



2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Arkia Wade

Position: Baltimore County Council

District: 9

What is your position regarding the Councilmanic Courtesy norm?

Councilmanic courtesy has traditionally been intended to respect the voice of the district councilmember, and I understand why that norm exists. However, in practice, I believe the drawbacks now outweigh the benefits. Too often it concentrates power in one office, enables favoritism or "pay-to-play" dynamics, and undermines collective decision-making by bypassing a transparent, countywide legislative process. It can also reduce public trust when major decisions are made behind closed doors rather than through open hearings and debate. Finally, it makes it harder to address countywide challenges like traffic, infrastructure, and housing because issues that affect everyone can be blocked or stalled by a single district. I support a more transparent, collaborative approach that balances district input with the best interests of the entire county.

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 Dividing Line.

Baltimore County needs a comprehensive, data-driven approach to address the affordable housing shortage. I support conducting a countywide housing needs assessment to understand gaps in supply, affordability, and housing types, and to guide smart policy decisions.

I believe the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) should be reviewed thoughtfully, using data and community input. While it plays an important role in protecting rural and environmentally sensitive areas, it should not be used to block appropriately scaled housing in areas that already have infrastructure and transit.

To expand affordable housing, I support encouraging a wider range of housing types, including mixed-use developments, "missing middle" housing (duplexes and townhomes), accessory dwelling units, and cost-saving options like modular, prefab, and tiny homes. We should also reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers that drive up costs and slow production and create incentives for developers to include affordable units.

Finally, we must preserve existing affordable housing and build community trust through transparent planning and meaningful resident engagement. Other counties have shown that combining smart zoning, incentives, and partnerships can increase supply while protecting community character and Baltimore County can do the same.

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

Baltimore County has several underutilized resources that could play a much bigger role in driving economic growth. One is the nonprofit sector, which already delivers critical services but could be better leveraged as an economic engine through workforce development, small business support, and community revitalization projects. Nonprofits create jobs, attract grant funding, and reinvest dollars locally, especially in underserved communities.

Another underutilized asset is the Baltimore County Department of Aging and the growing older adult



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population. With the right investments, we can expand programs that support aging in place, create jobs in caregiving and home modification, and support older adults as volunteers, mentors, and even entrepreneurs—strengthening both the workforce and the local economy.

We should also invest more in community development corporations (CDCs) and help create new ones in neighborhoods that lack them. CDCs have a proven track record in other counties and cities of driving small business growth, redeveloping vacant properties, supporting first-time homebuyers, and revitalizing commercial corridors.

By better connecting these sectors with county economic development efforts, grants, and private investment, Baltimore County can unlock local talent, strengthen neighborhoods, and grow a more inclusive and resilient economy.

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

The greatest needs in District 9 are affordable housing and a stronger, more inclusive local economy. The two are deeply connected. Too many families are struggling to find housing they can afford, and too many neighborhoods lack the investment, good jobs, and small business support needed to thrive.

To address housing, I will push for a comprehensive, countywide housing needs assessment and support a mix of solutions, including affordable and workforce housing, mixed-use development near transit, and innovative options like smaller-footprint and prefab housing where appropriate. I will also work to strengthen partnerships with nonprofits, community development corporations, and faith-based organizations to preserve existing affordable housing and prevent displacement.

To grow the local economy, I will focus on supporting small businesses, revitalizing commercial corridors, and connecting residents to job training and workforce development especially in fields like healthcare, skilled trades, and green energy. I also want to better leverage underutilized resources like the nonprofit sector and older adult workforce to create jobs and keep dollars circulating locally.

My goal is to make District 9 a place where people can afford to live, find opportunity close to home, and feel confident that their community is moving forward and not being left behind.