
Message from the Council President

This budget makes historic investments in education and in meeting the needs of our residents and our workforce. We achieved these goals by reducing the proposed property tax, finding efficiencies in government operations and making strategic investments to keep Montgomery County moving forward. Today, the Council approved the County's \$6.7 billion Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget and \$5.7 billion amended FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to fund essential needs in our community.



The 11 members of the Council had very different views and opinions on this budget. Some wanted higher taxes, some wanted lower. This is what democracy looks like. The end result was one of consensus, recognizing that we all supported the labor contracts of our county and school employees, maintaining a strong social safety net, and preserving our reserve fund.

While there may be disagreements about the details of the budget, there should be no disagreement that this budget process has been more transparent than any other in recent memory. Each committee chair reported their recommendations to the full Council in open, televised meetings and I abolished the omnibus budget consent calendar.

I directed Council staff to identify and publicly report proposed increases from the County Executive and the committees, and each staff report was readily available to the public.

Our apolitical, professional Council staff worked with each of our offices to discern the will of this body. Some Councilmembers wanted to spend less and have a lower tax rate, while others wanted to spend more, which would have placed a higher tax burden on our residents. The end result is one of consensus, with an overwhelming majority supporting every aspect of the \$6.7 billion budget that makes significant investments in education, our workforce and essential services for residents. This didn't leave us with much room for discretionary spending.

Moreover, I extended the time for the public to testify in person and virtually and increased the number of speakers for our budget public hearings, with 166 residents testifying and thousands more calling, emailing and tweeting their thoughts.

The Council's budget deliberations carefully balanced our strong and steadfast commitment to our students and teachers with our residents' many other priorities, while also upholding our responsibility to be fiscal stewards of taxpayer dollars. The Council ensured resources were maintained to honor the County's long-term commitment to its retired employees and to fully fund the County's reserves. At the same time, we reduced the County Executive's proposed 10-cent property tax rate by more than half to a 4.7-cent increase per \$100 of assessed value. This reduces the tax burden on property owners by approximately \$118 million while also funding MCPS at the largest year-to-year increase since the Great Recession.

At the end of the day, this Council, as a body, has chosen to take a path of consensus - balancing our fiduciary responsibilities with the needs of our residents.

This budget upholds our commitment to investing in key priority areas.

A heavy emphasis on this budget went toward ensuring our most vulnerable populations were safe, healthy and housed. As the Council's former lead on Homelessness and Vulnerable Communities, I'm proud of the more than \$480 million dedicated to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), which invests in our safety net programs, including increased funding for food security and shelters.

We're making significant investments in advancing our housing goals, with \$77 million dedicated to our Department

of Housing and Community Affairs, including investments that will bring more housing and more affordable housing in the County. The Council supported the production and preservation of affordable housing by allocating \$57 million to the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) and \$8 million to the Housing Opportunities Commission, which works to provide affordable housing and supportive services to low- and moderate-income families.

The Council's newly formed Economic Development Committee has been sharply focused on ensuring that Montgomery County is open for business by putting real investments into action.

Tens of millions in this year's budget will directly help bolster our local economy and will help accelerate business development across the County, including \$3.2 million for the County's incubators and economic partnerships, \$3.5 million for the County's Economic Development Fund, and \$6 million to Montgomery County's Economic Development Corporation, which helps connect businesses locating to or expanding in the County to critical resources and services. Plus, over \$1.2 million is designated to support Black and Latino-owned businesses in Montgomery County.

This budget dedicates \$270 million toward improving our transportation networks, including funding toward Vision Zero and road safety improvements. This will help make our roads safer for everyone, because no one should have to live with the pain of losing a loved one on our roadways.

Plus, the Council made historic investments to build a more resilient economy and environment, including \$9 million for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and \$18.6 million to the Montgomery County Green Bank, which helps County homeowners, businesses and property owners make affordable energy efficiency and clean energy investments in their properties.

We're continuing to invest in efforts to strengthen public safety and ensure that everyone feels welcome, seen and safe in Montgomery County. We're upholding our commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice. The Council increased funding for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice and are continuing our support for the outstanding work of our Minority Health Initiatives, Black Physicians Network and other programs. Putting together a budget of this magnitude and complexity is always challenging, but this budget took a higher level of scrutiny and discipline than any previous year that I can recall. It takes an all-hands-on deck approach and is a true collaborative process.

I am proud of the way that the Council worked through this budget and focused on the diverse needs of our residents. The work continues.



Evan Glass
President, Montgomery County Council