that certain "voices" are heard more than others.
- The meetings I have attended in the past are either not set up for the crowds who gathered (e.g., crammed in a school cafeteria) or drag on too long. Or a bunch of people who talk too much hog the microphone.
- I the tone and tenor of the waterfront play hearings has made we wary of participating. A small minority -- and I mean small -- completely dominated the procedures and cost the city and the majority citizens time and money. Firm and reasonable ground rules are necessary for me to participate.
- I definitely agree with the ground rules for participation - too often these meetings are commandeered by "crazies" who want to monopolize the discussion, take it off topic, etc. and then no one reigns them in. I'm also more likely to provide feedback remotely rather than in person - I can't take time off work to go to meetings and I generally want to be home with my family in the evenings/weekends. If I was already

at a community event of some sort (e.g. Art on the Avenue, farmers markets, etc.) and someone was there asking for feedback, that's when I'd also be more likely to provide it.

- This is window-dressing. The city's staff, most of whom probably don't live in the City, hold these because they have to; but as with the waterfront issue, the decisions were made before input was sought.
- I have seen the hands on workshops work and how they do. I have also participated in small groups and seen how they can be manipulated.
- Redefine "attending" community meetings. There should be ways to participate virtually too, including real-time.
- Same as #6.
- Parking is an issue if in the Old Town area
- Some of these ideas sound good-- but in practice, they end up being terrible wastes of time. "Small group discussions" comes to mind. If it was made clear that input received during such activities would actually be used, it would be far more appealing.
- The processes in the City are dominated by special interests long held in high esteem at City Hall, those that are not "frequent attendees" are often overlooked.
- adequate parking
- Hold meetings during the day and not night and hold meetings online. The existing system is too dated and do not work well with those with young kids plus the only meeting I ever been to was too long and people there were more for political agendas or personal agendas rather than improving Alexandria. Plus there seems like there are too many meetings which is overbearing and intimidating.
- parking
- More online venues for participation; more live and archived webcasts; more meeting minutes for those who cannot attend in person.
- Easily available free parking.
- I am very interested in learning more about what's being done to preserve historical places of significance and the city as a whole. I would go to all city-held meetings concerning these topics if they were held at different times, or if I could provide feedback prior to or after the meetings.
- On-line. interactive web-based opportunities to read and comment on city proposals before they are hatched as full blown plans could help to reduce the lack of trust in the city staff that has been apparent in recent venues.
- "It is clear how my input will be used" -- is this a joke? Ever heard of parallel construction?
- "I want to feel like my input will count and not like decisions have already been made when I walk into a community meeting with pre-appointed planners that sometimes have contracts in place.
- Groups discussions are fine with proper time and moderators available."
- I've lived in Alexandria for over 30 years, so my criteria for what is important/somewhat important/not important have changed over the years
- If the meeting is anywhere other than Old Town, the availability of parking would make a difference.
- Come to where groups of people are - farmers markets, etc. Just make it clear you aren't selling or soliciting. Be very approachable.
- Public meetings should be supplemented with on-line opportunities.
- The city can hold as many meetings as it wants, but if it doesn't actually listen to the citizens, then it doesn't matter. Right now, the impression is that while the city hears input from citizens, it doesn't actually listen to that input mainly because it becomes very clear that many decisions have already been made by the city and developers.
- don't want to attend a meeting where I have to sit for 2 hours to get 5 minutes for my input. Feel like it's just a drop in the bucket.

- The city needs to do a much better job in showing how community input gets incorporated into the decision-making process. As it stands now, it is very much a case of "thank you for your feedback.". I recommend the city take a good look at how the process that ACPS developed for input into the design of the new Jefferson-Houston works. They have done a great job of incorporating community input into their design.
- "As I said above, online input is a good way for everyone to participate -- but only if someone is tasked with the job of organizing and reporting on the input from citizens.
- This is especially good for seniors during inclement weather."
- "As I said above, online input is a good way for everyone to participate -- but only if someone is tasked with the job of organizing and reporting on the input from citizens.
- This is especially good for seniors during inclement weather."
- yes, you got it. Example: when the city puts out a notice for a meeting..why is it just in Facebook, twitter, and on the website....does the city realize that things are still somewhat localized and that they may in fact have to outreach where people are...stores, schools, parks, neighborhoods, markets, coffee shops....bureaucrats easy fix: Well, we put it on the website...how many people actually use that cumbersome thing?
- Parking
- It would be good to have multiple options for feedback. I like to have time to think out my responses so post-meeting surveys/comment options would be helpful.
- "See comment for question 5.
- I believe that many citizens would participate if provided with enough information and a clear means to do so. At this point, it appears as though only those who are part of a Commission, Advisory Group, Social/Political/Civic Group are the only ones participating. This leaves the great majority the option of participating only through (1) voting for a council member who you hope will vote as you would on issues (but do not readily know what those issues are and how the member voted - as such information is not easily accessible or provided as a matter of course) and (2) finding out about a public hearing that might directly affect one because a poster was posted in the neighborhood.
- Too many meetings have the results are already decided on the issue under consideration. The meetings are too often a waste of time and tax dollars. Especially on the money spent for the consultants to run the meetings.
- Since I take public transportation there is no regular service to my neighborhood in the evening (perhaps 1 DASH bus per hour)
- It is just as important to know what other citizens are thinking as to know the information city officials want to provide. For that reason, I am not very interested in a small group format. I prefer town hall style meetings.
- It is just as important to know what other citizens are thinking as to know the information city officials want to provide. For that reason, I am not very interested in a small group format. I prefer town hall style meetings.
- Many have come to feel that community meetings are of little value. Confidence in their value will be rebuilt, not by any particular mechanism, but if the results over time restore participants' confidence that their input is genuinely listened to, responded to, and changes the result in any important way. If the input is merely "tolerated," or is selectively reported and used, to reinforce the City's preordained or preferred conclusion, the process is not only a waste of time, but insulting.
- It is important that community meetings and public hearings be announced well in advance. It is not just a matter of making arrangements to attend. Additional time is needed to allow neighbors and civic associations to confer and present a unified position.
- I attend when the topic is relevant to me.
- Ample notice ahead of time.

- I strongly believe in using design charrettes for community planning. Having supportive online engagement tools is important as well.
- After reading this, I'm thinking that I don't usually participate because I assume I will not be heard...or that what I say won't make a difference anyway.
- The email alerts from the city are worthless. All they talk about is flooding and weather, and I'm not going to check my email to learn about. If the city would include information about when and where meetings, particularly planning and zoning, are taking place, I'd be able to make time to attend more.
- I would like to see more aggressive progress in the Huntington Area.
- Too many public forums. Lot lot of time wasted in too much discussion
- Alexandria's public input process has no beginning, middle or end. Alexandria begins process, stops process, starts process again. Those of who participate in good faith are left confused and exhausted
- All announced meetings seem to be right before they are scheduled. I think the city should send a weekly update on a weekly basis- same date and time. What I receive seems random.
- I believe we are somewhat wary of politicians. I don't always believe that the rank and file citizen's input is worthwhile and that the politician pays more attention to the folks who fund their campaigns.
- far enough advance notice of the meetings is always helpful.
- I believe that a clear definition of what is wanted from the public should be stated up front so that everyone is knowledgeable about the goals and outcomes of the meeting.
- Under no circumstances should the city or state be using government funding to provide translation for these meetings, surveys, etc.!!!!!!
- Present participation processes, especially small-group sessions and one-on-one conversations at public meetings with City staff, clearly are designed to dampen citizen input, by minimizing the ability to hear what other citizens think about staff proposals.
- "Have a transparent decision making process for the public
- Have a complete roster of participants and interested parties around every decision"
- I did attend one meeting that began with informal discussion with staff available for one on one conversation. This process permitted input to be provided to staff and commission policy/decision makers prior to the formal meeting. During the formal meeting some questions/clarifications/comments were taken from the floor. After the formal meeting there was again informal discussion where residents could lobby/converse with the decision makers. This is a better format.
- "It is clear how my input will be used" is #1. I have attended several meetings and wondered this. The second most important is convenient time of day or evening. For those of us with young children, it is actually easier to attend meetings at 8pm than at 6 or 7pm as many meetings are scheduled. For anyone with kids, the 5-8pm time frame is the hardest and often meetings are during that time. Or, there are meetings in the middle of the work day and how could anyone attend those?
- It seems sometimes that the City's comment process is just pro forma, and does not actually respond to citizens' concerns. I and other members have often felt "railroaded" by the decisions that were made despite protests and despite the damage to Alexandria's long-term interests. In particular, decisions about development have proceeded without adequate planning or supporting infrastructure. If the pattern continues, we will move out of Alexandria.
- While allowing for public input is important, conflicting opinions are inevitable. Not all options are realistic. Professionals play an important role. A few individuals consistently complain they are not heard when they do not like the policies being adopted. Also, at some point council members need to vote based on the information at hand. These study panels are painful and drag out the decision-making process too long.
- <http://americaspeaks.org/> is a paradigm of grassroots engagement.
- "How are you going to have small group discussions and keep it open and honest?"

- This is a problem with civic groups and others of small connected individuals with the free time and access to influence and lobby the city.
- Has to be a subject I am currently interested in like elections, libraries, bike commuting, rec centers & pools, etc..
- Oftentimes these meetings are taken over by very opinionated people with few time constraints. There needs to be a way to give your opinion effectively, efficiently and without investing a ton of time.
- Well-publicized, and publicized well in advance
- Additional Comment= parking
- The child care is at top of my list, because in order to attend these meetings. If I don't have childcare I miss some of them.

Question 7: If you don't typically attend City-held community meetings, tell us why. [Select all that apply, and/or fill in other]

- I don't think it would make a difference, don't think my opinion would have any sway with the decision makers - thus a waste of my time. Plus I think it would be boring.
- I no longer live in Alexandria
- Either I am not aware of them or they take place in a place that isn't metro accessible or during my work hours.
- I just moved to the area and would like to get more involved; have not participated in any meetings thus far.
- Meetings are cancelled far too often for me to take any public schedule seriously. As a single parent with a full-time job and a disabled son at home, my free time to participate in civic engagement or any other activity is limited. I'll be doing things I can count on.
- I don't find them productive since the same people show up who already have an agenda.
- Meetings about things happening in Old Town, Parker-Gray, Arlandria, Del Ray etc. are not going to bring out residents from the West End (that I know of).
- There are too many sub-groups/meetings to keep track off- take Beauregard, for example. There's the BRAC Working Group and meetings, the Beauregard Small Area Plan and meetings, the High Speed Transit-way meetings, plus others that I'm sure I can't remember. For something like this, there need to be regularly scheduled, ongoing meetings (2x quarter?), where these other topics are incorporated and discussed. This was citizens can PLAN to attend and participate in meetings.
- I do attend community meetings
- Meetings are often scheduled at times conflicting with many persons work and commuting schedules.
- I tend to think that my opinion won't matter. The city leaders tend to do what they want to do regardless of community input. And the leadership in Alexandria is highly tilted toward one party and thus not necessarily representative of my views. So what's the point?
- I don't tend to hear about these meetings until after the fact.
- Transportation can be a problem.
- Not sure when meetings are, how I can participate if I did attend--other than listening
- "Also I'm new to the area (from Colorado) and do not feel that largely I ""deserve"" the right to foul things up for others.
- Not yet, you know? It's been a year though, so I'm starting to get the hang of the area and am really feeling welcome and comfortable and will soon be ready to share properly on the publish issues that matter to me."
- I doubt that it would do any good.

- When notices for public hearings are only posted near the geographic area, such as in front of a school, I might not see it and thus not know it was happening. This happens a lot with the school across the street from where I live. I don't go over there for any reason, therefore I miss the notice. Need better communication.
- Again, I am a commuter so it is harder to get a sense of what my role vis-a-vis city engagement.
- I follow Alexandria on Facebook -- but I don't see city-held community meetings announced there.
- Most meetings are way too late in the evening.
- Insufficient detail on exactly what will be done at the meeting and where things are in the process. Also need to know up front what the decision criteria are. Insufficient lead time in many cases, as I most often already have commitments on my calendar by the time I hear about them through the listserv.
- The days and times of the meetings usually conflict with my work, family or other commitments
- I attend all the meetings that deal with my neighborhood, and some with the City. Jefferson-Houston School. Aquatics - Olde Towne Pool, Civic Association, PTA, some others also. Even with 2 small boys, I make it a point to attend as much as I can.
- I have attended planning meetings in the past and feel that often what is discussed ends up going by the wayside during the implementation process.
- "1) The City often seems to have its mind made up on what directions it wants to go, and in my experience it does not embrace what its citizens tell it, even when the citizens are more informed than city staff on the issues under discussion.
- do not give credit to the people who help them with causes and, after a while, it is deflating to support those initiatives and, over time, any City initiatives.
- As a result of the two above items, I've given up on the City. I've decided to donate my time and expertise to non-City causes because I can gain more satisfaction elsewhere. "
- When I have participated before, the recommendations were agreed and not carried out so I felt the participation was only to placate, not assist with decision-making.
- The agendas are not posted ahead of time and it is unclear what the purpose of the meeting is. Good meetings require good planning. They should be focused and positively engage people attending the meeting. They can often be a waste of time.
- I'm not convinced anyone will actually act upon and/or consider my input.
- Timing and relevance to my being only employed here.
- I don't think anything is done with input.
- No impact on political decisions
- Rude behavior from other participants.
- I work evenings and weekends so the majority of meetings are not held at a convenient time for me
- I do attend -
- I get the Alexandria emails with information about upcoming meetings and events. They are helpful but sometimes I feel overwhelmed with email and they don't get my attention. I've tried following various calendars on the City website but those are stove pipes. (As an example the Library calendar doesn't even include all the library events. That's one department in the City and libraries specialize in sharing information!) It would be helpful if the website had a comprehensive calendar available, maybe even only a week ahead, listing City-wide activities. Also, if I could "subscribe" to specific topics of interest, so I'd know they were coming up, I'd be more likely to attend. Currently that information isn't shared effectively. (Another example: I only found out about the Taney Avenue Mile Long Yard Sale date when I saw the banner on the elementary school fence. It was probably in the community newsletter, but that isn't always hand delivered on time, many times events listed in the newsletter are passed by the time I receive this. Still another: A child care home was proposed on my street. I had no idea this was happening until my neighbor received a certified letter from the applicant. My home must have been outside the required range. If I hadn't talked to my neighbor several days before the hearing, I would

never have known this was happening. A sign was posted on the property, but unless I walked or drove around the block in that direction, I wouldn't have seen it.) Communication and inclusion need to be improved so that people like me know an event is happening, and we need to feel our input is valued, as well as acted upon. If I'd known about the yard sale, I would have volunteered to help. If I'd known about library events I would have attended. In the case of the child care home, I attended the meeting and spoke against it, but it was apparent that the planning commission supported in home child care regardless of resident concerns and that neighbors who either emailed or spoke against it were simply given lip service.)

- The reasons can vary to not being in town, knowing about them in a timely manner, or knowing that many people are speaking.
- I don't feel that my opinion counts or will be heard by the city
- Never hear about any until it's too late (however, I am receiving emails lately about meetings)
- Have lost interest until recently.
- Do neighborhood associations count? I go on those rare occasions when the topic has urgency.
- The meetings have so many topics that to go about one topic requires a multi-hour commitment as well as paying for parking.
- I generally attend when relevant to me.
- "waste of time
- see above, comment #6"
- Uncertain what the benefit would be. Doubt that my input would have any effect. For example, the plans to expand the existing ramp off to 395 to Seminary Road --- I don't think our views would be considered seriously.
- I work for the City government.
- I have a rather non-traditional work schedule, so weekend meeting times would be more helpful in getting to the meetings.
- I don't think that my opinions are sought
- I don't live in Alexandria.
- They can be tedious
- meeting times are not easy for families. it is also not clear how the input will be used.
- Been there, done that.
- I will admit that I do sometimes rely on my neighbors to represent my interests because I just do not have the time. I am not proud of shirking my civic responsibility.
- Watch televised meetings.
- only moved here this year so don't know about the city a lot yet. would like to know more.
- As I want the City of Alexandria to substantially cut government spending and borrowing, our knowledge and understanding of how people and markets work it not attended to much less adhered to. The Democrat machine funds themselves off our money.
- I'm only aware of community meetings if I happen to be signed up for a particular newsgroup that has a meeting announced.
- I'm not sure what the meetings are about
- They are a waste of time. They are often set up to give a green light to decisions that the City thinks are right. They provide cover for City Council.
- I do not know about many meetings, and those I know about can be hard to get to with my schedule.
- The people who go are irrational and mean
- "I would like to see a set of public calendars that I can load into my personal calendar via something like the iCal format. I get the email announcements but that knowledge rarely makes it onto my calendar. The several council meetings I've attended feel pretty daunting and rigid. I recognize this is probably

the nature of the beast but it is not a comfortable environment for someone who does not regularly attend.

- The thing I'm most interested in is sustainability but the city's focus remains on new construction and single-family support. We need help in improving the sustainability of large existing multi-unit condominiums and the City has not been willing to be a partner in that endeavor. "
- The community meetings are mostly about airing of grievances. People like me, who think the city is mostly doing a good job, don't have grievances to air and thus find these sorts of meeting hugely boring.
- Disability.
- General laziness
- General laziness
- "I feel that often the loudest and most popular opinion of your core groups don't represent my interest as an African American male. The real issues of inequality appear to be too uncomfortable to deal with, and doesn't receive adequate attention. Discussions are needed that will unify and raise the conditions for everyone. pls excuse typos, typed on my cellphone.
- Please see comments in number 6 above. I have participated, though.
- they are frustrating. Not happy with BAR for example.
- I have been discouraged by all the complaints by participants in past meetings that their input was not heeded or respected. The overwhelming impression is that decisions have already been made.
- I don't want to waste my time. I don't know how the meeting operate and if it'd be worth my time. Will decisions be made at the meeting and/or to what degree will my input make a difference?
- Drama
- The people who attend and testify at public hearings before the Council are a bunch of who are too emotional and not rational.
- "They take a lot of time and very little is actually accomplished.
- while fresh ideas can be presented - most often it's rehashing the known.
- Sometimes I don't find out about the meetings until after the meet.
- The meetings are not held late enough for me to leave work and attend them. I would have to ask permission to leave work early and make it the hour(s) at a later time.
- A sense that my participation would not make a difference.
- The only ones I have attended are the BRAC-133 meetings, since that's where I work. As a worker but non-citizen, I don't feel it's my place to participate in other issues. However, I do follow Potomac Yards activity closely, as I live on the Arlington edge of Crystal City/Potomac Yards, and I should participate more frequently in these..
- I sometimes get the sense that the decisions have already been made and that the community meeting is just to check off the box that input was received from the residents.
- A few meetings I've attended have been through my office, and honestly, they are boring. I don't have a huge interest in politics, and while I work in Old Town, I live in the West End. My feelings are since there's not enough money or power from the residents in the West End, compared to Old Town/rest of Alexandria, politicians aren't as interested. Old Town problems are a beautiful waterfront, West End problems, highways and government buildings. Why not add some more beauty to the West End. Fix what can be fix, don't let streets go with gaping pot holes. At this time, I do not have children in the public schools, but having recently learned that Alexandria schools are not producing high performers, my husband and I have begun the process of looking to move to Falls Church or Arlington for a future family, where schools rank higher. On a tangent from the original question, sorry, I think it's great people care so much about their community, I get it, why wouldn't you, but don't you have better things to do than write opinion pieces weekly in local newspapers, yell at your opponents?
- They don't make a difference. Decisions are made behind the scenes.
- I am aware of some meetings, but apparently not all.

- See my comments above. At a certain point, you just have to stop wasting your time.
- I think the city has its mind made up and won't listen to, respect or investigate other viewpoints. We have a major crisis at ACPS, we are spending a LOT more per child and our test scores are terrible. Less than half of the children eligible for public school attend and if they all did there would not be room. We are still busing children when they can walk. This city seems to be focused on low-income housing and ruining the waterfront. If the city wants to take care of people in need I support that, but let's start by requiring 3rd party income verification so we actually know who needs help.
- "Some topics don't relate to me. So I don't go. I find it too easy for me to skip evening meetings. especially in the winter-- simply don't want to go out at night.
- ever try ""go to meetings"" ? people could listen in from their home"
- Often, I hear about community meetings only days before such meetings are scheduled. As such, I cannot often change plans to enable me to attend. In addition, I live on the West End, where the normally free local newspapers are not distributed to residents' homes like they are in other areas of town. As such, getting such information requires one to be more proactive. When formulating strategies to increase community engagement, one needs to consider the mechanisms readily available to residents, which often differ for apartment dwellers, renters, and homeowners.
- "Use plain English to explain what meetings are for and the functions. You guys use so much techno babble lawyer speak that the common man has no clue what your discussing. You guys need a major lesson in KISS! KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID If you want to discuss parking and Quaker Lane then be sure THAT is listed in the title or subtitle. Then make up a common instruction sheet FOR ALL that will be followed, and do this with all the meetings, gatherings or workshops. If everyone knows what is the schedule and when they can input information perhaps you'll get more involvement.
- Finally make up a number of community locations like supermarkets and post lists of upcoming events.
- Part of the issue is that I'm not exactly sure where a consolidated calendar of these "community meetings" would be so finding out about them usually ends up being an email I happen to see come across my inbox. If there were a central place to track these events (even better, a Google calendar I can add to my personal calendar), I'd at least know of the entire list.
- The meeting topics are not compelling enough to make me want to attend.
- Hasn't been one with respect to this area for some time.
- I'm not always aware of when and where the meetings are being held with adequate notice so I can make arrangements in my work schedule to attend.
- We are frequently out of the area but are very interested in the development of the city of Alexandria, specifically Del Ray.
- They city officials rarely listen to citizen concern and only do what is in there interest.
- A lot of times the meetings are during my business hours and as a small business owner, it is tough to just leave work.
- An alternative is to develop a Web page around issues that people can go into, on their schedule and provide feedback. Like a message Board or similar to what the Patch uses. It is easy to manage and moderate.
- Often unaware of relevant meetings. Also, it seems that decisions are usually made in advance.
- It seems that my input, and that of my neighbors becomes irrelevant to the final decision.
- I typically always attend city meetings. I am very involved in these meetings.
- I am very interested in providing my input to the city, but meetings are not that convenient for me with 2 kids at home. I am also not that interested in listening to angry or non-productive commenters at public meetings. Short surveys like this are easy and I don't mind participating in this way. The easier you can make participation, the more people will participate.
- I work full time in DC. The schedule of those hearings that are of interest for me has routinely been at an inconvenient time of the day, unless I take vacation time to attend.

- Generally speaking, I don't think community meetings are very well advertised. I subscribe to the e-mail alerts, and I very haphazardly found out about the community meetings that the recreation department was having. It wasn't shown on the city website either.
- See my comment for answer 5
- While I am very involved and attend a fair number of City-held meetings, when topics are far removed from my neighborhood or concerns I care about, or when I am satisfied with the City's actions, I do not participate, because we all have limited time and it is best not to spread oneself too thin. Where one does participate, one needs to really pay attention, devote time and effort, and take an active role.
- While I am very involved and attend a fair number of City-held meetings, when topics are far removed from my neighborhood or concerns I care about, or when I am satisfied with the City's actions, I do not participate, because we all have limited time and it is best not to spread oneself too thin. Where one does participate, one needs to really pay attention, devote time and effort, and take an active role.
- Sometimes there is too much discussion of unimportant matters. The meeting coordinator does not always know how to manage the meeting
- Meeting location or time it is being held is not convenient.
- I do not believe that the City of Alexandria cares about what is best for the public. The city seems to be owned and operated by developers. Why aren't city planners REQUIRED to live within the city limits, and forced to live with the results of their misguided decisions? And, why, do we keep hearing the blatantly false refrain that development will add to our tax revenues? Taxes for homeowners are always going higher, while our quality of life deteriorates.
- "I suspect the meetings are primarily designed to generate support for pre-conceived solutions to defined problems.
- Problems that I consider of city-wide importance do not seem to attract city government attention."
- One horrible example is that Waterfront Meetings---like Parks and Rec---were at 7 a.m. This is insulting to the residents. Hold them on a weekend or at night. It is deliberate to make the time so inconvenient no one can attend. At 7 a.m. people are getting ready for work, or getting kids off to school. Meetings should not be held at the convenience of the Chair's schedule, but for the majority of the community.
- I no longer have the patience to participate in groups that are so highly charged with their own viewpoints that compromise is impossible.
- Different answers apply to different situations and topics
- loss of faith that it means anything in the long run
- I don't think my input will be used. City meetings are often just an excuse for the city to do what it was going to do anyway, while they can then say they took public opinion into account.
- I have a sense that fiscal concerns drive decisions regardless of public input. The huge government high-rise on the western side of I395 (BRAC?) near Seminary Road is a stunning example. It's inconsistent with the surroundings; it changes the Alexandria skyline; and there was a lot of public input against it.
- I read both papers every week, and get many of your website emails, but none about meetings or hearings. I'm sure that info is out there, but don't know how to get it. And I commute to another city three weeks a month, M - Th, so my schedule is very challenged.
- If you don't have children you don't really have a voice in this city - we are drowned out by angry parents and vocal activists. I think the gay and lesbian community in Alexandria is very isolated. We have entirely too many boards and commissions in this city - and the sister city groups are a waste of time and money. Stove-piping decisions through single-perspective boards is an old way of thinking...and excludes many different perspectives. What we really need is neighborhood committees that are made up of representatives from the topic areas that are currently represented by the boards. Come up with alternatives and open the door to more participation.

