

July - December Edition

2025



FREDERICK
YOUTH COUNCIL
SPARKING CHANGE
SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

YOUTH VOICE

In 2025, the Frederick Youth Council continues to lead boldly, transforming ideas into action and ensuring that youth are not only heard but also empowered as decision-makers.

LEADING
THE WAY

The Journey

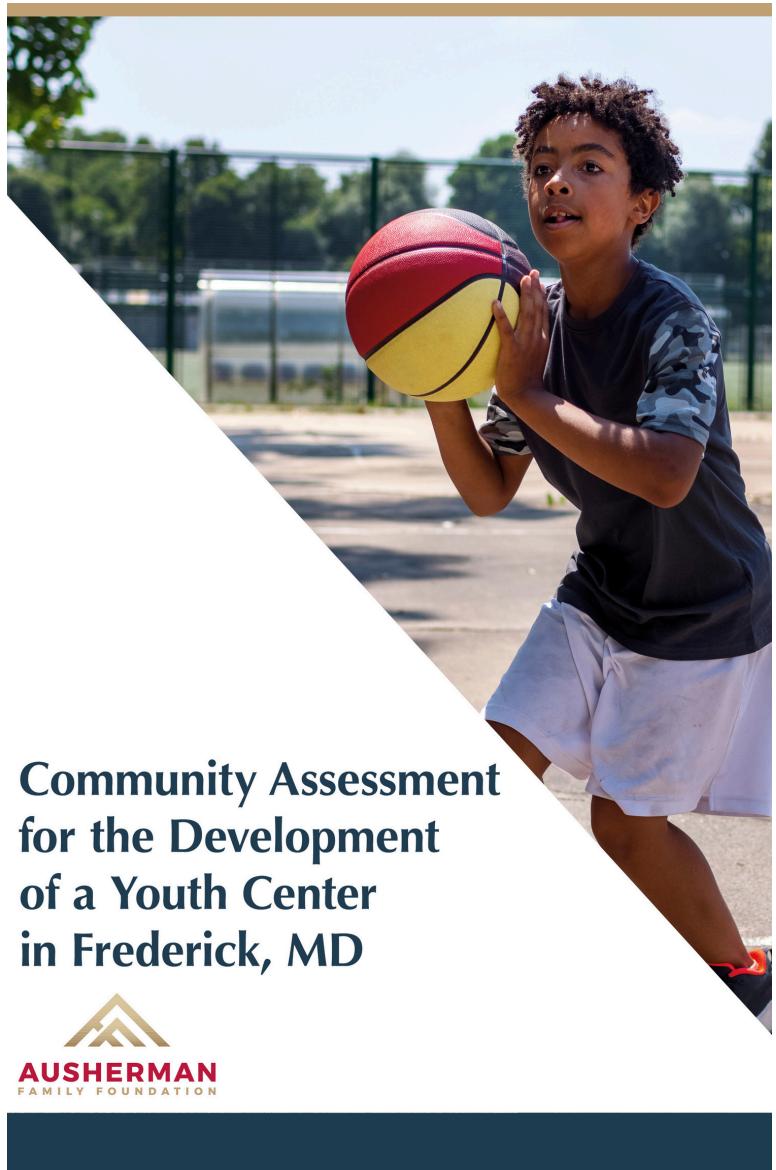
The journey began in 2022 with a community-wide assessment to explore how Frederick County could better support its young people. The assessment engaged youth, parents, educators, and community leaders to identify critical needs. It revealed three key outcomes: the need for a dedicated space for youth, a network to connect resources and reduce silos, and a platform to elevate youth voices in decision-making.

From this work, the Youth Council was created. It began in early 2024 with a clear goal: to ensure young people had a seat at the table and could influence the decisions that impact their lives. The Youth Council quickly became a driving force, providing leadership, insight, and energy to shape community initiatives.

