

County Executive Candidate Responses

Question 1: *Please share your vision for fostering a pro-business environment, spurring job creation, and private investment.*

Kittleman: Economic development is the heartbeat of our community. By having a strong commercial base, we can afford to provide all the services our residents need, such as an excellent school system and a wonderful quality of life. Increasing our commercial tax base by only one or two percent would yield enormous fiscal benefit for the county. That is why my Administration worked so hard to address the planning issues surrounding the 2010 General Plan Amendment for Downtown Columbia so that the Howard Hughes Corporation could move forward with its plan to invest \$2 billion in our community. That project alone will completely reshape our Downtown into a regional powerhouse for technological, health care and cyber industries, while, at the same time, provide affordable housing for our younger generation of residents and workers. Then, over the next several years, we will be looking to find the best way to turn Gateway into a true Innovation District that will include residential development and retail opportunities. With the Downtown Columbia – Gateway commercial axis in place, I believe that Howard County will be well on its path to unparalleled financial security in the future. Then, when the redevelopment plans for Route 1 and Route 40 are added to these economic development activities, it is clear that the sky is the limit for our business environment in Howard County.

Ball: I have been and remain dedicated to fostering an environment where we create more private sector jobs that pay a living wage, while increasing support and opportunity for small, and local businesses so all hard working entrepreneurs can build wealth.

Question 2: *What do you envision being your most significant accomplishment during your four-year term to enhance Howard County's business environment?*

Kittleman: Howard County, like the rest of Maryland, is open for business. During the past four years, in addition to our efforts in Downtown Columbia, my Administration has worked hard to identify the needs of our current businesses. I have personally visited hundreds of businesses, talking with the owners and employees of those businesses so I have a full understanding of their needs.

When legislation has been introduced in the County Council that we thought would harm businesses more than it would help residents, we fought that legislation or tried to make it better.

And, we have tried our best to bring predictability back to government. We knew that for the business climate to improve, the most important ingredient was to limit government interference and capricious governmental action as much as possible while, at the same time, looking for ways for government to facilitate the growth and health of those businesses. This is one reason why I directed the departments in my Administration to apply existing rules fairly, but make suggestions to change the rules if deemed necessary or appropriate. It is also why we have not raised taxes on our businesses, no matter how tempting it might have been to do so.

Finally, as the Chief Economic Development Officer for Howard County, I have worked closely with Larry Twele and our Economic Development Authority to attract more high-quality businesses to Howard County by touting how great a place Howard County is to own and grow a business.

Ball: As your next Howard County Executive, I will make it a priority to help grow small, local business. At the end of my time as County Executive, there will be more local businesses who, in part because of expanded opportunities and support, will be thriving and be examples of success in the region and nation.

Question 3: *This past fall, the County Council passed an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance that many believe will hinder and stifle future development.*

- a. *Do you think this legislation should be revisited before it goes into effect in July 2019?*
- b. *If so, what would be the objectives of any revisions you would pursue? If not, why not?*
- c. *In light of this legislation, how will you promote economic development and still address the County's plight of limited affordable housing?*

Kittleman:

- a. When I took office, I made it a priority to have APFO reviewed and strengthened. The Task Force that I formed conducted a thorough analysis of land use goals and infrastructure needs and made important recommendations to update developer fees and better manage school capacity levels. The APFO legislation passed by the County Council could not include all these recommendations because of the need for State action. If re-elected, I will ask the State delegation to revisit these recommendations so that I can work with the County Council in 2019 to better align revenue from development with school capacity and growth. As part of this process, I will also continue to work with the Board of Education and HCPSS to ENSURE THAT [make] any revisions work for our residents.
- b. I believe that having an adequate supply of affordable housing is an integral part of any broad economic development strategy. That is why my Administration fought to bring a realistic and innovative affordable housing strategy to Downtown Columbia, and why we continue to support developers' efforts through PILOTS to facilitate the development of affordable housing in opportunity areas of the County.
- c. The County Council adopted an amendment to exempt certain affordable housing projects from the APFO regulations. Considering the high housing prices in Howard County and the need for affordable housing, I believe that the exemption was a reasonable approach that will spur economic development by enabling employers to attract and maintain a local workforce at all industry and skill levels.

