

Who's  
Running?

# 2026 HOWARD COUNTY CANDIDATE GUIDE



DEMOCRAT

DISTRICT 3  
**AMIR NAVIWALA**  
HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**What is your vision for strengthening Howard County's competitiveness for business investment, job creation, and private sector growth?**

My vision begins with restoring stability as the foundation of economic competitiveness. As a businessperson and entrepreneur myself, I understand how important a healthy business ecosystem is. But I also know that businesses thrive best in communities that are stable, well educated, affordable, and rooted in long-term wellbeing — not in places experiencing rapid, speculative, or deregulated development.

Howard County's greatest economic asset is our school system. If we strengthen every school across the county — not just those in affluent areas — we will attract families who value education, create a strong local talent pool, and draw employers who want an educated, stable workforce.

Responsible, paced development that respects infrastructure limits will maintain the high quality of life that attracts both families and businesses. Growth should serve the people who already live here, not price them out or overwhelm our schools, roads, etc..

A competitive Howard County is one that grows deliberately, sustainably, and fairly.

### How will you measure progress on your goals?

I will measure progress using indicators that reflect economic vitality AND family stability, including:

- Housing affordability trends
- The stability and strength of all HCPSS schools
- Local small business formation and survival
- Commute times, infrastructure performance, and transit reliability
- Wage growth and workforce participation
- Resident quality-of-life surveys
- Rates of displacement and cost-of-living burdens

A county cannot claim economic success if families are being priced out, if infrastructure is overburdened, or if residents feel unstable in their day-to-day lives.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****What steps will you take to reduce regulatory barriers and create a more predictable, pro-business environment?**

Predictability and clarity are essential for any business — and especially for small businesses. I will streamline processes that create unnecessary burdens while ensuring we do not drift into deregulation that undermines the stability of our schools, roads, and neighborhoods.

For too long, large developers have shaped legislative agendas and benefited from major tax incentives and credits that often do not deliver long-term community benefit. I believe in a regulatory environment that is fair, transparent, and consistent — one that supports local entrepreneurs without allowing large developers to set the rules or accelerate growth beyond what our infrastructure can bear.

Pro-business must also mean pro-community. The two are not in conflict when growth is paced responsibly.

**How do you plan to align economic development with workforce readiness, ensuring residents are prepared for emerging jobs (especially in tech, healthcare, and trades)?**

We must start by building and strengthening the talent we already have. If we ensure every school — in every neighborhood — is strong, well-resourced, and supported, we will produce a generation ready for the jobs of tomorrow.

My strategy includes:

- Expanding partnerships between HCPSS, HCC, local hospitals, tech firms, and skilled trades (Note: Tech firms would be evaluated against certain ESG criteria. Those involved in war profiteering, genocide, unethical forms of surveillance, excessive resource usage, etc. would be screened out of this)
- Building internship and apprenticeship pipelines that include all students, not just those in high-performing zones
- Supporting upskilling and retraining programs for adults
- Ensuring cost of living remains manageable so families and young workers can stay in the county

Workforce readiness is impossible if families cannot afford to stay here.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **What role do you see for public-private partnerships in advancing innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic growth?**

Public-private partnerships can be powerful — but only when the partnership is balanced and the public interest is protected first.

I support partnerships that:

- Strengthen school-to-career pathways
- Support small business innovation and entrepreneurship
- Expand infrastructure or community resources
- Promote inclusive economic opportunity

However, P3s must not become vehicles for large developers to gain preferential treatment or influence. Partnerships must be transparent, accountable, and tied to measurable community benefit.

### **How will you ensure that small and minority-owned businesses have equitable access to County contracts, incentives, and support services?**

As someone who is building and operating a business, I deeply value the role of small and minority-owned businesses in shaping local economies.

I plan to:

- Strengthen MBE participation goals and enforcement
- Break large contracts into smaller opportunities accessible to local firms
- Offer technical assistance and bid-support programs
- Provide clear public reporting to identify disparities
- Ensure incentives don't only flow to the largest players

Economic fairness does not happen passively — it requires intentional design.

## BUDGETING

**What do you see as the biggest challenge for the County budget, and how do you plan to address it?**

The biggest challenge is maintaining stability in a volatile economy while growth has outpaced our infrastructure, especially schools. When development runs ahead of roads, schools, and services — often pushed by large developers seeking density increases or tax incentives — the county budget becomes strained and families bear the burden.

