

Frederick County Executive
Jessica Fitzwater's
Transition Report

2023



March 20, 2023

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Message from the County Executive

Dear Frederick County,

It is truly my honor to serve as your County Executive. I believe in a Frederick County where everyone can live, work, and thrive – a place where all residents feel a strong sense of belonging. Each one of us has a responsibility to do what we can, with what we have, where we are, to make our community – and, yes, our world – a better place for all.

Our administration starts in a strong position thanks in large part to our first County Executive, Jan Gardner, who led the transition from a county commissioner form of government to a charter government. She left the County on solid financial footing, and we are well positioned to continue to build a government that meets the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population.

Our Transition Team brought together more than 130 Frederick County residents who gave freely of their time and talent to set shared goals for our administration. I am especially grateful to Co-Chairs Toni Bowie and Rick Weldon for their leadership throughout this process. We asked the Transition Team to anchor its work in the values of accountability, inclusion, and sustainability – values that form the foundation on which we will grow as an organization and serve our residents to the best of our ability.

I am so thankful for the amazing civil servants who keep Frederick County operating each and every day. Our people are our most valuable resource, and I want everyone in our workforce to feel valued, to think big, and to be bold. Together, we will foster a workplace culture where everyone can achieve their full potential, while working with our residents to solve problems and make life better for people.

This report is the beginning of a process, not the end. We will use this document to hold ourselves accountable as we continue the important work of serving our community. In the coming months, we will publish a tracker on our website, so everyone can see our progress and stay engaged. And we will ask the Transition Team to reconvene annually for a public meeting to receive updates and continue to lend their energy and expertise to our work.

We challenged our Transition Team to be bold – and, as you will see in the following pages, they certainly were! I look forward to continuing to bring people together as we implement their recommendations. Together we can shape Frederick County's future.

All my best,

Jessica

Jessica



‘This report is the beginning of a process, not the end. We will use this document to hold ourselves accountable as we continue the important work of serving our community.’



Message from Co-Chairs Toni Bowie & Rick Weldon



‘People of different backgrounds and differing opinions came together to listen, learn, debate and compromise.’



Dear Frederick County,

For the past three months, we have led County Executive Fitzwater’s Transition Team, a dedicated and diverse group of Frederick County residents who are deeply invested in our community. These are leaders in their fields, who brought a wealth of talent and experience, and we are grateful for their contributions to this process.

Our work was community-led and government-informed. Transition Team members engaged directly with County officials. They asked questions that were tough but fair, and they shared their personal experiences interacting with County government. It was truly a dialogue, as Transition Team members learned about how the government operates, and County officials heard ideas about how the government could operate.

This is the kind of engagement that makes Frederick County a special place. People of different backgrounds and differing opinions came together to listen, learn, debate, and compromise. They had hard conversations about complicated issues, without being hard on each other. We were so impressed with the amount of time Transition Team members invested, the quality and quantity of the knowledge they gathered and shared, and the respect they showed each other. The process was inclusive and transparent, and this report represents countless hours of research, discussion, and deliberation.

This is an exciting time for Frederick County, and we should all be invested in this young administration’s success – because their success is truly our success. It was an honor to lead this work, and we look forward to working with County Executive Fitzwater to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Toni Bowie

Rick Weldon

Transition Team Members

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Toni Bowie
Hon. Rick Weldon



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Overview

On November 21, 2022, County Executive-elect Jessica Fitzwater announced Toni Bowie and Rick Weldon would serve as Co-Chairs of her Transition Team.

Mr. Weldon is President and CEO of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, a former state legislator and county commissioner, who brings experience from the business and non-profit sectors. Mr. Weldon was asked to help lead the transition because he understands County government from the inside, as a former elected official, and the outside, as an advocate for the business community.

Ms. Bowie is the founder and managing partner of MaxLife, a Frederick-based firm focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion that helps organizations develop work places where their employees feel seen, heard, and valued. Ms. Bowie was asked to help lead the transition because Frederick County is growing and changing, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging need to be woven through every facet of County government, so we are prepared to serve our increasingly diverse population.

At that announcement, County Executive-elect Fitzwater pledged that the values of inclusion, accountability, and sustainability would guide the Transition Team's work and infuse the work of her administration. She also promised ample opportunities for public engagement with the process.

On December 5, Jessica Fitzwater was sworn in as County Executive.

