

*Who's  
Running?*

# 2026 HOWARD COUNTY CANDIDATE GUIDE



DISTRICT 5  
**CAT CARTER**  
DEMOCRAT **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 is to make Howard County a place where businesses—small and mid-size companies, farms, tech firms, and family-owned shops—can grow without navigating unpredictable or outdated processes. As a small cybersecurity business owner who works closely with federal agencies and attends federal contracting and cybersecurity conferences, I understand the challenges employers face and how important federal partners like Fort Meade and NSA are to our local economy.

I'm also a former ESL and English teacher, which gives me a deep appreciation for how much our diverse community contributes to attracting a talented workforce. Strengthening that foundation helps keep Howard County competitive.

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

I will measure progress through:

- Job growth and retention.
- Increased redevelopment of aging commercial centers.
- Improvements in broadband and tech infrastructure.
- Growth in small and minority-owned business participation in county contracts.
- Direct feedback from business owners.

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

I will streamline permitting, modernize outdated regulations, ensure consistent standards across departments, and improve communication so businesses know what to expect before investing.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

I support expanding apprenticeships, internships, and certifications in partnership with HCPSS, HCC, and local employers. As a former ESL teacher, I know supporting all learners, including English learners, strengthens our long-term workforce.

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

They can help modernize infrastructure, expand broadband, support innovation hubs, and workforce training without increasing burdens on taxpayers.

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

By simplifying procurement, improving outreach, tracking participation transparently, and ensuring incentive programs are accessible to small firms.

## BUDGETING

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

The cost of schools, infrastructure, and services is rising faster than revenue. We must make responsible decisions that align with actual revenue to maintain affordability and competitiveness.

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

I support plain-language budget summaries, community meetings, clear project justifications, and public-facing performance metrics.

## DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

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

Yes. District 5 faces congestion, limited transit, and school capacity issues. Growth must match real infrastructure capacity.

## DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

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

1. Road safety and capacity improvements.
2. School construction and modernization.
3. Expanded transit options for rural and suburban residents.

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

My cybersecurity background and work with federal systems will help me advocate effectively for transportation funding, broadband support, and school construction dollars.

### 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?

Top priorities:

1. Tie growth to actual infrastructure capacity.
2. Prioritize redevelopment.
3. Create clear standards residents and businesses can trust.

Expected outcomes:

A more predictable process, fewer exceptions, and development that supports quality of life.

### What are your plans to encourage redevelopment of existing commercial properties?

Streamlined approvals, flexible uses, and incentives for meaningful upgrades.

## DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

**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?**

We can support more housing when schools and infrastructure can support it. Strong APFO standards and fair developer contributions are essential.

## EDUCATION

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

I will work to expand internships, apprenticeships, and partnerships with HCC, HCPSS, and employers. As a former ESL/English teacher, Apple Ballot candidate, and small cyber security business owner, I am committed to ensuring these opportunities reach students of all backgrounds and ensuring Howard County is creating effective pipelines of students and adults who can meet the current and future workforce needs.