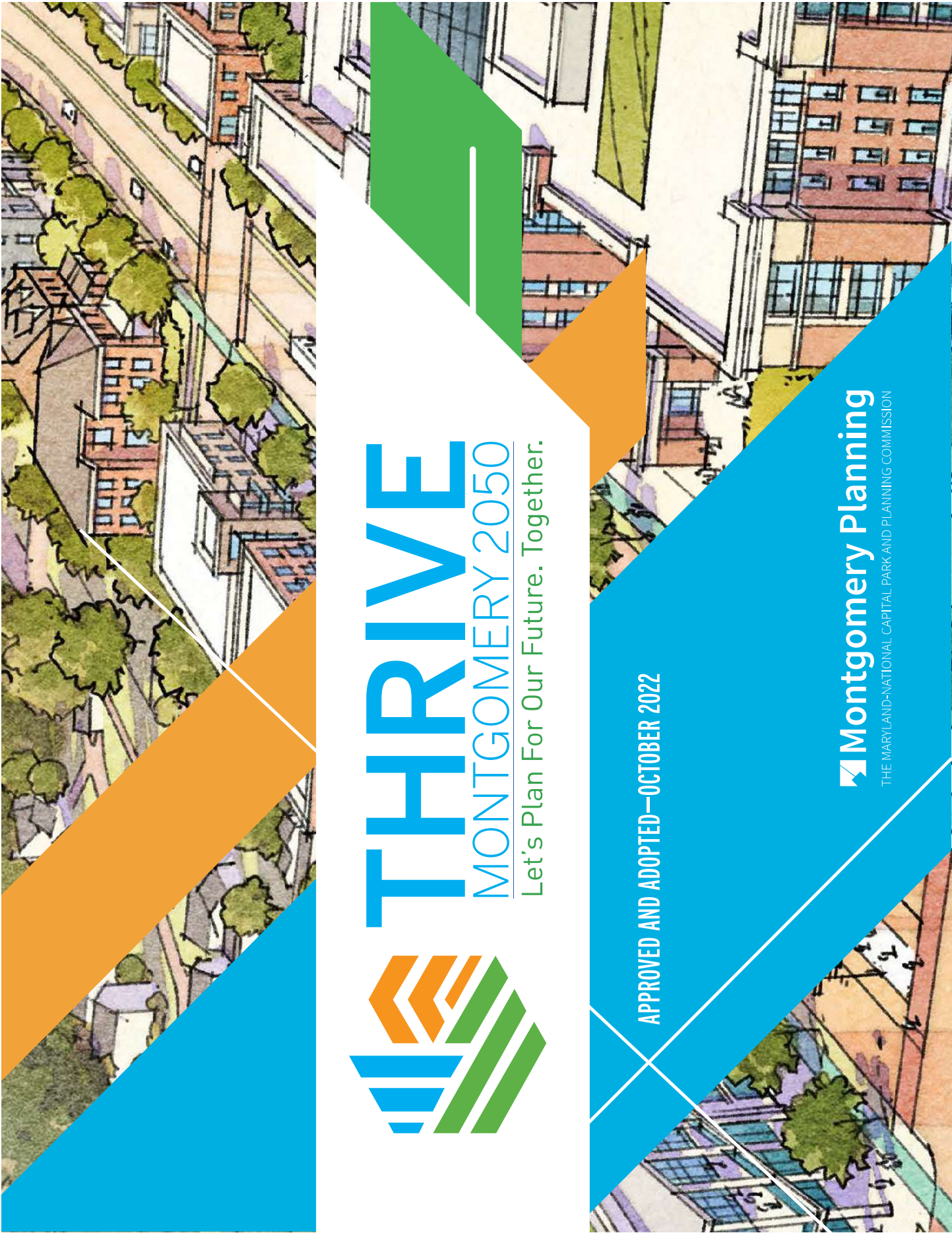




THRIVE

MONTGOMERY 2050

Let's Plan For Our Future. Together.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED—OCTOBER 2022

 **Montgomery Planning**
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Thrive Montgomery 2050 contains the text and supporting maps for a comprehensive amendment (rewrite) of the 1969 General Plan (*On Wedges and Corridors*) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, as amended; the 1993 General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County, as amended; the Master Plan of Historic Preservation, as amended; the 2010 Purple Line Functional Plan, as amended; the 2011 Housing Element of the General Plan, as amended; the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, as amended; the 2018 Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, as amended; the 2018 Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan, as amended; and the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan, as amended.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a general plan for the county with a 30-year horizon. It sets a vision for the county and encompasses broad, countywide policy recommendations for land use, zoning, housing, the economy, equity, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, and historic resources. These recommendations provide guidance for future master plans, county and state capital improvement processes, and other public and private initiatives that influence land use and planning in the county. None of the plan's zoning-related recommendations can be implemented without a sectional map amendment, a district map amendment, or a zoning text amendment approved by the County Council.

Sources of Copies

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD, 20902. Online at www.thrivemontgomery.com.
This version of *Thrive Montgomery 2050* includes an update to the Acknowledgments page (November 2023).

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is a bicounty agency created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's counties; the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises about 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises about 919 square miles in the two counties.

The Commission prepares, adopts, and amends or extends the General Plan (*Thrive Montgomery 2050*) for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County. The Commission operates in each county through planning boards appointed by the respective county governments. The planning boards are responsible for implementation of local plans, recommendations on zoning map amendments, zoning text amendments and subdivision regulation amendments, and the general administration of their respective park systems.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission encourages the involvement and participation of all individuals, including those with disabilities. The M-NCPPC will generally provide, upon request, appropriate aids and services and make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. To request accommodation (e.g., large print materials, listening devices, sign language interpretation), please contact the M-NCPPC Montgomery County Commissioners Office by telephone at 301-495-4605 or by email at mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org, or contact the Montgomery Planning ADA Coordinator at 301-495-1324. Maryland residents can also use the free Maryland Relay Service for assistance with calls to or from hearing or speech-impaired persons by calling 7-1-1. For more information about the Maryland Relay go to www.mdrelay.org or call 800-552-7724.



CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL AND ADOPTION
THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 GENERAL PLAN FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

This comprehensive amendment to the 1969 *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors)* for the *Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland*, as amended; the 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County*, as amended; the *Master Plan of Historic Preservation*, as amended; the 2010 *Purple Line Functional Plan*, as amended; the 2011 *Housing Element of the General Plan*, as amended; the 2013 *County-wide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*, as amended; the 2018 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*, as amended; 2018 *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan* as amended; and the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*, as amended; has been approved by the Montgomery County Council, sitting as the District Council, by Resolution Number 19-1413 on October 25, 2022, adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board as Resolution 22-101 on December 1, 2022 and has been adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission by Resolution Number 22-42 on December 21, 2022, after duly advertised public hearings pursuant to the Land Use Article – Division II, of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

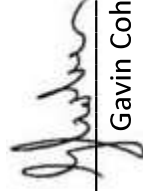
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



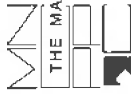
Peter Shapiro
Chair



Jeffrey Zyontz
Vice-Chair



Gavin Cohen
Secretary-Treasurer



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
6611 Kenilworth Avenue • Fiskeville, Maryland 20737

MCP8 NO. 22-101

M-NCPPC NO. 22-42

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, by virtue of the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, is authorized and empowered, from time to time, to make and adopt, amend, extend and add to the *On Wedges and Corridors, Updated General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, 1993*, and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Montgomery County Code, Chapter 33A, held a duly advertised public hearing on Thursday, November 19, 2020, on the Public Hearing Draft *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, being a Comprehensive Amendment to the *On Wedges and Corridors, Updated General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, 1993*, as amended; the *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County, 1993*, as amended; the *Master Plan of Historic Preservation*, as amended; the *Purple Line Functional Plan, 2010*, as amended; the *Housing Element of the General Plan, 2011*, as amended; the *County-wide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, 2013*, as amended; the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, 2018*, as amended; the *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan, 2018*, as amended; and the *Bicycle Master Plan, 2018*, as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board, after said public hearing and due deliberation and consideration, on April 8, 2021, approved the Planning Board Draft *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, recommended that it be approved by the District Council, and on April 13, 2021, forwarded it to the County Executive for recommendations and analysis; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Executive reviewed and made recommendations on the Planning Board Draft *Thrive Montgomery 2050* and forwarded those recommendations and analysis to the District Council on June 10, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Council sitting as the District Council for the portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District lying within Montgomery County, held two public hearings on June 17, 2021 and June 29, 2021, wherein testimony was received concerning the Planning Board Draft *Thrive Montgomery 2050*; and

Approved as to
Legal Sufficiency: /s/ Matthew T. Mills
M-NCPPC Legal Department

WHEREAS, the District Council, on October 25, 2022, approved the Planning Board Draft *Thrive Montgomery 2050* subject to the modifications and revisions set forth in Resolution No. 19-1413

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission do hereby adopt the said *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, as the General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, as approved by the District Council in the attached Resolution NO. 19-1413, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of said Amendment must be certified by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and filed with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of each of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as required by law.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Resolution No. 22-101 adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission at its regular meeting held on December 1, 2022, in Wheaton, Maryland on motion of Commissioner Branson, seconded by Commissioner Piñero, with a vote of 5 to 0, Chair Zyontz, and Commissioners Branson, Hill, Presley, and Piñero, voting in favor of the motion.


Jeffrey Zyontz, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Resolution No. 22-42 adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner Geraldo, seconded by Commissioner Bailey, with Commissioners Bailey, Branson, Doerner, Geraldo, Hill, Piñero, Presley, Shapiro, Washington and Zyontz voting in favor of the motion at its meeting held on December 21, 2022, during a hybrid video-conference/in-person meeting at Wheaton Headquarters in Wheaton, Maryland and broadcast by the Montgomery Planning Department.


Asuntha Chiang-Smith
Executive Director

/// Plan Framework and Overarching Objectives

Thrive Montgomery 2050 aims to create communities that offer equitable access to jobs, more housing, transportation, parks, and public spaces. Just as importantly, it can help guide the design of the built environment to strengthen the social and physical health of our residents, supporting active lifestyles and encouraging interaction and engagement. This framework embraces and builds on the *Wedges and Corridors Plan*, with a greater emphasis on the development of compact, “Complete Communities” and the

role of major corridors as places to grow. It also supports greater conservation and expanded protection of our natural resources and recognizes the importance of integrating arts and culture in our communities.

The ideas and recommendations in this Plan are organized to achieve three overarching objectives: economic competitiveness, racial equity and social justice, and environmental health and resilience.