Ball:

- a. I was glad to work with our community on an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO), which County Executive Kittleman signed, that addressed many concerns about infrastructure and quality of life. In order to continue to improve and be the best County to live, work, and play, we must ensure we don't lose sight of what makes Howard County attractive—quality of life, which includes schools that aren't too overcrowded and roads that aren't too congested.

- b. I think we should regularly and frequently review APFO to ensure that it is meeting our needs and our goals. I think any revisions should be part of a transparent, community conversation about how to ensure we don't overdevelop and how we have sufficient infrastructure and public facilities.
- c. While we need to have a full spectrum of housing affordability, I do not support too much housing too fast, especially housing for people with greater need, and inadequate public facilities.

Question 4: *Going forward, what is biggest challenge for the County budget and how do you plan to address these fiscal constraints?*

Kittleman: As County Executive, I've faced multiple budget challenges, and through sound budgeting practices over the last four years, we have maintained adequate funding for all the County's critical services while not raising a single tax. It is important to note that all my proposed balanced budgets have passed the County Council unanimously.

The constant challenge is balancing revenues and expenditures. For example, the County's FY19 budget is built on modest revenue projections due to the uncertainties associated with the federal tax plan. I expect this uncertainty will continue in the short-term.

With respect to expenditures, education funding remains my top priority. Despite the revenue challenge, we provided education funding above state Maintenance of Effort in FY19, which I have done all four years. HCPSS capital projects are also a top funding priority. The County provided approximately \$55 million toward school construction projects in FY19, and my focus in the coming years will be to fully fund the construction of the county's 13th high school. Finally, another significant expenditure category is retiree pension benefits. The budgets that I presented to the County Council have consistently met annual pension obligations for County and school system employees. This commitment will remain in my second term.

If re-elected, my pledge to the residents of Howard County will be to maintain prudent fiscal management, fund critical county services fully, and not raise any taxes on businesses or residents. This effort will require a collaborative and cooperative budgeting philosophy, which I upheld in my first term and will continue in my second term.

Ball: In recent years, we have seen deficits balloon in our school system, including \$50 million for fixed charges—employee health and dental, about \$500 million in deferred maintenance for our school buildings, increased school portables/trailers, road resurfacing backlog, delayed public works projects including needed stormwater remediation, and a myriad of other county needs, while our revenue has been more stagnant than it could be. The biggest challenge in our budget is how to better align our needs, our wants, and our revenue. As your next County Executive, I will help grow our economy with more private sector jobs and expansion of our small businesses, which will generate more revenue. We also need to hold government, including the school system, accountable for how we are using taxpayer dollars. Finally, there needs to be an adjustment of expectations as we shift away from the current administration's practice of proposing budgets where the programmed dollars in the out years far exceed reasonable spending.

Question 5: *Do you share the concern that our road and transit infrastructure is inadequate to accommodate the jobs and development coming to Howard County and the region?*

- a. *What are your top priorities for transit, transportation, infrastructure and public facilities investment in the County?*
- b. *How would you work with neighboring counties, state and federal authorities to address these deficiencies and secure the resources needed to improve these public facilities?*

Kittleman: If economic development is the heartbeat of our community then our transit infrastructure provides the arteries that keep our heart beating. And, right now, our transit health is not good, but it is getting better.

- a. During my Administration the creation of viable transportation options for the community has been at the forefront. We have taken great strides in significantly improving the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in our county by incorporating a holistic “complete streets” approach in our design manual. We have tackled a neglected public transit system to address an aging fleet, and re-evaluated an inefficient route structure that hasn’t been reviewed for almost 10 years. My Administration tackled these issues through replacing buses, and by establishing a review process for the current routes that included significant input from the community. That review culminated in a Transit Development Plan that will guide how to adjust our routes over the next five years so that we are more effectively getting people where they need and want to go.
- b. We need a vision of what a regional transit system should be. We don’t have one now. Having a good working relationship with our Governor, as I do, will facilitate the creation of that vision so that resources can be appropriately directed. For example, establishing a true Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line from Ellicott City, through Columbia, to Silver Spring is a project that we have been investigating, as is a BRT/rail line from Downtown Columbia, through Gateway, to the MARC line and BWI.