- It's so hard to effect change. I went to a meeting on city swimming pools, a topic about which I care desperately, and it seemed like a pro-forma gathering where the consultants the city hired to justify closing the Warwick Village pool had already done so. At a meeting on traffic, the planners seemed wildly out of touch with reality. You can express bus down Rte. 1, opposite Potomac Yards, but I don't see that the line takes anyone where they need to go. I need to get from my Beverly Hills house to my Old Town gym. Rte. 1 is the direct route, but I can't drive Glebe to Rte. 1, wait for a bus to take me to Madison St. and then walk a mile to the gym. What are they thinking? They're doing NOTHING to mitigate the coming traffic nightmare!
- This is my fault and I don't know how to correct it.
- In some instances, feeling that the decision has already been made and public meetings are held just for show.
- I retrieve resources from Duncan Library and I network with the CSB about community events, services, etc.
- I am not able to at night.
- "I think that public meetings are an inefficient and tiresome way (for me) to provide comments.
- I would much rather obtain information over the web or by telephone and respond by email."
- I am currently leaving outside the area.
- I have committed to starting to attend, but have not gone to anything yet.
- The sheer number of meetings, trying to pick and choose, especially when there is more than one city sponsored meeting a night. When the meeting begins before 7:30 pm. There is hardly time to get home, eat, and do a turn around to get out of the house and to the mtg. For meetings starting at 6:30 or 7 pm sometimes the traffic is exponential. You didn't mention transit for #7. I remember one meeting was held at the Masonic memorial. I exited from the King St Metro station and almost didn't attend because there wasn't a shuttle bus to facilitate climbing Shuter's Hill after a full day of work and not having had supper.
- The president of my neighborhood association has given me the impression that any neighborhood concerns must be presented to city government only through her...not through residents.
- I attend the meetings that are important to me but not all of the meetings. They tend to go on too late into the night. How about meetings just for input...and not the wholeboard meeting?
- I do not hear about them in time. I also don't attend if they don't run the meeting efficiently and limit long, unnecessary discussions (or monologues)
- I do attend meetings, have been appointed to a city commission, and testify regularly at School Board and City Council public hearings...and not to yell at them either, but to simply give my opinions and suggestions.
- I'd prefer providing my opinions online.
- I do attend, so did not answer
- Seems to be same people saying the same things and it takes too long to sit through all of that.
- "they're not useful
- However, I do feel I should attend more city-held community meetings.
- I've only been aware a few times, and either it had already passed, I couldn't make it, or it often might have been a topic I have no opinion of or interest on. However, I hear about a lot of what other people accomplish in the community, so I want to start becoming involved to see how I might be able to help.
- Timing and awareness are the main reasons behind my lack of participation. I work long hours at a job in DC, which makes it difficult to attend evening meetings.
- Better advanced publicity needed - via multiple outlets. Often, I find out about a meeting - the day of the event (via Patch).
- if the status remains quo, nothing has been done, and nothing is going to be done.

- I do attend oftentimes
- I attend meetings
- I try and attend meetings with topics that are relevant to me. It's important to stay informed.
- Meetings are too long and strong leadership is missing.
- Recently moved to Alexandria
- I live outside of the City but work in the City.
- It is my observation that the City is not really interested in what the residents of the City want; only in what the Board wants!
- "(1) Meetings are not the most efficient way to receive information.
- (2) If I were to offer my views, I don't think they would make any difference to decision-makers anyway."
- My husband travels and so I am the only one home and do not think a 2 year old will hold up in the meeting. I cannot afford a babysitter at \$14 per hour for a meeting.
- I get frustrated at public meetings where the goals, outcomes, etc. are unclear and most participants seem to repeat what has already been said and simply want to get their voice on the record. I'd like to attend a meeting that at the end we have marching orders, something to do, something that will result in something more than simply another meeting.
- I was a member of the BRAC Citizen Advisory Group. Too often, I felt that the City had made decisions without adequate prior community involvement. Recently, candidates running for City Council who had been on Council when the City offered Mark Center as one of the locations for BRAC, spoke about regretting their decisions that were made "behind closed doors." Decision-making must be open and transparent and the community must perceive the process as being open and transparent.
- Too many people.
- See comments above.
- I grew up here but just recently moved back. I'm getting up to speed on city issues, but overall I'm satisfied how things are going.
- Having participated in public meetings concerned with making decisions for the city and having found these meetings to be biased towards previously made decisions with very little consideration actually given to citizen's comments I have opted out of attending further meetings - at least for the past few years. This is a great disappointment as, when I moved to Alexandria, it appeared that you were very citizen oriented.
- Don't think they matter - have any bearing on decisions.
- I attended two of Jim Moran's town hall meetings. In one case, he had a speaker who is expert on the federal debt/deficit, then the next day, he voted for billions of dollars in foreclosure expenditures. I also feel the meetings aren't publicized sufficiently and thank my Civic Association for being on the ball, though they have slipped in the last couple years in the West End.
- As I related above, by the time issues are presented publicly the onus is on the citizenry to refute. It's not a conversation and it's not inclusive. Meetings and agenda and even our questions are controlled. Relax the rules on participation at public meetings.
- No way in this question to indicate that I often attend these meetings but not constantly. Some topics interest me more than others. On those where I don't have a strong feeling I do trust others who have strong feelings to work on those issues.
- I work in the District, and travel out of state frequently for work. So when I do know about meetings, it's hard to make it due to work travel or hard to get home in time.
- I often have a hard time taking the city leaders seriously when I find the back channel conversations through FOIA and what they really think about things.
- This is just to say that, while I'm not aware of them, neither do I go out of my way to be aware of them.

- I attend what I can, but with 3 kids (2 in ACPS), I do a lot with the school, PTA, etc. I also work for another local jurisdiction, so I do a lot with that jurisdiction and don't have a lot more time to go to many more meetings.
- N/A
- Honestly, I view city meetings as just a group of citizens complaining and unwilling to compromise on issues. I would like to participate if the environment is one of collaboration.
- In the daily rush of activities with young kids and dual careers, it can be difficult to set aside time
- We just moved here and are not yet familiar with these meetings.
- Parking in the City during City Council public meetings is difficult and expensive. Other meetings are not well advertised in advance.
- See above. I work long hours - in at 0800, home around 1830/1900. Returning at that hour leaves me 30 minutes or so with my daughter before I bath her and put her to bed. I attend hearings on weekends and would attend some during the day - even leaving work if I had to. Realize holding council meetings on weeknight evenings is an effort to accommodate many.
- It sometimes feels that the important decisions have already been made, and only the window dressing is left open for input.
- Parking and getting to Old Town is not convenient; T.C. is more centrally located.
- I used to but feel it is a waste of time.
- As a city employee, I feel a bit limited re: my role/opinion as a city resident...
- The meetings often include so many topics that hours go by before something relevant to me comes up. Also, often, it seems that some minority groups of people have already captured the decision-makers and activities are well on their way before the general public finds out. One example of this was the mishandling of the dog park down along Founder's Park.
- I don't live in Alexandria or plan on living here, so I don't think the meetings are relevant to my interests.
- I feel that I have been active for 40 years and do not have new thoughts to share.
- I am confident I can make my opinions known to City officials, both staff and elected
- As a non-citizen of Alexandria I can't vote on changes.
- "If a meeting notice was sent or announced and held reasonably near my home, I would attend. However, as stated above, when I did meet with the City representative and asked for either a traffic light or pedestrian yield sign be put at the Stevenson Ave.- Yoakum Ave intersection, I was told that traffic was not her area of expertise and thus she couldn't take my request to City Hall. But she did listen to the condo developers.
- As with this questionnaire, I only hear from the City when an election is forth-coming."
- The problem with meetings in the past is that they are usually while I am at work or commuting home from DC.
- I am disable on social security benefits
- If I could teleconference or Skype into meetings I'd be more able to participate.
- The meeting times and locations are usually at inconvenient locations or times. If a topic relates to my immediate neighborhood, I would definitely try to attend, even though it seems that community input is not really welcomed by the city.
- Advance notice is important. When I learn of meetings the week of the event, it's too late to change plans and attend.
- "What should I attend meetings for?"
- My opinion and feelings do not count.
- The higher paid politicians and money makers get their way anyways..."
- I attend plenty of meetings...

- Haven't put enough effort into going to meetings.
- We are active retirees and grandparents. We take and teach classes at Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute and provide occasional day care for our grandson. We read the Washington Post daily but don't read the local papers closely and thus miss information about city events.
- City - City Council meetings on TV
- I am not aware of many community meetings. And sometimes those I have attended are more in the nature of the City telling me what is going to happen, not what I think of that. Just as one small, relatively insignificant issue. At the corner of Commonwealth and Maple St, there was a culvert that was going to be uncovered and then recovered. A meeting was announced. Many of us showed up - at the site, on a hot, dry night, and spent a good long while listening to city folks explaining to us why this had to be done, how it would happen, when it would be finished etc. Most people there were interested in whether the apartment building right next to it would continue to use it for parking (we were assured they were not allowed to do so now, but also told the City knew they wanted permission to do so); whether that was so or not, whether we might be able to landscape the area to make it more "green space" than concrete, or at least landscape around it so that the concrete slab, parking or not, would be less visible; things like that. The City had no interest in our ideas on that score, nor any advice as to how we could offer that input to the city. Result: The culvert was recovered, and it looks just the same as it did, and is still being used for parking without markings, without order - just a concrete slab surrounded by weeds, with cars parked helter skelter.
- I prefer to input through the Chamber or other organizations with which I am associated or through membership on a City commission or board.
- I usually express my concern to council members through emails and letters. Most of the time, my concerns are addressed, but when I have contacted the City, there has been lots of resistance.
- I'm not confident that my participation will be meaningful.
- We need to stimulate greater community involvement. One sees the same handful of residents participating "all over the place" while the vast majority sit on the sidelines, some never offering anything more than criticism. The active people get spread thin and often end up with conflicts of multiple meetings, hearings and events they would like to participate in.
- While "input" is desirable, meetings are often not controlled and my time is too valuable to attend a meeting that is hijacked by a minority of "civic activists". Speakers should not be permitted to their individual version of the "facts". When they stray from the facts they need to be called on it. I believe that more people would participate in the process (and would provide meaningful insight).
- While time is definitely an issue because of long work hours and so much time already devoted to community events, there was a recent series of public meetings to discuss I believe recreation, etc. and after the first meeting, I heard there was really little opportunity for discussion and feedback, so I did not bother to attend any of the other ones. Community meetings cannot drag on and on and they have to allow for feedback.
- Community meetings can be hijacked by just a few citizens with strong agendas -- polarizing rather than collaborative or instructive
- I usually do not know when community meetings are held.
- I just haven't committed to that level of participation.
- I know that any impact will require many hours of work and will require me to organize friends, neighbors and others and will only partially succeed if at all. Often meetings are held only after decisions are made.
- I have always participated, in the past. Due to family health issues, it is more difficult now, and I don't often go out at night. But that is JUST ME. Others can participate as their jobs and family schedules permit.
- Last minute notices or lack of notices make it hard to know when community meetings will occur.

- I watch zoning, planning and architectural review board and sometimes school board meetings on TV.
- I don't have time. I'm too busy attending meetings affecting my neighborhood directly /indirectly (Public hearings, other city meetings, City appointed board, civic meeting) and trying to piece those bits together, leave me little time for equally important issues (Affordable Housing, Equal Opportunity, PR&CA). Or I'm busy dealing with City departments; preparing and submitting applications crucial to a community event.
- I am new to the city.
- how about giving teleconference call a chance to provide input - virtual...ooops like below
- The genius store called, they're running out of you.
- "I currently attend and speak at a lot of meetings. One cannot attend them all.
- That being said, there is an inconsistency in how meetings are announced. The City provides several methods for publicizing the meetings. The requirement should be that they are all used. ENews is great, but some commissions are not included. If I rely on ENews, then I miss out.
- I do not live in Alexandria
- I live in Fairfax county and am active in my own community
- As a relative "newcomer," I feel that the city's interests are dominated by ingrained, long-term office holders and that I won't be able to make a difference.
- I commute 45 to 1 hour to and from my job. Alexandria was too expensive for us to buy a home here.
- I don't feel sufficiently informed about the context of the issues being addressed -- I feel that my opinion will not be taken seriously because it's not of concrete relevance to the topic of discussion.
- "1. The city gives short notice of hearings and not adequate information about development.
- For example, Planning and Zoning Commission gave short notice for hearing regarding sale and plans for changing zoning for property located at 100 S. Pickett Street, Alexandria, VA. (currently a bowling alley) Citizens were not given information as the developer claimed in Docket Item #10 A-C Master Plan Amendment #2012-0002, Rezoning #2012-0001, Development Special Use Permit #2011-0007. Citizens in the nearby neighborhood condos were not given information about the proposed building and zoning change until after the Zoning and Planning Commission approved it and recommended it to City Council who also approved it. The developer was given cooperation by the City and help to get this property zoned for multi-use, residential and retail commercial use. Citizens were not given details other than that information that was made available on the day of the hearing. Every other property on that side of the street was zoned commercial. Placing new residents between a car dealership and a strip mall makes no common sense in city planning. Now, there is going to be an apartment building with about 8900 square feet of commercial use on the ground floor without adequate parking for customers and 200 additional residents. This will increase traffic on S. Pickett Street, between Duke Street and S. Van Dorn, by at least 200 cars a day. This makes no common sense. This street is already a busy corridor from the West End to S. Van Dorn, to obtain access to I495. Pedestrians have a very difficult crossing the street to obtain to get to the public bus.
- Traffic. The traffic survey that was taken, by a city staffer on the vary morning of the hearing regarding the zoning of the property and testified at the hearing that the traffic was insignificant. The survey was taken after 8 AM . By 8 AM, most of the people turning from Valley Forge Avenue on to S. Pickett Street had already left for work. In this case, the survey data was insignificant and inaccurate in relationship to the amount of traffic flow if the timing of the survey was earlier in the day.
- In addition, the city has not addressed water drainage to avoid flooding of S. Pickett Street during heavy rain and high tide,
- The city has not addressed the need for adequate construction of the building to provide access by the fire department for fire protection for an apartment hi-rise, high density building.
- Has the city really addressed these issues while it was in a hurry to grant zoning approval for this structure ? It does not appear to be the case.

- 2. City of Alexandria Swimming Pool - survey and recommendations for swimming pools in Alexandria, Virginia, in May, 2012 - Population 139,000
- This survey does not accurately reflect the need and wants of the community regarding city pools. The city currently has a great need to replace the sole indoor swimming pool, Chinquapin, on King Street. The pool is over 25 years old and needs too many repairs. The roof leaks every times it rains. This enables mold to continue to grow. The air conditioning and heating systems are out of date and inadequate. The AC system is not worth trying to repair on an regular, expensive basis. There is dust everywhere. There are fans in the locker rooms and in the pool area to circulate air and disburse humidity. Why spend 1.4 million dollars to fix it? Why not just tear the building down and rebuild a new building? It would cost less in the long run to patch it up. The pool pumps are old and adequate. The company that manufactured them does not exist today. These are only some of the ongoing maintenance issues that create a possible hazard to health and safety to the general public at this facility. For many years, this center has been overused and overscheduled for various swimming classes and programs, including summer camps. Why put a bandage on this building over and over again?
- Has the City Manager ever gone swimming there? If not, try it out.
- This is a major health and safety hazard to the general public who use this pool. The city already has the land at the same location.
- Actually, the city need to build a second indoor pool for the city.
- City Manager, please do something about these issues.
- I attend quite a few meetings, but the only way I could attend all of them is if I were retired or unemployed. As a result, my voice is not being heard. That's true of most people in this city.
- It needs to become important to attend -- if each meeting is dominated by a few it is not useful -- if there can be input from all it would be important -- all city functions have to be seen at a local level -- be educational -- how does trash work, how does sewer work -- tours with family -- be creative in talking about mundane things that affect our lives
- Often when I do become aware it's too late to plan to attend.
- I don't know how to find out when and where they are.
- We moved here 6 months ago and would like to get involved.
- The primary reason is that I don't have time (or I'm working when meetings are held). Secondly, unfortunately, I've almost "given up" on the city. The west end of Alexandria has moved in such an opposite direction (a complete downhill free fall, in my opinion) from the beautiful, clean, QUIET, area it was when I moved here decades ago. Many of the most outspoken people at community meetings are people who in no way represent my interests; and they are taking over the west end of the city, by virtue of sheer numbers. (I say many, but there are a few "old-time" residents, who try to speak up on behalf of the betterment of the community, rather than what other free and subsidized entitlements they can get for themselves).
- I would like to participate but I feel that I have very little time at the moment.
- I oftentimes do not attend community events whereby the location being considered is generally not within my bailiwick. Though all areas of the city may be affected because of traffic considerations, quality of life, etc., I sometimes feel it is the responsibility of younger people to elicit responses, and also that those who live most directly within the affected area should be the ones who can give the most valued assessment of the planning and/or its directives.
- I have little confidence that they matter in the decision.
- "The same people drone on and take up all the time. There should be limits to the number of times that an individual can get on the agenda so the same ""squeaky wheels"" don't monopolize the process."
- The times never match my work schedule. Best case for me is to go online to attend.
- My comment is not original, but it is heartfelt: Public engagement is now encouraged only after policy decisions are made and certain planning assumptions and points of view set. The residents have not been

invited to SHAPE the vision, but rather to weigh in on concepts and plans that have had the rules defined mostly by the economic sustainability recommendations. Public meetings seem like people taking turns talking, but without dialogue. I'm turned off by council members or city staff engaging in private conversation while a citizen addresses them. Meetings are guided by facilitators who begin with a point of view. I appreciate how very difficult civic engagement is to muster and sustain -- and how very, very messy democracy is. And, I believe that leaders should lead. That said, the best leaders turn FIRST to residents and locally owned businesses and ask "What kind of community do we want? Could that vision be realized? How? At what cost? How do we get a majority of our residents and local business owners to engage in crafting a vision and plan?" Consultants and work groups should follow from that first and necessary process. I have been publicly quiet as others publicly flame current City Council and School leaders on development issues, school issues, social services issues, because I recognize all that has been accomplished. This is a good City. I'll stay informed. I'll vote. I'll continue to send compliments for good service. And I'll start showing up when showing up is more than showing up.

- "No information on meetings unless you are connected with the city or civic group.
- See my comments above.
- "I don't think it is Democracy in action when the meeting is dominated by people whose highest concern is stopping a project regardless of value / benefits. I don't want to hear redundant ""not in my back yard comments"". I do want to hear new thoughts and views but I dislike it when a meeting seems to have become hijacked NIMBY repetitions.
- I don't think project decisions should be based upon a head count of ""yes /no"" comments that are repetitive and voiced only to project an agenda of no."
- I find that the same people with the same concerns monopolize discussion for a very long period of time. It makes for long and tedious meetings.
- Not always aware of the meetings as the information is not in front of me. E-Mail reminders and meeting listings would be helpful for me personally.
- Basically what I said in #6
- Too time-consuming. Little likelihood that my values or views will be heeded.
- see #6.
- I don't miss many !
- The reality is most of us are just too busy to take a few hours to attend meetings in person. I know participation is important, but attending meetings would require leaving work early to make dinner ahead of time, taking kids to soccer practice, arranging for a sitter to put the kids to bed, coming home late and getting ready for work and school the next day, going to bed late, and getting up at 4:45am to go to the gym before work (and trying to stay awake at work meetings). Weekends are full of errands and kids' soccer games and just trying to go outside and enjoy living in this city at a park or festival, so sitting at a 12 hour public hearing just isn't in the cards. I know it sounds like a litany of excuses, but that is daily life for many of us who want to participate, and we are the lucky ones that don't have to take two busses to work a second job and walk down the street to the laundromat to do laundry and struggle to make ends meet. I care about civic issues but there should be a way to learn about the issues and voice input from home after my kids go to bed as well as going into communities to share proposals and solicit input in accessible ways (translation, childcare, holding meetings in different parts of the city).
- Same as #6
- I do attend a lot of meetings and participate in local government
- Although I periodically check the city website. I don't always know about the city held community meetings. Perhaps if they were advertised on the local news programs, it would help spread the word.
- Participate when have the time; biggest need for this City is a new 50-meter pool (should have an indoor water park to generate revenue)

- Not sure where I fit in, how I can relate, or what I can contribute.
- Meetings held on Saturdays conflict with religious observance.
- Too many meetings hard to figure out what to go to.
- Often meeting notices do not fully explain the extent of the reach of the meeting. A great example of this is the recent transportation corridor planning efforts that by title would indicate it was about traffic but in reality became planning tools to increase development.
- I do attend.
- The meeting formats and the length of meetings is too long. Plus there seems like there are too many meetings.
- I don't work 9-5 so alternate times would help me-
- The meetings often drag and there are many community members that tend to harp on subjects that excessive time is not needed to discuss them.
- It always seems that the city reps already have made their decisions and are just paying lip-service to the public.
- It always seems that the city reps already have made their decisions and are just paying lip-service to the public.
- I attend forums hosted by various community groups, but haven't hear of city held meeting on issues other than permits for use of certain buildings. I hear about city activities through work, but rarely get information at home, though I am a city resident.
- I attend forums hosted by various community groups, but haven't hear of city held meeting on issues other than permits for use of certain buildings. I hear about city activities through work, but rarely get information at home, though I am a city resident.
- I'll take full responsibility for not attending meetings. I haven't made it a priority, though perhaps I should, with property values in my neighborhood on the decline.
- Often times don't hear about the events until just a few days before.
- Concerns about conflict of interest.
- Personal mobility issues.
- It seems like the last few meetings I attended on BRAC 133 and on Beauregard Redevelopment were to explain the decision to me not to seek my input. Now I am seeing plans for the NOVA Community College with a 400 person dormitory for students and other persons whatever that means. The plans are all laid out. A neighbor showed them to me. Pretty bad communications.
- I don't have information on or confidence in the meetings being conducted efficiently or input being of utility.
- I get tired of listening to people complain.
- The times are not conducive to my work and church schedules.
- "Timing is often awkward for my attendance.
- I'm not convinced the City pays any attention to citizen input that doesn't fit the ""template""."
- Not sure what affect my participation will have.
- Lack of interest.
- What meetings are there other than the Council meetings?
- My husband has attended. Some of the meetings are so contentious and go so late into the evening they are not reasonably accessible.
- I attend when I have time and when the subject interests me.
- See explanation above.
- I am not always aware of community meetings.
- It's not clear the role of the public in each meeting, how the public will be engaged or permitted to participate.

- illness
- "don't attend when I'm not aware of what is going on
- also some important items like review of final City council approved Beauregard Plan was offered for a very limited time"
- I have a busy life that allows little more in schedule
- As a long time West End resident, I don't think that the city really has any interest in the opinions of West End citizens. The endless meetings on BRAC, which resulted in virtually no concessions to the residents, has led me to the belief that the real role of meetings is simply to give the illusion of participation.
- Discouraged by neighborhood association president.
- New to area
- I think that it would be a waste of time. The politicians will do what they want regardless what I suggest. Everything in Alexandria seems to be politics.
- I think that it would be a waste of time. The politicians will do what they want regardless what I suggest. Everything in Alexandria seems to be politics.
- Hard to find out when/where they are and the City typically sends out info about them the day of the mtg.
- I work in downtown Washington, so the time of day is also important; I'm rarely back in Alexandria before 7:00 p.m. during the week.
- New to the area.
- Over the years I have realized that the city council is dominated by one political party and often times, partisan decisions are made. The composition is not representative of the entire community. The city is way too political.
- I would participate if I knew about them
- Inconvenient times
- I believe more advertisement of the meetings needs to be put out. Especially to the west end.
- Inconvenient meeting times for working citizens or citizens with young children. For example, I was active in our neighborhood branch's Friends of the Library. We asked to consider changing the time (4pm on a Monday) to a time that would make it more accessible for the public -- but was told the convenience of the City staff was more important than public input.
- the City employees that show drive me crazy. they are self-important and hard to listen to. they give you the idea that the decision has already been made and they are only humoring us.
- As I work full time, I do not have time to attend every meeting. I try to attend those that have a more immediate impact on me/my neighborhood, but I cannot attend all meetings.
- Times are not convenient; evenings on school nights. Single parent, childcare issue and bedtime.
- Never had positive experiences in the past, most decisions are done deals before they come up to a meeting and the meeting is just a way to cover for the respective department.
- City sponsored meetings are not structured in a input-friendly manner.
- Often seems too long a time commitment, particularly if there is a lot of irrelevant, drawn-out public comment.
- Time and location of meetings is important as well as transportation there. I attend meetings at city hall because it is close to me, but others either are not advertised via the city's emails or are located too far away and at night.
- Time and location of meetings is important as well as transportation there. I attend meetings at city hall because it is close to me, but others either are not advertised via the city's emails or are located too far away and at night.

