

Who's
Running?

2026 HOWARD COUNTY CANDIDATE GUIDE



DISTRICT 3

DEMOCRAT

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

Where We Are: Howard County's assets are real: proximity to federal agencies and employment centers in DC and Baltimore, a highly educated resident workforce, the Maryland Innovation Center's startup ecosystem, and an emerging cybersecurity cluster that HCEDA has been building through the regional Maryland Cyber Workforce coalition. These are strong foundations. At the same time, our commercial and residential tax base has not grown in proportion to our ambitions, issuing fewer than 500 residential permits in recent years compared to historic highs of over 5,000, while aging office parks near train stations and Gateway are underutilized. Entrepreneurs and small businesses still report that starting or expanding here involves too many unclear steps and unpredictable timelines.

The Opportunity Ahead: I envision Howard County as the Mid-Atlantic's most entrepreneur-friendly jurisdiction: a county where the rules are clear, the network is connected, and the infrastructure (housing, broadband, and transit) works for businesses of every size. Specifically, I will work toward:

- A cohesive, connected business ecosystem that links HCEDA programs, the Maryland Innovation Center, Howard Community College, and the local Chamber into a navigable support network for entrepreneurs at every stage.
- A streamlined regulatory environment where a new business owner can understand what is required, get a predictable timeline, and open without navigating overlapping, redundant rules.
- Transit-oriented redevelopment (TOD) that converts underused parking lots and aging commercial buildings into high-yield, mixed-use communities, expanding the commercial and residential tax base, creating quality jobs, and funding schools without overburdening current residents.
- Sector-specific growth in cybersecurity, health technology, and the skilled trades, building on Howard County's existing talent base and institutional relationships.
- Lower household energy costs through Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), directly improving the bottom line for residents and small businesses while investing in clean energy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

How will you measure progress on your goals?

Accountability Through Data: Good governance requires clear metrics. I will request that HCEDA and the Department of Finance publish an annual economic competitiveness dashboard that makes these metrics accessible to every resident and business owners:

- Commercial tax base growth: share of total County assessable base from commercial and mixed-use properties (target: increase from current levels toward pre-2008 proportions).
- New business permits and business survival rates: both the number of new business starts and the three-year survival rate of those businesses.
- HCEDA portfolio performance: loan deployment, BRITE program graduation rates, and the share of Catalyst Fund dollars reaching minority- and women-owned enterprises.
- Workforce pipeline: number of Howard County residents completing industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields through HCC, HCPSS, and workforce development partners.
- Permit processing times: average days to permit approval for new businesses and redevelopment projects, with targets for year-over-year improvement.
- Resident entrepreneurship: share of new business licenses held by Howard County residents, to measure whether our ecosystem is serving people who live here.

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

Where We Are: Complex, overlapping regulations create an uneven playing field. Well-capitalized firms with legal teams can navigate the system, while first-time entrepreneurs and small business owners cannot. Unpredictable timelines for permitting and zoning decisions make it impossible to underwrite a project or open on schedule. This is not a problem of too little regulation. It is a problem of unclear, inconsistent, and sometimes redundant regulation.

The Path Forward: I will pursue the following specific reforms through the Council's legislative and budget authority:

- Plain language business start guide: a single, clear document that walks a new business owner through every county requirement, fee, and timeline, modeled on best practices from jurisdictions that have dramatically reduced time-to-open.
- Binding permit timelines: I will support legislation that establishes maximum review timelines for standard permits, with automatic approval or required explanation if deadlines are missed.
- Single point of contact: advocate for a dedicated business concierge function within HCEDA or DILP for new business starts and significant expansions, so owners are not passed between departments.
- ECON Task Force implementation: champion the actionable regulatory reforms produced by the Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity Now Task Force, ensuring recommendations move from report to ordinance.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

- APFO reform: replace the current one-size-fits-all Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance with a regional approach that stops blocking redevelopment of village centers like Owen Brown and Long Reach. The current policy drives the very redistricting disruptions communities oppose, and perversely chokes off the revenue needed to fund school improvements.
- Zoning clarity: use the upcoming zoning rewrite to create clear, by-right paths for the development we want in activity centers and TOD zones, removing the conditional use barriers that impose thousands of dollars in legal costs on projects that qualify for approval.

