



Sonia
GARCIA Ph.D.

Democrat for County Council, District 6

soniagarciacouncildistrict6.com | info@communitywithsonia.com

2026 Policy Platform

My campaign is rooted in a simple principle: Working with residents, not against them. I grew up in Montgomery County as the daughter of Salvadoran immigrants in a working-class family. My background in science, research, and public service has taught me the importance of data, transparency, and thoughtful planning. I am running because our communities deserve leadership that listens, asks difficult questions, and prioritizes accountability.

SONIA GARCIA STANDS FOR:

Transparency & Accountability

Residents deserve honest communication and a voice before decisions are made.

Protecting Working Families & Seniors

Growth should not come at the expense of the people who already live here.

Responsible Budgeting & Tax Fairness

Families should not be treated like the County's backup funding plan.

Smart Growth That Respects Communities

Development must include infrastructure, planning, and protections for residents.

A Government That Listens

Leadership means showing up, listening, and working with the community — not around it.

1. OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

1. Office of the People's Counsel

Restoring the public's voice in land use decisions.

I fully support restoring funding for the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC). Its funding lapsed in 2011, and despite County Executive Elrich recommending funding for at least five consecutive years, the Council has continued to reject it.

Five counties across Maryland have a People's Counsel. Montgomery County — the largest county in the state — does not. That is unacceptable.

soniagarciacouncildistrict6.com | info@communitywithsonia.com

My Commitments:

- Restore full funding for the OPC immediately
 - Ensure the OPC can participate as a party in land use cases and provide technical assistance to residents
 - Center OPC outreach on communities of color and low-income residents who cannot afford to hire attorneys
 - Champion state legislation to provide Montgomery County residents equal treatment under state law
-

2. Housing & Zoning

Responsible growth that protects existing residents and delivers real affordability.

I oppose More Housing NOW, ZTA 25-02 and University Boulevard Corridor Overlay, ZTA 25-12 as enacted. The amendment increased density without addressing infrastructure capacity, stormwater management, school capacity, or transportation impacts — and replaced naturally affordable homes with units priced as high as \$1.4 million, while calling \$900,000 "affordable."

My Commitments:

- Prevent institutional investors and equity firms from acquiring single-family homes at scale
 - Support repealing ZTA 25-02 and ZTA 25-12 or pursuing meaningful amendments with infrastructure-first requirements
 - Define affordability by what working families in Montgomery County actually earn — not planning department figures
 - Enforce strict eligibility requirements on affordable units to prevent investor flipping
 - Protect existing naturally affordable housing stock — once demolished, it cannot be recovered
 - Implement 'use-it-or-lose-it' rules so approved housing projects move forward instead of sitting idle
 - Protect tenants from sudden, extreme rent increases while supporting responsible housing investment
-

3. Economic Development & Business

Building a competitive, diversified economy — starting with our greatest asset: our people.

Montgomery County is home to the third largest life sciences hub in the country — yet most businesses and investors don't know that. The county's economic development entity, MCEDC, has undergone significant leadership turnover and has operated without a clear strategic plan or measurable return on investment. Businesses are closing across the county, and we are falling behind Howard County and Northern Virginia. This has happened under the watch of the Economic Development Committee — chaired by my opponent.

My Commitments:

- Demand accountability and a measurable strategic plan from MCEDC with clear ROI benchmarks
- Actively market Montgomery County as the third largest life sciences hub in the nation
- Leverage my scientific and research background to attract life sciences and biotech employers
- Streamline permitting and regulatory processes for small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Strengthen partnerships with research institutions, biotech sector, and the innovation economy
- Invest in workforce development programs connecting residents to high-demand industries
- Support public life sciences jobs where funding allows, to create jobs and improve public health outcomes

Source: May 8, 2026 – Montgomery County Council Budget Worksession (Afternoon Session):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kncWsHa4yvl>

4. Infrastructure Investment & Capacity

Development must not outpace the infrastructure that supports our communities.

Development approvals have outpaced investments in transportation, schools, and utilities.

My Commitments:

- Strengthen Adequate Public Facilities requirements — no development without infrastructure capacity
 - Support a moratorium on new density approvals in areas where infrastructure is demonstrably inadequate
 - Prioritize road maintenance, congestion management, and reliable transit
 - Address school overcrowding before approving new density
 - Invest urgently in stormwater management and water/sewer infrastructure
-

5. Taxes, Spending & Fiscal Policy

Responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

My Commitments:

- No tax rate increases — residents already face one of the highest tax burdens in the region
 - Reduce Eliminate long-term tax abatements for private development that lack clear public benefit
 - Require measurable outcomes for all publicly funded programs, consider a forensic audit.
 - Require transparent, independent cost-benefit analysis before any tax incentive is approved
-

6. Planning Board & Governance

Restoring transparency, accountability, and community trust in local government.

The county's own Office of Legislative Oversight warned that ZTA 25-12 could disproportionately displace Black and Latinx homeowners in the University Boulevard corridor — and the Council moved forward anyway. Outreach failed to reach the homeowners most directly impacted. When the county creates an equity office and then ignores its findings, residents rightly ask: who is this process serving?

My Commitments:

- Give the OLO's racial equity and social justice findings binding weight — the Council must formally justify overriding them
 - Require the OLO and equity offices to participate in drafting plans, not just reviewing them after the fact
 - Mandate full public transparency of all data, analysis, and community feedback before votes
 - Reform community engagement to be door-to-door, multilingual, and accessible — not a procedural checkbox
 - Ensure Planning Board composition reflects the communities most impacted by planning decisions
 - Require full infrastructure, anti-displacement, and affordability analysis before any development approval
-

7. Racial Equity & Community Engagement

Centering the voices of those most at risk — not just those with resources to show up.

