



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

October 30, 2017

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
Office of the County Executive
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Sent by e-mail

*Advice from the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board re:
Items to consider early in the 2019 Operating Budget process*

Dear County Executive Leggett:

As you work to prepare the Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget, the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board has maintained an ongoing dialogue within our community and has identified the below focus areas as priority budget items. As representatives of a growing, urban community, we urge your consideration of these areas of need in order to not only relieve suffering but as an investment by the County that will reduce future indirect costs while enhancing the overall prosperity of Silver Spring.

Homeless Services

As you noted in your recent visit to the SSCAB, the expansion of the Progress Place Homeless Shelter has come an increase in the population of homeless in downtown Silver Spring. The homeless population is often in need of a variety of services, including social work, mental health job placement services and housing assistance. We believe the emergency shelter can only go part way to supporting this population. In addition, we also recognize that the homeless population can lead to indirect costs including an increase in police hours to manage unruly behavior and vagrancy, as well deterring economic activity where homeless individuals congregate around businesses.

- *We therefore continue to support appropriate funding an effective homeless shelter services program, and collaboration with adjacent jurisdictions to adopt similar programs.*

Infrastructure/Roads and Facilities

We recognize that some road and construction disruptions are unavoidable if development is to continue. However, as emphasized at our October 9 SSCAB meeting, such disruptions are often in conflict, hard to anticipate, and do not adequately mitigate the near-term disruptions to residents in downtown Silver Spring and the surrounding neighborhoods, but also discourages visitors that contribute to economic activity, thus hurting local businesses and community life.

- *We urge you to include funding for the Department of Permitting Services to increase coordination and advance publicity of the major infrastructure work (similar to what was done for the move of the Walter Reed facility to Bethesda), as well as funding for additional mitigation efforts.*



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In addition, while we are grateful for new facilities, such as the Silver Spring Civic Center which has successfully increased community activity and community life, we also recognize that maintenance of these facilities cannot be deferred lest future costs, perhaps even higher due to neglected maintenance and repair, reduce community use.

- *We therefore urge the County adequately adopt "life cycle funding" to keep future costs down by adequately budgeting facilities maintenance.*

Affordable Housing and Rental Housing Outreach, Education and Organizing

With the growing percentage of Silver Spring residents living in rental housing has come an increase in rental housing instability and angst. Renters are unable to predict the amount of annual rent increases, nor can they be certain that landlords will renew their leases each year—or each month. We applaud the efforts of the County to expand services to enforce renters' rights through its "Renters Have Rights" campaign, as well as funding critical services to educate, organize and empower renters to act individually or collectively for their own welfare.

- *We urge the County to increase this funding commensurate with the growing need and increasing renter population.*

In addition, the stress of unstable housing costs the County by increasing healthcare costs—especially for seniors and the disabled as well as children as school officials reported to the SSCAB of increasing emotional issues faced by students living in substandard and unstable housing. Housing instability also strains housing code and landlord/tenant law enforcement staff time, and, affects student academic achievement.

- *We urge the County to increase funding for the preservation of existing workforce housing as well as the expansion of affordable housing opportunities for renters and owners as a way to reduce economic and human costs while investing in a more prosperous future for Silver Spring.*

We provide this advice in advance of the yearly budget forums anticipated to be held in January. As you know, Silver Spring's forum is consistently well-attended by many community members who will also speak - on behalf of groups and individually - to community needs. Thank you for your consideration of this advice letter and for your ongoing attention to the Silver Spring region, as we continue to strive for enhanced community and prosperity.

Sincerely, on behalf of the full Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board

- Signatures on file-

Matt Losak, Chair
Ed Levy, Vice Chair
Mark Mendez, Secretary
Abe Saffer, Secretary Parliamentarian

CC: Montgomery County Council