/// How Thrive Montgomery 2050 Was Developed

Organization of the Plan

Related to the three primary objectives of economic competitiveness, racial equity and social justice, and environmental health and resilience, the Plan is organized into nine chapters:

- Economic Competitiveness
- Racial Equity and Social Justice
- Environmental Health and Resilience
- Compact Growth: Corridor-Focused Development
- Complete Communities: Mix of Uses and Form
- Design, Arts, and Culture: Investing and Building Community
- Transportation and Communication Networks: Connecting People, Places, and Ideas
- Housing for All: More of Everything
- Parks and Recreation for an Increasingly Urban and Diverse Community: Active and Social

The first three chapters, following the introduction, each address one of the three overarching objectives of the Plan. As such, they “set the stage” for the policies and practices recommended in the chapters that follow. The ideas in each of the following six chapters are intended to complement each other and outline approaches calibrated for varying scales of planning. The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters move from the countywide scale (Compact Growth) to the community and neighborhood scale (Complete Communities) and finally to the details of individual blocks and buildings (Design, Arts, and Culture). The chapter on Compact Growth describes a countywide approach that aims to concentrate development along corridors to maximize the efficiency of infrastructure, preserve land,

and focus investment. The Complete Communities chapter covers strategies for individual neighborhoods and districts that build on the foundation of a compact footprint for growth by incorporating a mix of uses, building types, and lot sizes to create livable places that are accessible and inviting to people with a variety of income levels, household sizes, and lifestyles. The Design, Arts and Culture chapter discusses the finer-grained analysis of design concepts applicable to blocks and individual development sites, the architecture of public and private buildings, the landscape of plazas and public spaces, and elements of street design.

These concepts are reinforced and supported by the remaining three chapters, which address specific topics related to development and public infrastructure. The Transportation and Communication Networks chapter outlines the multi-modal and digital infrastructure required to support compact growth and the creation of walkable, well-designed Complete Communities as well as the communication networks in the county. The Housing for All chapter recommendations are intended to diversify our housing stock across incomes, building types and geography. The Parks and Recreation chapter describes the role of public and privately owned parks and gathering spaces in encouraging social interaction, promoting a healthy lifestyle through physical activity, and mitigating the effects of climate change through environmental stewardship. Each chapter explains how its recommendations serve the broader objectives of *Thrive Montgomery 2050* and provides suggested measures to gauge progress in implementing the chapter’s ideas. No plan that is designed to provide guidance over a period of decades can anticipate every difficult problem, attractive opportunity, or useful idea that may emerge, so these metrics should be used to assess new proposals as well as to measure the success or failure of the plan’s recommendations over time.

/// Thrive Montgomery 2050 Establishes the Building Blocks for Places that Prosper

How can a land use plan support economic competitiveness? Thrive focuses on three specific areas: quality of place, transportation, and housing.

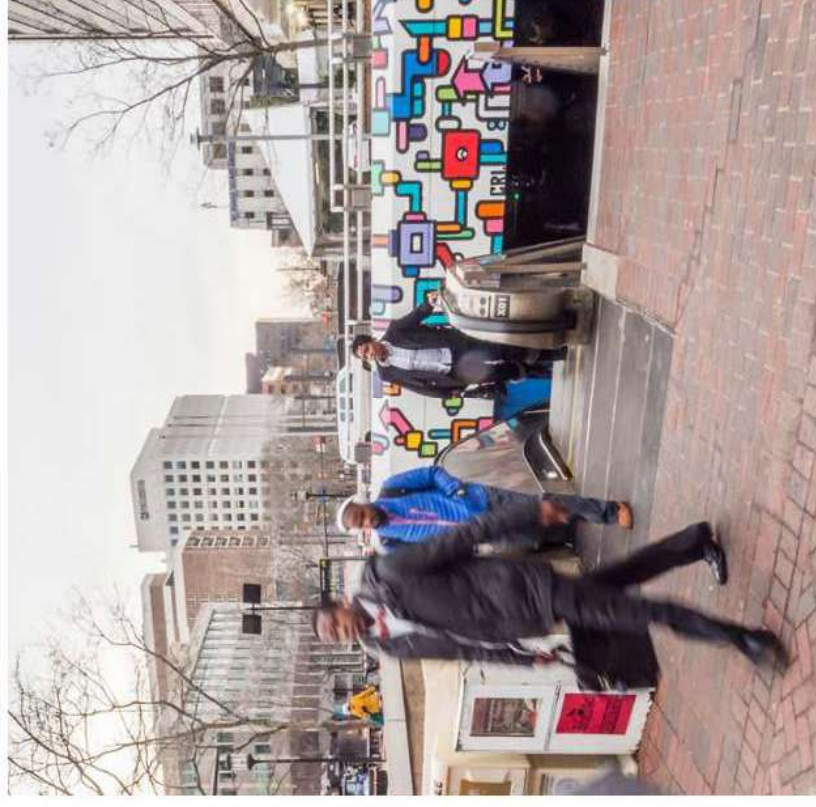
Great Places Are Magnets for People, Businesses, and Jobs

People are instinctively drawn to vibrant centers of activity that have a sense of place with lots of things to do. They enjoy living and working in places that facilitate social interaction and where walking and biking feels safe and appealing and where travel between their homes and other destinations is accessible and easy—be it by car, bike, or transit. Employers making decisions about where to locate are increasingly responsive to these preferences, giving communities that can satisfy them a crucial competitive edge.

Developing neighborhoods and districts with the features and qualities that support the emergence of more vibrant communities is easier said than done. Even the most progressive policies on land use, transportation, housing, and public amenities are likely to fall short unless they are integrated into a cohesive framework. That's why *Thrive Montgomery 2050* recommends strategies that reinforce each other, using compact form as the foundation, Complete Communities and "15-minute living" as basic orienting objectives, attention to the aesthetic and functional aspects of design, and the importance of increased housing and transportation options as important criteria for implementation. Each of these topics is discussed at length in the policy chapters of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.

In addition, Thrive considers parks to be infrastructure for economic development. World-class places require world-class parks, recreation, and cultural amenities. Look to Central Park in New York, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Millennium Park in Chicago, or Hyde Park in London and the significance of great urban parks becomes clear. In fact, parks and

related amenities are regularly cited as among the most important factors influencing business decisions about where to relocate or expand. Multiple studies have shown that parks increase adjacent property values by 5 to 20 percent, providing incentives for property owners to contribute to the creation of public parks or to build privately owned, publicly accessible spaces for recreation and gathering. Likewise, taxpayer-funded investment in parks and related programming and amenities delivers strong economic returns to the public. These topics are discussed in greater detail in Thrive's Parks and Recreation chapter.



