

Montgomery County 2026 Candidate Questionnaire



Personal Information:

Name

Drew Morrison

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2026 Election?

County Council District 1

Where Can Voters Learn More About Your Positions Or Contact Your Campaign?

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Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited. There are no word limits but please try to be consise.

(pictured above: One Acre Farm)

Please share 3 sentences that help us to know you better:

I grew up in Bethesda, worked at the County Council for former District 1 Councilmember Roger Berliner, have worked in public policy and transportation and seen Montgomery County Government do big things and make a real difference for people. Serving in Governor Moore's Department of Transportation, I've had to take on crises like the Key Bridge collapse and have led teams focused on the environment, workforce development, safety, and statewide transit needs. Montgomery County faces unprecedented challenges to continue to be the successful, thriving community that we love, and I bring the right mix of experience and vision to help us address the current challenges and set us on a path for a stronger future.

When we recently surveyed residents throughout the County, they shared that their top priority was a lack of government transparency - How can Montgomery County ensure transparency in their legislative and land use decision making? How would you grade current public engagement? Do you support re-establishing the Office of the People's Counsel?

I understand the importance of true transparency, getting all stakeholders involved early, and what it

means to really base decisions on what residents are saying. I have been responsible for building consensus among stakeholders to resolve differences, break barriers, and help communities move forward on big, regional projects throughout the DC area. A client of mine used to remark, "We bring Drew to all the bad meetings," because I was expert at bringing diverse stakeholders together to work through the hard questions and forge common ground. That requires a specific combination of experience, knowledge, and a desire to do what's best for the community that I would bring to the Council.

I think that there is more work to do to meet residents where they are when engaging the public on planning issues. I will hold regulatory agencies like the Planning Department accountable for, and work with you and others to ensure you are part of every legislative, zoning, or budget process before us. I support creating more and appropriate options to get residents accurate and timely information on how land use proposals work and what the law says as to what regulatory reviewers must consider. I think it is particularly important that there be more information and tools available to residents around both the Board of Appeals and specific planning decisions that do not go before the Council.

Do you believe that the way that local government branches (executive, legislative and planning), and state entities currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take to bring better collaboration?

Yes and in my role as a Senior Advisor at the Maryland Department of Transportation who has worked on key legislative priorities for Governor Moore, I have seen other examples of how to structure government and understand the points where we can improve communication and interaction between the Executive and Council.

Number one: I will be a tireless advocate to the next County Executive for District 1 priorities - in particular long-stalled but critically needed infrastructure projects such as sidewalks, bike infrastructure, and intersection improvements to improve traffic safety for all road users.

I will work with residents, the Executive, and my Council colleagues and colleagues in the State legislature to identify the one or two "big" priorities we should get together to pursue each State legislative session. And I will work to make sure that we do not have future situations where County state legislators and Councilmembers are not aligned on the Agricultural Reserve and its future.



Source water protection is a priority for County residents. Rural residents are served by wells drawn from a federally designated Sole Source Aquifer. What specific actions will you take to protect groundwater quality and ensure a sustainable supply of drinking water for residents, farms and businesses? And what do you propose with regard to protecting the Potomac River, a drinking water supply for more than 5 Million people in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Given increasing drought conditions, growing data center water consumption, and projections that the Potomac River may not meet future demand, how will you plan for a water-constrained future? What policies or investments would you prioritize during your term?

I support zoning and building policies that control and restrict water use from the Sole Source Aquifer and from the Potomac. I have seen how this plays out on a project-by-project basis from my time as a legislative aide at the Council, and will know to include Countryside Alliance and residents who rely on the Aquifer early and often when or if further proposals come up.

What role can the Ag Reserve play in helping our County address Climate Change? Do you have plans to bolster the county's funds to address climate change, i.e. expanded grant making, review of energy tax structure for high energy consumers such as data centers?

The Agricultural Reserve's natural open space and forests play a critical role in preserving the type of land that reduces carbon and precludes the generation of further carbon emissions. I oppose any different or special tax incentives for big-energy users such as data centers and would require any such user generate its own clean energy.



Do you support the long planned closure of the trash incinerator in Dickerson? Please provide some details as to why or why not. (pictured above: Shepherd's hey Farm)

I support the closure of the incinerator and transition to curbside food waste composting and other, cutting edge waste management strategies to reduce our waste stream. I am disappointed that the County Executive and his team have been slow to implement solutions here, which have resulted in major maintenance costs that residents have been forced to pay through their solid waste charges that could have been avoided with more effective planning. I will bring my experience working on major, complicated infrastructure projects to help advance this transition effectively alongside the rest of the Council and the next County Executive.

Should Montgomery County host hyperscale Data Centers? If so, what zoning standards and regulations should be established? Have we gathered all the necessary information to make an informed decision at this time?

I believe we should focus our economic development efforts in industries where we are already strong and better suited for from a land use and affordability perspective - namely, biohealth innovation. There are three core considerations to the data center issue: addressing their potential direct impact, considering the opportunity cost of data centers over other economic development strategies, and taking action to address the statewide and regional impacts of data centers on utility prices.

When it comes to their direct impact, we must establish clear rules that align with our values. We must create a specific land use category for data centers, restrict them so they do not intrude on residential areas, require that they generate their own 100% clean energy, and address water use and noise issues.

Further, we should consider that many of the industrial areas where data centers could locate are also viable sites for health manufacturing facilities. Our biotech industry is moving toward health manufacturing, bringing together the research and the production, and our peers in Virginia and North Carolina are eating our lunch. I want us to invest in health manufacturing rather than data centers.

Even without hyperscale data centers here, our utility prices are set at the regional level, with demand far outpacing supply. I will build statewide coalitions to create the clean energy we need to reduce ever-rising utility bills.



Forests are a key tool for climate protection and protecting public health. How would forest protection and control of non-native plant species factor into your administration’s goals? (Picture above - Wib Middleton)

I support a strong Forest Conservation Law that, if tree removal is allowed, requires one-for-one replacement on-site or as close to site as possible. I support outreach and education to the public on the importance of purchasing and planting native plant species over non-native, and working with you and others to spread that message.

Where do you stand on synthetic turf playing fields for school and community use?

When I worked at the Council, a principal concern with artificial turf was the issue of crumb rubber in-fill. We worked to identify alternatives and to require organic in-fill for all turf fields. As the demands on our fields continue to rise, artificial turf will continue to be identified as an option because of the increased play and recreation time it allows. I will work to make sure that we continue to review fiscal, environmental, and health issues as we invest in our fields - and ways to make more natural grass fields workable for the community.



Challenges to current and future farmers are increasing. The average age of County producers is 59. The cost of leasing farm acreage (60% of farms are leasing) is skyrocketing while a diverse new crop of farmers struggle to afford farmland. Have you got any plans for how the County can help keep the industry healthy and promote expansion– with an understanding that resilience depends on local food and fiber production? (Pictured above: Afrithrive Farm)

We have to balance new potential revenue streams against uses that may sound attractive on the surface but don’t actually relate to farming or agriculture in any real way. This has continued to be a pressure point on the Agricultural Reserve and one that - besides having potential land use impacts - threatens to increase the cost of land here even more.

I support funding for a small farm incubator at the Montgomery County Agricultural History Farm Park in collaboration with you, the small farmers you work with, and our partners in the food resiliency space. Pivotal to the success of this incubator is that “graduates” have a true opportunity and pathway to purchase and lease land at an affordable price, and I will support every tool we have as a County to enable that transition.