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

Building the Pipeline: Howard County's greatest economic asset is its people. But a strong workforce does not develop by accident. It requires intentional alignment between employers, educators, and government. I see three interlocking priorities:

Cybersecurity & Technology: Howard County already anchors a regional cybersecurity workforce coalition led by HCEDA, with federal EDA recognition. I will build on this investment by expanding structured internship pathways that connect HCPSS students and Howard Community College graduates directly to county-based tech employers, with preference for Howard County residents hiring local talent.

Healthcare: With major healthcare systems operating in and around Howard County, this is a sector where workforce development directly improves community health outcomes. I support expanding HCC's allied health programs and creating employer-linked scholarship and apprenticeship models that guarantee employment upon credential completion.

Skilled Trades: We are building a county that will require tens of thousands of skilled tradespeople: electricians, plumbers, HVAC technicians, construction workers. Yet trades pathways in our schools remain underfunded relative to the opportunity. I will advocate for increased Blueprint investment in career and technical education, apprenticeship programs connected to the county's union and contractor community, and a public narrative that treats a trades career as the pathway to the middle class it is.

Connecting the Ecosystem: I will continue to support a formal employer roundtable, convened by HCEDA, that brings together large anchors (federal contractors, healthcare systems, tech companies) and small businesses to identify specific credential gaps and co-design training programs. Howard Community College should be a primary institutional partner in this effort.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

Public-Private Partnership as a Core Strategy: HCEDA is itself a public-private partnership, and its track record demonstrates what this model can achieve. The Catalyst Loan Fund has deployed \$3.3 million specifically to women-owned businesses. The HoCo RISE Business Assistance Grant Program has distributed \$21 million since 2020, with over 51 percent reaching women-owned businesses. The BRITE commercialization program's participants are 75 percent women- and minority-owned. The Maryland Innovation Center has incubated dozens of startups and hosted the Great Pumpkin Pitch to connect entrepreneurs with capital and community. These are not just programs. They are proof points for what partnership can accomplish.

Building on this foundation, I will support:

- Expanding the Catalyst Fund's flexible lending capacity, particularly for underserved entrepreneurs who cannot access traditional bank financing, using county budget authority to capitalize a revolving loan fund.
- Community Choice Aggregation: a public-private energy purchasing partnership that lowers electricity costs for residents and small businesses while directing investment into local renewable energy, a just transition that pairs economic relief with climate action.
- Housing as infrastructure: partnering with home builders in redevelopment projects to designate units that keep our teachers, firefighters, bus drivers and other essential employees in the community they serve, treating workforce housing as a public good.

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

Current Progress and Remaining Gaps: HCEDA has made meaningful progress: the HoCo RISE grants, the Catalyst Fund, and the BRITE program all have strong records of reaching minority- and women-owned businesses. These programs work and deserve sustained investment. But access to county contracts, not just grants, which is where the next frontier lies. County Executive Ball created an executive order to promote local procurement. This EO should be codified and expanded for full effectiveness.

My Commitments

- Procurement reform: support transparent reporting on the share of county contracts awarded to minority-, women-, and small-business-owned enterprises, with annual public benchmarks and a path to improvement.
- Contract readiness technical assistance: fund HCEDA to provide pre-bid coaching so that small and minority-owned businesses can compete for county contracts on a level playing field, with support for understanding requirements, bonding, insurance, and bid packaging before the solicitation closes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

- Simplified procurement for small contracts: advocate for streamlined, simplified procurement processes for contracts under a meaningful threshold, reducing the administrative burden that systematically disadvantages small firms.
- Continued investment in HCEDA ecosystem programs: the BRITE, Catalyst, and RISE programs must be fully funded and expanded, not treated as discretionary line items.
- Resident entrepreneurship focus: prioritize Howard County residents in business support programs, so that economic development investment circulates within our community.

BUDGETING

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

The Structural Challenge: Howard County's biggest budget challenge is the gap between our recurring revenue base and our growing commitments, and the reactive, emergency cycle this gap produces. Ninety percent of our General Fund comes from property and income taxes. When those revenues grow more slowly than state mandates, inflation, and educator contract costs, we face a choice between underfunding our priorities or drawing down reserves.

