



TRANSITION TEAM REPORT

Prepared for

Howard County Executive Calvin Ball

January 2019

A Letter from the Team

January 2019

To the reader,

After his election, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball formed committees of experienced community members to assist and inform his administration's transition into office. Members were tasked with making recommendations to County Executive Ball regarding the full scope of county government, divided into ten issue areas. We were asked to gather findings that would identify current strengths, as well as opportunities for growth.

Our process involved conducting interviews with agency heads and some of their top staff. With the help of these dedicated public servants, we were able to glean useful insight into the needs of our County government. We believe that by building on Howard County's many successes, with an eye toward its potential, this administration can help Howard County continue to thrive.

In our conversations, both as a committee and with the various agency heads, we found ourselves continually returning to advancing the values of Howard County, and have structured our recommendations to achieve these goals. First and foremost, our government should strive for fair and equitable opportunity for every resident of Howard County. To realize our community vision of becoming a truly inclusive place to live, we should refocus on questions of diversity and equity. Every resident deserves access to high quality services ranging from education, housing, transportation, to healthcare and beyond.

Our committee also believes that opportunities exist to make our government more open and transparent. We suggest making services and information more easily available to everyone in Howard County, with a particular focus on the role of technology in improving consistency, speed, and accessibility. We encourage the identification and use of applicable data to drive informed decision making in all areas of government.

In order to expand economic opportunity and secure our financial future, particularly in light of predicted economic headwinds, we recommend improved efficiency and fiscal responsibility. We will outline a variety of suggestions, from infrastructure considerations to a review of our current organizational breakdown.

We also recommend efforts to ensure excellence in customer service. Howard County should be a place where everyone's voice is heard and where government works to serve the people, first and foremost.

When it comes to issues of security, we advocate for innovation and long-term planning. From the physical to the digital, safety should be a priority of this administration's work.

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Finally, we must acknowledge that Howard County exists as part of a larger, regional picture of government. We recommend leadership that fosters regional cooperation between localities, especially on our shared issues.

In this report we will provide specific options for how to achieve these goals. We believe they form a collective picture of government that is more efficient, responsive, and inclusive to the needs of everyone. We would like to thank County Executive Ball for this opportunity to serve Howard County and assist the work of his administration. During this time of transition, we look to the future with confidence in his leadership and a renewed sense of optimism for our community.

Gratefully and forever yours,

The Transition Team

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Transition Team

CHAIR

Guy Guzzone, Senator, Maryland General Assembly

STEERING COMMITTEE

Martha Anne Clark, Owner, Clark's Elioak Farm

Dr. Kathleen Hetherington, President, Howard Community College

Dr. Daraius Irani, Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Applied Research, Towson University

Tonya Kennon, President & CEO, Howard County Library System

Dr. Darryll Pines, Dean of Aerospace Engineering at the Clark School, University of

Maryland Young Smith, President, League of Korean Americans-Howard County

Steven Snelgrove, President, Howard County General Hospital

Ken Ulman, President, Margrave Strategies

Nikki Highsmith Vernick, CEO, The Horizon Foundation

Beverly White-Seals, President and CEO, Community Foundation of Howard County

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Thomas Bundy, Esq.

Jill Marie Bussey, Esq.

Roger Caplan, President, Caplan Group

Jeremy M. Eldridge, Esq.

Jessica Feldmark, Maryland State Delegate

Jack Lewis, Communications Consultant

TJ Mayotte, VP, Cyber Resilience Leader, Synchrony

Rajan Natarajan, Ph.D., MBA, President and CEO, Global Alliant, Inc.

Margaret Ann Nolan, Esq., Co-Founder and Principal, Decision Point Strategy Group, LLC

Shahan Rizvi, IT Team Leader

Charley Sung, Esq.

Josh Tzucker, Esq.

Courtney Watson, Maryland State Delegate and Former Howard County Council Member

William Woodcock, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

Staff | Jennifer Jones

CITIZEN SERVICES

Chair | C. Vernon Gray, Former Howard County Council Member and Former Administrator, Office of Human Rights

Co-Chair | Alicia Altamirano, Esq., Community Activist

Co-Chair | Rev. Larry Walker, Deputy Pastor, Celebration Church and President, African American Community Roundtable

Darin Atwater, Community Activist

Erica Byrne, Executive Director, Voices for Children Inc.

Max Crownover, Ph.D., President, PFLAG Columbia - Howard County

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Zainab Chaudry, Community Activist
Bita Dayhoff, President, Community Action Council
Paige Getty, Senior Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia and Co-Chair, PATH
Bob Gillette, President, Howard County Veterans Foundations, Inc.
Ainy Haider-Shah, Marketing Manager, Communications and PR, BD
Laura Howell, Executive Director, MD Association of Community Services
Lou Hutt, CPA, Esq., Managing Member and CEO, The Hutt Company
Deeba Jafri, Community Activist
Andrew Kanicki, Community Activist
Ying Matties, Community Activist
Niti Srivastava, Community Activist
Rev. Robert Turner, Senior Pastor, St Johns Baptist Church and Community Organizer
Staff | Jamila Ratliff

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Chair | Alicia Jones-McLeod, Executive Director, Black Chamber of Commerce
Nat Alston, Chair, Howard County EBOC
Cathy Bell, Co-owner & Operator, McDonald's Franchises
Warren Citrin, Founder, Raytheon Solipsys
Barry Curtis, President, Best Fence, LLC
Jetheda Hernandez, Economic Development Strategist & Entrepreneur
Steve Hunt, Senior Director Facilities & Real Estate Operations
Ira Levy, COO, Affiniti
Lisa Liu, Past President, U.S.-China Association of Commerce
Leonardo McClarty, CCE, President, Howard County Chamber of Commerce
Steve Sass, Esq.
Ed Trumbull, Vice President, ICF
Staff | Jennifer Jones

EDUCATION

Chair | Mamie Perkins, HCC Board of Trustees and Former Acting Superintendent, HCPSS
Lisa Davis, Director, Program Innovation and Student Well-Being, HCPSS
Maura Dunnigan, Former Rouse Scholars Advisor, HCC and Legislative Director, Maryland General Assembly
Frank Eastham, Retired Chief Officer of School Management and Instructional Leadership, HCPSS
Karina Fisher, Community Member
Laura Johnson, VP of Communications, National Summer Learning Association
Rick Kohn, Community Member
Julia McCready, Former Music Teacher, HCPSS
Thais Moreira, Ph.D., Medical Science Liaison, Allergan, Latin American Council, Community Action Council
Colleen Morris, President, HCEA
Dawn Popp, Esq., President, Greater Elkridge Community Association
Garnet Persons, Chief Executive Officer, E-Rate Elite Services, Inc.
Nat Turner, President, NBT Consulting, LLC. and BOE Operating Budget Review Committee Member
Staff | Maureen Evans-Arthurs

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ENVIRONMENT

Co-Chair | Grace Kubofcik

Co-Chair | Mark Southerland, Vice President, AKRF and Chair, Environmental Sustainability Board

Brooke A. Abercrombie, Workforce Manager, Howard EcoWorks

Howie Feaga, Howard County President, Maryland Farm Bureau

Josh Feldmark, Executive Director, Bike Maryland

Ann Jones, Director, Partners for Open Space

Tim Lattimer, Retired Diplomat

Kevin McAliley, Chair, Wilde Lake Village Board of Directors

John Tegeris, Ph.D., President, Dayton Rural Preservation Society

Ned Tillman, Principal, Sustainable Growth, LLC

China Williams

Staff | Jamila Ratliff

HEALTHCARE

Chair | Clarence Lam, Senator, District 12, Maryland General Assembly

Scott Berkowitz, Sr. Medical Director, Johns Hopkins Medicine and Associate Professor, JHU School of Medicine

Lori Doyle, Public Policy Director, Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland

Chesahna Kindred, MD

Hannah Lee, Student

Laurie Lundy, Addiction Recovery Advocate

Audra Nixon, MPH, Health Advocate

Deborah Rivkin, Vice President Government Affairs at CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

Rusty Toler, Senior Fellow, WISER

LanLan Xu, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, IMPAQ International

Staff | Tyler McCurdy

HOUSING

Chair | Ian Kennedy, Howard County Housing Board Commissioner

Liz Bobo, Former County Executive

Paul Casey, Former President and Current Board Member, Downtown Columbia Housing Corporation

Keith Gillan, President, Murn Properties

Sherman Howell, VP, African American Coalition of Howard County

Stacy Spann, Executive Director, Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission and Former Director, Howard County Housing Commission

Staff | Safa Hira

PLANNING, ZONING, & PERMITS

Chair | Nina Basu, Esq., Principal, Basu Law Firm

Ronald Brasher, President, Brasher Design

André J. Gingles, Esq., Gingles, LLC.

Rob Moxley, Security Development

Amran Pasha, Local Entrepreneur

Gregory Phillips

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Al Romack, Manager, R&D, AM and IP, Automotive Supplier
Jen Terrasa, Maryland State Delegate and former Howard County Council Member
Staff | Safa Hira

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chair | Herman Charity, Retired HCPD
Steve Bolen Ph.D., Former U.S. Intelligence, NASA and Air Force
Lisa Meyers, Chief, Howard County Police Department
Christine Uhlhorn, Chief, Howard County Fire and Rescue Services
Staff | Maureen Evans-Arthurs

PUBLIC WORKS

Chair | Tom Coale, Esq., Former VP, Ellicott City Partnership
Dale Chase, President, Local 3085 of AFSCME Council 67 - Department of Public Works
Mary Catherine Cochran, Former Director, Patapsco Heritage Greenway and Founder,
Preservation Howard County
Fred Ducca, Ph.D., Director, Transportation Policy Group, National Center for Smart Growth at
UMD
Anwar Hasan, Engineer, SVP, Louis Berger and Chairman, Maryland Higher Education
Committee
Kimberly Kepnes, Resident, property and business owner on Main Street Ellicott City
Tony McGuffin, Resident of Ellicott City, former Main Street business owner, and community
advocate.
Sharonlee Vogel, Vice-chair, Maryland Commission on Aging and Chairwoman, Senior
Advisory Committee, Columbia Association
Natalie Ziegler, Owner, Carroll Mill Farm
Staff | Tyler McCurdy

Administration

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Context: Government should strive for fair and equitable opportunity for every resident of Howard County. To realize our community vision of becoming a truly inclusive place to live, we should refocus on questions of diversity and equity. Every citizen deserves access to high quality services - from housing to transportation to healthcare and beyond.

Goal: Fair and equitable opportunity for every resident of Howard County.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Reorganize the Office of Human Rights: Consider renaming the office as the Office of Civil Rights. The committee members suggest that the Executive create a short-term work committee to further review this office immediately. The committee should focus on examining the underlying code that governs this area, case sourcing and the investigation process, and make recommendations on how the office can function as a model Civil Rights agency.
- Create and implement a Diversity and Inclusion Plan to attract and retain a diverse workforce: Use the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to implement, communicate, and engage the entire County workforce after plan creation. Additionally, create an Executive-level Steering Committee to guide the committee and provide the Executive-level support needed to be successful.
- Conduct a Disparity Study to review procurement procedures and processes with regard to the award of County contracts to people of color, women, and veteran-owned businesses: A disparity study will provide more data and context to understand where Howard County needs to go to meet County Executive's vision and shift from goal-oriented to a result-oriented outlook. Consider finding partners to help fund the study.
- Create/develop professional development paths within departments: Create and implement a leadership development rotational program, including career development plans for employees, that provides opportunities for County employees to gain new experiences and grow as leaders without having to leave County employ.
- Actively promote Howard County values by addressing critical issues head-on: Consider exploring utilizing proactive litigation to implement the Executive's priorities.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Open and Transparent Government

Context: Our committee also believes that opportunities exist to make our government more open and transparent. We suggest making services and information more easily available to everyone in Howard County, with a particular focus on the role of technology in improving consistency, speed, and accessibility.

