



*Falls Church  
Village Preservation & Improvement Society*

**FALLS CHURCH CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE  
QUESTIONS & RESPONSES**

April 2008

The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS) asked candidates for the City Council to respond to five questions on topics of interest to members of VPIS:

- Priorities for future development in City commercial corridors;
- Restoration of trees and greenery lost to commercial and residential development;
- Preservation of historic structures;
- Attracting diverse retail/commercial business; and
- Improving City parks and open space.

The unedited responses from the seven candidates are provided in alphabetical order. The seven candidates are:

**Nader Baroukh**

**Robin Gardner** Mayor

**E.B. Ed Hillegass**

**Lindy Hockenberry** Vice Mayor

**Margaret Housen**

**Patrice Lepczyk**, and

**Lawrence Webb**



*Big Chimneys Park*

## Nader Baroukh

### **1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

The City must expand its commercial tax base in order to maintain its independence and exceptional schools. We cannot continue to convert our commercial zones into predominately residential projects. It is critical that the City's commercially zoned land be used predominately for commercial purposes. We must seek better balanced developments. If I am elected to City Council, this will be my fundamental development priority.

The "Village Section" (West Broad St. from Little Falls St. to near Spring St.) has been defined by several recent residential condominium projects that have started a pattern of out-of-scale mixed-use development projects coined by some citizens as a "condo canyon." These types of projects have been predominately residential and threaten our neighborhoods, overcrowd our streets, and add significant new public service costs. As a member of City Council, I will implement a development strategy that provides for sustainable commercial uses.

The North Washington St. Corridor (both sides of North Washington St. from Great Falls St. to the Arlington County border) includes a number of underutilized properties and is surrounded by residential properties, including many historic structures. Development along this corridor must be sensitive to the adjoining residential land uses and provide a sense of proportion to the neighboring residential areas.

The West End of the City (both the north and south sides of West Broad St. to Fairfax County) currently consists of several strip malls. This area also includes automobile sales, service providers, and light industrial uses, which may provide an opportunity for development. Given this area's proximity to the Metro, there is an excellent opportunity to create a walkable and pedestrian-friendly environment. Moreover, the City owns property in this area. As a member of City Council, I will look for opportunities to use the City-owned property and possibly make it available for consolidation with adjacent properties to redevelop this area.

I am committed to a development strategy that retains a sense of proportion, is environmentally sound, and is economically sustainable. Rather than simply responding to what developers bring to the table, as a member of City Council I will pursue developments that preserve and extend the City's many unique qualities. We should not compromise the identity, charm, existing residential communities, and the public open spaces of our City.

### **2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

One of the City's greatest natural resources and most attractive features is its extensive urban tree cover. The preservation of trees not only enhances the beauty of our City, but also serves as a foundation for sound water, soil, and air pollution management.

The City must maintain and enhance its tree cover. During development, requirements must be put into place to protect existing trees and to replace trees when they are removed. Tools already established by the City, such as the City's Tree, Shrub, and Weeds Ordinance and the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Overlay District, provide good starting points and should be followed and periodically reviewed to determine if changes are needed. The City must continue to enforce and use such tools in ways that maximize environmental protection.

As to the canopy that has not been replaced due to development, the City must work with developers and homeowners to replace trees that have been lost. An excellent way to accomplish this is by encouraging developers to contribute to programs such as the Neighborhood Tree Program. Additionally, as a member of City Council, I will seek to implement a program where developers and homeowners would be encouraged to replace removed trees with trees or improved landscaping in our public parks and open spaces.

### **3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

The City has many historic structures and a long history of historic preservation. It is important for the City to continue to preserve these structures as they are an important part of what makes Falls Church such a unique place to live. Given the current efforts to rewrite the City's zoning code, it is essential that the City provide the tools necessary to preserve historic structures. Additionally, developing out-of-scale and architecturally undistinguished developments in our downtown area will detract substantially from Falls Church's historic heritage. Developments should be architecturally creative but compatible with historic Falls Church, as provided by in the City's Design Guidelines.

The City can use its historic heritage to help make it a destination by showcasing its historic structures. As a member of City Council, I will work to provide educational opportunities for the broader community to learn about the City's history and its rich heritage. I will also work with interested property owners and our Recreation and Parks Department to provide tours of the City's historic structures, which will help attract visitors to the City.

