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The 2024-2025 cohort of the Frederick Youth Council



Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) Chair Alexander Hossainkhail

Frederick Youth Council Looks Ahead After First Year

The Frederick Youth Council capped off a successful first year of operation in 2024 at its “Planting Seeds Through Leadership and Service” event at New Spire Arts. Since applications for the council’s first cohort closed in January 2024 and its first meeting was held in March, the youth council has created a space for Frederick’s youth population and given them a voice in their community.

As the council approaches the anniversary of that first meeting, its 15 members, ages 12 to 20, are looking towards the future. They will be particularly involved in the planning and vision for the upcoming Frederick Youth Center.

“We asked them ‘What would help you, what services do you need and where could you access them?’” recalls Caylee Winpigler, who serves as the community impact manager for the Ausherman Family Foundation, of the youth council’s founding. “They needed a building and center where they could access those services. They needed more connection between the nonprofits and entities that are providing those services. ... The final point was that if we’re going to be doing all of this for youth, we need youth voices intimately involved in the process every step of the way.”

The Frederick Youth Council is notable for being the first youth council servicing a county. While the City of Frederick has hosted a smaller youth council for several years, and the Maryland Youth Advisory

Council has been in operation since 2008, there was a gap in youth leadership between the city and state levels.

But these youth councils are about more than just leadership opportunities for children and young adults. They allow them to have a voice on important local policy issues and participate directly in the democratic process. The event’s guest speaker, Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) Chair Alexander Hossainkhail, noted that MYAC maintained a 75% influence rate over the Maryland General Assembly during the last legislative session. This means that whenever MYAC published its position on a bill, there was a 75% chance that the General Assembly would side with that position.

“Imagine what our communities could look like if every young voice, including yours truly, mattered at the decision-making table,” Hossainkhail explains. “When you picture that, do you believe that your current voice matters? Youth councils exist to ensure young perspectives aren’t just heard but are actively sought out when decisions are made. We exist to uplift the voices that fall through the cracks and to make their stories known.”

Frederick Youth Center on the Horizon in 2028

The City of Frederick recently signed off on the establishment of a new youth center, to be built in partnership with the Ausherman Family Foundation. Located on Scotty’s Bus Lane, right across from

McCurdy Field, the center is expected to open in 2028 following renovations and construction starting in 2027.

The Ausherman Family Foundation, which has been contributing to community projects in Frederick County since its establishment in 2001, contributed \$1.5 million to the construction and renovation budget. The foundation has been exploring the idea of creating a youth center in the county for the past several years as part of the Downtown Safety and Services Initiative, producing a report in 2022 outlining the needs of Frederick County youth and a potential timeline for implementing a youth center.

The Foundation noted in its report that its primary aims were to provide community and mental health services for local youths, as well as reduce drug usage.

“Youth who have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences and those without caring adult connections are at the highest risk for not graduating from high school and for developing substance use disorders,” the report notes. “They stand to benefit the most from the more coordinated and accessible programming and services that a youth center and collaborative activities will offer. Our youth are the future of our community.”

The approval of this new youth center represents a major step forward for the initiative, which is meant to help community members ages 14 to 24 develop their leadership skills and get more involved in their local community. ■