



## Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Will Jawando

### Personal Information:

**Name** Will Jawando

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** County Councilmember At-Large

### Where Can Voters Learn More About Your Positions Or Contact Your Campaign?

My website is Willjawando.com

My campaign manager, Nicole Rios, can be reached at nicole@willjawando.com.

**Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited.**

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

The Agricultural Reserve serves Montgomery County (and really, the entire DC Metro region) as a living, thriving link to our regional heritage, in the preservation not just of open space and farms, but farming itself as a livelihood. This is important for many reasons, but for me, those that stand out include history, green open land with clean air and water, and the possibility of economic opportunity for small businesses involved in organic, craft, and artisanal food and beverage. And, today we have to note the importance of the ag reserve in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. Where would we have been without the farmers whose produce fed the unprecedented number of individuals and families that faced food insecurity during the pandemic. There is also an undeniable truth that the open spaces provided key opportunities for residents to experience open space and recreational opportunities when they needed them most. Our ag reserve is a gift that continues to give to our residents and is why it is important that we maintain it for generations to come.

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

I wish to continue to preserve the open land in the Agricultural Reserve, and I want to see our farmers there thrive. Part of my call for keeping what I call the Montgomery County Promise is economic opportunity for all, particularly small businesses, such as the farmers and food producers in our Agricultural Reserve. I'd like to see the Ag Reserve develop additional markets for specialized and organic crops, to expand beyond our local markets, for broader sale in the growing area of high-end food and beverage. There's great demand for these high-value products. I believe we can develop new small businesses here in Montgomery County to market Ag Reserve commodities into those specialized marketplaces. We also need to consider table top products that are locally produced and sold right here in Montgomery County. We have done a lot during COVID to connect local farms mostly located in the Ag Reserve to our food insecurity programs through Food for Montgomery, a public-private partnership I helped develop with non-profit partners that allowed local farms to supply food to food insecurity programs. This program also invested in capital purchases from some of the farms to allow those producers to improve their food management systems, such as refrigeration. Finally, I think we should continue to find ways to create a direct supply chain to Montgomery County Public Schools, so we are feeding our children local food and produce. This would cut carbon emission from the supply chain, would improve nutritional outcomes for our children, and provide an

economic boost to our local producers.

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

I am proud of my record bringing energy, enthusiasm and ideas to expand the scope of the environmental movement to include low-income communities and people of color – two groups who have not traditionally been part of the environmental movement. I believe we need: Smarter land-use planning, focusing our development and redevelopment near mass transit, with greater density of mixed-using housing, in order to prevent sprawl and over-development. Rebalance our transportation investments, away from roads and highways and toward a more reliable, accessible and speedier public transit network. Maintenance of real-time and publicly-available reports on chemical and particulate emissions from the Dickerson Generating Station and the county-owned and operated trash incinerator. This will help protect our air and our water.

### **What role will you play with regard to ensure that we safeguard our drinking water supply both surface and groundwater?**

When we see new development, particularly in the upcounty near the Ag Reserve, we must be aware of the serious impacts on our watershed. We must take into consideration the impact of that development on downstream drinking water supplies. To that end, there will be costs. The question becomes who will bear the cost: the taxpayer, or the private developer? A balanced approach would see an agreement between the county and the developer to offer tax credits for construction of stormwater remediation projects as part of the development: rainscapes, rain gardens, and use of permeable surfaces for areas such as parking lots. And, where possible, incentivize developers to be able to build more in the urban areas of the county and consider changes to zoning laws to allow for more mixed use development in areas around transit.

### **What are your top priorities to help the County address climate change? What role will the Ag Reserve play?**

We must make sure that any county-wide approach to climate resiliency includes all of our communities, particularly those with our neighbors of moderate means. Public policy must incorporate our entire constituency – not just those who have the means to choose to invest their own money (or see their taxes invested) in climate resiliency projects. To that end we must: bring emissions from buildings under control, green-the-grid through locally-generated renewable energy including solar, and electrify the county fleet while providing support and assistance to allow the public to do the same. These three ideas are a starting point for how our county government can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Even as working farmland, the Ag Reserve provides an enormously important part of our environmental balance in Montgomery County, through preservation of forest, pasture, open space and clean waterways: all crucial to maintaining air and water quality in our home county.