Goal: An open and transparent government that effectively services the residents of our county.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Appoint a County PIA coordinator to improve the County's response to information requests: Within the PIO, appoint a person responsible for working with all custodian departments on MPIA requests, coordinating responses when more than one department's records are requested, and collecting data regarding the requests and responses. The Coordinator should be trained in proper response, logging and tracking requests, and equipped with tracking software to ensure the process is effectively managed. In particular, the coordinator should be trained to determine if the MPIA request and proposed response should be reviewed by an attorney in the Office of Law.
- Update and Upgrade the County Website to make information easily accessible to the public: The public's entry into all things Howard County government is the website. The current website needs to be redesigned to be easily accessible, user friendly, intuitive, and provide information in a clear and concise matter. The Executive should consider assigning ownership of the website to the Director of Communications with DTCS providing technical support. The PIO will manage all content creation with input from departments. The PIO webmaster has responsibility for the overall look and feel, acting as the clearinghouse for all content and development, while working with DTCS on technical issues. A workflow should be established for creating such content from the applicable departments, regularly updating such content beyond events, and ensuring that the customer is directed to the appropriate information. The website redesign should focus on: consistency; speed; user friendliness; intuitiveness; optimization for mobile; and adaptability, including for multiple languages and sensory needs.
- Make fiscal notes detailing the financial impact of legislation publicly available: The County should make information about the fiscal impact of proposed legislation available to the public, similar to the fiscal notes published on State legislation. In the immediate term, the Administration should publicize a fiscal note as a matter of open and transparent government. This sort of information also can help the public more easily track and evaluate proposed legislation. This additional level of review of the costs and benefits of proposed legislation will further help the County avoid major mistakes and increase the chances that newly enacted laws will serve the public's interest. If not done yet, the Budget Administrator should also brief the new Council on a macroeconomic analysis of Howard County. In the long term, consider proposing a Charter Amendment requiring fiscal notes for legislation to ensure the citizens of Howard County always have access to this critical information.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Efficiency and Fiscal Responsibility

Context: In order to expand economic opportunity and secure our financial future, particularly in light of predicted coming economic headwinds, we recommend improved efficiency and fiscal responsibility. We will outline a variety of suggestions, from infrastructure considerations to a review of our current organizational breakdown.

Goal: A fiscally stable county that is able to weather economic storms and prosper into the future.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Improve the IT infrastructure: DTCS has several ongoing and planned infrastructure improvement plans. Executive support for these plans is crucial for success. The Administration should ensure this continues.
- Create a comprehensive communication organization: Reunite the Director of Communications and the PIO and their staffs in a unified organization with shared office space to provide effective messaging from the County Executive and the County. Ensure all positions in the office have clearly defined responsibilities and appropriate resourcing and authorities. In particular, the office should grow the capability to communicate with the public using social media via streaming, social media channels, etc.
- Convene the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee (SAAC) and recommend that SAAC become a standing committee that continues to meet regularly throughout the year: The Committee is tasked with making recommendations to the County Executive on revenue projections, the debt ceiling, long-term fiscal outlook, and other observations and recommendations on County revenue and spending patterns. The Committee usually meets weekly from early January through February and prepares a report in March. We believe the committee should continue to meet throughout the year and provide the County Executive and the County Council with continued detail on revenue levels and the impact of economic indicators such as changes in personal income, assessable base growth, and other data that the Committee considers applicable.
- Continue with the study of the fiscal impact of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) on the County in today's economy: A study of the implications of APFO is important in light of projected economic headwinds and the effect of APFO. The study should be published to educate internal and external audiences. In addition, consider a fiscal impact analysis of extending the current Ellicott City watershed building moratorium.
- Review organization and responsibilities of Office of Transportation: Consider a possible reorganization to maximize opportunities for complete streets and efficiency across all transportation modes. Howard County needs a regional, comprehensive strategy for transportation in, out, and through Howard County.
- Develop outcome-based budgeting: Direct the Budget Office to partner with agencies on developing budgeting strategies that are focused on positive outcomes for residents and performance measures around agencies completing and fulfilling their strategic missions. Outcome-based budgeting would apply to both agencies and external groups (e.g., the EDA, grant funded agencies).
- Review current HR practices and procedures to find areas for improvement, with a focus on creating a world-class HR organization: Attention should be given to training, both within HR and in individual agencies, on staffing policies and the responsibilities of HR,

particularly vis-à-vis its relationship with other departments. It is also important to focus on opportunities for staff development, growth within departments, and retention.

- Consider reorganizing Purchasing with a broader mission: Consider redefining this Office as the Office of Procurement, with a mission that focuses on strategic sourcing. Provide training and certification in governmental procurement for existing employees and require such credentials in new hires. Increase the small purchasing threshold to improve efficiency and explore partnerships with HCPSS and HCC for bulk purchases.
- Revisit the Rainy Day Fund investment strategy to prepare for a downturn in the economy or a revenue shortfall. Currently, the Rainy Day Fund percentage of the general obligation is 7% and we suggest increasing it to a rate that is consistent with the priorities of the Administration.
- Minimize critical staff turnover: Place a high priority on training and continued organizational efficiencies, particularly around constituent services, with new staff to maintain employee morale and prevent excessive staff turnover.
- Continue focus on maintaining County AAA bond rating: The County's AAA bond rating allows us to borrow money at the lowest possible cost which contributes to the County's financial stability. When considering budgetary or financial issues, the maintenance of this rating should always be a priority.
- Provide Office of Law sufficient resources to support its representation of the County and its public officials: The retirement of two long serving attorneys from the Office of Law presents a challenge and opportunity requiring significant timely reorganization of the Office and bringing in any new expertise necessary to support the administrative, counsel, and litigation functions of the Office. One critical vacancy created by the retirements is that of Deputy. The new Deputy should be skilled in the management and supervision of attorneys to support the Solicitor.
- Allow Office of Law attorneys to concentrate on core issues: Consider appointing an office manager to handle administrative duties of the Office, rather than using attorneys to fulfill these responsibilities.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Excellence in Customer Service

Context: We recommend efforts to ensure excellence in customer service. Howard County should be a place where everyone's voice is heard and where government works to serve the people, first and foremost.

Goal: Ensure that residents interacting with government are able to do so effectively and have a positive experience when doing so.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Assign a full-time staff person in the Executive's office to be the point person/project manager for historic Ellicott City: Given the significant economic contribution of historic Ellicott City to both the County and the State, an issue of this magnitude needs a focused County representative. This could be a contingent position filled by a leader focused on

flood mitigation in the context of a holistic view of growth of both Ellicott City and Ellicott City as part of Howard County.

- Create a single management and issue tracking portal for employees: Create Countywide Steering Committee and change management effort around bringing as much functionality and procedures into one portal as possible, with an eye towards one-stop shopping and frictionless user experience. Ideally, the portal would be used to track frequency of specific subject matter calls from constituents, track closure of cases, track performance of agency requested, and provide more information to improve the website for optimal public outreach. Consider leveraging and expanding the use of the existing ServiceNow platform.
- Provide Executive level support for the work between DTCS and other County agencies to create a single login customer experience for residents: The portal will be a “one stop shop” for residents who would be able to use one login to pay bills, sign up for classes, pay traffic tickets, and so on. As part of this effort, the Administration should examine bill and citizen communications format and process in an effort to reduce the number of calls received (over 30k/year), including educating citizens and improving website FAQs.
- Assign a full-time staff person in the Executive’s office to be the point person/project manager for revitalizing Village Centers: Village Centers are a crucial piece of Columbia, providing access to every day needs for many of Columbia’s residents. They also create economic opportunities for our County’s small businesses, but many are in need of revitalization. A point person in the Executive’s office will ensure they receive the attention they need and deserve.
- Assign an information and referral specialist to handle all incoming calls: It is important to develop a constituent services operation that is second to none. The person in this position can successfully route constituent calls to the proper constituent services manager and ensure adequate language access for all residents. Move the current duties out of the PIO office.
- Consider providing extensive customer service training for new employees: The training should be for new staff to help them gain departmental knowledge and also learn appropriate techniques to handle inquiries with empathy and responsiveness and with cultural and linguistic sensitivity. Develop metrics to measure success.
- Provide the Office of Law more appropriate office space: Given that many Office of Law meetings are confidential, access to appropriate conference rooms and offices is crucial. At a minimum, designated secure areas, in which Office of Law has priority access, for internal deliberation and confidential meetings should be assigned in the short term. Develop a specific plan to provide the Office of Law appropriate space on a long-term basis when the State’s Attorney’s Office is relocated to the new Courthouse.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Innovation and Security

Context: When it comes to issues of security, we advocate for innovation and long-term planning. From traffic stops to cyberspace, safety should be a priority of this Administration’s work.

Goal: For the county to be ahead of the curve with respect to security and innovation.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Create a comprehensive Countywide branding initiative, both internal and external: The Executive should ensure all communications and materials speak with one voice. All marketing and content development functions should be aligned under the Director of Communications, with ongoing training provided to department content creators. The administration should give each department guidelines on how to use the logo, symbols, and colors, and when putting something out to the public there must be a County directed format. Finally, the Executive should examine the return on investment for current communications initiatives, including newsletters, and consider modernizing the County's approach. Consider more video, podcast, newsletters, blogs, and emerging communication formats.
- Increase focus on cyber security: The Executive should upgrade the currently vacant IT Security position to be a Chief Information Security Officer/Deputy CIO. Due to the difficulty in attracting IT talent, consider increasing the IT pay structure, using special categories, during the ongoing review of the County's pay scale. This structure can be modeled from other counties. Long-term, the Executive may consider bringing together cyber and physical security under a Chief Security Officer (CSO).
- Leverage Howard County's expertise to create a long-term cyber security strategy: Consider creating a community-based Cyber Security Steering Committee, which will be tasked with creating a long-term plan for a secure and modern Howard County infrastructure. With considerable local expertise in private sector, federal, and Department of Defense cyber security, the steering committee can concentrate on a long-term strategic roadmap while the Howard County CIO can continue near- and mid-term focus.
- Move the County to a more secure network and enterprise: Executive support for security requirements is critical for success. As examples, the Executive can consider:
 - Amending policy to remove personal devices from internal County networks,
 - Ensuring administrative representation on the Security Steering Committee, with monthly reports on security posture to the County Executive, and
 - Focusing on the expertise and space needed to create a Network Operations Center/Security Operation Center.
- Direct the Office of Transportation to focus on a Complete Streets Mission, including improving overall ADA compliance throughout the system, finding bike lane opportunities, and move Bike Howard forward: Complete Streets will ensure people of all ages and abilities can move around the County safely and efficiently, using their mode of choice, be it driving, walking, biking, or public transit. A focus on this mission will improve safety, quality of life, and sustainability in Howard County. Repaving County roads should be part of a comprehensive, strategic plan that maximizes all forms of transportation as appropriate, with resources aligned to the vision.

- Explore innovative opportunities through ride sharing companies to augment para/elder transit: The nature of shared transit has emerged as a new opportunity for transportation in Howard County. The administration should look to new ways of doing business that can increase access while decreasing overall cost, including leveraging existing ride sharing companies.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Regional Cooperation

Context: We must acknowledge that Howard County exists as part of a larger, regional picture of government. We recommend leadership that fosters regional cooperation between localities, especially on important issues of transportation.

Goal: Howard County partner with other counties and levels of government to achieve the best results for its residents.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Convene a summit of localities focused on regional transportation and Smart Cities issues and opportunities: The Executive should consider taking a leadership position and inviting all regional governments, including all counties, Baltimore City, Fredrick and Annapolis. The summit should discuss regionalism and transportation, to include what can be done together and what needs to change. Potential topics include:
 - Plans for Routes 29 and 32 that have impacts across County lines,
 - Transportation across major points to major transportation hubs, including BWI, Marc and Amtrak stations, and Metro stops,
 - Opportunities to jointly leverage Smart Cities resources, and
 - Encourage multi-jurisdictional purchasing and advocate for State legislative change.
- Work closely with state and federal delegations regarding funding priorities for Annapolis and DC and ensure Howard County gets necessary support: Transportation funding in particular has not increased to keep pace with Howard County's growth. Close coordination with Howard County's representation at all levels of government is critical to secure necessary resources.
- Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions on Route 1 revitalization: The Route 1 corridor is a growing economic and residential center for Howard County, but land use, infrastructure, and access has not kept pace. Given its size and importance, revitalizing Route 1 will require cooperation across several jurisdictions and robust public-private partnerships. The Executive should consider leading such a coordination project.