Housing for the Workforce Needed for a Strong Economy

Increasing the supply of new housing near transit, jobs, and amenities may help improve the quality of life for everyone in the county while helping to attract and retain the broadly skilled workforce that employers need, making the county more economically competitive. The increased demand for walkable neighborhoods with a mix of uses—especially near transit—is well documented. Housing in “Walkable Urban Places (WalkUPs)” command prices 71 percent higher per square foot than other locations in the Washington area, reflecting both the desirability and relative shortage of these kinds of places⁷. By concentrating more housing of different sizes and types near high-quality transit corridors, we can provide housing that will help keep the most productive workers in the county, curb escalating prices in the most desirable locations, and improve accessibility of jobs, transportation, and services while being mindful not to displace current residents.

Conversely, if we don’t have enough housing, workers will continue bidding up the cost of existing residences until only the very affluent will be able to afford decent housing in convenient locations. Lower- and middle-income residents will either be priced out entirely or face crowded, substandard housing conditions in remote locations with long and difficult commutes. Without affordable and attainable housing dispersed throughout the county, we will never be able to attract and retain the broadly skilled workforce needed to effectively run businesses, regardless of their scale or economic sector.

The Role of Regionalism in Strengthening and Diversifying Our Job Base

Even as we focus on bolstering our competitive position in sectors such as hospitality and life sciences, we also need to diversify our job base and improve connections to centers of employment and innovation

⁷ DC: The Walk Up Wake-Up Call: The Nation’s Capital as a National Model for Walkable Urban Places”, Leinberger, Christopher. The George Washington University School of Business, 2012.

throughout the region. Montgomery County is part of a dynamic regional economy with a rich mix of public institutions and private companies.

Many residents of the Washington region travel to, from, or through Montgomery County to reach jobs or homes in other jurisdictions within the region. The effects of decisions about housing, environmental stewardship, economic development, and other issues in any DC-area jurisdiction are felt by its neighbors. We enjoy many benefits from cooperation with our neighbors, but also compete against them for opportunities, and consensus on how to address regional problems is often elusive. Montgomery County is an integral part of the larger region and must find ways to work more effectively with other area governments to make us all stronger.





Housing

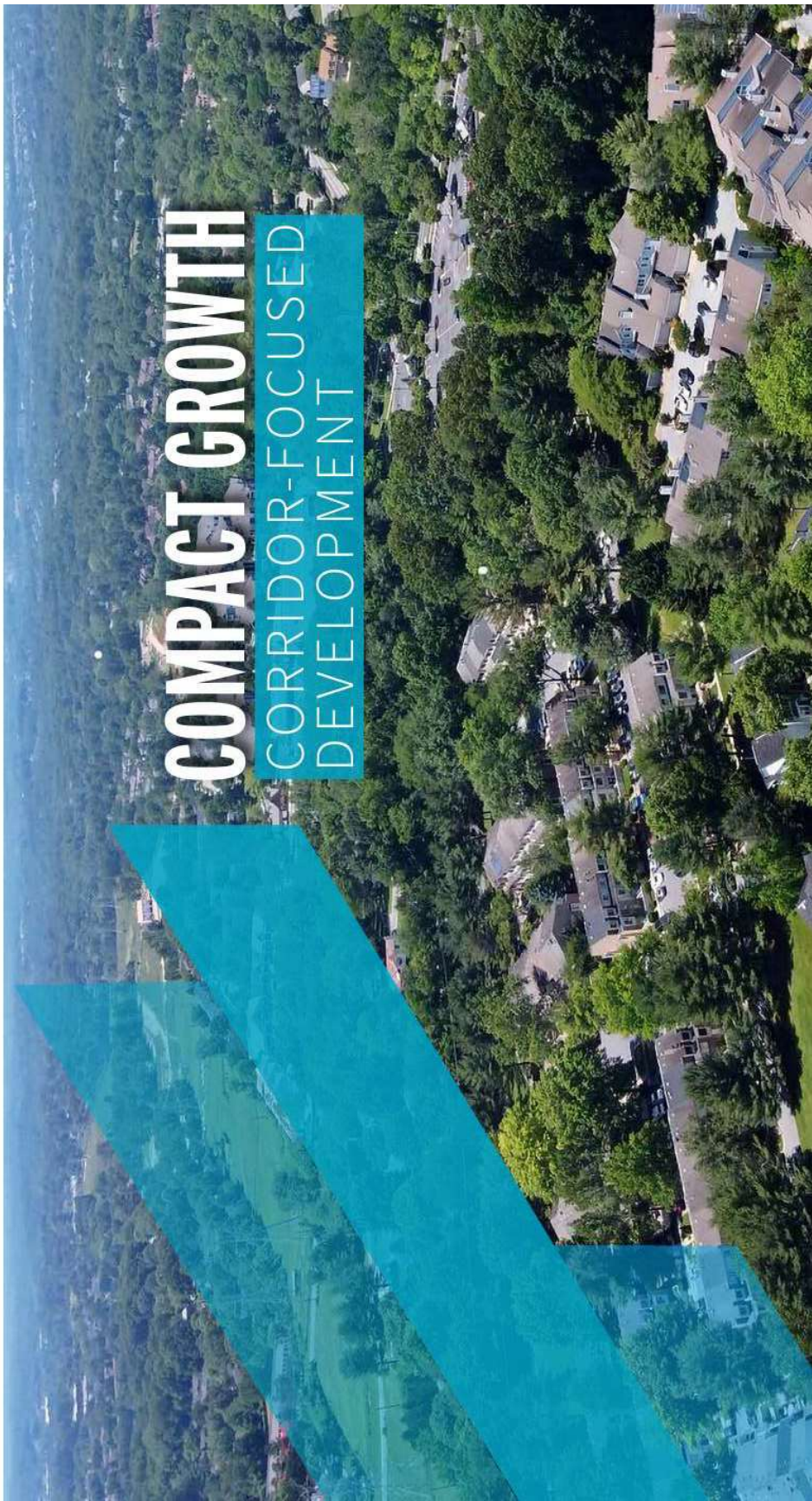
Thrive's housing prescriptions to address racial equity and social justice largely center on a strategy to significantly increase housing production, striving to increase housing density along major corridors and in Complete Communities across the county. This includes more housing for every income level, with particular attention to providing more income-restricted housing, housing for very low-income, and permanent supportive housing.