Ball: Our road and transit infrastructure is woefully inadequate, not just for quality of life, but also to maintain our competitiveness. Public transportation alongside with connecting our biking and walking pathways needs to become a priority if we are serious about ensuring Howard County is the best place to live, work, and play. Our current road and transit infrastructure does little to help accommodate easy transportation for our commuters by any means other than a vehicle. In order to create superior jobs and development, it is imperative that we create a system where transportation is easily accessible for all. If we want to support business and economic development, we need to invest in what matters.

- a. Creating a business environment where individuals can easily access their workplace by either public transportation, biking, or walking is imperative in promoting a Live-Near-Your-Work-type initiative. I would make ensuring our community has easy access to transportation around our County and region a priority. Specifics include real progress on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as well as expanded bike connections and improved mass transit to employment centers.
- b. Many of the most important infrastructure deficiencies we currently see in Howard County require vision, collaboration, focus, and tenacity. We need a leader who can bring the other leaders in Federal, state, local government, as well as the private sector together. As a certified mediator with effective relationships across the region, since I

recognize the importance of infrastructure and want to improve things, I am confident I can make more progress than we have seen over the last four years, which is very little.

Question 6: *How will you support Howard County's educational standards while balancing the needs of our residents and businesses?*

- a. *Do you believe that the Board of Education has used its County funded budget responsibly?*
- b. *Do we need to institute changes that require the Board of Education to better use existing school capacity?*
- c. *What changes in the HCPSS budget process are you considering?*

Kittleman;

- a. My education priorities remain funding the HCPSS budget, managing school construction efforts to meet enrollment needs, modernizing facilities to optimize learning, and narrowing the achievement gap through our Achieve 24/7 programs. I believe that these are the shared priorities for families, residents, and businesses.
- b. My Administration has proven its ability to work collaboratively with the school system around budget and policy development, and I would like to see the relationship strengthened with respect to school capacity management. By tackling redistricting efforts and school construction priorities jointly, the expertise of county planners and school system officials can make more informed school capacity decisions.
- c. The County Executive's role in the school budget process is to follow the Board of Education's Superintendent's guidance and fund their priorities within the confines of the overall County budget. Doing so requires the County Executive to sometimes utilize existing budgetary tools to prioritize dollars for certain investments. For example, when the prior superintendent indicated that she would cut funding that was designated for teacher salaries and special education, I took the unprecedented action to put the funding into specific administrative categories. If re-elected, I will continue to work with the Board of Education on developing its annual budget to ensure that county dollars are allocated properly to fulfill the commitments made to children and families. This is not a change in policy but rather a continuation of an effective practice that I learned as a Howard County Councilmember and used as County Executive.

Ball: Our reputation in education and the educational opportunities we provide are our top selling points for economic development and growth. As an educator, with daughters in our school system, who has been endorsed by the Howard County Education Association, I am uniquely qualified to understand and ensure high educational standards for Howard County. As Councilman, I have seen and supported the needs of our local residents and businesses. I hope to use these two experiences to create a balance between our educational and business opportunities, while holding our school system accountable.

- a. I have called for auditing the school system budget and spent hours holding them accountable because I know they can do a better job with our tax dollars. The County Executive controls the form of the budget and has the duty to safeguard taxpayer dollars.