Citizen Services

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | The Department of Community Resources and Services Administrative Offices

Context: The Department of Community Resources and Services exists to provide services to the most vulnerable residents of the county – elderly, children, and their families; those who are disabled; those with no or low income – and ensures that those needing services have access to them. The department’s eight offices and over 60 programs accomplish their missions through collaborations and partnerships to deliver services efficiently and effectively.

Goal: Provide awareness and transparency of DCRS Programs.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish an Office of Communication within the Department to develop, coordinate, and provide targeted information to residents about its many available services – e.g., coordinate internal and external activities; coordinate special events; manage customer services; and handle inquiries from partners, residents, and the media.

Goal: Enhance efficiency through the elimination of duplication.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Option for early action: Eliminate the mandate requiring nonprofits and partner agencies to use DCRS software. Current practice duplicates software already used by nonprofits and partner agencies, which creates confusion and does not promote efficiency.

Goal: Ensure synergy between actual functions of positions and qualifications of personnel, which will also give greater clarity to position functions.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Assess and update DCRS HR Classification System. The service delivery model is evolving as our population changes. Accordingly, it is imperative that the Department be properly staffed to meet the needs. This study should include a thorough salary review as well as a skills gap analysis. The Department must position itself for the needs of tomorrow.

Goal: Ensure there is adequate staff who are bilingual and/or multilingual.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

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- A greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring programs and services are offered to residents in their native language. In those areas where the county cannot provide the resource, the non-profit, faith-based, volunteer and professional communities should be engaged.

Goal: Invest in Technology that focuses on enabling access and “self-help.”

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- As the county’s Human Services Department, DCRS serves the most vulnerable among us. Accordingly, the department must leverage the latest technology available, which will allow the residents of Howard County to efficiently identify what resources and services are available.
- In addition, inter-departmental coordination across the county can be vastly improved with improved technology. This subcommittee encourages the County Executive and his leadership team to think “big” in implementing a broad county wide technology infrastructure.

Goal: Implement a Marketing and Communications function within the Department of Community Resources and Services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Department offers a wide breadth of services to the community, however, that message is not reaching the most vulnerable efficiently and effectively. A broad communications strategy is necessary to achieve the mission of the Department. This strategy should include the creation of a Director of Communications position as well as the necessary support staff.

Goal: Recruit, hire and retain a Policy Analyst for the Department with an emphasis on data-driven accountability.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- DCRS needs an oversight function to evaluate programming, study of current goals, implementations, and outcomes. This function should be tasked with creating accountability reports that are quantifiable and determine adjustments/future recommendations.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Office of Children and Families

Context: The mission of the Office of Children and Families is to provide information and access to resources for families to ensure all children in our community thrive. The goal of the Office is to work in concert with the community to coordinate, develop, expand, and enhance children and family services in Howard County.

Goal: Increase Marketing and Community Outreach, to schools, churches, nonprofits and the public.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Invest in technology that will enable the public easy access to services and information as well as allow for interactive communication where residents and caretakers can more effectively communicate their needs. An additional staff resource within the Office is likely required to accomplish this goal.

Goal: Enhance a more effective and efficient utilization of resources in addressing pre-kindergarten children with issues such as behavioral health, food access and more.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish partnership and coordination with the County's Head Start Program whose primary focus is prekindergarten children.

Goal: Increase the availability of Mental Health services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Increase funding to attract quality providers, especially relating to trauma informed Providers (assist with mileage, office space, bonuses.) There is a lack of providers due to reimbursement rate (especially for Medical Assistance) and the demand for services greatly exceeds the availability of services.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Office of Human Trafficking Prevention

Context: The mission of the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention is to prevent human trafficking in Howard County and beyond.

Goal: Identify opportunities for awareness and education, and partnerships with nonprofits, police, and others.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Create liaisons with other civic and faith-based organizations, including the school system, to further the goals of Human Trafficking awareness as well as identify any support gaps for victims of Human Trafficking.

Goal: Increase the number of opportunities for Training & Education in the community.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Increase the staffing level of this office by a minimum of one staff member who will be focused on training and education, supervising volunteers, and as general office support.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Local Children's Board

Context: The mission of the Local Children's Board is to ensure that all children and youth in Howard County are safe, healthy and have the opportunities to succeed, with adults who provide them a nurturing community.

Goal: Review for possible implementation the recommendations of the recently completed Equity Report.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The County Executive should meet with Members of the LCB Equity Committee to review and discuss the complete Equity Report.

Goal: Provide cost effective, sustainable services in Howard County.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Grants for Request for Proposals (RFP) should continue to be open for proposals, as this will allow a pool of qualified candidates who offer cost effective sustainable alternatives.

Goal: Engage with local civic, community and faith-based organizations to increase partnerships and opportunities to increase services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Explore booths at local events, faith-based organizations; continue to work with the school system and hospital to increase awareness of services and educations. Work to identify gaps and determine who is not being reached, why are they not being reached, and what can be done to reach them. Continue to promote communication, accountability, and involvement, especially within the school system.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Community Service Partnerships

Context: Effective and community-oriented systems of collaboration and partnerships are enormously positive steps toward achieving the needs of an increasingly diverse population – more diverse in age, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and physical & mental abilities.

In particular, Community Service Partnerships are key to serving the needs of residents and is particularly situated for collaboration with the nonprofit community and other agencies. Resources – financial and other – may be leveraged to accomplish much beyond what county government can do, though CSP cannot and should not replace government responsibility. And CSP has unparalleled opportunity to promote the values of equity, diversity and inclusion through its grant making process and the several services it supervises and administers.

Goal: Promote efficiency and less duplication of services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Eliminate the Board to Promote Self-sufficiency to avoid duplication of services. The Community Action Council of Howard County is the premier organization in the County and for over 50 years has worked to eliminate poverty and promote self-sufficiency. This Board’s mission is to “work to reduce incidence of poverty in Howard County”. Furthermore, setting issues and priorities should be done by the Coalition to End Homelessness, not the Board to Promote Self-sufficiency.

Goal: Reduce homelessness and near-homelessness in Howard County by creating greater awareness of prevention programs and implementing more – and more effective – eviction prevention.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Change name of Continuum of Care (COC) to Office of Homelessness Services & Prevention. While “Continuum of Care” is enshrined in law as the name of the program focusing on homelessness, the committee recommends this name change to communicate more clearly that the office handles homelessness issues. Additionally, the office strategy should have greater emphasis on re-housing residents who are homeless and preventing at-risk residents from becoming homeless.

Goal: Provide for greater efficiencies, fiscal responsibilities, and effective program outcomes.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Explore multi-year grant contracts for grantees who have a strategic focus that extends multiple years and thus enable better planning and sustainability.

Goal: Ensure greater operational efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in grant recipients and county service programs.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish performance metrics for evaluation.
- Assess all nonprofit grantees and all county service programs to ensure that funds allocated are utilized according to plan of action, and whether or not additional targeted assistance is needed.

Goal: Ensure that immigrants receive and benefit from necessary services – language interpretation/ translation, legal assistance, housing, and more.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish a Coordinator for Immigration Affairs in the County Executive’s office. There are over 20% foreign born in Howard County. There are many challenges and gaps in the services to address mental health issues of children (anxiety, fear) and families (fear of

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deportation), language barriers, need for assistance with citizenship applications, job counseling, housing assistance; etc. FIRN does an excellent job, but it is under-resourced and underfunded. Coordination of services would facilitate the delivery of necessary and appropriate services to immigrant residents, including legal counseling. This position should serve as a liaison between HCPD and the Immigrant community.

Goal: Establish an Office on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- As the county becomes increasingly diverse across religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural lines it is believed that a targeted focus on understanding the unique aspects of our diverse population would strategically position Howard County for a bright future that is fully inclusive.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Boards and Commissions

Context: County leaders must ensure that all boards and commissions fully represent the demographic diversity of the county.

Goal: Promote the rich diversity of the County and its cultural traditions.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Executive's Office, as well as a DEI Commission to help the DEI Coordinator in the CE's office to make recommendations and execute programs. Among DEI's responsibilities: interfaith advisory council; promoting and celebrating the vibrant and varied arts cultures in our county.

Goal: Ensure that Boards and Commissions have diverse memberships.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Assess Boards' and Commissions' current membership.
- Pursue corrective actions to adequately represent the full diversity of the County – in age, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and physical & mental abilities – sincerely promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Goal: To provide LGBTQ advocacy, education, and support for all who live and/or work in the county

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish a LGBTQ Commission.

Goal: Establish a Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- As the county becomes increasingly diverse across religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural lines it is believed that a targeted focus on understanding the unique aspects of our diverse population would strategically position Howard County for a bright future that is fully inclusive.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Office of ADA Coordination

Context: The Office of ADA Coordination provides technical assistance to County departments and informal guidance to the public regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability rights laws. The Office of ADA Coordination supports County government’s efforts in ensuring that disability-related policies, procedures and practices are implemented in compliance with applicable requirements and that buildings and facilities are built and maintained in accordance with the ADA and other laws.

Ensuring our county facilities and programming is accessible to residents with disabilities is a tall order giving the complexity of cases emerging in our society. This office struggles in seeing the fruits of its labors come to bear. As a small office within one Department, the office sometimes faces push back and resistance from other offices outside of DCRS due to this office’s lack of enforcement authority. Structural and staffing changes are likely required for this office to achieve its full mission.

Goal: Relocate the Office of ADA Coordination to County Administration.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The County would be better served if this office had stronger enforcement authority. This can be achieved, in part, by moving the office to report directly to the County’s Chief Administrative Officer. Additionally, the committee recommends the County Executive work with the County Council to determine any legislative action that may be necessary to provide the Office greater enforcement authority over County agencies.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Office of Veterans and Military Families

Context: The Office of Veterans and Military Families recognizes the growing needs of the more than 20,000 veterans who call Howard County home. Our office provides guidance, information and access to Howard County veterans, military families, their dependents and survivors; promotes activities that serve veterans of all ages; and collaborate with other service providers to address more complex issues. With the various programs and services offered within our government, nonprofit and business community, we assist in the navigation of available resources. The Department of Community Resources and Services’ “No Wrong Door” policy can help identify scams targeting military members, assist a disabled veteran or veteran caregiver with services, help a homeless veteran find housing, and assist a relocating military family with childcare options.

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Goal: Grow the Office to include additional staff.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Currently, this office is staffed by one Part-Time county employee. Given the size of the Veteran and Military Family population in the county, this office should be staffed at a higher level.

Goal: Identify opportunities to provide transportation to/from VA Medical Centers that serve the Howard County Veteran Population.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- It is no secret that access to transportation in Howard County is an ever-growing need. For the Veteran population, that need is exacerbated given the nearest VA Medical Center is located in Baltimore City. With over 20,000 Veterans in the County, there is an immediate need to assist in providing access to the VA Medical Centers that serve Howard County Veterans. Neighboring jurisdictions, such as Carroll County, have transportation programs for Veterans. Howard County should work with local Veteran Service Organizations to assess this need and work to implement a transportation assistance program for our Veterans.

Goal: Identify the feasibility of implementing a Veterans Treatment Court.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Howard County has an effective Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court. It is recommended that this program be extended to include a Veterans Treatment Court. Coordination with the Howard County State's Attorney's Office as well as the Chief Administrative Judge for Howard County is necessary for this action.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Office on Aging and Independence

Context: The mission of the Office on Aging and Independence is to ensure that Howard County older adults and persons with disabilities have the resources they need to grow, thrive, and live with dignity by improving access to services and supports, promoting individual choice, and enhancing efficiency and quality of services. There are currently 26 different programs that service the aging population of Howard County.

As the population of older Americans, both in portion as well as raw numbers, continues to rise, the number of older adults that truly wish to age in place is also rising, currently 13% of county residents are over age 65 and over 42,000 are enrolled in Medicare. As these numbers increase the burden on county resources to meet the physical, emotional and mental health needs of this population will also grow.

