

Calvin Ball

for

HOWARD COUNTY EXECUTIVE

What is the problem?

Perhaps our greatest shared responsibility is the stewardship of our planet and natural resources. The air, water, and land that sustain our existence must be cared for as we care for our own homes and families. However, at all levels—global, national, and local—we face environmental concerns that demand our attention and action.

The [Maryland Commission on Climate Change](#) (MCCC) reported that climate change is already impacting Maryland adversely. The state has already lost land due to sea level rise and has seen millions of dollars in property losses and the loss of life due to floods, heavy rains, strong winds, and more prolonged periods of extreme heat. All of this poses a threat to our community's health, security, and prosperity. Our challenge is to both reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to fortify Howard County's resiliency to future impacts.

Nowhere is the nexus between global environmental challenges and our local community more evident than Old Ellicott City. Having suffered two catastrophic 1,000-year floods in the past two years, Old Ellicott City (OEC) has become an iconic example of the very real climate risks that Howard County must manage.

Ellicott City is the most visible example of how our traditional pattern of development in an age of climate change leads to severe negative impacts on our environment, public health, and our quality of life. Historically marginalized communities continue to bear a disproportionate burden of pollution, waste, and other undesirable side effects of economic growth, often without receiving the benefits. We must seek stronger regulatory measures and land use policies that foster sustainability, reduce pollution, minimize impacts on public services, and compel polluters and developers to pay for the direct and indirect costs resulting from their economic activities. We must do so in a way that reflects the changes brought on by climate change.

Environmental protection once enjoyed broad bipartisan support. Many of the nation's landmark environmental laws enacted during the 1960s and 1970s came under Republican administrations. However, amid declining fortunes and job losses seen in heavy industry over the past 30+ years, powerful interests have persuaded many

policymakers that environmental measures are overly burdensome and come at the expense of economic growth and job creation.

A growing number of communities around the country are finding that smart development and thoughtful climate action bring substantial net benefits to local communities. Under my leadership, Howard County will once again become a leader in advancing climate-smart and sustainable development. This will enhance our community's security, prosperity, and quality of life today and for future generations.

Our Values: Enlightened Stewardship and Local Leadership

We all deserve to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and eat food that is safe. Howard County is blessed with a rich natural heritage, with forests, wetlands, and open spaces that nurture our souls. Our kids and grandkids deserve to enjoy these blessings, too, and it is our collective responsibility to make this so.

Likewise, our communities should be accessible and inviting for everyone. We should all be able to get around with sustainable transportation options and without costly and pollution-generating traffic. Moreover, we should be able to enjoy safe and livable neighborhoods that are free from excessive noise, air pollution, and eyesores.

These are fundamentally *local* issues. Federal and state authorities can set standards and create incentives, but land use decisions and accountability must be at the local level. You deserve a County Executive who recognizes the urgent need to act in protection of public health and the quality of life we enjoy in Howard County.

We can expand the economy, create jobs, and maintain a healthy environment at the same time. Economic growth and environmental protection go hand-in-hand; they are not mutually exclusive. In order to accomplish this balance, partnerships are vital; citizens, businesses, farmers, and governments must work together.

How we conduct this work is important. We must engage in open, transparent policy-making and debate, with ample opportunities for stakeholders to participate in finding win-win solutions.

The bottom line is that one of our biggest challenges is also our greatest opportunity: To help Howard County evolve into a model community for the 21st century and beyond through smart policies, forward-looking investments, and sustainable development that bolsters our resiliency and protects the vitality of our land, water, and air.

Our Vision: Sustainable Solutions

Our solutions start with the fundamental belief that environmental protection and economic growth are not mutually exclusive, but the pillars on which our long-term sustainability must rest.

Achieving greater sustainability will require a coordinated effort from residents, businesses, government, community institutions, and all other stakeholders. This collaboration must lead us toward smart and sustainable development that promotes livable communities and good jobs that are close to home and pay a living wage. It must also lead to greater investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, which will strengthen our community's security, economy, energy independence, and environmental health.

To address the challenge of climate change we must: (1) *mitigate* to avoid the unmanageable; and, (2) *adapt* to manage the unavoidable.

So, to mitigate, we must do our part in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to avoid making climate change worse. Howard County can be a leader if we:

- Incentivize greater investments in clean energy and curb our reliance on fossil fuels;
- boost energy efficiency;
- Implement sound forestry and land use management practices; and,
- reduce the energy we waste and air pollution we generate while sitting in traffic jams.

The benefits of this mitigation are environmental, economic, and personal.

We live in a state that is well-placed to be a climate leader. The [MCCC reported in 2016](#) that Maryland is “**on target to not only meet but exceed the emission reduction goal**” the state had set for 2020 under the 2009 “Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Act.” The Commission reported that this “was being accomplished with an estimated benefit between \$2.5 and \$3.5 billion in economic output by 2020, as well as the creation and maintenance of between 26,000 and 33,000 new jobs.”

