



## 2026 Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate Name:** Crystal Cody

**Position:** County Council

**District:** 8

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### **What is your position regarding the Councilmanic Courtesy norm?**

"In 2025 and 2026, we saw legislation — including Bill 19-25 — that tried to codify councilmanic courtesy, the idea that one councilmember should have the final say over zoning decisions in their district, even when those decisions affect the entire county. Supporters call it local control. But the truth is, it hands unilateral power to a single elected official and sidelines the voices of residents, planners, and the full council.

My position is simple: no one person should control land-use decisions that shape housing, transportation, and economic growth for 870,000 people. Zoning decisions have countywide consequences. They deserve open debate, public input, and a full council vote — not a tradition that concentrates power and shuts out accountability.

Councilmanic courtesy may be a norm, but that doesn't make it good governance. It creates an unpredictable, political process where one member can block redevelopment, block housing options, or block economic opportunity even when the community and the data say otherwise.

As a councilmember, I will support a process that is transparent, collaborative, and grounded in planning — not personality. Every district deserves a voice, and no district should be held hostage by the preferences of one member. Baltimore County moves forward when decisions are shared, not siloed."

### **What concrete steps will you take to address the acute shortage of affordable housing in Baltimore County? Please include your position on the current Urban-Rural Demarcation Line.**

"Baltimore County is short nearly 19,000 homes that match what working families can afford. Young professionals priced out by rising rents, seniors who can't afford to downsize, and families spending half their paycheck on housing are leaving for counties with more attainable options. We can fix this with data-driven, responsible growth that protects what makes our communities special while making room for the next generation.



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First, we need to modernize our zoning. The Urban–Rural Demarcation Line matters, and inside that line we should allow more housing choices — duplexes, tiny homes, senior housing — options that fit the character of our neighborhoods and how people live today.

Second, we should build around transit. Transit-oriented development puts homes where people already travel, reduces traffic, and expands options. District 8 is almost entirely inside the URDL and perfectly positioned for smart, mixed-use redevelopment.

Third, we must redevelop what’s already sitting empty. Vacant shopping centers and aging commercial corridors can become vibrant communities with housing, retail, and green space. And we must protect the homes we already have through strong code enforcement, support for aging in place, and partnerships that preserve affordability.

This isn’t about building for building’s sake. It’s about ensuring every resident — from Essex to Middle River to White Marsh — can find a home that doesn’t break the bank. Housing is the foundation for education, public safety, and economic growth. If we get this right, we strengthen the entire county

### **What resources are under-utilized in our County that could be used to increase economic growth?**

"Baltimore County has enormous economic potential, but too many of our assets are sitting idle. We have more than 3.5 million square feet of vacant retail and commercial space across the county — including aging corridors in Essex, Middle River, and White Marsh — that could be transformed into mixed-use districts with housing, retail, and small business space. We also have over 1,000 acres of under-utilized industrial land on the east side with the infrastructure already in place for clean manufacturing, logistics, and trades training.

Our waterfront is another missed opportunity. Middle River and Essex have over 150 miles of shoreline, yet we generate only a fraction of the tourism and recreation revenue seen in comparable counties. And Martin State Airport — one of the most strategically located airports on the East Coast — supports more than 1,300 jobs today, but it could anchor an entire aviation, emergency services, and tech corridor with the right investment.



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These aren't problems — they're opportunities. Instead of raising taxes, we should be activating what we already have: redeveloping vacant corridors, modernizing our waterfront, leveraging county-owned land, and opening procurement so more local, minority- and women-owned businesses can compete. Economic growth comes from putting dormant assets to work. That's the kind of forward-thinking leadership I'm bringing to the council."

**What is the greatest need in the district you are seeking to represent and what are your plans to address it?**

"The greatest need in District 8 is restoring stability — in our schools, our infrastructure, our small local businesses, and our public systems. Our families are dealing with overcrowded classrooms, aging water and road systems, and EMS units that are among the busiest in the entire county, yet haven't received proportional investment to match the demand.

We also need to address concentrated poverty. In parts of Essex and Middle River, more than 30% of households fall below the ALICE threshold, and several schools serve student populations where more than half the student population lives in poverty. My plan focuses on changing the conditions that create those disparities — investing in school capacity, workforce development, business incubators, strengthening EMS and public safety infrastructure, protecting our waterfront communities from chronic flooding, and redeveloping vacant corridors into job-producing, mixed-income neighborhoods that give families real mobility.

My commitment is simple: your zip code should will not determine your opportunity or access."