Name:	**George Leventhal**
Address:	Takoma Park, MD
What office are you seeking?:	County Executive
Where can voters learn more about your positions?:	www.georgeleventhal.com

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2   **Someone new to Montgomery County may ask, "What's the Ag Reserve and why is it important?" What's your answer?**

The Ag Reserve is more than a land use policy. It is the preservation of land and resources that are integral to Montgomery County. When we preserve agricultural land, we not only honor our past, but also ensure locally grown food, and opportunities for recreation and tourism, for our future. The Ag Reserve includes farms and rural spaces, parkland and heritage sites, bikeways and fishing. It contributes to our economy through working farms, wineries and breweries. It is the 'green lungs' of our county, providing environmental protection through maintenance of open space and trees, and enhancing air and water quality.

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3   **What are your priorities regarding stewardship of the County's natural resources (water, forests, open spaces) and parkland?**

I will always support the strict limits on development in the AR zone (one house per 25 acres). In other zones, I will seek to improve the ratio of parkland to people, and protect forests, while allowing suburban and urban development. I will support better utilization and activation of parkland through improved trail connections, landscaping, and internal improvements.

I supported the Ten Mile Creek Area limited master plan amendment in 2014, reducing density in areas of Clarksburg that drain into a sensitive watershed. I supported the highest water quality protection charge and most stringent National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) requirements in Maryland, despite criticism and litigation from property owners and developers.

I oppose any study or construction of a second bridge crossing into Montgomery County. Any such bridge would harm the Ag Reserve, and encourage sprawl development, inconsistent with our master plans.

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4   **What is your vision for the future of the County's Agricultural Reserve? Briefly, how would you achieve that vision?**

I have been a champion of the Agricultural Reserve, and I will continue to defend it. Maintaining the Ag Reserve calls for continued vigilance, which I will not let up. This goal can be achieved while still ensuring the economic viability of farm enterprises through appropriate agritourism, and the enhancement of our farm winery and brewery industries. As Council President in 2006, I appointed the Ad Hoc Agricultural Policy Working Group, which proposed further strengthening prevention of development through the Building Lot Termination (BLT) program, which I supported on the County Council. I was the original sponsor of the County Council resolution leading to the installation of 'Welcome to Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve' signs on state roads. This is consistent with the goal of educating the public about the Ag Reserve, so ongoing public support can be maintained and enhanced.

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5   **Can you identify some of the top challenges to the Reserve's local agriculture and what actions you would take, if elected, to address them?**

The biggest challenges for farmers are weather, pests, and commodity prices all of which are beyond the capability of local government to alter or affect. We can help address the next biggest challenge, which is attracting the next generation of farmers. We should support 4-H, our county agricultural fair, and other programs, including an agriculture curriculum in public schools, to make the work appealing to young people. Farmers need to be supported in their efforts to find local markets for produce and livestock. Development pressure is always strong, and as I wrote in question 4, we must be vigilant to defend productive acreage.

6   **What more can be done to support our local farm businesses and rural communities?**

Include farmers markets in community plans. Increase incentives for the development of breweries and wineries. Encourage the county, the school system, other public agencies, and private companies to purchase local produce and livestock in every way possible.

7   **How should our County manage its solid waste? What role should incineration, composting and recycling play?**

I would like to see the county adopt a Zero Waste plan, which significantly increases recycling and composting. Single family homes' compliance with mandatory recycling has been pretty good, but we need greater compliance from multi-family buildings and private businesses, especially restaurants and hotels. I co-founded Bethesda Green, a private-public partnership which installed recycling bins throughout downtown Bethesda. We need to make recycling and composting much easier throughout the county. We also need to work with communities and individual homeowners to increase acceptance of compost storage, including greater understanding of backyard composting.
I am aware that many community members suggest that the county's contract with the Dickerson incinerator should not be renewed, and I will actively explore whether this is feasible if elected County Executive.

8   **How can we expand the role the County's schools play in the support of a healthy local food system and the success of local agriculture? Do you support a rural schools' policy that provides equity for Reserve cluster schools acknowledging the unique nature of schools in region set aside for farmland and open space preservation?**

I funded the mobile science lab developed by the MD Agricultural Education Foundation that provides students with hands-on learning regarding nutrition and agriculture. I sponsored the study of junk food advertising in schools. As Co-Chair of the Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee, I've overseen the Eat Well Be Active strategic plan to address issues of fitness and nutrition countywide. I encouraged MCPS to plant more produce on school grounds to help kids understand the link between farming and nutrition. I support expanding the Maryland Homegrown School Lunch program and will work with MCPS officials to encourage more local purchasing.
I understand that our rural communities worry about the potential for school closures. Closing rural schools would lead to excessive travel times for many students. I would like to see more specialty programs-like the magnet programs at Poolesville High School-dispersed throughout the county to achieve a better distribution of student population.

9 **Currently the County is exploring how best to support a strong agricultural economy through agritourism and new farming enterprises such as on farm breweries and wineries. What are your thoughts about how best to advance on farm activities within the context of the master plan?**

> I have supported appropriate agritourism activities, farm wineries and farm breweries. I am excited by the prospect of a regional grape processing facility. Agritourism and commercial activity should be consistent with the promotion of agriculture.

10 **What are your regional transportation priorities? Do you support M83 and an additional Potomac bridge and outer beltway through the Reserve or adjacent rural zones?**

> I am a strong and forceful advocate for alternatives to the automobile and will foster creative thinking in this area as County Executive. I have been the leading local elected official supporting the Purple Line. I support Bus Rapid Transit on Route 29, Veirs Mill Road and Route 355, with future routes to be studied as well. I support the Corridor Cities Transitway. I will encourage expansion of MARC service from West Virginia and to BWI.
> I am open to dialogue with the State of Maryland regarding how to add capacity to I-270, the American Legion Bridge and I-495. Any plans for added capacity on I-270 and the American Legion Bridge should include a dedicated rail or bus line. I would not support widening I-495 east of the I-270 spur, but I believe capacity can be added with narrower lanes and better use of shoulders.
> I am opposed to M-83.
> I oppose any study or construction of a second bridge crossing into Montgomery County.