



GSSCC Questionnaire
Montgomery County Council Candidates

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Council District for Which You Are Seeking Election: At-Large

Number of Years Lived in that District: 18 years

Party Affiliation: Democratic Party

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held: Founder & owner of Streamline Management, a residential property management company that employs 14 people and is 15 years old

Please insert your answers after each question below, or answer using a separate document. Please return the completed questionnaire to jredicker@gsscc.org no later than close of business on Friday, March 4

1. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives and our economy in unprecedented ways. The County provided financial assistance to help businesses through these unprecedented times, but many businesses and employers have still not recovered.

- What are you prepared to do to get businesses and our economy back to a sense of normal?

Business won't be completely normal until the virus is done with us, even if we're done with the virus. The county government can continue to vaccinate, boost, test, and adjust mitigation as conditions fluctuate to protect people and keep things as open as possible. With the amount of knowledge, vaccines, and boosters now available, government-imposed mitigation measures should be used with great care so that the public knows if a restriction is being implemented, it is only because it is absolutely necessary.

- What will you do to support business should the COVID pandemic remain with us?

The County Council and County Executive should be nimble and flexible. When the pandemic hit, regulations were quickly altered to allow things like take-out alcohol sales and delivery. The county does need to have a sensible plan in place to support the school system if there are spikes in cases or variants emerge that are more transmissible or lethal or both that includes robust childcare options.

- What kind of financial support (grants and loans) will you support to help businesses and nonprofit organizations (i.e. commercial rent support, reimbursement for testing kits, grants to support continued telework)?

With the influx of federal funds, state budget surpluses, if those find their way back to Montgomery County in a meaningful way, I would support allocating as much money as possible for the businesses and nonprofits that truly need help to survive.

2. The Silver Spring Central Business District was envisioned to become a smart-growth, live, work, and play community. However, in the past 10-plus years, Silver Spring has evolved into a primarily residential neighborhood

(bedroom community), with virtually no commercial office development. At this point, the County seems to be focused on just the “live” and “play” aspects. But local retailers and restaurants are feeling the brunt of having fewer and fewer customers during office hours.

- What will you do to address this and help bring more employers and jobs back to Silver Spring?
- What will you do to revitalize our daytime economy in Silver Spring?

The job that I’m asking you to hire me for is to gather as much information as possible from experts, stakeholders, and members of the community, decide what the best public policy is, then operate both inside and outside of government to make that happens. On this and many things I would rely on the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce as a heavily weighted resource to know how to expand employment in Silver Spring. Here are some thoughts though:

Push to complete the Purple Line as quick as possible, which means reducing or eliminating constant change orders unless necessary,
Invest in the infrastructure that allows for growth such as transportation (roads, bike lanes, sidewalks, buses, etc), utilities, in particular water and sewer,
Facilitate the build out and leasing of Inventa Towers,
House the homeless population near the Georgia Avenue DC, Maryland border so 1) human beings are properly cared for, and 2) that’s not the first image people have of Silver Spring, and
Definitely address safety and security concerns.

3. The Planning Board’s Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan’s sole answer to reviving and expanding Silver Spring’s office market is to simply “improve the public realm (i.e., build more sidewalks, bikeways, parks, etc.). Please explain why you agree or disagree that this is an effective and appropriate strategy for returning economic prosperity to the downtown Silver Spring business district?

Government policies that foster an atmosphere of growth are much more than access and amenities. They include heavy infrastructure, safety and security, a desirable quality of life for the workforce, capacity for companies to expand in place, and incentives for firms to locate to downtown Silver Spring. It’s important that we do everything we can to locate companies near transit just as we want to focus residential housing near transit nodes.

4. In recent months, Silver Spring has experienced a dramatic increase in violent crime, which threatens our economy, our business owners, and our residents. The expansion of our “nighttime economy” has been accompanied by some unintended consequences. Two recent surveys show that the top concern of most residents is crime and safety.
 - Will you support bringing either a police substation or creating a new district police station in downtown Silver Spring? Why or why not?