- b. Currently in Howard County, we have schools that are overcrowded and schools that are struggling to fill seats. As County Executive, I will work with the Board of Education to ensure our schools are at an appropriate capacity.
- c. We need to ensure the HCPSS budget process is more transparent. This can be done by utilizing improved and effective communication methods to ensure our residents are aware of the budget process. As County Councilman, I regularly send out emails and use social media as a tool to inform and empower the public. As County Executive, I will continue these efforts in all departments, including the HCPSS budget. It is one of the best ways to demonstrate accountability with the use of funding for our children's future. Additionally, it is vital that the HCPSS budget align with a strategic plan, which will help focus our resources on our shared goals.

Question 7: *What challenges do you anticipate coming up in the long term that require a different approach than today?*

Kittleman: Three challenges exist that have bedeviled our efforts for many, many years: funding education, land use policies, and taxes. Our school system is the pride of our community and is essential for the well-being of our children.

However, we do not have unlimited funds that can be used for that purpose. We must use our resources efficiently and effectively to achieve our educational goals. This means that redistricting, class size, school design, and other factors must be continuously considered to maintain and improve our school system at every opportunity. Escalating tax rates cannot be the answer; increasing our commercial tax base, however, can help address this concern on a long-term basis.

Land use policies continue to cause conflict because of the differing visions of who we are as a county. Some believe we are a suburban county, serving metropolitan areas outside of Howard County. Others believe that we are business and jobs center that must continue to grow or risk becoming obsolete. This schism creates a divide that makes a coherent land use policy difficult to create.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote that "taxes are what we pay for a civilized society." However, they are often the bane of civilized discussions. While our tax system in Howard County is seen, generally, as being fair, we cannot count on increasing tax rates to fund future efforts. Instead, we will need to be more efficient in the use of our resources, while actively pursuing efforts to expand our commercial tax base.

Ball: One of the challenges I anticipate is stormwater management throughout our County like Historic Ellicott City. It is prudent to note that Historic Ellicott City is a mill town which was built in a challenging place and will, most likely, struggle with flooding issues. However, we must engage subject matter experts and employ innovative ideas and best management practices that can preserve and protect this historic town as well as other parts of our county prone to flooding.

Question 8: *The re-writing of zoning and land-use regulations will affect the county for generations.*

- a. *How prepared are you to address the many issues that will confront you in this process?*
- b. *Please share your zoning and land use philosophy?*
- c. *What do you want as the end result of this process?*

Kittleman: I knew when seeking office four years ago that our development regulations needed to be reviewed, and that is why I established a public process through which this review will occur.

- a. The County has already completed the first phase of this review. We hired an independent consultant to perform an exhaustive review of our development regulations over a two-year period. During this review, the consultant held 40 public meetings, met with 460 stakeholders, and received over 700 suggestions for improvement. As a result, the consultant issued a report in February 2018. To begin the second phase, we will be retaining the services of an expert to re-write the development regulations based upon the February report.
- b. I believe this review, and the resulting changes to the development regulations, will serve as the foundation for better land-use decisions to will be made when we develop the County's next General Plan and go through the next comprehensive rezoning process.
- c. Further, one benefit from this process should be that growth in the future will not strain the County's infrastructure and environment. I will redirect some of the County's planned growth to the commercial sector so that residents, present and new, have opportunities for employment. Land use and economic development have a strong relationship, and I want to maximize that relationship so residents can live and work in Howard County, a goal that, if achieved, will improve our residents' quality of life and our tax base.

Ball:

- a. The way we rewrite zoning regulations today, will continue to affect Howard County for generations to come. I have experience serving as Chairperson of the Zoning Board of Howard County which I believe will help prepare me to address the possible issues I will face during as Howard County Executive. As a councilman who's successfully worked on a general plan and comprehensive zoning, I helped the future growth. I learned a lot from our community about how we can do a better job and will collaborate with all for an even better process and product.
 - b. We should work with the market and build for the future, which means more electric vehicle stations, expand use of solar energy, a full spectrum of affordable housing for people of all abilities, better stormwater practices, and a growth management philosophy that protects us against overdevelopment. In Howard County, our quality of life is part of our brand. Our land use policy should further that quality of life, while maintaining opportunity.
 - c. The end result should be a land use policy that is clear, effective and helps manage growth appropriately.
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