**4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

In order for Falls Church to attract diverse retail establishments and restaurants and create a more walkable City, the City must establish a true City Center: a public gathering place such as a "public square" or "commons," anchored with public facilities that have a proven ability to draw people to visit, such as a library or recreational facility. Such a destination-based development will serve as a vibrant source of community pride and create a sense of place, as well as serve as a catalyst for the high-quality mixture of commercial uses that the citizens of our City want and deserve.

For example, in Shirlington, the public library and the performing arts space serve as a draw for residents to shop and eat at the neighboring restaurants and retail shops. Shirlington offers an example of a public and private partnership that has been very successful. Our City must capitalize on similar opportunities that are appropriately scaled to Falls Church, rather than simply responding to what developers bring to the table. As a member of City Council, I will look to the principles that were provided in "Street-Works," which had wide community support, in such development efforts.

**5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

The amount of parkland and open space in the City is very limited. Moreover, there is little vacant land with which to create parkland. Therefore, it is critical that the City preserve and improve the existing parks and open space within the City. The City's efforts to establish a comprehensive plan for each of the parks is a step in the right direction. The key, however, is implementing these plans. If I am elected to the City Council, I will provide the needed leadership to ensure that these plans are carried out.

Additionally, as our City's population increases, the City must develop methods of acquiring land to be used for parks and open space. As new developments occur in Falls Church, the City Council must work with developers to ensure that adequate parkland and open space are provided for the residents of our City.

## **Robin Gardner** Mayor

**1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

I want our commercial corridors to represent key desires of our community – interesting design, walkability, and an area that's welcoming to our City residents. Although commercial development is key to building a diverse tax base for the City, we need to make sure there is balance. A solely commercial zone shuts down at 6:00 — there is no vibrancy to this type of development and it doesn't encourage community gathering. Our corridors need to encourage people to shop, get together, and spend time with their friends and neighbors as a community.

**2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

In recent years ordinances have been put in place to stop the erosion of our tree canopy. The City has also added Urban Tree Forestry staff. I would like to continue the City's emphasis on tree plantings both in commercial and residential areas, and continue to encourage public participation in the site planning process for commercial development. The Neighborhood Tree Program has not only increased the tree population in our community, but also has made more citizens aware of the importance of trees in creating a desirable streetscape. I would also like to establish a program to reward citizens who take care to not disturb the healthy trees they have in their yards during development on their property.

**3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

The City has maintained many of its historic features and has encouraged rehabilitation of historic homes within the City. We must continue to identify historic areas in the

**Gardner** *continued*

City and determine the best way to preserve them, either through zoning ordinances or via public and private investment in historic structures. We must also continue to work on improving our Historic and Cultural Conservation District (HCC). Although this has been a continual challenge in the community, we must try to reach consensus on what would be the best approach to defining historic structures in Falls Church. In order to encourage more visitors to the City, I would like for one of the new storefronts in the City Center South to be a Visitor's Center for the City of Falls Church, focusing on our historic place in the region. We are working closely with Fairfax County to bring Tinner Hill to fruition. We have put together maps that identify the historic buildings and areas within our community. Each year the City sponsors various events throughout the City to celebrate the historic significance of our community. We not only must continue this but enhance it, as well. As we work on the facilities study for the City, we need to determine how we can increase the Virginia Room and give it more prominence in the community.

**4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

Diverse retail establishments gravitate to good retail space, and to communities that demonstrate such businesses can thrive. I also support the Chamber's recent resolution regarding development and their desire to help in the outreach effort. Through the Chamber of Commerce and our Economic Development Authority, I encourage outreach to diverse, eclectic establishments – places not found in other communities. There is a place for both nationally recognized companies and smaller establishments in our community. I also believe that small upstarts should be offered some tax incentives above and beyond those already in place.

**5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

We have taken steps to increase open space by purchasing the Hamlett property, adding onto Crossman Park, and increasing the size of West End Park. We have an Open Space fund in place to help in purchasing additional open space for the use of our citizens, and we have master design plans in place for each park so we can improve on the open space we currently have. We also need more rectangular fields, and I encourage collaboration with our surrounding jurisdictions to share space.

**E. B. Ed Hillegass**

**1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

My development strategy for our commercial corridors is to ensure that commercially zoned parcels have a greater percentage of commercial development in a mixed use project. The redevelopment of downtown Falls Church on the south side of West Broad is weighted towards a residential project and we need to have a greater amount of commercial space to increase our city revenues.

**2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

Common practices for protecting water resources often fail to maintain either good water quality or healthy ecosystems. Large amounts of residential infill have eroded our City's tree canopy which leads to a poorer ecosystem. Protection of the natural environment is an important goal for the City of Falls Church because it is necessary to maintain and enhance the quality of life of its citizens. I would suggest that we start a program to reinforce the greenery that we once had in a larger volume. By educating our citizens and adding to the current customary tree-planting or hedge-planting at newly built houses or buildings, the citizens will promote planting trees as a method to restore some of our tree canopy.

**3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

We have many friends who live in our City today that have historic structures and its designation by VPIS and comply to preserve its historic significance. It is important that we continue to preserve our history of homes that were built many years ago. I would definitely consult VPIS on this question since their members have a greater expertise in our historic heritage.

**4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

Once again I would ensure that a greater percentage of our commercially zoned land be built up with a greater percentage of commercial volume. I would try to consolidate restaurants and establishments so that our citizens and neighboring communities are able to park and walk instead of getting back into their cars to find a food

establishment. This would entail that we have more than enough parking available to accomplish this task of a pedestrian friendly city.

**5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

Our City has taken steps to buy open space or through gifting or donation of commercial developers. With a limited amount of land space in our city we need to continue to grow our greenery and increase our tree canopies as I mentioned above. Any improvements to our City Parks would need to be surveyed first by the users and then recommendation could be made.

**Lindy Hockenberry Vice Mayor**

**1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

I supported the Comprehensive Plan nonresidential change for the North Side of City Center with the purpose in mind to make this the site of our planned public gathering open space as well as a site for future civic buildings, commercial, entertainment and retail concentration. It is very important to set the stage for what we as a city have as a vision of that area, so that creative plans can come to fruition. Since the North Side has huge difficulties with property consolidation, it will take strong leadership to enable this to happen, but I am very confident that with a solid plan that this can be accomplished.

The West End of the City is far out on the horizon, but with that said, we need to put into place all of the legislation that will bring us what we want to see there. We need to become much more precise in our vision for that area. Much will also depend on the fate of the Dulles extension.

**2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

A few years ago, I sponsored legislation and chaired a community task force that rewrote our tree ordinance. This new ordinance was written in accordance with the

Chesapeake Bay regulations and did help with the preserving and replacement of trees. Our arborist feels that it is successful in areas of large soil disturbance. However, many of us feel that more must be done with smaller projects that are not covered by the ordinance. Since our zoning code is now being rewritten, we must be watchful that that our policies are not only maintained, but perhaps enhanced.

I also want to commend VPIS for your continuing efforts of planting trees through the Neighborhood Tree Program.

**3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

Policies preserving historic structures are in place — some feel they are too lenient and others feel imposing on property rights. We have to be vigilant in supporting the policies that we have in place and we should always be working with citizen groups for improvements.

The second part is a great question to ask because there is so much going on right now about what can be done to make Falls Church City a historical destination. First of all, Tinner Hill Foundation, Fairfax County and the city are negotiating with the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to include the historic Tinner Hill site as part of the regional park system. This would be a cooperative effort to design and build a park for the education and enjoyment of our entire region. This would also allow the city to plan for a city museum that would emphasize the history and heritage of our city including early black history, civil rights along with our rich Victorian history. Much can be built on the success of our participation last year in the National Folk Festival and can include the Virginian Room at our library.

**4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

This is an issue that I feel very strongly about and I remain firm in my positive long-range view that if you build great space the type of retail and restaurants will come — my version of a field of dreams. Much of this is market driven by the need for density and critical mass, but when our projects, including City Center South, are leased and sold we will become an energetic vibrant City that will attract the types of businesses that we want and need.

## Hockenberry *continued*

### **5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

All of our City parks have been reviewed by the community through Parks & Rec and each has their specific master plan for future improvements. Through the Open Space Task Force, we have added a great amount of open space with the purchase of the Hamlet Track and adjoining properties along with the expansion of Big Chimneys, Crossman and West End Parks. We now have a workable policy in place that will be able to continue to add much needed open space. I firmly believe that with density in growth, open space must always be added for community enjoyment.

