



From: Vanessa Atterbeary

Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) Questionnaire – County Executive

1. What do you feel makes you stand out compared to your opponents, and how would you implement the experience and qualities you could bring to the position? Please include your most timely plans you have for new legislation or plans for the County.

I stand apart from my opponents because I bring both deep roots in this community and a proven record of delivering results at the highest levels of government. I was born and raised in Howard County—growing up in Columbia and Clarksville, attending our public schools—and that lived experience drives my commitment to ensuring every family here has the opportunity to thrive.

Over eleven years in the Maryland House of Delegates, including five years as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, I led on some of the most complex and consequential issues facing our state. I built coalitions, navigated difficult negotiations, and delivered real results—fully funding education through the Blueprint, advancing public safety reforms, and fighting for working families. I know how to turn priorities into policy and policy into action.

Howard County is at a critical moment. We must fully fund and modernize our schools, tackle an affordability crisis that is pushing out working families, and ensure that growth is responsibly aligned with infrastructure and community needs. As County Executive, I will move immediately to streamline permitting and reduce unnecessary delays, invest in school construction and address deferred maintenance, and expand housing options that are truly affordable for teachers, first responders, and service workers.

My leadership is grounded in discipline, collaboration, and accountability. I do not engage in performative politics—I focus on delivering results. I will work closely with the County Council, Board of Education, and community stakeholders to ensure our government is responsive, transparent, and effective. On day one, my administration will be focused on execution—because Howard County doesn't need more talk, it needs leadership that delivers.

2. How do you see HoCo by Design being implemented? Specifically, which zoning and land use changes do you see having to be made to implement it?

HoCo by Design is a strong, forward-looking framework for Howard County's future, but its success depends on disciplined, comprehensive implementation—not piecemeal decision-making. The current overreliance on individual Zoning Regulation Amendments creates unpredictability for residents, businesses, and developers, and makes it harder to fully realize the plan's goals.

As County Executive, I will move to implement HoCo by Design through a comprehensive re-zoning process with clear rules, defined timelines, and meaningful opportunities for public engagement. At the same time, I will pair zoning reform with **permitting reform**—streamlining approvals, reducing duplicative reviews, and creating a more predictable development process so projects that meet our standards can move efficiently from concept to completion.

Implementation must be grounded in balance. We need additional housing, but growth must align with infrastructure capacity—especially our schools, transportation network, and public services. That means coordinating land use decisions with capital planning so we are building complete, sustainable communities.

I support expanding practical tools like accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and “missing middle” housing to increase supply in a way that fits within existing neighborhoods. But increasing supply alone is not enough. We must ensure zoning policies include clear, enforceable affordability requirements so we are producing housing that is truly accessible for working families, seniors, and young people.

Ultimately, my approach is about clarity, predictability, and results—so residents understand how decisions are made, and we deliver the housing and communities Howard County needs.

3. How will you ensure that the roles of all entities involved in “Columbia Governance” are clearly defined so that Columbia's redevelopment moves forward in a clear, consistent, and transparent way and reflects the original vision of the planned community?

Columbia's governance structure has long been fragmented, with responsibilities shared among Howard County government, the Columbia Association, and Howard Hughes Holdings. That lack of clarity has created confusion, slowed progress, and undermined public confidence in redevelopment decisions.

As County Executive, I will lead a **structured, transparent process to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations across all entities**. This will begin with convening a formal working group that includes county leadership, the Columbia Association, Howard Hughes Holdings, and—critically—resident representatives. Together,

we will map existing authorities, identify gaps and overlaps, and establish a shared understanding of who is responsible for what.

From that process, my administration will produce a publicly accessible governance framework that outlines decision-making authority, coordination requirements, and accountability measures. This will include clear timelines, defined points of public input, and mechanisms to resolve disputes so that projects can move forward without unnecessary delay or confusion.

Just as importantly, this effort will be grounded in collaboration and mutual understanding. Defining roles is not just about assigning authority—it is about building alignment so that all partners are working toward a shared vision for Columbia's future.

Redevelopment must reflect Columbia's founding vision as an inclusive, thoughtfully planned community, while also meeting today's housing and economic needs. With clear roles, predictable processes, and transparent decision-making, we can restore confidence and ensure Columbia continues to grow in a way that is both intentional and true to its core values.

4. The Aging in Place Tax Credit has a 10-year limit on it. Would you seek to eliminate that limit? Also, what are your high priorities for immediate action in the Howard County Age-Friendly Action Plan?

Supporting residents as they age in place requires policies that are flexible, inclusive, and responsive to how people actually live. The current Aging in Place Tax Credit is too restrictive—particularly the requirement that seniors must have lived in their homes for a set period of time to qualify. That limitation excludes many residents who move later in life to downsize, be closer to family, or access care. That needs to change.

As County Executive, I would work to significantly modify the residency requirement so that more seniors can benefit from the program. I am open to extending the duration of the credit as well, but first and foremost, we must ensure it is accessible to the seniors who need it most.

