

# Montgomery County 2026 Candidate Questionnaire



## Personal Information:

**Name** Radwan Chowdhury

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2026 Election?** County Council At-Large

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

Thank you. They can contact me or learn more about me at my website:  
<https://radwancampaign.com>

Learn about my policies and blueprint at  
<https://radwancampaign.com/the-blueprint/>



**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 concise.**

(pictured above: One Acre Farm)

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

I'm a community organizer, policy professional, and At-Large County Council candidate committed to delivering results through accountability, transparency, and data-driven governance. My work has focused on building coalitions across communities—supporting nonprofits, small businesses, and working families—while advancing practical solutions to rising costs, infrastructure gaps, and environmental sustainability. I'm running to ensure Montgomery County protects what makes it special, including the Agricultural Reserve and our natural resources, while creating a future where every resident has access to opportunity, stability, and a high quality of life.

**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?**

Residents have the right to demand more transparency—especially in legislative and land use decisions that shape communities for generations. I will implement a “Transparent Government Framework” that requires plain-language summaries of all legislation, real-time public dashboards for development applications and zoning changes, and earlier community notification with legally required response timelines before decisions are made. I will also push for stronger disclosure requirements around developer communications and ensure all planning data—especially related to the Agricultural Reserve, water resources, and environmental impact—is publicly accessible and easy to understand.

Frankly, I would grade current public engagement a C-. Too often, engagement happens late in the process, is difficult to access, or feels performative rather than impactful. I will shift this to a proactive, neighborhood-based engagement model, including multilingual outreach, hybrid participation options, and structured feedback loops so residents can clearly see how their input shaped final decisions.

Yes, I strongly support re-establishing the Office of the People’s Counsel. An independent advocate is essential to level the playing field—especially for residents navigating complex land use, zoning, and environmental decisions. This office should be empowered not only to represent community interests, but also to provide oversight on major development proposals, protect sensitive areas like the Ag Reserve, and ensure that growth decisions align with long-term environmental sustainability and public interest.

**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—coordination between the County Executive, County Council, Planning Board, and state agencies must be significantly improved to deliver consistent, transparent, and forward-looking decisions.

Today, too many decisions are made in silos, leading to conflicting priorities, delays, and uncertainty—especially around land use, infrastructure, and protection of the Agricultural Reserve and our natural resources. I will establish a formal interagency coordination framework that requires early-stage alignment on major policies and development proposals, including joint planning sessions, shared data systems, and synchronized review timelines so agencies are working from the same facts and objectives from the start.

I will also push for integrated county–state collaboration, particularly on transportation, water infrastructure, and environmental protection, by creating standing coordination tables with clear accountability metrics and public reporting. Most importantly, I will ensure that collaboration does not come at the expense of transparency—residents should be able to see not only the final decisions, but how agencies worked together to reach them, especially when it impacts the Ag Reserve, forests, and water quality that define Montgomery County’s 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?**

Protecting our drinking water—both the Sole Source Aquifer that serves rural residents and the Potomac River that sustains the broader region—is fundamental to public health, agriculture, and long-term economic stability. This requires a shift from reactive management to proactive, enforceable water stewardship.

For groundwater p

rotection, I will strengthen wellhead protection policies and land-use controls in sensitive recharge areas, particularly within and around the Agricultural Reserve. This includes tighter regulation of high-risk uses (such as certain industrial activities and high-density development on septic), expanded water quality monitoring, and direct support for farmers to adopt best management practices that reduce nutrient runoff and protect soil health. I will also invest in modernizing septic systems, expanding cost-share programs, and establishing a real-time groundwater monitoring and public reporting system so residents can clearly track water quality trends.

To protect the Potomac River, we must treat it as a shared regional asset under growing stress. I will prioritize stronger stormwater management standards, upstream pollution reduction, and restoration of forests and stream buffers that naturally filter runoff. At the same time, I will advocate for deeper regional coordination across jurisdictions to align water use, conservation, and emergency planning—because no single county can solve this alone.

Planning for a water-constrained future means making hard, forward-looking decisions now. I will require large-scale water users—including data centers—to meet strict water efficiency and recycling standards, with transparent reporting and enforceable limits tied to available supply. I will also push for water-neutral or water-positive development policies, where new growth must offset its water impact through conservation, reuse, or infrastructure investment.

Finally, I will prioritize investments in water reuse systems, drought resilience planning, and upgraded infrastructure to reduce leakage and inefficiency across the system. My approach is simple: protect our sources, manage demand responsibly, and ensure that every decision—especially around growth—respects the reality that water is finite and essential to every resident, farm, and business in Montgomery County.

