



GSSCC Questionnaire
Montgomery County Executive Candidates

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Number of Years Lived in Montgomery County: 18

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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. Please speak to relevant experience that makes you qualified to be the County Executive. For example:
 - What specific executive experience do you have?
 - What non-governmental professional executive experience do you have?
 - What experience do you have in dealing with government requirements necessary to run a business profitably?
 - What experience do you have in trying to obtain from the County or the State, a permit or license related to operating a business?

After college, I came to Washington, founded and led a nonprofit called the 2030 Center to advocate for social security from a youth perspective. I helped form and lead a coalition to defeat President Bush's attempt to privatize Social Security. I then held senior leadership roles at Rock the Vote, the 2008 Obama campaign, and AARP, before being elected to the County Council in 2010 as an At Large member and reelected in 2014 and 2018.

I have lived in the Silver Spring area since moving here with my wife Angela in 2004.

I have helped many businesses deal with permit and license issues, along with many other constituent concerns over my time in the Council.

2. 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?
 - What will you do to support business should the COVID pandemic remain with us?
 - 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)?

I wholeheartedly agree that the past two years have been incredibly difficult for small businesses across the County. I have been proud to help coordinate the ongoing financial assistance the County has provided to small businesses and support continuing assistance as long as the pandemic is keeping businesses from getting back on their feet. I have learned to never say never, but while the emergency measures taken in the height of the pandemic were justified, now that the public has the awareness and the tools - such as vaccinations and high-quality masks -

to manage their own risk, even as cases rise and fall in the future we will not have to impose restrictions on private businesses.

I think the most important thing we can do to get back to normal is accept that COVID is here to stay and we must start thinking about it like the weather. When it's not raining we don't need our umbrellas, but don't throw them away. Chances are, we will need them again - that goes for boosters and masks.

3. 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?

While it is certainly true that Silver Spring would benefit from more office development, there does remain a substantial commercial base downtown that we should be proud of. The County has focused heavily on the office component but the market has primarily attracted housing and retail as you suggest. Obviously, COVID has greatly exacerbated this problem as it has emptied offices across the world. As both employers and employees continue exploring the long term viability of work-from-home and hybrid arrangements, uncertainty will remain in the office market. County government has limited tools to overcome these market forces. My medium term vision is to use the arrival of the Purple Line and development of 29 BRT to position Silver Spring as a wonderful, diverse, urban destination for office and biotech companies to locate that sits at the center of the compass rose with easy access to other important clusters in all directions - the University of Maryland and the growing tech cluster around College Park to the East, Bethesda and NIH to the West, White Oak and the FDA to the North, and DC to the South. We can help cement this image by creating a Purple Line Innovation District.

4. 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?

My reading of the proposed Silver Spring Downtown Plan is more expansive than simply improving the public realm, but I do agree that is an important goal. The Plan also adds considerable flexibility to the zoning in Silver Spring's commercial core- both by providing more height and density where needed to make development work and by being more open to a wider variety of uses, making it easier to develop biotech and other commercial spaces. As the Council reviews the plan, I intend to ensure that the additional flexibility, and costs the Planning Board proposes, are well balanced to provide maximum incentive for commercial development. These are important updates. Like all Master Plans, the Silver Spring Plan can only allow development, it cannot require it, so it cannot be a full solution to addressing Silver Spring's economy.

5. 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?
 - 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?

Overall I am proud of the nighttime economy in Silver Spring, but I agree that the rising violent crime is a very serious problem. I want to extend praise to Councilmember Jawando, who arranged a meeting between many of the nighttime business owners and County officials, which led to the private sector voluntarily investing in bringing more off-duty police to Silver Spring. Since that change, I have noticed a decrease in incidents. While I think we need more officers at key times in downtown Silver Spring, a substation doesn't really accomplish that goal. If you visit the 3D station you'll see that officers don't work from the station because they are out on their beats.

I am open to exploring a closing time for restaurants and hookah bars, but would like to hear more directly from the affected businesses before putting such a policy in place.