- Again reasonably priced transportation is necessary and if public transportation is the only means, then attending evening events is questionable.
- I do not like listening to a million other uninformed people pontificate; too much inefficiency in meeting conduct
- "I don't think we have enough community meetings!!!
- For the few that exist, I do learn of some when it is too late to attend, and I feel the City doesn't get this information to me well enough. I feel it should be easier to find out about meetings affecting my community and the city than it is today. "
- I don't like meetings.
- I'm not interested enough to attend a whole meeting on a myriad of topics. Online options only.
- Meetings are not well publicized, and should be in the evenings, not weekdays when many are working.
- In the past, attending the meeting did nothing because the decision was already made, so asking for neighborhood/community input was frustrating...at least that is the feeling several of us got.
- See comment for question 5.
- I do attend public meetings that are of interest to me and the issues I support.
- "Most of the city issues lately seem to be ""controlled"" by a few vocal citizens who are steadfast in their ways and unwilling to bend to new ideas. I do not want to be involved in any process that results in bitter letters to the editor when members of a work group do not get their way.
- The democratic process only seems to ""work"" when the loudest voices are satisfied. I will not dedicate my free time to sharing my ideas with others who prefer to railroad the process."
- For the most part I believe the City representatives have an agenda they wish to push regardless of the input from the community.
- city held community meetings are used as a front for city hall elected officials and staff to present what they think citizens want to hear and then go back to city hall and do what city staff and elected officials really want to happen so they can then say "well we did it, now let's do what we want". lack of transparency and representation of the facts are often with-held from citizens who are involved.
- I would like to, but I'm not sure where to find out the dates/times/locations. I'm a new resident of Alexandria, and I've some of this information is difficult to find online, or contradicts itself (i.e. it is not always clear which meetings are community meetings and which are for niche groups and organizations).
- I am on email lists, but sometimes only get notice of a meeting that day. The city seems to assume that everyone knows what is going on. Meetings need to be publicized well in advance and the city needs to provide an alternative means of providing input (like written comment) for those who cannot attend.
- The meetings are often late at night and go on too long. You wind up sitting and waiting for long periods of time to comment. There is no time certain when docket items are called.
- I live in Alexandria, Fairfax County
- I am unaware of an easy way e.g. on line/website or via e-mail to know what the topics are that are of interest to me and to follow the regular schedule as well as pros and cons of the issue, 2.) my personal experience in appearing before a city board in the one instance it was really important to me was seemingly pointless - Unless you are a "big" donor to City and/or Board officials or otherwise "known to important people" one's viewpoint or argument was not listened to at all and even talked down by Board members- there was seemingly no point in attending, the outcome seemed pre-determined; 3.) because of #2 - I have not spent time seeking out more meetings to attend.
- I do attend, but do not attend more because meetings are generally so very unsatisfying. Creativity, openness to new solutions to old problems and compromise seem largely absent. For elaboration, see comments that followed Question 5.
- They are at inconvenient times and are poorly managed.
- I do not take the time

- I am fairly certain the Alexandria government is run by people who do not share the interests of the upcoming majority of the community, i.e. 30-35 year old professionals... i.e. the riverfront development decisions forced back by angry sun-setters trying to keep diversity out of the neighborhood.
- I feel as though I'd have to actively seek out information regarding meetings in order to attend. I don't usually find out about meetings in advance.
- I think it's unfortunate when a few outspoken residents influence decisions affecting the city that a less vocal majority supports.
- I could have checked the first if something other than the all or none alternatives were available.
- If my homeowner association can revert by to their old system of distribution of announcements this might be helpful as there are many older neighbors who do not utilize the internet.
- I simply do not trust the process. I can attend 5 meetings, but if I do not attend the 6th -- the retirees will somehow be out in force and convince that they are not doing the right thing and the five prior meetings won't matter. In Alexandria, it is last in last out. You win through stamina and those of us with kids (or lives) are not valued as human beings with real opinions. The city seems to think that the only people who count are those who have nothing better to do than to go to meetings all day and all night all days of the week.
- Sidewalk cafes with outdoor seating is what make the place very lively and attracts many more tourists. Great that the city allows sidewalk dining... but WHY does the city tell all the restaurants that after a certain date in November they can no longer have outdoor seating? This makes no sense, and hurts tourism and sales. The date restriction on outdoor dining should not exist. Let them put tables outside all year long! If the people come and want to sit outside, why should the city stop this? Other cities allow this all year long. If it gets too cold, the restaurants can put out portable heaters, and extend the outdoor dining all year. Rules like this make no sense, and actually hurt sales and tax revenue for the city. Copenhagen has outdoor seating all year long! Miami Beach has outdoor seating all year long, and they use the heaters for several months when it's cold.
- All announced meetings seem to be right before they are scheduled. I think the city should send a weekly update on a weekly basis- same date and time. What I receive seems random.
- See above - I don't think our views are heard.
- I had participated more in the past, but I guess I just lost confidence in the impact these meetings had.
- also, many people attend them who are there to hear themselves talk and prolong the meetings past the point of usefulness.
- Just bought in Potomac Yard and I plan to take up a role in these meetings and happenings in the future.
- Just bought at Potomac Yard and looking to get involved
- I do tend to participate.
- City Staff does not speak or provide information unless asked...or submitting a report of data/facts.
- Many of the same citizens attend the meetings and are overly negative, confrontational, and don't seem to be attending for constructive or helpful reasons. I find these types of people off-putting and do not want to associate with them.
- Not confident it would be worth the time or relevant to me.
- I use public transportation. It is most often inconvenient for me to get there and return home.
- Fear of what others might think and negative reactions to ideas I might offer.
- It's too much like work - seeing the same people and discussing the same issues plus I think the level of discourse is pretty low. The squeaky wheel gets the grease in Alexandria - and some residents are very effective at squeaking.
- I have confidence in elected officials and civic association leaders and usually agree w/their decisions.
- continuing scheduling conflict
- I attend lots of City-held community meetings.

- Meeting notices are no always timely, nor is the notification process consistent. The opinions of the community do not seem to count or decisions have already been taken by staff/council and the community input is window dressing.
- Is there a listserv I could be on to find out about when and where meetings are occurring? I belong to the Rosemont listserv so hear about some things but am definitely missing general notices of city council and other community meetings.
- I am not aware of many community meetings. The option above applied to "all."
- certain people are permitted to dominate the discussion, drowning out alternate voices.
- I can't make them all so I go to the ones that are relevant to my area of the community....not always enough notice on the meetings and cannot adjust schedule that easily
- I suppose I assume that my input would not be welcome. My political ideas are not shared by the majority of those serving on City Council.
- NA
- Often I find out about meetings after they happen or I'm not able to attend.
- I have attended a few meetings but would like to attend more. I could attend if they were held at 8pm and if I was more aware of how my participation matters (i.e. is it a meeting to provide input? If so, how will my input be used? or is it just information? If so, please just send me the meeting minutes so I can read them on my own time.
- I am quite deaf, so can't hear very well at meetings. However, I feel strongly that the city has relied on developers too much to guide decisions.
- I don't believe my showing up and commenting makes much of a difference.
- I have attended meetings and I have not always felt welcome. Although rules are important, I feel like they are excessive and exclusionary. The meeting times have precluded my attendance, as well as the length of the meetings.
- It is good to see the city reach out and gives me small hope that the city will be honest and equal.
- timing of the meetings and information on topics
- My full-time job deals with urban growth and development, transit, and community participation. I often feel very strongly about some of the opinions I hear in public meetings and it makes me uncomfortable to participate in a public conflict, so I just stay away. Cowardly, but there it is.
- I only recently moved into Alexandria but have spent many years in the area.
- I often find out about community meetings after they have happened or by e-mail from an invested party the day of the meeting.
- Often I don't hear about meetings until the day before or the day of and cannot rearrange my schedule.
- I'm not sure how my input would be solicited or used.
- I believe it would not be a productive use of my time due to political bickering and "hidden" agendas
- See Question #5.
- Some boards have closed minds on some issues - traffic/parking, planning - BAR
- City Staff sometimes does not do tis homework (my experience with that is transportation - several times
- Why beat my head against a wall again.
- Not eager to hear personal agendas or anger
- A lot of going back and forth with no positive results
- I do not live in Alexandria
- They are often at inconvenient time or locations.
- Don't follow City News closely enough to make useful comments "opinions" not particularly helpful - need informal participation.
- Not very much information to the Spanish Speaking Communities

- I am busy at work.
- I attend on topics important/relevant to me

Question 8: What do you think are the most important ways to engage the community in public decision making? Provide additional comments here:

- Most of my neighbors have no idea what's going on, but do subscribe to the neighborhood listserv. The also read the local papers which have less and less unbiased information (mostly anecdotal info instead of facts)
- Again I believe Alexandria does a very good job in engaging the community and making sure the community has multiple ways to learn about planning in the city. However, I don't think there additional need for public meetings where verbal attacks are made against individuals. Disagreement on issues is OK but the recent berating of individuals is out of line.
- I really don't want to go to a hearing to hear the same five people talk at length about the same issues without adding anything new. (That is how I understand meetings often go)
- There are too many sub-groups/meetings to keep track off- take Beauregard, for example. There's the BRAC Working Group and meetings, the Beauregard Small Area Plan and meetings, the High Speed Transit-way meetings, plus others that I'm sure I can't remember. For something like this, there need to be regularly scheduled, ongoing meetings (2x quarter?), where these other topics are incorporated and discussed. This was citizens can PLAN to attend and participate in meetings.
- Things that I ranked "not important" might better be characterized as "nice to do, but not necessary." Calling them unimportant implies that there is no value in them, whereas all of these suggestions have value.
- For instance: Votenet Solutions, Inc has a few great tools for online interactions, voter registrations, community polling etc. I mean, yeah, it's where I work, but it's a great toolset for getting the word out to people who can provide really important feedback in a timely fashion.
- Making it easy to monitor a process as well as join a process that is already underway is very important.
- Community meetings should not be the only way to provide feedback on an issue.
- In our City, there really are a lot of families that do not use the internet at their homes. I am one of those families, so if I don't get it at work during the day I am not aware. Sometimes I get fliers which are helpful if received in advance of meetings.
- Sometimes it is difficult to identify issues important to a community early in a planning process. There needs to be some education and a discussion of an appropriate process before identifying important issues to be tackled.
- "Experts" might be useful, but they won't be if they're just preselected to essentially advocate for the City's predetermined/preferred conclusion. In terms of surveys, the questions can be slanted to produce whatever outcome the survey writer wants, so I wouldn't agree with the premise that a "statistically valid survey" is the end-all, be-all of opinion gathering.
- I think those of us who are paying the extraordinarily high price of what the city does should have a very large say in how it is spent. The taxes here are way too high.
- It's really important to engage the WHOLE community, not just those who have the time to attend meetings. It's also important to communicate via more traditional methods, not just through email and the web.
- Electronic submission of opinions, ideas, and the opportunity for discussion.
- "Provide information in language that is easier to understand or provide actual method of obtaining further details or explanation.
- Public hearings are way too late in the process. The proponents of whatever needs board/Council approval have already spent weeks or months negotiating with staff and lobbying Council members.

- If the City requests resident inputs, please also take action that reflects those inputs.
- As a resident of the West End, my experience has been that our community has not been involved in the early on planning process. Decisions are made without consideration of the residents.
- "The most effective way is to elect conservative city officials, but that's unlikely here.
- It is not enough to ask for the community's opinion -- the Council and City government must actually use the community input or no one will bother helping out.
- The "vocal minority vs. the silent majority" is always a problem and elected officials need to use common sense when making decisions!
- The most important way to engage the community is to listen to what residents want and make that happen. If people know that their participation and time spent leads to action on the part of City Council they will be involved. When the residents are ignored time and time again they stop trying to be part of the process.
- On that last point, there should be multiple communication options. Not everyone uses every medium.
- surveys are expensive to conduct properly, and will have bias unless carefully conducted- in this economic time, surveys aren't the best use of funds
- The community shouldn't be making the majority of decisions it makes and should be left to the private sector.
- Often I have attended/participated in city meetings/discussions and it was clear to me that the decision to do something was made prior to engaging the public - essentially, the public meetings were a complete sham (I won't name names/departments here). Why waste my and everyone else's time to give only the appearance of public input? There are other parts of the city which do a WONDERFUL job of engaging the public, listening to input/feedback and shaping the project as a result. You can't make everyone happy all the time but you can make most people happy sometimes.
- Get the word out in a better fashion so people know what is going on and when and where pertinent meetings are being held - I'm speaking specifically of Beauregard Small Area Plan development. Places like Washington Post - Washington Examiner - bus stop notices - sure there are other venues that would also be suitable.
- Again, I really don't think the City and its elected officials have a clue what it means to work together and this silly poll shows that,
- Unfortunately, I think the answer has to be all of the above. You need to offer multiple venues and opportunities because as is all too familiar to me, few people avail themselves of the opportunity so you need various options in the hopes of catching their attention in some way. Many of us choose not to pay the Cable monopoly so we don't have access to Channel 70. Do you livestream? I don't see any indication that you do on the website. Personally, I'd like to see increased use of tools like Google Hangouts as a way of allowing voters to have more intimate conversations with city employees or elected officials without having to go to City Hall. Maybe increased use of tools like seeclickfix or wikis to help crowdsource solutions in a more 21st century way. I think the website redesign awhile back was a huge improvement. I think navigation of the website could still be easier as the search function doesn't work quite as well as I would like. Personally, I'm also a big fan of open data and for using that data and other resources to provide more personalized service to me. Currently, the only "personalized" service I get are the notices for tax payments.
- I find comment boards not worth the effort. Staff summary of the comments turn them to mush. E-mail can be helpful in some situations. Virtual participation and social media are a waste of time, mine and yours. You can't replace human interaction with computers. This is not Sim City --- these are people's lives, their children's education and their home & neighborhood values. A short quick entry on Facebook, is not an enlightening discussion. Slowing down the process so that everyone has time to read, think and prepare comments would be helpful. Giving everyone the summer off from planning meetings would create happier citizen and staff. The pace of participation required by the Waterfront

Plan and the Beaugard SAP was exhausting, less productive of a good plan, and unnecessary. The pace is being driven by City Hall's political needs, not the community's needs or best interests.

- I like the idea about "statistically valid surveys" -- a lot of people in this town claim to represent the (silent) majority, when they most assuredly do not.
- Not all people use social media and email. Going into communities and talking with people face to face will always be the most important step.
- Not everyone has access to or uses social media or email communication tools. This effectively locks out an entire sub-segment of the city. Statistically valid must include EVERYONE's opinion. You cannot allow the responses to be skewed because they are gathered anonymously and electronically.
- I feel as if small groups deter comments. It seems counterproductive, but I have attended several public meetings where there was a 'representative sub-committee' set up to whittle out a 'consensus'. In more than one case, that sub-committee either never reported back their ideas or the ideas reported were a radical deviation from the general input at the meeting; overall, I did not feel as if the smaller groups represented the larger group as a whole. Plus, when the groups are broken down, less people are participants and there are less ideas thrown in the mix.
- Need MORE online opportunities to provide feedback to city planners and decision-makers.
- I think getting the word out about the existence of eNews or other social media opportunities is important. Most people don't even know the City has a Facebook page, or have no idea about eNews existence. I don't know how many people actually frequent the website. I think you need to use more general media outlets if possible to alert people about what is going on, i.e. radio/TV/media websites. Or, reach out through the school system to get parents who normally may not participate or hear about opportunities to participate.
- I believe current outreach efforts are successful.
- I am generally engaged in civic matters myself, but believe other approaches to involve my 20- to 40-something peers who are family- and career-oriented are important if we are to succeed in representing all Alexandrians. Too often, public participation at city meetings is dominated by the same old faces who claim to represent all of Alexandria but are seemingly resistant to community change. Finding ways to draw out new voices, especially younger to middle aged Alexandrians, would improve the process. I also think we need to be careful not to create such an elaborate process for public comment that we stifle our nimbleness. How many times do we need to have a public hearing on the same topic? For any given policy, an up-front listening session, a series of public workshops (with targeted outcomes), one Commission-level hearing, and one Council-level hearing should be sufficient. Finally, I do think it's odd that Council votes at the same time that it holds its public hearings. It gives the perception that the input is merely perfunctory, and doesn't provide even a day's time to consider public feedback and rework anything objectionable. Instead, I would hold the first reading at the public hearing meeting, and the second reading at the following meeting.
- Again gaining the public's attention during the decision making process is difficult. Providing opportunities does not necessarily capture attention. Also minority protection is important. The will of the mob cannot always govern - i.e. survey results.
- "This survey is a great start to increasing civic engagement! It needs to reach out to a wide community of citizens who are not tied in to the city email distribution or ACT's distribution lists. As David Sachs noted in his departing letter printed in this week's Alexandria Times, ""civic engagement is practiced by a vocal, educated, extremely small minority, most of whom are in the middle class or wealthier.""
- I really like the idea of virtual participation via the web, but again, this will be limited to pretty much the same small minority of vocal, educated, middle class citizens. Perhaps one way to increase participation among underrepresented groups would be through the churches and going out to community events such as the Arlandria festivals.

- Developing a habit of civic engagement needs to start with our youth and in our schools. Many of our current city officials are products of our school system, yet our current students do not presently display much interest in being active in the civic process of our community. City staff as well as elected officials should be coming to our schools to solicit the opinions and cultivate the interests of our young people about the issues facing this city. For many of the families who have arrived more recently in Alexandria, it is often the children who are first to break the language and cultural barriers to bring their elders into the process. "
- Most people do not like to participate in surveys, do they ever capture the voice of the entire community?
- In-person participation takes more time from participants, but it encourages a higher level of investment in issues than just logging in.
- We pay for expert city staffers. We need not pay for outside consultants to do your planning. Open-ended questions should be presented to the public, not weighted options after all the planning has been done in secret.
- Communities will only feel engaged, or feel the need to or value in engaging, if they believe that elected official and managers will be responsive to them. I haven't seen that here in Alexandria.
- Let's value the opinions of those of us who actually PAY taxes more than those who do not. If you don't have skin in the game, tax increases and zoning changes have no impact on your life.
- The more the city involves people, the more buy-in you get.
- love the virtual participation idea
- Use of surveys needs to reflect the culture of the survey respondents. The use of online or telephone surveys may not be as effective as more costly in-person surveys.
- "I think the key to the future of governance in communities is the adoption of notions from open source governance. We live in an age where the force multiplier for quality and impact someone can have is the Internet. Government can take advantage of this as well to get citizens engaged and participating in the decisions and issues that affect the city. The white house has already made strides in this area and, while it is difficult at a national scale, the idea fits very well with a local community where people have specific and tangible impacts to policy decisions. Implementations of this have to fit the specific community so Alexandria would have its own flavor of course. I think the spirit of what this survey is attempting to uncover is how to achieve citizen involvement and engagement and my best answer is this type of approach.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-source_governance
- <http://opensource.com/government>
- "Many people in the City are busy and the ability to participate remotely (virtual) and by email/web (asynchronously) may improve the level and breadth of participation.
- Virtual participation is an EXCELLENT option that I highly support. I would be MUCH more active and knowledgeable with that option in place.
- I prefer email--when everything starts going to Facebook and Twitter, I no longer follow the issue.
- A lot of people are afraid to speak in public, so they don't participate. Finding another option would get you more input.
- Geo-located notices.
- In the past it appeared that there was opportunity for express opinions and dialogue, but in the end it seemed to make no difference.
- Get the community involved at the start of the discussion, program or, project. This will empower them to participate more fully. This will make them stakeholders.
- I also like comment boxes or recording devices in prominent places around the City.

- Could the City try Google Hangouts and other ways to hold virtual public meetings? One challenge might be verifying identities and making sure people with legitimate connections to the City are participating (and not others).
- "Well planned and conducted charrettes.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate; having professional staff with expertise in public outreach will really help. "
- Answer two combines two separate suggestions that, in my opinion, apply to two different groups of people. I, for example, would be much more likely to express my position on comment boards than at City public hearings.
- Online participation is the way to go.
- I think the city should be using all of the above methods.
- The same nay-sayers seem to have more time and energy than the rest of us and they just dominate meetings with the same nasty and unconstructive comments. Their viewpoint needs to be kept in check and balanced with others', so others feel their voice can be heard and will be valued.
- Consider a mobile application to allow push notifications on issues and solicit opinions or feedback on important issues City council and staff are working on.
- Make people feel their opinions are important to the process.
- ask people on surveys like this what they value and then take it to heart. Not important should be changed to "not effective" because you are already doing most of these things... and can you honestly say that it is better here than it was 25 years ago? Despite Del Ray/Mt. Vernon and Prince street being renovated and rebuilt, the overall quality of life in Alexandria has deteriorated.
- I don't really know how to reach people who think they care about an issue but don't take to time to become really informed, and are hence vulnerable to every breeze of misinformation that blows through on the wings of somebody's ideology.
- I don't really know how to reach people who think they care about an issue but don't take to time to become really informed, and are hence vulnerable to every breeze of misinformation that blows through on the wings of somebody's ideology.
- City public hearings often are a rehash of known positions. Can take all day and are not effective. Better to form positions through early involvement in the process and small groups to present a unified position with reasons and recommendations presented as a unit rather than by each individual. Citizens involved who support this position should be identified.
- Be careful about becoming too reliant on technology (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) to engage residents because you will cut off people who do not have Internet access or choose not to use these programs. There need to be a variety of ways available to participate. Face-to-face communication is still vital.
- Most important is the involvement of people affected early on in a process. For as long as I can remember a major problem with politics is that by the time the public is made aware of something -- or even asked to vote -- the key decisions have already been made.
- The use of surveys needs to be done without a predetermined outcome. I have participated in the City Survey more than once and found the questions to be skewed, so that there was no other outcome than for over 90% of the public to be happy with the way things are.
- You collect all this "data" and that's the last we hear of it. For 4 years of Landmark meetings, the City refused to have any tapes or Minutes taken, so there was no written record. So it's like reinventing the wheel when you start up again. There were many wonderful ideas of what residents wanted to see as part of landmark with emphasis on retail, commercial and recreational. The staff and Council never deviated from its original focus of 6000 plus condominiums. It was a failed plan. No mention of a school, for a community that large. No emphasis on how to connect that "oasis" with transit throughout the city. Horrible!

- stop changing the approved plans after the approval, stop changing the zoning laws and providing other exemptions whenever anyone asks for them, and stop doing both of those things without the same level of public input that was required at the beginning of the process.
- Go to where the people are instead of forcing us to come to the Council and decision-makers.
- See above.
- LISTEN!!!
- Engaging the community is good but the city leaders must make a decision and stand by it. Leaders should lead so that progress is made without revisiting the same old issues multiple times.
- Make use of Cameron Station meeting space and meeting times to make it easy for our neighborhood residents to participate.
- I believe every citizen should have access to CSPAN even if you cannot afford cable television.
- Not sure if this is the case, yet in the "old days" after the public comment meeting, public testifying at Planning Commission was closed. However, the developer was allowed to make changes and yet the public was "shut out" of comment. If the developer is going to make last minute changes there should be options to either delay the final decision OR allow public comment to address the latest changes.
- Make sure news coverage is accurate. Not everyone uses social media or email.
- P&Z. Needs to be more open and honest with the community. They tend to disregard the feelings of the area they are working with.
- Ground rules to lit endless debate and don't naysayers hijack a meeting and stop progress. Set a timeline with ground rules and keep to it.
- Make people feel important and actually necessary!!! Invite them, personally, for their input....many people are afraid, or don't know how, to testify at public hearings or write letters. You've made it easy...now just invite them.
- Having someone distill all the half-truths and misperceptions on issues (like truthorfiction.com or factcheck.org) so that citizens feel they can make decisions or participate fully to the best interest of all those living in Alexandria. i.e., providing an objective side-by-side argument on issues such as the waterfront choices, Beauregard, Landmark, etc. Truly understanding the background or underlying factors would help me advocate for or against an issue. But that's not likely to happen
- "I don't want to join another web site in order to participate. I won't join Facebook because of privacy concerns. Don't limit my avenue of participation to Facebook.
- If you're going to have small group discussions, make sure that there is a city leader in each group. The city leader doesn't have to lead the group.
- There must be more ways and more effective ways than the ones you offered here. I don't know what they are. Why did you choose these for the survey?"
- "Establish an engaging way to find out about topics and how to participate in the process. As part of the communication, make sure that people know how their input will be used.
- Also, look at how this survey is being advertised, and analyze what that tells you about the city's public participation process."
- The big meetings may be politically necessary but they are do not fit the way our family lives. Seem way out of date
- These are all great ideas!
- By time I hear about City initiatives, it's too late. He planning has occurred and it's the plan implementation that gets all the media headlines.
- I think the city has surveyed itself into inertia. The current process drags on too long, and the people/interest groups who say they 'need more time,' 'didn't know' are 'weren't included' are just trying to jam up the process. Alexandria slipped to number 26 in a look at the wealthiest cities, while neighboring Fairfax and Arlington fared a great deal better - both are more aggressive.
- I get lots of good information from the Seminary Hills Association board meetings and website.