The assessment findings also inspired the creation of the 12-to-24 Collaborative—a network designed to align efforts and connect services for young people. By working in partnership with the Youth Council, the Collaborative ensures that youth voices remain central to planning and action.

Another key result of the assessment was the vision for a youth center—a space where young people can gather, learn, and thrive. The Youth Council was instrumental in shaping the concept, ensuring it reflects the needs and aspirations of those it serves.

This journey continues to build momentum. The Youth Council, the Collaborative, and the youth center represent a shared commitment to creating a stronger, more connected community driven by the voices and leadership of its young people.



Community Assessment for the Development of a Youth Center in Frederick, MD



About the Youth Council

The Frederick Youth Council is a diverse group of young leaders ages 12-24 committed to elevating youth voices across the community. Members engage with local government and nonprofit partners to ensure young people's perspectives are heard, valued, and reflected in decision-making. Through leadership, advocacy, and civic engagement, the Youth Council empowers youth to shape the future of Frederick and drive positive change for their peers.





Senior Send-Off: A Bittersweet Farewell

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In August, the Youth Council marked a bittersweet moment of transition and growth as we said goodbye to our senior members. Watching our seniors step away from the Youth Council and begin their journeys into college and the next chapter of their lives was both emotional and deeply meaningful.

These young leaders helped lay the foundation for the Youth Council, shaping its culture of youth leadership, civic engagement, creativity, and community care. As the first inaugural members of the Youth Council, they set the standard for what youth-led leadership looks like in action.

While their presence will be missed, we know they are going on to do great things. Their voices, leadership, and contributions will always be woven into the story of the Council, and they will be forever cherished as trailblazers who opened the door for future generations of youth leaders. We celebrate their growth, honor their impact, and send them forward with pride and gratitude.



Making Space for New Youth Council Voices



The Next Generation of Youth Leaders: Bold Voices, Fresh Perspectives, and a Commitment to Shaping Frederick's Future

In 2025, the Youth Council welcomed new voices following a rigorous application process that received over 80 applications from youth across Frederick. From this highly competitive pool, 10 new Youth Council Members were seated, along with 5 Youth Council Liaisons. While the selection process was difficult, it was also energizing—an exciting testament to the strong foundation laid by previous Youth Council members.

New members gathered for their first official meeting at Talley Recreation Center to participate in Part II of the Youth Center Visioning Session with Noelker & Hull. Then, the group left for a Leadership Retreat at ThorpeWood, where senior Youth Council members passed the torch, supported orientation, and warmly welcomed the next generation of youth leaders.

Meet the Next Generation of Change-Makers



The retreat created space for connection, shared values, and continuity as leadership transitioned from one cohort to the next. Orientation included laughter, skits exploring different leadership styles, and reflective activities such as letters to future selves, facilitated by Dr. Laura Sherwood, Youth Council Mentor. These experiences helped new members feel welcomed, connected, and prepared to lead.

2025 Frederick Youth Council

Welcome the new and returning members of the Frederick Youth Council! This group is ready to continue shaping initiatives, amplifying youth voice, and driving positive change in the community.

Leadership Team



Breanna Brea Ochoa
Chair



Muikiio Wafula
Vice Chair



Ellary Catino
Secretary



Ethan Burks
Peacekeeper



Rhea Ramesh
Timekeeper

**INSPIRE
CHANGE**
Lead with passion

2025 Frederick Youth Council

"It's inspiring to see our creativity and leadership recognized by the city and community partners. Every meeting, every project, every moment we spend together reminds me that youth voices are powerful—and when we step up, we can shape the future of our city for the better."



Carter Davis



Kiya Marshall



Judah Shaool



Vincent Stanaway



Nithya Bhimisetty



Eric Jiang



Samira Bowins



Melissa Koufiogna



Meray Ghobrial



Anaya Jackson

2025 Frederick Youth Council

"Being part of the Youth Council has given me a voice, a platform, and a community where my ideas truly matter. Together, we plan events, share our perspectives, and make real change in Frederick."