To promote racial equity and economic diversity in housing in every neighborhood, the Plan recommends developing targeted strategies to minimize gentrification and displacement, while promoting integration and avoiding concentrations of poverty. The idea of development without displacement is an exciting one, but these ideas in practice are often acting in direct opposition of each other. Development without deliberate community and neighborhood conservation efforts will almost certainly result in some displacement. So, instead of ignoring this possibility, let's determine where people can go.

Identifying and promoting safeguards against the potential loss of naturally occurring affordable housing continues to be a priority for the county. The county has made recent strides in preserving naturally occurring affordable housing by using a variety of financial and land use tools. For example, the county has increased funding for the Housing

Initiative Fund to help preserve naturally occurring affordable housing. Through recent master plans, the county has also allowed for increased density in exchange for no net loss of affordable housing in the event of redevelopment. Understanding that these naturally occurring affordable housing units are important housing resources to the county, more work is needed to understand the risk factors associated with losing these units, as well as the best strategies to preserve these units. If housing affordability continues to decline, it is quite feasible that Montgomery County could require even more commuters from outside the region to staff its businesses. This dynamic would be in opposition to both the Equity and Sustainability goals of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. (See Appendix B-7: Housing Affordability, 2020.)

Undoubtedly, many residents who currently occupy a community where they have historical, cultural, spiritual, and other ties (kinship) will want to remain in their home community. However, there will be some residents who may like to move to a more affluent area. Traditionally, planning documents are written to support Housing Choice as a strategic goal for future outcomes. When we juxtapose this idea with regional housing markets, it would seem that in order to balance the integration of low-income neighborhoods, some accommodation for rebalancing should be made to ensure that economic benefits begin to reach historically disadvantaged populations. As such, integration should be a two-way process, by which there should be a parallel strategy of making accommodations for low-income housing in areas that are already wealthy, thus providing new residents who want the choice of living somewhere else to achieve immediate access to communities that have proximity to jobs, good education, etc. If we are going to promote development in the growth areas with new market-rate housing, there should also be a provision of new low-income housing in high-income areas to allow for housing choice in different markets.



/// What Policies Will Solve the Problem? Refining—and Recommitting to a Compact Footprint

Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes redoubling and refining efforts to concentrate context-sensitive growth in centers of activity. Centers of activity range from large downtowns, to medium-sized town centers, to rural villages and neighborhoods. The Plan also makes a new commitment to promoting growth along major transportation corridors to maximize the efficient use of land and create Complete Communities. These corridors create a web, connecting residents to existing and future centers of activity and Complete Communities. These corridors also either have robust transit service in place or planned or are located close to existing concentrations of jobs, services, and infrastructure in ways that lend themselves to supporting more intensive development to produce the kinds of Complete Communities described later in this Plan.

The intensity of development along these corridors should be aligned with the urban, suburban, and rural context of the surrounding area and calibrated to account for existing or planned transit and other transportation infrastructure. Detailed analysis of each area will come through future planning efforts that include extensive public engagement. Some corridors, such as Rockville Pike, even now connect several centers of activity, making these corridors appropriate for more intensive development. Other corridors will have less intensive development due to their context and level of transit service.

Outside of these corridors, limited, organic growth should be allowed to meet localized needs for services and provide a balanced, diverse, and appropriate range of housing choices; increase racial and socioeconomic integration; and achieve more Complete Communities in all parts of the county. This limited development must be managed in ways that help to form more Complete Communities without expanding established development footprints or encouraging significant intensification of

land uses outside of Complete Communities. Preservation of land for recreation, agriculture and environmental management must be ensured for the benefit of the entire county.

The concept of corridor-focused growth is a fundamental organizing element for *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, as it recognizes not only that intensively developed centers of activity and preservation of land both play a vital role in our quality of life but that neither pattern can exist without the other. By describing the types of places where context-sensitive growth should be encouraged, this chapter aims to establish the foundation for Complete Communities, which depend on a compact footprint to give them the coherence, focus, and mix of activities necessary to succeed. The scale of development, building types, and diversity of uses envisioned within this footprint are discussed in greater detail in the Complete Communities chapter. In turn, the design elements that complement and reinforce Complete Communities are discussed in the Design, Arts, and Culture chapter.



Compact Growth 70

Beyond Transit-Oriented Development: Complete Communities and 15-Minute Living

Thrive Montgomery 2050 recognizes the benefits of transit-oriented development, which often uses mixed use zoning as a complement to high-quality transit service, but it updates and recalibrates ideas about the role of mixed uses by adding Complete Communities and “15-minute living” as organizing principles for thinking about planning of neighborhoods and districts.

Complete Communities are places that include the range of land uses, infrastructure, services, and amenities that allow them to meet a wide range of needs for a variety of people. They include housing suitable for different household types, income levels, and preferences, helping to support racial and socioeconomic integration. The specific mix of uses, amenities, parks, public facilities, and building types in Complete Communities vary depending on factors such as the size and location of the neighborhood or community, proximity to transit, variation in physical features such as topography and environmental resources, and other factors unique to the history and context of each place.

