

Letter to HoCo County Council for Funding Green Initiatives for 2022 Budget

[2022 Proposed Operating Budget](#)

Page 7: Clean and Sustainable Environment - Lead in the fight against climate change by promoting green infrastructure and decreasing emissions. Promote agricultural conservation and innovation, continue park improvements, and expand renewable energy use

Page 15-16: Clean and Sustainable Environment

[2022 Capital Budget](#) C0329 - Energy Management/Improvements - \$300K- pages 97-98.

Dear Howard County Council Members,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, strongly encourage you to approve the green initiative items for a clean and sustainable environment in the 2022 proposed operating budget. We were thrilled to see that a Clean and Sustainable Environment was a priority area in the proposed budget. These items will help in the fight against climate change by promoting green infrastructure and decreasing emissions.

We urge you to fund the following in the final 2022 operating budget:

- \$90,000 in PAYGO to enhance the [County Climate Action Plan](#), providing a comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory to measure the success of mitigation and community adaptation strategies compared to the prior plan.
- \$52,000 to modernize the [Green Infrastructure Network](#), evaluating and updating the existing map. In addition, an acre or more of forest would be planted to build on the existing green infrastructure network, especially in communities that lack access to the current network.

Previously, we urged the county executive to include funding in the fiscal 2022 budget to update Howard County's Climate Action Plan, which was last updated in 2015. In light of the most recent IPCC report and alarming data, it is evident that the 2015 county plan is outdated and inadequate. HoCo Climate Action developed and circulated a letter calling for this critical funding to update the Climate Action Plan. In less than a week, 15 local organizations and faith communities as well as 29 individuals signed on to the group letter.

The state recently released a [new climate plan](#). Montgomery and Frederick counties have passed Climate Emergency bills. Additionally, [Montgomery](#), [Frederick](#) and [Prince George's](#) counties are developing new county level county actions plans that include avenues for community involvement. Howard County needs to take on this challenge, too.

In addition, we support funding for the Green Infrastructure Network, which supports native plant and animal species while helping to clean the air and water, maintain natural ecological processes, and contribute to quality of life. Modernizing the Green Infrastructure Network is crucial to improving our air and water along with identifying communities that lack access to these ecological benefits.

Both of these items are included in the [Howard County Racial Equity Task Force's draft recommendations](#) from the Public Health and Environmental Policy subgroup, page 22. Funding these critical projects will help ensure that Howard County develops policies to address environmental racism.

Finally, we support a capital budget item that was proposed but not funded last year: **C0329 - Energy Management/Improvements - \$300,000**. This project supports the county's commitment to energy savings and energy efficiency, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

While we are pleased with the county executive's new Green Fleet Policy to reduce petroleum fuel consumption in county vehicles by 20% by 2024, we also support a more rapid transition to electric vehicles.

We have delayed big steps for too long. We see evidence around the world and in our backyard of the danger of inaction. The 2016 and 2018 Ellicott City floods tragically demonstrated the county's need to address the cumulative threat from a changing climate. Funding these priority projects will help make all Howard County communities more resilient to the threats from climate change. We need these critical tools to advance climate mitigation while also focusing on vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Regards,