The Solution - Grow the Base, Not Just the Rate: The sustainable answer is to grow recurring revenues by expanding the assessable tax base through transit-oriented redevelopment that converts underperforming commercial land into high-yield, mixed-use communities. This generates new property and income tax revenue without overburdening current residents. Simultaneously, I support:

- A third-party review of our tax structures by independent economists, not politicians, to identify tax reforms, including a restructured income tax and a progressive recordation tax modeled on the proposal I championed that would have added \$30 million annually while reducing the burden on first-time homebuyers.
- A multi-year revenue strategy that ends reactive, last-minute budgeting and gives educators, families, and businesses the predictability they need to plan.

Howard County's triple-AAA bond rating is a genuine asset: it lowers our borrowing costs and reflects fiscal discipline. Protecting that rating while growing our revenue base is an important strategy.

BUDGETING

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

Building a Culture of Transparency: Trust in government is built through consistent, accessible, and honest communication, not just during budget season but year-round. My approach:

- Annual economic competitiveness dashboard: publicly accessible metrics on commercial tax base, permitting timelines, business starts, and HCEDA program outcomes, so every resident can evaluate progress.
- Inspector General: I was proud to help create the first truly independent Inspector General office in Howard County history, providing an ongoing mechanism for public accountability and program review.
- Plain language budget summaries: advocate for accessible, jargon-free summaries of the County budget that any resident can understand, not just the full technical document.
- Participatory procurement: engage the business community, including small and minority-owned firms, in the design of procurement policies and contracting requirements before they are finalized.

DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

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

Yes. Infrastructure is not just a quality-of-life issue. It is a business investment issue. When traffic is unpredictable and transit is limited, employers have difficulty attracting workers, and employees face hidden commute costs that suppress economic activity. Our infrastructure investment has not kept pace with our aspirations.

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

Top three priorities for transportation, infrastructure, and public facilities investment:

- Multimodal transportation in TOD zones and activity centers: prioritize pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections in the areas where we are directing growth, so that new development is genuinely walkable and transit-accessible, not just transit-adjacent.
- Transit connectivity and frequency: partner with RTA and MTA to improve bus frequency and reliability on corridors connecting our activity centers, employment hubs, and residential neighborhoods. A worker who cannot rely on transit to get to work is a worker who cannot take that job.
- Road maintenance and school-adjacent safety: ensure that aging road infrastructure serving schools and employment centers is maintained on a predictable schedule, not deferred until failure. Deferred maintenance is always more expensive than planned investment.

DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

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

Working with regional, state, and federal partners: I view Howard County's local officials as one team in Annapolis and Washington. I will present a unified county front with the Executive and our state delegation for MDOT investment in Howard County corridors, pursue federal infrastructure and transit funding, and use the county's APFO reform process to ensure that new development is matched to infrastructure capacity, not used as an excuse to block needed growth in infrastructure rich areas.

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?

Zoning Philosophy - Zone for What We Want to Build: Our current zoning code was designed primarily to prevent things, not to enable them. The result is a system where everything we actually need, including workforce housing, mixed-use walkable centers, small multiplexes, and neighborhood-scale commerce, requires an expensive, unpredictable process, while the status quo requires nothing. I believe we should flip this: make the uses we want easy and by-right, and reserve discretionary review for genuinely exceptional circumstances.

Top three priorities in the zoning rewrite:

- Enable TOD and activity centers with clear, by-right standards: establish predictable form-based standards for development in activity centers and TOD zones, so that a developer, employer, or entrepreneur knows exactly what they can build and on what timeline, without a years-long approval process.
- By-right ADUs and small multiplexes: allow accessory dwelling units and small multiplexes by right wherever single-family detached housing is permitted, provided they match the visual character of the neighborhood. The conditional use requirement currently imposed adds thousands of dollars in legal costs for projects that almost always get approved. It is a barrier to entry, not a safeguard.
- Regional APFO reform: adopt a regional APFO chart based on growth designations in HoCo By Design, replacing the blunt countywide threshold that blocks redevelopment of village centers and counterproductively drives the redistricting disruptions that communities oppose.

Expected outcomes: A zoning code that generates the housing supply, commercial activity, and tax base our schools and services need, while protecting established neighborhoods and agricultural land. Fewer redistricting crises. More housing at every price point. A stronger commercial tax base. And a regulatory environment where every entrepreneur and home builder knows the rules and can plan accordingly.

DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

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

Turning Underperformance into Opportunity: Howard County has hundreds of acres of underperforming commercial properties: aging commercial along Route 1 and Route 40, underused parking lots near our transit corridors, and declining village centers that once anchored community life. These properties represent our largest untapped opportunity for expanding the tax base without consuming greenspace or agricultural land.

My Approach:

- Strategic APFO exemptions for redevelopment: stop treating the conversion of a parking lot into a mixed-use community the same as a greenfield subdivision. Revenue positive redevelopment that replaces impervious surface with productive use should be prioritized, not blocked by thresholds designed for sprawl.
- Tax and financing incentives: support PILOTs (Payments in Lieu of Taxes), time-benefit permitting (expedited approval for projects meeting county goals), and a county revolving construction loan fund, partnering with allied agencies and the private sector to make projects viable that would not break ground under purely market conditions.
- Transparent site inventory: publish and maintain a public inventory of county-owned surplus land and underperforming commercial properties, so home builders, employers, and community groups can identify redevelopment opportunities.

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?

Reframing the False Conflict: The framing of 'housing growth versus school capacity' is a false conflict, and an expensive one. When we block growth to protect school capacity, we simultaneously choke off the revenue needed to fund school improvements. The result is the worst of both worlds: a housing shortage that drives up costs for existing residents, while school infrastructure continues to age without the investment it needs.

The Data-Driven Answer: Not all growth is equal. Studio and one-bedroom apartments in activity centers generate very few students per unit while producing significant tax revenue. Transit-oriented, mixed-use redevelopment generates a higher tax yield with a lower student generation rate than traditional suburban single-family development. I will use this data to shape our APFO and zoning policies, directing growth toward the forms that expand our fiscal capacity without overburdening classrooms.

Funding Schools Through Growth:

- Use redevelopment revenue, generated by TOD and village center revitalization, to fund school modernization and capacity investment, so that new growth directly funds the school improvements it requires.
- Support the Interagency Commission on School Construction and push for a stronger state partnership on school facilities, because aging schools are a statewide problem that should not fall entirely on county property taxpayers.

EDUCATION

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

Where We Are: Howard County Public School System graduates among the highest-achieving students in the state. Yet too many of those students leave Howard County for college and careers, and too few come back. At the same time, local employers, from cybersecurity firms to healthcare systems to skilled trades businesses, struggle to find local talent pipelines. Closing this gap is both an education priority and an economic development priority.

My Vision: I envision a seamless continuum from HCPSS classrooms to Howard Community College credentials to Howard County careers, where a student can see a direct, supported path from the classroom to a living-wage job in this community. This is not aspirational; it is achievable with intentional coordination.

Specific Commitments:

- Employer roundtable: convene a formal, ongoing HCEDA-led employer roundtable that connects large anchor employers (federal contractors, tech firms, hospital systems) and small businesses with HCPSS and HCC to co-design career pathway programs tied to real local job opportunities.
- Structured internship pipelines: use the Council's budget and legislative authority to incentivize county-contracted employers and HCEDA program participants to offer structured, paid internships to HCPSS students and HCC graduates, like the Youth Employment Program, prioritizing cybersecurity, healthcare, and the skilled trades.
- Trades and apprenticeship investment: advocate for expanded investment in career and technical education within the Blueprint framework, including apprenticeship partnerships with the building and construction trades. A welding or electrical credential earned at age 18 is a pathway to a middle-class life in Howard County.
- Maryland Innovation Center student programming: build on the MIC's existing entrepreneurship platform to create student-facing programming, including pitch competitions, mentorship, and exposure to the startup ecosystem, so that the next generation of Howard County entrepreneurs grows up knowing this community supports their ambitions.
- HCC as bridge institution: strengthen the Howard Community College pipeline from HCPSS through industry credentials and transfer pathways, ensuring that every Howard County student, regardless of four-year college plans, has access to a subsidized, proximate pathway to a career.
- Attainable housing for young professionals: all of this investment is wasted if the graduates we train cannot afford to stay. My commitment to workforce housing, including ADUs, educator units, and TOD development at all price points, is inseparable from the goal of retaining the talent we develop.