

Who's  
Running?

# 2026 HOWARD COUNTY CANDIDATE GUIDE



DEMOCRAT

**JANSSEN E. EVELYN**  
**HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL**

**DISTRICT 4**

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

Economic development brings opportunity and improves quality of life by growing our tax base, creating jobs, and reinvesting in our communities. Howard County is already a strong place to live and work, but competitiveness is never static. County government must ensure that we support growth rather than get in its way, while making that growth sustainable over the long term.

Strengthening competitiveness means getting the fundamentals right. We must fully fund and support our education system to attract families and build a skilled workforce. We must modernize zoning and reform APFO so housing and commercial development can grow alongside our economy in a predictable and responsible way. We must invest in reliable transit and multimodal infrastructure that connects residents to jobs, reduces congestion, and supports redevelopment rather than sprawl.

Having worked across multiple county governments, including as Deputy Chief Administrative Officer in Anne Arundel County, I understand the importance of aligning land use, infrastructure, housing, and economic development around clear long-term goals. By prioritizing predictable and transparent regulations and fostering strong public-private partnerships, we can create an environment where businesses of all sizes can thrive, innovation can flourish, and growth benefits the entire community.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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

Progress must be measured through clear, data-driven outcomes paired with community feedback. Key indicators include reducing Howard County's housing deficit and increasing the production of missing middle and workforce housing, tracking business formation and retention, expanding the commercial tax base through strategic redevelopment, and increasing participation by minority- and women-owned businesses in county contracting.

Workforce readiness goals should be measured by enrollment and completion rates in apprenticeship and internship programs, particularly in high-growth sectors such as healthcare, technology, and the trades, as well as overall job growth and employment rates. Infrastructure progress can be measured through expanded transit service, improved RTA headways, and reductions in deferred maintenance across schools and stormwater systems.

Ultimately, success is when economic growth translates into an improved quality of life, a stable revenue base that supports schools and public services, and opportunity that is accessible to all residents.

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

The County Council has a responsibility to foster a regulatory environment that is clear, consistent, and predictable. Drawing on my experience navigating complex county systems, my approach is centered on simplification, coordinated review, and strategic reform.

Modernizing our zoning code is essential to addressing housing supply constraints that limit workforce growth and business expansion. This includes allowing a greater mix of housing types, supporting transit-oriented and mixed-use development, and ensuring regulations align with the General Plan. At the same time, APFO must function as a coordinated planning and capital investment tool that aligns growth with timely delivery of schools, transportation, and public facilities, rather than creating uncertainty that discourages responsible investment.

I will also advocate for streamlined permitting and licensing processes, particularly for small, minority, and women-owned businesses, and for clearer development guidelines with early engagement to reduce delays and last-minute disputes. Predictability and transparency give businesses the confidence to invest and plan for the future.

## **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)?**

Economic development and workforce readiness must be planned together. We need a seamless pipeline connecting education to employment. I am committed to working with HCPSS to ensure students have access to modern technology and career-focused programs that prepare them for today's workforce.

I will work to expand the Howard County Government Trade Apprenticeship Program through the Office of Workforce Development, increasing registered apprenticeships in partnership with Howard Community College, trade unions, and local employers in healthcare, technology, and the trades. I also support launching a county-first internship program placing students within county agencies and partner organizations to gain real-world experience.

As the son of a teacher and a nurse who earned her degree through community college, I understand the power of accessible education pathways. My experience in county administration positions me to build the partnerships needed to create a homegrown talent pipeline that meets employer needs and provides residents with stable, family-sustaining careers.

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

Public-private partnerships are essential tools for delivering results at scale. The private sector brings capital, expertise, and agility that can accelerate projects beyond the county's direct capacity.

I see partnerships playing a key role in redeveloping aging commercial corridors, expanding workforce training facilities, deploying green infrastructure and climate resilience projects, and revitalizing village centers through mixed-use development.

Having worked in county administration and alongside community organizations, I am committed to structuring partnerships with clear expectations and strong community benefit agreements that deliver affordable housing, local hiring, and support for small and minority-owned businesses.

