



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

January 27, 2026

Subject: FY27 Operating Budget Priorities for East County

The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Elrich,

On behalf of the **East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB)**, I write to share our regional **FY27 Operating Budget** priorities-grounded in the lived experiences of East County residents and informed by our long-standing role as a bridge between the community and County government.

East County is home to working families, small businesses, essential workers, immigrants, and seniors who contribute deeply to Montgomery County's economic and social fabric. Yet for decades, our communities have experienced uneven investment, slower infrastructure delivery, and inequitable access to services than other areas. The FY27 budget is an opportunity to address those gaps with intention, equity, and measurable impact.

Safe, Livable Neighborhoods Through Effective Housing Enforcement

Residents across East County increasingly report housing code violations and misuse of residential properties-often occurring during evenings and weekends, when enforcement is currently unavailable. This undermines neighborhood stability, safety, and trust. We strongly urge funding to expand Department of Housing and Community Affairs and Department of Permitting Services inspector staffing during nontraditional working hours, so enforcement aligns with when violations actually occur. Timely, visible enforcement is essential to protecting residents and preserving the quality of life.

Balanced Housing and True Affordability

East County supports affordable housing—but not concentration without balance. We recommend funding a mixed-income housing study that includes both affordable and market-rate units to promote economic diversity, maintain a stable tax base, and prevent displacement. Families, especially those with children, seek safe neighborhoods, green space, and long-term stability. A

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countywide housing strategy that distributes affordability equitably, beyond transit-only corridors, will better meet those needs while strengthening communities across Montgomery County.

Transportation That Connects People to Opportunity

As the Viva White Oak redevelopment accelerates, now is the time to invest in east–west connectivity. We request funding to initiate the Randolph Road BRT study and the US 29 Intersections Upgrade Study to ensure transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and Ride On systems are planned as a cohesive network—not retrofitted later at higher cost. To fully realize US 29 BRT as a regional economic corridor, we also request funding for driver staffing and training to support service to Columbia in Howard County.

Children, Youth, and Working Families

Demand for childcare and youth programming in East County continues to outpace supply. Increased investment in preschool, as well as pre- and after-school care, is critical for working families and child safety. Equally important is expanded funding for youth development programs that offer structured, constructive, and equitable opportunities—helping young people thrive while strengthening community safety.

Immigrant Support and Community Stability

Many East County residents are newly arrived immigrants facing urgent needs—from housing and food security to legal assistance, language access, healthcare, and job placement. Targeted funding to support these services is not only a moral imperative; it is an investment in community stability, workforce participation, and long-term economic contribution.

Fire, Rescue, and Public Safety Readiness

Our volunteer firefighters and first responders serve with dedication, often while balancing full-time employment. We request funding for professional training offered at accessible times, replacement and cleaning of personal safety gear nearing expiration, and procurement of additional apparatus—including reserve rescue squads and ladder trucks—to ensure readiness and protect both responders and the public.

Economic Development that Reaches East County

We recommend investment in a comprehensive nonprofit and community services strategic plan to better align funding, improve coordination, and ensure timely distribution of awarded funds. Clearer communication around grant opportunities is essential so organizations are not excluded by process alone. Additionally, expanded funding for Small Business Center program services will strengthen entrepreneurship and job creation in East County.

We also urge funding for studies by evaluating alternatives to Impact Taxes as the primary mechanism for financing schools, infrastructure, and transportation. Learning from peer regions can help reduce housing costs, improve development feasibility, and sustain County revenues.

Workforce, Recreation, Parks, and Education

Targeted investment is needed to strengthen healthcare workforce pipelines serving East County residents. Recreation facilities need additional staffing and require replacement of aging equipment and long-deferred maintenance. Our parks need continued support to remain safe,

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accessible, and welcoming. Sustained funding for a Montgomery College fourth campus and the East County Education Center is essential to ensuring access to higher educational opportunities, workforce development and economic mobility in the region.

Planning and Civic Capacity

Finally, we strongly support continued funding for the Community Planning Academy. Its success demonstrates the value of equipping residents with knowledge to engage meaningfully in the planning process, building trust, capacity, and better outcomes for the County as a whole.

Mr. Executive, East County residents are not asking for special treatment; we are asking for fair investment, responsive services, and partnership. The FY27 operating budget is a chance to translate values into action and ensure that East County's growth is safe, inclusive, and economically sustainable.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to Eastern Montgomery County. We look forward to working with you to advance these shared priorities.

Sincerely,



Radwan Chowdhury

Chair, East County Citizens Advisory Board

CC:

- Natali Fani-Gonzalez, County Council President
- District 5 County Council Member Kristin Mink
- District 7 County Council Member Dawn Luedtke
- Jewru Bandeh, Director, ECRSC
- Jennifer Bryant, OMB Director