My immediate priorities within the Age-Friendly Action Plan focus on housing, transportation, and connection. We must expand housing options that allow seniors to remain in their communities—whether that means aging in place in their current homes, adding accessory dwelling units, or transitioning to accessible, right-sized housing. Affordability is critical, especially for residents on fixed incomes.

We also need to strengthen transportation options so seniors can reliably access healthcare, groceries, and community activities, and invest in programs that reduce isolation and support mental and physical well-being.

This is about dignity, independence, and ensuring that every resident can continue to live and thrive in Howard County at every stage of life.

5. Do you support a strong APFO? Please be specific, and note your position on the main issues recommended by the most recent County APFO Review Committee. Please note how you would balance “missing middle” and “increasing housing supplies” such as with the ADU legislation, and retaining open space, and balancing infrastructure.

I support a strong APFO, and I believe it must remain grounded in its core purpose: ensuring that development is aligned with the capacity of our schools and public infrastructure.

While I appreciate the work of the APFO Review Committee, I do not support moving to a system that relies primarily on fees in place of capacity protections. Revenue alone cannot address overcrowding, and maintaining clear standards for school capacity is essential to protecting educational quality.

At the same time, APFO must be modernized. A one-size-fits-all approach does not reflect the realities of different types of development. Smaller-scale projects such as ADUs, senior housing, and transit-oriented infill should be evaluated based on their actual impact, rather than being subject to the same constraints as large subdivisions.

My approach will balance three priorities: protecting school capacity, supporting responsible and targeted housing growth, and ensuring infrastructure investments keep pace with development. Open space preservation, environmental protection, and thoughtful growth are not competing goals—they must be pursued together through a transparent, data-driven framework.

6. How would you implement prioritizing school budget funding?

Fully funding Howard County’s public schools is a core responsibility of the County Executive. My administration will meet or exceed Maintenance of Effort each year, prioritize eliminating the backlog of deferred maintenance, and ensure that our capital and operating budgets reflect the real needs of students and educators.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future presents both an opportunity and a fiscal challenge. As Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, I was directly involved in shaping that legislation at the state level. I understand both its intent and the practical realities of implementation. As County Executive, I will ensure that Howard County meets its obligations in a way that is sustainable, while also advocating for fair and equitable state funding.

Education is not an area where we can afford to fall behind. Investing in our schools is essential to maintaining the strength of our community and our local economy. I am honored to have the endorsement of the Howard County Educator’s Association.

7. When will your constituents see enactment for the long overdue Comprehensive Zoning, APFO updating, and the Development Regulations Assessment?

Howard County has operated under an outdated zoning framework for far too long, and that delay has created uncertainty for residents, businesses, and our broader planning process.

Within the first 90 days of my administration, I will complete a full status assessment of the Development Regulations Assessment, the comprehensive zoning update, and APFO reforms. From there, I will publish a clear, public implementation timeline with defined milestones, deadlines, and accountability measures so residents know exactly what to expect and when.

These are not open-ended efforts. My administration will move them forward with urgency and discipline, with the goal of delivering a modern, coordinated framework that aligns zoning, APFO, and development regulations.

Equally important, I will ensure the process is transparent and inclusive—providing meaningful opportunities for public input while avoiding unnecessary delays.

Residents should not have to navigate outdated, inconsistent rules. They should expect a system that is clear, predictable, and responsive. My administration will deliver that—on a defined timeline, with real accountability.

8. Are you using public financing (CEF) for your campaign? Why or why not?

For my campaign, I am using the traditional financing option. I am not participating in the public financing system, and I want to be direct about why. I led the passage of legislation in the Maryland General Assembly that created Howard County's public financing pathway. I entered this race with an existing, funded campaign account, which is a technical disqualifier under the rules. I also know, having led on the creation of public financing, that this system was designed for first-time candidates who do not have a pre-existing base of support to lean on in their campaigns.

I also want to be honest about something else: the public financing structure limits my ability to partner with labor unions and community-based organizations that contribute through PACs and affiliated entities, and also prevents me from coordinating with them through the campaign. These are organizations I have worked alongside for over a decade in Annapolis, fighting for working families, for better wages, for safer workplaces. I am not going to cut off those relationships for the optics of a system I helped build.

In addition, I do not believe that, as our county faces numerous significant budget issues, such as a close to \$200 million school deferred maintenance backlog, it is right for me to be forcing taxpayers to contribute to my campaign.

My commitment to transparency and clean government is not a campaign promise. It is an 11-year record and one that I will continue if I am fortunate enough to be our next

County Executive - and that is why I am honored to have the endorsement of “The People’s Voice Ethics Ballot.”

9. In 2024, Howard County voters approved a Charter Amendment to create an independent Office of Inspector General (OIG). How will you ensure this office remains fully funded and politically independent during your administration?

Howard County voters made a clear statement in support of transparency and accountability by approving the Office of Inspector General. My administration will fully respect both the letter and the spirit of that mandate.

I will ensure that the OIG is fully funded as required and that it has the staff, resources, and access necessary to carry out its mission effectively. Equally important is a cultural commitment to independence. Oversight should not be viewed as a threat, but as an essential component of good governance.

My administration will welcome the work of the Inspector General, including findings that may be critical, because accountability is fundamental to building and maintaining public trust.