

### **Individual Candidate**

- What have you done professionally or as an activist that qualifies you for public office and that might stamp you as a candidate whom Our Revolution Montgomery members would want to support?

Professionally, my entire career has been in public service, specifically affordable housing. I began my career as an affordable housing specialist with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). After completing grad school, I served as an economic development contractor for HUD, working with cities and counties from Puerto Rico to Alaska, helping them turn government grant funds into housing and job opportunities for low- and moderate-income people. Currently, I serve as a regulator for a federal finance agency, ensuring that the mortgage markets remain fair and open to all. Throughout my professional career, I have chosen public service and worked to ensure safe, secure and affordable housing is available to everyone.

On a personal level, I have volunteered in my community and on a variety of progressive campaigns. Currently, I serve on the board of the local public housing authority, Rockville Housing Enterprises. Additionally, I have volunteered with my civic association in the Twinbrook neighborhood to bring younger, more progressive voices to a traditionally older, insular community group. I have also volunteered for many progressive campaigns over the past two decades in multiple states. Directly after college, I spent a summer registering voters in east Texas. More recently, I volunteered on Ben Shnider's and Marc Elrich's campaign for County Council and County Executive, respectively.

### **Affordable Housing**

- Low income renters and/or renters of color are at the greatest risk of being evicted, priced out of Rockville, and have the least access to newly created housing. If diversity and equity is important to you, what specific housing policies will you support to preserve community stability, ensure equity of housing access, and help residents of color and low-income residents prosper?

Overall, a major contributor to the increase in rental prices and lack of access is a lack of housing supply. We need to allow more and denser housing to be built, particularly near public transportation. Allowing the construction of enough rental housing to satisfy the needs of the community will go a long way to reducing overall increases in rent. I think Seattle's recent experience is evidence of the benefit of this approach. Focusing on transit-oriented development also has the added benefit of reducing the need for access to cars, which has both economic and environmental benefits.

For increasing the supply of specifically affordable housing, we should increase the requirements for inclusive zoning/moderately-priced dwelling units (MPDUs). This would include increasing the amount of MPDUs required in new developments, as well as requiring larger 3/4 bedrooms options to accommodate families, a major gap in local affordable housing. Additionally, the city should adopt "net-gain" policies for new development, requiring not one-to-one, but one-to-more replacement of any affordable housing.

However, the housing affordability crisis has become so acute that, in addition to addressing housing supply, we can do more to directly support tenants. I would support a rent stabilization policy for tenants, capping

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allowable rent increases, as well as expanding Rockville's current emergency assistance program as part of a broader tenant bill-of-rights.

Additionally, I would like the city to become more active in purchasing naturally occurring affordable housing. For example, several years ago Rockville Housing Enterprises (RHE) purchased Fireside Apartments, using low-income housing tax credits. This preserved 234 affordable units for renters, with half being operated as subsidized housing and half as "market rate". Since RHE is a mission-based public housing authority, the "market rate" units are not priced significantly above the affordable units. Broadening this approach would ensure the long-term operation and stability of rental properties as affordable housing, protecting renters.

Finally, I have spoken personally and publicly about the need for more affordable housing in Rockville, both when the subject of the Twinbrook Quarter development came before the city council and in my multiple interviews for the city council vacancy left by Councilmember Palakovich-Carr earlier this year. In addition, I have supported the county-wide legislation in favor of lessening the restrictions on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). None of these policies is a silver bullet, but by adopting a broad-based approach, we can support current and future renters in our community.

- What specific policies measures will you support to incentivize developers to create affordable housing for low to moderate income renters?

As I mentioned in the previous question, loosening construction and density restrictions around major transit hubs, particularly Twinbrook and Rockville Metro stations, would allow for the construction of more housing. This would be coupled with more inclusive zoning requirements and incentives (MPDUs, etc.) to ensure that the increase in supply was not strictly luxury units. Additionally, I would advocate for a more expansive ADU policy for Rockville, similar to that recently adopted by Montgomery County. ADUs typically rent for less than comparable multi-family units. Also, Rockville could encourage and support more mission-oriented housing organizations (such as Main Street) to build affordable housing through assistance with land acquisition and financing. Finally, the city could more aggressively purchase and preserve existing units through Rockville Housing Enterprises, as we have with Fireside Apartments.