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Older adults are the cornerstone of our traditions and cultures and are instrumental in having fostered in the quality of life we have come to love and expect in Howard County. Accordingly, the committee would like to see continued implementation of the 2015 “Creating an Age-Friendly Community” Plan.

Goal: Ensure efficiencies and programmatic outcomes (non-duplication of efforts) are being achieved.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Conduct an assessment of OAI eligibility and using technology, track older, low-income Medicaid recipients for service provision. There are other Departments in the County that offer programming for the same population groups OAI aims to serve. By coordinating efforts, these agencies can offer more robust and complete programming to our vulnerable residents.

Goal: Ensure that older residents being discharged from hospitals to their homes are provided assistance with discharge instruction and information as needed.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish partnerships with the non-profit organizations to develop a program to minimize readmission rates. Data shows many readmissions occur within 30 days of discharge.

Goal: Ensure that low-income older adults have access to the service provided by the Office.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish partnership with the Health Department to increase income threshold for Medicaid eligibility and utilize technology to track older low-income Medicaid recipients for service provision.

Goal: Implement a rebranding campaign to better reach the constituency this office is charged with serving.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- This office has been pigeonholed as the office that only serves “older” residents. This is not the case. This office aims to serve residents of all ages. Accordingly, the name and message coming from this office must reflect the true nature of the programs and services offered.
- This initiative should include renaming of the 50+ centers. This infrastructure can be better leveraged to serve the entire population of vulnerable individuals, not just those of a certain age.

Goal: Engage the Faith-based Community and other Civic Organizations.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- This initiative will provide OAI and the entire Department a means to identify the vulnerable as well as educate them on the services and resources available to them. In addition, these organizations can educate the Department on the current and future needs.

Goal: Expand home meal delivery by leveraging existing infrastructure.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The County owns many facilities with commercial grade kitchens. In addition, many houses of worship and community centers in the county also have commercial kitchens. OAI can leverage these assets and the Faith Based / Civic Organizations to expand its Meals programs to serve more individuals in need, including the homeless.

Goal: Expansion of Home and Community Based Services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Programs such as the Loan Closet offer our most vulnerable residents' opportunities to live with dignity. Often times these residents face challenges in accessing these services. OAI should look for opportunities to bring the services to the residents in cases where the residents cannot get to the services. By leveraging existing infrastructure, OAI may be able to implement "office hours" at remote locations for those residents that face transportation challenges in getting to the DCRS facilities in Columbia.

Goal: Establish a "Passport to Service" program for County Residents & Volunteers.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Howard County has a vibrant volunteer community. There are many opportunities for individuals to serve organizations, however, there is no known mechanism for individuals with needs to "register" to receive services. Having a Passport Program would enable residents who need assistance with day-to-day tasks to register and be matched with a Volunteer who can provide that assistance. The goal of this program would be to connect the needs with a care provider for simple, ordinary tasks such as grocery shopping, meal preparation or moving the trash bin to the curb for pick-up. The idea is to "help a neighbor that you have not met yet".

Goal: Increase access to transportation for seniors.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The County currently has a population of 13 percent seniors with projected increase to 20 percent by 2035. Current services are not adequate, and it is a matter of public safety.

Goal: Ensure that residents of all ethnic backgrounds feel that their culture is accepted and is accessible to them.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Provide more culturally diverse food for community-provided lunches at senior community centers.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Office of Consumer Protection

Context: Many individuals are unfamiliar with consumer protection laws and struggle with communication, leaving them vulnerable to being taken advantage of by scams, deceptive trade practices, and so on. The Office of Consumer Protection currently provides a “Language Friendly initiative” that helps answer questions for Korean-American community members who are unable to easily communicate in English, allowing them to access the Office’s services in a more easily responsive way.

Goal: Expand support for other languages and cultures in the county.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Expand the Language Friendly Initiative for other communities with a language barrier such as the Spanish-speaking and Chinese-speaking communities.

Goal: Further Partner with Montgomery County on Consumer Protection initiatives.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Montgomery County has a similar program for Consumer Protection. Coordinate the marketing of the Language Friendly Initiative with Montgomery County and share consumer protection resources such as databases of reported cases.

Goal: Expand education on Consumer Protection.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Many individuals lack education on avoiding scams and malicious practices. Language barriers and cultural differences may also prevent individuals from reporting such cases. Stronger education in these areas will help them overcome these barriers and identify such cases.

Economic Development

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Context: Diversity and inclusion is a core value in the County. This committee believes there are opportunities to expand procurement initiatives to include more minority-owned and women-owned businesses. Additionally, we seek a workforce strategy that serves all residents, including the under-employed, unemployed and youth residents who can evolve to become our future workforce, employers, and entrepreneurs.

Goal: A County strategy that places diversity as a central factor in its planning for development.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Implement and expand utilization of minority-owned and women-owned businesses in County procurement. Past efforts have been aspirational and have not reached the level of consistent and expected goals. The current subcontracting goal applies to contracts valued at \$50,000 or more and we recommend the goal be retained but additional oversight should be implemented to ensure that the goal is met or exceeded annually.
- Include a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Public-Private Partnership (P3) development projects. All future TIFs and P3s should incorporate in a transparent fashion, a Community Benefits Agreement that publicly and specifically articulates percentages for Women, Minority, Veteran, Disabled and Small Business Enterprises. Additionally, the CBA should state Workforce Development goals for hiring, creation of apprenticeships, and employment of individuals with barriers to employment.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Open and Transparent Government

Context: In a time where doubt is expressed in conversations on the trustworthiness of government at varying levels, and where uncertainty looms on the horizon, we believe it is imperative that government be open, and transparent about both what it does and why.

Goal: The county should be an open and committed partner in addressing the needs of both businesses and workers.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Increase operational collaboration among County Administration, Economic Development Authority (EDA) and Workforce Development. These stakeholders should lead the implementation of the coordinated economic development plan. This coordinated plan provides the guidance for business recruitment and retention, redevelopment, procurement, partnerships, job access and training goals for the County. Special attention

should be paid to the issue of workforce development. The plan should be reviewed and amended periodically to reflect changing conditions.

- Creation of a Workforce Development work group to increase employer engagement, enhance employer services, increase coordination between the education and business communities and expand community awareness. The work group goal is to create a comprehensive five-year workforce strategy to serve all residents and employers in Howard County. Howard County's strategic location, strong employment base, enviable quality of life, region-leading public education system and superior suburban setting, position it as an excellent place to live and do business. More than 10,000 businesses and government agencies employ over 170,000 workers. Corporate citizens range from healthcare, biotech, information technology, telecommunication, wholesale distributors, nonprofit/philanthropic entities, and additive manufacturers. [1]
- There should be representation from key stakeholders: Office of Workforce Development, Economic Development Authority, Howard Community College, Howard County Public School System, key employers and applicable State agencies. This group would also benefit by including specialized education institutions such as Lincoln College of Technology, Maryland University of Integrative Health, and university programs including Johns Hopkins University, Loyola University Maryland, University of Phoenix, and the University of Maryland University College.
- Ongoing Economic Development subcommittee meetings. In order to help develop, implement and track metrics, we suggest ongoing subcommittee meetings to support the Administration in evaluating performance and effectiveness of economic development in the County. More extensive and ongoing analysis of the programs and opportunities outlined in this document is imperative to ongoing economic prosperity.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Efficiency and Fiscal Responsibility

Context: The administration should identify appropriate metrics reflecting achievement of goals and levels of growth and establish new metrics to guide future decision making.

In order to address the predicted downturn in the economy, we made several suggestions that focus on fiscal responsibility.

Goal: An efficient and fiscally healthy county for years to come.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Revisit the Rainy Day Fund investment strategy. Based on national guidance as well as research on similar initiatives in surrounding jurisdictions, it is strongly encouraged that the Administration consider increasing the ongoing investment in the Rainy Day Fund to prepare for a downturn in the economy or a revenue shortfall. Currently, the Rainy Day Fund percentage of the general obligation is 7% and we suggest increasing it to a rate that is consistent with the priorities of the Administration. [2]

- Complete the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) study that was commissioned to review the financial impact of this legislation on the County. Consider completing the study in the first 100 days of the new Administration in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of APFO on economic development. Should it be determined that enhancements to the legislation are required, we recommend the Administration maintain this as a high priority.
- Establish an “Efficiency Ombudsman” directly accountable to the County Executive. The FY2019 budget guidance requested County agencies and departments submit suggestions and information on efficiency and savings throughout the government. The process of implementation of these suggestions was not clear. We suggest the Administration appoint a department or key executive to maintain a high priority for this initiative and oversee the implementation of recommendations identified in this effort. Short-term opportunities should be implemented, and long-term opportunities should be flagged and followed for future implementation. This program will serve to offset other expenditures, including some of the recommendations herein.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Excellence in Customer Service

Context: There should be a renewed focus on outreach to new and potential county employers as well as retention and expansion opportunities for current business owners in the County.

Goal: Ensure that Howard County is a great place to start, and to keep doing business.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Develop outcome-based initiatives to grow and support existing businesses. National data shows that most job growth occurs from the expansion of existing businesses. The implementation of outcome-based initiatives by the Administration and EDA that track business outreach, capital investment and funding would support existing businesses.
- Continue programs that support existing industries, such as the Agricultural Land Preservation Board, as it assumes the broader mandate given to it by the council. Additionally, encourage the practice of effective communication and customer service through industry specific representatives such as the office of the Ag Ombudsman.
- Encourage partnerships in the County in order to create solutions for sustainable development. Developers, the Columbia Association and private entities control a substantial portion of the developed and developable land in the County. Therefore, continuing partnerships to ensure community engagement and support of planned developments will be in the best interest of the new Administration.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Innovation

Context: As we evolve from a County of primarily greenfield development to one of infill and redevelopment, we must embrace smart commercial strategies. We must reimagine, as a more mature County, how we support businesses and develop an improved model for economic development in the County and in the region.

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A large part of the economic success of the County will be due to innovation and revitalization of key areas in the County, such as Gateway and Route 1.

Goal: To ensure that Howard County continues to grow thoughtfully, including the businesses that start here.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Create a Redevelopment Authority in order to assist the County in stimulating economic revitalization. As a mature community, we need to consider revitalization as a primary development strategy. Providing a managed process through a Redevelopment Authority will provide for effective future development.
- Develop and support strategies that increase the commercial tax base in order to reduce the upward pressure on the residential tax base. Examples of such current commercial development opportunities include Columbia Gateway, Route 1 corridor, Village Centers and others. As suggested above, the Redevelopment Authority is key in this effort.
- Create an Innovation Fund for short-term economic development needs. This fund would be available to ensure the County can be responsive to unanticipated needs, particularly between budget cycles. New ideas and support systems in Howard County are necessary to build the business environment. An Innovation Fund could be used for development of focused new capabilities (such as the 3D printing initiative of recent years) or for marketing efforts and outreach when circumstances provide such an opportunity.
- Develop an Accelerator Program to provide support for new businesses in high growth target industries. This will allow Howard County to capitalize on opportunities from Fort Meade and Cyber Command. While not a definitive listing, potential target industries could include:
 - Cybersecurity
 - Bio-medical & Health technology
 - App development program

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Integration with Transportation

Context: Transportation is an additional consideration that was not formally evaluated by this group but was highlighted due to its importance with respect to job access and attracting businesses and talent.

Goal: A county transportation system that will ensure access to jobs for employees, and access to employees for businesses.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Integrate Economic Development and Workforce Development initiatives with transportation improvements. Transportation and affordable housing improvements increase job access, result in a larger pool of employees available for the job market and can be a factor in shifting the business sectors attracted to the County. Specifically, the

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economic revitalization of the Gateway District and Route 1 depend on robust transportation solutions.

[1], Maryland Department of Commerce website, Brief Economic Fact // Howard County, Accessed December 13, 2018

[2] Michael Gordon, "\$41M in budget cuts proposed for Montgomery County," LocalDMV.com, Dec. 11, 2018, <https://www.localdvm.com/news/i-270/-41m-in-budget-cuts-proposed-for-montgomery-county/1653801686>.