6. 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)?

Montgomery County businesses used to create a lot of the region's jobs. But for several decades, trends have been shifting. Now almost all the region's job growth is in NoVA and to a lesser extent DC.

That's a problem for us. Strong communities and strong families are built on a foundation of growing economic opportunity.

We can build our own momentum and restart our job engine.

I am running for County Executive to take bold action to make Montgomery competitive again — as I have been doing at the Council. I am going to SAY YES to the changes we need to strengthen our economic future.

Fortunately, we have momentum in life sciences and I believe we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to chart a new course – but we need executive leadership that gets it.

As County Executive, these will be my 7 keys for making us more competitive:

- **Support abundant housing for the workforce. Young workers — our kids and grandkids! — need to be able to live here. If workers can't find housing, it is harder for companies to grow here. Empty nesters need great housing, too, particularly when they want to downsize. We are a housing shortage community. We must make housing more abundant.**
- **Expand transportation for reliable commerce and commutes. Upcounty, East County and inside the Beltway. RideOn, Metro, the Purple Line, the Corridor Cities Transitway, the American Legion Bridge and 270 — we need to keep improving our capacity. At the same time, we have to prioritize investments in safe, walkable infrastructure and transit so that walking and biking are real options — a cause I have championed for years at the Council.**
- **All along the Red Line, create walkable urban areas with great restaurants and culture. Quality of life for the workforce and empty nesters alike will be key to our competitiveness. We need to keep boosting the urban nodes on both sides of the Red Line. Not just White Flint — we need to push hard in Grosvenor, Forest Glen, Silver Spring, Bethesda, North Bethesda, Shady Grove, Glenmont, Wheaton, Twinbrook, you name it. We need to remake old shopping centers and parking lots into dynamic destinations. That takes thinking differently about policies that are holding back revitalization in those areas.**
- **Boost talent pipelines for growth and equity. We must prioritize STEM investments in MCPS, Montgomery College, and The Universities at Shady Grove (USG). Not only to power our companies, but to open up pathways for all kids here to have a better future — which is the whole point of economic growth. USG can provide 7,000 STEM degrees annually with more state support, and we can get kids on that pathway from every neighborhood in Montgomery County! And that's just the beginning if we think big about Higher Ed here.**
- **Create the Purple Line Innovation Corridor, leveraging the University of Maryland, the largest computer science program in the US, and its surging growth in quantum computing. All along the**

corridor through Silver Spring and Bethesda, build affordable housing, walkability, bikeability, urban parks and other quality amenities to create a world class destination for workers, small business and innovation economy companies.

- **Build on our Federal powerhouses, the NIH, NIST, FDA, NOAA. Boston has Harvard and MIT; we have NIH. We can do this! A great example of my thinking here is the potential new Federal Pandemic Center, an initiative that is gaining steam thanks in part to funding that I proposed and the Council and County Executive supported. The East County has tremendous potential with the FDA. Let's make it happen.**
- **Provide extra care for small businesses. Retail and restaurants, breweries, personal services, professional services — these are often family owned businesses that create many if not most of our jobs. We can help our small business entrepreneurs with Main Street programs providing technical assistance, and we can do a lot more to help Black, Brown, Asian and Women owned businesses. A stronger job engine with high paying jobs will bring success to small business owners, too. And we need County permits and processes that are focused on getting to Yes, not just saying No.**

I'll conclude on this note. You can't attract tech companies like Apple or Microsoft to locate here while you oppose 5G. You can't attract millennial workers while you dismiss their housing needs. You can't grow the East County while you talk down its prospects. You can't realize the Purple Line's full potential by single tracking it. You can't solve a housing shortage by opposing new housing.

You get the picture. Achieving this goal will require electing new leadership!