On December 6, County Executive Fitzwater announced the Transition Team would include eight committees: a group of senior advisors, and seven working committees:

- » **Economic Development & Jobs**, co-chaired by Linda Thane-Morgan and Jason Lee
- » **Education & Workforce Development**, co-chaired by Missy Dirks and Melissa Muntz
- » **Government Innovation**, co-chaired by Dr. Rachel Mandel and Gayon Sampson
- » **Housing & Quality of Life**, co-chaired by Mark Long and Ryan Trout
- » **Public Health & Human Services**, co-chaired by Malcolm Furgol and Dr. Denise Rollins
- » **Public Safety**, co-chaired by Kim Dine and Clarence "Chip" Jewell
- » **Sustainability, Infrastructure & Transportation**, co-chaired by Dusty Rood and Barb Trader

Recognizing that Frederick County has a strong foundation on which to build, the County Executive announced the Transition Team's work would be guided by four core documents:

- » The Livable Frederick Master Plan
- » The United Way's ALICE Report
- » The Equity and Inclusion Leadership Team's 2021 Report
- » The Climate Emergency Workgroup's 2021 Report

The County Executive also announced the public could visit www.frederickcountymd.gov/transition to share their feedback. Over the course of the transition, 2,786 people viewed that webpage and 136 shared comments.

On December 12, County Executive Fitzwater convened the full Transition Team at Winchester Hall. They heard from Ms. Bowie about diversity, equity, and inclusion, from Mr. Weldon about accountability, from Joe Richardson about sustainability, and from Jim Racheff about Livable Frederick. Each committee was given a packet which provided an overview of the process, core values and guiding documents, timeline, the County Executive's policy positions, and questions to consider.

Between December 16 and December 21, the committees held organizational meetings, and several committees broke into subcommittees to consider specific issues.

Beginning on January 4, 2023, the committees or their subcommittees met weekly. These meetings provided an opportunity for the committees to hear from and ask questions of current and former Frederick County government officials and other stakeholders. The meetings were posted on the transition website and open to the public. Beginning in mid-February, the committees submitted their draft recommendations to the County Executive's Office.

As the transition unfolded, the County Executive honored her pledge to make the budget process more accessible by holding seven budget town halls, two at Winchester Hall and one in each council district, which engaged more than 350 residents. She was joined by County Council members at each town hall. The County Executive met individually with every division director and launched a monthly senior leadership team meeting, creating a forum for division directors to share information and identify opportunities to collaborate. She also began the FY2024 budget process, including hearing appeals from each division.

On March 8, the County Executive met with the Senior Advisors to share the unedited draft recommendations. On March 13, the Senior Advisors met to review the document and share their feedback. On March 14, the County Executive's Office shared the unedited draft recommendations with the division directors, nearly half of whom provided feedback. And on March 20, the County Executive released this report to the public.

This process was truly community-led and government-informed, with significant input from a diverse group of stakeholders who are deeply invested in Frederick County's future.

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unfolded, the County
Executive honored
her pledge to make
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Committee Recommendations

Economic Development & Jobs



A. Revitalize the Business & Industry Cabinet

The Business & Industry Cabinet is an advisory board created for the sharing of ideas, solutions, and creative approaches to business topics and issues facing Frederick County. It last met in January 2020. The County Executive should reconstitute an inclusive Business & Industry Cabinet which reflects the diversity of Frederick County's economy, which meets regularly, and which provides a forum for business leaders and government officials to share information, learn from one another, and solve problems.

B. Establish a Business & Industry Sub-Cabinet

In addition to an external-facing Business & Industry Cabinet, the County Executive should establish an internal-facing Business & Industry Sub-Cabinet, which includes the division directors and other County officials whose portfolios touch the business community. The purpose of this body is to create a forum where County officials can work together to identify chokepoints, streamline inter-departmental processes to improve the customer experience, and hold each other accountable for outcomes.

C. Streamline the Permitting Experience for All Customers

Frederick County's Fast Track Permitting is a successful tool which has helped the County attract new major employers. The County Executive should expand this model to serve all businesses, including small businesses and startups. This expansion should include dedicated staff resources to help businesses navigate the permitting process, provide exemplary customer service, and eliminate barriers for non-native English speakers.

D. Establish a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program

The State of Maryland established its MBE Program in 1978 to ensure that socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses are included in the state's procurement and contracting opportunities. Today, small, minority-owned, and women-owned firms can seek certification required to meet minority participation goals. The County Executive should conduct the legally required disparity study to analyze minority participation in County contracts, publish the study, and use its results to create a County MBE program.