The related concept of 15-minute living has emerged as a way of reimagining existing communities to maximize their attractiveness and efficiency by mixing housing, offices, and retail uses so services, infrastructure, facilities, and amenities to serve the daily needs of people who live or work there are within walking distance. While a literal or rigid application of 15-minute living may not be practical outside of the corridor-focused growth areas and centers, the concept is a useful way to generate concrete recommendations to make communities more complete and help them succeed.

Different Ingredients for Different Communities

The combination of strategies that can help create a more complete community in any particular place depends heavily on context. The scale (village vs. town center vs. downtown), location (inside vs. outside the

growth footprint) within one of the state’s four growth tiers⁹ and type (e.g., office park vs. central business district vs. residential neighborhood vs. suburban shopping center) all influence which elements should be incorporated and how they should be tailored. Despite the varying needs and conditions of different parts of the county, however, the concept of encouraging more diversity of use and form is relevant in almost every location. For example:

- Existing suburban office parks in locations such as Rock Spring or Clarksburg’s COMSAT site have large existing buildings that can accommodate employment but lack the integration of uses, services, and amenities necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive office market. Complete Communities strategies can help reposition these employment centers through infill and redevelopment to incorporate a variety of housing, restaurants, retail, public facilities, and parks and public spaces along with better transit service, making them more attractive to both residents and employers.

- Likewise, for places the county hopes to see emerge as important centers for office employment, such as White Flint, White Oak, or Germantown, the integration of additional housing options can help to encourage activity beyond regular business hours, creating the sense of energy and activity during the evening and on weekends.

Centers of activity in suburban and rural areas, which range from large retail shopping centers such as Aspen Hill, to clusters of commercial and neighborhood-serving retail uses like the shopping areas in Potomac Village or Four Corners, offer convenience retail for surrounding subdivisions but often lack safe pedestrian accommodations, good transit connections, or high-quality parks and public spaces. In some places, new

⁹ As defined by The Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012, Senate Bill 236.

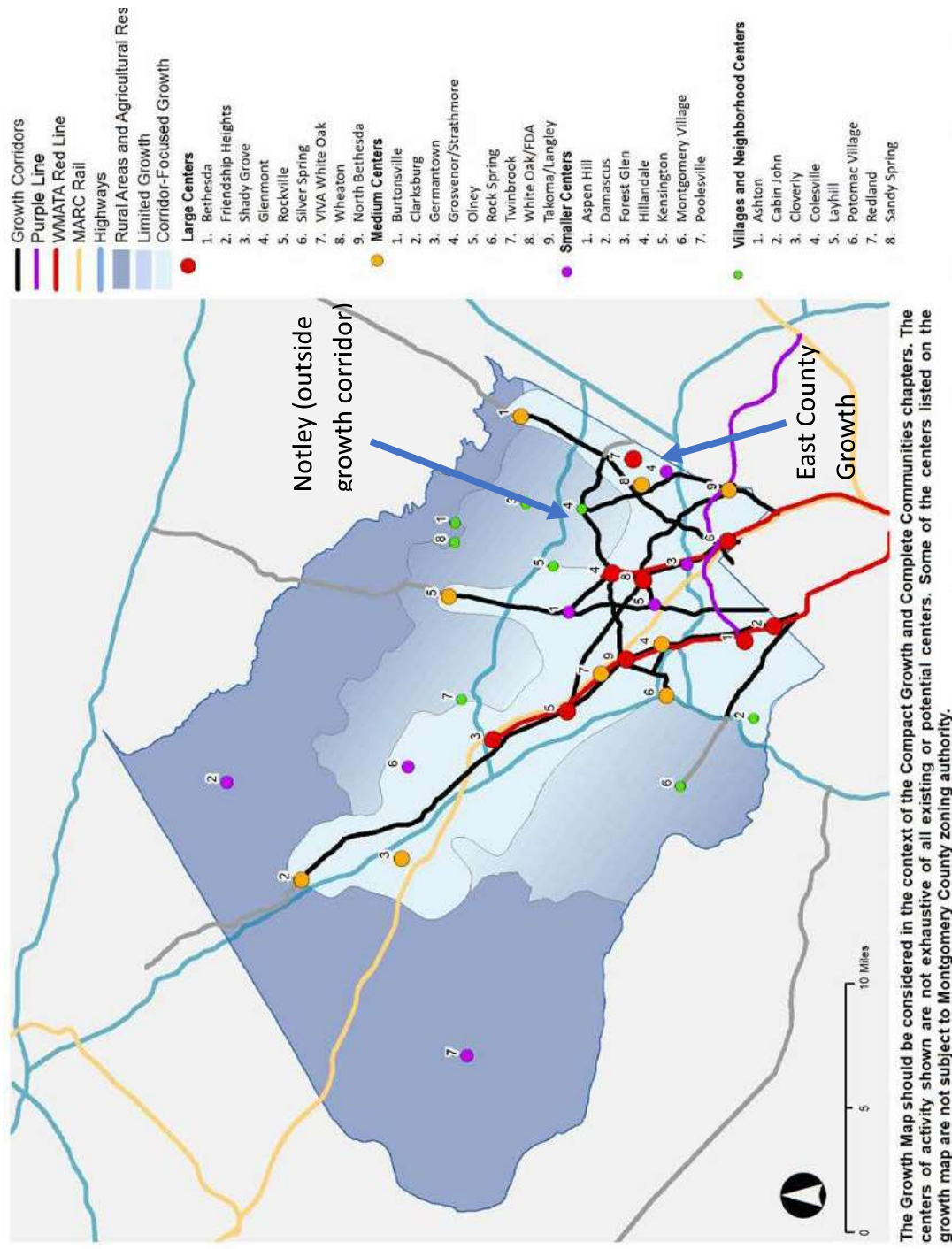


Figure 34: Proposed Growth Map—Corridor-Focused Growth

of our presence in one of the most dynamic regions in the country, if not the world. In addition to the existing Metrorail and MARC services to the District of Columbia, master plans call for new transitway connections to Prince George's County (the Purple Line and University Boulevard BRT) and the District of Columbia (the New Hampshire Avenue BRT). However, there is a growing need to provide transitway connections to Howard and Frederick counties, and to Northern Virginia as well.