Education

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Funding

Context: Education has always been a top priority in Howard County, and this recommendation recognizes our community's pride in an education system that ranks among the top in the state. This recommendation is anchored in a commitment to advance creative solutions and fiscal efficiencies that ensure an exceptional teaching and learning environment for all students, families, educators, administrators and support staff across the three anchor education institutions.

Goal: Implement innovative approaches to fund our educational budgets in a manner that reflects the needs and priorities of the community.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Promote budget transparency and increased collaboration among County Government, HCPSS, HCLS and HCC with community priorities, needs of learners at the core of all decision making among partner education agencies.
- Ensure equity in funding of programs and materials and consider meaningful incentives to improve outcomes for all groups, particularly students of color, students who are low income, English Language Learners and students with disabilities.
- Monitor and advocate for federal and state funding to ensure all institutions within our educational system receive the full amount of its needs-based funding.
- Restore funding proportional to student enrollment and the cost of inflation.
- Assess and develop a comprehensive plan to allocate revenue from the Education Lock Box generated through casino revenue in accordance with state guidelines and education needs.
- Work with Howard County State Legislators to give Howard County local control to assess and adjust school impact fees for developers.
- Explore more creative, public/private partnerships, grant funding or pro-bono collaboratives to help close the gap in unmet programmatic, training, or capital improvement needs.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Capital Improvements

Context: Appropriate capital investments for our education institutions' infrastructure are critical to providing safe, healthy and innovative teaching and learning environments for all. This recommendation builds on a campaign commitment to assess and prioritize safety measures in

our educational institutions, deferred maintenance projects, school infrastructure, and technological needs.

Goal: Create a proactive and collaborative planning model for capital investments based on accurate data, student and family needs and a comprehensive process that leverages economies of scale where appropriate across the educational institutions.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Commission an office to explore public/private partnerships (3P) to examine the possibilities of leveraging the economies of scale around technology, construction and deferred maintenance across the three educational systems. This can serve as a blueprint for other impactful collaborations across the three pillar organizations in order to increase revenue and reduce expenses.
- Ensure that all new construction is built with net zero-carbon emitting buildings. When remodeling old facilities, an effort should be made to decrease their carbon footprint.
- For HCPSS, this would include expediting HS 13 and HS14, working with HCPSS to develop and plan to more effectively and proactively utilize existing school capacity and encouraging collaboration between the County Council and HCPSS to ensure that future school planning is based on accurate projections regarding student yields from existing and future development.
- For HCC, this would include moving forward with construction of the much-needed new athletic facility.
- For HCLS, this would include planning for relocation and design of Central Library, creating greater capacity and an opportunity to better serve the community by co-locating with affordable housing.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Equity of Opportunity

Context: According to the Maryland State Department of Education, “educational equity” means that every student has access to the opportunities, resources and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success and social emotional well-being and to view each student’s individual characteristics as valuable. The characteristics of each individual student include but are not limited to ability (cognitive, social emotional and physical), ethnicity, family structure, gender identity and expression, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economics. The new educational equity regulations establish equity as a priority for the Maryland State Department of Education and all local school systems.

According to the HCPSS Learning and Leading with Equity Strategic Call to Action, equitable supports ensure every student achieves personalized goals. High-quality special education services are consistently delivered across the county and reflect the input and collaboration of families. Howard County stands ready and committed to a plan for reimagining equity in its three anchor education institutions, galvanizing action and focusing resources to address gaps and their root causes.

Goal: Foster and advance a system-wide “culture” in which equity of opportunity is prioritized at all levels within our pillar education institutions and the needs of special populations e.g., English Language Learners, low income families, learners with disabilities, are integrated into a plan that makes measurable progress in bridging the achievement/opportunity gaps in Howard County.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Creatively leverage resources of pillar educational organizations, government agencies and nonprofits to prepare all students, especially our most vulnerable, for college, careers and life.
- Track progress and community advocacy around the Kirwan Commission’s recommendations and funding formula, designed to ensure that all students, regardless of race and ethnicity, are “college- and career-ready” by grade 10, including broadly expanding early-childhood education, increasing teacher pay, and boosting spending on special education.
- Expand a restorative justice culture that equips pillar education organizations with a systemic vision, best practices, along with culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy to support trusting, supportive, positive learning environments that reflect the County’s values of diversity, equity and inclusion. This should include training on unconscious bias and the potential for it to impact disciplinary decisions.
- Review the Early Childhood Education Action Group Recommendations for historical context of community needs and relevant strategies to advance access, availability and coordination of quality early education efforts.
- Evaluate the current capacity of the Head Start program.
- Support evidence based practices and initiatives that promote academic achievement among underperforming student groups.
- Proactively review, assess and recommend outreach strategies to increase access and delivery of education services and information to underserved students and families that may include expanded translation of information, sign language interpretation as well as visual or physical accommodations.
- Work across all agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to increase and support student success in Advanced Placement and dual enrollment offerings for low income and minority students as well as out of school time/summer enrichment that may advance student success.
- Build creative partnerships with industry leaders and education partners to develop cultural and global competencies necessary for our students to compete in emerging vocational or STEM opportunities in today’s economy.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Health and Safety

Context: In order to thrive, students and families need to feel safe, nurtured and supported. Our education system has a duty to ensure the highest standards of safety and to shape supports that foster mental wellness for students and families.

Goal: Coordinate more closely among the three pillar agencies to develop and implement holistic, equitable approaches to health, safety and wellness.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Enhance safety protocols across all institutions with a particular focus on students with special needs
- Promote relationships between law enforcement and educational systems in order to increase the frequency of positive interactions between officers and members of the community.
- Clearly define roles, expectations, and partnerships of the law enforcement (SRO's, security, and patrol officers) present within educational systems.
- Expand outreach, supports and professional development for mental well-being services through collaboration with community service providers that support the needs of students in school and out of school.
- Explore opportunities to coordinate with area farmers to enhance healthy eating options.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Workforce

Context:

Building a vibrant and thriving community begins with its community and an education workforce that is diverse, responsive, supported, and competitively compensated. Our educators remain the single largest in-school factor in students' academic success and it is our obligation to compete for the best educators as well as administrators, support staff at many levels who make significant contributions to the teaching and learning environment for all.

Goal: Monitor and encourage collaboration with all agencies to reimagine, prioritize and advance best practices in attracting and retaining the best workforce that reflects our diverse community.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Require meaningful professional development, training on cultural proficiency and unconscious bias, and bilingual staffing at all levels to meet the needs of our diverse populations.
- Create partnerships for mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, return opportunities and other programs that support lifelong learning as well as professional, personal growth establish public/private partnerships for leadership growth
- Strategic offices and positions dedicated to implementation and evaluation of equity measures
- Create competitive compensation and incentives across all levels

Additional Resources

- Strategic Call to Action HCPSS

County Executive Transition Team Report

- Council of Chief State School Officers Advancing Equity Report
- HCC Commission on the Future Report
- HCLS Vision 2020

Environment

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Fully Embed Climate and Sustainability in County Decision-making

Context: To maintain the high quality of life for which Howard County is nationally known, decision-making at all levels must ensure that development and operations are sustainable and climate-smart. This is an environmental, economic, and equity issue. If the county is to be inclusive of and fair to everyone, then development must be sustainable so that our children and future generations have the opportunities and quality of life we do.

Goal: Fully imbed climate and sustainability considerations in County decision-making.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The County Executive makes a public commitment to incorporating climate and sustainability in County decision-making and directs all department staff that this is a priority.
- Appoint and empower senior advisors to the County Executive who are responsible for reviewing all major decisions to ensure they are sustainable and climate-smart.
- Recognize the Office of Community Sustainability (perhaps renamed Office of Sustainability) as the research and facilitation organization that develops initiatives in coordination with other county departments.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Improve Outreach and Engagement with the Public on the Environment

Context: The citizens and businesses of Howard County continue to feel that they are not fully aware or engaged in important environmental activities of County government. The current website is hard to navigate and many useful forms of communication with the public are not being used. Environmental issues are a major concern for citizens, and most are not aware of substantial environmental successes that are being achieved. They may be more encouraged to act on these issues if they know they are part of a countywide effort.

Goal: Improve outreach and engagement with the public on environmental impacts of government actions, so that individuals and businesses can help the county reach its environmental goals.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Revamp and expand the public outreach approach of County government to provide better and wider access to government decisions and actions.

- Greatly expand the use of social media and other communication means currently used by citizens and businesses. Communicate by using “what is being used.”
- Increase the outreach to citizens and businesses through direct staff interactions at all events countywide, not just county-sponsored events.
- Celebrate the environmental successes of Howard County, such as energy savings, sustainable agriculture, and the expected meeting of the MS4 stormwater permit.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Increase Funding for Environmental Actions through Multiple Sources

Context: Environmental activities needed to achieve sustainability and long-term stability for Howard County have been chronically underfunded. With the exception of the MS4 stormwater program, which is legally required under the Clean Water Act, most environmental initiatives have been grant-funded pilots. Even stormwater management efforts have had to patch funding together from unsustainable sources when the watershed protection fee was reduced. Going forward, stormwater maintenance needs will outstrip available funding. There are also limitations on use of enterprise funds (such as Department of Recreation and Parks program fees) that constrain environmental investment.

Goal: Attain a level of increased funding for environmental actions needed to make Howard County sustainable and climate-resilient by developing a broad portfolio of revenue sources.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Increase the trash fee (no increases for the last 10 years while costs have risen) from \$225 to \$275 per year. Anne Arundel County’s trash fee is \$285.
- Increase developer impact fees and transfer taxes. The Spending Affordability Committee has recommended a transfer tax increase for the past two years.
- Aggressively pursue energy efficiency programs. These will reap long-term cost savings for citizens and businesses.
- Aggressively pursue grants or use PAYGO funds, where available, for one-time expenditures such as the Climate Action Plan and Green Infrastructure Network.
- Maximize flexibility in spending of revenue from sources, such as the Forest Conservation Fund and Department of Recreation and Parks program fees, to support environmental actions.
- Continue to support and uphold the agricultural preservation program. Maintain the dedicated transfer tax for agricultural preservation.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Commit to Smart, Sustainable, Climate Resilient Development and Redevelopment

Context: Adverse impacts of development throughout the county are one of the major concerns of Howard County citizens. We are now at the stage where 90 percent of the county is developed or in agricultural preservation or conservation easements. It should be a priority of the County to preserve or develop sustainably this 10 percent of remaining uncommitted lands. Because the county is nearly built-out, most future development will be redevelopment. This provides a great opportunity to “right the wrongs” of past development. Preserved land should be

recognized for its multiple benefits, including local food production, recreational opportunities, and environmental mitigation potential.

Goal: The development process in Howard County requires all future development and redevelopment be smart, sustainable, and climate-resilient.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The update of the County Development Regulations, about to begin Phase 2, must include substantive environmental protections (such as creation of Open Space zones and protection of lands in Green Infrastructure Network) and code revisions to ensure sustainable development and connectivity.
- Revise the Subdivision Review process to ensure collaboration among all departments including the Office of Sustainability. Cumulative environmental impacts of development should be tracked and published.
- Longer term, Howard County should model an environmental impact assessment (EIA) process similar to that in California, Georgia, Minnesota, New York, and Washington State with the intention of spearheading statewide legislation that will require EIA. This “beyond APFO” legislation is perhaps the best means to (1) ensure long-term sustainability of development and (2) enhance transparency through greater opportunities for public participation in the County’s development-review, decision making process.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Build and Maintain Truly Resilient Infrastructure Countywide

Context: Howard County has a well-deserved reputation for first-class institutions and infrastructure that supports our high quality of life. Our infrastructure, however, is chronically underfunded with significant maintenance deferred (more than 15 years for road resurfacing). With the exponential increase in Environmental Site Design (small, onsite retention of stormwater), maintenance will be further challenged. Even more importantly, our infrastructure is not built to the standards needed to be climate resilient, with Old Ellicott City (OEC) being the prime example. The loss of green infrastructure (e.g., natural forests, meadows, wetlands, and waterways) puts even greater strain on our gray infrastructure and developed areas.