- Did you vote for / do you support approval of the Twinbrook Crossing development? (Yes/No); Explain?

Yes, I spoke publicly in support of this development as a representative of the Twinbrook Community Association as well as an individual. The project would replace of 19 acres of asphalt and half-empty storefronts with housing for people, inclusive zoning through MPDU requirements, green space, tax revenue for the city, and reduced storm water runoff.

- What do you think should be done with the former Red Gate Golf Course land?

Much of the land (approximately 40-45 acres) is difficult or unsuitable for construction due to topography. I would like to retain that portion as green space and trails. Also, the east side of Rockville is lacking in many parks and recreation amenities like athletic fields, etc. I would like to see the areas immediately adjacent to Rock Creek Park and Needwood retained as park space, fields, etc. The areas near Taft Rd. and East Gude Drive can be

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used for mixed-use and housing construction, offering both the opportunity for the city to provide affordable housing and housing for specific populations (e.g., persons with disabilities, senior housing, etc.).

### **Inclusive Government/ Democracy**

- Do you support increasing the number of council seats to reflect the growing city's population? If so by how many?

Absolutely. The Council should be increased by at least two more members (six City Council members, plus the Mayor). I would prefer increasing the Council by four members (eight City Council members, plus the Mayor). I would also consider adopting a ward-based or combination at-large/ward-based Council to ensure representation from all Rockville neighborhoods. For example, no member of the City Council currently lives east of MD 355 (Rockville Pike), which limits the current council's linkage to a large part of their constituency.

- Currently the Mayor holds the power to select members to Rockville boards and commissions. Would you change this selection process? If so, what do you propose?

Yes. I'm currently a member of Rockville's Boards and Commissions Task Force, and I'm convinced that changes need to be made to the nomination and confirmation process. Specifically, diversity is lacking and members are allowed to continue to serve after their terms have expired, inhibiting turnover and input from the Council. The Mayoral appointment process is a major choke point, allowing many commissioners to serve YEARS past the expiration of their term. Councilmembers are not allowed to force a vote on nominees or bring alternate nominees to the floor. Vacancies are piling up while citizen interest remains high. There should be a mechanism to allow for the Councilmembers to bring alternative nominations to the floor for a vote without the need for the Mayor to nominate.

- Please highlight any measures you think will ensure greater representation from communities of color and lower income communities?

First, I believe expanding the Council will be key to greater representation of communities of color and lower income residents within the Boards and Commissions system. An expanded Council would be more broadly inclusive and diverse, encouraging the recruitment of other diverse Board and Commissions applicants. Additionally, the City should adopt guidelines for board and commission appointments that take into account diversity, including gender, racial/ethnic, and income diversity for nominations. The Council should also allow suggested appointments from any member and take votes on nominees rather than funnel those appointments only through the Mayor.

Secondly, I would encourage the city not just to advertise positions as open to individuals who are interested, but to work with organizations that have an interest in the commission's work and encourage them to recruit applicants. For example, if a vacancy on the Human Rights Commission arose, the city might reach out to MCPS Pride or other LGBTQ+ organizations and encourage members to apply for the vacancy.

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Finally, for representation on the City Council, Rockville should adopt public financing, similar to what Montgomery County has. It's incredibly difficult for even someone like myself with income and a public policy background to raise the money to run a campaign. Access to funds should not be an impediment to running for office, though it too often is. This adoption would be most beneficial to potential low-income candidates.

- Did you vote for / do you support vote by mail for Rockville? (Yes/No); Explain?

Absolutely. The research on vote by mail is clear. It increases participation, particularly from underrepresented populations including renters, people of color, and younger voters. Turnout in municipal, off-cycle elections is low enough as it is; we need to do everything we can to encourage people to participate and vote-by-mail makes it easier for everyone's voice to be heard. Lastly, vote-by-mail is also expected to have the added benefit of reducing the overall cost of running an off-cycle election.

- Do you support public financing of municipal elections to better enable people from diverse backgrounds to run for office? (Yes/No); Explain?