- "I really appreciate the availability of taped City meetings. I would be nice to have more meetings available taped on the website and better ways to provide feedback after or while watching the information.
- I like to idea of increased use of statistically valid surveys. It can be difficult in a public forum to start a view that is different from the ""accepted"" (or most vocal) neighborhood view. I would feel less inhibited when participating in a survey. "
- Need to do better in communicating the decisions that are being made and how to provide input.
- where are the delegates we elected? what are they doing for us?
- City officials only listen to people that they feel are "important". Average people's views are not solicited or appreciated. The views of "important" Democrats are considered but Independents and Republicans are ignored.
- Engaging the community earlier to key. 10 days warning for a public meeting is too short - and the city does a poor job reaching out to affected neighbors, businesses, and civic associations about upcoming issues in their neighborhood. Too often staff decisions become "done deals" because local citizens are not given opportunity to voice their opinions before decisions are made.
- Use surveys to determine not only "what issues are important to the community" but also the range, nature and intensity of the community's views on those issues.
- Have a nexus between public decision making and enactment of City policy.
- Testimony from experts can be enlightening, but there can be an underlying agenda when that testimony comes from a stakeholder with an interest in the outcome of a local project. I do believe that information provided by other communities can be very helpful.
- I have problems with community decision making because 1) there tends to be "the drawbridge mentality", i.e. I've got mine; 2) NIMBY & 3) as exhibited in complaining about the Woodrow Wilson bridge, those not qualified were given credibility as experts. So how do you extract valid information from community input.
- City Council Member need to make a point of coming to one Parkfairfax Board meeting at 7:00PM just to say " hello and I am here is you need me". The same goes for the Mayor. Whomever is going to come, needs to let the manager know so that he can alert the Board President. The meetings are on the 3rd Wed. at 7PM at 3360 Gunston Rd. (upstairs on the left) The manager is George Gardner. The Annual Meeting wi a good time for the Mayor to show up. In 2013, it will be on April 17, I think.
- "Ensure that minutes of all meetings are on the web soon after any meetings - then it would not take several months to find out that your comments had been totally mis-represented.
- By the way, I've never seen any minutes/web information on some committees, e.g. the what does the sister cities committee do? The meetings should be recorded and minutes put on-line. There are a lot of people on this committee and I'm sure they'd like their work known to Alexandrians, it can't just be about the Scottish Walk."
- q and A
- There is considerable danger shifting public interaction to the web; as we've seen with service businesses and other forms of contact, the web method can end up being another buffer/bit bucket that actually inhibits dialogue. Adding web interfaces is fine, but not as a substitute for direct human contact.
- Alexandria needs a real newspaper.
- Allow sufficient time for information to flow, with honesty and integrity attached.
- The problem is not avenues fro participation, it's listening
- The most important way to engage the community is making sure everyone is aware of the opportunities to participate--I feel like this can be difficult to know about (I tend to not know a planning meeting, for example, occurred until after it has already happened).

- I don't use social media, but frequently use email. So having various communication methods available would be ideal.
- I think it is important to set a schedule from the begging (e.g. there will be a total of 4 meetings, one in Sept., one in Nov., etc., each will be held at 7pm at XX location - agenda and minutes from the previous meeting with be at XX website, proceedings can possibly be watched on Channel 70, etc.). It describes, right from the onset what can be expected and folks can get the information on their schedules early and then figure out how they can participate.
- Transparency is very important to any City process. All meetings should be advertised and accessibility should be ensured.
- Virtual communication is still not accessible for much of the population of the city. For example, those who answer this survey will only represent those who have regular access to technology and know how to utilize it.
- Go out into the community, rather than expecting the Community to come to you.
- having smaller, community based working groups that are able to provide feedback to City government would provide a better comfort level to residents; many are uncomfortable speaking in front of "officials" but will openly share among friends and neighbors.
- I think we'd all benefit from hearing from actual experts on things like urban development and flooding.
- I don't think it's about method; it's more about motive. Adding more ways for input won't generate civic engagement if the populace doesn't trust the intent.
- Advance notice is important -- lots of it.
- Please no surveys - they are so difficult to do well.
- "Virtual" attendance doesn't work for me; my dial-up doesn't "do" video. However, I can participate in teleconferences if need be. Advance notice and numerous opportunities to attend and in different locations would be appealing to me since I'm actually quite busy and frequently busy by the time I learn of a meeting. Evening meetings don't work well for me. I'm starting to fade by 8 PM.
- Make it easier to jump in. It's hard to find information on what's already occurred in previous meetings so that i know the foundation in moving forward.
- Must include the voice of the many who never attend meetings; most in the City have no idea what goes on
- Inviting the community early on is very important. For example, a busy intersection next to my residential neighborhood is about to expand in order to increase car capacity. Our neighborhood was never contacted about this change that will bring more cars down our streets. We found out about this change from another civic association. We have never been contacted for input.
- "1. ESTABLISH CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED.
- 2.HAVE SOME SORT OF BUDGET RANGE FOR WHAT THINGS WILL COST....BEFORE LAUNCHING INTO PROJECTS, OR PAYING CONSULTANTS FOR SURVEYS AND PLANS.
- 3. DETERMINE THE NEED FOR THE PROJECT AND HOW TO PAY FOR IT before STARTING THE PROCESS.
- 4. LOOK FOR AND SOLICIT PRIVATE MATCHING DOLLARS FOR FUNDING PROJECTS. "
- Sorry to have checked all of the above as "important," but I truly feel they all are critical to the process.
- When I see city staff so dependent on so-called outside experts, I begin to question the competence of city staff. I have also developed a perception that developers have their fingers in the planning pie early on and are able to manipulate city staff to the developers advantage.
- I believe if you hold smaller group discussions, they can appoint one person to then express the majority view to a larger, governing group.
- Pay more attention to the civil associations and the Federation of Civic Associations. Staff currently ignores them.

- Politics has been taking place in Alexandria almost three centuries. bet this is the first time we have a public questionnaire request. How long will it be before any City representative show interest in West Alexandria?
- Be certain that the City's definition of Participation includes "communication" which means a TWO WAY exchange
- City public hearings sometimes become circus events. The rules for these should be enforced: timing, no cheering, etc., Alexandria is changing. It is becoming a younger city. For some, this is hard to understand.
- "Be clear about process of citizen input, and move to a decision. In many cases, differing a decision in the name of public input adds cost.
- "First make the community feel like their voices are being heard, not only to hear them, but to actually take everyone's opinions into consideration and
- a priority"
- The Alexandria Gazette and the Washington Times are not particularly helpful, and the Post is of limited use in researching local issues. A more direct means of communication using the neighborhood associations that exist throughout the City might be an improved means of interacting with citizens.
- These choices seem to limit participation to those who are already engaged or are already easy to reach. Reaching out to include all voices may require phone calls or snail mail or notes sent home with public school children, possibly even knocking on doors.
- Many citizens distrust the local government because they have not seen issues and solutions developed from the "ground up." Much of this is due to lack of participation early on. It leads to many segments of the public being vulnerable to propaganda from some self-appointed civic "leaders" that highly filter the information. What is needed is a serious educational effort to convinced people that LOCAL government has far more of a direct impact on their lives that the Commonwealth or Federal governments, and that EARLY participation and input avoids the feeling of being confronted with a "fiat accompli" when a decision is being finalized by Staff and Council. When most individuals talk one-on-one with the Staff, for example, they find the Staff open and professional, and trust and confidence is restored.
- I think there are ample ways to participate but that many people don't know always know about them.
- The City website is extensive but it is often difficult to find what one is looking for. I'm not technical enough to propose a solution other than perhaps a more extensive, cross-referenced "search" mechanism.
- "It has been my experience that public participation does not change the city's mind what it's going to do with a particular project. That needs to be changed if you want people to contribute ideas.
- Some of these are great and while not to be negative, are unfortunately unrealistic. The suggestion of "inviting the community early on in the planning process" can be so discouraging. I know for a fact dozens of times the City, the Planning Dept., etc. have reached out to the community in any number of ways and has done everything they could to get specific involvement and these certain groups would refuse. Then at the last minute, suddenly pop up and say they didn't get to be part of the process.
- "Make the criteria that is or isn't being taken into account open & clear.
- Do not make assumptions or say what they are. Having a plan for underground parking on the waterfront at the hotels is ridiculous and even the structural engineers agree.
- Then LISTEN to those who are impacted by whatever it is--the waterfront or BRAC
- Don't pit one side agst the other. Everyone wants something GOOD for the waterfront or BRAC area--it isn't us v. them"
- There needs to be special attention to reaching out to groups that are traditionally under-represented at "community meetings" -- renters, ethnic minorities, working couples. Our meetings seem to be

dominated by retirees. People with young children and two-income couples don't have much time to come to meeting after meeting to beat a topic to death.

- It's obvious that despite the community's desires or opinions, the council or city staff make decisions that benefit their views or help corporate policy. The city council members have their own agendas and push those despite the views of the public they serve. You need to make citizens feel as if you truly are asking for input and you will honor their input or people will get frustrated and lose faith in the City government.
- "open-ended" meetings can be a free-for all. I was at the GW debate for the mayor and city council members and the moderator was unable to keep the crowd from interrupting, clapping and otherwise ruining the evening. Plus, many questions were biased, although the presence of the League of Women voters helped moderate the aggressive stance from the affordable housing advocates and the Old Dominion Boat Club, the two most vocal groups as far as I could tell. What gets lost is a quieter, more thoughtful discussion in these forums.
- "Small group discussion may 'inform' staff but impacts recommendations only to an extent. Staff must adhere to guidance from the City Manager, City Council, City ordinance, and case law decisions. When their 'guidance' leans a particular direction, their recommendation reflect it.
- By the time an issue gets to a public hearing it is more than likely a proverbial 'done deal'. Expecting any changes more than minor tinkering, requires the act of an African-American church congregation (I've witnessed it!). A few years I began leaving when a hearing runs late into the evening and now, most times I just don't bother to attend - exercise in fruitlessness.
- Comment Board? Do you mean Twitter-like social media? (don't have time for Twitter) Most comment boards I've read (online new media, blogs) are riddled with comment from highly opinionated yet ignorant participants or participants looking to blame someone (devolves into name calling).
- Similar issues: too much traffic, not enough (or not free) convenient parking, loud noise (cars, people, or commercial activity), inconsistent application of policies/procedures (application determined by staff), ability to readily access complete/accurate information... I could go on (for free!). Do you really need to pay a consultant to learn this?
- My experience indicates that something becomes an 'important issue' when urgent, when that citizen considers the issue to be a direct, adverse impact on them. The learning curve of becoming involved is frustratingly time consuming, particularly when you have but 10 days to comprehend and respond.
- Inviting the community early is good; Staff did that with the Waterfront Plan.
- I do not use social media. Allowing participation via email I would find useful."
- use real data statics no peoples impressions....cause shrill hysteria...BRAC is a good case of this nonsense..yes it was bad; no, not the end of the world
- discussion and public policy decisions must be based on empirical data, not emotion, and unsupported opinion
- "There are of plenty of opportunities for ""community participation"". The problem isn't the quantity but rather the quality of those opportunities. The public should be involved at the very beginning of the process. Too often, city staff (at times with developer input) comes to the public with all of the major decisions already in place. The staff doesn't engage in conversation, they tell, rarely ask and hardly ever listen.
- Also, the process and the procedures that will be followed in designing & reviewing development projects with the community should be transparent, organized & fairly uniform from project to project, so that everyone can be reasonably clear as to what to expect at the beginning. (However, the process should be open-ended with each step following in order as the prior portion is completed; not a rigid time line.).
- The genius store called, they're running out of you.

- "My only concern with using the various new technologies, is that they should not completely replace the old ones.
- Personally, I do not use Twitter or Facebook. In general they consume time and require effort to monitor privacy. And I hope what we discuss is more important than 144 characters.
- I do not get cable, so any plan that relies solely on cable would not have my support."
- Our elected and appointed leaders have a disturbing tendency to ignore the experiences of other communities and only listen to the core of activists who have time to attend public meetings. It explains why Alexandria is always playing catch-up to surrounding communities.
- I personally have a bias toward "design charrettes", hopefully I spelled that right.
- It's important to give people better tools for participating in the public debate, however, the subtext behind these questions is the implication that better decisions will be made if more people express their opinions. I'm not sure that will necessarily lead to better dialogue.
- The existence of a permanent channel of communication is also important. It is very difficult if not impossible to "provide opportunities to explore issues through dialogue and deliberation, and for everyone to express their positions", when a particular development planing process is already in motion. I believe that the city of Alexandria would benefit from creating permanent channels of communication, which do not have to be limited to public meetings. Perhaps cultural events where people get together in a non contentious environment would also be good.
- I do not use social media as a conduit for information, am not sure of its value as yet. As for city e-news: previously, one click was all that was necessary to get the info, now another step is involved in opening the attachment. I prefer the first method, older method as it was extremely simple to scan the contents with immediacy, instead of opening and waiting for an attachment to download.
- There also has to be an END to the issue -- gathering information is great and listening to input but at some point our leaders of our great City need to make a decision and move forward. The problem is not getting back to those participants what the decision is. If the sessions go on and on and on, people tend to leave the process so the capability of being able to contact everyone that was involved (the nay sayers usually last the longest) of the outcome.
- Also, people who are approved for Commissions and appointed committees should be expected to provide two-way communication to the larger groups they are intended to represent. These members should not be allowed to act as filters of information. They need to demonstrate how they are serving the larger citizenry through their Board participation so it is clear that they are not simply leveraging the system to meet their individual needs/agendas.
- Using modern communications can go a long way, COMCAST CH 107 shows Twitter feedback simultaneously with political programming content.
- Caveats: Engagement must be open, transparent, legitimate. Loaded survey questions and planning assumptions derived from a flawed process would render engagement a waste of time. (Example: Don't ask the public to comment on a design or a policy without first asking us "would it be desirable to do X?")
- "The above options lead me to believe that you know exactly what the problems areas are.
- Please stop the Good Ole Boy Network and Insider Alexandria that exists.
- See answer to question 7. The need for sun to shine on the entire process - and for measurable results is essential for as things have been it is hard to dispell the thought (perceived - reality) that some are listened to more than others, that the "influencers" are a few priveleged sectors i.e. developers and those who will economically benefit from decisions - these being other than citizens/residents.
- Make it clear what the parameters are & just lay it out there so everyone is on the same page. Use real market data to express what is possible and not possible. (e.g. I work in Arlington and people want a Trader Joe's on every corner. Not going to happen because of the market, but people still push for it and think the County can MAKE it happen.)

- People participate when they want to effect the outcome and when they think the outcome matters.
- Many of the city committees and city decisions are directed by staff who may more in alignment with state of the art, rather than what is most healthy for our city. I think the city manager and city council need to be much more aware of who is setting policy and ensure that at least one citizen is represented when developing city policy.
- Yes to Virtual participation! It is really difficult to leave the house in the evenings to go to meetings because my kids go to bed early for school, so even if childcare were offered I probably still couldn't go. Online participation would really make it easier. I'd love to participate, but it's also hard to stay open minded about the participatory process that becomes controlled by the vocal minority with the free time to attend, and likely don't represent those of us too busy with families and careers. I think many other parents of young children would say the same, given the active discussions that occur about civic issues on the local parent listserves.
- Make people feel relevant in their participation
- Always concerned that only the idle and overly concerned are heard because the rest of us are working and raising our kids. Not sure that surveys will cure the problem, but what else do we have?
- Make it easier to find out what happened at meetings and post changes to ongoing projects. For example, there was no easy way to find the revisions for the waterfront plan as it moved through the process. You had to rely on various groups to put out their own spin.
- Using email I think would greatly help with community participation.
- My general impression is that many projects are initiated with city staff and with engagement with city officials, details worked out and plans are presented to citizens as a fait accompli, with community input sessions being little more than window dressing to give the appearance of an open and transparent process. Earlier engagement with citizens is very important on projects that impact the community.
- I think that the challenge to surveying the public is reaching all segments of our residents and those who work in the city. Some groups of people may be more likely to attend meetings and others more likely to post on web forums. All groups should be represented when soliciting public input.
- I think that the challenge to surveying the public is reaching all segments of our residents and those who work in the city. Some groups of people may be more likely to attend meetings and others more likely to post on web forums. All groups should be represented when soliciting public input.
- "It is often difficult to attend public hearings because of other responsibilities, especially family responsibilities. The city should allow citizens the opportunity to provide video testimony that would be shown during the City Council or other public hearing.
- The city should also solicit questions that citizens have on various aspects of city government. The answers should be provided in a prominent place on the Web site."
- The key is early engagement in policy discussions using all of the tools mentioned above.
- We have to make virtual participation just as important as in person.
- I think virtual participation might be a good option, but holding meetings at other times would be better. In-person participation is always preferable.
- "There is no comprehensive, easy to read report that gets to the Alexandria citizens gauge how the city is doing with tax payer dollars. The foundation of a democratic society is trust in government and as a tenet of that it is important to communicate to the citizens. If you are interested in getting the public involved begin reporting with an honest, accurate report each year.
- <http://www.talgov.com/Uploads/Public/Documents/auditing/pdf/citizenreport2011.pdf>
- Few communities are similar to Old Town in the proximity of businesses to residences, which engenders unique issues or problems.
- I do not believe that Alexandria politicians are ready to discuss what the residents want. They will do what is more expedient for them regardless what the people want.

- I do not believe that Alexandria politicians are ready to discuss what the residents want. They will do what is more expedient for them regardless what the people want.
- Give community members an equal say in organizations that directly impact them, eg the Board of Architecture Review. The current BAR is seen as overbearing and unreasonable to the point of ridicule. Neighborhood gatherings often include discussions of how the BAR has made it impossible to make improvements to even rotting buildings or to remove eyesores such as chain link fences. Yet residents have no recourse - the BAR's decision is final, unless one wishes to go down the path of a lawsuit. There needs to be some balance and sanity restored to the decisionmaking process at the BAR.
- the city only told us about the new trolley routes after they had made plans for example
- "If the city only comes to the table after they've already reached an agreement with a developer, then it is no longer a discussion with the citizens to talk about options, but simply informing them of what is and then to hear complaints. The city already has laws/ordinances/rules in place about the process but hasn't been following them or applying them
- I am still reeling from one hearing where a citizen asked for a single very minor variance on where to build a shed on his very odd shaped yard that was bounded on the front and back by city streets and on the third side a small parcel of city property (where the two streets came together). The city refused. But then the very next request was from a large developer who was asking for 7 (seven!) not so minor variances. It quickly became clear that the hearing was simply a formality... a show for the citizens so that the city could claim they followed the rules when in fact it was a done deal. Why are zoning laws only applicable to citizens and not to the developers?"
- seems like a few people "control" the process, and that our input doesn't really matter.
- When I check the box for "virtual" participation, I don't expect the city to provide web technologies so that I can interact with the group that is meeting in person, but it would be good to have the meeting (whether it's city council meeting or candidate debate) be broadcast on the web, if possible.
- Bring the information to the community early and often. I can't stress this enough. Provide updates between meetings. Get out and talk to people informally. Not all information needs to be gathered at a structured meeting. Hold lunchtime information sessions for those who can't otherwise attend. Coordinate with other local civic, non-profit, and retail organizations. Go outside the typical city organizational "comfort zone".
- I think that the "virtual" participation is critical, as are statistically valid surveys, and especially involving communities EARLY in planning processes -- and then following up! A good example is that I saw a listing on the DRCA listserv about a community meeting to design bus shelters for the new high speed bus on Route 1. I did not attend because the time was inconvenient for me personally - but I did look at all 3 designs on the website and I felt okay with any one of them. Looking at the website is when I learned we would get this dedicated bus lane (explaining the reason for tearing up the median of Route 1 for the first time to me!). Now only a few short months later, the lane is curbed, sod planted, and the traffic signals removed. I guess we're not getting a bus???? But no one tells me. I feel this is typical of the round-about ways I learn things, and the lack of communication from the City to me.
- data, surrounding jurisdictions, research...and how about engaging the many universities here for undergrad/grad research pro bono projects on traffic, urbanization, development, trees, parks, demographics, public policy, economics, commerce, real estate, housing, public transportation, etc., etc., etc.
- E-mail is the way to go. If you're on the web, you have e-mail. Social media sites often exclude the public as a whole. Those who are not members of the site from even reading the materials on the site. Social media also requires folks to sign up for another account to manage and web sites like Facebook have major privacy issues. This is contrary to the purpose of open government.

- The fact that there are 5 days left for the conclusion of this Survey (which I just learned about today) and so few Alexandrians have responded, is a tell tell sign of the serious problems in communicating important information to the Community.
- All of these are great ideas. I participate in the American Medical Association's House of Delegates (their policy making body). Prior to meetings, ideas are posted on line and physicians can offer their opinions via a virtual committee. It helps the committee chairs to condense opinions and focus in-person discussion on the key concerns. An approach like that could be very helpful.
- statistically valid surveys must present numbers and not percentages. This makes the survey biased, i.e. 85% of whatever does not give the number of respondents who were asked a question or involved. It could have been just 3 people. many citizens do not use the web, social media or other technology to find out information and many folks may not have a computer, even in 2012. Using outside "experts" from outside our community does not mean they know what's going on in the community nor are aware of the issues. When city hires outside consultants to represent them, of course they are going to talk the "city talking points" - that's why city hired them!!
- The city generally hears from the same small groups of people and because they are vocal the city seems to assume it has received adequate input. In my opinion, the memberships of small task forces are hand picked to ensure the city already knows what it will hear. The city also should not spend any more money on consultants or surveys unless the public has asked for it. Parking "surveys" that equate equally parking on the 100 and 1000 block of a street (i.e., concludes there is adequate parking on the 100 block because there is lots of parking on the 1000) block are a waste of money.
- City should show that it is proactive on major issues. For example, the Small Area Plan for North Old Town is big time outdated, yet initiation of the rewriting process is not until mid 2013 at best. This SAP is critical to the future of AX and N Old Town, what with the closure of GenOn and the Waterfront development issues we face. Rewrite and approval will take significant time; therefore earlier and proactivity is better.
- The community is broader than the "Civic Associations" in town (some of which are "cliques" of neighbors that really do not welcome others that live in the neighborhood) The community is composed of many busy individuals that need to :1.) have some regular way via computer e.g. e-mail or a dedicated neighborhood website - of finding out what issues are being discussed that concern esp. their neighborhood 2.) The community needs to be more broadly represented on boards (e.g. BAR and BZA) that make important decisions that affect people's lives but neither seem to be representative nor is it transparent how these people come to obtain and retain these important positions 3.) Find some regular and transparent way for people to get information 4.) find some way for individuals that do not have time to come to community meetings to have their opinions clearly heard and acknowledged.
- "Larger sample" methods such as surveys, twitters, etc. may have some value in affording users a sense of participation, but are probably of little substantive value, reflecting public opinion and attitudes at the moment, rather than well thought-out, considered judgment. I would not trade one issue-specific letter to the Mayor and Council for a hundred anonymous "tweets" or web-page "hits".
- There needs to be a clear disclosure of conflicts of interest and financial self dealing from the Mayor's office down to the members of the citizen committees. The General Counsel's office of the City works to hide these important facts, such as denying access to records and advising members of boards that their personal communications and business dealings with stakeholders do not need to be made public. It is difficult to trust anyone in the process.
- If you don't have Comcast you miss lots of info. Provide videos of meetings, events, etc. on e-mails, u tube, and direct tv
- "The City must LEAD the discussions by clearly and fairly laying out the CONSEQUENCES of the various options under consideration or proposed. Then the City must undertake to sift through the public comments to ensure it is not just the ""squeaky wheels"" being heard.

- Honestly, the City has blown just about every major development decision its faced over the past 25 years. The "no development" folks have driven very poor decisions -- Cameron Station's too-high density (its the West End who cares); residential development in Eisenhower AND no reasonable egress; a mess at Potomac Yards with the City ridiculously contemplating paying for a metro station -- no City the size of Alexandria takes THAT on ; inefficient development around the Braddock and King Street metros. The list goes on. The problem with the waterfront is that you have Old Towners who don't want the rest of us in "their" parks and are who wiling to look at just garbage to keep "us" out pitted against the City Planning Department whom NO ONE trusts because they have botched virtually everything they have touched. Mr. Young, if you can lead us out of this mess, you deserve to be canonized! "
- If we are going to involve the community, I think it's important to be prepare to let them have a say in things. Otherwise, they won't bother to continue participating. At the same time, we have to let the public know that we aren't the authorities, and sometimes it's best to listen to the experts. That's a tough balance!
- this community is too diverse to give an answer for the community. each subgroup no doubt has its own "best" solution.
- I think all of the above.
- The city just needs to make some freaking decisions. Stop this nonsense and take ownership of an issue. The city leadership needs to LEAD. Too much process has led to paralysis.
- I have attended public hearings and made suggestions of things that need to be changed, and they basically have been ignored. I have called the city planning department telling them they need a lot more bike racks along King Street, and again they ignore these suggestions. There should be 2 bike racks on every block of King Street, on each side of the road. More than half the blocks have no bike racks at all. The racks they do have only holds 2 bikes! So in total along King street there is probably bike parking capacity for 20 bikes! This is absurd... there should be parking for at least 100 bikes. People on bikes spend as much money in Old Town as people in cars.... maybe even more. I will complement the city on the new bike share program... great job... but for those of us who have their own bikes, there is no where near enough parking and its not in the right places... such as in front of Walgreens, and every other block where shops and restaurants we patronize are. I have also suggested the city turn the Saturday farmers market into a big event, by adding artists from the Torpedo Factory, a couple of bands, etc. and run this all day long, and even into the evening.. and the city has ignored this. Yet they are always trying to bring more tourists to town, but then ignore the suggestions that would accomplish this. So after spending time making all these suggestions, and seeing them ignored, I give up.
- Also, stop using outside consultants. It's a waste of funds--there are plenty of city employees who should be able to spearhead and outline projects without spending money to find out what is already known.
- not social media as not everyone participates. email preferred.
- It is important to give positive feedback and positive citizens the same amount of importance as the negative. Too often the negative feedback and citizens are emphasized more than the positive.
- I think small groups and appearances before boards appeal to people who are already being heard - they are less likely to bring new voices into the discussion. Many people here with the loudest voices are the least well informed. There are a lot of of thoughtful, intelligent people who are not engaged, in part I think because even if they have lived here for years, there is a sense of being a transient - they are not from here and they plan on moving elsewhere eventually. They also are too busy to keep up with complicated issues - an really good reason to find new ways to communicate with them. I think Alexandria would be a better place if they were more involved.