E. Explore Additional Procurement Strategies to Support Local Businesses

Many jurisdictions have policies to promote the use of local suppliers and service providers to create a sustainable economy, grow local businesses, increase employment, and invest government dollars in the community. In addition to establishing an MBE program, the County Executive should explore additional procurement strategies which will invest County funds in local businesses.

F. Implement the Frederick County Growth Opportunity (GO) Strategy

In partnership with the University of Baltimore Jacob France Institute and TEconomy Partners, Frederick County published its Growth Opportunity Strategy in 2018. This comprehensive document includes strategic priorities, recommended actions, and measurable outcomes. The Office of Economic Development should align this document with the Livable Frederick Master Plan, develop a plan to implement the strategy fully, and publish a dashboard to track implementation.

G. Lift the Creative Economy

Frederick County has a dynamic and diverse arts community, which contributes meaningfully to Frederick County's economy. The Growth Opportunity Strategy identifies arts, culture, and creativity as elements of quality places, but the Frederick County Office of Economic Development does not include the creative economy as a "key industry." The County Executive should work with stakeholders in the arts community to develop and implement a strategy to grow the creative economy.

H. Develop Place-Based Economic Development Models

Place-based economic development models build upon the unique features of a community and its existing physical and social assets. The County Executive should foster partnerships with Frederick Community College, Frederick Health, Hood College, Mount Saint Mary's University, and other institutions to identify shared values and goals and develop strategies for inclusive place-based economic development.

I. Provide Targeted Tax Relief to ALICE Families

The United Way's most recent ALICE Report showed that 37% of Frederick County families cannot afford basic needs such as housing, transportation, childcare, food, healthcare, and technology. The County Executive should provide targeted tax relief to these households to help them better make ends meet.

J. Establish a Retail Incubator

Retail incubators allow retailers to occupy shared or temporary stores in locations that would either have been too risky or financially prohibitive for a retail start-up. These incubators often help minority- and women-owned start-ups that have challenges accessing capital. The Frederick County Office of Economic Development should partner with an organization that understands retail incubation to create a retail incubator.

K. Support the Diversifying Agricultural Economy

Frederick County is Maryland's largest agricultural county, and our farms are integral to our economy and quality of life. The agricultural economy is changing, but many laws, regulations, and governmental processes have not kept pace with the change and inhibit innovation as a result. The County Executive should convene stakeholders to review and recommend modernization of all laws, regulations, and processes that touch the agricultural economy.

L. Position Frederick County to Be a National Leader in the Data Center Industry

Frederick County is less than one millisecond by fiber from Loudoun County, Virginia, which is home to more than 25 million square feet of data centers. The global economy is dependent on data utilization and storage, and the dependence is growing. The County Executive should convene stakeholders to develop a model for critical data infrastructure which leverages the benefits data centers can provide our local economy while protecting our environment and quality of life.

Education & Workforce Development



A. Partner with Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) to Recruit & Retain the Best Educators

Staffing schools is harder than ever. It has reached a crisis point nationally, and we feel it more acutely in Frederick County. When we do not staff schools adequately, all students lose. According to state data, FCPS is Maryland's fastest growing school system and has a staff vacancy more than double our surrounding jurisdictions. The County Executive should partner with FCPS to raise teacher salaries and explore other incentives, like expanding workforce housing, to recruit and retain world class educators.

B. Invest in Student Behavioral Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42% of all high school students felt persistently sad or hopeless, 29% experienced poor mental health, and 22% seriously considered attempting suicide in 2021. The County Executive should invest in research-informed programs and specialists, like social workers and other mental health professionals, to help address the growing youth behavioral health crisis.

C. Develop a Collective Impact Model to Serve the County's Most Vulnerable Students

The County Executive should catalyze the development and implementation of a collective impact model which coordinates efforts and resources between and among nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and County divisions to provide wraparound services to our most vulnerable students in the most efficient and effective way possible. These students include, but are not limited to, English-language learners, students with disabilities, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals.

D. Think Creatively about County Spaces to Support Education & Workforce Stakeholders

Bringing the Prospect Center online will give Frederick County an opportunity to re-evaluate its real estate portfolio. The County Executive should take this opportunity to think creatively about the existing portfolio and potential acquisitions that could be used as a shared resource by multiple education and workforce stakeholders. The County Executive should encourage FCPS and Frederick Community College to think creatively about use of their real estate to support these stakeholders.

