

Economic Sustainability in Arlington

A presentation to the Arlington
Economic Development Commission on:

*“Cultivating Community Sustainability through
Resiliency, Competitiveness, and Innovation”*

– Report by Darrene Hackler, Ph.D.

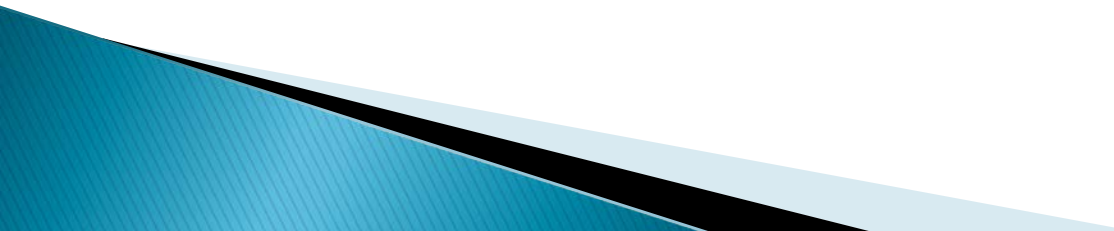
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Report Summary –

- ▶ Key points from GMU white paper
 - ▶ Findings about Arlington's approach to economic sustainability relative to other places
 - ▶ What comes next?
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What's in the GMU report?

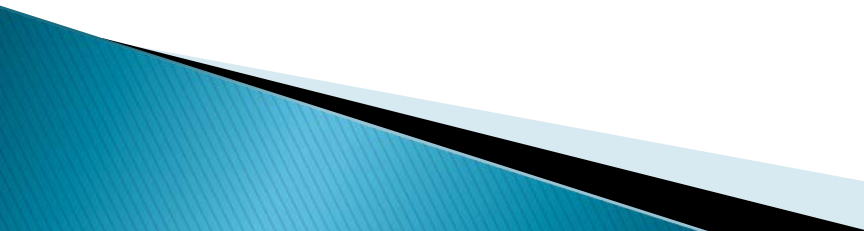
- ▶ Research and Analysis in three sections:

Section 1 **defines the concept** of economic sustainability

Section 2 examines how **other communities approach** economic sustainability

Section 3 provides an **analysis of Arlington's framework** for economic sustainability

Section 1 – What is Sustainability?

- ▶ **Sustainability** = Meeting the needs of the current population without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs.
 - ▶ **Sustainable Development** = Economic growth measured against the quality and distribution of the resulting benefits and impacts (recognizing negative external costs.)
 - ▶ But -- developing sustainability approaches is **complex** and fraught with **ideological arguments**.
 - ▶ And -- **successful approaches may require changes** in fundamental governance structures, economic frameworks, and business and human behavior.
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What is Sustainability?

- ▶ Generally includes three core dimensions:

- ▶ Acknowledges trade-offs between them

- ▶ Also synergies

- ▶ Defining these terms varies widely

Environmental

Economic

Social

Sustainability

Environmental

- ▶ Looks at the natural environment's capacity, quality and ability to be conserved and/or replenished.
- ▶ “Green” terminology reflects technology and approaches to preserve, maintain or reduce negative impacts on the environment and natural resources.

Sustainability

Economic

- ▶ Includes national, organizational and local dimensions
- ▶ Recognizes that **economic prosperity or vitality is necessary** to attain an ideal state of sustainability.
- ▶ Considers how to achieve economic prosperity equitably, and without damaging the environment and ecosystems
- ▶ Stabilizes community, and **enables further focus on environmental and social goals.**

Sustainability

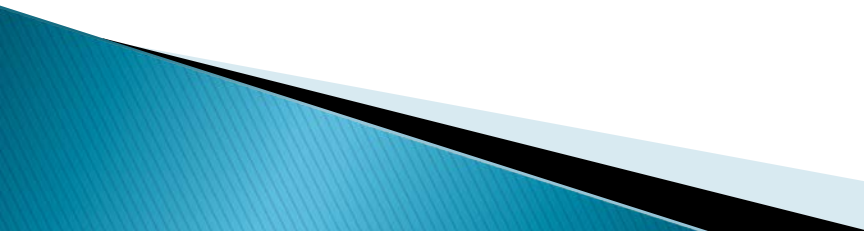
Social

- ▶ Acknowledges effects of economic growth on discreet populations (income, gender, age)
- ▶ Social development, social progress, or social well-being reflects a community's cultural attributes
- ▶ Social equity or social justice tends to emphasize relative distribution of equity among populations and generations, and implications


Measures & Indicators

- ▶ Many diverse approaches and methods
 - Built on foundation of data
 - Used to highlight community issues, especially problems, and rallies stakeholders to collaborate on finding solutions
- ▶ Effective indicators :
 - Should be associated with a community's values
 - Can guide both policy and standards
 - May spur communities to new commitments of achieving results that link economic, environmental and social issues into shared success.