- The council would also have to listen and not come to meeting with preconceived notions based on city staff ideas instead of citizens ideas
- I would support increasing the ability to find out about opportunities to participate via social networking or other channels.
- I think these are all pretty important. Statistically valid surveys would be AWESOME. Early community participation in the planning process would also be great. Maybe this already happens and I'm just not aware. Overall I think the city does a pretty poor job communicating with residents re what they are working on, what the key issues are, and how an individual can help / get involved. Would be cool to receive a bulletin in the mail every quarter with this information, and an option to receive it via email.
- Make it clear -- by reporting out to residents -- how decision-making processes incorporated citizen comments and feedback, in particular noting when plans and decisions were altered as a result of citizen input.
- Can Alexandria really afford to conduct statistically valid surveys on all the proposals that come before the council to vote on? Sounds totally unrealistic.
- Again, <http://americaspeaks.org/> is a paradigm of grassroots engagement.
- stop making decisions based on people's opinions; we need real information and data to drive the agenda. People love to complain and do it often which gives the impression that there is wide support for their cause.
- Make operations of various city agencies more transparent. Our health department is insanely overbearing & clearly overfunded, sending monitors to community picnics to poke food with thermometers. The library system is completely dysfunctional. Transparency will expose the problem of these agencies.
- Stand up an independent oversight to look at the data submitted and use that as basis for planning & execution. Previous "community" input was gathered and ignored by the administration choosing to carry out their own agenda. They have proven that they can't "plan" to support community wishes. Brac 133, Mt Vernon Ave, Rt1, Duke st are buried in congestion and the "buildout" continues.
- I think it is very challenging to get broad participation. So you will generally hear from those particularly passionate, and with available time.
- The process, such as the Budget process, for when/where input should be of best timing is not clear
- Metrics of success or failure are not well known at least print; could be on website but I couldn't find them.
- Any Consultants/Experts should be knowledgeable in our topic/issues and location - we are not looking for cookie cutter solutions. Every community is unique.
- The office/champion accepting ideas is not clearly known.
- When using Consultants, make sure they know and understand the topic or issues + have a background that is relevant to the topic/issues.
- Metrics of progress to meet strategic goals & objectives.
- Esp. notify the people if it is in this area of the City.
- Discuss why public input comments taken or not taken. It is frustrating to mention an issue, suggestion, and then never hear it mentioned or learn why it was not considered.
- These hands on activities accomplishes several goals: 1) Have strangers who normally do not interact, work together; 2) It gives people an understanding of the entire issue; 3) Creates a sense of community.

Question 9: As the City works to improve the public participation process, please indicate the level of importance you place on each of the following. Provide additional comments here:

- Now we only pay attention to the noisy dozen that always say no to any progressive planning or ideas. We give them too much credence, too much weight because the good people that form the back bone of this community are helping their kids with homework, coaching a soccer team, working at their church or are serving on the PTA. We have to figure out how to give them VOICE in these decisions without having to show up to 4 meetings to say the same thing or they are heard as loudly as the naysayers. City Council needs to find and do what is right for the most people and looking to a better future, instead of just responding to people who want the status quo.
- I would participate if I thought I had a say in the decision, not just the "decision makers."
- On the other side, let's not slow down the planning process with lengthy public input processes. We already have a poor reputation in the metropolitan area for being against any development.
- They city hires professional staff for the purpose of making decisions based on expertise. Citizens don't necessarily have that expertise.
- I think the hands-on activities idea is a good one. That can help bring people together, and help them learn how to work together, instead of everyone stating his or her position but actually having to help build a workable plan.
- Don't allow those most able to access high-priced lawyers and consultants to crowd out the opinions of others. Also, all constituents should be considered equally. Those who live near waterfront property shouldn't be able to dictate major decisions about the waterfront for the rest of the city.
- I do not believe that the city council is responsive to citizen input. Decisions are made in a vacuum with the window dressing appearance that citizen input has been considered
- I think the City does a decent job of soliciting input and involvement. It's not the job of the City to spoon feed residents.
- Broadcast on TV and Internet, and live-blog the meetings, and allow feedback on social media.
- Our community needs more people knocking on doors to reachout to all that should be included in decisions about their homes, properties, and neighborhood.
- don't know what verbatim and unfiltered refers to -- sounds like there's a back story to this one
- It is important that staff provide written responses to reasonable comments. The responses help shape the ultimate outcome of the process.
- The community is not heard and either the public servants are serving their own agendas (e.g., creation of work for job security) and/or the city council/boards are also self-serving.
- **THE CITY'S ZONING CODE AND OTHER REGULATIONS PROVIDE THE BASIC RULES THAT EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABIDING BY. CITIZENS COUNT ON THE CITY STAFF AND ELECTED OFFICIALS TO UPHOLD THESE RULES, NOT NEGOTIATE THEM AWAY. INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS WITH JOB AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES RARELY HAVE TIME TO STUDY AND FOLLOW DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS TO THE DEPTH REQUIRED TO GET EQUAL CONSIDERATION WITH THE PAID PROFESSIONALS AND LAWYERS PROPOSING NEW DEVELOPMENT. WE COUNT ON THE CITY STAFF AND OUR OFFICIALS TO SPEAK FOR THE LAWS THAT ARE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT US.**
- Reading this list of items, every one is "important". Same for previous questions. This survey looks to me like another opportunity for public input that is a "feel good" moment so residents think they have input. When I see change and feel my input is valued by city planners I will be more likely to increase my participation. I just don't see that the inputs I'm providing to this survey so far are valuable or will be used going forward.
- For Pete's sake -- who is going to say that one of these NOT important.
- Sometimes, final plans for a project do not reflect the community input that was received.
- Be sure that local politicians do not have financial interests in the things they vote on, however remote
- Unfortunately, it usually seems that the City Council makes its decisions with little regard for the quality of life here and with little interest in what residents value. Plans are put into place that make the lives of

citizens much more difficult and less pleasant (need I mention that I drive down Seminary Road to Baileys Crossroads daily and the commute to school has doubled since BRAC opened and the traffic patterns were changed to make it easier for commuters from elsewhere and to the detriment of locals?). I am beginning to really dislike living here after 22 years.

- To improve participation listen to the citizens who live and work here instead of hiring so called experts who don't. Stop all the "studies" and "surveys" that cost so much money. Between the expertise that city employees should have, and citizens who live and work here, and a Council that has the interest of current citizens foremost, we should not need study after study. It is an excuse to avoid responsibility for decision making. When citizens have a voice that is heard they participate
- Sometimes the minority voices seem to drown out the majority. As a new resident in the city, I have been discouraged by the strident voices of some of the longer-term residents, as well as stories about the city's resistance to sensible change. This has changed my perspective on the value of all points of view, since the louder residents don't show much respect for views which differ from their own.
- I hate this phrase, but, I think more transparent communication methods would be greatly appreciated by the community, definitely by me. When the Beauregard plan was being discussed, I had to search and search for information about what was happening beyond the initial plan that was available on the web.
- need a means to contain the most aggressive and vocal element to ensure that people feel comfortable and "safe" expressing themselves in a public forum. Need to aggressively reach out to the "quiet" ones at a meeting.
- Little of the above is done in a quality a meaningful way now.
- Stop wasting my money.
- Again, it's clear that the City doesn't know what its doing.
- As per above, I'm a huge advocate of crowdsourcing and even more importantly of open data and standard APIs so people can dive as deep as they like or build mashups to help build personalized services.
- Whatever process there is for community input, that process should not be hijacked by a minority of citizens with an ax to grind. If you don't like the overall direction, then vote the officeholders out.
- Reaching out to all communities is key, but one public survey, will not reach all members of the community. Engaging communities where they are -- churches, community events, places where they do business - would be helpful.
- Having participated in a number of meetings on development issues, we find that they often allow a small number of adamant individuals to skew the proceedings. Input is fine., but it sometimes seems to lead to endless discussion and inaction.
- Last element is one of the most important to me.
- unfortunately, a lot of residents are turned off by the negativity of most hearings. The neighborhood associations can be very detrimental .They rarely represent the point of you of their residents.
- "The city does not need more committees & meeting.
- Think these are boggin down the process,
- Need to reach out to the community leaders first "
- Show leadership for the people, represent the people's interests, and make sure that politicians don't come across as self serving.
- I want to rely on experts more than public opinion for certain areas.
- It's nice to have everyone's opinion verbatim but it isn't a realistic expectation or efficient. I also would try to simplify the process rather than enforce one size fits all processes and documents as sometimes the issue just doesn't require that much effort and some thing are either big issues or have a wide variance in opinions and require more discussions.
- We have been doing this for years and it never seems to be enough..

- The city needs to balance the need for public participation with the need for decision making and finality. Participation should not be so extensive/lengthy to delay decision making and commercial opportunities.
- Would appreciate vision statements that outline what kind of community we want to move toward. I like impact or consequent statements that map the advantages and disadvantages of different course of action. In my experience this helps to show the trade offs among different decisions as well as anticipate unintended consequences of decisions.
- Again, charrettes.
- Let's hope the next City Council has the courage to do what they know is right for the city and not what a few vocal citizens who want to hold up change have to say. Our waterfront is a disgrace.
- Yes to all!
- beware of neighborhood groups that say they represent the neighborhood esp land use issues!!!
- Why not add that the City Health Department who hires health and environmental specialist should have a public voice in what is safe, healthy, and environmentally sound. Honestly, you are under-utilizing the Health Department who should act as an educated, non partisan expert city matters. The Mayor and the Council are too swayed by special interest groups and developers. These decisions shouldn't be a popularity contest focused just on the a myriad of public meetings.
- Keep all processes open and transparent. Avoid closed meetings except when specified by law (as in personnel actions). Do not take for granted that everyone in your party agrees with your viewpoint. Be sure that staff actions reflect the policy put forth by elected officials. Give more than lip service to respecting the opinions of residents, who often have more expertise than hired consultants. HIRE FEWER CONSULTANTS who waste half their paid time here getting to know the locality and the issues, and even then, often make major mistakes in the most basic assumptions. Officials should be familiar with conditions on the ground in all development issues, traffic concerns, etc., not make decisions based on concepts seen only on paper.
- Keep all processes open and transparent. Avoid closed meetings except when specified by law (as in personnel actions). Do not take for granted that everyone in your party agrees with your viewpoint. Be sure that staff actions reflect the policy put forth by elected officials. Give more than lip service to respecting the opinions of residents, who often have more expertise than hired consultants. HIRE FEWER CONSULTANTS who waste half their paid time here getting to know the locality and the issues, and even then, often make major mistakes in the most basic assumptions. Officials should be familiar with conditions on the ground in all development issues, traffic concerns, etc., not make decisions based on concepts seen only on paper.
- Surveys need to be carefully written to ensure that the City departments are soliciting feedback through open-ended questions rather than trying to sway opinions or get at a specific result. I like the idea of encouraging more active participation at meetings through hands-on activities. Participants should be able to trace how the activity directly relates to helping assemble the plan or develop solutions to the issues at-hand.
- This is one of the best (from my perspective) surveys I've taken because you seem to want these additional comments. Hurrah!
- Council sessions are shown on cable TV. Why aren't some of these major meetings also given similar coverage? People with children can't always get a babysitter to attend. This way they can watch it at home. Put the TV tapes of major hearings at the libraries so people can watch them, or figure out how they can stream it on their computer.
- There should be a code of conduct at public meetings. Too often the participants get personal, nasty and threatening. I know of many who will not speak up because of threats of verbal personal abuse and violence, perceived or real. The cities leaders take too much abuse. Uncivil input should not be tolerated. Decisions are inevitably unpopular to someone but leadership is elected to make them for the

good of the city. Not necessarily for the good of the majority! Since they are elected "at large" each council member represents everyone. Imagine the state or the country operating that way.

- It is also important to remember not all citizens are online. I'm not and I'm using a borrowed computer to complete this survey. It is very frustrating to contact what used to be the Citizen's Assistance line only to be told, you can find the answer online.
- None of the above will be useful nor accepted if the City government openly distains public input during planning and/or City Council hearings as has been my experience. Further, the City's poor planning for development, especially when contrasted with the successes enjoyed by Arlington, is unacceptable and needs to change.
- "Expert facilitation is CRITICAL. Invest the \$\$ to make sure that the meetings are run by someone who knows how to manage the meeting for the purpose of getting input from people who are most likely to be affected by the topic/decision. The city meetings I have attended or watched on cable give the impression that the purpose of the meeting is to adhere to the process, which happens to include community input in a decision that probably has already been made.
- The challenge that any government faces is not asking for input. The challenge for a government is showing that the input from everyone -- even when someone is speaking as an individual -- is given careful consideration. Unfortunately, I am distrustful of the process that I want to participate in: If I participate does it make a difference, or does it just fulfill the requirement to invite public participation?"
- Much of this can be done on line..... Even 'hands on' building ideas. See what they did in boston near city hall. virtual build was on line. Perhaps support small businesses and restaurants by having a series of small meetings available.
- The challenge is reaching out to diverse segments of our community- working poor, limited English, etc.
- It's all important, but which cities have the resources to really do all of those things????
- I think it is important that participants see their input used not just acknowledged. I do find it frustrating to participate in meeting after meeting but hardly ever see changes or results from my input. I think others feel the same way. So what if we comment at a City Council hearing. If we never see action or response to what we suggest it is a worthless endeavor and people give up. I guess the City can say they offered the opportunity but if that is the only goal it is a poor one. After commenting at a City Council meeting I would like to hear back just how my comments will be used. I feel most times they just evaporate. However, I am not one to 'give up'. I am steadfast to the bitter end.
- 'somewhat' in answer the the question is really yes and no. I don't think a city that strives to be all things to all people is going to be effective at anything. Talented staff, some terrific members of council, and great intentions - but expanding participation and prolonging the process is only going to slow things down and p*** people off. How could a small group of wealthy homeowners manage to stall an incredibly promising waterfront plan? And how is BRAC a debacle? What exactly was the revenue it brought to the city? After-the-fact shock and awe over a bad traffic problem in the NCR comes across as calculated and disingenuous.
- You can't please everyone all the time
- Strong leadership will lead the city rather than have weak leaders led.
- Engaging the community earlier to key. 10 days warning for a public meeting is too short - and the city does a poor job reaching out to affected neighbors, businesses, and civic associations about upcoming issues in their neighborhood. Too often staff decisions become "done deals" because local citizens are not given opportunity to voice their opinions before decisions are made.
- It is important to acknowledge the value of citizen ideas when appropriate, rather than staff taking all of the credit. Staff can take the blame though when things don't work out well!
- I imagine that surveys have a fairly low response rate, therefore i would make surveys online based and not spend money on printing and mailing out materials.

- more power in the process for low-income people and communities of color. just like businesses are often guaranteed a seat (or more) at the table then why not guarantee more seats for people who have been historically excluded?
- Re-establish the legal and regulatory controls that protect residents and property owners. Otherwise all of the above has no tangible means of enforcement.
- We already have a public process here in Alexandria -- the problem is that it is usually too long, people get tired and you lose them half way through, and then it boils down to a very few leading the way in the end. Unsure how to solve this but almost every issue is taken to the public but the few loud squeaky wheels are the only ones that last through the process.
- I think the last one here is critical--it's important for the public to know how their input affects future plans so that community members will want to continue to participate because we will see that our input actually has an impact.
- Some times it is difficult to keep the interests of the total "Community" in perspective when being bombarded by the interests of "communities" which are vocal on a single issue. There is a larger city with varied needs and concerns. Sometimes a "community" must make a sacrifice for the "Community" in order to have a viable city. Parking and business growth vs homeowners. Pedestrians/bikes vs vehicle traffic. High density vs low density.
- Once again, transparency is essential.
- Share it publicly or on the web, allow input, share it, allow input, and repeat until feedback is largely incorporated or accounted for.
- Many of the things I believe to be important or somewhat important staff already does so keep up the good work.
- Re: the fifth question above -- decision-makers "receiving" public input isn't the point. Rather, it is providing for the public to take part in the decision-making itself. With more than just a vote in city elections.
- Reach out to all segments of the community through face to face dialogue
- While it is important to acknowledge and encourage public input, ultimately, decisions should be made by experts who take into account many factors, such as best practices, financial issues, current trends, etc. It is gratifying to see that the City is working to improve the public participation process!
- Events at City Hall are too hard to park a car
- I have lived in Alexandria my entire life. I see the painstakingly slow development of Potomac Yard as a prime example where too many people had input and tried to protect small interests versus what is best for the entire city.
- The recent waterfront "plan" was awful. The city was tone-deaf to many important issues (costs, parking, ignoring the city's own zoning laws, ignoring state and district legal boundaries, ignoring property owner's rights, and ignoring resident's concerns on a variety of issues (building height, density, bus and pedestrian traffic/parking). More needs to be done by the city to include private ownership and payment for waterfront improvements. The city has done a poor job in running the food pavilion on the waterfront(it is currently and has been vacant for more than a year) and in property management (surplus property that should have been sold off, and the waterfront eyesore vacant building on the Strand and Prince Streets, 4 years!) Public input would have helped many of these things.
- I think planning by the city should be as transparent as possible as well as make sure the plans are well received by the community. I would not be surprised to find that a good percentage of the community believes the city does a lot of things simply for revenue and not to benefit the community.
- Despite public input, I believe we elect our Mayor/Council members to consider the best interests of the City. There are vocal minorities in the City who will continue to be dissatisfied with decisions; this is true everywhere. We have a large silent majority, as most communities do. I think our local elected

officials need to have the best interests of the City in mind when they make decisions, even if those decisions are sometimes unpopular.

- Why is there no government oversight agencies in Virginia?"
- "These are all important parts of the process, but EARLY ENGAGEMENT of the community is one key element that I see lacking here.
- In other places where it is used, I have seen it be a very cooperative process, resulting in a better plan that works for everyone. "
- The common feeling in Alexandria is that the mayor and much of the council value the views and interests of real estate developers over the views of citizens
- These all seem important and good ideas.
- More clarity, more honesty and equality.
- If the citizens know that x is being contemplated, and have a way to provide input (even if it's just an address or an email to write to), and get updates if they request that, that would be enormously helpful. No one (owner or renter) should find out the road in front of their house is being widened AFTER the decision has been made and half their yard is gone (that happened to a whole group of friends of mine who live on Duke St). No one should find out that their yards will be dug up, sewers re-done, curbs replaced by having a sign on a post put in front of their house (which happened to me - and then it took months for that process to start; many months for it to finish; unless we were home all day to talk to the workmen, we didn't know that we could have extra work done on driveways etc., - it was a mess and it didn't need to be. We should have gotten notifications from the city - emails, anything, that this was being planned; emails again to let us know the actual start date; emails, once it had started, to tell us where to call if we had problems or complaints - that would have been SO much easier.
- Provide for formal comment system such as federal government's notice & comment process, so that the city compiles comments on important projects as well as the city response to public comments.
- "Out reach" to all segments is already done. What is important, in my opinion, is early insight into planning decisions, but not necessarily allowing for public comment at all meetings, as this can produce filibusters. Public OBSERVATION of working meetings is extremely helpful. Citizens can afterwards contact their elected representatives, as Constitutionally guaranteed, but cannot interfere in the working groups.
- Timing of citizen input is very important. It should be early in the process, and a means to keep citizens up to date on who is approaching the city on development issues, and to indicate what could be coming is important. Since sometimes we don't know what we don't know, having a communication channel out to citizens from city hall is almost as important as inviting comment.
- "Be responsive. Promised follow-up happens far too infrequently.
- Listen. Don't disregard and fail to hear what people say; often Council and Commission members chat among themselves while citizens are attempting to address them. Or they are off to the kitchen, or out in the audience chatting with some member of the public. Hear what people are saying – don't just respond with the City's standard patter as though the City's got it right and the citizen just doesn't get it. Citizens are due a clear, comprehensible response.
- Frequent references to "the planning process" makes this sound like it is all about P&Z. Are other departments, commissions and our elected officials part of this effort too?
- "Didn't really get this question....but major issue/problem with both elected officials and city staff - for some reason, they have gotten so nervous that they don't stand up for what's right. They have 1-2 people complain about an event that 5,000 attend and love and they require mediation or threaten it's future. Both elected officials and the City staff need to have the courage to NOT give just a few naysayers or constant complainers a platform. It should be what's best for the ENTIRE city.
- It won't happen. Special interests don't want it boards and commissions are over loaded and often not interested in hearing unschooled public participants often there only once.

- Lots of work, but all is important and valuable in this citizen-active community.
- We hire professionals on city staff for a reason. Parochial interests are alive and well in Alexandria. I am not sure how or to what extent it is possible to integrate hundreds of opinions/input from citizens to shape public policy. I do think the initial planning process needs to be more comprehensive and could be improved by identifying community priorities earlier and attaching meaningful cost estimates to them. If transportation issues had been thoughtfully examined at the time the recommendation was put forth, I doubt BRAC would have built where it is, far from a Metro. If individuals don't want commercial or other development on the waterfront, what will it cost the city to buy out the owners? If someone proposes a museum, put a price tag on it and translate that to cost per homeowner/commercial property owner. Then, the debate is more than wishful thinking. (Ok, I want a hotel on the waterfront. I work on upper King St and love the Lorian, its spa and restaurant, the safety it affords the neighborhood, and all the support they provide to non-profits in the community. Plus, less traffic than office workers.)
- Civics tutorials on process. Not everyone has the time and inclination to attend Citizens Academy. Find an alternative way. Make the processes standard across all Boards, Commissions and Committees. Public outreach should not be an afterthought. If you do not want to listen to civil public testimony, then resign from the public appointed/elected body. Or at least get up and pretend to go to the bathroom.
- Many people tell me that they don't participate because it doesn't do any good. In our area, they are angry because even though a majority are opposed to major elements of the Beauregard SAP the response from the city has been to approve it anyway, without addressing our concerns.
- unified approaches...no zero sum games...people feel disaffected...leave the process, then the vocal minority will take over..you must encourage diversity, insure voices are heard, take macro approaches
- city should consider inputs from long-term residents with some significance...since they demonstrate a long-term commitment to Alexandria, and not transient
- I gave a somewhat lesser importance to "broad range of options" & "reach out to all segments" because I believe that participation is a civic responsibility and, while opportunities should be available, the individual should be expected to exert some effort.
- The genius store called, they're running out of you.
- "I guess saying everything is important does not help prioritize, but I have participated in many types of meeting, workgroups, etc. Sometimes a given format works well and sometimes it does not. Sometimes the good idea is not immediately obvious. Sometimes it is important to get and keep all sides on record and sometimes it is not. All the metaphors apply: I'll know a good meeting when I see it. A good meeting is in the eye of the beholder. One person's productive meeting is another person's tedium.
- Too many times in Alexandria, only certain people are listened to or certain people are ignored based on their point of view. If internet-based means of communication are used, they must be given equal or greater weight than communication via sparsely-attended public hearings. Otherwise, it's a wasteful exercise.
- You will have to use all of these to be effective
- I wish these procedures had been followed before the BRAC decision was made!
- Community input shaping recommendations sounds too much like those who yell loudest win.
- While it's important to be inclusive, extra tax dollars should not be used to prepare and translate questionnaires and community surveys in multiple languages. People who genuinely care about this city (and country) should care enough to learn English, as it's a unifying aspect of being an "American". (Holding on to "home" languages is wonderful, but have enough respect for this country to learn English if you plan to live here).
- As I said above, I believe that public participation should be detached from specific plans (small area plans or others).
- Again, same comments as above -- what happens when the process finally ends?