7. 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.
 1. **I will make improvements to our permitting processes that Marc Elrich has failed to make. As a candidate, Elrich said that he would make this County "the best" place to do business in the region; but then after he was elected he backpedaled and said he would make it "not the worst." In reality he has not done much of anything. I will make real changes and provide leadership that can improve the culture of the organizations involved, particularly DPS.**
 2. **I will provide grant funds to small businesses in our business districts like downtown Silver Spring to ensure they thrive.**
 3. **I will build on the resources that I am already working to provide for Black-owned businesses in Montgomery County and particularly Silver Spring, by providing incubator programming, assistance with procurement so businesses can sell or provide services to large companies as well as different levels of government, and I will launch a CDFI focused on providing grants and loans to Black owned businesses.**
8. 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?

I have devoted much of my time on the Council to trying to fix a historic mistake: cutting off East County from jobs, transit and amenities. I have been a staunch supporter of Viva White Oak, along with encouraging other development opportunities along the 29 Corridor. I support fixing Flash on 29 with true dedicated lanes to ensure that we have *rapid* BRT in the corridor. I supported changes in the Growth Policy and Master Plans that allow new

commercial growth and have worked to ensure that our County's only industrial-scale data center on 29 has what it needs to continue operation in the County. The 29 corridor can and should be a major new jobs center for Montgomery County.

9. 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?

Here's my transportation plan:

- **Get the Purple Line done right!** We can't afford to single track the purple line. Getting it right means more service, more trains, and lower commute times—and more economic growth along a Purple Line corridor.
- **Build transit for the UpCounty**—Corridor Cities Transitway, BRT on 355
- **Build transit for the East County**—doing Route 29 BRT right
- **Support plans to expand the American Legion Bridge and 270** (not the Beltway towards Silver Spring), but push for reversible lanes north of 370
- **Devote future 270 toll revenue to transit alternatives.** These revenues could bring generational change to our county, and we need to make sure that they're going towards projects that will keep us green and keep us moving.
- **Make walking safer** by investing more in sidewalks and crosswalks. This has already been a major priority for me and I've passed [legislation](#) to allow lower speed limits on neighborhood streets to promote pedestrian safety, made a \$1.5m investment in pedestrian and bicycle safety and infrastructure, and passed legislation to keep our sidewalks clear during snow storms.
- **Build protected bike lane networks** in Silver Spring, Bethesda, Wheaton, Germantown and other urban centers
- **Push the state to make MARC a real commuter rail system**, interoperating with VRE
- **Plan BRT to Tysons** and assess rail connections to Tysons
- **Start moving on extending the Red Line** from Shady Grove to Germantown
- **Expand free bus service and maintain free bus service** for kids, seniors, and people with disabilities

I have joined with colleagues in successfully advocating for state assistance for businesses impacted by Purple Line construction, and believe the state should continue to provide financial assistance as long as construction is disrupting business in Silver Spring.

10. 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?

I was proud to support this legislation and believe it is critical to hear from the business community before making policy that will affect them. Now that we have some experience with this process, I believe one way to allow more resources for deeper analysis - such as interviews with business owners and deeper research and data collection - would be to remove the requirement to do impact statements for bills that have de minimus impact on businesses and non-profits in the County. It would be better to have more thorough impact statements on the bills that really matter. The Council does have a robust public input process and the County and local Chambers have many avenues to share their views with policymakers - which thankfully, they do routinely.

11. 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?

As we recover from this brutal pandemic, it's more important than ever that we have a plan to build an economy that works for all of us.

I understand that if we want to build a strong economy and maintain our vibrant progressive community, we need to start saying *yes*. *Yes* to reforms to promote housing affordability all. *Yes* to better educational outcomes for all, not the few. *Yes* to transportation investments that keep us moving. *Yes* to action that tackles our climate crisis head on. *Yes* to reforms to promote public safety for all.

And to get all that done, we need change in our county leadership. Our current County Executive has a track record of saying *no* — maintaining the status quo rather than delivering real progress. That's why for so many of us, our economy is lagging behind other counties in the region, it is tough to find housing that is affordable, so many of our homes and offices are not powered by clean energy.

As your next County Executive, will make Montgomery County work for us all.