The Montgomery County Police are the experts in patrolling and public safety. I would want to hear their detailed analysis of the impact of a bigger footprint and its impact on crime and balance that with would a greater police presence, and what the most effective use of funds would be.

- Would you support legislation that requires a set closing time for restaurants operating as bars and nightclubs as well as hookah bars (as is done in Prince George’s County and D.C.)? Why or why not?

From the perspective of a dad whose children go to a school (Sligo Creek Elementary) where there was a shooting less than a block away a few months ago (December 29), businesses should have the freedom to safely operate as they see fit until it impacts people’s safety and other business’s ability to be successful. Using liquor laws, sound ordinances, law enforcement, and any other tool available, I would support measures to keep the community safe.

5. GSSCC believes that a thriving business community brings prosperity for all of our citizens by increasing the number of good private sector jobs and expanding the tax base to support necessary public services.

- Please list all the initiatives/legislation you have supported/or would support to foster the growth of existing businesses and encourage new business creation.
- Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County.
- What is your plan for making Montgomery County more attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate (i.e. increased tax incentives, subsidies, streamlining the development approval process)?

We consistently discuss policies and ideas that operate within the margins instead of taking a step back to see if there are any gamechangers out there. I am confident that if we create an economic identity for the entire county that all 1.1 residents would be proud of, our own citizens and home-grown businesses would change the narrative of the county being unfriendly toward business to being our biggest cheerleaders. I suggest that this new education and marketing effort center around **Quad H**:

Hospitality – half of nation’s hospitality companies are already here, such as Marriott, Choice, and Host Hotels. Any secondary or tertiary company that works with the blue chips should be in the county.

Healthcare – focused around NIH, FDA, and Walter Reed, the level of innovation for medicines, therapeutics, vaccines, biotechnology, Montgomery County should be the Silicon Valley of the health industry

High Tech – home to the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the National Cybersecurity Center for Excellence, we’re a natural base for advanced technology and quantum computing companies to be in close proximity.

Hops – the thriving craft brewery industry can be marketed as an agrotourism destination for visitors to Washington, DC or those who want to spend a few days tasting our beers. There’s an opportunity for Montgomery County beer to be the equivalent for wine as Napa Valley. With the talent here, at least one of these breweries should go national, like Flying Dog in Frederick, or Dogfish Head in Delaware, which would unlock our Ag Reserve.

Once we have a solid brand identity we can point to, we’ll start to hear our own businesses and residents singing our praises, and reach the economic potential that we should be achieving.

6. Many of our small- and medium-sized business members feel that the policies adopted by County government reflect a lack of appreciation for the contributions they make to our community. Please describe your understanding of the difference between the challenges faced by large multinational companies and small locally owned/operated businesses. (For example, the County requires small business owners to pay a recordation tax when they use their personal home as collateral for a business loan that is more than \$3 million. Yet large business owners don’t have to personally guarantee anything, let alone put their personal property at risk for access to capital.) Please provide three specific examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand.

The only job I’ve ever had is founding and operating a small residential property management company that is 15 years old and has 14 employees. As a Councilmember, I would work with the Executive Branch to undertake a whole of government examination of all the regulations and administrative burdens we place on small businesses. For example, the county requires residential homes to have rental licenses and to renewing each of them takes our office manager an entire day to complete. Though the state requires corporate entities to pay \$300 annually to keep their LLC or partnership active, the county hasn’t seriously pushed for reducing that amount to make it more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions. There have to be thousands of requirements that the county forces businesses to undertake with no real tangible benefit that hasn’t been looked at in a comprehensive way with an eye toward solutions.

7. The Route 29 Corridor in Eastern Montgomery County has suffered from a lack of commercial and other development for many years. Few, if any new employment opportunities have been created to provide jobs that would address complaints about traffic congestion (that is taking employees to Silver Spring or D.C.) or bring economic prosperity to this area. What are you going to do to ensure economic development that brings new businesses and jobs to the East County/Rt. 29 Corridor?

