



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

March 17, 2025

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

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

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-47
to the FY25 Capital Budget, Department of General Services – Elevator
Modernization (\$1,200,000)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #25-47 *Elevator Modernization* will advance racial equity and social justice in the County as it provides resources to modernize elevators at Progress Place-which provides shelter and services to members of the County's homeless population. The elevators in their current state are not reliable and pose safety risks to residents, staff, volunteers, and visitors using the facility. By modernizing the elevators, the County will advance racial equity and social justice by creating a safer space and enhancing accessibility for all users living and seeking services in the facility.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #25-47 is to provide more durable and reliable elevators in Progress Place, a facility that houses residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and nonprofit providers who also provide homeless services in the building. The existing elevators are not reliable and pose safety risks. The Progress Place elevators will be replaced within the *Elevator Modernization* project in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). *Elevator Modernization*, an ongoing level-of-effort project, provides for the orderly replacement/renovation of aging and outdated elevator systems in County-owned buildings.

Racial Equity and Social Justice

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The County began operating the current Progress Place facility in December 2016. Washington Property Company completed the construction of the four-story, 40,000-square-foot facility through a redevelopment agreement that exchanged the former Progress Place property for the construction of the current property.¹ Several organizations, including Shepherd's Table and Interfaith Works, operate out of the facility in conjunction with Health and Human Services. They offer minor medical walk-in services, vision and vocational services, educational resources, case management, winter overflow overnight shelter, a central kitchen, and meal services to the homeless in the Silver Spring area.² The facility also has personal living quarters (PLQ) that provide housing to low-income individuals transitioning back into society 24 hours a day, seven days a week.³ The facility also provides administrative office and support spaces for staff and volunteers.

Elevator modernization will reduce racial disparities and inequities for low-income individuals and families who rely on services provided by Progress Place, particularly those with mobility challenges, such as the elderly or disabled. The existing elevator system is slow and frequently malfunctions, creating delays that hinder access to medical services, educational programs, and housing. These inefficiencies place an additional burden on staff, who often assist clients using stairs, risking injuries and straining resources further. Improving the elevator's functionality will enhance access for both clients and staff, facilitating better service delivery and overall operational efficiency.

During construction, steps will be taken to minimize disruption to services and access for clients, especially those in vulnerable positions. Measures such as scheduling work during off-peak hours and offering alternative access routes will help manage potential challenges like noise and service interruptions, which will help to mitigate unintended consequences.

- III. **ANALYSIS:** According to the Ninth Report of the Infrastructure Maintenance Task Force (IMTF) from February 2024,⁴ elevator systems have a criticality rating of four on a one to five scale. A four rating is defined as systems that are very important to the operation of the facility, with five being the highest rating. The report also identifies an acceptable life span of an elevator system as 20 years.⁵ Despite the facility's relatively young age, a supplemental appropriation is necessary to fund elevator renovations. The elevator modernization project for Progress Place was originally scheduled in the CIP for FY22.⁶ However, the project has not moved forward and now requires supplemental funding to

¹ Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DGS/OPD/DevelopmentProjects.html>.

² Available at: <https://silverspringdowntown.com/go/progress-place>.

³ Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy19/ciprec/P601401.pdf>.

⁴ Available at: https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=16040&meta_id=171302.

⁵ In the IMTF report, the average cost of elevator replacement totals \$300,000, with an acceptable annual replacement cost (AARC) of \$1,800,000 budgeted. An average of 6 elevators are estimated to be replaced annually using the AARC.

⁶ Available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy21/cip_pdf/P509923.pdf.

proceed. Given the project's criticality rating and the population served by the facility, funding is necessary to improve reliability and accessibility for all building users.

By addressing the burdens and disparities created by the existing elevators, the modernization project at Progress Place aims to reduce racial inequities by improving accessibility for all users, particularly among minority residents who disproportionately face barriers to supportive services. With improved elevator access, the project will promote inclusivity, ensuring that individuals of all racial and economic backgrounds can access essential services.

For more information on ORESJ's approach to applying a racial equity lens to projects that involve upgrades to County facilities, please review REIA #23-70—Amendment to the FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program for the Public Safety Communications Center Phase I: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-70.pdf>. Additionally, ORESJ has written extensively on homelessness, shelter services, and transitional and permanent housing. Our most recent REIA 25-42⁷ on this topic references our analysis on numerous REIAs on this subject.

cc: David Dise, Director, Department of General Services
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

⁷ REIA #25-42 Services to End and Prevent Homelessness (SEPH), The Short-term Housing and Resolution Program SHARP, Shelter Services Expansion, Rental Assistance Program (RAP), and Housing Stabilization Services (HSS) Eviction Prevention Program. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/25-42.pdf>.