## Margaret Hausen

### **1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

For the Broad and Washington street corridor there are already seven restaurants and I do not see the need for any additional eating establishments. If this area is to be developed there is the overwhelming problem of parking. Should the City build a municipal parking garage a la Alexandria, and where would this parking lot be located?

This area of the City needs to be handled with great care as there are businesses there, e.g., Brown's Hardware. This is one of the very few old-fashioned hardware stores in Northern Virginia and it should be designated as a historic building.

For the West End, certainly the two strip malls on the East side need no more development. This area is all commercial and the City benefits from these tax dollars. The Gordon Road area has primarily auto repair shops as well as Don Beyers Volvo dealership. I was told that some years back Don Beyer wanted to sell, and that the City tried to acquire the other property by eminent domain and were unsuccessful in court. Nothing can be planned for this property until it is sold or the City tries another eminent domain tactic.

### **2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

The City has an Urban Forestry division within the Planning department. I would ask that this Department conduct a study and give a written report to the Council with suggestions as to how this problem can be solved and how long it would take. At this time the City seems to have no clear-cut policy as across the street from me trees have been destroyed to make room for the Holiday Inn. Unless these trees were diseased should they have been sacrificed?

The City has already infringed on the tree canopy and blocking sunshine to some residents who live on Park Avenue. The new building, The Spectrum, blocks all sunlight from these homes.

### **3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

They should be designated as "historic structures" and kept up by the City as is done with Cherry Hill Farm. The historic buildings could be rented as retail space for antique shops and similar businesses.

### **4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

Parking, parking, parking. There are so few public parking areas within the City. Unless, and until, this problem is alleviated attracting more retail establishments is not going to happen. Even with the escalating price of gasoline people still want to drive to wherever they are going; we are spoiled and we aren't going to give up driving — even if it's only a few blocks. As I've already said, I don't think the City needs another eating establishment.

### **5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

I am most familiar with Cherry Hill Park and this area of green appears to be well cared for. There is only so much that can be done with 2.2 square mile area.

Again, I'd consult with the Urban Forestry Division as they are the experts and know the parks far better than I.

## Patrice Lepczyk

### **1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

The new City Center would be the anchor near the Broad and Washington intersection. Some green space near its vicinity could help to offset its mammoth size having virtually no open space which would also make this area more attractive for new businesses in this neighborhood. In the long term, the West-End of the city is not far from the Metro and would be an excellent site to consider the Arlington type model with pedestrian walkways, retail and office space having commercial underground parking with residential units above.

### **2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

I have personally been affected by the city's incompetence and suffered severe consequences in this regard. Immediately after regarding and laying down nearly 4000 sq ft of concrete pavement without permit and damaging my property, my neighbor had the Arborist condemn an over 100 foot tall tree in the far corner of my lot forcing several mature trees to be hacked horribly in order to reach it. This official had no interest in the trees illegally cleared on this adjoining lot because the required paperwork for re-grading over 2500 sq ft had not been submitted. This typifies the bureaucratic attitude of being easily manipulated into simply yielding to whosoever appears to be more powerful and bullying the weak. The city needs to be more streetwise to developers' ruses in order to enforce the existing laws thereby protecting trees and requiring mandatory replacement. The quality and efficiency of city personnel would have to be greatly improved before granting them any more authority.

### **3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

There are minimal actual historic structures in the city and any new official designations should be completely voluntary sought out by the owners themselves. Some of the city's homes are distinguishing and interesting although most of the new residential buildings are of the colonial style which is the most popular in the area. Combination of federal and/or art deco styles are aesthetically pleasing complementary and historically relevant to

the city and somewhat more blocky, less expensive to build which may be a very strong consideration for most of development in the near future.

### **4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

I prefer maintaining restrictions in building height and minimizing development density at the same time avoiding the strip mall appearance by building pedestrian walkways and underground parking. Mixed use developments of retail and commercial shops on lower levels with office space and residential units above seem appropriate. Although it would be quite far in the long term, the city of Falls Church as a designated Art District with its proximity to the International Airport could support high end art galleries and boutiques, unique products that could attract buyers, visitors and window shoppers that could support a cafe society and quality restaurants.