Goal: Build and maintain both green and gray infrastructure to standards that are sustainable and climate-resilient.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Reevaluate options for restoration and incorporation of resiliency of OEC after immediately beginning construction on the consensus-best flood retention projects in the watershed. After maximizing flood retention, develop a flood conveyance system that best retains the character of OEC.
- Demonstrate resiliency concepts throughout the county by choosing a second community (after OEC) to be evaluated and restored as smart, sustainable, and climate-resilient.
- Maximize preservation of the mapped Green Infrastructure Network. Both acquisition and management restrictions/incentives should be considered with a full accounting of both the monetary and non-monetary values of ecosystem services.

- Review existing draft revisions to Howard County forest conservation regulations and amend to include (1) acre for acre forest replacement, (2) forest protection planning early in the development process, (3) use of fee-in-lieu to maximize forest benefits, and (4) preservation of priority forests. Pass the revision through the County Council in 2019.
- Ensure that all major government projects undertaken by DPW be coordinated with DRP, DPZ, and others so that multiple benefits can be obtained (e.g., by co-locating compatible features managed by different departments) and adverse impacts minimized (such as disruption of neighborhoods). The senior sustainability advisor or Office of Sustainability could be the ombudsman for this coordination.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Invest in Multimodal Transportation to Create a Connected County

Context: One of the greatest barriers to equitable opportunities for all citizens and for sustainability going forward is lack of transportation options beyond the automobile. Howard County citizens have long advocated for better bus routes, more pathways, and more pedestrian access. The County has developed or is developing Bikeway, Pedestrian, Transit, and Complete Streets plans that need to be implemented at scale; doing so will create a connected equitable, sustainable, and vibrant community. This is essential for two reasons: (1) viable, attractive transportation alternatives will reduce our carbon footprint and (2) when we have built-out downtown, we will need to get 5-10% of drivers out of cars at peak hours or we will need to build a new Route 29 interchange over Lake Kittamaquidi This interchange would be very expensive and eliminate valuable green space.

Goal: Complete planning and make investments in multi-modal transportation to create a connected Howard County.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Ensure that Subdivision Review and developer regulations requires connectivity in new projects. Including multi-modal requirements in place of some existing automobile requirements has reduced costs for developers.
- Complete the Bikeway, Pedestrian, Transit, and Complete Streets plans. Require that comparable standards be included in the update to Development Regulations Phase 2.
- Fully fund the Bikeway, as envisioned by the Horizon Foundation, to provide essential connectivity and health benefits.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Update and Implement Climate, Energy, and Solid Waste Plans

Context: Recent federal and international reports on climate change have confirmed that impacts will be more severe than previously predicted. These reports have emphasized that the economic costs of these impacts will be many times greater than the costs to prevent and adapt. Lastly, it is the low-income and traditionally marginalized populations in Howard County and worldwide that will suffer the most.

Goal: Update and implement the Climate Action, Energy, and Solid Waste Plans of Howard County.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The County Executive should sign Howard County onto the “We Are Still In” declaration of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. This will signal that we are no longer ignoring these risks.
- Update the Climate Action Plan and greenhouse gas emissions inventory of 2012 to identify and implement energy savings and GHG reductions, as well as incorporate climate risk-reduction and resilience measures based on a countywide climate vulnerability assessment.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan that (1) incorporates new climate realities and (2) is based on robust stakeholder engagement, particularly including the county’s highly vulnerable populations (e.g., low-income and traditionally marginalized communities).
- Aggressively begin implementing the recommendations of the Energy Plan.
- Make Howard County a “STAR+LEED Community” by incorporating best practices into development.
- Review and, as appropriate, update the County’s 2014-2024 Solid Waste Management Plan to incorporate stronger practices to reduce the volume of organic and plastic wastes in the county’s waste stream. This will bring the whole community together to create cultural change by using plastics as a poster child for reducing waste.

Healthcare

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Behavioral Health

Context: Nationally, 1 in 5 adults and children struggled with mental illness in the past year. 50% of us will meet the criteria for a mental illness at some point in our lives. In Howard County, suicide was the leading cause of death among youth between the ages of 15 - 19 years of age between 2014 - 2016. There is a real sense of urgency in the healthcare community, and in this committee, to address the crisis in behavioral health care. Howard County should look for every opportunity to expand the full continuum of mental health and substance use disorder services and to more fully meet the needs of our residents.

Howard County provides a variety of substance use disorder (SUD) services and programs, but residential treatment options for residents are extremely limited. Currently, only one facility (Howard House) is located within Howard County which provides only the lowest level of residential treatment and serves only 15 men. Treatment gaps include lack of crisis stabilization services, detox, and residential treatment. While these services exist in surrounding counties, Howard County is the only Maryland county in the Baltimore-DC metro region that does not have residential treatment services available. This forces residents to leave critical support networks to seek necessary treatment outside of the County. Due to the lack of such services, HCGH (ED) is over-utilized and the wait time to access services outside the County range from three days to three weeks.

Goal: Improve prevention and treatment of mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Assess the full continuum of needs for the community and evaluate gaps in the continuum.
- Check with sister counties and others around the country to look at best practices.
- Create residential treatment center in the county.
- Consider funding the Practice Howard Behavioral Health program.
- Consider funding for Assertive Community Treatment Teams.
- Provide more services for outpatient mental health and fill in the gaps in behavioral health treatment.
- Provide crisis services.
- Study measures to reduce emergency department overuse due to behavioral health conditions.
- Explore ways to coordinate with HCPSS to expand school-based mental health services

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Advance Greater Coordination of Programs, Services, and Data within the County

Context: Health and human service programs in the county often serve the same population. There is sometimes a duplication of effort, overlap in services, or discontinuity between

agencies, and sometimes non-profits in the county. (e.g. Careapp) In other situations, there should be improvements in data sharing, such as between the Howard County Public School System and the Health Department to ensure that health needs are adequately addressed.

Goal: Improve coordination/collaboration of Health and Human Services, and data sharing within the county.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Emphasize or create an initiative around the importance of evidence-based decision-making (e.g., HealthStat).
- Collaboration and coordination between departments (including the Health Department and Department of Community Resources and Services)
 - Consider greater integration between HCHD and DCRS and explore potential creation of a “Health and Human Services” (HHS) model that encompasses both HCHD and DRCS.
 - Sharing data gathered by the school system for both individual clinical follow-up and for aggregated public health surveillance purposes. (e.g., student eye exam info not shared w HCHD, even in de identified form)
- Improve community outreach and coalition building, especially towards addressing disparities within different populations and ethnic groups. This should be supported by data from the Howard County health survey.
- Focus on using health data for decision-making and linking it to the impact on a community. Consider the return on investment across all policies.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Focus on Public Health and Prevention

Context: The County’s health efforts should be focused on prevention and public health, especially on preventing chronic disease, improvements in lifestyle medicine, and advancing behavioral modification. Addressing the social determinants of health (e.g., housing, access to healthy food, education, transportation, the environment, etc.) can have a larger impact on the health of a community than the direct clinical care and services provided. Improvements in the social determinants of health will require concerted attention and leadership.

Goal: Elevate Public Health and Prevention as Priorities.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider implementing a “Health in all Policies” framework. This can include analyzing the health impact of all legislation (similar to a fiscal analysis/note that accompanies legislation).
- Elevating an internal senior leader advocate or champion at the cabinet level accountable to the County Executive whose responsibility is to focus on improving public health, coordinating health programs/services, and assessing/reassessing health outcomes. This champion should also examine the priority goals identified in this document and create a roadmap/action plan.
- Using the Board of Health’s regulatory authorities to advance politically challenging public health initiatives.
- Make healthier drinks and food more widely available by fully implementing CB-17.
- Provide funding for biking and walking (e.g., WalkHoward)

- Enact a robust Complete Streets policy.
- Explore ways to make youth sports more accessible, especially for lower income families.
- Consider other methods of calculating “return on investment” (ROI) for county public health programs and initiatives. Prevention is undervalued because it’s hard to quantify, especially from a fiscal/budgeting standpoint. Move past the immediate/traditional definition of ROI for public health efforts.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Improving Access to Primary Care and Increasing Capacity of the Healthcare Workforce

Context: Access to primary care can be difficult because of an aging population, greater healthcare needs, and a declining number of healthcare professionals. These challenges can have a significant impact on health disparities. (e.g., a shortage of providers will affect those in need more, further exasperating existing disparities. This will be a growing concern in some subspecialties like geriatrics, given the aging population.)

Goal: Improve access to primary care and increasing capacity of the healthcare workforce.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Study measures to reduce emergency department overuse, especially due to behavioral health conditions.
- Consider increasing community care (including home and community-based) providers to address insufficient capacity, to assist in connecting residents to local resources, and addressing the social determinants of health.
- Assess the integration and utilization of urgent care centers, which have proliferated in the county.
- Examine potential collaborations or partnerships with Howard Community College to address workforce challenges.
- Consider conducting a needs assessment to evaluate adequacy of the number of healthcare providers in the county (if unable to obtain access to Practice Howard data from HCGH).

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | County Public Health Funding

Context: The Health Department budget has seen reductions in county support (e.g., 2% reductions in the proposed budget every year). Over the last decade, the state has reduced funding to health departments for core public health support. Improvements in public health cannot be made without additional support and funding. Improving the county’s health is not the sole responsibility of the Health Department, but also other Departments who may not view health as their primary concern. However, for there to be an improvement in the health of the county, all Departments have a role in addressing the social determinants of health.

Goal: Increase funding for public health programs and services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider and assess the impacts of prior reduction in funding on the Health Department.

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- Assess and/or reassess current population health programs funded by the county and the state; identify deficiencies and impacts from reductions.
- Consider elevating public health and prevention as a cross-cutting theme throughout county policies. All county departments and agencies have a role in improving public health, not just the Health Department.
- Consider other methods of calculating “return on investment” (ROI) for county public health programs and initiatives. Prevention is undervalued because it’s hard to quantify, especially from a fiscal/budgeting standpoint. Move past the immediate/traditional definition of ROI for public health efforts. The healthcare industry is a large part of the local economy, and a healthy population also attracts businesses and helps grow the economy.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Health Equity and Disparities

Context: The county continues to experience gaps in health equity and significant health disparities. Addressing social determinants of health will be important in reducing these disparities (e.g., inequities in housing, income, educational achievement, transportation, etc.).

Goal: The county’s public health efforts should maintain a focus on reducing health inequities and disparities.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Identify and conduct root cause analysis of health disparities to determine target areas.
- Consider having the Board of Health or senior leader champion convene an evaluation or priority setting to address improvements in equity and disparities.
- Examine or reference existing county health indicator data in determining priorities.
- Improve community outreach and building coalitions, particularly to demographic or ethnic minority populations.

Additional Observation: It is important to reassess the above priority goals in two years, refine them at that time, and/or determine new priorities.

Housing Committee

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Expanding Housing Opportunities

Context: Howard County is known throughout the world for its high quality of life, exceptional schools, and ideal location between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. Consequently, demand for housing here is very high, and this persistent demand coupled with economic, regulatory, and social barriers has led to a housing shortage that is especially acute among those families that have moderate or low incomes. This shortage is not only quantifiable, persistent, growing, and causing direct hardships for many Howard County families, but it is also causing indirect hardship for all of us. Significantly, it is also a substantial barrier preventing many people who work in the County from moving into the County. A community that cannot provide adequate housing opportunities across all incomes, especially for those who choose to work here, will suffer economically, socially, culturally, and among other ways.

A decent, affordable home is the fundamental foundation every person needs to realize their full potential. Housing that is not affordable, unsafe, temporary, and impermanent leaves residents who are in homes with considerable uncertainty and anxiety, one crisis away from homelessness. The vast majority of Howard County residents who are homeless are experiencing this kind of “situational” homelessness, while many others struggle each month just to hold onto the housing they have. While the struggle of housing affordability is especially acute among rental housing, homeownership is an equally important consideration. The impacts of unstable housing on children are wide ranging and can persist for many years, even their entire lives.