Liaisons



Charlotte Djangali



Tamir Shahid



Stephanie Calix



Liam Kalbskopf



Victoria Jacobo



Follow the
Frederick Youth
Council on social
media for more
information and
updates.





Community Partners

The Youth Council gratefully acknowledges the 18 community organizations that participated in and supported the Back-to-School Wellness in the Park Resource Fair by sharing resources, services, and support with families across Frederick County.

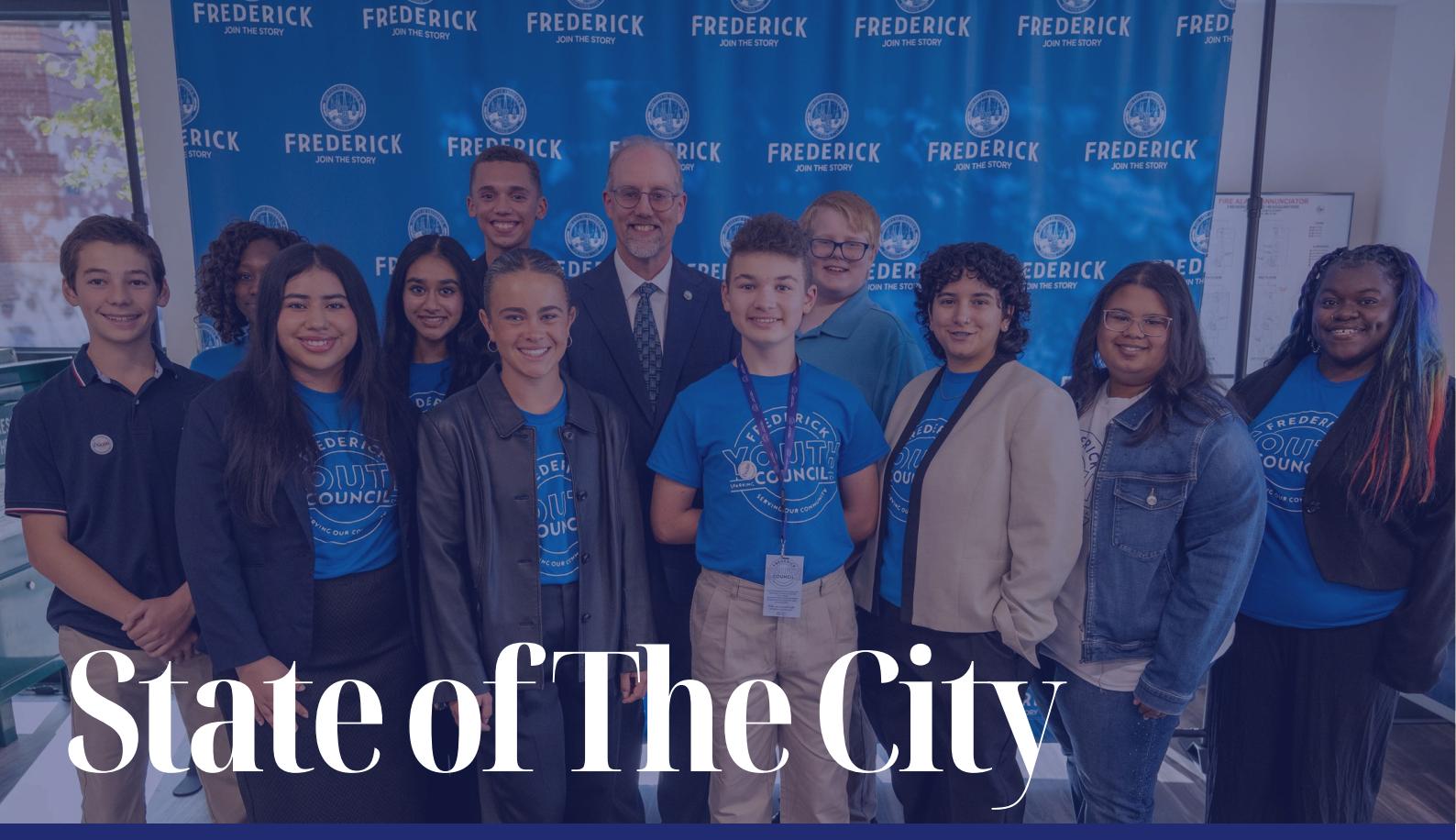
Back-to-School Wellness in the Park: Youth Wellness in Action

