



**THE GREATER BETHESDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
2021 ADVOCACY AGENDA**

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce stands ready to collaborate and advocate based on the following principles:

COVID-19

Focus on the impact of Covid-19 on the community and businesses and the state moving forward.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Advance systemic change at all levels of government to (i) foster a political and regulatory culture that recognizes the relationships between local business successes, both large and small, and the County's regional competitiveness; and (ii) support responsible fiscal policies with proactive planning and innovation.

LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING

Increase growth and development around existing and planned Metrorail, Purple Line, and Rapid Transit Vehicle stations integrated with infrastructure and road projects to grow the tax base, attract new businesses and residents, reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and improve quality of life. Advocate for and support for government policies and incentives that are consistent with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (MWCOG) Regional Housing Targets for Montgomery County, including: (a) the emphasis on creation of new housing that is located in Activity Centers or near high-capacity transit; and (b) creation of new housing that is affordable to households across a range of income levels.

PUBLIC HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND SAFETY

These facets of our community are vital to attracting new businesses and residents and retaining existing ones and maintaining the stature and quality of life for which the County and region have become well known.

CULTURAL ENRICHMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

The County and the Greater Bethesda region can remain on the cutting edge of cultural enrichment and environmental awareness through novel and innovative partnerships and approaches.

2020-2021 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND

Economic Development/Labor and Employment

- Unemployment Insurance: Oppose any efforts to place undue unemployment insurance burdens on employers resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Preemption: Ensure that Montgomery County employers must come first and be put on a level playing field with all other businesses in the State by including preemption on all employment-related bills. This must be retroactive to previously passed local employment-related local laws.
- State budget: Given state and local fiscal challenges due to COVID-19, oppose any unnecessary expenditures that threaten the State's economic welfare. Address the structural deficit, systemic pension reform, and spending restraints. Increase focus on Montgomery County getting its fair share of the State budget.
- Montgomery County ABS: Remove Montgomery County's authority as the single wholesaler and predominant retailer of alcoholic beverages. Oppose any band aid efforts to enhance the ABS or increased unfair competition with local businesses.

Transportation

- WMATA: Continue watchdog support for dedicated state funding for WMATA.
- I-495/I-270 P3 Program: Support the widening of I-495 up to I-270 and I-70, including re-design of the American Legion Bridge.
- Purple Line: Press for completion of the Purple Line light rail and trail.
- Montrose Parkway: Accelerate construction of the State portion of Montrose Parkway east of Rockville Pike to Veirs Mill Road.
- SHA: Continue to make the State Highway Administration more accountable and responsive to needs throughout the County.
- Maryland Transportation Trust Fund: Ensure that funds are directed, as appropriate, to the greater Bethesda community and Montgomery County.
- FLASH BRT: Support State funding for Montgomery County FLASH BRT program.

Health, Education, and Safety

- Maintenance of Effort: Reform the state's maintenance of effort (MOE) law to give Montgomery County more flexibility to address its fiscal situation and ensure that each county agency and department receives its necessary share of the annual budget.
- Kirwan Commission: Advocate to defer implementation of Kirwan Commission funding, given the State's current fiscal situation.
- School Construction-Increased Funding: Promote fair share funding for Montgomery County School construction.

2020-2021 ADVOCACY AGENDA FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Economic Development/Labor and Employment

