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# Message from the Council President

This budget is a reflection of compromise, collective values, and the complex needs of our growing community. I am proud to say that the County's \$7.1 billion Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Operating Budget and the \$5.94 billion FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) focuses on our core priorities: investing in education, supporting public safety, producing and preserving affordable housing, combatting climate change, protecting the most vulnerable, and jumpstarting economic development to grow our tax base.



Putting together a fiscally sound budget that meets the needs of Montgomery County's 1.1 million residents is the ultimate balancing act. The 11 members of the Council had to make difficult choices with finite resources, especially as we sought to increase funding for public education.

We added significant additional resources for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) by funding 99.2 percent of the Board of Education's request without raising taxes or increasing the County's debt, while maintaining our reserve levels above 10.8 percent to provide the necessary flexibility to respond to potential fiscal emergencies in the months ahead.

Like all budgets before us, this year brought its own set of challenges and opportunities. To ensure our decisions reflected the community's needs, we bolstered community outreach efforts which led to the largest turnout for public hearings in recent history. We heard from 255 residents at five public hearings, a 55 percent increase in participation from last year. We also provided simultaneous interpretation services and options for remote participation.

With an unprecedented level of community engagement throughout this deliberative process, the Council produced a budget that meets today's needs and makes strategic investments for Montgomery County's future so we can strengthen our social safety net and maintain our high quality of life.

The budget the Council approved totals \$3.3 billion, which is an increase of more than \$157 million over the approved FY24 Operating Budget. To help ensure increased funding leads to improved educational outcomes, we approved funding for two additional MCPS oversight positions in the Office of the Inspector General and included accountability language and reporting requirements on educational outcomes for the first time ever. We also continued to provide the Board of Education with resources to improve their fiscal oversight and budgetary analysis and assist them in their roles as duly elected fiduciaries of one of the largest school systems in the country. Our community's quality of life relies on a thriving economy and strong workforce. I'm proud that we worked together to fully fund the contracts for our dedicated educators, public safety professionals, and County government employees.

We came together to provide \$4.7 million for the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation. Additionally, we broadened our state and university partnerships to double down on our global leadership in biohealth innovation by adding funds to create a new biotechnology workforce training facility and continuing our multi-year commitment to support the recently established Institute for Health Computing. With these key investments and the recent approval of the \$20 million New J.O.B.S. Initiative to spur economic growth, we have laid a strong foundation for Montgomery County to re-emerge as a regional economic powerhouse.

Together, we stepped up to support our nonprofit partners who provide a social safety net for our most vulnerable residents and serve as key County partners and employers with inflationary increases and approximately \$18 million in operating and capital grants.

We supported working families and their children with investments in early child care, including \$10.3 million in resources for the Early Care and Education Initiative, \$13.5 million in Early Childhood Services, and \$1 million for the

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We're continuing to strengthen public safety with major investments in our police department, fire rescue service, and first responders, including providing ongoing funding to continue the highly successful Drone as First Responder Program in Silver Spring and Wheaton and expand it to the Upcounty and Bethesda. We funded nearly half a million dollars for the police cadet program and increased pay to bolster recruitment efforts. We also supported an additional half a million dollars for new tools and technologies our police department needs to effectively do their job. This budget also provides \$1.2 million to grow the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to protect our faith-based and ethnic organizations facing increasing threats and hate crimes at a time when it is regrettably needed more than ever.

As the Council's chair of the Planning, Housing and Parks Committee, I am thrilled about the historic level of funding for affordable housing in this budget at \$168 million, including fulfilling the \$50 million commitment for the Nonprofit Preservation Fund. Additionally, the capital budget includes a significant funding increase for the Affordable Housing Acquisition and Preservation Project, including \$50 million this year, and a \$20 million increase in future years for the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund.

As we focus on tackling the housing crisis, we're also planning for a sustainable future with forward-looking transportation and climate initiatives. We provided \$3.5 million for the Great Seneca Transit Network which will provide Upcounty residents with more mobility options and help reduce reliance on cars. I'm particularly proud of the more than \$19 million dedicated to helping finance clean energy projects for residents and businesses through the Montgomery County Green Bank. We also increased funding for our Climate Change and Vision Zero initiatives by a combined 51 percent to continue our efforts to build a cleaner, safer, more sustainable community.

Our parks and recreation spaces are among our most valuable assets for residents of all ages and abilities. Together, we continued the Council's tradition in recent years to provide adequate funding to expand our heavily utilized trail network and ensure our Parks Department has enough funding to maintain the open spaces that are so vital to our community's quality of life.

A budget of this scale and complexity requires focused, in-depth scrutiny and collaboration at all levels. We made compromises and came together to ensure that every dollar goes to its best and highest use, all while holding the line on new debt and higher taxes.

This budget is an important step toward setting us up for long-term success and economic mobility to ensure all our residents have access to high-performing schools, outstanding public services, and the high quality of life that they rightfully expect and deserve.



Andrew Friedson  
President, Montgomery County Council