



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2021

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Supplemental Appropriation: Development Ombudsman REIA #22-20

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) assessments findings regarding Supplemental Appropriation #22-20 are inconclusive. Available information does not indicate to what extent a racial equity lens has been applied to the development of the Ombudsman position or how the recruitment and oversight of this position will advance racial equity and social justice in the county.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-20 is to fund a vacant non-merit Development Ombudsman position within the Office of the County Executive. This role was created in 2015 and until 2019 was occupied; information accompanying this supplemental appropriation request does not include details about the progress or results of the previous Ombudsman's performance. According to available documentation the purpose of reactivating this position is to bring strategic focus and attention to economic development projects in the White Flint area. The Development Ombudsman will facilitate commercial and residential development projects, requiring coordination across departments and agencies in the County. Available information outlines the following expected deliverables:
- Create a vision and plan for the area from Bethesda to Clarksburg
 - Executing and supporting the Joint Development Agreement with WMATA, including infrastructure and site development

- Create a comprehensive marketing plan that complements development and branding along the Red Line I-270 corridor.

There is growing evidence that an explicit focus on racial equity in economic development is as important for local economic growth as it is to advancing social justice. A recent Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement explains this paradigm shift in economic development¹. Brookings Institute describes this necessary shift as community-rooted economic inclusion and explains how a combination of equity-focused structural changes and relational changes can build wealth within underinvested communities, reduce economic inequity, and simultaneously drive economic growth².

Applying a racial equity lens to the Development Ombudsman position would require that (at a minimum) the incumbent recognizes and attends to:

- Racial and ethnic disparities in the County related to employment, housing, transportation, education, and healthcare. See Montgomery County Racial Equity Profile³ and National Equity Atlas⁴.
- Historical housing and development patterns across the County and how these patterns have disproportionately harmed communities of color, spurring residential displacement and inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities.
- Relationships with White Flint community members and their experiences with previous economic development efforts in the area.
- Climate impacts created by infrastructure development and any disproportionate effects those may have on communities of color or other minoritized groups.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

¹ Dr. Theo Holt and Dr. Elaine Bonner-Tompkins. Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight. "BILL 10-21: Economic Development – Economic Development Strategic Plan – Economic Development Corporation Duties". March 2021. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/resjis/2021/Bill10-21-RESJ.pdf>

² Hanna Love, Jennifer S. Vey, William Taft, and Elizabeth Demetriou. The Brookings Institute and LISC. *Community-Rooted Economic Inclusion: A Strategic Action Playbook*. March 2021. Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021.03.10_BassCenter-Playbook_Community-Rooter-Econ-Inclusion_Playbook.pdf

³ Users can search community-level indicators and racial and ethnic disparities at the County level. Jupiter Independent Research Group. Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight. Report Number 2019-7. Racial Equity Profile Montgomery County. July 15, 2019. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/RevisedOLO2019-7.pdf>

⁴ Users can search a number of indicators at the County-level. National Equity Atlas. Policy Link. Available at: <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators>