



## **Amazon Updates**

*by Rick Keller*

The Mount Vernon Group has been generally supportive of Amazon's entry into the Arlington community because we've felt the positives outweigh the negatives.

First, there will be state money for transit and affordable housing. Second, the commercial tax base will improve, both directly from Amazon building as well as from the reduction in commercial vacancy rates as others moved in to sit next to Amazon. That will help keep Arlington's residential tax rate the lowest in the region while still providing more revenue to meet the needs of our growing school population as well as other County services.

However, there are also areas where we've had concerns. While there is more funding for affordable housing, there would also be housing cost increases that would affect those in the low and middle-income brackets (although the average Amazon salary of \$150,000 is not that much higher than the mean Arlington household income of \$127,000).

Additionally, schools already bursting at the seams could be impacted depending on where the new workers and their families live.

Green space, already an issue in urban Arlington, will be under more pressure as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments numbers indicate an overall housing shortage in our region already. There will be pressure to increase development, possibly causing other infrastructure pressures as the region tries to jam more people into existing roads and mass transit.

All areas of concern need monitoring and a willingness to work with staff and elected officials to develop a vision and set long term plans to deal with possible consequences.

Your local Mount Vernon Group leaders are not among those who regard the Arlington County decision-makers with suspicion. Rather, we are those committed to working with them while keeping an eye on progress toward solutions. It was that type of joint trust and effort that led to the Arlington County Board adopting our Ready for 100 campaign renewable energy goals into the updated Community Energy Plan (CEP).

A current concern is the energy footprint of “Met Park”, the Amazon development that will be built on the brown field in the Pentagon City area. The mixed-use development plan is a good one--just not good enough. The current LEED Platinum goal falls short of where it needs to be for the development to align to CEP goals. The architect for the project says they are committed to the site being powered by 100% renewable energy by 2030 (new generation both local and off-site), but there is no commitment to zero-carbon by 2050.

We feel strongly that the County Board needs to keep CEP goals in mind when reviewing the Met Park site plan and make decisions based on that evaluation.

More information on the Amazon site plan <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/met-park-phases-6-8/>

*This content originally appeared in the December 2019 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit [virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/](http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/).*