- Just a caution on surveys they are useful to a certain extent but might need to be supplemented with focus groups or a limited number of personal interviews with "hard to reach" groups that can be weighted to account for those left out of the survey process because of language, resident status, etc. ...
- Outreach and community survey methods should be appropriate for a given community for greatest participation.
- "Listen, act. and be informed.
- Stop listening to the same old tired people ... the vocal minority of this town that continually goes to the city and testifies in hearings because they have the time and money to do it.
- Listen to the people who are too busy trying to survive than speak at city hall.
- How do you do this? Go on a neighborhood and door to door listening tour and hear the people who are being screwed over on a daily basis because they do not know the systems, have connections,
- Again, even with the above as principles for the future, there must be auditable records to support outcomes - which can be shown to all citizens via multi-media, i.e. web sites as well full use well as print forms (Gazette-Packet - other city papers and postings) in advance of any decisions (with opportunities for further collaboration before decisions are made). Recognize that there are many who do not have/regularly use computers - and certainly many who do not engage in "social media".
- I had to read these choices three or four times just to understand them, and I have a maser's degree. Improve the process by using Plain English.
- But you won't do it...
- "i recently served on an advisory group, the preliminary report/ results of which were disseminated among the city staff who sat on the group, but withheld from the rest of the advisory group. I didn't understand this process?
- "While I think it is important to communicate with residents about issues and to receive their input; realistically, you cannot delay action on every issue in the attempt to satisfy all residents. That said, I think doing this survey is a great way to engage the public and solicit viewpoints.
- See previous comments about alternative options for participation (including virtual).
- Tell people upfront what absolutely cannot be done for budgetary or other reasons so we don't waste time arguing
- This survey is already too long...
- As you can see, I am a big fan of reliable, valid information!
- Who cares about being told about plans after the fact PLUS most of the acknowledgement of public input seems to be very patronizing because the decision has already been made by others not those who live in the community.
- Beyond community surveys, focus groups may be helpful as well.
- Surveys and statistical information is rarely accurate, in my personal and professional experience with such. Open and frequent communication and in-person participation is ideal.
- And report to the citizens!
- "Recent controversies left me with the impression that the city staff/officials had the opinion that they didn't want to be bothered with public opinion that was counter to their current plan. They seemed to ""charge ahead"" with their established plan without giving much consideration to the countervailing opinions/approaches. They are in a rush to get to execution of the plan without having done the necessary work to bring the public along in support of the plan. Specifically, the Waterfront Plan (to me) has 3 parts: 1. (and most important) Flood Control for Downtown; 2. Beautification of the waterfront path (of some, but marginal benefit - its already very nice - I ride it frequently by bike); 3. Redevelopment of 3 underutilized properties & the needed rezoning to enable that development. My opinion is that there is no rush to do # 3 and no huge need for # 2. So, break out #1 and get that done while consensus is built on the matter of development.

- "Alexandria has long been a city of neighborhoods, each with its own identity. In many cases, people who don't live in a particular neighborhood and are unfamiliar with its nuances interject themselves in "planning" for that neighborhood and don't have to live with the consequences. An prime example is the waterfront plan.
- This is a ridiculous poll. The choices above are so vague as to be meaningless. Here is my suggestion for increasing participation: eliminate polls. Tell City Council members, the Mayor, and City Government officials to get out of their Old Town Offices and meet the citizens in their neighborhoods and just listen to their concerns. Do it on a regular basis - and you might actually improve communication and trust in the city.
- Good ideas but they will never fly in Alexandria.
- As a professional bureaucrat, I welcome the suggestion for standardizing planning processes and plan documents as far as is possible. It makes it much easier for non-experts to follow what's going on if they know where to look.
- When a decision is finally made it is also important to communicate why that came about and why the alternatives were rejected. Right now it often seems arbitrary or worse, that other interests are favored. There are a lot of people who feel their voice is not heard and that the city officials who show up at our community meetings have their own agendas and do not respect the opinions of residents. When we try to make our opinions known to these officials we are never sure that they are communicated to the final decisionmakers.
- Decisions should be well reasoned. If public input does not match the final decision, well supported reasoning must be provided. Just because the public wants something doesn't mean it is the right way to go, but good communication is essential. Also keep in mind that it is typically those with the most extreme viewpoints that are the most vocal, and many of us who just want to be helpful in the middle don't want to have to deal with/listen to those people to get our view heard. That's the main reason for my lack of involvement - it's hard to take the solicitation events seriously when there is so much political grandstanding going on - I get enough of that in the media, I don't need to waste my spare time on it too.
- Again, simply bringing in citizens after the city and developers have agreed on a plan does not qualify as involving the residents. I would argue that any developer should work with a neighborhood on a plan BEFORE even bringing it to the city.
- I'd be careful about trying to make decisions based on statistically accurate community surveys. The vast majority of people haven't done enough research to know about the issues.
- Public participation is my career. I can't stress how important this is to the city's long-term survival, both as a place to live and as a place to visit. I adore Alexandria, but in my opinion it falls far short of where it should in terms of engaging the public. Both the mayor and city council (along with many staff) have a comfort zone that they don't step out of often enough. That must change.
- I do not feel any of these things happen now and I really wish I could feel they do.
- "there is no one Alexandria. There are many. Black-White; minority-majority; immigrant-longterm; rich-poor; east-west....
- why does the squeaky wheel get the grease?
- case in point, Rosemont and Beverly Hills wants something - they get it overnight....east side asks for years nothing....
- the life, safety, quality of life, education, etc. in the poor areas is not worth as much as the wealthy.
- THIS IS AMERICA, this is not the South of the 1930s-40s...show the people in poor areas that you care and there is hope.
- Online options

- Surveys are a good instrument, but not a panacea...be careful of overreliance on surveys. Many people screen calls now or don't open "junk mail," yet not everyone has online access. It's harder to tell if surveys really reach the cross-section that you want for across-the-board input.
- The City of Alexandria has the benefit of being quite small. There is no reason why city officials should not provide quarterly reports (via internet to keep costs at a minimum) with issues being addressed, the options to resolution, pros and cons of each option and then permit our input online.
- Again, when using the "community survey" technique, results must show numbers and not percentages. Citizens who are involved are not getting the facts, but being fed information from city staff in order for city hall to get what they want and not listening to citizens, whether they speak at city hall meetings, planning commissions and issues related to what city council is going to vote for. It is wishful thinking to believe that clarity throughout planning process and citizen input is going to shape recommendations. Too many examples to cite here how this has not worked!!!
- The "Establish common elements to all planning processes and plan documents" is worded ambiguously--I'm not sure what you mean by this point.
- I understand that planning has to start somewhere, but in my opinion by the time the city shares its proposals (even so-called concepts proposals) with the public it already is so invested so much time and effort in that proposal that alternative views are not seriously considered. If a staff person spends a year working on a proposal they are unlikely to be easily persuaded that it is the wrong proposal. It is human nature.
- Avoid the tendency of having one Community Organization dominate, or try to, the planing process. I refer to OTCA. The attitude seems to be, rightly or wrongly, that "if it's good for OTCA, it's good for Alexandria". Ax is far more diverse that OTCA's membership demographics and boundaries (and I am a member of OTCA)
- Transparency as to who is participating and who they are representing - a Multistakeholder process is important, but you need to know who the stakeholders are.
- The City of Alexandria needs to 1.) increase transparency in how government boards and officials who are not elected are selected and why they are allowed to retain such positions 2.) become much better at informing ALL citizens, as individuals who own property and live here what is going on and have that information disseminated to them personally (e.g. via e-mail or known website for a neighborhood or issue. These should also be written in language that is clear to a layman) Do not rely on "civic associations 3.) "push" information - do not wait for people to try to work their way through a confusing website to find if, for example, anything has happened to a particular development plan in their neighborhood 4.) create "virtual" communities with well-monitored boards for neighborhood participation - no anonymity - so that people do not bully but which enable all people to give opinions and input
- "Procedural due process"--a process that is entirely fair, open and transparent--is necessary but not sufficient: there must be "substantive due process" as well, if the public is to have confidence in the integrity both of the result and of the process by which it was arrived at. A voluminous process which, however, results in little change, or only tangential or cosmetic change, to the proposition the City started with, is so discouraging as to be almost worse than no process at all. The only thing worse is when it is later discovered or revealed that the City Council and/or staff had already discussed the essence of the proposition with private parties--particularly those with a financial interest--and reached general agreement on a preferred conclusion--before the "public process" has even begun. Such a sequence reveals the "public process" to have been not a demonstration of the government's respect for the public, but a fraud upon them.
- Wording of second option noted above: "Allow the public to have input on the public engagement and planning process" illustrates a common problem in Alexandria's system of governance. The solution:

change the approach from "allowing" to "inviting and ensuring that the public have input in the public engagement process."

- There needs to be a clear disclosure of conflicts of interest and financial self dealing from the Mayor's office down to the members of the citizen committees.
- "See comments above -- the problem in Alexandria is NOT insufficient public input. It is uninformed public discussion, because the City Staff consistently fails to fairly evaluate and then convey to all the citizens the consequences of various proposals.
While I have heard some in town say they don't want to be like Arlington with its smart growth around metros, etc., I don't think folks truly understand the repercussions of funding a city with the transportation needs we have and the amount of social services our population requires with residential real estate taxes, alone! It is up to the City to start making that information known to the citizenry and start asking just what the majority is willing to give up.
- As a former employee of local government (Planning and Zoning) and a current employee of a non-profit, I know that there is such a thing as too much community involvement. Issues can drag on and on. Public participation must have time limits or decisions will never be made. You need to acknowledge all points of view, but you don't have to agree with them. Few members of the public sufficiently understand planning and zoning to offer valuable input.
- There are some good ideas here!
- My experience is that people are more inclined to participate if they feel it will have any affect on the process or outcome.
- Unfortunately, everyone in this neighborhood will not participate for whatever reason. However, the group of interested vocies are making a different.
- Start by listening to good thoughtful suggestions that are made by people like me who lives here, and enacting them. Its great you call Alexandria an "Eco city", but it has to be more than talk, and we need to see action. We need way more bike racks along every block of King Street, both sides of the road. We need an electric tram/streetcar system to replace the noisy, polluting diesel buses. The city staff should all be driving electric cars. The guy riding around writing tickets could be doing this from a bicycle, instead of an SUV or polluting car. There should be real bike lanes along King Street. You should remove parking along one side of King Street and make that a protected bike lane. Expecting bikes to ride in the road with buses blasting diesel fumes in your face is not going to happen, and with no bike lanes, and few bike parking, calling the city an Ecocity rings empty... greenwashing. The buses should be converted to electric buses! They have them in Miami Beach, and have had them in San Francisco for decades.
- I think the "community" input can be rigged by P&Z through selective surveying. I believe P&Z and other city staff organizations should be required to face citizen discussions directly and not as bystanders to a discussion between a workgroup or commission and the public at large.
- Again, these are all pretty good ideas, except maybe "acknowledge all points of view." Some POVs are just wrong or don't make sense, if you look at data and at what other communities are doing. This is where surveys -- really good, wide, statistically significant surveys -- would help a lot, I think. Sometimes "the squeaky wheel gets the oil" even when that wheel represents a small but very vocal minority.
- Some members of the community will never be happy, regardless of how long and in which fashion their opinions are solicited. While soliciting ideas and encouraging public participation is a lofty goal, I hope you realize not everyone is going to be happy. At some point, elected officials have to cut through the rhetoric and make decisions for the best interest of all the citizens - those with money, those who are disenfranchised, those who own property, those who rent, and others who visit or work in Alexandria.
- "I do not need anyone to represent what I can say myself

- For this reason, when a civic association claims to know what is best, how can a handful of people decide what is best when they only represent a sliver of the larger community who do not want to go to their exclusive clique and boring meetings"
- See above
- Very important to have documents "accessible" - in language, and with summaries that make it easy for people who aren't well versed in planning lingo to read.
- Policies/Crime Prevention
- Keep everyone informed throughout the process - makes the process relevant as well as makes the participation worth while.
- Not just the Regulars

Question 10: As we explore what's next for Alexandria, what are the key topics you think we should discuss as a community? [Select the 7 topics most important to you. Provide additional comments in the space below]

- ways to LOWER taxes and find ways to bring more businesses to Old Town
- After living through the BRAC debacle and the horrendous loss of affordable housing, I would strongly favor a moratorium on further growth until the obvious favoritism and the kowtowing to developers becomes less important to politicians than the health of the entire community.
- "Retirement options for those who wish to stay here after their working career is over. Or for those who wish to retire into the area from elsewhere.
- Volunteer opportunities. "
- Provide timely and important information on weather emergencies and natural disasters. Provide timely cleanup so that residents can get on with our lives as soon as possible.
- Most of these things should NOT be the business of the city government.
- Wheelchair accessibility of all buildings and spaces is very important.
- Schools is a MAJOR issue for families living in Alexandria. My child is in elementary school. When I talk to other parents, most plan to (1) enroll their children in private school, or (2) move to Arlington or Fairfax County when their children reach high-school age because TC Williams is such a poor school.
- Changing regulations to encourage/make it easy for people to use/install alternative energy sources, even in multi-family dwellings. We need to face up to the post-peak oil future and begin changing Alexandria to face that less energy-rich future. (Which admittedly has been staved off a couple of decades by the pillaging of the Earth that is fracking...).
- affordable medical care
- way too much emphasis has been given to affordable housing and encouraging diversity. We have a marvelous array of diversity--it is no longer an issue. A big issue is how few representatives have a real, vested interest in our school system.
- "Please add parking as another key topic unless it will be covered as part of traffic management.
- If it is not going to be covered in either environmental quality or healthy communities, please add mosquito and other pest control as a key topic."
- We need to think about our parks
- The Ugly Park at the King Street Metro is an embarrassment and it is the first thing guests see when they get off the Metrothink Europe and lovely lush areas.....not picked tobacco and annuals "
- Please explain why the City continues to give the school system more and more money, more than they ask for, in some cases, when they are among the lowest achieving in the Commonwealth. Why are the schools afraid to confront the issue of children that do not live in Alexandria attending schools paid for by Alexandria taxes?
- Public safety -- in all honesty, I cannot believe this wasn't one of the standard items on this list. It's the City's very first responsibility to its citizens.

- Residents and nonresident employees working together.
- I believe that all of these subjects are worth community discussion. I picked the first seven based on the directions for this question, but I would have picked all of them if that action was permitted.
- "All of these are of at least some importance.
- The city's libraries are very important to me and I don't see any category here that covers them.
- I live in 22304 which is the most diverse zip code in the area, according to a recent study reported in the Alexandria free newspaper. I love my neighborhood because of its diversity. Yet when I attend city meetings and events, the attendees are mostly white, mostly upper middle class, very reflective of the Old Town Alexandria stereotype and not reflective of my neighborhood. West End Alexandria remains a step-child in so many ways. Issues and concerns in West End are different from those in East End, not everyone fits the Old Town stereotype. Often, it doesn't seem as if City leaders understand this difference, or are interested in our inputs, or especially want to encourage participation in a diverse community.
- Programs for youth, particularly those with significant risk factors
- "Somewhere there has to be a limit established.
- Alexandria, according to many (including me) is FULL.
- "We've reached capacity; the point of diminishing returns"
- Early childhood issues and opportunities.
- Preserving open and public parks is critical to long-term sustainability of the City. Parks and greenways are economic catalysts and improve the quality of the environment. Two mega trends for the 21st century are - increased density and sustainability. Building, repairing and maintaining the green infrastructure is the key to a robust economy, a healthy city and rich community.
- "Academic quality should be emphasized over ""diversity"" in the schools.
- City has gone overboard in its vendetta against individual transportation (cars). "
- Stop affordable housing
- City staff must be aware who they are working for and as important be sure they do not give the impression of arrogant professionalism they have recently manifested.
- "The city is wasteful and disorganized when it comes to public service and is not focused on the residents. The city plants trees in the summer, doesn't water them, and they die. The city does not have an organized approach to tree watering, or to trimming trees to let them grow through the wires.... not hacked off under them. We get two recycling containers yellow and blue. We have had three iterations of curb cuts for various handicapped persons instead of one comprehensive effort. There have been two King Street Task Force efforts costing thousands of dollars, yet the recommendations go unfulfilled. (ie. Recommendations for no commercial offices or real estate offices on King, yet the CVS prime location is now being developed that way.) No inexpensive daytime parking to encourage people to come to Old Town. No parking meters in Del Ray vs \$1.75 per hour in Old Town thus giving incentives for businesses and customers to go to Del Ray, or elsewhere, vs Old Town where the merchants have higher rents and are often forced to close their business. Historic preservation is ignored for businesses. Look at the roofs on lower King Street. They are not copper, tin, or shake as required by Historic Guidelines. These are examples of why the city of Alexandria is spoken of as ""amateur hour"". We are the jewel of the DC area, yet we pander to developers with increased densities, variances for parking, and up-zoning-even on the waterfront.
- Thank you for listening.
- The quality of public schools will be a major factor as my family decides whether to stay in Alexandria to raise our children.
- Employment and workforce development
- Affordable housing is the top issue, followed by ACPS - all of our schools are exceeding capacity and we need several new elem schools in the near future.
- It's really tough to limit that to 7. They are all extremely important to me.

- Deeply and immediately cutting all of the above. Stick to maintenance of what we have and privatize many functions and defund.
- Parking!!!
- economic sustainability of the community
- I am new to Alexandria - moved here 9 months ago. Overall I am pleased and impressed with the quality of life - love my access to the metro, free trolley, restaurants and shopping. The torpedo factory is an asset - but why is the first floor area by King Street vacant? Why the empty food court pavilion? Wish the ferry service was better - more frequent and "better" boats. Overall, I am impressed with city employees who are courteous and professional.
- How about listening? How about analyzing problems differently?
- "I love living in Alexandria. I've been here almost 20 years now and think it is a great city. I think the elected reps, volunteers, and city employees have, overall, done a great job of making this a wonderful place to live. As a person who served on a condominium Board for nearly 10 years, the issue I felt most directly was affordable housing. It clearly has many benefits but for our community it also was pretty painful. The agreements about number of units maintained by the City in our condominium go back to the very foundation of the Association in the 80s. I know that I and my fellow Condominium owners would like an opportunity to have a dialog about changing the number of of affordable units in our condominium.
- As I said above, I think Alexandria has done a fair bit on the issue of sustainability but my particular corner of the Alexandria has been largely left out of those efforts. I would like to see Alexandria be far bolder in what it is doing with sustainability and renewable/clean energy. We are in gridlock at the National level. The State of Virginia seems hell-bent on competing for last place in the US on sustainability. We can only do so much with our large and old condominium building without partnerships. I Alexandria to be a bolder partner on sustainability!"
- How to preserve some development options for future generations rather than doing everything possible right now.
 - "Tax break for middle income seniors and more ""perks"" for tax paying city residents such as :
 - Ability to park in other zones for reduced or free fare
 - Discounts for tax paying residents
 - Block party opportunities"
- "Affordable housing / social responsibility is important to me, but I am under the impression that those concerns are being addressed. ???
- I am aware that many people do not feel comfortable having a percentage of their upscale neighborhood dedicated to affordable housing, and I can appreciate that. I recall reading about a community (do not recall where) that successfully integrated low income citizens into upscale neighborhoods by educating the low income segment as to expectations and community standards BEFORE they moved in. Among the recommendations were: 1) Don't gather on the front stoop, instead use the area to the rear of your home, e.g., deck, porch; 2) Don't congregate in the street or stop your car in the street to talk with your friends; 3) Hang only neutral colors or lined draperies at your windows, and don't hang posters or ""loud"" decorations in the windows; 4) Don't blast music from your home or car; 5) Pick up litter and sweep your steps and walk; 6) Introduce yourself to your neighbors; 7) Greet your neighbors when you see them.
- In my opinion, the upscale segment of the community needs to be ""educated"", too. They need to understand the sensitivities of those in affordable housing and make an attempt to make them feel welcome...
- Micro and small business initiatives.
- "Alexandria public schools and learning environment for kids ."
- "Low income housing, which is different from affordable housing.

- Well being of all children that live in the community."
- Possible use of Baldrige Assessment and then developing metrics that are easy to understand for the entire City and pertinent to what should be measured to show progress on that activity/program/project.
- This survey is a good start!!
- Youth development; summer programs/jobs/mentorship
- Financial stability and accurate budgeting are critical to our future. A detailed review (every 5 years) of the sources and uses of our tax dollars is a must. This exercise should be coupled with identifying how our citizens want to prioritize spending. Through this sources and uses review we may also identify programs that are no longer appropriate or helpful.
- All of these are important. I've selected my 7 but all of these need to be addressed or monitored to improve or maintain our quality of life.
- Implementation of existing plans.
- Safe community is a concern
- Higher Education opportunities /community college
- We must develop commercially to relieve the tax burden on residential taxpayers.
- Improving the physical and mental health of all Alexandrians is vital to both our economic future and the vitality and quality of life of the city.
- Healthy communities and the arts are also important
- Establish programs(outside of PTA) that allow consistent interaction w/young mothers, single parents, ESL parents as it relates to their child/ren education. Assigning a "parent to parent" mentor who would engage w/the parent but not doing the job for the parent regarding their involvement, but create a firm awareness of the positive impact their involvement has directly w/the child/ren and their school as a parent.
- Perhaps the biggest topic that the City must address is the fact that we have long been "built out" in terms of how much infrastructure we really have to serve the development that is taking place. Our roads are virtual parking lots at certain times of the day. We've squandered taxpayer dollars on foolish things like "curb build outs" and other nonsense, while real services (like leaf collection) have declined. We need to stop raising taxes at the same time we are lowering services.
- Senior Citizens!!!!!!
- "We have one of the LOWEST unemployment rates in the area and our average income is high...we have plenty of affordable housing. You never hear of anyone saying that Beverly Hills CA or the Upper East or West Side in NYC need to provide low income housing.
- Also let's crack down with SEVERE penalties for those people that lie or allow their addresses to be used by kids from MD to attend TC Williams or other schools. We have called repeatedly about the drop off that occurs on Clifford Ave every morning and this has been going on for years. "
- interested in affordable housing for middle income
- Everything above is important. Sadly, I think the affordable housing is not being replaced at the same ratio that it is now. And that train has left the station.
- "Our waterfront development plans are a joke or worse. And nothing has even been started yet. Just hearings, hearings, plans, re-plans, hearings and court contests. There is no real ""community involvement"", just common confusion. I hear one plan, then I hear that has been scrapped. You need to create a working process that EVERYONE can follow and stick to it.
- Personally I felt our waterfront development should include dining and pedestrian friendly access. So now we are getting our butts kicked by National Harbor. They took nothing and have far more dining and entertainment options than we do. Now they are stealing our business and they'll take far more unless we get after it. But we will fail again! "
- Historic preservation - historic sites (museums) + historic architecture
- I am for the waterfront redevelopment that the city approved.

- The process for issuing and contesting parking tickets. Improperly issued tickets are a waste of taxpayer money in the courts and are costing our citizens unfairly. We need increased accountability in this process.
- Becoming a model city in sustainable design
- The City needs to be more open about what its plans are before it is too late for the community to express concerns. Recent examples where this didn't appear to happen are the BRAC building and the Beauregard small area plan (that might be the wrong name). The City has continued to support further development in ways that has eroded affordable housing, increased traffic congestion and overburdened roads, and ignored long-term effects, such as increased school populations with no schools to house the children. It's time to call a halt to building on every available square inch of land in this city!
- Better committed from City of Alexandria staff and City of Alexandria Council on Westend of City of Alexandria (Westend of 395's highway)
- Education QUALITY is not on this list- only enrollment, budget, land use. How do we make PUBLIC schools high quality in Alexandria?
- Services/inclusion for people with disabilities.
- Emergency preparedness; Emergency Management; Public Safety and Security; etc.
- I am flabbergasted that HISTORIC PRESERVATION is not within the list of key topics that the community should be discussing. Historic Preservation should be guiding and shaping all decisions that the city makes as it plans for the future.
- Weaknesses of school system that are geographically concentrated; integrating public housing into communities; more peaceful (noise free) neighborhoods
- 1.) Location of affordable housing. 2.) How to deconcentrate location of ARHA housing."
- Bike trails
- Recreation
- Infrastructure improvements"
- Alexandria is extremely weak on pools (mostly outdoor), skate parks that are guarded, and high quality modern recreation centers in general for the population in this city. The term Healthy communities is vague in the list above.
- ACPS is in an unacceptable state given our location and it falls far behind in quality compared with other city amenities. This should be placed at the forefront of the agenda.
- Thank you for seeking input on this topic.
- "I only checked two above, below are my 3, 4 and 5.
- Children centered activities. Spray park, children's museum, bounce houses. I am always utilizing Arlington County for their wonderful spray parks. Loudon County has moon bounce facilities.
- Alexandria City lacks children focused activities. It's really a shame.
- I'd like to see a children's museum on a much smaller scale than big museums. Something like the Playseum in MD and DC.
- "The City needs to go to GOOGLE and see if they are willing to do what they are doing for Kansas City for us with their new Internet infrastructure but take it 1 step further. I think the next step in all communities is improving the access to technology that city residents have access to and then using that to upgrade our schools, business and other revenue generating outlets.
- Alexandria needs to be in the forefront of such things to make it a community that people want to live in."
- Our waterfront must be developed to delight residents and visitors and must be financially sustainable.
- "traffic management and non auto travel.... some great initiatives but look at Russell Road as an example: getting more crowded everyday and backed up w/o properly timed lights. Now it has traffic nodes instead of a curbed bike lane to provide for people to get the at least 4 schools on Russell Road.

There is no safe way to even get to Russell Road on roads w/o sidewalks like Beverly. It is common sense, that if you got the transportation, the sidewalk people, and the health dept. together that you wouldn't have the technical knowledge to coordinate and solve this. Don't waste, 10 community meetings on something like this. After all, I think that we got the absurd and unsafe traffic nodes after a community meeting. Look at a university just pick one and you will see how to design roads with bike lanes without 10 community meetings. One of your city engineers came from the U of Illinois which is famous for designing good bike transport.