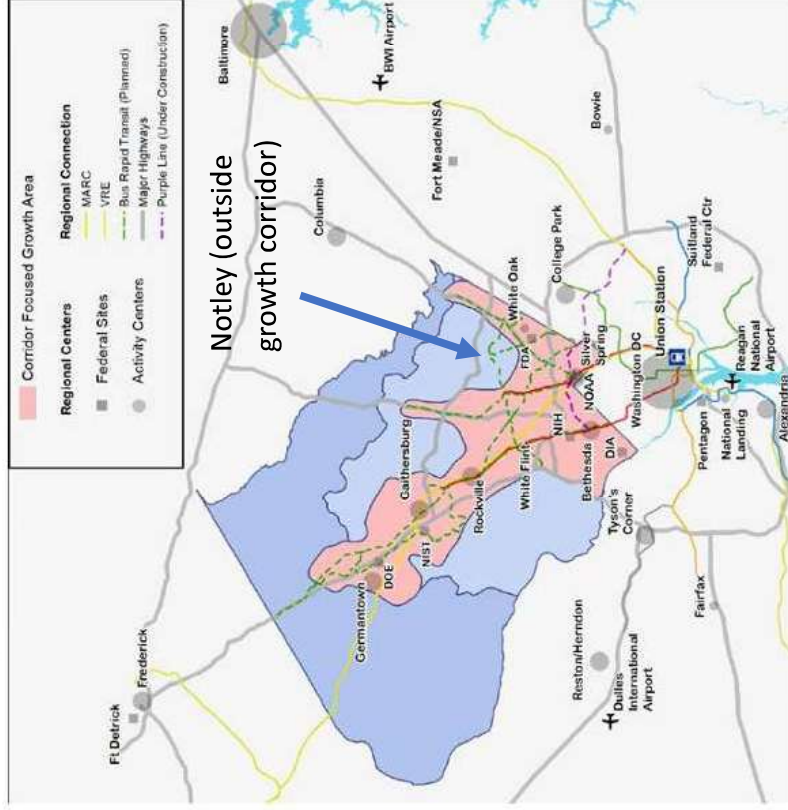


Figure 45: Regional Connections to Activity Centers

Even for travel within Montgomery County, our legacy road network has serious shortcomings. Our central business districts and major suburban corridors generally lack the grid of streets that create the building blocks of a thriving community, with frequent intersections and narrower vehicle lanes to facilitate slower speeds and safer crossings to make walking,

rolling and bicycling more practical and attractive, and to provide access points and routing options for automobiles. More and more residents and workers prefer transit and other alternatives to driving alone—and a significant number do not have access to a car—but most jobs in the county are not located near high-quality transit, and many of our neighborhoods lack even sidewalks. Combined with the absence of efficient east-west connections, especially for transit riders, this pattern limits access to jobs and opportunity, particularly for low-income residents who are more likely to depend on transit, and makes our transportation system less adaptable and resilient.

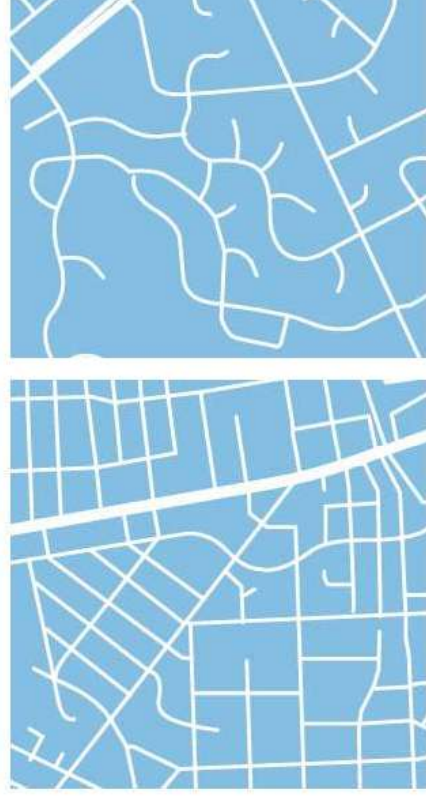


Figure 46: Higher Connectivity in a Traditional Grid of Streets (Downtown Bethesda, Left) Compared to a Conventional Cul-de-Sac Pattern of Streets (Olney, Right)

The failure to provide robust alternatives to driving and the inability to provide additional space for roads—in combination with low rates of housing construction—leaves more commuters stuck in traffic and pushing jobs as well as people to other jurisdictions. The result is that the county loses residents, jobs, and tax revenue while simultaneously increasing traffic congestion as more people drive through the county on the way to jobs and homes in other places. Meanwhile, the importance of virtual connections, including the deployment of high-speed wireless network and fiber optic cable, continues to grow.

The Growth Map reflects current land use and is representative of the location and types of growth expected through 2050; however, the corridors and centers shown on the map or fitting the descriptions provided below may evolve over time through future approved and adopted master plans and functional master plans.

