



AIM County Council Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from Loretta Jean Garcia candidate for At-Large

Affordable Housing

How would you work with AIM to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to \$100M by the year 2022?
I would consider increasing the HIF to \$100,000 by 2022. I would work in partnership with AIM, the Housing Opportunity Commission, nonprofits and private companies. The HIF funds can be used for a variety of purposes, including loans and subsidies to acquire properties, to rehabilitate deteriorating properties, or to repair and upgrade facilities. These funds can help prevent displacement of county residents, and provide subsidies to allow seniors, people with special needs, and renters with low and moderate incomes to live in units throughout the county. I would look into creative solutions, including using tiny homes as transitional housing for veterans and homeless individuals & families, as some communities are doing.

How would you work with AIM to put 200 units of affordable housing on public land, in the development pipeline each year?

I would consider proposals regarding placement of affordable housing on publicly-owned land. The achievability of this proposal would depend on many factors. The long-standing policy in Montgomery County has been to locate affordable housing throughout the county. If the goal is to have affordable housing located in desirable areas – near public transit, retail and schools - that may not always be possible with county-owned land. But, I can commit to work with AIM and other groups to see where affordable housing can be located effectively throughout the county.

Equity in Schools

How will you work with AIM to expand the Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary program to four additional Title I elementary schools each year so that the program serves 2,400 students by the year 2022?

I would work with AIM and partners in the EBB program to increase the program to Title I elementary schools each year. The implementation of this goal would depend on factors, including the county budget, which is currently in deficit status. Funding to the Recreation Department and MCPS – which are in partnership with the EBB program - could ensure a stream of funding for the EBB program. If full funding were not achievable through county taxpayer sources, I would encourage and work creatively with partners to raise funds through other sources.

Protecting Immigrants and Refugees

Many Montgomery County families are living in fear of one or more parent being separated from their children because of deportation. How will you work with AIM to include funding for deportation defense and family preparedness in the county budget, as well as work with AIM to find private funding for these efforts?

I support legal defense funds and throughout my legal career I have worked with bar associations and nonprofits to provide legal defense funds. Some jurisdictions are providing funds for deportation defense,



including neighboring Prince Georges County. I would work with AIM, nonprofits working with immigrants, and others to assist with finding funds for legal defense against deportation. It may be possible to set up a defense fund through the Gilcrest Center for immigrant services. If taxpayer funds cannot fully cover the costs of legal defense, there are nonprofits working with immigrants and I would support organizations raising legal defense funds through non-public sources.

Will you commit to work with AIM and Montgomery County landlords to house refugees in Montgomery County?

Montgomery County is a community that welcomes immigrants and there are many groups within the county that are working with the resettlement of refugees. I know from working on refugee resettlement efforts, that groups often find that housing is not available or affordable in Montgomery County. Consequently, refugee apartments may be found in nearby jurisdictions, including Prince Georges and Frederick Counties. I will commit to work with AIM, faith communities, family services centers, other groups, and landlords to find housing for refugees in the county.

Transportation

Will you work with AIM to protect good transportation jobs from privatization?

I support public transit and I use buses and trains often. I would reframe the question, not as protecting county employees, but as respecting them. Working as a manager in county government for nearly ten years, I know that successive budget cuts have reduced the county workforce significantly. I know that county employees have shouldered the extra load, doing “more with less”. Outsourcing has been happening for decades, with mixed results. Some public services – including electricity, water, phones, and mail services - have been privatized with some success. At a time when the county budget is running at a deficit, it is prudent to look at whether costs may be reduced through outsourcing. However, our transportation needs are great and increasing. I commit to examine not only ways to save money, but also ways to maintain and improve transportation services to the public. I will support our experienced and dedicated transportation workforce as the best course of action.

How will you hold WMATA accountable to prevent cutting bus service in the county, particularly to low-income areas?

I support public transit, including regional and Montgomery County bus services. One way to ensure continued services from WMATA is to step up and provide dedicated funding for regional bus and Metro services. Local governments are all trying to find ways to cut costs. Montgomery County residents and leaders need to recognize that public transit services are important for our local economy. These transit services provide a means for county residents to get to their jobs, which in turn means that they can contribute to the county’s economy. Other than funding, Montgomery County leaders can continue to meet with regional transit providers, through council of government or otherwise. Ongoing negotiations can ensure that county residents will continue to have necessary public transit services.

Democracy with Accountability

Do you commit to meeting with AIM within a month of taking office, and on a quarterly basis subsequently?



Yes, I will commit to meet with representatives of AIM within a month after taking office and periodically after that, quarterly if that appears to be a good schedule.