- "I believe residents need to be realistic about both the benefits and limitations of a community of 140,000 people who live adjacent to the Nation's Capital. I have no patience with people who move to a historic city that is a tourist destination and delight in living close to restaurants and a lovely waterfront but get upset if outsiders want to share their space. They forget that the visitors help support our economy and help keep our tax base reasonable.
- It is short-sighted not to invest in infrastructure. Failure to maintain and improve sewer systems, roads, bridges and buildings only results in higher costs down the road -- or else the major deterioration of a formerly proud city. There is no such thing as stasis, at least not for long; we either improve or we decline."
- "I believe residents need to be realistic about both the benefits and limitations of a community of 140,000 people who live adjacent to the Nation's Capital. I have no patience with people who move to a historic city that is a tourist destination and delight in living close to restaurants and a lovely waterfront but get upset if outsiders want to share their space. They forget that the visitors help support our economy and help keep our tax base reasonable.
- It is short-sighted not to invest in infrastructure. Failure to maintain and improve sewer systems, roads, bridges and buildings only results in higher costs down the road -- or else the major deterioration of a formerly proud city. There is no such thing as stasis, at least not for long; we either improve or we decline."
- Thank you for providing opportunity to respond to the survey
- Support for those coming out of jail and prison - \$1000 allocated for each returning citizen will insure that no more than 8% go back to jail!
- "Would like to see more opportunities to discuss long-term sustainability and economic development issues. Where does the City want to be in 2050 and how do we get there?"
- Also would like to see the Mayor and City Council members as well as senior officials in the City hold open office hours. This would go a long way to help our elected officials and departments heads stay connected to their constituents and take the temperature of the community. "
- i want EWALD pool reopened in 2013!
- This is tough. I didn't select schools cuz I don't have kids but I still believe they are critically important. And for Alexandria, the character of downtown is critical -- preserving that and making it easily accessible. That two-hour parking restriction is insane. What woman can have lunch and go shopping in two hours, for example. And requiring paid parking like DC does all over is simply offensive and definitely unsporting. So I might have selected parking had it been offered. It's one of those quality of life things, little niggling things that make your blood boil instead of paying attention to what's wonderful all around. Which brings one to budget and development and affordable housing: we need a pleasant place for everyone.
- "Increasing the availability of reasonably priced parking for automobiles in commercial areas.
- Promoting an increase in the percentage of higher-income residents, who can/will pay the taxes for the other government-funded initiatives."
- "With architecture, Art Deco is being foisted on the West End, in spite of NUMEROUS complaints by citizens. We are looking to the future, not to the well worn past. Focus on quality of life, not just profit motive for developers, most of whom live somewhere else. Same is true for staff who don't live here

- Stop imposing plans just because they were tried somewhere else, when the logistics, neighborhood composite and funding options are totally different.
- Everything is a one-way communication. City does exactly what it wants. Include residents from the beginning instead of bringing them in at the end---esp. for the Mirant redevelopment. "
- Enable the City Council and city government to be more involved in running the schools rather than just through the budget. We waste so much money on Superintendent Sherman and too many other school managers, to what end? The school board is not qualified to address the mess that our schools have become.
- "High quality architecture does not have to be made entirely out of bricks. Architect Frank Gehry blended modern and brick successfully in many of his buildings, like the Weisman museum in Minneapolis University campus which switched the focus from the brick center of campus towards a focal point on the river, drawing people in from the other bank. Here are more examples:
<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=Frank+Gehry+Buildings&qpv=Frank+Gehry+Buildings&FORM=IGRE>
- Enough with the bricks. Let's look into the future, the past (and brick!) is well enough preserved in Old Town.
- If I could check 'Traffic Management' seven times, I would!
- The angry people, parents, seniors, and select minority groups really crowd the conversation in Alexandria. I appreciate that these folks all have needs and need to have a voice. But those of us who pay high taxes - and do not eat away the tax base with kids in school or other community-based needs - don't really have the ear of the Council. I get really frustrated when I hear people talk about more money for schools, because we are putting A LOT into the schools already. What about us simple families who just pay our taxes, buy groceries and mow our lawns? Are there more opportunities to meet my needs?
- Please understand that when I marked Finances/budget it is because I believe we need to address the need for more revenue, not lower taxes.
- The most important topic should be the ACPS's performance. Businesses don't want their employees' kids going to inferior schools.
- If the proper emphasis is giving to non-auto travel then the traffic mgmt should be impacted in a positive way.
- The problem of crime in old town is one of my major concerns
- All of the above are very important to our quality of life.
- I am a huge cycling and arts advocate...so my main interests are in art education for ALL kids and environmental issues, particularly involving transportation.
- "You will find a lot of useful information on these types of issues in the Knowledge Network of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).....
- www.icma.org/kn. The city staff should be using the knowledge network as a resource and city staff will benefit from membership in ICMA, the CM is a member."
- It's painful to only choose 7. ALL of the topics are key and should be discussed. Questions like this are why things like arts, open space, healthy neighborhoods, and the future are never given careful consideration.
- tourism
- Early childhood education - how could you leave this off!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- My personal opinion is that the quality of our schools drives the vitality of our city. Arlington is a prime example. They have a similar demographic and yet their schools perform much much better than ours. In 1986 TC Williams out performed the Arlington schools. Arlington schools have continued to improve while ours have diminished in quality. Maybe we need to look back to 1986 to find out what was being done at that time to have 15 Westinghouse Science finalists. Only one school in the country had more finalists. The Bronx School of Science. The better our schools, the more people will want to

live in Alexandria and pay more for housing thus more tax revenue thus more funds for open space, athletic fields and a healthier community. It is a simple cycle. In 1986 there were nearly as many different countries represented at TC as there are today. We have to stop making excuses and get to the cause of the problem and get it fixed.

- If the city is going to continue to hobble itself with an impossible standard of altruism, it needs to ensure it is enforcing the policies it has in place to mitigate the impact of its commitment - overcrowding, pockets of crime, noise, dilapidated housing, gang activity - on the quality of life of the neighbors who only wish to enjoy the peaceful quite of their home. It is absolutely too much to ask to be 'accepting' and 'understanding' of different 'cultures' (nobody cares about where someone is from when they are causing a disruption or breaking the law) - one city, one standard.
- 1. I would like to see the City make more efforts to encourage local production of food - urban gardens and urban chickens. Families of all demographics need to be able to provide. They are quiet, they eat many insects and small rodents, they improve soil fertility, and they create food. It's clear that Alexandria is behind the times and we need to step it up in this department and do what's necessary to make healthy food accessible to our residents. I think our goals for health and environmental quality should be - less chemicals and more nature. Less fuel being wasted to transport things we are capable of growing here.
- 2. More residents seem to rely on bikes and public transit. I would like to see more focus placed on integrating safe bike lanes. And focus placed on areas of heavy traffic flow. I've also heard some residents mention the idea of a monorail above Duke St as opposed to buses. This sounds like a great idea, although I'm not sure how feasible it is when you consider cost, noise, installation procedures, etc.
- 3. I've heard that ACPS has been improving (thank you). I would like to see more programs put in place to teach kids about gardens, food, and biology/anatomy/physiology. Above all else, your body is the most important tool you have. Without your health, you have nothing. We should be training our children to nourish themselves and to become employable, self-sufficient adults, as opposed to just training them to go to college and take out loans they can't afford."
- my concern is eldercare, and the ramifications of lack of and/or continuing elder abuse.
- Why limit to seven choices? If I could have checked them all, I would have. They are all important to our quality of life.
- All of the above topics are very important to me and my family.
- Ways to keep our city clean and trash free!
- More effort on building a strong city and less effort in social engineering and making the city residents dependent rather than leading an inspiring independence through economic investment and growth in commercial activities and employment .
- Affordable Housing in Alexandria is critical.
- Making developmentally-appropriate preschool education available and affordable for all 3- and 4-year-old children in the City.
- Public School Improvement!
- "transparency and accountability.
- Ability to remove from appointed position."
- Thank you for conducting this survey. All the topics in Question 10 are important quality of life issues in Alexandria.
- Residential parking when bus routes are running through the community to the Pentagon and to DC. Problem is that outsiders park and sometimes leave on trips thus causing a problem for residents who arrive home at 9:30PM and find no spaces close to home. The permit parking is challenging for non-oldtown residents because the the guest parking permits. Maybe a "substation" could be set up to give them out.
- Utilizing all modes of transportation should be crucial to the planning process.

- Schools ---but not the issues noted above ---the achievement gap.
- The transit and biking sections of non-auto travel surely come under traffic management; there's no need for a separate item. Even walking can be included here as walking in town is affected by traffic. Non-city road activities in this item come under the open space, trails... item.
- Recognizing the need for complete streets and providing better facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians is a great start. Launching CABI as the third community in the region was a good decision and the expansion into Del Ray and other areas will increase traffic substantially. There is much more to do and I hope the City will increase its efforts to make it easier, safer and more comfortable to ride for utility, transportation or recreation.
- "Raze the Chinguapin Center. Provide dedicated, adequate public funding from the city budget for construction of a new, indoor aquatic center at Chinguapin Center. It is falling apart. It is the only indoor pool in the city of 139,000 people. It is antiquated with its water filtration and ac/heating system, a leaky roof for years and general maintenance is underbudgeted. These are causes for health and safety issues. Why fix an old building when it probably would be a better decision to just build a new pool rather than to try to fix the old one. It would cost more to fix systems than to build a new building.
- It is the most active, busy aquatic center in the city, with programs 12 months a year, for adults, children, TCW, Marlins, camps and other swim teams. Revenue generated for programs at Chinguapin should be returned to that facility and not distributed to other pools.
- A second indoor, deep water pool should be built in the West End to meet the needs and wants of the citizens in the West End. Alexandria is not competitive with swimming teams in our local area.
- The budget for Chinguapin has been neglected since 2008, when TCW was built. A new pool was scheduled for 2008 when the high school was built. That funding needs to be returned to Chinguapin.
- Arlington has 3 indoor pools.
- Alexandria seems to have been taken over by federal government building projects that add nothing to the tax rolls and use public resources. Put a moratorium on federal office building.
- Today there seems to be a disconnect between city staff (who recommend decisions) and the neighbors affected by them.
- I think this falls under neighborhood preservation but Alexandria is very rich in our Country's history -- we work with this as a strength along with the arts.
- Traffic, traffic, traffic.
- waterfront! start putting in SOME restaurants and boutique hotels in the robinson terminals, art building and dilapidated buildings on the waterfront. we do not need the whole plan to be passed to start small. one space at a time . It now looks awful in many sections. could be much more attractive! the deliberation has gone on too long. get building!
- Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
- This list should include economic development. I see it mentioned with regard to Arts, but I believe it is integral to our discussion of affordable housing, ACPS, finances/budget and most other topics above.
- METRO and DASH buses are too large for the streets, are never full, often speed and run red lights. It is the worst on Pendleton St. as they rush to the bus garage. Can't the bus garage be moved away from this growing residential area? Can't smaller, quieter buses be used? Can't the drivers adhere to traffic laws?
- "I was surprised that the issues of quality preK and K - 12 education were not on this list. School readiness and the ability to read by grade 3 are issues that impact our economy. When only one out of 10 applicants at Wal-Mart can pass the initial employment screening, we are in big trouble.
- availability of high-quality, low-cost child care throughout the city
- Encourage sustainable ordinances like backyard chickens
- Early Childhood Education

- Preserving the uniqueness of Alexandria by defending vs the generic, the "everywhere"-ville nature of much development, business development, etc.
- Many of these topics are related as they speak to the future of the City, and it's hard to pick only 7. Although Environment and Health didn't make my list, I don't know how we discuss my 7 w/o touching on those 2. Also, as a big HS/youth sports guy, I would not have picked Arts a few mths ago; but I've seen 1st-hand what the Arts can do for kids, and there are many similarities.
- I think we already devote a lot of resources to those on the lower end of the income spectrum. It might be time to realize that it costs a lot to live in Northern Virginia and it might not be for everyone.
- I believe making sure every Alexandria child gets an excellent education that prepares them for work or further education is the civil rights issue of our time. I would like the City/ACT/Children Youth and Family Collaborative Commission to host an opportunity for the entire community to learn why reading by third grade is so important, what is currently being done by ACPS and nonprofit groups in the city to increase the percentage of children who can read by third grade and then to have a discussion to come up with other ideas for how individuals, business, civic associations etc. can help make it happen.
- Let's not forget crime. I live on the 1000 block of Queen Street. Two people have been stabbed since I moved here in 2009. Drugs are a problem too. Not everything to include the stabbings, one of which I witnessed and testified too, are easily uncovered in crime reporting.
- Real estate tax increases -- just ridiculous
- The city website can be very difficult to navigate. For example, city council dockets are generally inaccessible from other parts of the website. So to know about a particular development, you have to go through each docket and each boards agenda/minutes, virtually guaranteeing that things slip through the cracks. Essentially, you have to know that something was going to be on the docket to have any chance of finding it. Given today's technology and simple hyperlinking, resolving this seems straightforward.
- I'm sorry -- these are all very important. Some build/relate closely to others.
- We need more bike lanes; greater numbers of teachers in ACPS; increased emphasis on health and wellness (i.e., greater amounts of health/physical education in elementary and more than two years at the High School level). West end traffic is getting too heavy.
- Alexandria needs to capitalize on its waterfront location, and have a mix of Parks, trails, retail, residential. The warehouses need to go, with a tasteful mix replacing them. The retail and residential will need to pay for the Parks and trails. The subsidized housing needs to be moved to other cheaper inland locations. Alexandria does not need to be the only municipality offering low income housing. Art, and art projects should be on public display in cases, or pedestals at locations all over the city, and changed on a periodic basis.
- Business opportunities to ethnic minority residents; grants made available for nonprofits
- Several topics are redundant. Also, some issues government has limited if any impact on.
- Please consider upgrading the aquatic facilities at Chinquapin, e.g. by adding a whirlpool. Seems like a frill but is healthful for older citizens and those with orthopedic issues. They seem standard in the regio, e.g. Fairfax
- Non-auto travel, open space & recreation, Arts, diversity and demographics are also important, and need to be part of the whole Development Planning process.
- adolescent pregnancy, school lunches, increase physical education time in schools
- All of the above are important and it was difficult to eliminate. What I eliminated was what I feel we are already doing well (environmental quality, affordable housing, etc.)
- Residential commercial relationship
- "I love modernization as much as the next person, but we are not a ""real"" city, we are not equipped with the space nor city employees to handle such a large dream and expectation. Our roads are bad as it is, our taxes have skyrocketed even though federal and citizen funds are coming into revenue due to this increase in people and transit.

- The schools are not equipped to take on this amount of students, and the areas that are being affected now, are already passed capacity.
- The traffic around these schools is outrageous, it is completely insane during am and pm hours. Causing unsafe and illegal situations. The city schools need to re-route many of their mileages and bus routes to accommodate and ensure student safety. The streets are not the same as they were 5/10/20 years ago. It was ok for a student to walk to school, but now, they are risking their lives in order to get to and from school.
- 'Diversity' goes with affordable housing; 'public' and 'open' spaces and 'preservation' go with development & redevelopment, as do 'environmental quality' and 'healthy communities'; 'non-auto travel' goes with traffic management; one should not discuss redevelopment without discussing 'trends';
- I care about affordable housing but consider that as part of community diversity. And preserving our neighborhoods is very important to me. It was very distressing to me at the City Council Candidate Debates to hear everybody talking about how important density and mixed use properties are to the neighborhoods, and several candidates said "but, of course, that should be the plan only for those areas near subways". Well I didn't move to Rosemont to be near a subway, that just happened. And I didn't buy a building in Parker Gray for my office because it was near a subway - it was near my house and accessible to clients because of the GW Pkwy. But density and mixed use (most of the retail use sitting empty) is what I've got! Maybe density and mixed use IS the answer, but we are not GOING ABOUT IT CORRECTLY?! We need to take another hard look. Or Rosemont and Parker Gray are going to disappear. I swear we look like Arlington highrises but WITHOUT the vibrant businesses, WITHOUT the carefully planned green space, and WITHOUT the beautiful architecture. All we've got are boxey high rises with a couple hedges along the edges. We can do better than that!! The history (let alone the people) if Rosemont and Parker Gray deserve better than that. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU for asking my opinions!
- Library! Aquatics
- Beautification is high on my list, which could be considered as art. We need more.
- "Community diversity discussions should include ways to welcome and assist immigrants who are new to the community. Just saying that we have a diverse community is not enough. We need to take advantage of our diversity and provide opportunities to hear the needs of everyone in the community. That means that all groups need to be represented in our community discussions.
- Finances should be discussed not just as a method of excluding what is too expensive, but should include what we are willing to pay for to enhance our quality of life.
- Parking
- CODE ENFORCEMENT is the "other." Too many houses are over crowded and becoming "hotels"; unlicensed "day cares" are causing some neighborhood traffic problems, and safety concerns; too many cars are being parked on lawns; and putting refuse out for pick-up is not being enforced. Code enforcement needs to routinely visit the extreme west end.
- Old town is becoming a wasteland of chain stores and restaurants, with insufficient support for growing tourism (aka a parking nightmare), and, overall, an unpleasant experience for residents. My hope is that you keep the mess out of Del Ray!
- "We need a discussion about priorities, especially in light of the economic times and anticipated budget cuts in many areas.
- Transit didn't even make the list?
- Density; the related tax base. The City's position re federally-owned properties.
- The City needs to develop a comprehensive master plan that addresses land use, transportation, infrastructure, parks etc.
- "Early childhood programs
- Supports for children and families

- Opportunities for youth involvement, engagement and entertainment"
- How to get the City, residential & businesses to work together and get along
- "The City should not be suing its own volunteer boards just because it disagrees with their findings.
- The City should stop increasing taxes every year, year after year."
- OLD TOWN parking
- under ACPS I would also add quality of education; under community diversity I would add how diversity affects all citizens including needs and funding for social services, housing and education;
- I would also add infrastructure if I had one more vote -- but did not, as maintenance of our infrastructure is a necessary function of government and perhaps not as needy of public involvement.
- All of these are important however, raising expectations when nothing is likely to come of it leads to the type of cynicism that I exhibit here after 40 years of attending such meetings [do you recall small area plans ?]. Do you remember how every development was to increase the tax base and yet my taxes continue to go up and there is no money except for unnecessary bridges. when I moved here Alexandria had the highest number of public housing units in the metropolitan area now you want to talk of "affordable housing" as tied to medium income not teachers, police, or garbage collectors. Libraries are under staffed, recreation is cut (the handicapped have to raise donations for facilities). I guess (Whats Next Alexandria is - talk is cheap and thats all that will come of this.
- Making government more efficient and transparent in use of tax dollars for the projects on the boards or in planning.
- Maintaining a diverse community is primary, I feel. Racially, culturally, and economically--diversity keeps vibrancy and vitality.
- "Well, all of these issues are important to a thriving community. Hard to pick. Good schools attract good businesses for their workers who want to live here; they pay more than their share of tax revenues and subsidize residential property owners. But the School Board and Superintendent really control the schools; the council only provides funding.
- We need density around the Metro. The city needs to pay its fair share for the Metro at Potomac Yard. The entire community needs to think about possibilities for GenOn, not just a north Old Town. (Ok, I'd love to see theater space like Signature in Shirlington, among other mixed-use spaces.) Of course we want high-quality architecture but the planning staff likes it safe and has its favorite architects, and is probably even more risk-adverse after the waterfront criticism.
- "Affordable housing / Community diversity: No one complained as the diversity within my neighborhood changed dramatically from 1999 - present. Granted there wasn't a massive redevelopment of existing housing stock, but the changes: a) made/make existing residents feel unwelcome; b) rising home values priced them/price their children out of the neighborhood; and c) encouraged seniors/heirs to capitalize gains by selling out to developers.
- Other:
 - 1) Reduce inefficiency and redundancy (E.g. grounds maintenance is spread amongst multiple agencies - General Services, ACPS, RP&CA, TES).
 - 2) High quality public spaces (spaces that serve more than one sport or purpose)
 - 3) The Cost of Free Parking
 - 4) Preserve 'Quality of Life' for residents
- seems you are on the right track, but for ex...basic infrastructure and services are not to be franchised to developers...you get low quality, has to be redone anyway, and yes you save \$, but the city must be responsible for basic infrastructure needs - roads, sidewalks, utilities, etc.....
- "these are the most important! Nice work~!
- please keep processes transparent: I know many provided input on the Del Ray trolley- recommending use of Commonwealth Ave - but suddenly there was a decision without discussion or any treatment to whether or not Commonwealth was exempt. After all it is a major thoroughfare and had a trolley in the

past. As a major N-S avenue, bracketed by Russell and Mt Vernon, it should be used more for public transportation."

- The genius store called, they're running out of you.
- "I think a review of the procedures of all of our boards, workshops and commissions is in order. A set of best practices should be determined and required for:
 - 1) Public notification of date,time,location and agenda
 - 2) Timely dissemination of staff reports
 - 3) Consistent approach to public comment. Not allowing any public comment till the end of the meeting should be banned, especially if there have been multiple agenda items. Trying to make points about a agenda item that is long past and when everyone is tired and trying to leave is frustrating at best. Signing up to speak should be consistent. I recommend that all should follow the city council or planning commission protocol.
 - 4) For any board/commission/workgroup/etc. that has members that are supposed to represent some group or community, those members should be strongly encouraged/required to actually communicate with that group or community.
- We need much better aquatic facilities, such as Arlington already has!
- The city and the mayor have gone off the deep end on density development. We need more acquired by purchase open space and parks.
- As you can see all are important. We all need to decide what kind of city we want in the future how we are going to grow as we need to do to be better than we are
- Better public transit, more public transit, a west Alexandria Metro station (between King and Van Dorn) with some kind of access over the other tracks to Duke St.
- The CitybCouncionhasc to end it's slavish obedience to developers. The City government has to stop acting in secret.
- I think we need to pay attention to decisions of the superintendent. We will lose many educated families in public schools if we continue on the present course of intervention and not differentiation. Our chief of curriculum came from Success for All and is adopting this program at schools like Mount Vernon where many children do not need intervention. They need a better program than one designed for inner city schools. The new reading guidelines are not balanced and fail to acknowledge the research of Fountas Pinnell. Alexandria's families want more than good test takers.
- The ARTS are KEY to Alexandria's growing identity as a travel destination. Emphasizing and prioritizing the availability of funds, support, grants, and venues can significantly differentiate us from all our local metro area neighboring communities!
- "Availability of affordable SMOKE-FREE condominiums and rental properties (both garden and high-rise apartment types). This is an idea way past it's time. This is not only a nuisance issue for non-smokers - having to deal with the filthy smell of smoke and sidewalks littered with dirty cigarette butts. But, it's undeniably a health and safety issue as well. The cause of many multi-unit building fires is smoker-related and the health dangers of second-hand smoke are well documented. Non-smokers who are physically, financially, and/or otherwise unable to purchase detached single family homes should have affordable smoke-free housing options in the city. (Other nearby localities have finally started to offer this, but they are usually only in very expensive, upscale high-rises; and not everyone wants that, even if he/she could afford it). This should absolutely be given consideration in the so-called ""revitalization planning"" for the west end of Alexandria.
- I am sure that my second concern will fall on deaf ears - for reasons I've already mentioned above - but I will express it anyway. Alexandria should seriously reconsider (and revoke) its status as a sanctuary city for illegal aliens. I see first-hand on a daily basis how welfare and entitlement programs are constantly abused here. Alexandria citizens are paying dearly for this. Nowhere is this more evident than in the education systems. Many people who might find Alexandria ""tolerable"" for themselves,

say they would never stay here if they had children (because of the poor reputation of the Alexandria Public schools).

- A cross sectoral workshop that is truly non related with specific development plans would be a good start.
- Need to focus on Landmark Area a bit more. Also low income and affordable housing should be looked at more.
- ACPS quality
- "Healthy development for infants and toddlers and early childhood learning. This is critical to school readiness, closing achievement gaps, intervening early in the lives of children living in chaotic environments (which affects healthy brain development, etc.). Environmental quality is also important to me, which is closely linked to non-auto travel. However, since I believe in positive incentives over punitive measures, I selected ""open space, trails and recreation based on the assumption that these quality of life infrastructure pieces would lead to a reduction of automobiles and better environmental quality. Affordable Housing is a critical issue and has an impact on many of the other issues. For example, we spend lots of money at the front end of services for people with the highest need. Then, after providing ESL classes, parent classes and costly health and learning supports, there is no housing stock for individuals and families as they move out of poverty. We should make sure we have a continuum of services and supports within our infrastructure and build in more prevention mechanisms.
- "I would like to see improvements to Alexandria wrt the lifestyle. Most cities are known for something or have some redeeming feature. It seems that Alexandria is losing this sense of uniqueness. Is this just another city with a few old buildings that have been converted to business? Why not a harbor with a nautical museum; an expansion of the archeology society to showcase artifacts; or what about encouraging citizens to visit through more cultural center activities like film festivals, lectures, concerts etc. We like it here but there is a lack of the full range of shopping, dining, housing you can find in other counties/ cities in the area. Right now we travel out of town to shop and eat because there are 't enough options. periodic festivals; improve walking or biking for commuters.
- Reducing exposure of children to secondhand smoke; reducing child obesity; increase access to primary care services
- "Social services is missing from this list. important.
- ""Traffic management"" and ""high quality architecture and public spaces"" and Trends..."" are important, but I subsume these under ""development and redevelopment.""
- Do this more often, and most of all get out of the office and listen to the street
- Housing, Schools, and Environmental Quality are the most important to me and affect the rest on your list.
- Beyond ACPS infrastructure, I want to talk about the QUALITY of education & improving the perception of Alexandria schools so that young, educated, involved families don't leave.
- I think the city has a bias against cars. This is unfortunate. Bikes are now available in the city but bike riding is dangerous. The number of injuries and fatalities due to bikes has risen significantly because of the increase in bike riding. Cars are cost-effective when lights are in sync and there are enough lanes.
- Our schools are mediocre by national standards. Mediocre at best. The waterfront was ram-rodged through. Traffic is only getting worse. Our fire truck fleet is outdated because we've sacrificed so many of the fundamentals of City government to special interest commissions and other pointless bureaucracies that make Alexandria feel like it's a big city. It is not. Get back to basics. There's no reason for us to have a Human Rights Commission - we're not the United Nations. And, oh yeah, the BAR needs to be toned down and accountable earlier in the process to someone.
- A number of these topics do not strike me as discrete.
- I am really nervous about ACPS. We have a 2 year old and it seems like kindergartens are overcrowded already and getting worse. And I hear that the school quality just isn't that good for middle school and

high school level. I love living in Alexandria, but to continue to live here I'd like to see more resources put toward significantly improving the education system.