Well-structured partnerships allow the County to leverage private innovation while protecting the public interest and ensuring growth is inclusive and widely shared.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

Ensuring equitable access strengthens our entire economy. I will advocate for proactive support, not just passive outreach. This includes creating a dedicated navigator within county government to help small businesses understand procurement processes and bid on contracts.

Breaking large procurements into smaller scopes, enforcing meaningful subcontracting goals, and increasing transparency around contracting opportunities are critical steps. I also support creating a centralized digital hub consolidating county and state incentives, grants, and mentorship programs.

Access to capital remains a major barrier. We should explore partnerships with local financial institutions to create tailored loan programs that support small business growth. Equity means opening the door and providing the guidance needed to walk through it.

## BUDGETING

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

By and large, the biggest challenge to the County's budget will be dealing with the reality that our current growth trends, supported by unsustainable pandemic-era revenues, will not allow us to keep up with the services our community expects and deserves. From the State level budgets to our own County, it's clear that the revenue strength we've become accustomed to was driven by temporary federal stimulus and market gains, not lasting economic fundamentals. As our community grows, we must strategically transition from a pure growth model to a sustainable maintenance and smart redevelopment framework. The General Plan Update presents the critical roadmap for this transition. We must prioritize smart and strategic growth policies that encourage high-value economic and community development.

To address fiscal constraints, it is imperative that we proactively expand our commercial and residential tax base via mixed-used redevelopment and building vertically in appropriate centers as this method is both environmentally sustainable and fiscally prudent. This strategy will attract and retain businesses and increase community incomes, thus offsetting the natural fiscal pressures of an aging population and maintain our revenue base. We can alleviate the need to raise taxes or cut core services while simultaneously creating new employment opportunities and strengthening our local economy.

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

Trust is built through early, meaningful engagement. I support holding pre-budget town halls, both in person and online, to gather input before budgets are drafted. Complex trade-offs must be explained clearly through accessible communication.

I also support exploring participatory budgeting pilots that allow residents to help direct discretionary capital funds. Inclusive engagement requires varied meeting times, translation services, and proactive outreach so all voices are heard.

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

Yes. Growth in Howard County is expected to continue, largely through redevelopment, which means options for building new roads or significantly expanding existing ones are limited. As the County's population and employment grow, lane miles of roadway will not expand at the same pace. Even as downtown Columbia continues to urbanize, growth in vehicle trips will likely outpace growth in transit trips if we do not plan intentionally.

That reality requires a strategic response. Building more roads is not the answer. The solution is coordinated land use and transportation planning that prioritizes transit oriented development, frequent and reliable public transit, and sustained investment in sidewalks and bike infrastructure. Encouraging compact, mixed use development reduces vehicle trips, shortens commutes, and allows more people to live closer to jobs and services.

From both an economic development and environmental perspective, this approach is essential. As density increases in activity centers, transit must scale alongside it. Expanding frequent and reliable transit service allows more people to move efficiently between homes, jobs, and leisure destinations, narrowing the gap between transportation supply and demand.

Increased opportunities for travel by transit, particularly to and around density centers, support Howard County's economic competitiveness, improve mobility, reduce congestion, and do so in a way that preserves existing communities and advances long term sustainability.



## DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

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

First, expanding and improving public transit, including extending Route 29 Bus Rapid Transit to Columbia and improving RTA frequency and reliability.

Second, treating school facilities as core infrastructure. Years of deferred maintenance and enrollment growth require sustained investment in new school construction, vertical expansion of existing schools, and modernization to meet current and future needs.

Third, building multimodal and climate-resilient infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike lanes, stormwater systems, and utilities that support safe, sustainable growth.

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

Having served in senior roles under three County Executives, I have extensive experience working with state agencies, regional bodies, and congressional partners. Howard County must remain an active stakeholder in the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan and competitively position projects for state and federal funding by aligning local priorities with broader regional and state goals.

On the County Council, I intend to be a proactive and persistent advocate for Howard County, ensuring our transit projects are prioritized in the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan and competitively position our home for state and federal infrastructure grants. My understanding of how to navigate bureaucratic processes and align local projects with broader regional and state goals is a part of the unique skillset I bring that will directly translate into secured funding for our critical infrastructure needs.