E. Partner with FCPS to Develop a Plan for Universal Pre-Kindergarten

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future requires expansion of pre-kindergarten programs. In the 2021 – 22 school year, FCPS began planning for this expansion. Its traditional 4-year-old full-day pre-K programs are at 94% capacity, and it is experiencing significant challenges serving 3-year-olds. The County Executive should partner with FCPS to identify appropriate space for pre-K programs where transportation will not be a barrier to attending and to facilitate private partner collaboration.

F. Convene a Summit to Create a Comprehensive Workforce Plan

The government's ability to convene is among its most significant and underappreciated powers. The County Executive should convene a summit to bring stakeholders together to create a comprehensive and inclusive workforce plan. Frederick County Workforce Services should steward the implementation of the plan and should partner with Data Driven Frederick to ensure the process is data-informed and the plan has clear and measurable metrics.

G. Expand Apprenticeship and Internship Programs

Frederick County's Division of Public Works established a working relationship with FCPS' Career and Technology Center. The County Executive should expand this partnership to create robust and enterprise-wide apprenticeship and internship programs that show students career opportunities in public service while meeting needs identified within County government.



Government Innovation

A. Encourage a Culture of Innovation & Failing Forward

As Frederick County continues to grow and change, a status quo mindset cannot prevail in government. At this moment, the worst answer to the question "why do we do it that way?" is "because we have always done it that way." The County Executive should foster an enterprise-wide culture of innovation and risk taking, which includes training managers and all staff on innovation, psychological safety in the workplace, and change management and reward them for incorporating these practices into their work.

B. Modernize Talent Management

Over the past eight years, Frederick County has grown by approximately 800 employees, but the Division of Human Resources has not grown to meet the workforce's needs. The County Executive should modernize the talent management operation to make Frederick County a highly sought-after employer where people want to work. The County Executive should invest in training, including culture, trauma-informed practices, technology, and diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

C. Focus on the Customer Service Experience

Bureaucracies often think about processes and procedures from the perspective of the bureaucratic experience, not the constituent's experience, which often results in unpleasant and frustrating interactions with government. The County Executive should direct a review of existing processes and procedures through a constituent-focused lens to develop an outstanding customer service experience and cultivate a culture where the workforce wants to do business with constituents.

D. Break Down Siloes within the Organization & Foster Enterprise-Wide Thinking

Frederick County is a relatively siloed organization wherein component parts of the government do not necessarily understand the work occurring in other parts of the government. This creates inefficiencies and discourages innovation and collaborative problem-solving. The County Executive should break down siloes, centralize services common to the divisions, foster enterprise-wide awareness that promotes innovation and collective problem-solving.

E. Develop a Collective Impact Model

The collective impact model develops and supports networks of community members, organizations, and institutions who advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems-level change. The County Executive should develop an intentional collective impact strategy that positions the County as the backbone or support organization for work which includes all sectors of the community, not just government.

F. Develop a Grant-Making Strategy

Frederick County makes grants to an array of non-profit organizations that serve our residents. The County Executive should encourage collective impact initiatives through the grant-making process by prioritizing projects that utilize the model to magnify outcomes and influence partnerships. This will ultimately eliminate duplication of services and identify unknown gaps in services.

G. Develop an Enterprise-Wide Approach to Technology

Frederick County's approach to data and technology is decentralized, which creates inefficiencies, results in missed opportunities, and elevates the risk of cyber-attacks. The County Executive should evaluate all existing information technology processes and empower the Interagency Information Technologies Division to develop an enterprise-wide strategy to promote efficiency, standardize practices, prioritize security, encourage effective use of technology, increase interoperability, and promote data use and sharing.

H. Partner with Data Driven Frederick to Build a New Model for Data-Driven Decision Making

Local governments build "stat" systems to manage data, publish dashboards, and drive decisions. This has utility for the government but does not leverage outside data to understand the picture more fully. The County Executive should collaborate with Data Driven Frederick to create a model public-private partnership which leverages data to break down siloes within our community, increase transparency, promote trust, foster innovation, and strengthen accountability.

I. Use the Livable Frederick Master Plan to Create an Outcome-Based Budgeting System

The Livable Frederick Master Plan was adopted a few short months before the COVID-19 pandemic forced County government to focus all its resources on the crisis at hand. While some work was started to align the budget with Livable Frederick, the process is incomplete. The County Executive should develop and implement an outcome-based budgeting system that aligns County investments with the results envisioned in Livable Frederick.

