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Address: Takoma Park (home), Silver Spring (office)  
What office are you seeking?: Montgomery County Executive  
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: [www.marcelrich.org](http://www.marcelrich.org)

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**2 Someone new to Montgomery County may ask, "What's the Ag Reserve and why is it important?" What's your answer?**

The Ag Reserve is a nationally recognized model for preserving farmland close to a metropolitan center - it is 93,000+ acres with 900+ farms and horticultural businesses. It is critical for cleaning the air and water in the region, is a brake on suburban sprawl, provides green spaces distinct from more crowded concrete covered urban spaces, and helps mitigate the heat island effect created by urban spaces. It is also an economic engine, providing employment to over 10,000 people and almost \$300 million in economic activity. Significantly, over 40% of farmers say that their farms are their primary source of income, much more than for farming in general in this country. That demonstrates the economic viability of our farms, and indicates that investments in and support for agriculture are likely to further increase the success of farming in the county. An economically healthy farming sector is a strong disincentive to weakening our policies that focus on agricultural preservation.

**3 What are your priorities regarding stewardship of the County's natural resources (water, forests, open spaces) and parkland?**

I do not know how you would do responsible stewardship without prioritizing all of these. I would probably put water and forests first because of the critical environmental role they play. We need policies that protect the quality and quantity of our water, making sure we mitigate development impacts and provide adequate buffers from streams. I am opposed to granting waivers for quantity and quality when approving any development and our policies should maximize water retention and minimize imperviousness to prevent rapid run-off so water is better able to percolate down into our aquifers.

Because trees play a critical role in carbon sequestration, I would build on my earlier work and try again to pass a stronger tree protection bill that focuses on tree-saving first. Our open spaces and parklands also play a varied and important environmental role and I have consistently been their advocate on the County Council. I would continue to work to preserve them as County Executive.

**4 What is your vision for the future of the County's Agricultural Reserve? Briefly, how would you achieve that vision?**

My vision is the continued preservation of the reserve and a strengthening of farming. I will explore ways to accelerate the termination of building lots, will not allow encroachment of housing, and will make sure that the land is used for agricultural purposes and farm-related activities. If farmers are not economically viable then we will lose the farms - which would jeopardize the Ag Reserve - so I want to make sure that farmers can succeed at making farming their principle source of income. I would also aggressively try to build links between farms and restaurants and grocers. Promoting table crops and sales to restaurants where there is an increasing interest in local food would be a focus for me. I would explore including students, perhaps having them help with planting and harvesting, as an educational and

outreach effort.

We also have to maintain a focus on water availability because the depletion of water resources can jeopardize both farming and production activities.

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**5 Can you identify some of the top challenges to the Reserve's local agriculture and what actions you would take, if elected, to address them?**

I have talked to farmers about crop choices and they behave in an economically rational way - they grow what they can sell with certainty. The links between farmers and potential outlets for local produce just do not magically occur, so I would work to develop marketing strategies to help link buyers to growers. I would also work with the school system to develop a conscious buy local policy through contracting with our local farmers. Other places are making these connections and we should be, too.

I feel we have been primarily reactive and think we need to be a lot more conscious and deliberate in providing proactive assistance to our farmers. I would sit down with the farm community and talk with them about what they see as opportunities and how the county could help them take advantage of these opportunities.

Once we are into drought conditions, water management will be very difficult, so we also need to proactively work to protect our water sources.

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**6 What more can be done to support our local farm businesses and rural communities?**

Farmers need opportunities to access markets, diversify their crops, and process crops. We need to work with communities to protect the sole source aquifer, partly through education about best practices for maintaining septic systems. And our land-use policies, farming practices, and stewardship of forests and open space all play a role in protecting the county's water supply.

We also need to respect the integrity of the rural and rustic road network and ensure that existing regulations to protect the Ag Reserve are enforced. As County Executive, I would work with farmers and other residents to plan for ongoing preservation and success of the Ag Reserve.

I have worked hard over the years to both discuss the importance of the Ag Reserve with downcounty residents and assure them that protection of the Ag Reserve doesn't negatively impact their neighborhoods.

I have tried to be a champion of all of our communities and to show that quality of life does not need be sacrificed.

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**7 How should our County manage its solid waste? What role should incineration, composting and recycling play?**

I am committed to a real zero waste policy that does not renew the contract for the incinerator when it comes up in April of 2021. Incinerators emit more CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of electricity produced than coal plants. I fought against the creation of the incinerator when it was built - it did not belong in the Ag Reserve (or anywhere) then and it does not belong there now. There are better ways to reduce and manage our trash. The county is moving forward with a food composting strategic plan that will be important but is not sufficient. A zero waste strategy goes well beyond composting (and composting must include multiple smaller sites). Making products from recycled materials rather than new ones can cut energy use by as much as 95%, and recycling programs support 6 to 10 times as many jobs as disposal efforts. While our recycling programs are very good, we must do more to remove all recyclables from the waste stream as well as reduce the amount of trash we generate.

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- 8 **How can we expand the role the County's schools play in the support of a healthy local food system and the success of local agriculture? Do you support a rural schools' policy that provides equity for Reserve cluster schools acknowledging the unique nature of schools in region set aside for farmland and open space preservation?**

As I mentioned in my response to question 5, I would work with the school system to develop a conscious buy local policy (Montgomery County local). Schools should be able to put out what products they want in what quantities they want and when they need them, and we should work with MCPS to contract with our local farmers. Other places are doing this and we should join them.

The Ag Reserve has been consciously developed as the least dense area of the county and school policies need to reflect that. Schools should get equitable treatment and access to resources because the development pattern here was meant to serve a county purpose; it is unfair to penalize rural schools because they serve a less dense area. I would actively advocate for MCPS to acknowledge that when making policy for the Reserve cluster schools.

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- 9 **Currently the County is exploring how best to support a strong agricultural economy through agritourism and new farming enterprises such as on farm breweries and wineries. What are your thoughts about how best to advance on farm activities within the context of the master plan?**

Locally produced high-value crops and products derived from those crops can help preserve the Ag Reserve by disincentivizing the conversion of land to rooftops. A wine industry based on local grapes could strengthen the Ag Reserve and help attract and retain more young farmers. Grapes typically use the worst land but the crop value is very high, and Maryland state law supports a guaranteed market for grapes. A crush pad facility - one that is carefully planned and scaled and avoids unintended consequences to the community - could allow our farmers to enter wine production without facing the high cost of each farm building their own processing facility.

Whatever we do has to be balanced against the impacts on traffic and water, which have to be proactively managed. That is why I support agro-tourism that builds on underlying farming activity. I do not want the need for processing to turn the Ag Reserve into the home of giant processing facilities serving more than just local farms.

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- 10 **What are your regional transportation priorities? Do you support M83 and an additional Potomac bridge and outer beltway through the Reserve or adjacent rural zones?**

I oppose M83, another Potomac bridge, and an outer beltway (anywhere). I am the ONLY candidate to have ALWAYS opposed and been active in the fights against such projects, including the Intercounty Connector (ICC).

I serve on the Council of Governments Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and worked successfully for a more balanced approach to transportation. TPB recommendations support bus rapid transit (BRT) expansion and policies to discourage single-occupancy vehicles and get more people into transit. I have advocated for these changes for ten years because they are the most cost-effective policies - and the most effective policies, period.

In terms of specific projects, I support using the highly directional nature of traffic in the county - while saving a lot of money and minimizing environmental impacts - by adding two reversible lanes, including BRT lanes, to I-270 and to 355 and building the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT). I also support adding a third track to MARC.