The Youth Council partnered with the City of Frederick and Transformative Arts Project to host a Back-to-School Wellness in the Park Resource Fair, bringing together families, youth, and community partners for an evening centered on connection and well-being. Community members attended with their families, including County Executive Jessica Fitzwater, highlighting strong cross-sector support for youth wellness.

Youth Council members played an active leadership role by facilitating a community mural-painting project focused on emotions, creating space for creative expression and dialogue around mental health. Youth also addressed the community prior to the outdoor screening of *Inside Out 2*, helping frame the evening around emotional awareness, resilience, and youth wellness.

The event created a welcoming, accessible space where families could connect with local resources, learn about available supports, and engage in meaningful conversations about mental health and wellness—right in the heart of the community.





State of the City Attendance

Youth Council members attended the Mayor's State of the City presentation, gaining firsthand insight into local priorities and civic leadership. Members also had the opportunity to connect with city leaders, reinforcing the importance of youth presence in public decision-making spaces.



Youth Leadership on Display

Youth Council members had the opportunity to network and engage with local civic leaders, including Mayor Michael O'Connor and Delegate Chris Fair, as well as other community officials. During the event, Youth Council members were publicly recognized and confidently stepped into their roles as emerging leaders, reinforcing the importance of youth voice in civic spaces.



Youth Voice Shaping the Future Youth Center

Youth Council members toured the future Youth Center alongside Andrew Welker, from Ausherman Properties, and participated in interviews to share their lived experiences and ideas. Scheduled to open in 2028, the Youth Center has been shaped by the voice of youth at every stage—from early visioning to discussions about how the space should look and feel, as well as what programs, activities, and support services should be offered.

Through ongoing feedback and collaboration, the Youth Council continues to play a critical role in informing design and policy decisions, ensuring the Youth Center reflects the needs, creativity, and aspirations of young people across Frederick.



First Look Inside: The Future Frederick Youth Center at 300 Scotty's Bus Lane





Frederick County Council

Youth Council members had an invaluable opportunity to meet with Frederick County Council, including the Council President and Vice President, to share their perspectives, exchange ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogue about the future Youth Center. The conversation affirmed the importance of youth voice in shaping county priorities and highlighted a shared commitment to investing in the next generation.



The power of youth voice was on full display as five Youth Council members presented in front of the Frederick County Council, sharing updates on the Council's progress and its pivotal role in shaping the upcoming Youth Center. By speaking directly to community leaders, these young advocates demonstrated how youth perspectives can influence decision-making, drive community initiatives, and ensure that the next generation's needs and ideas are heard and valued.



County Presentation PDF





It's all

About Youth Leading The Way



The 12-to-24 Collaborative's First Annual Membership Meeting brought partners from across Frederick County together at Hood College for a day of reflection and collaboration. Highlights included a Youth Council-led panel and facilitated discussions that centered youth voice and helped shape a shared Common Goal, along with the unveiling of the Youth Center's schematic design—marking an important step forward in youth-led, community-driven impact.

Setting the Common Agenda Video [YouTube](#)





MONTHLY BUSINESS MEETINGS

The Youth Council meets every third Tuesday for their monthly business meetings, where members discuss council business, plan upcoming events, and collaborate on initiatives. These meetings often feature inspiring guest speakers, including community leaders like Mayor Michael O'Connor, giving members firsthand insight into civic leadership and opportunities to connect with local decision-makers.

