



## Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Lily Qi

### Personal Information:

**Name** Lily Qi

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** Delegate

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

On my website at [lilyqi.com](http://lilyqi.com) or sign up for my newsletter at [info@lilyqi.com](mailto:info@lilyqi.com). Also my social media posts on my work at [facebook.com/lilyqiMaryland](https://facebook.com/lilyqiMaryland) or on Twitter [@lilyqiMaryland](https://twitter.com/lilyqiMaryland).

Lily

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 Montgomery County Ag reserve is a protected plot of 93,000 acres that makes up about 40% of Montgomery County's landmass and is critical to who we are as a community, our quality of life, and the local economy. Established in 1980, this forward-thinking move has made Montgomery County a national model in environmental protection and provided the County with a natural treasure that allows for local agriculture and ag tourism to flourish, while preventing sprawling development through environmentally conscious land use policy.

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

I believe that the Ag Reserve is not only an environmental strategy but also should be leveraged for agriculture and an eco-friendly economy. For decades we have moved towards a more sustainable "buy local and source local" economy, and the importance of this has only been bolstered by supply chain issues. My vision of the Ag Reserve is to expand agricultural output, exporting and agricultural tourism. For example, we should have dedicated shelves in every grocery store with locally-grown produce and locally-made products and restaurants that feature local ingredients, supporting more companies like the One Acre Farm and its partner the Compost Crew who are examples of great social entrepreneurs in our district in Dickerson. Maryland's growing craft brewery and winery industries such as what we have in Poolesville and Olney should also be strong partners with the Ag Reserve to create a new supply chain that is all locally grown.

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

I am a strong proponent of smart growth and proud to be endorsed in 2018 and 2022 by the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters. I believe that growth in our county is inevitable and necessary for us to have a vibrant and successful future but it must be balanced with protecting our natural resources. I support continued stewardship of our County's natural resources through in-fill development and public transit including walkable and bikeable communities to minimize impact on natural landscape.

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

In this past legislative session, I worked with the Muddy Branch Alliance, Clean Water Action and other partners to sponsor HB371 for smart road salting standards for private companies as we have seen increased chloride levels in local water systems due to salt runoff from roads. While this legislation did not pass, I will continue to work with local organizations such as your organization to see this through. It is unfortunate that the legislation got stalled because the Maryland Dept of the Environment is already working on implementing a training program as my bill proposes and such requirement already exists for public contractors. I have also been supportive of efforts to curb pesticide runoff and believe in providing additional resources for those on well and septic systems who are at risk of system failure. Thank you for your support of my legislation.

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

My top priorities are faster transition to clean energy sources, protecting the ag reserve and our waterways, and growing a green economy. In particular, these priorities have been reflected in my work as a first-term legislator. I have sponsored and passed legislation to establish and solidify funding for a state-sponsored green bank to fund clean energy capital projects and support clean energy innovation. As chair of the MoCo Delegation's Economic Development Committee, I have also ushered through the Community Choice Energy legislation by Del. Charkoudian to accelerate Montgomery County's adoption of cleaner energy sources. Ag Reserve plays a critical role in minimizing the carbon footprint while incentivizing smart growth with concentrated density as discussed before. In addition, it can be a source for biofuel and other resources in our collective fight against climate change.

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

We must focus on expanding our agriculture and the burgeoning agri-tourism business to support farm businesses and communities. Around the country agri-tourism is becoming a major aspect of the economic driver and Montgomery County is largely playing catch-up to our regional neighbors. Steps should also be explored to simplify small business ownership in the Ag Reserve. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Ag Reserve is that 94% of farms are family owned and expanding on this existing small business base will be critical in coming decades.

## **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?**

Regionally I advocate for smart multi-model transportation options to meet the demands of our growing and diverse, multi-generational communities. I grew up in Shanghai where transit is the primary means of getting around. Maryland and America have to get on with our infrastructure development to make our vast suburban communities more walkable, bikeable and connected with transit-grids. I supported legislation to study the commuter bus with North Virginia and this year we passed legislation to mandate funding for MARC. We need expanded bus rapid transit on MD355 between Bethesda and Clarksburg, and the construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT). While M83 was a hot topic in 2018, it is no longer being pursued as a top choice by the county because of other studies and transit options for Upcounty. As for the second bridge crossing—I represent the Poolesville community which has made it very clear and I believe our priority should be to focus on improving the existing American Legion Bridge.

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

Montgomery County is a national leader with a recycling program that's one of the broadest in the region. I believe we should implement and incentivize aggressive composting in conjunction with phasing out incineration. As a Delegate, I am supportive of removing incineration from the renewable energy portfolio as this issue was presented to my committee of Economic Matters Committee multiple times. As a member of the committee, I voted to remove black liquor out of RPS as well. We

should also adopt even better recycling strategies with better labeling as I have been exploring with my intern last year.

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

For a community of over a million people with such cultural and geographic diversity, we need such a comprehensive exercise to understand where and how to grow and plan ahead. I understand this has been a very challenging process and appreciate the hard work of the Planning staff and leadership. But the fact that as state legislators representing different areas of the county were not part of a deep conversation about the future growth of the county concerns me and maybe speaking to a larger issue of inclusion in voices from different communities. Having said that, I understand there are many worth components to this plan as a significant update to the "wedges and corridors" plan.

**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?**

Absolutely. I can write a dissertation about community engagement as that was part of my work in Montgomery County government. First, the sitting county executive has the primary responsibility to make sure state legislators are engaged in the county's priorities, beyond the annual priorities hearing, and are clear about the annual "asks" so we can better fight for transportation and housing and environmental projects. Whatever they might be. I also think it's unfortunate that the executive and legislative branches are often not aligned on priorities and policy agendas. We definitely need to have more coordination of different branches and agencies of state and local government across the board on similar or overlapping issues from small business to senior services. As an example, I passed a bill in 2021 to mandate data sharing on employment discrimination complaints between state and county governments for better collaboration and coordination. On environmental issues, the state needs to lead and help share best practices to help smaller jurisdictions adopt sound policies—a portal of sort would be tremendously valuable.