- **COVID-19:** Enact policies and programs that encourage businesses impacted by COVID-19 to remain viable and thriving while maintaining public safety.
- **County Budget:** Support a responsible County budget that recognizes the changing fiscal environment due to COVID and addresses structural deficit, systemic pension reform, and general spending restraints.
- **Employment related legislation:** Montgomery County laws and regulations should not be more burdensome on Montgomery County employers than any comparable Maryland statewide employment related legislation.
- **Privatization of the wholesale and retail alcoholic beverage system and Liquor Licensing Process:** (*i.e.*, distribution and sale of beer, wine, and liquor to on- premise and off-premise licensees). Through privatization, reform the liquor licensing process to provide flexibility and better opportunities for licensees.
- **Economic Development:** Implement policies that protect and encourage businesses to expand. Target economic development expenditures to attract and retain existing businesses and residents, in order to sustain and grow the tax base (*e.g.*, expenditures to support the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation). Review and subsequently repeal legislation that directly or indirectly has an adverse fiscal impact on businesses in the County and puts them at a competitive disadvantage. Implement policies and programs that assist businesses to stay in business.
- **Education/School Capacity:** Monitor and encourage efforts to enhance educational excellence during the pandemic as well as plans for safe schools reopening. Enact a comprehensive longer-range school capacity solution that ensures sufficient and realistic resources to fund capacity-increasing school space in a timely fashion within the County's Capital Improvements Program, and eliminates the potential for subdivision approval moratoriums in neighborhoods impacted by aging out of population.
- **Small Business Assistance:** Encourage and enact legislation and programs that support small businesses and non-profits, assist them with COVID related economic challenges, *e.g.* grants, procurement reserves, redevelopment impact funds, and education.
- **Diversity of Business:** Promote a diversity of business opportunities for employees of all ages, recognizing the positive effect that a diversity of employment opportunities provides for the County's long-term economic viability and vitality.
- **Commercial/Residential Continuity:** Oppose any efforts to impose rent control in Montgomery County. Adopt reasonable policies that balance the needs of property owners and tenants impacted by COVID.

Land Use, Transportation and Housing

- **General Plan/THRIVE Montgomery 2050:** Closely follow the development of the new General Plan which is being updated after numerous years, replacing the 1964 Wedges and Corridor Plan with an eye towards expanding with an eye towards expanding employment and housing opportunities near transit.
- **Metro stations:** Promote short-and long-term improvements to Metro stations in the Greater Bethesda area including the Bethesda Metro Station through the Bethesda Metro Improvement Task Force in partnership with WMATA and other parties. Support efforts to fund and develop northern entrance at Pike District Metro Station.
- **Urban Districts/TMD's** Transportation Management Districts (TMDs): The Chamber supports the work of the TMDs as they assist employers and promote transportation options;
- Establishment of a provisional Pike District Pre-BID/Urban District entity to energize and program public spaces, support economic development activity and manage branding, programming and maintenance.
- **BUP:** Reinvestment of fees and taxes generated in the Bethesda Urban District, including the Bethesda PLD, to improve and upgrade existing facilities and services including street lighting, streetscape, and pedestrian facilities.
- **Bus Transit:** Protect and expand the Bethesda Circulator service and Ride-On bus routes to transit nodes and connections, and employment centers within the greater Bethesda region to maximize ridership.
- **FLASH (BRT):** Work to implement and support the FLASH system countywide within a dedicated lane, and collaborate with the County's to promote considered approaches to bikeshare, telecommuting, transit ridership incentives, and other programs that help reduce vehicle trips.
- **Montrose Parkway:** Establish funding to construct the State portion of Montrose Parkway (east of Rockville Pike to Veirs Mill Road).
- **Housing:** Advocate policies to increase production and preservation of all types of housing - including housing that is affordable to a range of incomes - consistent with the targets established by COG and adopted by the County. Examples of policies to address our housing affordability crisis would be expedited approval processes, reduction of fees, property tax credits or abatements, use of public land for mixed income housing, greater commitment of County funds for those who need rental assistance.

Health & Safety

- **COVID-19:** Enact policies and programs that encourage businesses impacted by COVID-19 to remain viable and thriving while maintaining public safety.
- **First Responders:** Improve our community's public health and safety by restoring and maintaining budgetary resources allocated to our first responders and preserving the significant contribution of volunteers in providing first-class fire, rescue, and EMS services.

Culture & Environment

- **Arts Organizations:** Continue to advocate for sustainable funding for arts and cultural organizations.
- **Bethesda Green:** Partner with Bethesda Green to promote sustainable business and living practices.