ELLICOTT CITY SAFE AND SOUND
PHASE 1

The Ellicott City Safe and Sound plan, developed by County Executive Calvin Ball, is a multi-phase plan built around the need for public safety, supporting business and property owners, preparing the county for a changing climate, and creating a more inclusive, community driven process for decisions regarding Ellicott City’s future. There are already several projects underway that will increase the watershed’s stormwater retention capacity. These upstream projects already in the pipeline are continuing to move forward at this time while the Ball administration examines alternatives to full-scale demolition on the lower end of Main Street. The administration is also exploring additional opportunities for stormwater projects throughout the watershed.

The first phase of the plan includes decisive actions the county executive is taking today to build upon the progress that has already been made. The next phase of the plan will be introduced in the new year along with a robust process meant to solicit public input and feedback.

ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY

Building Acquisition. Public safety is the top priority of the Ball administration and is the biggest responsibility of the county executive. To that end, County Executive Ball intends to honor the offers that have already been sent out and negotiate in good faith with those property owners to acquire their properties. These properties, along with any other buildings that may be in imminent danger, will be assessed by a structural engineer to ensure their stability and integrity. Acquiring the buildings is just one step in a long recovery process for Ellicott City, and the administration continues to explore all options regarding next steps for the buildings once acquired.

Emergency Public Alert System. While the county already has emergency alert capabilities, County Executive Ball wants the businesses, residents, and visitors of Ellicott City to have as much warning and direction as possible during severe weather events. As such, the county executive has directed his Office of Emergency Management to develop a comprehensive plan to bolster the county’s Emergency Public Alert System, with new technology and elements to enhance capabilities during extreme weather situations. Specific areas of enhancement may include improvements to the County’s capabilities in terms of audio and visual warning systems, and a broadening of real-time information systems to allow for more targeted messaging during emergency situations.

Clearing the Waterways. Keeping the waterways in and around Ellicott City clear of debris is a critical element to ensuring the safety of residents, business owners, and visitors during severe weather events. Currently, waterways are inspected on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, but more can and will be done. At the county executive’s direction, the Department of Public Works will be
developing a program to increase the frequency of inspection and debris removal along nine waterways that experience a heavy debris load during significant weather events.

- Within three business days of any severe weather event (defined as rainfall greater than 2 inches over a 24-hour period or a storm with sustained winds greater than 30 mph), the county will inspect the nine waterways included in the pilot.
- Any debris that accumulated during the storm will be removed within 14 business days.

Residents will be able to track inspections and see pictures of debris that was removed on a public dashboard that will be launching early 2019.

**SUPPORTING BUSINESS AND PROPERTY OWNERS**

**Flood Mitigation Assistance Pilot Program.** The 2016 and 2018 floods were devastating for residents and business owners across the county. Many of these homes and businesses would greatly benefit from flood mitigation projects that would help to protect their properties from future disasters. The new “Flood Mitigation Assistance Pilot Program” is a matching grant program that will provide funding for flood mitigation projects in certain areas.

- The pilot program includes $150,000 in funding.
- Projects must be on structures in flood zones A, AE, or Shaded X (Old Ellicott City, Dunloggin, Valley Meade).
- The maximum amount per project is $5,000.

After a year, the pilot program will be evaluated, and a determination will be made regarding the feasibility of expanding the program to other areas of the county.

**Working with State Partners.** During the upcoming legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly, County Executive Ball will be working with the county’s state partners on the following legislative initiatives to be introduced by Delegate-elect Courtney Watson and cosponsored by Senator-elect Katie Fry Hester:

- Funding to recapitalize Maryland’s Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program to provide ongoing state funding for flood mitigation projects in Ellicott City and other towns affected by flooding.
- Legislation to make flood mitigation projects an eligible use of funds from the state’s Bay Restoration Fund Fee.

The county executive will also be exploring state legislation to allow for greater access to private property during times of emergency in order to clear the county’s waterways.

**Supporting Main Street Businesses.** Although much of the physical damage from the floods has been repaired, business owners on Main Street continue to feel the economic impacts of the flood. To be successful, business owners need additional assistance with marketing their products, bringing people back to Main Street, and accessing resources. To assist Main Street businesses, County Executive Ball has directed the county’s Economic Development Authority to support one full-time staffer to act as an ombudsman for Main Street businesses. This individual will help promote tourism on Main Street and will assist business owners with any aspect of their business, including connecting them to available resources at the local, state, and federal level.
KEEPING ELICOTT CITY’S HISTORIC CHARM

Creative Options for Lower Main Street. The county executive has great respect for the hard work that went into the previous flood mitigation plan. However, the Ball administration is continuing to explore options that consider the desire by many to retain as much of Old Ellicott City’s charm and history as possible. County Executive Ball has directed the Department of Public Works to explore flood mitigation options that do not require full scale demolition. It is important to not use a sledgehammer when only a scalpel is necessary.

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROCESS

Creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) Exploration Committee. As the Ball administration continues to explore opportunities for properties on Main Street, it is important that Ellicott City has a holistic, community-driven advocate for the district, one that incorporates all of Ellicott City’s diverse stakeholders. This type of entity is typically known as a community development corporation. CDC’s exist all over the state, including in Frederick County.

To examine the feasibility of creating a CDC for Ellicott City, County Executive Ball is launching the “Ellicott City CDC Exploration Committee”. This representative and diverse group of stakeholders will examine what a CDC for Ellicott City would look like, what their role would be, and how they would interact with other existing organizations already doing great work for the residents and businesses owners of Ellicott City.

The county executive looks forward to hearing recommendations from the exploration committee in the coming months.