



## Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Omar Lazo

### Personal Information:

**Name** Omar Lazo

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** County Council District 6

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

My website is [www.omarlazo.com](http://www.omarlazo.com)

I can be contacted directly at [Omar@omarlazo.com](mailto:Omar@omarlazo.com) or via my campaign manager at [info@omarlazo.com](mailto:info@omarlazo.com)

**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 over 90,000 acres that have been preserved and protected by the county. This is for the preservation of our farm supply, for the preservation of our green spaces, the protection of our environment, and a way to ensure that urban sprawl does not take away the beauty of our green spaces from future generations.

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

My future for the Ag reserve is that we start investing in our locally sourced produce. We are facing a huge supply chain issue at the moment and I believe there is a great opportunity to buy locally sourced products that can be made right here in our Ag reserve. There is also a huge challenge with food insecurity and we need to make sure that our residents have access to healthy food options. This is a great opportunity to collaborate with our local farmers.

To achieve this, we must look into access to capital and also workforce development. We need to incentivize the business opportunities in the Ag reserve. We must promote business growth and also make sure that we have the ability to train the work force that will be needed.

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

I completely believe that one of the greatest treasures that our County has are its parks and open spaces. As a child in Washington DC we used to drive up to Montgomery County just to visit its parks. We need to expand our green spaces and make sure that the upkeep and preservation of our current spaces is enhanced and protected. There have also been a lot of issue with stormwater management that we must seriously address. We also need to make sure that we prioritize acquisition of land for parks in urban centers.

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

I would make sure to be a strong advocate for the preservation of the Ag reserve and make sure that we take responsible measures as Urban sprawl continues. We must also make sure that we educate

our residents on the impact of our actions on the environment.

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

The Ag reserve plays a crucial part in our ecosystem. I am 100% committed to reducing our carbon footprint. This will be a multifaceted approach, but investing in green public transportation will lower these carbon emissions. From electric buses and county vehicles, to improving the public transportation system so we get cars off of the road, this will help us reduce the carbon emissions. The role that the Ag reserve plays is that it acts as a green lung for our county. As we also increase our reforestation efforts, we will help further clean the polluted air.

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

I believe we need to provide access to capital and technical training to our farmers. There are emerging clean technologies such as hydroponics that would provide sustainable food production for our masses. We need to nurture those relationships with local businesses to buy local. This can be for fruits and vegetable, or grains for things like beer production. Our rural communities could have a guaranteed market here in the urban areas. The county should also be buying all products available to provide food for schools, food insecurity, etc.

**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?**

My priority has always been to expand our local transportation system. This is a huge equity issue that can also be a great solution for the environment. Many people don't have access to public transportation. Increasing our BRTs and expanding our public transportation network will reduce the amounts of vehicles on the road and negate the need for expansion of M83 or 495. We have lost way to much of our green space to urban sprawl and we must do what we can to protect what we have.

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

I believe we need to look into moving away from incinerating our trash. It's incredibly bad for our environment. We should focus more on composting which would include programs with businesses and residential tenants. We need to work on infrastructure which also includes update our extremely outdated recycling plant.

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

I agree with much of that is in Thrice 2050, but I am very cautious as to the implementation. I am very concerned about the equity element of it. The transportation side of it, parks and green spaces, ag reserve plans are good but I just want to make sure that the affordable housing plans will truly take into account lower income residents. There needs to be safeguards that will prevent further expansion of unaffordable housing. I think in general, as I am door knocking, there is way too much confusion and lack of knowledge of the plan. I think there needs to be more transparency and making sure that the residents understand that their representatives are voting for.

**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?**

I do believe it can be improved. I have been working closely with several state representatives to make sure that my residents voice is being listened to. I believe we need to have more public forums with local and state officials together. We must also offer forums in different languages depending the predominance in that area. My district has a latino plurality. We need to make sure that we are letting everyone have a voice. We must also do a better job of tapping into our local civic engaged leaders.