We are already seeing examples of this leadership right here in Howard County, too. For instance, the Columbia Association has cut its GHG emissions by a remarkable 55% over the past five years thanks to smart investments in clean energy and energy efficiency. They did this not just to be good environmental stewards; but also because it's good business.

As your County Executive, I will make sure that Howard County is once again a leader in promoting clean energy and energy efficiency, both to protect public health & safety and to strengthen our long-term prosperity.

To adapt to climate change, we need to make our communities and agriculture more resilient.

Howard County has yet to do a realistic and comprehensive assessment of our vulnerability to climate impacts, nor have we sufficiently integrated climate considerations into our land use planning and disaster risk management. For example, Howard County's 2015 "Climate Action Plan" deals only with GHG reductions. It does not include any provisions to adapt to climate change and make our communities more resilient. We must do better. Under my administration, we will make updating this plan an immediate priority, incorporating resiliency as an integral piece.

It will also take real leadership to move relevant County agencies from their stove-piped operations and to make sure they work closely together to implement the new Climate Action Plan. This means getting Public Works, Planning & Zoning, Community Sustainability, and Emergency Management, among others, all on the same page and working in the same direction. I'm committed to forging public-private partnerships, where necessary, to find practical, cost-effective solutions that enjoy wide acceptance and implementation.

All of Howard County wins when our local communities, the private sector, and agricultural producers are better able to anticipate, manage, and adapt to the growing climate risks we face.

Steps to Greater Sustainability

1. Update Howard County's 2015 "Climate Action Plan"

Howard County's Climate Action Plan must be updated to reflect a better understanding of the threats posed by climate change, our ability to mitigate these threats, and opportunities to adapt and bolster our resiliency. We will update the plan in the following ways:

- Update underlying 2012 greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory.
- Evaluate key advances and shortcomings under the 2015 plan.
- Set an ambitious GHG reduction target in line with Maryland's 2030 target of a 40% reduction from 2006 levels (per the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act), with deeper reductions for 2050.
- Outline key programs, initiatives, and metrics to be used in implementing the plan, including:
 - incentivizes for greater investments in clean energy and energy efficiency;
 - reduced solid waste streams and improved waste management;

- boost electric vehicle fleets and infrastructure;
 - modernize land use and transportation planning to reduce time lost idling in traffic;
 - incentivizes for open space, farmland, & forest preservation; and,
 - leveraging Maryland Department of Agriculture incentives, such as research, education, technical assistance, and financial assistance, to boost the ability of local farmers to implement practices that create healthy soils, thereby boosting the yield, profitability, and carbon sequestration capacity of agricultural soils.
- Add **climate-resilient development** as a significant component of the new plan, including:
 - comprehensive assessment/mapping of climate risks, especially with regard to critical infrastructure; and
 - incentives for green infrastructure development and other ways to improve water quality and flood control;

2. **Re-imagine Old Town Ellicott City – From Icon of Disaster to Icon of Resilient Development**

Old Ellicott City is a treasured community and a bellwether of a future marked by climate change. Our opportunity following the two catastrophic floods over the last two years is to radically transform this city for a new era. This historic town was an integral part of America’s “Industrial Revolution” and can now serve a similar role in the coming “green revolution”. We will achieve this ambitious goal for Old Ellicott City with the following strategies:

- Convene stakeholder representatives in a collaborative process to:
 - review hydrologic realities of the OEC watershed;
 - review 2017 engineering studies & cost estimates for remediation
 - explore alternative solutions in the context of new climate realities, engineering & cost constraints, risk factors, historical considerations, and socio-economic aspects of OEC and environs,
 - formulate optimal solutions for short-, medium-, and long-term renewal of Ellicott City’s historic district
- Bring stakeholder driven options forward for broader community input & feedback.
- Incorporate a re-imagined OEC into Howard County development plans

3. **Revitalize the Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board.**

Howard County's Environmental Sustainability Board was created more than a decade ago as a body of informed and dedicated stakeholders who would advise the county in its work to achieve greater sustainability. Since that time, the Board has been tasked with issues outside of this important role and has gotten away from its essential mission. We must revitalize this board and ensure it is focused on our most critical sustainability work.

4. Make Howard County at “[STAR Community](#)” by enlisting in the STAR program (“Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating Communities”) and incorporating STAR’s best practices into the County’s sustainable development efforts.

Understanding our challenges, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses is essential to this work. With STAR’s expertise and perspective, we can obtain a more holistic understanding of current position and how best to manage our efforts and invest our resources. We have great tools and resources at our disposal, and with some additional guidance, we can ensure we are working both smarter and harder.

5. Support & avail of state-level programs for workforce training & development to boost jobs in clean energy, green infrastructure design, and resilient development.

The “green” economy is the economy of the future, and we must be doing more to ensure residents and businesses have the tools, expertise, and opportunities to take part in this important economic and environmental industry.

6. Support regional clean transportation plans and programs to reduce carbon emissions.

We need to invest in sustainable transportation options that reduce carbon emissions and limit our reliance on fossil fuels.