Yes. It's key for allowing more folks to become involved and even consider running for office. My own campaign will likely raise and spend approximately \$7,000 by the end of the campaign. That's out-of-reach for most folks, even in a relatively wealthy area like Rockville. People simply don't have the networks of friends and family to raise that kind of money. And \$7,000 is a shoestring budget for a campaign, even a municipal one. We need to make government service more accessible, and public financing allows for that.

### Environment

- Do you support the Montgomery County's Climate Emergency Resolution (2017), which will transform the climate by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2027 and reaching 100% elimination by 2035, and initiate large-scale efforts to remove excess carbon from the atmosphere?

Yes. Climate change is an immediate threat, and we need to treat it as such. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a tall order and needs a nationwide and worldwide approach. However, that doesn't mean local jurisdictions can't contribute. For places like Montgomery County and Rockville, possibly the most important thing we can do is encourage transit-oriented development, specifically Metro-based density. Additionally, we can encourage the rapid adoption of BRT and other transit solutions to reduce the need for car-based trips. Transitioning the City and the County to entirely renewable energy should be another goal.

- Do you support Montgomery County's Zero Waste Plan, which will strategically evaluate the County's actions and investments over the next 20-plus year period to maximize waste reduction, reuse/repair, recycling, and sustainable management of materials? (Yes/No); Explain?

Yes. In Rockville, I'd like to see us add a composting option to our waste and recycling options, as well as direct city agencies to reduce waste, reuse and recycle when possible, and sustainably manage city assets. Specifically, I'd like to see the Rockville Parks and Recreation Department look at adopting and using native species and

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clover on fields and in parks, instead of grasses which require intensive herbicide and pesticide use. Additionally, the city should examine transitioning the city vehicle fleet to low/no-emission vehicles, as well as installing free charging stations at municipal buildings.

### Economy

- Over the past years, many small businesses have been priced out of Rockville Town Center and have been replaced by larger corporations and national franchises. What policy measure(s) can you take to ensure the Town Center develops in an equitable manner and supports local small business entrepreneurs?

To encourage economic development in the Town Center specifically (and Rockville more generally), I support an approach sometimes referred to as “economic gardening.” This refers to cultivating and assisting existing small businesses to expand and add to their workforce, rather than chasing large corporations with incentives and tax breaks (e.g., Amazon). This approach includes providing support through local economic development organization (i.e., REDI) in the form of mentorships, financing, etc. I also think the City should investigate the option of leasing/purchasing space in the Town Center to place a small business incubator or resource library.

Additionally, the City can adopt a few specific policies. First, expanded *start-up* small business loans from the city for anyone wanting to open a small business in Rockville, not just the Town Center. Secondly, encouraging the development of areas of the City – particularly near both Twinbrook and Rockville Metro Station – that have empty and out-of-date storefronts and commercial space. Many modern-day entrepreneurs need locations with access to better data infrastructure than currently exists in many of the commercial developments built in Rockville for the 60’s and 70’s. Also, establishing a small-business incubator within REDI that focuses on cultivating – through loans, grants, mentorship, etc. – homegrown small businesses so they can establish themselves and grow.

- Would you support legislation that strengthens the development of Rockville business co-ops?

Yes. It seems like the main obstacle to establishing worker-owned cooperatives, particularly when workers are interested in purchasing an existing business due to owner retirement or similar circumstances, is access to financing. Short of establishing a full public bank (something I support at both the county and municipal level), the City could specify that establishing business co-ops is an eligible activity under the Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) Small Business Impact Fund, as well as other city programs. This would allow business co-ops access to financing not otherwise available.

- Do you support creating and/or expanding publically owned utilities in order to lower the cost of living in Rockville?

Yes. I fully support publicly owned utilities and believe we should create and expand them. Not only that, I’d encourage the development of public banking system to allow for the financing of public utilities. As a bridge, we should incorporate more renewable energy – solar and wind, in particular – into municipal buildings.

- Do you support municipal, public sector workers and their right to organize and form a union?

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Absolutely, and I would support any action necessary to encourage that at the municipal level. I was a member of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) union when I started at HUD. Public sector workers have a right to organize and unionize just as any other employee should.

