

We Can Do More: Tree|Houses in Arlington County, Virginia

Let's talk about trees.

In Arlington, the topic of trees, specifically tree canopies - a term indicating how much of the county is shaded by trees - is at the top of the list. Total coverage is expected to have decreased, but as of the latest [study in 2017](#), was set above the [national city average of 27.1%](#), coming in at 41% coverage of the county. This expected decline has often also been a sticking point when it comes to what to do with housing the expected [incoming population increases](#), specifically for those who have typically struggled to afford the area they serve.

There is little to debate when it comes to the overarching value and need of trees. Coming from [The United States Mid-Century Strategy for Deep Decarbonization](#); a further two billion metric tons of CO2 will need to be extracted from the atmosphere each year between 2016 and 2050 in order to hit net zero targets nationally. From this two billion metric tons target, the [World Resources Institute](#) estimates that strategic tree restoration alone, without displacing agriculture, has the ability to meet approximately 20% of said target, or 360 million metric tons of CO2 per year.

Can we build more affordable housing, without sacrificing environmental safety? Do these two issues need to conflict?

Echoing the thoughts of County Board candidate Adam Theo, they do not. To double down, housing density could even help tackle the stormwater kerfuffle, [decreasing per-house runoff](#), and allow for more greenspace...and trees!

The larger response needs to focus on what more we can do.

So, let's also talk about more.

When I think about Arlington, I think of *so much more*.

When I think of what Arlington is capable of, I think of the [fittest](#) city in the country, five years running as of 2022.

I think of [innovation](#).

I think of one already [spearheading solar panel](#) installation.

We can build duplexes, triplexes, and add more trees in the process. We can lead the way in energy technology. We can tackle other natural climate solutions on our way to maximizing that 37% potential emissions reduction the Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences, ([PNAS](#)), claims is possible by 2030. Arlington has the people, resources, and will to make us capable of becoming leaders in a whole host of scalable environmental solutions.

Arlington's need for housing does not need to stand in the way of its potential to serve as an environmental safe-haven and pilot city for progress.

About the Author:

Mike Coletti serves as an Environmental Advisor and volunteer with TheoForArlington.