The challenge of housing is not new to Howard County. During the last fifteen years, panels, task forces, community organizations, and even transition committees like this one have analyzed data showing our growing housing deficit and the imbalance between household incomes and housing costs. Too often the work of these groups has gone unnoticed, their calls unheeded. Most recently, the County Council-appointed “Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force” worked for the past year to examine barriers to prosperity and opportunities and develop recommendations to address them. This committee endorses the EOP Task Force’s Housing and Community Development findings and recommendations in hopes that these reports will lead to measurable, impactful action.

In a community with as much wealth, opportunity, and compassion as Howard County, we have both an opportunity and an obligation to address our housing challenges, which are not unique to us. The time has come to realize that housing is a fundamental, essential component of community infrastructure—like roads, schools, and water utilities—and one that touches all facets of our government and community. Without this essential infrastructure in place, our local economy will slow; our residents will find their economic and educational growth stunted, new

opportunities more elusive; and our community will fail to deliver on the promise and responsibility of its abundance. On the other hand, considering and investing in housing as infrastructure not only uplifts those for whom housing is an acute, ongoing struggle, but it uplifts all of us—our economy will grow, our quality of life will continue increasing, and the fabric of threads that bind us together as a community will strengthen.

Adherence to the values espoused by our community—particularly, those of inclusivity, shared prosperity, and expanding opportunities for all—compels us to act with determination and resolve to develop strategies and tools to expand a continuum of housing opportunities—from home ownership to rental and across the income spectrum—for current and future residents. We can begin to make meaningful progress toward righting the economic and social injustices perpetrated by our housing shortages and toward creating opportunities for all residents, neighborhoods, and our entire community to thrive, together.

Goal: Develop and formally adopt a comprehensive, actionable strategic plan with measurable goals and a diverse set of legislative, regulatory, economic, and social tools for expanding housing opportunities in Howard County.

We are taking a different approach by recommending only this one, overarching goal to address housing challenges. Past efforts like ours, including the recent EOP Task Force, have also recommended a housing master plan as a goal. Our hope is by calling for the formal adoption of this plan, it will carry more weight and have the community’s backing and support, both of which will be critical as this work continues and struggles over housing arise.

Aside from its formal adoption, this plan must:

- Be developed by a diverse group of community members and other important stakeholders
- Be built on the values of inclusiveness, equity, openness, transparency, and responsibility
- Be comprehensive in this scope and approach, recognizing that housing opportunities must be addressed county-wide and should be located in all parts of Howard County, looking at both new construction as well as existing housing in older neighborhoods.
- Address legal, financial, regulatory, and political barriers to the expansion and preservation of affordable housing opportunities
- Examine housing programs and policies in all departments, agencies, and offices of local government, as well as those of community and human service organizations outside of Howard County Government
- Set goals, benchmarks, and other indicators for all levels of income that address the location, siting, funding, and design of housing to measure and ensure progress
- Be rooted in data-driven best practices from within Howard County and around the country

- Serve as an opportunity to engage all residents in a conversation about the importance of expanding housing opportunities and the benefits of inclusive, mixed income neighborhoods
- Identify potential long-term, sustainable, and consistent funding sources to help build and preserve affordable housing opportunities
- Guide the enhancement, refinement, and further development of a comprehensive set of policies, regulations, processes, funding sources, and other tools to ensure the plan's success

Options to Consider for Early Action

The first and most immediate steps that should be taken is to establish the housing master plan task force, to define its charge and process, and to place staff to support its work. Our hope is that this work can be done during the first quarter of 2019, and that the committee tasked with this plan be given a 12-month deadline in which to have it complete. There are many models and past examples for creating working groups such as the one we are proposing, and these examples should be used to guide the formation and work flow of this group.

While the committee works to develop this overarching plan, the work of expanding housing opportunities must not rest. Therefore, we recommend the following as options to consider for near-term action, loosely ranked by likelihood of early, successful action:

- Refine the county's existing Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) policy and program to more effectively develop affordable housing opportunities, especially in areas of the county where these opportunities are in critically low supply
- Consider tax abatement and incentives to foster affordable housing creation by both the Howard County Housing Commission and private developers
- Continue to support and explore opportunities to strengthen the new framework for affordable housing development in Downtown Columbia
- Eliminate regulatory, legal, and other barriers that restrict greater collaboration between the Housing Commission and the Department of Housing and Community Development
- Implement the recommendations of the EOP Task Force on matters related to housing and community development
- Explore expanding existing funding sources—e.g., the Transfer Tax—or locating new ones to support affordable housing initiatives
- Consider changes to the county's zoning ordinance to expand areas where affordable housing is a required component of all new development and to consider whether housing opportunities should be integrated into other zones

As we have already noted, this committee is not “reinventing the wheel” but rather hoping to set it in motion. The challenges of housing affordability are well-known and documented in Howard County. A new set of indicators will be released early in 2019 and signs point to the crisis of housing affordability is only growing.

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The opportunity to act is now. With bold, visionary leadership, and a strong social fabric, Howard County is well positioned to make meaningful strides toward solving a problem many believe is intractable and often too controversial to address. Howard County has sought comprehensive, sustainable, and innovative solutions to many challenges before and it is time to bring that same thinking, determination, and creativity to the issue of housing affordability.

Our community's future depends on it.

Planning, Zoning and Permits

Introduction: Generally, Department of Inspections, Licensing, and Permits (DILP) is operating efficiently and responsively for its constituents. Many of the actions listed below were suggested by DILP are considered a sign of a healthy organization evaluating itself honestly. The suggestions are considered more incremental improvements than wholesale process changes.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DILP Permit Timeline

Context: Currently, certain applications for permits take a long time to process. A lengthy time frame is especially problematic for tenant retrofits, especially in areas of the county with higher vacancy rates, with a negative impact both on landlords and the community as a space remains vacant. DILP lacks human and technological resources to keep up with the current application load. Moreover, permit fees have not been raised in many years.

Goal: Reduce the review and response time, while maintaining quality, in order to facilitate the orderly improvement of properties. Over time, solutions may include an increase of services, and the committee recommends that the Administration consider the creation of an enterprise fund, increasing permit fees in order to improve services, including funding for staff, improved technology for DILP, and other investments to improve processing time.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DILP to establish a set of key performance indicators tracking the time it takes to between filing for a permit to the issuance of the building permit. Assure they are granular enough to identify specific areas for improvement. Establish a quarterly review of the KPI's to target process improvement, additional training, cross-training, or increase staff necessary to effectively meet DILP's needs.
- The Administration should work with DILP to consider certain process improvements, such as:
 - Establish a walk-through day for commercial permits, similar to that of residential permits. This permit review process can be established for construction, grading, and/or use permits of a specific size
 - Identify a variety of approvals/services for which specific fees and definitive time to completions can be established and promoted for revenue generation
 - Developers should be allowed, at their own financial risk, to apply concurrently for a building permit and to begin the DILP review process during the Site Development Plan review to expedite project timelines. Permit review should be

allowed to move forward in review process, after the Environment Concept Plan has been approved by DPZ.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DILP Inconsistency between and among Inspectors and Reviewers

Context: Currently, inconsistency exists between what is approved by plan review and the requirements imposed by inspectors on the field. At times, the field requested changes are not reflected on the approved plans. There is also inconsistency among reviews and among inspectors, leading to inconsistent outcomes and standards.

Goal: Create clear guidelines and training so that there is consistency between and among inspectors and reviewers. Establish clear, updated, and adopted versions of the codes. Any newly adopted codes that reflect past local amendments should be removed to clarify standards.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DILP to consider opportunities to move DILP personnel into the same building. If not practical, office space should be consolidated to encourage communication, collaboration, and consistency.
- The Administration should work with DILP leadership to consider improvements to enhance the effectiveness of DILP:
 - Create checklists for review and inspection that are consistent and require these are followed by all personnel. Consider establishing an internal Wiki to allow best practices to be proposed, shared, and discussed prior to issuance of new interpretations.
 - Create regular updated bulletin for interpretations and distribute to internal personnel. Also, consider a separate distribution list for outside stakeholders to receive updates.
 - Create reminders and training opportunities for employees to review policies and procedures at regular intervals.
 - Consider setting a policy that established an “approved plan takes precedence over an inspector’s field interpretation.”
- Regularly review succession planning to assure that new leadership is well versed in the operation of the department. An orderly transition is effected without significant gaps in leadership and that tribal knowledge is not lost before transfer to new personnel.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DILP Rental Housing Quality

Context: DILP issues rental housing permits and inspects the same way. Currently, several rental units are operating without licenses and often at substandard quality. There are believed to be a substantial number of rentals in the County that are not licensed, including ones that operate as informal hotels or boarding houses. Unregulated, substandard rental housing created life

safety issues and has a negative impact on the community. There is no current penalty for operating a rental housing unit without a permit.

Goal: All rental units should be required having a license in Howard County with a penalty for landlords who are not licensed.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DILP to create partnerships and educational material to assist in the reporting of unlicensed rental units. The Administration should also work with DILP to create partnerships with homeowner associations, the Columbia villages, and the Columbia Association to explore partnerships for referrals when properties are in disrepair and are believed to be unlicensed rental units.
- Consider legislation to update the code mandating a fee to any landlord operating an unlicensed rental unit.
- Consider legislation to address short term rental issues and the lack of adequate inspection and permitting.

Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)

Introduction: The Administration can make significant improvements to how DPZ interacts with stakeholders, resulting in better outcomes for the community.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DPZ inconsistent Processes and Outcomes

Context: Community members and developers are concerned that DPZ actions are inconsistent and that the department is unresponsive to citizens, developers, and other stakeholders. Timelines for processes are unclear and appear to be inconsistent.

Goal: Leadership at DPZ needs to establish a culture that is inviting of investment through actions that are timely, consistent, impartial, and responsive to applicants while concurrently providing adequate opportunity for citizen input relevant to an applicant’s pending proposal.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DPZ to:
 - Establish leadership goals for improving culture and holding trainings.
 - Create standardized timelines, policies, and procedures that are consistently applied, including reviewing the process for redlines and waivers.
 - Establish clear expectations of the role of advisory versus mandatory processes. We suggest a review of the current process be conducted with clear delineation of advisory versus decisional responsibilities confirmed and communicated, including staff review and Design Advisory Panel (DAP).
- The Administration should create a position of an Ombudsman within DPZ who will investigate complaints made against the department and who can serve as a point of contact for the public.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DPZ Review Timeline for Simple Projects

Context: Review timelines on simple projects can be unreasonably long. This review process prevents a simple project from moving forward in a timely fashion.

Goal: DPZ should create internal processes and suggest any necessary legislation to expedite simple projects.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DPZ to create opportunities to expedite simple projects, including reviewing project types to identify simple projects that are repeated regularly and may be appropriate for an expedited review process.
- The Administration may suggest legislation to create expedited processes for simple projects.
- The Administration should work with DPZ to delineate its processes, create expected timelines for those processes, and complete quarterly statistics reviews to determine the effectiveness of those processes and report back to the Administration.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DPZ Operations and Staff Resources

Context: DPZ staff processes a significant workload and often the DPZ staff response time is too long, hampering projects. It is perceived DPZ lacks the human and technical resources to process its workload.

Goal: DPZ should be efficient and respond timely to stakeholders.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DPZ to identify a variety of approvals and services that can be identified for specific fees so that time guarantees can be established and promoted for revenue generation.
- The Administration should send staff to attend pre-submission meetings.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | DPZ Revision of Zoning Regulations

Context: The Zoning Code is inconsistent, internally contradictory, poorly organized, and has a number of technical problems. A review of the problems with County Zoning Regulations has been completed, with certain recommendations to rewrite the Code. Currently, DPZ has proposed to begin the code rewrite of New Town Zoning.

New Town (NT) is a unique and complex zoning district which created a development plan for a single district that covers more than 14,000 acres in primarily Columbia. When the NT district was established, the original petitioner owned all the district's land and actively controlled

development through Final Development Plans (FDPs). The original petitioner, who no longer owns most of this property, maintains control over the development plans for the NT Zoning District where it can only be amended through petitions. The majority of property owners are forced to seek permission from the original petitioner in order to make changes to their own property. This significant control over land use in NT makes it difficult for other owners to redevelop their property. The FDPs in NT also refer to various other portions of the Zoning Code and can be confusing. The 2030 Plan, which did not create an updated version for the NT Zone, instead recommended that “the NT Zoning Regulations need to be revised to establish clear criteria for redevelopment in New Town, including amendments to Final Development Plans.”