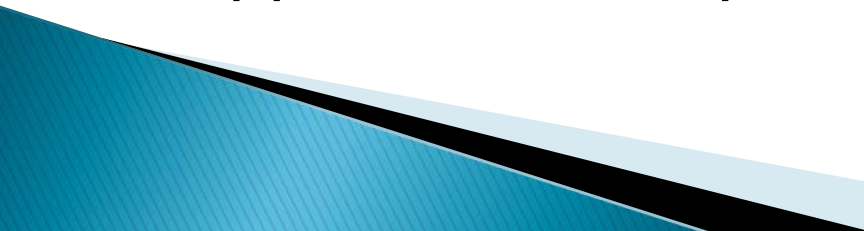
Section 2 – Economic Sustainability and Economic Development

- ▶ Definitions vary widely across communities.
 - ▶ Unlike Arlington, most communities do not look explicitly at **economic** sustainability.
 - ▶ Many assume economic sustainability will result from pursuit of social and environmental sustainability goals.
 - ▶ Some communities connect current decisions, policies and incentives with long-term planning about future economic growth.
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Economic Sustainability and Economic Development

- ▶ In many communities, economic sustainability is defined in terms of **environmental** resources, and then framed in a context of positive **social** outcomes
 - Green buildings
 - ▶ In most cases, goals and indicators include only traditional measures of economic **prosperity**, not **sustainability**:
 - Number of jobs, not quality of jobs
 - 'Green' jobs, not jobs in sustainable businesses
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Section 3 – Assessing Arlington

- ▶ Arlington defines economic sustainability through:
 - Innovation
 - Resiliency
 - Competitiveness
 - ▶ Also via value-based community goals and identity
 - ▶ 20 Grand Thoughts illustrate a further, holistic approach to analysis, defining success
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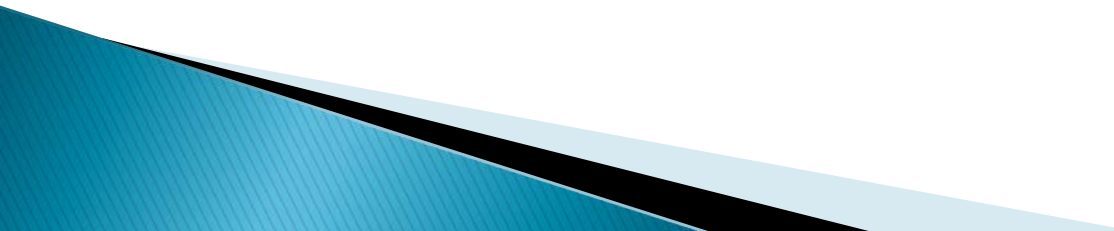
Arlington vs. Others

SUSTAINABILITY WITH WEAK ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY		STRONG ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY
Guide to Planning Efforts	Sustainability Indicator Projects	Economic Sustainability Planning
Austin, TX	Seattle, WA	Boulder, CO
Eugene, OR	Portland, OR	Marin County, CA
Grand Rapids, MI	Boston, MA	Kirkland, WA
Cambridge, MA	Burlington, VT	Sydney, Australia
Denver, CO	Pittsburgh, PA	
	Central Texas Counties	

Arlington vs. Others

- ▶ **Fundamental Question:**
 - Is Arlington's approach, valuing **resiliency, competitiveness, and innovation** as economic sustainability a meaningful contributor to *overall community sustainability*?
- ▶ **Answer:**
 - Compared against established literature and other community case studies, **Arlington's approach is sound and appropriate** for meeting the related goals for economic sustainability and its relationship to overall community sustainability.

Recommendations for Next Steps

- Relate *economic* sustainability into a strategy for *community* sustainability.
 - Define the scope of the strategy, including **definitions of needs, reasons for action, and ways to measure and analyze progress.**
 - Solicit broad stakeholder buy-in on *plan strategy, actions and measurements of success.*
 - Implement the sustainability plan with **clear action steps and opportunities to assess goals**
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Arlington Economic Sustainability: The GMU Report In Context

- ▶ 2009 – Arlington Economic Development Commission develops “Framework for Prosperity”
 - ▶ County-wide focus on environmental and energy sustainability broadens awareness of sustainable, economic development
 - ▶ EDC asks – what dynamics support our success and how to we actively maintain them?
 - ▶ Leads to a holistic examination and value-based interpretation of community performance and success (e.g. 20 Grand Thoughts.)
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