

Donna Blasdell
County Council District A 2018

1. What improvements are needed for your district?

District A faces many challenges which need to be addressed. First and foremost is economic revitalization. If we can bring businesses back to District A and along the entire Route 40 corridor, we will be able to improve the overall economic outlook for the area and the county. Specifically, I believe we need to provide incentives for the redevelopment of existing brownfield properties. I think this can be addressed through the permitting process with the reduction or elimination of fees based on the length of time a property has been vacant.

A second issue is the number of vacant houses and houses in the foreclosure process. Homes and properties are in disrepair and are often overgrown which leads to blight. This situation tends to cause an increase in crime within the area.

A third issue is the number of rental properties within the district. Within District A some communities have a 60 percent or more rental occupancy, Renters overall are not the primary concern; the concern is those landlords who do not maintain the properties up to the current livability code and do not have a local agent to contact when problems are discovered and need to be resolved.

2. What legislation do you plan to introduce for your district? For the County? If you are an incumbent, what legislation have you introduced?

A central piece of legislation I will introduce is to reduce fees associated with the redevelopment of vacant properties within the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor, the Edgewood Overlay, the Edgewood Sustainable Community Area, any Enterprise Zone or a BRAC zone.

Another vitally needed piece of legislation is one to address the rental property issues. I will propose a rental property registry, which will require landlords to maintain properties to the current livability code and have a local agent who can be contacted for any issues which may arise

3. How would you include or engage more people to provide input to the Council's decisions?

I believe the public should be included as much as possible with the Council decisions. One of the main issues I have noticed is when amendments are added to the introduced legislation. The public has little time to comment on those amendments before a final vote is taken. I will like to see additional time allocated by the Council before a final vote to allow for the public to comment. If this requires legislation to be introduced, I will present that legislation to the Council.

As a Council Member, I will be providing information to the public through the Community Advisory Meetings, the District A Facebook Page, and a monthly newsletter. I will encourage the public to contact the office to express their concerns.

4. Would you be willing to explain your voting decisions on the dais for each bill you vote upon?

I believe all citizens should know why their representative votes a certain way. I will always be willing to explain my decisions to citizens in any way, including from the dais.

5. Would you support better ways to provide the public with user-friendly notification of decisions by DAC and the Zoning Board of Appeals? If so, how?

I will support more user-friendly notifications to the public regarding DAC and Zoning Board of Appeals decisions. Announcements should be placed a dedicated page on the County Website. Email sign ups can be utilized to send out email notifications when decisions are released. Social media can also be utilized.

6. Would you vote in favor of term limits for County Council members? Explain.

I believe term limits should be implemented for County Council members and I will work to ensure the proper legislation or Charter Amendment is enacted.

7. How do you propose to solve the County's traffic problems in your district?

Thankfully District A has fewer traffic problems than other areas of Harford County. I will work with the citizens of the district to identify those areas where work is needed and try to address them. Unfortunately, many of the main roads throughout District A are state roads. Therefore the county and state will need to work together to find solutions to any problems.

8. What parts of the zoning code do you feel need to be changed?

The original zoning code was written in the 1970's. The current county zoning code was adopted in 2008, with periodic amendments since then. I believe it is time for an entire overhaul and re-write of the zoning code for Harford County.

9. Do you feel it's time for noise and lighting legislation in Harford County?

I do believe noise and lighting standards are needed in Harford County. These changes can be addressed with the revision of the Zoning Code.

10. Do you approve of General Industrial (GI) zoning adjacent to residential communities or within a Village District? If your answer is 'No', how do you reconcile your disapproval with HarfordNEXT and recent Comprehensive Zoning Review decisions?

I do not approve of GI adjacent to residential communities or within a Village District. However, the HarfordNext and the recent Comprehensive Zoning changes are now law. Under the right circumstances, the laws could be amended to make necessary changes, which could also be addressed through a Zoning Code overhaul.

11. Do you agree with the reduction in the number of County inspections on construction sites when only 34 percent of contractors are in compliance with the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance?

I do not agree with the reduction of County inspections on construction sites. Our waterways are one of the most precious assets for the county, and since our waterways lead to the Chesapeake Bay, for the state. We need to ensure all construction done within the County is protecting our waterways.