I plan to:

- Align growth with actual infrastructure capacity
- Prioritize school funding as core infrastructure
- Reevaluate large developer incentives that have not produced sufficient community return
- Focus on redevelopment before costly expansion
- Maintain long-term fiscal discipline and transparency

A stable budget begins with stable communities.

**What steps will you take to increase transparency, trust, and civic engagement in budget and policy decisions?**

- Publish clear, accessible budget dashboards
- Hold listening sessions in or for underserved communities
- Require transparency for all incentives and tax credits
- Publicly track development impacts on school capacity and roads
- Increase opportunities for residents to shape policy early — before decisions are made

Residents must feel the county is working *with them*, not around them.

## DEVELOPMENT &amp; REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

**Do you share the concern that our road and transit infrastructure is inadequate to support current and future growth?**

Yes. Over the past decade, growth has accelerated significantly faster than our infrastructure can support. This is not due to resident demand — but to developer pressure to maximize land value through dense, mixed-use projects, which drives up property values, pushes out existing residents, and strains schools and roads.

We must correct this imbalance through responsible-paced development.

## DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

### **What are your top three priorities for transportation, infrastructure, and public facilities investment?**

1. School capacity and modernization
2. Road congestion relief on key corridors (US-1, MD-175, Snowden River)
3. Reliable public transit and safer pedestrian infrastructure

Stability and quality of life require infrastructure that keeps pace with growth. Investing in infrastructure is not just about catching up with growth; it's also about creating good local jobs and ensuring that we build a community where businesses and families can thrive for the long haul.

### **How will you work with regional, state, and federal partners to secure needed resources?**

I will advocate with clarity and honesty:

- We need funding tied to real congestion and real school overcrowding
- We cannot continue growing faster than our infrastructure
- Federal and state grants must be pursued aggressively for transportation and schools
- Data and transparency will guide our requests, not developer-driven projections

Howard County will be more competitive when our growth is sustainable.

### **The rewrite of zoning and land-use regulations will shape Howard County for decades. What are your top three priorities in this process, and what is your overall zoning and land use philosophy? What outcomes do you expect to see from this effort?**

My philosophy: Zoning should protect community stability, not developer-driven speculation.

Top priorities:

1. Align growth with school, road, hospital, and other infrastructure capacity
2. Prevent displacement and protect affordability
3. Reduce developer influence and increase public transparency

Zoning exists to serve residents — not to accelerate profit-driven cycles that destabilize communities.

Expected Outcomes:

- More predictable and stable growth
- Stronger, fully resourced schools across the county
- Reduced rent burdens and displacement
- Redevelopment prioritized over new sprawl
- Greater public trust in land-use decisions

A healthier, more cohesive community.

**DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT****What are your plans to encourage redevelopment of existing commercial properties?**

- Incentivize redevelopment of vacant and underutilized corridors
- Support adaptive reuse and small-business-oriented redevelopment
- Focus on revitalization before greenfield expansion
- Streamline permitting for redevelopment while maintaining community protections

Redevelopment lifts communities without overwhelming schools and roads.

**Development is often framed as a conflict between housing growth and school capacity. How do you believe the County should balance school funding needs with new housing development?**

The conflict exists because development has been approved faster than school capacity has been expanded. The solution is simple:

- Growth must match school capacity
- Developer fees should reflect the true impact on schools
- School construction must be treated as primary infrastructure
- Development moratoriums or slowdowns should be considered in severely overcrowded zones

Good schools are not a barrier to growth — they are the foundation of healthy growth.

**EDUCATION****How will you support stronger school-to-career pathways that connect students with local employers and internship opportunities?**

I plan to:

- Expand partnerships with hospitals, tech firms, trades, and logistics companies (Note: Tech firms would be evaluated against certain ESG criteria. Those involved in war profiteering, genocide, unethical forms of surveillance, excessive resource usage, etc. would be screened out of this)
- Build county-supported internship and apprenticeship pipelines
- Strengthen HCPSS–HCC collaboration
- Ensure pathways are accessible to ALL students, not just those from affluent neighborhoods

A strong, equitable school system is the most reliable economic development strategy a county can have.