Most importantly, if someone is investing in a major project, like Viva White Oak, I would be a vocal supporter of it. The East County was promised a top tier Bus Rapid Transit system with a dedicated lane, but what we got was a very nice bus that is limited by traffic. I'd focus on getting the dedicated lane for that line as well as the entire BRT network to get people moving. My understanding is that Edens is near an agreement to upgrade Burtonsville Crossing, which would spur growth too. Economic prosperity in a geographic region is tied to disposable income. I'd make sure housing gets built in the East County so businesses have customers.

8. The Chamber supports a balanced approach to transportation policies that takes into account the needs of our member businesses, their employees, their customers, and their vendors. That balance must accommodate those who use public transit, drive on our roads, travel by bicycle and on foot, and need sufficient parking options at their destination.
 - Please describe your approach to finding the right balance of transit, roads, parking, and other transportation options.
 - What is your proposal to balance this equation -roads, trains, buses, roads, parking garages? Need all to get people to work?
 - What will you do to address the needs and concerns of businesses that expect to be harmed financially during the continued construction of The Purple Line?

As a dynamic place, Silver Spring stands to benefit from an “all of the above” approach to transportation to make it a fully connected place to get to and move around once inside. To find the right balance, I'd seek out and gather all the data and information available to see what the best options are in terms of being realistic. For example, while we should be maximizing transit options, there are days where I have to leave work to pick up my kids from aftercare, get them to sports or Scouts, pick them up and get them home. That means I have to use a car, so our roads need to be efficient too.

We owe it do the businesses harmed by the Purple Line to make it right however we can. Since these are our businesses, the county should pitch in but since the project was mismanaged by the state, they should be responsible for writing a check, assisting with relocation, and whatever is needed to take care of our own friends and neighbors who have been harmed by something that is going to benefit us one day.

9. In 2019, the Council passed legislation to require an Economic Impact analysis to determine a proposed bill's potential positive or negative effects, if any, on the County's workforce, taxation policy, property values, incomes, operating costs to businesses and non-profits operating in the County, capital investment from the private sector, economic development, and the County's competitiveness. The Chamber believes that this effort has not always focused sufficiently on impacts to existing businesses and the economy as a whole.
 - Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners? Why or why not?
 - Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not?
 - Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the County Chamber of Commerce, and the individual area Chambers (rather than just the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not?

The job of a legislator is to analyze a piece of legislation, get as much input as possible, and use their judgement to decide if a law will benefit Montgomery County, and deserves passage, or won't move us forward, and should be defeated. The Economic Impact Statement (EIS) law sponsored by Councilmember Andrew Friedson went into effect a mere 4 days before the first COVID cases were diagnosed in Maryland. Like any innovation in its infancy, it can always be improved to work better. The EIS is not meant to replace public participation in the legislative process that includes outreach to business owners, Chambers of Commerce, the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, and any stakeholder. Due diligence by one analyst on a piece of legislation is not meant to supplant public input. In fact, if honored to represent the people of Montgomery County, I would be hesitant to rely solely on the analysis of the Office of

Legislative Oversight (OLO) and instead see it as one data point in a larger examination of how a law would impact the business ecosystem.

10. What is your vision for the future of greater Silver Spring and Montgomery County, and what is needed to accomplish this vision, over the next 5 years?

Silver Spring and Montgomery County should be a destination. A destination to grow a business. A destination to live. A destination to play. To do that we need to change that narrative that we are a land of “no” but instead a place that embraces continuous improvement, innovation, and is open to new thinking. Cultures are difficult to change and as we say in the business world, if you’re not growing, you’re dying.

That means safety and security, completion of existing transit projects such as the Purple Line and FLASH line with dedicated lanes, improvement of our public schools, continuing to streamline development, permitting, and inspection processes, and generally be a place that welcomes what the future will be.