J. Develop an Enterprise-Wide Approach to Communications

Frederick County's approach to communications is decentralized, which creates inequities among the divisions and disparate constituent experiences. The County Executive should develop an enterprise-wide approach to internal and external communication with strategies that are consistent, accessible, inclusive, and comprehensive. This includes centralizing communication oversight under the Director of Communications & Public Engagement and focusing on representation through imagery used to showcase the County.

K. Overhaul the Website with a Constituent-Focused Design

Frederick County's website is extremely outdated, which makes it hard for constituents to access information and provide feedback to County officials. The County Executive should overhaul the website to create a constituent-focused platform that makes information easy to find and creates standardized means for constituents to share feedback simply, directly, and consistently. The County Executive should also direct divisions to publish more public documents on the webpage.

L. Meet Constituents Where They Are

The County Executive held a series of in-district town hall meetings and used an online platform to solicit constituent feedback on the FY2024 budget. The County Executive should build on this practice of meeting constituents where they are by using multiple means and modes of communication, including in-person and virtual town hall meetings, neighborhood walks, events designed to engage with diverse populations, questionnaires, opt-in mailings, and other tools.

Housing & Quality of Life



A. Establish a Division of Housing

Frederick County faces a housing crisis which requires coordinated countywide action, but the Department of Housing & Community Development is nested within the Citizens Services Division. The County Executive should elevate housing within the organization by creating a Division of Housing (DH) and provide the resources needed to be effective in housing programs and finance. The DH should update the 2016 Affordable Housing Needs Assessment and develop a strategic plan.

B. Become the Lead Agency for the Continuum of Care Collaborative

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to promote communitywide commitment to ending homelessness and to provide funding for nonprofit and government providers to rehouse homeless individuals and families quickly while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused by homelessness. The DH should become the lead agency for the CoC and pursue becoming an Entitlement jurisdiction.

C. Expand Further into the World of Housing Finance

The DH should prioritize outside funding opportunities to create and preserve affordable housing, including the following: public-private partnerships for the development of HUD Section 202 housing projects for

low-income seniors, Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) properties reaching the end of their compliance period, requests for proposals targeting for-profit and nonprofit developers with successful track records, and other funding mechanisms.

D. Develop a Housing Preservation Strategy

To maintain and increase affordable housing options for residents, Frederick County must preserve existing affordable housing in addition to creating new affordable units. The DH should adopt and publish goals and criteria for preservation.

E. Partner with Municipalities to Increase the Affordable Housing Supply

In consultation with our municipalities, the DH should identify key funding, infrastructure, policies and programs to increase the available housing stock within municipalities. The division should explore possibilities to partner and customize its strategies as appropriate in consultation with the municipalities.

F. Improve the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)

The County Executive should convene stakeholders to review the APFO and make recommendations to reduce the effective moratoria of housing opportunities by evaluating existing and alternative school capacity test parameters, capacity factors, and alternative funding models. The South Frederick Corridor planning effort offers the best initial opportunity to consider alternative APFO models.

G. Review Zoning Ordinance & Regulations to Reduce Barriers to Affordable Housing

The County Executive should convene stakeholders to review the zoning ordinance and associated regulations to identify barriers and to make recommendations to allow for alternative housing types in all residential and mixed-use zoning districts with the goals of increasing affordable and market-rate development opportunities, providing ample services, and expanding equity and economic opportunities for historically disadvantaged residents.

H. Review All County-Owned Land to Be Considered for Affordable Housing Opportunities

The County Executive should direct a comprehensive review of all County-owned land which is under-utilized or not being utilized to identify potential affordable housing opportunities and perform an evaluation of each property and its development potential. The DH should then develop requests for proposals for each property based on this review and determine which are best for LIHTCs, possible social housing, and partnerships with non-profit affordable housing developers.

I. Develop a Service Coordination Model for Our Lowest Income Seniors to Age in Place

Our overall population is projected to grow 5.3% over the next five years, and our senior population is projected to grow 19.8%. The growth rate of our senior population is higher than statewide and national projections. The DH should develop a plan for reducing the cost burden of senior housing, increasing stock of affordable housing, and ramping up services to ensure high quality of life for our growing older adult population.