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

Ultimately, I believe the best thing we can do is prevent the sale of farmland to developers to build sprawling housing and commercial centers. Once paved, that land is no longer a source of clean water, air or food. So it's imperative for all of us, even our urban neighbors, to take care to support our rural communities, because the open land, trees and green space of our rural areas really take care of us all. In other countries, particularly in the European Union, rural communities are preserved through economic vitality. We must do the same in the United States. We can forge public policy that creates more economic opportunities for our local farm businesses, both on and off the farm, but also mitigate risks and escalating costs. We do need more housing, but we should concentrate and incentivise redeveloping urban areas near transit with a focus on affordable housing and workforce housing.

### **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?**

We have suffered a historic imbalance in Montgomery County, with the vast majority of our resources going toward roads and highways, instead of public and mass transportation. We must reverse that

imbalance, and place a major focus of our investment on BRT, Metro maintenance and expansion, a network of protected bicycle lanes, the CCT, and all-day MARC. While I am open to continuing to study M83, a new Potomac crossing and additional Beltway lanes, to date I have yet to see data and evidence that supports the feasibility of any of those projects. I believe the projects mentioned could damage our environment and the additional Potomac crossing could also be detrimental to the preservation of the Ag Reserve. At this time I am not in favor of the building of new highways mentioned above.

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

I believe incineration is a last resort, and we should focus primarily on composting and recycling. Much of this depends on a deeply-rooted education and marketing campaign to our county's residents, as well as smartly-managed solid waste pickup, both at the residence, and in the case of composting food waste, at the business. Too many of our big businesses, and many of our homes, don't do enough to recycle and reduce their home waste. And food-waste is a tremendous issue, both because of the number of people who go hungry in our affluent county, but also because of the environmental detriment that occurs when food waste is mixed with household and commercial garbage instead of being collected and composted separately. These are major issues, and are not easily fixed, but need to be addressed as we fight climate change.

### **What are your views on the general plan update "Thrive 2050," both the process and the draft now before the Council?**

As a member of the Planning Housing and Economic Development Committee on the County Council I have had a front seat on deliberations and work related to Thrive.

Thrive is not perfect. In its present form it falls short on racial equity and social justice, and it is not the easiest document to understand and explain. That said, Thrive does correct some of the mistakes we made in the 1993 General Plan Amendment that led to dramatic under-investment in East County for the past 30 years. Correcting those mistakes is absolutely essential. Thrive also does a good job of identifying ways we can improve environmental resilience. In addition, the goal of compact and complete communities will help us reduce our reliance on the automobile, which is critical to meeting our climate goals.

Given the newer challenges we face with housing affordability, racial and socioeconomic inequality, environmental challenges, and a need to remain economically competitive with regional rivals, we have to take action to begin to replace our general plan. Through our consideration of Thrive before the PHED committee and the Council and as a result of numerous public engagement sessions, I have seen areas related to outreach in particular where the process was imperfect. I firmly believe we need a new and more inclusive approach to planning in our County and will continue to incorporate suggestions from my constituents to improve the final policy.

Finally, it is important to note that Thrive is fundamentally a foundational document and none of its recommendations can be implemented without further action by the Council and further public input. Nor will any changes happen quickly, these changes will happen gradually over time as different policies are passed by the Council and as new projects move forward under these new guidelines.

### **Do you believe that the way that local government branches, state entities, and the public currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take?**

I do think we need to see improvement of intergovernment relations between our federal and state partners. During the Trump Administration, we saw historic rollbacks related to the preservation of open space. Today we see a course correction there, but if we see a return to power by those who do not value the preservation of open land, this will continue to be an issue. While our locally elected federal officials have been supportive, the policies of those in favor of some of the last administrations policies concern me. Likewise, I have felt our governor's priorities have not been in line with responsible and sustainable environmental stewardship, and once again, our locally elected

representative has been on the front line making sure we protect important assets like the Ag Reserve. In addition, the rise of disinformation campaigns and destructive behavior has been a hallmark of the last 5-6 years. What I will continue to do is push for policies that represent our residents, especially with our locally elected state Delegates and Senators. Montgomery County is a special place and I am proud of the work we do across jurisdictional lines, and it can work: Montgomery County's response to COVID 19 is a prime example. But we need more thoughtful cooperation on all issues where residents are included in conversations and plans for our shared future. I believe education about policies and open and transparent opportunities need to exist for all stakeholders, especially residents. During my time on the Montgomery County Council, I have pushed for transparency in all county decisions and actions, and I treasure the input of all residents and will continue to do so if re-elected.