**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?**

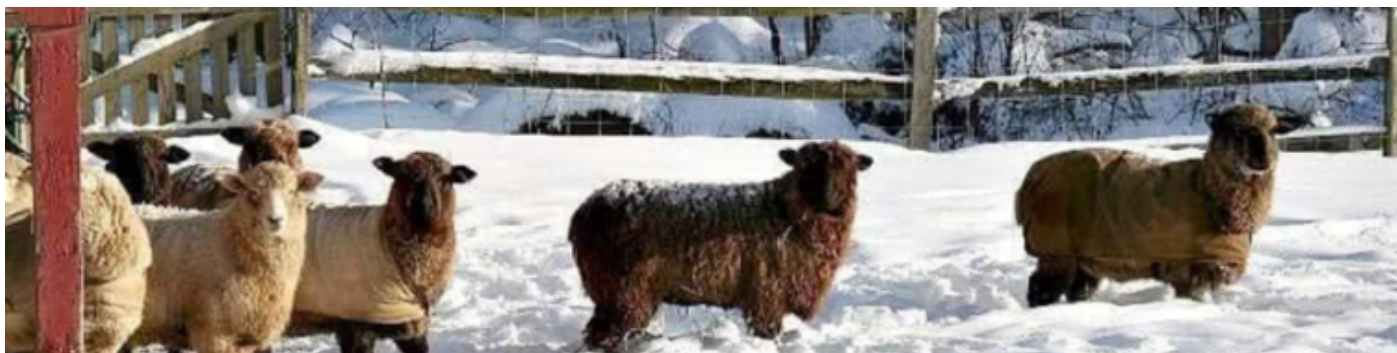
The Agricultural Reserve is one of Montgomery County's most powerful, existing climate solutions. It acts as a large-scale carbon sink, protects forests and soils that absorb emissions, preserves open land that reduces heat island effects, and supports local food systems that cut transportation-related emissions. Protecting and strengthening the Reserve is not just land-use policy—it is core climate policy.

I will treat the Ag Reserve as critical climate infrastructure by expanding incentives for regenerative agriculture, soil carbon sequestration, reforestation, and stream buffer restoration. This means increasing technical and financial support to farmers for climate-smart practices, creating revenue opportunities through conservation easements and carbon markets, and ensuring land-use decisions do not undermine the Reserve's long-term environmental value. At the same time, I will align zoning and development policies countywide so growth is directed away from sensitive areas and toward sustainable, transit-oriented locations.

To bolster climate funding, I support a targeted and fair revenue strategy. This includes reviewing and

modernizing the county's energy tax structure so that high energy and high water users—such as data centers—contribute proportionally to the infrastructure and environmental systems they rely on. Those revenues should be transparently dedicated to climate resilience: expanding grant programs for farmers and property owners, accelerating clean energy adoption, upgrading stormwater systems, and investing in drought and water conservation measures.

Finally, I will establish clear accountability by tying funding to measurable outcomes—acres preserved, emissions reduced, water quality improved—so residents can see real progress. My approach is to leverage the Ag Reserve not just as protected land, but as an active partner in meeting our climate goals while ensuring farmers remain economically viable and central to our county's future.



**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)**

Yes—I support the planned closure of the Dickerson incinerator, but I do not support closing it without a clear, fully implemented transition plan. We need to get this right—not just fast.

First, the case for closure is strong. The facility is aging (operating since 1995), emits harmful pollutants, and has recently exceeded state limits for toxic dioxins and furans—some tests showing levels 83% above allowable standards. These pollutants are linked to serious health risks and environmental harm, which is incompatible with protecting the Agricultural Reserve, water quality, and surrounding rural communities. At the same time, continuing to operate the incinerator will require tens of millions in additional maintenance costs, despite long-standing commitments to shut it down.

Second, from a climate and sustainability perspective, incineration is the wrong long-term strategy. Burning over 500,000 tons of waste annually releases greenhouse gases and toxic ash, while much of that material could be recycled or composted instead. If we are serious about climate action and environmental justice, we must transition away from waste burning.

However, the current challenge—and where leadership has fallen short—is execution. There is still no fully realized plan for what replaces the incinerator at scale, and simply exporting waste elsewhere without reducing it first risks shifting the burden to other communities without solving the problem.

My approach is clear and grounded in implementation:

- Commit to closure with a fixed, enforceable timeline, tied to measurable milestones—not indefinite delays.
- Accelerate a zero-waste strategy: dramatically expand composting, recycling, and waste reduction so we reduce what needs disposal in the first place.
- Develop a responsible transition plan for remaining waste that prioritizes environmental standards, cost control, and regional coordination.
- Protect Dickerson and the Ag Reserve from becoming a dumping ground for replacement infrastructure that harms rural communities.
- Ensure transparency and accountability so residents can track progress toward closure in real time.