J. Link Neighborhoods to Accessible Recreational Spaces

Housing creates communities, and parks and open green spaces are essential for quality of life in communities. The County Executive should partner with mayors and burgesses to identify opportunities to invest in local community parks which are accessible to all residents, regardless of age or ability. The County Executive should invest in projects that promote safe travel via walking and bicycling by updating and implementing the Bikeways and Trails Plan.



Public Health & Human Services

A. Incorporate a Health Equity Lens into Grant-Making

The County Executive should develop a framework for grantmaking which prioritizes organizations and programs that focus on health equity, provide services to marginalized and vulnerable populations, and that include the populations most impacted in their decision-making process, align with community data and reports, and partner with other organizations that support the work.

B. Strengthen the Healthcare Workforce

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects overall employment in healthcare will grow 13% in the next decade, yet the field is experiencing workforce shortages, high turnover, and an insufficient workforce pipeline. The County Executive should partner with stakeholders to create a comprehensive healthcare workforce development strategy, which includes engaging a diverse body of students in preparing to become community health workers as an endpoint or entry point into other healthcare professions.

C. Focus on Maternal Health Disparities

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a 40% increase in maternal deaths from 2020 to 2021, and the mortality rate for Black women was significantly higher than rates for other women. The Frederick County Health Department convened a Maternal and Child Health Collaborative in 2019, which commissioned a disparity study informed by stakeholders with lived experiences. The County Executive should use that study to develop a plan to address maternal and child health disparities.

D. Implement a Health in All Policies (HiAP) Framework

The County Executive should implement a HiAP framework in the County's policy-making processes which will require policymakers to facilitate cross-sector partnerships through enhanced communication and collaboration, identify and lift up successful examples of inter-divisional work, and establish a consistent evaluation framework to measure progress towards long-term goals and strategies.

E. Make Mental Health Services More Accessible and Collaborative

90% of Americans believe we are facing a mental health crisis, according to a recent national survey, and CDC data substantiate the belief. The County Executive should improve mental healthcare by working with and within community centers to meet people where they are, ensuring outreach materials are culturally tailored and available in multiple languages, using technology more effectively to disseminate information, and breaking down silos among providers.

F. Expand Successful Strategies for Addressing the Opioid Crisis to Emerging Disorders

The Frederick County Health Department has employed a number of successful strategies to address the opioid crisis and has run campaigns to improve the health and wellness of residents through prevention strategies to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco and alcohol use. The County Executive should expand program entry points, harm reduction programs, and the use of peer recovery specialists while continuing to focus on preventative and early intervention programs.



Public Safety

A. Finish Implementing the Laird Line of Duty Death After Action Report

On August 11, 2021, the Laird family lost a husband, father, son, and brother; the Division of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS) lost a brother, firefighter, and friend; and Frederick County lost an active and caring public servant. DFRS is committed to making systemic change, both to honor Battalion Chief Laird's memory and to prevent future tragedies. The County Executive should prioritize meeting national staffing standards,

adopting across-the-board training standards and operational competencies, streamlining decision-making processes, and creating an integrated career and volunteer workforce. DFRS should demonstrate successful implementation with a structured continuous quality improvement plan.

B. Focus on Recruiting & Retaining First Responders

There is a national shortage of police officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and 911 call takers. The County Executive should focus on the first responder workforce by retaining current first responders, using inclusive recruitment strategies to build organizations representative of the County's population, work to identify and alleviate barriers to recruiting persons from historically marginalized communities, and improve benefits for volunteer firefighters.

C. Promote Wellness of Front-Line Workers

Front-line workers confront trauma every day, which can cause post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, substance abuse disorders, and other conditions. DFRS provides behavioral health support to its workforce. The County Executive should expand these offerings. First responders also confront childcare issues due to the nature of their work. The County Executive should work to identify innovative solutions to these problems.

D. Expand Successful Programs & Measure Their Impact

The Frederick County Health Department partners with DFRS and other agencies to run successful harm reduction and diversion programs, like the Safe Street Program, the Community Outreach and Support Team, and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion. The County Executive should expand these programs and encourage similar collaboration across County government. The County Executive should also encourage partnerships with outside organizations, like the Be SMART Campaign.

E. Emphasize Prevention for Intimate Partner Violence

Education is the key to preventing abuse. The County Executive should emphasize prevention programs by partnering with FCPS to provide intimate partner violence prevention training at all Frederick County high and middle schools, conducting a community awareness campaign about intimate partner violence and human trafficking, and providing training to all County employees to identify and respond appropriately to intimate partner violence and human trafficking.

