

Responses from Julian Lopez

Julian Lopez is running for the Democratic endorsement for Prince George's county council at-large.

Question: Prince George's County is the most dangerous in Maryland for pedestrians and cyclists. Why do you think this is? Is there a role for you in changing this?

Response: Over the past few years, PG County has dramatically increased DPWT's budget. Between 2017 and 2018 alone reflects a budgetary increase of more than 13%. The results of continued development appear to be a positive with 0 pedestrian fatalities last 2017. The county's effort in improving DPWT's performance is an area all residents should celebrate. The efforts must be sustained by a continued and stable injection of funds. Key to this effort in continued improvement is increases in personnel to respond faster. Neighborhood traffic studies, for instance, take about 87 days. One area the County can improve on is a legislative push to introduce innovative technologies in the PG county traffic system. For instance, NYC introduced Midtown in Motion to reduce traffic related accidents and increase efficiency. We also have other innovative software that allow city governments to integrate direct user data with smart phones to identify traffic flows, congestions, bottle necks, potholes and accidents. As an example, we can look at Farmington, MI on how they integrate technology using Intellistreets. As County Council At-Large, I will support introduction and funding of technology in key problems areas.

Question: Currently, The Bus is the only bus network in the region that provides no weekend or evening service, although Prince George's County has a high concentration of workers in the service industry who don't work 9-5 jobs. Would you support extending The Bus service hours to better match what is provided by other jurisdictions?

Response: Generally yes but this depends on availability of budget and how other will key players in the transportation industries respond. Taxi operators and those in the gig economy (UBER/Lyft) may not fair well if the government expands in the leisure ridership. A better priority is to first allocate funding to areas where the bus system do not go. For instance, Swan Road does not have a route for the residents. There are elderly population in that area who needs to walk a distance to catch the bus. I'd like to see the budget first, prioritize route expansion before encroaching towards weekend operations.

Question: Do you support Governor Hogan's proposal to widen I-495 and/or the B-W Parkway? Why or why not?

Response: Yes, widening of I-495 and B-W is a must. Discounting budgetary concerns, there is a true need to ease congestion especially during peak hours. For instance, the traffic flow towards Wilson Bridge causes an average (anecdotal) of 10 minutes from Exit 7 or 4 miles. In the afternoon, driving from the Wilson Bridge towards Baltimore would take hours. Expansion of alternate road to North using the B-W Parkway may alleviate the pattern.

Question: What is your top economic development priority, and what strategies do you plan to

use to achieve it?

Response: Developing new industries in the PG County is my top economic development priority. We have to consider that the time to attract businesses to PG County is narrowing. The cost of money is expected to increase due to the expected rise of the Fed's discount rate. Locally, we have to acknowledge that the casino operations is expected to further soften the retail industry and the people's saving. This conclusion is relative to multiple casino studies. Introduction of The Great PG County Economic Leapfrog would create a buzz in the DMV area. Here, we will focus on attracting technology based companies in the area through tax abatement programs. This is a long term goal. The short to medium goal is an investment to create PG County a Premier Retirement Destination. This will have an immediate effect of infusing cash in the local economy. Best of all, higher paying jobs will be available. The construction industry will benefit.

Question: The county is currently developing a Comprehensive Housing Strategy. What are your goals and priorities for that? How would you combat the problems of evictions and foreclosures?

Response: In the political arena, most politicians would proclaim that they will help the poor from getting pushed out of the area. One candidate even declared that gentrification should not happen. The economic cost of such proclamation is tremendous. It means that the government is willing to subsidize the poor from being poor. The generational effect continues. A better solution is to integrate mix-housing developments in PG County. The government must soften the negative side-effects of gentrification through temporary subsidies especially to the most vulnerable (elderly and children). The effort should have a short term measure and long term strategy. In the short term, the local government should expand grants to nonprofit organizations that helps the most vulnerable. The decline in the 2018 income disparity grant must be reversed. The long term strategy involves development of mix-housing with a stable funding for nonprofit organizations.

Question: A development review process known as "call-up" was previously struck down by the state Supreme Court, but a similar process, known as "election," is proposed in the current draft of the county's zoning rewrite. Do you support including or removing "election" in the final zoning code?

Response: Yes. It's a politicized and bureaucratic process that must be stopped. Although the ideal context of call-up may stop negative side-effects of urban sprawl or uncontrolled developments, the process is an obvious pathway for corruption. PG County is an example to this as the State Supreme Court has declared. I agree that there has to be a government interest in planning but it has to be apolitical.

Question: Do you support allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs), sometimes known as "granny flats," in single-family home zones? Why or why not?

Response: Yes. Community development starts with the family. While the government should not involve itself (generally) inside a home, it has a vested interest in approving accessory dwelling units. Some regulations has to be in placed that is local and specific. It should not be prohibitive.