



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

December 5, 2024

The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Elrich,

The East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB) recommendations for the County's FY26 operating budget are provided below. Our input is inclusive of those from the larger community.

Community Health Services:

- The County's Community Health Needs Assessment alerted us to the disparity of healthcare services to those most in need. *Pediatric dental services* are one of those services. It is in high demand in the County and prominently so in East County. Health Services program directors of non-profit organizations have also stated this need is a high priority. We urge funding for this service in East County.
- We also recommend expansion of the DHHS Mobile Health Clinic services to East County's vulnerable, high risk and underserved populations and neighborhoods. This expansion needs to be done in close collaboration with the East County Consolidated Food Hub and the East County Regional Services Office.

Housing:

- East County has its share of affordable and subsidized housing, thus going forward we emphasize the equitable distribution of such units throughout Montgomery County to mitigate the uneven distribution of affordable housing in East County. Efforts are needed to ensure that, as development occurs, the existing percentage of market-rate affordable housing is retained, as well as a greater percentage of new affordable housing having more bedrooms to accommodate families.
- Rents need to be stabilized so that on one hand the rent increases largely track the rate of inflation, while on the other hand increased rents provide the needed revenue stream to the property owner. County staff is needed to administer such a program.
- Funding is needed to support code inspections of rental units to ensure they are maintained and that health and safety issues are addressed. Funding for staff is also needed to ensure abandoned housing is updated and occupied.
- There should be funds to address the needs of the homeless as well as the needs of the communities where they are found.

- As various programs are implemented to house more households in the same building or property, funds are needed to identify and provide related infrastructure, including stormwater management, transportation and parking, police and fire protection, and other public services.

Economic Development:

- Funding should be provided for a proof-of-concept "East County Civic, Business, and Community Advocacy Coalition", like a chamber-of-community or civic-federation. This organization would incorporate business, citizen, health services, faith-based communities, and other grassroots community groups to support economic growth in East County.
- Funding is needed for the WSSC Water and Sewer upgrade/expansion in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan Area to accommodate development in the area.
- We are requesting the feasibility of assessing and implementing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) models as effective innovative tools to attract investment and support the project's financial viability. This assessment should consider different structures, their potential impact on the local tax base, and their ability to attract private sector investment, especially as it pertains to the support and successful development of Viva White Oak in East County.
- Increased funding for the expansion of small business center assistance programs and services in East County to promote business development in the region.

Youth Programs:

- Programs that address both youth violence and support for healthy alternatives need to be well-funded. An integrated approach that includes policing, recreational and athletic programs, families and schools is needed. ECCAB requests that funding be provided to support a holistic approach for coordination between programs that address the needs of our youth as well as needed resources.
- Funding is needed for a comprehensive summer youth employment/paid job-related training for eligible low-income youth.
- Funding is needed for transportation to promote full access to community recreation programs and activities for youth and adults in underserved neighborhoods.
- Childcare Subsidies Program - There is an ongoing need to support working families by providing subsidies for childcare in our county, and especially in East County. If our families are to thrive, we request that funding for this program be expanded and made accessible to the most-needy families.

Transportation:

- Funding for an alternatives study of the Randolph Road BRT to ensure integration with the US29 BRT, New Hampshire BRT, and local bus. This route should consider service to the seven activity hubs (per Thrive) in East County that would contain high demand transit to user locations including, FDA, White Oak Medical Center, Montgomery College (education center and planned campus), Viva White Oak, and high-density housing buildings near US29. This study needs to consider using the US29 Orange Corridor to connect high-demand, transit-user locations, while retaining the US29 Blue Corridor as the rapid north/south route from Columbia to the Silver Spring Metro Station.
- Fund the reimaged Ride-On Service changes and expansion.
- Fund DOT to support developer design and implementation of Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP) projects. That funding should also support designs for needed complementary projects not in the LATIP.

Newcomer and Immigrants Support:

- Funding is needed to assist newcomers and immigrants in linking them to transportation, food security, legal aid, adequate and safe housing, language instruction, job training and placement,

and finally for health and human services (both physical and mental). This need is urgent as evidenced by the ongoing situations, especially at the Enclave apartments in White Oak, and also at other locations in East County.

Public Safety:

- Ensure sufficient and appropriate staffing for 3D and 4D precincts to reflect the specific and growing safety needs of East County. This would include additional police officers to engage directly with our diverse community.
- Increase funding for stationary and portable police cameras at shopping centers to prevent ongoing crime at retail and shopping centers in East County.
- Fund traffic calming and safety improvements at hot spots along roadways that have had multiple fatal and near-fatal accidents.
- Improve street lighting around public spaces and along county roads in East County to deter crime and provide for safety (e.g., Stewart Lane, Lockwood Drive, Briggs Chaney Road, Outlet Drive, etc.)
- Fund continued training on racial and social justice impact awareness for Public Safety officers.
- Provide funding for an expansion of the drone program in East County

Community Development:


- Fund commercial/shopping centers façade-improvement projects throughout East County. Additional funds may be needed to support agreements for three buildings in the Hillandale Shopping Center.

Education

- Fund Montgomery College to implement as well as continue technology and life science work skills training programs at their East County Education Training Center.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our recommendations and continuous support in service to Eastern Montgomery County.

Sincerely,



Peter Myo Khin
Chair, East County Citizens Advisory Board

Cc: Andrew Friedson, County Council President
D5 County Council Member Kristin Mink
D7 County Council Member Dawn Luedtke
Jewru Bandeh, Director, ECRSC
Jenny Bryant, OMB Director