F. Incorporate Additional Behavioral Health Protocols

As Frederick County prepares to bring its crisis stabilization center online, the County Executive should work with the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems to develop routing protocols that allow first responders to deliver individuals in crisis to the center. The County Executive should enhance the 911 center protocols for behavioral health responses. The County Executive should also work with stakeholders to promote awareness of Maryland's extreme risk protective order laws.

G. Break Down Siloes & Examine Problems More Holistically

Through groups like the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, Frederick County has recognized the value of bringing together an array of stakeholders to try to solve problems that no one organization can address. The County Executive should use tools like a criminal justice coordinating council to continue to break down siloes and develop an integrated strategic planning process for all public safety agencies. The County Executive should also conduct staffing studies for all public safety agencies.

H. Promote Youth Engagement with Uniformed Services Personnel

Engaging with youth is a powerful way for government officials to be inclusive in their work and can result in young people becoming more actively engaged in their community. Done well, it creates a dialogue between government officials and young people, where they learn from each other. The County Executive should promote youth engagement with uniformed services personnel, with a focus on historically marginalized communities, to foster mutual respect and better understanding.

Sustainability, Infrastructure & Transportation



A. Leverage Federal Money for Infrastructure & Resilience

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provide once-in-a-generation funding to invest in infrastructure and resilience projects. The County Executive should leverage this money to fund local projects by developing capacity to apply for and influence the direction of federal and state grants, developing public-private partnerships to catalyze projects beyond the government's ability, and exploring alternative funding mechanisms including green banks and resilience authorities.

B. Implement a Whole-Community Approach to Energy Efficiency

Promoting energy efficiency can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and bring about savings to the taxpayers. The County Executive should apply a sustainability lens to County-supported construction and renovation projects and encourage the Board of Education to do the same. The County Executive should also commission a comprehensive solar siting study, promote public awareness of energy efficiency programs, conduct an energy audit of County buildings and set goals for energy reduction.

C. Build Resilience to Extreme Precipitation & Drought Events

Flooding and stormwater runoff pose a real threat to Frederick County, as do rising temperatures. We need to prepare to mitigate the destruction and deterioration these threats could cause. The County Executive should prioritize mitigation by commissioning a flood resilience plan, coordinating with government and industry stakeholders to reduce vulnerability and promote safety, and promote public awareness so residents and businesses understand their risk and how they can mitigate it.

D. Ensure Adequate Domestic Water & Sewer Capacity

Frederick County's Division of Water and Sewer Utilities evaluates actual consumption and other planning factors and needs to promote efficiency in its systems. The County Executive should use Livable Frederick as a guide to determine and plan for future water and sewerage needs, while supporting the equitable and efficient distribution of water and sewer service to all County residents. The County Executive should also investigate the possibility of collaboration with municipalities in this area.

E. Engage the Agricultural Community

Frederick County's Office of Economic Development designates agriculture as one of the County's key industries, maintains an Agricultural Business Council, and serves as a liaison to the agricultural community. The County Executive should build on this work by engaging agricultural stakeholders to update the Frederick County Agricultural Strategic Plan, last updated in 2007, and increase the agricultural land preservation goal to 160,000 acres.

F. Develop a Greenway Corridors & Infrastructure Plan

To build on the framework of the Livable Frederick Master Plan, the County Executive should develop a comprehensive greenway corridors and infrastructure plan which should connect green infrastructure hubs, reduce fragmentation of natural areas, provide more options for wildlife migration, adapt as climate changes, identify forest conservation and afforestation opportunities, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and increase outdoor recreation opportunities for low- to moderate-income families.

G. Transition the County Fleet to Electric Vehicles

On March 13, Governor Moore announced the state will require car manufacturers to increase the share of electric vehicles they sell, reaching 100% of passenger car and light truck sales by 2035. The County Executive should develop a plan for transitioning the County's fleet to electric vehicles. The plan should consider maintenance and infrastructure needs and should contemplate the discontinuation of new gas station approvals to limit the presence of stranded assets.

H. Reorganize & Resource Transportation Functions

The County's transportation functions live in several divisions. The County Executive should determine whether cross-divisional coordination is appropriate or whether these functions should be consolidated. A barrier to providing, much less expanding, transit is competition for drivers. The County Executive should ensure wages and benefits for drivers are regionally competitive. Data show TransIT ridership is increasing, including short-distance riders. The County Executive should keep TransIT fare-free.