Montgomery County's University Boulevard corridor has Black homeownership rates significantly higher than the county average — a hard-won reality given this county's history of racially inequitable housing policy. The OLO explicitly warned that current rezoning plans risk reversing that. The county had the data. The question is why it didn't change the outcome.

My Commitments:

- Center community engagement on residents most at risk of displacement
 - Require outreach in multiple languages and at accessible times for all major land use proposals
 - Create transparent feedback loops so residents can see how their input influenced decisions
 - Restore trust between residents and local government through open, accountable governance
 - Oppose policies that accelerate displacement of communities of color under the guise of affordability
 - Support the Office of the People's Counsel as a direct equity tool for residents who cannot afford legal representation
-

8. Strong Schools

Kids and teachers deserve schools that are resourced, not overwhelmed — and officials who are held accountable.

Although the County Council does not have direct control over schools, it is in charge of funding — and that matters enormously. Montgomery County Public Schools are one of our most important community assets, and they are under pressure. Overcrowded classrooms, strained budgets, and development approvals that ignore school capacity and infrastructure have left families and educators navigating a system being asked to do more with less. I will advocate for schools to be treated as a priority, hold school officials accountable, and demand transparency. I will be honest with residents about what our budget reality requires.

My Commitments:

- Legislation requiring a forensic audit of MCPS to evaluate expensive contracts.
 - Require school capacity assessments before approving any new development that adds enrollment pressure
 - Fight for school budgets that protect classrooms, teachers, and student support.
 - Ensure infrastructure investment keeps pace with where families actually live and go to school
 - Prioritize schools in land use decisions — growth that overwhelms our schools is not responsible growth
 - Listen directly to parents, teachers, and school staff before any vote that affects their communities
-

9. Public Safety

Safe, healthy, inclusive neighborhoods — for everyone who lives here.

Public safety means more than law enforcement. It means healthy neighborhoods where families can breathe clean air, walk safely to school, and not worry that the next storm will flood their home. It means first responders who are resourced and supported. And it means a county that creates family-sustaining jobs and economic stability — because communities where people can afford to stay are safer communities.

My Commitments:

- Support first responders with the resources and staffing they need across District 6
- Address traffic and pedestrian safety — especially near schools, parks, and transit corridors
- Treat stormwater management as a life-safety issue.
- Fight for family-sustaining jobs that give residents economic stability and keep communities whole
- Ensure emergency services capacity is evaluated in every significant development approval
- Work toward neighborhoods that are safer, healthier, and more inclusive, for longtime residents and newcomers alike.

10. Immigration & Economic Integration

Montgomery County's immigrant community is an economic and cultural strength.

Montgomery County is home to one of the most diverse immigrant populations in the region. Immigrant residents contribute to our workforce, our businesses, our schools, and our tax base.

My Commitments:

- Support county programs that connect immigrant residents to workforce development, job training, and economic opportunity
- Invest in language access so immigrant residents can fully participate in county processes, public hearings, and community engagement
- Oppose county policies, such as amending current housing policies that will displace immigrant families, that create barriers to economic participation for immigrant residents and their families

11. Health & Human Services

Every resident deserves access to health and human services.

Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services offers critical programs across behavioral health, crisis intervention, senior services, child and family support, food access, and community health, and it has built three dedicated minority health initiatives that are among the most important equity investments the county makes. But having services is not enough if residents do not know they exist or cannot navigate them. In District 6 — a diverse, working-class corridor spanning Wheaton, Glenmont, Aspen Hill, and surrounding neighborhoods — too many families are not connected to the county services they are entitled to.

My background in science, research, and public health gives me a deep understanding of health equity — and what it takes to close gaps in access for communities that have historically been underserved. I will bring that lens to every decision affecting DHHS funding and programming.

Montgomery County's Three Community Health Initiatives — I Will Protect and Strengthen All Three:

- The Latino Health Initiative (LHI) — provides bilingual community health workers, asthma management, Latino youth wellness, family reunification support, system navigation, and climate and health education for Latino residents across the county. LHI is a lifeline for families who need a trusted navigator in both their language and their community. (lhiinfo.org)
- The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) — addresses the unique and often neglected health needs of Asian American residents through mental health programs, senior wellness, patient navigation, multilingual resources in Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese, and capacity-building grants for community organizations. (aahiinfo.org)
- The African American Health Program (AAHP) — established in 1999 and focused on eliminating health disparities in six major areas: infant mortality, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, oral health, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. AAHP provides free outreach, health education, support groups, and nurse case management to Black residents across Montgomery County. (aahpmontgomerycounty.org)

My Commitments:

- Fully support and protect funding for all three minority health initiatives — LHI, AAHI, and AAHP — which serve the most underrepresented communities in our county
- Champion health equity as a governing principle — zip code and income should never determine the quality of care or services a resident receives
- Expand multilingual outreach so all residents — regardless of language — know what services they are entitled to and how to access them
- Bring DHHS services and information directly into neighborhoods through bus, community centers, libraries, faith institutions, and trusted local organizations, rather than expecting residents to find their way to a government office
- Prioritize behavioral health and crisis services, including mental health access and opioid prevention, which are among the most urgent and underserved needs in our communities
- Support seniors with expanded access to aging services, adult protective services, and in-home support so they can age with dignity in the communities they built
- Ensure food security programs reach the families who need them most, including those who may not know they qualify
- Demand transparency and accountability in how DHHS funding is allocated, with community input shaping priorities, not just top-down decisions
- Partner with the community organizations already doing this work on the ground, LHI, AAHI, AAHP, and others — to extend the county's reach rather than reinvent the wheel



Sonia
GARCIA Ph.D.

Democrat for County Council, District 6