- decreased density less congestion
- i WOULD LOVE TO SEE DEMOGRAPHICS EASIER TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT GROWTH HAPPENING IN AN AREA LIKE POTOMAC YARD , or EISENHOWER VALLEY or even Land Mark Oh my lets not forget Landmark. BUT NOT OVER 10 or 20 years that it seems to take to happen. Many times we get to see an area and the build out but it never seems to happen that way or is much different over 20 years. Can we iron these kinks out or the delay or the forecasts just be made better. Or is just what communities or economics do to a plan anyway?
- Education as it will be affected by population growth in the city! /the way that all of these factors can interact.
- I'm a 2 issue voter: arts and environmental awareness...with the schools as a third:)
- Te3lecommunications competition
- I believe that Alexandria is a divided community especially the old town area. I live in the historic Parker Gray district and I find that there is a great divide between black and white residents. Not long ago, the local civic association had an ice cream social in a local park. There was only one black person present and i believe it was a police officer. Two blocks away, citizens of Jefferson Village were having a major cook out and all of the person present were black. I would like to see these two communities joined instead of separate. But it begins with understanding and presently the only thing you hear from white neighbors at the local civic association is when will the city plan to get rid of the Jefferson Village community. We don't want it in our neighborhood. When in actuality, I remember a time not long ago when the Parker Gray district was primarily black. But it is apparent that many in this city do not want to remember the history of this city.
- Biggest need is a 50-meter indoor pool facility (with separate indoor water park to generate revenue; with a learning pool as well)
- The cost of living continues to rise in the City of Alexandria. As a single mother who relocated to the area almost 2 years ago I am still in shock that I have to pay well over 2000K a month for a 2 bedroom apartment in the area. Housing should be 30% of my income, not 65% of my income.
- I find it interesting that most of the affordable housing (PLEASE define this term, because it should not include Section 8 or public housing) is in the North or South part of Old Town and Del Ray has none.
- Please do not do the Duke Street widening project. Please do not destroy the Duke Gardens neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods. So many of us have spoken to one another about feeling railroaded over this plan. It seemed the decision was final, and the public conversation was an exercise in going through the motions. This has destroyed belief in the good-faith efforts of our government.
- The city is not doing enough to address climate change. By failing to act now, we are, sadly, ensuring that the city doesn't survive in recognizable form for another 260 years; 15-30% of the greenhouse gases we emit today in driving to the grocery store will still be lingering in the atmosphere, warming our climate and acidifying our oceans, 1,000 years from now. We like to pride ourselves on being home to some of the founding fathers of our country, but we're recklessly endangering the future survival of our community, and the livability of our city. It's understandable that our city's leaders have so far lacked the courage and wisdom necessary to take on this issue in a meaningful way. That doesn't make it any less of a leadership failure.
- I look forward to seeing the results of this effort!
- affordable accessible child care and early education this SHOULD HAVE BEEN listed AS A key topics. it is part of the city strategic plan goal 4
- I have lived in Alexandria for most of my life. The quality of life in this city is beyond what anyone could expect. I feel we are well cared for by our city administrators, all those who are responsible for its operation including and especially our police and fire departments. I believe that in matters that have

affected me and my property have been properly and carefully addressed by the city. Alexandria citizens don't know just how well off they are.

- I suggest the city look to it's mssion statement before developing responses to federal proposals to ensure those responses are consistent with and reflect the city's values and priorities. NOT the case in the BRAC matter.
- You provide 15 items and you want to know the 7 MOST important ones? You should ONLY ask for the TOP THREE to make this informative as to what REALLY is important. If the heads of city departments lived IN the city, they would have a vested interest in its future rather than just holding down a job.
- "Revise parking regulations to conform to the reality that people own cars, but should be encouraged to minimize their use. Current regulations do not encourage the use of mass transit, and lead to energy waste.
- I think the above are all key topics with healthy community as well as infrastructure maintenance and construction a close time with my top seven.
- I am on the West End of Alexandria. My neighborhood has gone from middle class to the Hood as the projects in Old Town are leveled in favor of more expensive housing. Thanks for that. I am also extemely concerned that the City has taken an approach toward health that included attacking obesity. There is tons and tons of evidence that a shaming/attacking approach toward the obese does not work. The City should instead, put an emphasis on healthy habits. Those who have no pounds to lose need to practice healthy habits just as much as those who do have pounds to lose. The current approach contributes to weight stigma which in turn, increases eating disorders and encourages bullies and the public at large to shame/blame those who they deem overweight. There are both healthy fate people and unhealthy thin people. The sooner this is acknowledged and a health for all approach is adapted, the better overall community heathlh will be. See the Association for Size Diversity and Health's website as a good starting point if interested in this feedback.
- Parking in neighborhoods by outsiders (who often leave litter)
- Crime Parking issues
- More Senior concerns - Fairfax County is very good in this with all the Senior Centers that are keeping the seniors busy in things that they like doing.
- Excessive government regulations.
- Very interested in seeing our schools adopt more formal "green" policies and procedures, e.g. compostable lunch trays, outdoor classrooms, bringing the outdoors in, connecting children and learning with nature and play. Our children are our environmental stewards of tomorrow. It's critical that they are connected with nature and realize their impact and the impact of their choices on our planet.
- New development and construction in Alexandria is not in line with the city's architectural tradition and is changing the character of our community. Large, multi-family buildings built on our small streets will block out the light, increase traffic, raise costs of city services, blight the attractive views of our historical neighborhoods, and increase the similarity with areas like Rosslyn and Crystal City with their large and unattractive block houses. Also, construction permits are issued without consideration to community building--and only consider the largest number of housing units per acre. Traditional ,sustainable, and social communities include a mix of residential and retail property. No apartment block should be build without small retail spaces in the same block. The ground floors of all new apartment developments should be reserved for small retail shops. This cuts down on driving, increases retail revenue, and creates natural communities. Large residential developments like Potomac Yards, with interminable rows and stacks of residences, without any parks, statues, fountains, benches, restaurants, cafes, or small shops, create areas that are depopulated and deserted in the middle of the day, and dark and unattractive in the evenings. These so called bedroom communities are nothing more than dormitories on a mass scale, with no cultural, commercial, or recreational amenities for their

residents. The city council has no clue when it comes to urban planning. This is especially bizarre when one considers that the 200+ year old Old Town provides a ready-made model of classic English town planning. The ignorance of city bureaucrats is evident in the contrast between the beautiful and vibrant community of old town and the new developments of Potomac Yards, Carlyle, Eisenhower Avenue, and the new large buildings on N. Henry and N. Fayette Street. It is no wonder that the town has rebelled against the waterfront development. The citizens need only look at the development that has been allowed by the city to date to realize that they cannot trust city council to do the right thing with the waterfront.

- Let's get the waterfront area developed responsibly with public green space for all to enjoy. Incorporate a small boutique hotel, cafes, restaurants, gallery space can all bring in tax revenue.
- the BAR is mostly out of control. they should make fixing up ones house way easier.
- Our traffic is out of control with Marylanders trying to cross to Wilson Bridge or use our streets at a passthrough into 490/395 etc. If the casino goes through it will get worst. What is City Of Alexandria planning for this?
- Special Education resources are not adequate to meet the growing needs of the community. Children are NOT getting services and accommodations in the public schools as required under ADA law. Cut-backs to staffing, e.g. Occupational Therapists, mean that eligible children are not getting adequate therapy or support. Also the City's Therapeutic Recreation Program is grossly underfunded. Space "allotted" at the Chinquapin Rec Center for the TR program is insufficient for 27 participants. The special needs children are crammed into a room that should reasonably hold about 8 people. And when ACPS schools are closed for teacher workshop days, parents of special needs kids have to pay 4x what mainstream parents are asked to pay for public-supported childcare -\$10 for before care, \$10 for aftercare, and \$20 for core kids day out activities for a total of (\$40) , Mainstream families are only asked to pay \$10 for a FULL day of childcare. It's not right.
- Taxes
- I would add attracting quality retailers and commercial entities to help build the tax base as well as draw more tourism dollars to the city.
- "I cannot stress the importance of public transportation (non-auto) enough. Alexandria is in desperate need of a comprehensive transportation plan the address current and future needs. I've lived all my adult live in dense urban areas (and travel extensively through Europe) and I can say with certainty, we fall far short in that area.
- I also suggest we need aggressively promote the arts. If a small town in western Colorado can make their Main Street a living art gallery, surely we can.
- <http://www.downtowngj.org/aotc.cfm>"
- The aging population and the importance of nonprofits to assist the city with serving this group
- "Traffic and appropriate development are my concerns.
- Please also note that I likely received an email alerting me to this survey and to the meeting because I'm a member of a Commission. How would anyone else learn of it? It would be good to publicize it widely (Alex Times ad, etc.) - people are craving more opportunity to engage with the City's leadership."
- "Why is history not included? Alexandria likes to claim history is important, but this section fails to mention it as a key topic.
- I'm on the Fort Ward Advisory Group and I want to know why it takes up to 6 months for the City Manager's office to approve hiring someone to assist with writing a plan for the park. We've been told the money is already allocated, so this should have been approved quickly."
- "I believe that Rashad is on the right track with this...good luck trying to change the entrenched bureaucracy...they might not say it, but they may be thinking: ""This guy is not from around these parts."""

- It is about time....we finally got someone who will take this city into the 21st century for real equality for one Alexandria"
- "Parking is a huge problem especially for those of us looking for handicapped parking.
- I am restricted to only 7 choices. I actually find all mentioned are important."
- All of these topics obviously are important.
- Smart regulation, not over regulation. I'm interested in smart governing and making Alexandria live up to it's Eco City name. We were probably close to the last city/county around here to get large single stream recycling bins. We're not allowed to participate in responsible, sustainable backyard agriculture: What possible reason is there that I cannot have two properly cared for and housed hens in my backyard in a single family home neighborhood to produce my own safe food, but people across the nation in "green' cities can in even smaller spaces? The tributary waterbody in the Taylor Run area does not support frogs, this is alarming from a water quality standpoint. Since there are no frogs, there is a serious mosquito problem in these neighborhoods. Let's make Alexandria an Eco City - in a smart way (not from overregulation).
- It would be hard to have a discussion of any of these topics without also discussing finance/budget, so I did not select that topic; however, I think it certainly would be at the top of the list also.
- I need more than seven choices!
- One key issue is how to keep our property taxes low. The city cannot continue to provide and expand services...at the cost of residential property owners. Our homes have increased in "Market" value, but our incomes have, in most cases, decreased. Hence, short of moving out of the City, how are we to continue to pay such high property taxes? Mine have tripled since I purchased my home. It is unconscionable.
- It is unfortunate that in an effort to increase revenue to afford City services, the City has sold itself to new development of every square inch. With the exception of a few square blocks of Old Town, Alexandria has begun to lose the character that differentiates it from other communities.
- this is a "loaded question" with way too many choices and thus requires that we have competent staff who will be transparent and not try and force community to accept what city's agenda is for future issues. for those citizens with knowledge about some of these issues, we are aware of the facts rather than hearing from our elected officials and city staff how something is going to change, etc., i.e. affordable housing; open space - there is already plenty of open space/parks. city staff/elected officials need to tell citizens what's already here and stop pushing their agenda
- At a time when jobs and the national economy are in trouble, we should be looking for ways to make City services more efficient & cost effective, to end programs that are not working and to LOWER taxes rather than play with the tax rate so that cost to taxpayers is always higher. The role of the City government is not to provide everything for everybody but to identify emergency and essential City services that only the City can provide and to accomplish those functions cost effectively. Development must first take into consideration our ability to absorb resulting impacts. Borrowing for any development during a poor economy should not be considered. A new common sense approach is essential if we are to gain the trust of the people.
- School overpopulation and school performance are the most important topics for me.
- "1.)Development has gotten out of control in Alexandria. There is seemingly a desire to increase revenue with dense housing development. The canard that people will take Metro is bantered around as these high density developments are approved. But people do not take metro on the weekends when they take kids to soccer, go grocery shopping or to Target and you frequently can't use metro to get into DC on the weekend due to track work. Traffic and parking issues are increasing, public transportation is not keeping pace nor are sufficient parking plans in place as communities become increasingly overwhelmed by high density housing that springs up around them. Alexandria may have been voted a

""walkable community"" - but you only have 14 second to get across all of Route 1 as a pedestrian at a light which is insufficient unless you run.

- 2.) representation - I strongly feel that Alexandria needs to reconsider how citizens are represented. At the moment no one in particular represents my neighborhood and fights for my neighborhood - So while everyone may ""listen"" to my concerns no one has a vested interest in fighting for them. Dealing with my elected officials is like dealing with Comcast customer service - everyone is nice and nothing seems to get done and because no _one_ person is responsible, collectively noone is responsible. In the more than 20 years I have lived here I have become increasingly disillusioned with the nature and quality of citizen representation here"
- we desperately need to incorporate more bike lanes into our traffic plan; currently, other than trails, Alexandria is not very bike friendly. Additionally, Alexandria should adopt the traffic rule prevalent in many jurisdictions nationwide that for bicyclists stop signs are to be viewed as "yield" signs
- It is to be hoped that the range of responses to this question will illustrate that the goal of improving the effectiveness of public participation in our governing process is not a task merely for the Planning Department and Planning Commission, but for our entire government--including most especially the City Manager, Mayor, and City Council itself.
- Developers have too much undisclosed influence, especially in the low income housing sector.
- get developers out of the the waterfront debate and leave property owners alone
- Crime, cleanliness & maintenance in areas other than Old Town.
- I dream of the day that people in Alexandria will be mostly walking and biking around instead of driving.
- Thank you for doing this survey. I suspect you will get a lot of "all of the above" responses. I actually think the City does a very good job at community outreach, in planning and transportation, in doing the background analysis and considering alternatives. Thank you.
- I think it's important to remember that Alexandria is a desirable place because of what it IS now. This is not some old city in need of rehab. Alexandria is what other cities strive to become when they revitalize. Change for the sake of making money for business people who do not even live here is not needed and is detrimental to what makes this a nice place to be. We absolutely do not need more development. There is no point in it...unless you're looking to make a buck, at the expense of this city. Personally, I'd vote for more open spaces. I'd be shocked if the coal plant beces anything other than a mini city, though. That kind of development is clearly prompted by and beneficial to outside interests. I hope to see this type of development curtailed after the next election.
- "I'd like a city forum that for parents of kids who attend or will attend Jefferson-Houston Elementary. The forum would address what is being done to fix this failing school, and essentially, why parents in Alexandria should choose Alexandria public schools.
- "It is time to redevelop the west end. It is sad when we take our money to other cities because of the utter lack of shopping, food, and entertainment on this side of the city. We also need more schools. Most over overcrowded and it is not true that ACPS has small class sizes anymore. The parks are a beautiful feature of Alexandria so we should strive to have playground equipment which compliments this.
- "Overall, I think the City does a fine job and I'm proud to be a resident. Our public schools must improve, it is a shame that there is only one elementary school, Charles Barrett, where people want to send their children. Please get rid of sugary sodas AND ""juices"" from our public schools and recreation centers.
- It is a shame that Alexandria's two primary metro stations - Braddock Road and King Street - do not have very pedestrian-friendly designs. Pedestrians should be given the most direct routes (ex. from West and Pendleton you either have to cross several lights or walk out of your way to get to Braddock

Road). At King Street, you either have to go through the parking lot by Embassy Suites (very roundabout if you are coming from King Street) or wait for a bunch of lights to change.

- hard to pick just 7 when they are all interwoven. quality of life obviously covers a lot.
- Many of the decisions Alexandria makes harm and benefit other communities. Our considerations shouldn't stop at the city limit.
- "As a resident of Alexandria since 1991, I have watched and volunteered in my little neighborhood to see it evolve into a tiny gem within the City.
- The new proposed duplex on the corner lot at 2015 Dewitt has caused concern in the neighborhood. But this is NOT just a corner lot concern. A project at 142 East Glebe is actually an interior lot, where a small home was demolished to make space for eight townhouses. They face each other on the lot with a sidewalk down the middle.
- I actually agree that property owners should be able to do what they want on their land, within reason. And I understand that the City wants to increase the tax base – but at what cost? What is the goal? Is the City of Alexandria so desperate for cash that we should cram as many individual homes in our 15+ acres? Are we at all concerned about the quality of life, instead of just the quantity of tax revenue? In 2009, Alexandria was the fifth fastest growing city in the United States.
- What is the long term goal for Alexandria? If it is to add as many individual addresses within our property lots – we are well on our way. If it is to allow every bit of green space to be removed, because we are an “eco city” – Google Earth (specific address removed). Due to complaints about upkeep, the owner was encouraged to concrete his entire lot while city staff was present. Now the next door neighbor gets to deal with constant runoff flooding.
- If the goal is to have every street sign in the city a high-end glowing, constant maintenance, constant electrical expense, instead of the big metal reflective ones that have worked for 75 years – again we are getting there – without anyone questioning the ongoing cost.
- We should be clear on what we want for the future of Alexandria. It is not fair or reasonable to protest new owners that have development intentions that are clearly within our current code. My issue is that our code is open to cramming as many individuals into our spaces as possible.
- All the above.
- The city has made changes to Route 1 traffic signals thru town to increase the speed and flow of traffic right through the middle of Old Town, the great historic district. This makes no sense. All the noise and pollution this creates, as well as the danger it delivers to Old Town makes no sense because all those cars are just passing thru, they are not even stopping and spending money in Old Town. Route 1 - both Patrick Street and Henry Street should be returned to 2-way streets, and add on-street parking on Henry Street. This will slow down the volume of cars and trucks that zoom thru, and make the entire Old Town more pedestrian friendly for those of us who live here, and the millions of tourists who come to town. Having 2 high-volume 1-way streets go right thru the heart of the historic district really makes no sense at all. Large tractor trailer trucks have no business zooming thru the heart of Old Town either! They should be routed around Old Town. 95% of the big, noisy, polluting trucks that come thru Old Town are not from here and not coming here, and they leave behind noise, fumes, dust, dirt, and they tear up the roads... why do we allow them to damage Old Town when they are just passing thru?
- Weekly email newsletter including relevant links to city websites. Ability to access more information like emails distributed to make sure you have not missed information. The online Patch is a good move, but there should be more links to access with the city.
- Landmark Mall is a disgrace and an eyesore. I shop in Arlington or Fairfax. The Redevelopment committee has done nothing. Fix the Mall and then start on the more ambitious redevelopment of the surrounding area. Or, fix the surrounding areas and let the Mall become a blighting influence so you can take it over. This issue is one that doesn't always work with public input or creating Committees. Look at Capitol Hill - all those committees and nothing get done - ever!!!

- I am a huge fan of the Potomac Yard and Del Ray plans for the future and would like to be part. I am also very interested in taking part in the creation/preservation of Open Spaces, Trails and Recreation as well as Non-Auto Travel since I bike to work in DC and use the trail system every day. This is very important to me as well as High Quality Architecture and the Development and Redevelopment processes of the City of Alexandria.
- The cost of housing in Alexandria is incredibly debilitating to the middle class. Also, the negativity and air of entitlement is discouraging and disconcerting. There are wonderful people here and great things happening but it seems like the City is afraid to make positive announcements.
- public safety, lack of city communication with citizens (e.g. no signs, mailing, anything about last election)
- I live in the West end and feel like all the public officials really don't care about this part of the city. The fiasco with the BRAC building is but one example. Because we're not Del Ray or Old Town we get ignored. Such a shame.
- How can we help the vulnerable in our community? The poor, the sick, the elderly, single women, the unborn? How are we assisting families and women, especially single moms or those facing an unexpected pregnancy? We have two facilities in our community that provide abortions. This is a reflection that the material and emotional needs of women are not being met. How can we support them and their families? How can businesses and residents come together to assist the poor with food assistance and job training, so that they might lift themselves out of poverty and become full and productive members of our community?
- I think traffic management deserves to be extremely high on this list. It affects everyone, regardless of whether they have children, work or live here and is the public service that everyone utilizes. But the underlying philosophy seems to be if city hall just hates cars enough, maybe they will go away and then no one will think about them. In the big picture, development in a broad sense is probably the number one issue that needs to be discussed. But as I fight my way to work every day, paying taxes for traffic lights that don't work, roads that are blocked and intersections that are gridlocked, it's traffic that is top of mind.
- I believe the Alexandria Police Department is substandard in some areas. I believe this should be part of the public discussion. I also believe there is a shocking amount of waste in the city budget and should also be a topic of community discussion.
- The number 1 key issue is development/re-development and the associated rise in density - everything else flows from that.
- "Education, education, education -- not just enrollment trends (though yes, why is it that my kids aren't guaranteed to go to their neighborhood school), budget, land use -- but QUALITY. We should do more benchmarking against other communities and as a parent I would like more information on where we're strong, where we're weak, etc. from the mouths of administrators and teachers.
- Parks and recreation, particularly Aquatics. Our public pools are appalling, and this is an issue because many children in this community do not even learn to swim. But other park issues too. The parks in Arlington all have bathrooms and drinking fountains and baseball/soccer/tennis/basketball courts etc. Why not Alexandria? Some of our little parks are nice but nothing like Arlington and Fairfax. And I keep asking myself ""why""
- Thank you for doing this survey! I hope you get lots of great feedback."
- My number 1 is ACPS this is important to everyone in the city with kids or without as it impacts housing values and the community as a whole.
- "Affordable housing is incredibly important to me, not b/c I would take advantage of it myself (I own a house already in Del Ray that I can afford), but b/c living in a culturally, ethnically, and income strata-diverse city is an important element of quality of life. I do not want Alexandria to end up like Bethesda or Clarendon/courthouse, and I know this opinion is shared by many. I want my kids to grow up in a

diverse environment and if affordable housing options are not preserved, I'm afraid Alexandria will become a less-vibrant place to live. I am voting this year with this in mind.

- Also I would encourage the city to think about more creative architecture requirements for new or redeveloped buildings, especially condos/apartment complexes. So tired of brick! We can really set ourselves apart as a creative environment by presenting buildings with more creative architecture.
- Please publish your findings and these comments.
- I would much rather treat "non-auto travel," traffic management, and infrastructure maintenance and construction as A SINGLE SYSTEM for purposes of public discussion, planning, and implementation/administration. Dividing them in this way has a perverse impact on public participation and understanding of transportation issues.
- city libraries
- I have only lived in Alexandria for three years, but I am continually blown away by what appears to be continuous new construction and the lack of affordable housing options. Our household income is \$75,000 for our family of 5. As much as we struggle to make Alexandria livable, I cannot imagine the work that our minimum wage earning neighbors are facing to stay here in the community.
- Retaining age diversity by ensuring seniors has needed services and tax relief.
- The aquatics plan, what is going to happen with the public pools?
- Zoning issues, especially at the waterfront.
- Historic Preservation is important - it is what makes Alexandria unique & relates to quality of life & economics. This should have been a separate choice as was arts; environmental quality.
- More than seven topics are important to me - some could come under categories - i.e., community diversity, neighborhood preservation. Many of the topics are interrelated and should not be viewed independently.
- Aging population & what is needed & available for Seniors. Seniors will outnumber youth/students in the coming years.
- The Police Department record need to be opened up for public scrutiny. Fairfax County has the Citizens Coalition for Police Accountability.
- Mr. City Manager: since this is a "Poll" on civic engagement, why does it not advice where to take this paper so we might believe it is counted? Is no one at City Hall thinking these things through logically and completely?
- Money not being spent wisely in ACPS
- Library
- Affordable fitness classes
- Affordable housing for 55 years and over
- Affordable fitness classes
- Affordable housing - sure for working people. Public housing is a crutch for folks to continue abusing the system.
- Affordable fitness classes
- More affordable fitness classes/options
- ACPS - How to effectively engage parents to become involved at the failing schools or begin a process of sanctioning parents/guardians.

Questions regarding the Community Poll results can be directed to Carrie Beach, What's Next Alexandria Project Manager, at carrie.beach@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.3853.