

Bo Middleton's Response to The Forum Questions

1a. Environment

Richmond recently released its RVAgreen 2050, a plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by the year 2030, and by 100% by the year 2050. Henrico has no such plan in place and has not set clear climate goals.

Yes, I would support an action plan.

It appears, that in Henrico the emphasis is on educating residents about recycling and following existing environmental law.

In April, the Henrico Conservation Action Network and some local environmental activists convened a panel at the Libbie Mill Library, ideas, and questions were fielded, pushing Henrico to implement its own climate

Henrico Project that have substantial impact on its carbon footprint:

- “Henrico, HCPS & Capital Trees Partner to enhance the county tree canopies”. Trees can truly be lifesavers to our environment and our strongest tool in mitigating the of climate change. May 2023
- “Henrico County Landfill Gas Combustion Project”. This project captures and destroys methane from the Springfield Road Landfill. It destroys Landfill Gas(LFG) which otherwise would have been emitted directly into the atmosphere thus reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.
- At the same site Solar Panel System is being installed which generate renewable energy to power a nearby sewage pump station.

1b.

Data centers are a big reason why Dominion is projecting a surge in electricity demand over the next 15 to 25 years — so much so that the utility says it will need to keep fossil fuel plants running and add enough new gas-fired plants that its carbon emissions would rise, instead of dropping to zero by 2045, as the Virginia Clean Energy Act requires.

Environmental groups and State Corporation Commission(SCC) staff have said Dominion's forecast about data center-driven electricity use is too strong.

In Henrico, though, data centers are on a growth path.

Data centers are much sought-after economic development projects because they represent millions of dollars of investment, and local taxes.

But their big power needs have become an issue, especially at a time when the usual way of generating electricity — in coal-, natural gas- or oil-fired plants — emits the carbon-based gases that cause climate change.

Dominion has said that to meet the demand, it needs to keep fossil fuel plants running; environmentalists dispute that, on the grounds that Dominion's forecasts about data center growth are too bullish and because many data centers prefer renewable sources, such as solar or wind.

How do data centers affect the environment?

Data centers and data transmission networks are responsible for nearly 1% of energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which contribute to rising global temperatures and climate change. To get on track with the Net Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario, emissions must be cut in half by 2030. Jul 12, 2023

As data and computing use soars, so does the demand on data centers. Consequently, data centers' energy consumption undoubtedly also rises. This brings with it a host of environmental issues such as increased carbon dioxide emissions. Nov 10, 2022

Five ways data centers affect the environment

- Energy usage. Data centers consume vast amounts of energy and electricity to power everything from servers, storage and networking equipment to the infrastructure that's supporting these devices. ...
- Water consumption. ...
- Electronic and toxic waste. ...
- Land use. ...

- Greenhouse gas emissions.

1c.

I support bold changes from plastic-free products & packaging to zero-emissions vehicles.

1d.

Biodiversity: is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. Without a wide range of animals, plants and microorganisms, we cannot have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on to provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat. The variety of all living things on our planet, has been declining at an alarming rate in recent years, mainly due to human activities, such as land use changes, pollution and climate change.

Ways to help conservation efforts; switch to LED light bulbs, energy efficient electric appliances, washing laundry with cold water, walk, bike, take public transportation, electric cars, take fewer flights, eat more vegetables, compost any leftovers, encourage others to participate in local clean-ups of parks, rivers, the street in your community, etc.

2.ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

The disparity in the most vulnerable populations in a community, city or county stay that way until the people are encouraged to change, change comes from hearing faith filled word of what's possible in your life. Once you start to believe it, you can then achieve it.

3a. LAND USE:

- I will support comprehensive plans and zoning to protect the historic resources. Because, conserving land is crucial not only for the protection of natural areas, but also for the preservation of community vitality. Each year as stated we lose hundreds of acres of farm land jeopardizing the benefits provided by open space and undeveloped lands.
- I will support transit-oriented development (TOD) projects, especially because it is a good fit for providing affordable housing...great when near GRTC.

b.

I understand the challenge and the sentiments expressed, especially with a community that is mostly agricultural.

c.

- Part of the challenge with long term planning is not taking time to give residents ample opportunity to respond to the development proposed, leading to frustration and disappointment. Affordable housing development should always be a part of any long-range plan, particularly in those areas where it is lacking.
- In making decisions about land use development, I believe that vibrant streets and attractive public spaces are hallmarks of healthy communities. Distinctive features such as, historic buildings, or rows of shops and cafes make our neighborhoods places where people want to be. Communities with a strong sense of identity build on their unique history and assets to foster community pride, increase their visibility, foster social interaction, and market their community to potential businesses, potential investors and residents. That would be a good start for me!

4a.TRANSPORTATION: I would try to encourage the use of public and private transit services, especially during peak travel times, reducing the single occupant vehicle use. Additional incentive to increase public transportation use such as employer-provided subsidies, reimbursements, partial payments, or pre-tax deductions.

Expand education, infrastructure, and accessibility to promote walking and bicycling and other active modes of transportation. Education leads to broader acceptance of active modes of transportation. When you inform the general public on existing or future opportunities to safely walk or bike for their commute or in their neighborhood.

Public life near transit should encourage people to dwell and engage with the surrounding environment. Get out of the car and onto the streets, running or biking!!

b.

Yes. Working with the school board in any capacity to enhance the students capacity to excel academically and to see them equipped with the skills and knowledge to function and utilize their talent to work and develop entrepreneurial skill. How great is that! That's what we all want.

5.HOUSING:

Yes. I support all programs that provide education for families about mortgage loan requirements, credit counseling for first time home buyers and especially programs that grant down payment assistance. I support organizations, departments and policies that currently are in place to help connect families with affordable housing programs such as:

Virginia Housing

The Henrico Department of Community Revitalization:

- CDBG and HOME Funds
- Henrico's Home Purchase Assistance Program "New"
- Housing Opportunity Made Equal (HOME)

Many types of rental properties are LIHTC eligible, including apartment buildings, single-family dwellings, townhouses, and duplexes. Owners or developers of projects receiving the LIHTC agree to meet an income test for tenants and a gross rent test.

Tenant-based rental assistance programs. Federal tenant-based rental assistance is provided primarily through HUD's Housing Choice Voucher. It is the largest and most sought after housing program in America.

6.PUBLIC PROCESS AND TRANSPARENCY:

Go to them! Have meetings set up through the Henrico Community Revitalization Department, at the community center or local church.

Once you make them aware of the test sites, answer questions about how to navigate. Then you'll get your feedback!

7. EDUCATION EQUITY:

Equity education issue.

Students who are Black, Latino, low-income, and/or English language learners continue to have low academic outcomes and the disparities with White and Asian students is a major reason state outcomes remain significantly below national averages.