**DEVELOPMENT & REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

**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 top priorities are clarity, predictability, and alignment with our long-term plans. Zoning regulations should be clear enough to be consistently applied, predictable enough for residents and businesses to plan around, and firmly grounded in the County's General Plan.

In my role as Deputy Chief Administrative Officer in Anne Arundel County, I worked on land use and housing policy in a mature jurisdiction facing many of the same pressures Howard County is experiencing today. I saw firsthand how outdated or overly rigid zoning can limit housing choice, drive up costs, and make it harder for employers to attract and retain workers. I also saw how clear, well-aligned regulations reduce conflict, shorten timelines, and lead to better outcomes for communities and investors alike.

My land use philosophy is rooted in allowing a broader mix of housing types, prioritizing transit-oriented and mixed-use development, and directing growth to existing centers while preserving green space and farmland. Well-written zoning codes are not about picking winners. They are about setting clear expectations that support smart growth, protect neighborhoods, and give residents and businesses confidence in the County's future.

I expect to see increased housing production across a wider range of housing types, moderation of housing costs, and more walkable and connected communities. Over time, this should result in fewer vehicle trips, reduced emissions, and stronger alignment between where people live and where they work.

From an economic perspective, these outcomes strengthen the local workforce, make it easier for employers to recruit and retain talent, and support long-term competitiveness. From a community perspective, they allow us to preserve open space and farmland by focusing growth where infrastructure already exists. These are the kinds of balanced outcomes I have worked toward in county government and the results Howard County should expect from this effort.

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

Redevelopment of aging commercial properties is one of Howard County's greatest opportunities. In Anne Arundel County, I worked on economic development and land use initiatives that required aligning zoning, infrastructure, and community expectations to reinvest in underutilized sites. Those experiences reinforced that redevelopment succeeds when rules are clear, timelines are predictable, and community priorities are incorporated early.

As a Councilmember, I will support zoning changes that allow mixed-use redevelopment by right in appropriate areas, reducing uncertainty for investors while ensuring alignment with adopted plans. I also support targeted incentives for projects that include affordable housing, green building standards, and public amenities.

Drawing on my experience in both Howard and Anne Arundel counties, I strongly support the use of community benefit agreements, particularly in larger redevelopment projects. These agreements help ensure redevelopment delivers local hiring, support for small and local businesses, and community spaces that reflect neighborhood needs, so reinvestment strengthens both the economy and the community.

**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?**

Housing and schools are not competing priorities. Strong schools depend on a stable and growing tax base, which in turn depends on attracting residents and employers.

In county administration, I have worked through the practical realities of coordinating development with capital planning. APFO works best when it functions as a growth management and capital planning tool that aligns development with timely investment in school capacity, transportation, and other public facilities. When used as a blunt instrument to halt growth, it creates uncertainty without solving underlying capacity challenges.

By directing growth to areas where school expansion is feasible, sequencing development thoughtfully, and requiring fair-share contributions, Howard County can ensure housing and schools grow together. This integrated approach is not theoretical. It is how sustainable communities manage growth responsibly while maintaining high-quality public education.



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

As a parent of two HCPSS students, I am personally invested in ensuring every child, regardless of their background or post-graduation path, has the tools and direct support necessary for a successful future in Howard County. To support a comprehensive ecosystem of career and post-secondary opportunity for Howard County students, we must provide a myriad of options for HCPSS graduates. First and foremost, the County must fully fund the school system to expand career-focused academics and programs such as the ARL. Bolster professional development opportunities are a critical component of school-to-career success in Howard County.

I plan to build upon my prior success by dramatically scaling up the Howard County Government Trade Apprenticeship Program and forge new partnerships with unions, Howard Community College, and local businesses in tech, healthcare, and green trades to create more registered apprenticeship slots. Along this framework, I hope to launch the county's first dedicated internship program, placing HCPSS and HCC students within county agencies, non-profits, and private partnership organizations to gain meaningful professional experience.

Finally, I am dedicated to ending the opportunity gaps in our education system, especially in finding scholarships and job opportunities for students. The County must direct the creation of a centralized digital hub in collaboration with HCPSS and our county's library system. This hub will consolidate information on scholarship, internship, apprenticeship, and career resource opportunities in a free and readily available format.