SPOOKY FUN AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Youth Council partnered with the City of Frederick Parks and Recreation Department for the annual Community Halloween Event, bringing creativity and energy to the celebration. Members led face painting and art activities, and even took on the exciting role of judging the best Halloween costumes in Frederick, engaging with families and showcasing youth leadership in community events.



Youth Voices on the Air

For the second year in a row, the Youth Council was a special guest on the City of Frederick's Behind the Spires Podcast. Members shared updates on council initiatives, upcoming events, and their vision for youth leadership in the community, giving listeners a fun and engaging look at what the Council has been up to.

Community Involvement

Youth Council members gave back to the community through volunteer work and creative projects, using art and service to celebrate culture and make a meaningful impact in Frederick during Hispanic Heritage Month



TAKING THE STAGE



FALL FUN FEST: SHOWCASING YOUTH VOICE AND CREATIVITY

For their second annual end-of-year event, Youth Council members led a panel discussion, sharing their experiences and what inspired them to join the Council. The panel included a Q&A session where audience members could ask questions and engage directly with youth leaders. Prior to the program at New Spire Arts, a youth art exhibit featured local artists who shared their work and connected with the community, highlighting creativity and youth expression across Frederick.





Frederick's Got Talent

Several Youth Council members performed during the show, showcasing their diverse talents and creativity alongside other young artists from across Frederick.



Youth Talent Takes the Stage

As part of their annual event, the Youth Council, sponsored by Transformative Arts Project, hosted a Youth Talent Show featuring performances from young artists across Frederick. From singing and dancing to guitar and more, participants showcased their creativity and passion. Youth Council members shone on stage, impressing the judges, including County Council Vice President Kavonte Duckett and Natalie Clasper-Thompson, founder of Elixir Dance Studio.



Leading with Holiday Spirit: Kris Kringle Procession

15 Youth Council members proudly participated in the Kris Kringle Procession, joined by Jason Francis (the City of Frederick's Reengagement Program Manager), his wife, and several supportive parents. The event offered a joyful opportunity for civic engagement, bringing youth, families, and the broader community together while showcasing youth leadership in a festive, public setting.



End-of-Year Cheers

As we close out the year, the Youth Council extends a heartfelt thank you for your support and for creating opportunities for youth voice to be heard throughout Frederick. We look forward to a new year filled with connection, creativity, and collaboration, and can't wait to continue partnering with you to empower the next generation of leaders.

Stay up-to-date with the Youth Council and follow us on social media for the latest news on events, projects, and youth initiatives.



16



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YOUTH COUNCIL 2026

JAN



YOUTH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING

The 12-to-24 Collaborative hired Amy Wilkinson as the Backbone Director of the 12-to-24 Collaborative. For the January meeting, she will be leading the Youth Council through a strategic planning exercise to allow the Youth Council to identify what they would like to accomplish in the upcoming year.

APR



YOUTH PHOTOVoice EXHIBIT

The Youth Council will lead a Photovoice project on youth mental health in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club, mentored by Dr. Sherwood. Members will speak at TAP's 5th Annual Photovoice Exhibit Opening on April 30, 2026, with the exhibit on display at the Delaplaine Arts Center throughout May for Mental Health Awareness Month.

MAY



CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

May 7, featuring a Youth Provider Resource Fair and Youth Talent Show at New Spire Arts, bringing together youth, families, and community partners to celebrate wellness, creativity, and support.

JUN



APPLICATIONS FOR THE YOUTH COUNCIL OPEN

Applications open in June to fill open seats on the Frederick Youth Council. During this period, youth must submit their applications to be invited for an interview.

JUL



YOUTH COUNCIL INTERVIEWS START

All applicants will be interviewed during the month of July. Welcome announcements will be sent out by mid August.

SEP



NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

New council members will be seated on the council and will begin their journey by attending orientation at the Youth Council meeting in September.

Follow the FYC on social media for more information and updates on the application cycle.

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