



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Joshua Dowling

Personal Information:

Name Joshua Dowling

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? 14th District, Maryland House of Delegates

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

Check out JDforMD.com to learn more about me, my issues and my campaign. Feel free to contact me at josh@joshadowling.org or 240-234-9123 or follow along on Twitter or Instagram @JDforMD

Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited.

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 Montgomery County's wide-open green spaces, rolling hills and gentle streams. It's our summertime stalks of corn and sprouting crops, fall pumpkins and squash, and our year-round cows, chickens, goats and llamas. For me, growing up in the Ag Reserve meant growing up with an appreciation and commitment to nature, plants and animals. It meant my first job, working on a farm to help grow beautiful flowers and plants for people to enjoy throughout Maryland, DC and Virginia.

The Ag Reserve is Montgomery County's 50 year plan for maintaining and protecting agriculture and open-spaces throughout the county. The result has been preserving our open spaces, our streams and our agriculture, while simultaneously protecting our farmers. It allows all of our county residents the ability to enjoy and learn about nature and agriculture regardless of where we live, fostering a deep appreciation for our natural world. The AG reserve is also critically important as an economic driver, helping farmers contribute millions of dollars to our economy each year while conserving our beautiful countryside.

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

My vision for our Agriculture Reserve is to both maintain and strengthen our agricultural reserve and natural spaces while increasing access to the Ag reserve for all county residents, particularly our young children and learners. This means continuing to support our existing farms and farmers but also ensuring the financial viability of our farming industry. We can do this by ensuring that our farmers have guaranteed markets for produce and products so that they can make investments without fear of financial ruin. By developing partnerships between schools and other community organizations, we can develop guaranteed sources of revenue for our farms while also ensuring that our students and community members have sources of fresh, nutritious food grown right here in Montgomery County. As an added bonus, these partnerships can and should lead to field trips and other engagement between our youth and our agriculture community.

I support increasing access to the Ag reserve by boosting funding to public transportation, making areas like Damascus, Poolesville, Brookeville and Sunshine more accessible to all Montgomery County residents. I support encouraging the creation of similar reserves in counties throughout the state, and the funding of school activities and trips for students K-12 throughout Maryland to visit

Montgomery County's farms and natural areas. We have the potential to both increase economic opportunity for these areas while helping to foster a love of our natural environment and resources.

We all deserve clean skies, healthy food, and a green, livable county.

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

At the state level, I would like to change the law to better protect our natural resources. I support the creation of independent state and local level offices of Environmental Justice and Advocacy which would consolidate existing agencies and services, saving taxpayer money while simultaneously creating a one-stop shop for the stewardship, preservation and protection of our natural resources throughout Montgomery County and Maryland. This independent office would advocate on behalf of both residents and our environment and would evaluate legislation and proposals for their proposed environmental impact. Further, I support amending the Forest Conservation Act to strengthen protections of Maryland's existing forests, and to require a greater than 1-to-1 replacement rate for trees removed for development. Finally, I support adding an environmental science/stewardship requirement to our states' public schools: every student should graduate with the knowledge of how to protect and appreciate our natural environment.

What role will you play with regard to ensure that we safeguard our drinking water supply both surface and groundwater?

Throughout Maryland, we must refurbish and reconstruct aging sewage systems to prevent polluted water from leaking into our rivers, streams and water sources; I will support legislation to that effect. I will also push for legislation that requires groundcover, rain gardens and rainscaping on public lands while incentivizing such moves in private spaces. I will seek to dramatically limit the amount of single-use plastics in Maryland to help remove microplastics in our drinking water. Finally, I will seek to rapidly phase out waste-to-energy power facilities and lessen our reliance on landfills, both of which pollute our air and poison the groundwater in Montgomery County.

What are your top priorities to help the County address climate change? What role will the Ag Reserve play?

My top priorities to help Montgomery County and Maryland address climate change are to prevent further loss of green spaces and forest, reduce and eliminate dirty energy (including waste-to-energy) within the next five years, and dramatically reduce the amount of trash that is not compostable or recyclable. Montgomery County is in a prime position to be a global leader for combating the climate crisis. We can continue to protect our open spaces, like the Ag Reserve, by making sure our farms stay open, profitable and accessible to all. We must resist the urge to chip away at rural spaces in favor of urban sprawl and ensure that Montgomery County continues to practice smart, sustainable growth. The Ag Reserve can play a major role here by educating county residents on the importance of environmental protection while simultaneously limiting our carbon footprint. The state and county should further incentivize switching to clean and green energy for our farms, private businesses and homes through direct subsidies and payments.