### Healthcare

- Do you support a national single payer healthcare system? (Yes/No); Explain?

Yes. I support national single-payer healthcare for many reasons and have for a long time. Our current system is one that only helps those with enough money to manage the truly mind-boggling complexity of our healthcare system. Other nations get better results for less money. A national single-payer healthcare system is clearly passed due. Also, on a personal level, my older daughter broke her arm in early June and I am STILL arguing/negotiating with insurance companies, thirteen different bills, and almost \$2,000 out-of-pocket costs.

- What measures, if any, do you support to increase access to affordable quality care for all Maryland residents?

I support legislation requiring any insurer operating in the state to cover a variety of preventative and wellness expenses at no cost to the consumer. Additionally, we should expand state Medicaid eligibility to cover essentially everyone. I would also like to see us establish a regional, interstate healthcare single-payer system that includes other nearby states.

- Do you support Rockville passing a resolution or proclamation in support of Medicare for All? (Yes/No); Explain?

Yes. If elected, I'll write and introduce it myself.

### Racial Equity

- Do you support the Montgomery County's effort to develop a Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy?

Yes.

- What does your vision of a racially and economically equitable Rockville look like?

I like the vision of a racially equitable society from the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) that Montgomery County uses: "when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved." Racial and economic inequality are the result of cultural, political, and economic structures developed over centuries. They will not be dismantled in a day, but Rockville has made a good start with policies like the recent Fostering Community Trust Act. We can do more to incorporate immigrant communities into our government, adopt policies that benefit renters as well as homeowners, and invest in historically underrepresented neighborhoods like Lincoln Park. We can't just assume that policies are economically or racially neutral but must ensure that they don't negatively affect disadvantaged groups.

Also, Rockville contains some of the most diverse schools in the MCPS system. We can also work more closely with MCPS to ensure that all children in all Rockville neighborhoods have access to safe, high-quality schools with equal access to programs and facilities. While the city does not run the school system, the City Council

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should be more involved in the decisions affecting the schools within the city limits, particularly in advocating for the current boundary study.

- What are the greatest barriers to achieving your vision?

One of the biggest barriers, at least in my experience, is the assumption of neutrality in public policy. As a career civil servant, many people assume that public policies that don't explicitly mention race or income are, by definition, neutral. This is certainly the case regarding many housing, economic, and education issues. Convincing people that economic and racial equity must be explicitly acknowledged and analyzed as a factor in all public policy is a significant barrier.

Additionally, I've knocked on over 4,000 doors in Rockville, and it must be acknowledged that many people don't believe racial and economic equity are problems. People tend to believe that their circumstances are typical. Overcoming these blind spots and demonstrating the discrepancies in opportunity and outcomes for people of a different racial or income groups is a major hurdle.

Finally, quite obviously, I am not an expert on what it's like to be black, brown, low-income, or a woman in Rockville. I have my blind spots, just like anyone else. However, I'm running on a committee with two people of color and two women. Team Rockville's mayoral candidate, Virginia Onley, is a black woman who raised her son as a single mother. My colleague David Myles has had the police called on him during this campaign for "canvassing while black." Part of achieving a racially and economically equitable society is knowing when to listen and when to take the lead from others. I am honored to be part of a team with people who can inform and educate me about their experiences and help me understand how best to create a racially and economically equitable city.

- What policy measures do you support to achieve a racially and economically equitable Rockville?

Last year, Baltimore established an Equity Assessment program. It required city agencies, particularly the planning department, to assess existing and proposed policies for disparate outcomes based on race, gender, income and develop policies to redress those outcomes. I think this approach would provide a good blueprint for something similar in Rockville. Rockville could also establish a dedicated Department of Race and Equity, fully funded with full-time employees, to address racial inequities within city institutions and programs. Rockville's boards and commissions, as well as our economic development programs, could significantly benefit from a close review of their inclusivity.

### Education

- Do you support the county's reevaluation of existing school and cluster boundaries as a measure to address racial and socioeconomic segregation and disparities in our public schools? (Yes/No); Explain?