I. Advocate for Expanded Regional Transportation Service

The dissolution of the public-private partnership between Transurban and the State of Maryland to build toll lanes and widen parts of I-270 creates an opportunity for Frederick County to advocate for regional transportation solutions that reduce single-occupant vehicle miles traveled. The County Executive should advocate with state officials for expanded transportation options, including expansion of rail and commuter bus, and the exploration of better links between Frederick County and the Baltimore region.



Editor's Notes

Somewhere in this process, we started using a human development metaphor to describe Frederick County. It goes something like this: Former County Executive Jan Gardner had charter government in its infancy, and now County Executive Jessica Fitzwater gets charter government in its adolescence. The Cleveland Clinic describes adolescence as “an exciting yet stressful time when your child transitions into adulthood. Many rapid changes and developments take place during this time, and it’s not always a smooth ride.”

Change and development were recurring themes in every committee. There is widespread recognition that the former County Executive had an awesome task in establishing charter government, and she left a solid foundation on which we now get to build. If we successfully implement this report, charter government will be much closer to adulthood come December 2026. It will not always be a smooth ride, but we will grow and leave this government better for the experience.

The County Executive made inclusion, accountability, and sustainability the cornerstones for the Transition Team’s work. Just as she charged them to includes these values in their deliberations, they clearly expect she will honor her commitment to make them the cornerstones of her administration.

The Transition Team expects the County Executive to be intentional about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). This came up in discussions about building a workforce and elevating leaders that reflect the County’s growing diversity, identifying and alleviating barriers to recruiting persons from historically marginalized communities, understanding the perspective of the people government serves in designing programs, and making sure County staff are adequately trained to serve people of all backgrounds, experiences and diverse characteristics. Not every recommendation in this report specifically calls out DEIB, but nearly every recommendation could. The Transition Team recognizes culture change takes time but believes it can be brought about if the County Executive and her team are intentional about DEIB in every action they take and decision they make.

The Transition Team expects the County Executive will use and share data, even when the data make us uncomfortable. This came up in every committee, and multiple committees recommended partnering with Data Driven Frederick, establishing metrics to measure progress, and publishing dashboards. Although the Data Driven Frederick recommendation is in the Government Innovation section, something similar came up in at least four other committees. As the Government Innovation Committee heard, Frederick County is data rich but information poor – meaning we have lots of data but we do not have the tools to produce meaningful information. The Transition Team recognizes we cannot flip a switch to create a data-driven government, because that switch would already have been flipped if that were the case. The Transition Team expects to see pilot projects and inter-divisional work to begin moving Frederick County into a data-driven and information rich environment.

The Transition Team expects the County Executive will make sustainability an enterprise-wide value. Although most sustainability-related recommendations

‘The County Executive made inclusion, accountability, and sustainability the cornerstones for the Transition Team’s work. Every committee incorporated these values into their deliberations and the development of their recommendations.’



are in the Sustainability Infrastructure & Transportation Committee section, every committee discussed the issue. The Housing & Quality of Life Committee called out the sustainability of the County's existing affordable housing stock, and the Education & Workforce Development called out the sustainability challenges within Frederick County Public schools. The Government Innovation and Public Safety Committees called out the sustainability of certain structures and practices. The Transition Team believes sustainability is more than just "green" practices and looks forward to seeing sustainable thinking incorporated into all policymaking.

A brief word about the document itself. The unedited draft recommendations included 12,354 words and spanned 25 pages. That detail reflected the passion and expertise of the Transition Team members. This document is designed to be accessible to a non-expert audience. We want readers to understand the roadmap the Transition Team laid out, not necessarily every stop along the way. The unedited draft was shared with all division directors and will be dusted off regularly as we implement these recommendations.

The County Executive challenged the Transition Team to be bold – and it was. Thanks to its work, we have a clear set of priorities. Although events outside of our control may force us to re-evaluate our priorities, this document is now the north star for the Fitzwater administration.

Moving forward, we will work with County leaders to prioritize these recommendations and to develop implementation plans. We will create and publish an online implementation tracker, so everyone can monitor our progress. We will invite the Transition Team to reconvene one year from now for an update on our work, a discussion of our challenges, and a reflection on what new priorities may have emerged.

As the County Executive clearly said: This report is the beginning of something, not the end.



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Behind the Scenes