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

I support increasing access to the Ag Reserve by increasing funding to public transportation, potentially making areas like Damascus, Poolesville, Brookeville and Sunshine more accessible for all Montgomery County residents on the weekends during Spring, Summer and Fall. I support the funding of school activities and trips for students K-12 throughout Maryland to visit Montgomery County's farms and natural areas. As a teacher, I support the creation of partnerships between farms, rural communities and public schools to help foster a love of our rural spaces and farms throughout Montgomery County. I support the creation of programs that would enhance Maryland and Montgomery County's role in purchasing farm goods and buying local goods to help feed Maryland's public school students while simultaneously supporting and showcasing our local businesses.

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 strongly support expanding and increasing accessibility for public transportation. I do not support the construction of M83, an additional Potomac bridge or an outer beltway. Such solutions never truly work, and ultimately cause taxpayers to foot the bill for the destruction of our environment, homes, and businesses in favor of roads that will quickly become more congested. More roads usually means more cars.

Instead, Montgomery County and Maryland should explore the creation of more dedicated bus lanes throughout major thoroughfares in the county so that buses and public transportation provide a viable, convenient way of getting to and from various communities. I support truly expanding RideOn and WMATA services to areas like Clarksburg, Damascus and Poolesville so that residents can access the whole county on weekends too! This should be linked with a reduction and/or elimination of fares for public transit so that the greatest number of people are able to use a comprehensive public transit system throughout the county.

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

The whole world needs to dramatically decrease the amount of solid waste it produces, and Montgomery County is no exception. We are fortunate to have a fantastic recycling program in Montgomery County and we should use that to our advantage. In the legislature, I will push to create legislation dramatically limiting the use of single use plastics throughout the state, while further incentivizing the use of recyclable or compostable materials. I will push legislation to create a bottle deposit program for glass and plastic containers.

Montgomery County should follow Howard County's approach and implement county-wide compost collection, starting with an optional opt-in program, and phasing in different communities over time. Combined with bottle-deposits and other initiatives, county-wide composting will reduce our solid waste footprint while we work towards solutions for the solid waste that cannot be composted or recycled.

What are your views on the general plan update "Thrive 2050," both the process and the draft now before the Council?

I am strongly supportive of Thrive 2050. I believe that as our county grows, our goals and vision for our shared future should grow along with it. Thrive 2050 represents a good attempt to balance our growth with environmental protections, livability and equality for *all* Montgomery County residents. Enacting Thrive 2050 will make our communities and county a more equitable and prosperous place for all while simultaneously protecting our green spaces and agricultural heritage. Importantly, Thrive 2050 seeks to increase the types and availability of housing in Montgomery County, which will benefit all of us by making sure all residents can afford to continue to build their futures here.

While I am supportive, I think that the process behind drafting Thrive 2050 limited public engagement by relying on public hearings as a method of gauging public access. County and state government, especially for things of this magnitude, should more actively solicit public opinion from folks who cannot attend public hearings because of work, childcare or other obligations. I support this new draft master plan, but I also support making sure that public feedback and engagement is actively sought from all stakeholders—not just those in the know.

Do you believe that the way that local government branches, state entities, and the public currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take?

Unfortunately, the ways in which the public and our local and state governments interact are limited and do not serve the interests of all county residents. Generally speaking, participation in the process of government has been limited to those with a strong interest in areas of concern or those who are influential or well-heeled. The advent of social media and Zoom have allowed new venues through which residents can be made aware of new initiatives, provide their input, and request assistance from government entities. But even this increased access has its limitations and often fails to register the voices of people who are already disempowered and disengaged.

I would like to see state and local governments be more accessible to residents, such as by providing late hours once a week so services are available to more residents (like at the MVA), allowing the option to text questions and concerns and more. Equally important, I would also like local and state agencies to proactively solicit the input of residents about major issues that affect the county as a whole and local communities. Beyond town halls and random surveys, this should include using newer services like ALERT Montgomery and older methods like door knocking and calling to directly ask residents their thoughts, opinions and needs.

As a legislator, I pledge to hold Zoom calls, town halls and community-service events so that people can reach me in a variety of ways. I also pledge to get out and talk to residents every year—regardless of their party affiliation. I will always be an email (josh@joshuadowling.org), text, or phone call away (240-234-9123).