Many local jurisdictions periodically reevaluate school boundaries as a matter of course, and we should consider doing the same. While I acknowledge the issue that many homeowners raise about property values, public schools are not and should not be permanently tied to anyone's personal wealth creation. School boundaries are not a static promise to homeowners, but should strive to best serve the population they are meant to help, our kids. Across the board, research and our children's own preferences have told us that diverse schools improve outcomes and better prepare our kids for an increasingly diverse world. Periodically adjusting school boundaries has the additional benefit of allowing for the district to rebalance students to reduce overcrowding at certain facilities as well.

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This is an issue that obviously can't be solved by the city council alone, which is why it will be important to insert ourselves as one of the stakeholders in the larger process and advocate for what will best serve our city's diverse population within the broader county school system. I think this could best be done in Rockville by establishing a permanent Education Commission, something I have been advocating on the campaign trail. This would also eliminate the need for hasty and opaque task force creation, once issues have already risen.

### **Criminal Justice**

- Would you support legislation that ensures civilians are active participants in police trial boards, including creation of civilian review authorities?

Yes. As a member of Rockville's Boards and Commissions Task Force, I have brought up and supported the adoption of a Police Review Board for the City of Rockville. And not solely an advisory commission but a citizen board with the authority to review actions taken by police officers and to recommend policies for adoption by the Mayor and Council, with the composition of the board consisting of predominantly local residents and civilians.

- What policies should be implemented to ensure a full review for excessive use of force?

All accusations of excessive force should immediately result in administrative leave for the officer in question (with pay while an investigation is conducted). Investigations should be speedy, undertaken by an independent commission or outside organization (including a potential civilian review board), transparent, and the results disclosed to the public as a matter of course.

- Have you supported or do you support the Fostering Community Trust ordinance, which restricts City of Rockville employees, including police officers, from requesting immigration status of any person unless required by law?

Yes, I supported it and submitted testimony in support of it. My dissertation examined the effects of local immigration policies similar to Rockville's, and the policies are an important part of incorporating immigrants into our community.

### **Additional**

- Do you oppose the expansion of I-270 and the Beltway? (Yes/No); Explain?

Yes. It was a bad plan, and it has gotten worse following the Board of Public Works decisions. There are cheaper, better options to address congestion within the I-270 footprint (e.g., reversible lanes). The current plan also does not address two major chokepoints – the American Legion Bridge and where the road narrows going north toward Frederick. Finally, as a matter of course, it's bad public policy to build incredibly expensive toll lanes that are unaffordable to most users and leave the state on the hook for the cost if they don't make enough money for their private operators.

As described above, if we can address affordable housing issues in Rockville, this will hopefully also reduce the number of families moving well north of DC but commuting down into job hubs, by making it affordable and desirable to live closer in. But the current I-270 plan will not address congestion and will instead benefit only

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those living in far flung communities with the funds necessary to pay exorbitant tolls, while potentially taking public land, private homes and apartments, and beloved local businesses, like Carmen's Italian Ice.

- What measure(s) can address traffic congestion?

Allow more transit-oriented development closer to Metro stations so there are more options to live that aren't so far from where people work. Additionally, I was marginally involved in the Houston bus re-route plan that significantly improved their ridership; we should encourage a full-review of the bus system in Montgomery County and Rockville. Also, we should require that large percentages of any transportation spending be spent on transit options. Improved bike paths and pedestrian access should also be considered, so alternative means of transportation aren't dangerous.

### Final Remarks

- Is there one policy initiative you support that you would like to point to, in particular, as evidence that your priorities align with ours and give a final summation of why Our Revolution Montgomery County should endorse you?

Public banking. Enacting a progressive, equitable vision of local government will require financing, and there is less funding available from the state and federal governments. Public banking offers an option to leverage a jurisdiction's tax deposits to fund the expansive policies we need to tackle affordable housing, transit, and environmental issues.

Finally, I have spent my life as a researcher and a policy wonk. I live for the minutiae of public policy; the little tweaks that allow a few dozen more bus riders an hour or squeeze more rental units in an affordable housing development. I think that experience is a major asset. To truly realize the potential of a progressive agenda, we must ensure that the specifics of public policy align with broader progressive values. We must sweat the details, follow up on implementation, and adjust policy as necessary. This is something I've been doing for years for communities across the country; I'd like to bring it back to my home.