

A Resident Comments on Montgomery Thrive 2050 Plan

I agree with the ideology in the three pillars that can guide our county to an environmentally sustainable and equitable future. However, I believe you can make this plan more likely to succeed. Please consider the comments below.

The Environmental Pillar

As our County Executive said, “The absence of direct recommendations related to environmental resilience is glaring”. Here are some suggested strategies:

The recommendations in the Healthy and Sustainable Solutions chapter along with recommendations from the Department of Environmental Protection should be part of the Plan.

The Agricultural Reserve should be primarily for farming and not for development and ecotourism. Previous planning boards had the foresight to reserve this area. There is wisdom in that.

The Plan should address tangible, explicit actions to require state of the art energy efficiency in new buildings.

The Plan should directly address the continuing pattern of stormwater waivers in a substantive, action-oriented way instead of just implying some form of management.

I agree with our County Executive who said, “The Planning Board draft appears to assume that urbanism by itself is sufficient to address our environmental challenges. It is not.”

One Size Fits All

Just as diversity of the environment promotes a sustainable quality of life, so too, does diversity in human systems. To me, the plan seems to promote a one size fits all development of the county. The Plan should involve community collaboration in the decision- making process regarding their neighborhood. These residents know their neighborhoods best and many are invested in their community and their voice needs to be heard in a true exchange of ideas and actions. The Small Action Plan concept can be considered in each community.

Cloverly, where I live, is an ethnically and racially diverse community according to the 2020 census. Cloverly sits at the headwaters of the Northwest Branch on the western side, the Paint Branch Special Protection area on the eastern side and the Patuxent watershed area on the northern side. The western side of Cloverly was protected with RE-2 zoning to control our continuing development and afford some semblance of environmental resilience for its erodible soils. Increasing housing density and urban imperviousness and changing zoning would further degrade the streams and habitat of the Upper Paint Branch and Upper NW Branch. As you know, this cascades into a complex scenario of wide reaching environmental degradation.

Use Small Area Planning in our mature community to assure environmental resilience.

The Equity Pillar

The Planning Board focuses on housing type as the Equity solution. Housing type does not assure affordability. According to our County Executive, the Planning Department’s Silver Spring Missing Middle Housing Study found that the only MMH types that were feasible in downtown Silver Spring are for dense (\$715,000) and moderate townhouses (\$855,000). Even according to the Planning Board’s graph of median incomes for Blacks, African Americans and Hispanics, this is way out of reach for those we are fighting to include.

- a. Housing near transit hubs – the plan lacks direct recommendations to safeguard against gentrification. Please consider Small Area Planning in mature communities near transit hubs to assure that we minimize displacement and gentrification.
- b. In order to minimize displacement of lower income households, we need to have assurance that NOAH will be preserved, teardowns discouraged and rents stabilized.

Thank you.