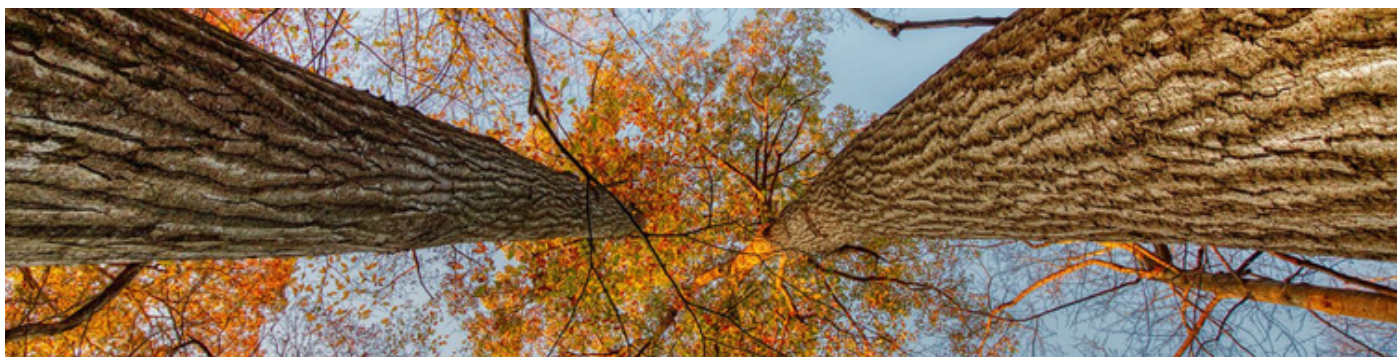
Closing the incinerator is the right decision—but doing it without a serious, funded, and transparent plan would be a mistake. My commitment is to deliver both: end waste burning and build a modern, sustainable system that protects our environment, our health, and our communities.

## **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?**

Montgomery County should not approve additional hyperscale data centers under the current framework without first completing a full, transparent assessment of their impacts on water supply, energy demand, grid capacity, and land use—especially given growing pressure on the Potomac River and long-term drought risk. At this time, we do not yet have sufficient localized data to fully understand cumulative impacts or infrastructure costs.

If the County does consider them, it must be under strict conditions: water-neutral operations, strong limits on energy and grid strain, full renewable energy or carbon-free matching, and siting only in already industrialized areas—well outside the Agricultural Reserve and sensitive communities. They must also pay full impact fees so residents are not subsidizing infrastructure upgrades.

Bottom line: we should pause new approvals until we have the data, and only move forward with tightly regulated, fully accountable projects that protect water security, the grid, and our rural land.



## **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)**

Forest protection would be a central pillar of my environmental and climate strategy, not an afterthought. Montgomery County's forests are critical for carbon sequestration, cooling temperatures, protecting water quality, and safeguarding public health—especially in areas that feed into the Potomac River and local aquifers.

My administration would prioritize no net loss of forest cover, stronger enforcement of tree protection laws, and expansion of reforestation efforts in both rural and developed areas. Within and around the Agricultural Reserve, I would strengthen protections for contiguous forest corridors and stream buffers to preserve habitat, reduce runoff, and protect drinking water sources.

Invasive and non-native plant species are a serious but often under-addressed threat to forest health. I would expand county investment in early detection and rapid response programs, support coordinated removal efforts with landowners and conservation groups, and prioritize native replanting to restore ecological balance. This would also include better education and technical assistance for property owners to prevent re-infestation.

Ultimately, forest protection must be treated as core climate infrastructure—on the same level as transportation or energy systems—because it directly affects resilience, public health, and the long-term sustainability of Montgomery County's natural resources.

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

I support a more cautious, health-informed approach to synthetic turf fields, rather than blanket expansion.

While turf fields provide reliable year-round access for schools and community athletics, there are still

unresolved concerns around heat retention, microplastics, chemical exposure, stormwater runoff, and end-of-life waste disposal. These issues are especially important in a county focused on climate resilience and protecting public health and water quality.

My approach would be:

Prioritize natural grass fields wherever feasible, especially in parks and environmentally sensitive areas  
Require full lifecycle environmental and health impact assessments before installing new synthetic turf  
Mandate safer material standards (phasing out the most harmful infill materials and requiring transparency on components)

Ensure proper stormwater controls so runoff does not impact local streams and the Potomac watershed  
Plan for responsible replacement and disposal of aging turf fields to avoid long-term environmental contamination

In short, synthetic turf can be used in limited, carefully regulated cases where it clearly serves community need, but it should not be the default solution. Decisions should balance athletic access with long-term environmental health, water protection, and climate considerations.



**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)**

Yes—keeping agriculture viable in Montgomery County is essential to protecting the Agricultural Reserve, strengthening local food systems, and ensuring long-term climate and economic resilience.

My approach focuses on three core priorities: access, affordability, and generational transition.

First, we must improve access to land for new and emerging farmers. I support expanding programs that match beginning farmers with available acreage, strengthening long-term leasing options on county-owned and easement-protected land, and prioritizing farmland access for those actively producing food and fiber locally. We should also explore “incubator farm” models that reduce startup barriers for new producers.

Second, we need to address the rising cost of leasing farmland, which is pushing out smaller and mid-sized operators. I would work to stabilize lease structures on public and conservation lands, encourage longer-term lease agreements that provide predictability, and evaluate incentives for landowners who keep farmland in active agricultural production rather than speculative use.

Third, we must support generational transition and farm viability. With the average producer age nearing 60, we need targeted programs for succession planning, mentorship between retiring and new farmers, and financial tools that help keep farms in production rather than being lost to fragmentation or non-agricultural use. Strengthening local food systems—including farm-to-school and institutional purchasing—can also create stable demand that supports farm income.

Finally, I see the Agricultural Reserve not just as preserved land, but as an active working agricultural

economy. Its long-term resilience depends on making farming economically viable for the next generation, not just protecting land on a map.