

Stephen Sugg - Relevant Experience & Background

My family's immersion in Rockville's daily life combined with my decades-long bent toward public service fuels my desire to serve on the City Council. In 2019 thus far I've participated in a ride-along with the Rockville Police; my three young children take part in in 5 parks and recreation classes; we've visited at least 7 local parks and the Croydon Creek Nature Center; and we are counting down the days to the start of another season at the Rockville Farmers Market. We've attended (online and in-person) civic meetings, and the staff at the Twinbrook Recreation Center calls me a "regular". In short, my family and I have deep ties to Rockville's civic fabric.

As a mid-career professional from east Rockville, I bring a perspective formed over several decades of working side by side with the country's most innovative community development practitioners and thought leaders. I've spent 12 years at two of the country's top non-profit intermediaries, helping to marshal public and private resources toward affordable homes and sustainable communities. I've carried out such work in 26 states, on Capitol Hill, and across the executive branch.

I'm also an educator, having taught social science for five years at a community college and earning a doctorate degree in education (K-12 emphasis) at the College of William & Mary. I pursued education after witnessing the power of strong schools in the communities where I worked. Studying education offered a chance to merge my social science (M.S.) training with a complementary discipline. My academic research and subsequent advocacy in education emphasizes arts in education; outdoor & environmental education; and school/community ties.

I ran unsuccessfully for the Montgomery County Board of Education in 2018. That experience coupled with training in school facility management, public finance, and education planning is salient as Rockville debates APFO along with future school boundary discussions. While understanding local nuance in such debates, I'm also keenly aware of national best practices as other communities grapple with similar issues.

Finally, in August, I transitioned to part-time employment. This ensures that I could devote ample time to civic engagement (and fiction writing, another of my passions—full disclosure).

Vision & Priorities

I offer the below suggestions humbly, cognizant that a successful short-term appointment would require listening and teamwork to accomplish any such priorities.

Outreach: I applaud the Mayor & Council's nod to "proactive outreach to diverse populations". I would prioritize economic diversity in addition to targeting ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. Over my career of standing up for marginalized

communities, I've watched low-income people, once empowered with a seat at the proverbial table, contribute mightily to civic life. Ensuring such across Rockville starts with listening home by home, neighbor to neighbor.

Arts & Culture as Economic Drivers: In 2018, I wrote two successful National Endowment for the Arts awards centered on design, placemaking, and arts as drivers of inclusive economic growth and building community. In carrying out arts-driven initiatives nationally, I've seen the catalytic nature of modest targeted arts-driven investment. I applaud Rockville's existing endeavors along these lines and would encourage multiplying such. Done right, such investment is a glue for community cohesion that taps often-overlooked local strengths.

Diversity: I join many in celebrating Rockville's diversity. Rockville's layered diversity—in many aspects—is unique, even within Montgomery County. Within a stone's throw of my home, I have neighbors with close ties to Indonesia, Ukraine, Korea, Israel, Japan, and the Philippines. My German-born wife and our bilingual children often walk to the nearby Korean grocer or to the dozens of neighborhood storefronts where English is rarely spoken. My children are lucky to grow up surrounded by this diversity. In the current political climate, showcasing Rockville's lived diversity is to our economic advantage while offering an important contribution to the national dialogue.

Culture of Health: Via my run for the Board of Education and subsequent advocacy at the local and state level for healthier kids, I'm a proponent of health & wellness as a driver of community well-being. A few examples of what I would support:

- Consider eliminating unhealthy options in vending machines at city recreation centers. We should offer better options for our kids, as many jurisdictions do.
- Consider devoting modest city resources (e.g., logistical support, etc.) toward programs such as "[Morning Mile](#)", which hundreds of localities and schools have used to promote youth fitness with high efficacy and at a low cost.
- Continue supporting walkability. I've been a vocal advocate for such in the past. The benefits are unmistakable.
- Consider a reciprocity agreement with Gaithersburg for youth recreation classes; such would increase options for Rockville families juggling kids' needs with family logistics.

External Philanthropic Investment: After working for national intermediaries that funnel billions of dollars to leverage local investments in housing and sustainable communities, I believe that Rockville is well-suited to attract additional philanthropic support, especially in lower-income neighborhoods. Our solid civic infrastructure is attractive to such investors. It is the job of city leaders to tap this resource.

Conservation & Environment: Every day, my family and I enjoy Rockville's outdoor spaces. Preserving such is priceless, especially as research across disciplines reflects a growing consensus: green space makes us healthier and it is good for local economies. I would also expand efforts to promote native plants, especially on city-owned property. And I'm proud of Rockville's leadership on so many environmental fronts.

Early Childhood: As the county and state consider increased early childhood investment, Rockville ought to also play a role. Tapping city facilities, especially parks, for nature based early childhood programs (Scandinavian model) and outdoor classrooms would bring best-practices to our kids and make Rockville a model for showing that the best classrooms often lack walls. Doing this will require political will and creativity; I recognize that core funding for education is beyond the city council's scope. But strategic city-driven action on early education will reap dividends, including growth of the business base.

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