Currently, there is a proposal to rewrite the Zoning Regulations beginning with New Town, however, there is not a current cohesive plan for all of New Town. A new General Plan is expected to be updated in the next few years, which may precipitate additional Zoning Code changes.

Goal: Zoning Regulations for all of Howard County, including New Town, should be clear, effective, and balance the interest of all stakeholders. It should enact a thoughtfully created plan.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Establish a New Town Master Plan Task Force to develop a master plan for all of New Town, including but not limited to Downtown Columbia and the Village Centers. This should include a review of all 265 FDPs and the role of the original petitioner in controlling land use within the NT Zoning District as well as the balance of land use types throughout the NT District. In parallel, a consultant working with DPZ can propose updates to regulations impacting the remainder of the County. After the New Town Master Plan is adopted, the consultant and DPZ may propose updated Zoning Regulations for New Town. Alternatively, the master planning of NT could not be completed as part of the General Plan Process.
- The Administration may propose legislation to address certain immediate technical deficiencies and discrete interim improvements uncovered by DPZ and its consultant in the review of Zoning Regulations.
- The Administration should begin preparing for the General Plan and for a comprehensive re-zoning process by deciding whether to divide the County into several zones. Considerations should be given in determining how these plans are integrated into the whole plan.
- The Administration should recommend adjusting the process for development in Downtown Columbia to send major changes to the County Council/Zoning Board. Such major changes may include alternative CEPPA compliance, changing height, changing density, affordable housing requirements or compliance, and design guidelines.

Context: Currently, there is no mechanism to ensure that what is built compiles with the approved Site Development Plans (SDPs). The compliance process is complaint driven, resulting in potentially unapproved structures built and defeating the design process.

Goal: Enact as-built inspections for all SDPs.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DPZ to establish as-built inspections for all commercial SDPs. Coordinate the DILP to identify opportunities for cross training and working together to efficiently conduct inspections.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Website Transparency

Context: Currently, navigating the Department of Planning and Zoning’s website is difficult and time-consuming. An effective government website provides easy-access information for the public and such access to information is crucial to transparency. Accurate, transparent, easily accessible information ensures that community members have an opportunity to provide meaningful input into public process.

Goal: DPZ should redesign the website for easy access of information and greater readability. Any member of the community should be able to find crucial information without needing to understand how the department is set up or how the development process works.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DPZ and the Department of Technology and Communication Services (DTCS) to redesign DPZ’s website to improve clarity, transparency, and easy access to information. This reorganization should be focused on how residents and make it easy to find out what is going on in the County or how they can do something they are seeking to do.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Transportation

Context: In Howard County, our transportation system does not adequately serve our community.

Goal: DPZ should work to better integrate accessibility of bus stops, pathways, and bikes while prioritizing safety.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- DPZ should better coordinate with Citizen Services, Recreation and Parks, Howard County Public School System, and HCEDA development on a cohesive transportation system that supports all communities.

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- Modifications to our transportation system should be community and advocate driven. Students, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and others who depend on our public transportation system should play a key role in determining its future our transportation system. Consideration should be given to where people need to go and where they want to go.
- Consider creating a separate Department of Transportation, separate from DPZ. This department should, among other things, provide an independent traffic and environmental analysis of proposed development.
- Coordinate efforts between transportation, DPW, and DPZ to improve transportation and transit infrastructure.
- Work better to integrate transportation planning, especially Howard RTA bus service, into the land use planning process.
- Accessibility and safety should be considered when prioritizing bus stop modifications and improvements.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | APFO

Context: Development can create additional infrastructure and other pressures on the community.

Goal: Address pressures created by development through legislation such as APFO.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should work with DPZ to address quality of life issues, such as public safety and hospital overcrowding, to be addressed in either APFO or other legislation.
- Traffic analyses should look at safety not just congestion.
- A larger radius should be considered when evaluating the impact of development.
- Address scenic roads concerns.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | The Planning Board

Context: Some in the community have expressed concern about the independence of the Planning Board from DPZ staff.

Goal: Ensure the Planning Board is independent of DPZ.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration should examine the role of the Planning Board plays both in its advisory capacity and in its decision making role.
- The administration should evaluate the appropriateness of the training, guidance, and assistance the Planning Board receives.

- The Administration should consider providing the Planning Board with an attorney that does not represent DPZ.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Community Input

Context: The current process by which community members and the public are given information about potential development and by which they may provide input regarding various potential development projects should be reviewed.

Goal: Create a transparent system where community members can easily provide information on various steps of the development process.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- The Administration may consider adding a requirement and process for community impact statement in development process to increase transparency within the community and allow for their suggestions.
- Create a process to allow the public to testify at the Design Advisory Panel meetings.
- The Administration may consider working with DPZ to create and disseminate accurate, clear, and accessible information regarding the development process and opportunities to participate in the development process. This could take the form of an easy to understand, accessible land use website or a manual.

Public Safety

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Howard County Police Department

Context: As Howard County continues to grow, the police department must grow with it in order to ensure that it continues to provide the quality of service that the residents of the county deserve and expect. The department has and will continue to operate at a high level of performance, but as with all departments, will benefit from additional capacity to meet increases in demand.

Goal: Ensure the department is fully staffed to meet the needs of a growing county and increases in demand for its services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Explore the feasibility of following the staffing recommendations of the 2017 Matrix Consulting study. Consider also the need for further support staff to improve departmental efficiency.
- Conduct two recruit academies each year with an average of 12-20 candidates to keep pace with growth and attrition.

Goal: Ensure appropriate response time and accommodate a growing workforce.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider plans to construct a third district station in central Columbia.

Goal: Ensure a transparent department that has the public's trust.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider implementing the recommendations of the Body Worn Camera Committee, and beginning a program as quickly as is feasible.

Goal: A department that is fully integrated within the community.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Continue the liaison program that has officers working with various ethnic groups and partners with other county agencies.
- Provide continued education opportunities, including ones that focus on diversity and unconscious bias.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Howard County Fire Department

Context: The department is still reeling after the July 23rd loss of Lt. Nathan Flynn. The department is committed to a transparent evaluation to ensure the prevention of future loss of life. A study conducted by the independent safety review board that will be completed and released by April or May of 2019. Additionally, the federal agency NIOSH - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is also conducting a comprehensive report which will be released within the next 12-15 months.

Goal: Ensure the department is fully staffed to meet the needs of a growing county and increases in demand for its services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Work with the department to address the impending vacancies from the Deferred Retirement Option Program.

Goal: A department that is fully equipped to perform its mission.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Examine the adequacy of the department's supplies and vehicles.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Howard County Sheriff's Department

Context: The Sheriff's office too will need to expand in order to meet any increased demand for its services in response to state or local legislation. From our conversations, the office seems eager to be a partner not only in its mandated capacity, but as a part of the community. Its interest in youth programs is noteworthy and should be supported.

Goal: Ensure the department is fully staffed to meet the needs of a growing county and increases in demand for its services.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider as a partial funding source for expanded staffing needs the monies generated when individuals fail to pay their rent notices.

Goal: An office that is fully integrated within the community.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Partner with the office as it develops community outreach programs modeled on those in the area that focus on youth development and supplement diversion tactics.

Goal: A prepared and well trained office.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Explore opportunities to enhance the office’s training programs and budget for supplies needed in them.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Howard County Department of Corrections

Context: Acknowledging that the department of corrections is not frequently the center of attention or at the top of an administration’s priority list, there are capacity and modernization issues statewide that will need to be addressed. There have been issues statewide filling vacancies within departments of correction, but Howard County has been more successful than a number of other jurisdictions in filling these positions. All the while, the department and this committee remain focused on its key mission, helping successfully reintegrate its population into the community, when the time comes for them to do so.

Goal: A department is fully staffed and well trained.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Continue to assist the department as it fills remaining vacancies.
- Ensure access to continuous training programs for correctional officers which exceed training standards mandated by the state.

Goal: Smooth reintegration for inmates.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Continue to foster the departments partnership with county agencies and community groups that assist the inmates reentering society.

Goal: Ensure the continued safety of inmates, and corrections officers.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider the design and construction of a new facility that reflects innovations in operational systems and design.
- Explore the installation of additional camera throughout existing facilities.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Howard County State’s Attorney Office

Context: With the goal of efficiency in mind, we have suggested ideas that could help staff do their jobs with greater satisfaction, and additional security. Like other departments included in this report, there is a focus on community integration and outreach, reflective of the values of the office and of the county as a whole.

Goal: A department that is fully staffed and operates efficiently.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Consider assigning a dedicated IT staff member to the office, as is done in other public safety departments.
- Explore the option of increasing the rate of leave generated by appointed personnel in an effort to compensate for the perceived instability of accepting an appointed position.
- Consideration should be given to add a position to the appointed staff that would act as a special assistant to the State’s Attorney to provide institutional knowledge to the office. This should be an executive level position as a direct report to the State’s Attorney.

Goal: An office that is fully integrated within the community.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Implement an elementary outreach and partnership initiative. Connect to local community groups and to our youth starting as early as the 5th grade. Emphasis should be placed on collaboration with the Howard County Police Department’s Youth Initiatives, Cultural Liaison Activities, Opioid Epidemic Education and Awareness Programs, Mental Health Expansion efforts, and Human Trafficking Awareness outreach to local businesses.

Goal: Ensure that the public trusts that the judicial system is just.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Coordinate with the Howard County Police Department to investigate and implement a body worn camera program in the county.

Public Works

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Openness and Transparency

Context: The committee believes there has been historic under-funding of the department has led to deteriorating and neglected infrastructure, staffing shortages, and inadequate equipment. The public should be fully aware of the state of the Department and its ability to maintain the systems on which the community relies.

Goal: A transparent and communicative government.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Have DPW conduct an assessment of its assets, staffing needs, and equipment to ensure a complete understanding of the department's strengths and liabilities.
- Have DPW provide a current priority list of infrastructure needs including, but not limited to: water and sewer infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, and facilities. This list should also include the cost to address those priorities.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Facilitate Innovation

Context: There are significant foundational and systemic problems facing the Department of Public Works that cannot be summarily addressed in a transition report. Therefore, the committee suggests that the County Executive's Chief Innovation Officer research and recommend best practices to be presented and considered by an appointed task force. This would include but not be limited to: organizational structure, project review processes, pay scales, and procurement processes within the Department of Public Works.

Goal: An optimized and efficient department.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Create a task force to review recommendations and actions presented by the Chief Innovation Officer.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Equitable Project Selection

Context: It was made clear during the information gathering phase of the transition that project priority has historically been a subjective ranking rather than a process defined by objective metrics that consider health and safety, environmental and community impact, and feasibility.

Goal: To ensure all projects are objectively ranked and prioritized.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Implement an Integrated Planning Framework to inform decision making and objectively prioritize projects. This system has been recommended by the EPA for stormwater

management projects, and the committee would encourage broad application of this framework to all public works capital projects.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY | Ellicott City

Context: The committee believes that the existing timeline for flood mitigation should be maintained or accelerated, and that alternatives to full scale demolition should be considered while maintaining focus on the ultimate priority of safety in lower Main Street.

The committee is aware that the revitalization and mitigation process for Main Street may cause short-term negative impacts on the business district, and believes it is important to pair pain with profit. To this end, it supports exploring proposals and programs that would minimize disruption and benefit the businesses operating in all areas of Main Street.

Goal: A safer and economically vibrant Ellicott City now and for years to come.

Options to Consider for Early Action:

- Ask the department to rerun flood models with additional scenarios that include the added variable of retaining as much of the authenticity of Main Street as possible.
- Consider removing parking along Frederick Road.
- Have DPW assess the structural stability of substantially damaged buildings in the context of the precipitation (snow and rain) predicted for winter 2019.
- Consider heretofore undefined upstream stormwater management projects, as well as aggressively pursue identified upstream retention projects that may have a countervailing effect on demolition along lower Main Street.
- Continue to provide financial incentives and benefits to Main Street business owners to mitigate disruption and potential negative economic impacts.