### **5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

The city should look to developers to implement designated small public park areas as part of their concessions package. The developers of City Center for example took a strip of park land for their project but did not replace it elsewhere. The city of Falls Church is limited in its size so new larger park areas may be less realistic but all opportunities for green open space should be seized for the long term true value of city funding. Although park land would be a far better use of the city's imminent domain power than clearing homes for new development, as the city had for City Center, it should truly be a last resort only when absolutely required.

## Lawrence Webb

### **1) What are your development priorities for the City's commercial corridors of Broad Street and Washington Street, and for the West End of the City?**

I am very committed to ensuring that our major commercial corridors are developed in a way that will bring a new vibrancy to our City. I am equally committed to making

**Webb** *continued*

sure that the public continues to have the opportunity to let their opinions be heard as the actual design process begins. We need input from our citizens in deciding what type of businesses to bring to the area. I would like to see good quality restaurants, retail and entertainment that will allow our citizens the ability to eat out and shop in their own community.

The West End of the city is something that needs to be examined in terms of how to increase and expand on its commercial uses. Much of this development will be tied to the final decision on the rail to Dulles project.

**2) Over the last few decades, there has been a large amount of residential infill that has eroded the City's tree canopy. What do you intend to do to restore the trees and other greenery that have been lost to both residential and commercial development?**

First, I'll look to enforce the current ordinances that are helping to preserve and replace trees in the City. I will also look for ways to acquire additional open space whenever possible to help preserve trees in our community. I am a true believer in replacing any trees that have to be removed, through acquiring new open space, including green spaces in new development, and replacing trees lost during construction or renovation whenever possible. As a member of the Parks and Recreation Board, I know how our tree canopy affects the whole experience of living and working in Falls Church, and I will make sure that we continue to save as many trees as possible.

**3) What steps would you take to preserve historic structures in the City? How can the City emphasize its historic heritage as a means to identify Falls Church as a destination?**

We must enforce the current policies we have in place when it comes to preserving our historic structures in the City. This continues to be a point of contention in the community because of the occasional clash between individual property rights and preserving community history. We must work with our citizen groups to see where improvements can be made in the current policy.

The City is working right now with the Tinner Hill Foundation and Fairfax County to have the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority include the Historic Tinner Hill site as part of the regional park system. I will look for ways to develop a place where the City's Victorian history as well as its links to the Civil Rights Movement can be displayed and preserved for all to see.

**4) What are your plans to attract the diverse retail establishments and restaurants that encourage pedestrian traffic and make the City a more interesting commercial place?**

I believe that the right type of development will attract the type of quality retail and restaurants we want in the city. We must work with the EDA and Chamber of Commerce to go out and recruit good quality establishments to the City. However, much of this will be market driven, and calls for the right mix of density. This will take time, but I stand strong to work very hard to make this a reality for our City. Our citizens should be able to shop and dine in their own city, and not have to go to Tyson's Corner or Arlington.

**5) What improvements would you like to see in our City parks and do you feel the City should take steps to increase the amount of open space?**

This is an area that is very and near and dear to me as I have served the last three years on the Parks and Recreation Board. During my time on the Board we have made great strides in improving the quality of our parks for our citizens. We have completed the master plans on all of our City parks. We have seen additions to Big Chimneys, Crossman, Hamlett, and West End Parks. With these additions we have improved access points to the parks to increase the accessibility for all our citizens. We continue to look for ways to acquire additional open space. There is still much to be done; we still struggle to find additional rectangular playing field space in the city. We have looked into ways to work with our neighboring jurisdictions to partner with them and share fields with them. I will always be a strong advocate for our city parks. I believe that in order to be a truly great city, you must have a great park system.

**The Village Preservation & Improvement Society**

*The Village Preservation & Improvement Society (VPIS), founded in 1885, is an active nonprofit citizen volunteer organization in the City of Falls Church, Virginia. After many years of activism, the Society still is comprised of concerned citizens who address many important issues that face our community. As our Statement of Purpose indicates, the Society works to preserve our natural and built environment, historic structures and landmarks, and promotes cultural and community activities. More information about VPIS is available on our website: [www.vpis.org](http://www.vpis.org).*