The Corridor-Focused Growth area (lightest blue) should have the largest share of new growth. It encompasses the most developed part of the county with highest-density population and employment centers, and the infrastructure to support existing and new development.

The Limited Growth area (medium blue) contains the mainly suburban residential communities where limited, organic growth is envisioned to meet localized needs for services, provide a diverse range of housing choices, and increase racial and socioeconomic integration to achieve Complete Communities.

Rural Areas and the Agricultural Reserve* (in dark blue) will continue to be dedicated primarily to agriculture, rural open space, and environmental preservation. It can absorb some growth as agriculture evolves and existing residential communities' needs change over time.

The Growth Map identifies several existing and potential centers of activity at a variety of scales, including Large, Medium, and Small as well as Villages and Neighborhood Centers. The centers identified are not exhaustive of all existing or potential centers, but rather are included to demonstrate that centers of activity, where existing and future compact growth should be concentrated, occur within the county's urban, suburban, and rural areas. While future growth should occur in these centers, the amount of growth and intensity of development should be commensurate with the center's location and context.

Large Centers are envisioned as the highest intensity areas generally characterized by significant residential and/or commercial density, either existing or planned, and are typically close to high-quality transit. They include the county's Central Business Districts, existing and future employment centers, the municipalities of Gaithersburg and Rockville, and most of the Metrorail stations which provide an opportunity for significant redevelopment.

Medium Centers would be less intense and cover a smaller geography than Large Centers. The Medium Centers could include significant clusters of existing or planned residential density, as well as clusters of commercial density, including large shopping centers and office campuses. Medium Centers are likely to be close to transit.

Smaller Centers are generally characterized by low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods, with clusters of commercial activity, including shopping centers and neighborhood-serving retail.

Villages and Neighborhood Centers are the lowest intensity centers containing a small number of neighborhood-serving uses and located in rural areas and low-density residential neighborhoods.

* The Rural Areas and Agricultural Reserve are areas of the county substantially zoned for rural or agricultural land use under the Rural, Rural Cluster, Rural Neighborhood Cluster, or Agricultural Reserve zone.

More specifically, the following policies and practices should be adopted in order to maximize the efficiency of land use and public investment, and establish the building blocks for development of vibrant centers of activity while preserving land for recreation, resource conservation, and agriculture:

Concentrate growth in centers of activity and along corridors through compact, infill development and redevelopment to maximize efficient use of land.

- Focus future land use and public infrastructure planning in activity centers and on growth corridors to direct development in ways that facilitate the emergence of Complete Communities. Evaluate appropriate land uses, transportation facilities, and community design that will encourage and enable full use of centers of activity and creation of Complete Communities. (Ec, En, Eq)

- Amend land use, design, and zoning regulations, including the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, to support corridor-focused compact development. Appropriate densities will vary but should be sufficient to support, at a minimum, the efficient provision of transit service along these corridors. (Ec, En, Eq)

- Improve the environmental sustainability of growth by encouraging infill and redevelopment to curb sprawl and bring areas built out in an era with little or no environmental regulations up to robust standards for stormwater management and other state-of-the-practice environmental standards. (En)

The three symbols (Ec, En, Eq) indicate a strong link between each policy recommendation and the three overarching objectives of the Plan:

Ec = Economic Competitiveness
En = Environmental Health and Resilience
Eq = Racial Equity and Social Justice

Promote and prioritize public investment in infrastructure in activity centers and along growth corridors and leverage it to attract future private investment in a compact form.

- Consider new methods of financing public infrastructure, such as value capture, tax increment financing, and other mechanisms to facilitate investment and provision of appropriate infrastructure in areas identified as appropriate for more intensive development. (Ec)

- Establish high-quality transit infrastructure along growth corridors through capital investment and ensure reliable, frequent service through operational investment. (Ec, En, Eq)

- Leverage federal, state, and local incentive programs, publicly owned land and land investment opportunities for infill development and redevelopment in activity centers and along corridors. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Develop a policy framework to ensure that businesses owned or operated by Black, Indigenous or people of color are accessing opportunities in new development and in redevelopment. (Ec, Eq)

Limit growth beyond corridors to compact, infill development and redevelopment in Complete Communities to prevent sprawl. Apply principles of urbanism at an appropriate scale along a rural-to-urban transect as outlined in the Complete Communities chapter.

- Sustainably manage land outside growth corridors and Complete Communities to increase biodiversity, improve the health of natural habitats, preserve privately owned forests, protect watersheds and aquifers, and improve water quality while providing expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation, including vigorous physical activity. (En, Eq)
- Support alternative clean energy generation, distributed energy, battery storage and grid modernization; and better facilitate composting/food waste recovery and other circular economy initiatives. (En, Eq)

Encourage the production of more housing to better match supply with demand.

- Expand opportunities to increase residential density, especially along major corridors and in locations where additional housing can assist in the development of Complete Communities. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Increase the number of income-restricted affordable housing units, especially for low-income households, with particular attention to high-income areas to ensure that people who work in retail, service and other low-wage-earning employment sectors have the option not to commute. (Eq)
- As part of the commitment to the Housing First approach, develop strategies to build deeply affordable housing and provide permanent supportive housing in support of unsheltered populations and those who may be aging out of youth programs. (Eq)
- Support building code amendments that reduce costs by accommodating innovative construction methods and materials including modular prefabricated housing and mass timber. (Ec, En)
- Continue to prioritize use of public land for colocation of housing and other uses, particularly where government agencies design new facilities or dispose of real property. Consideration of increased opportunities for housing low and very low-income households should be included in the analysis of how best to leverage county assets. (En, Eq)
- Increase regulatory flexibility to incentivize residential infill, redevelopment, and repositioning of office parks, shopping malls, and other underutilized properties. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Provide financial and other incentives to boost housing production for market-rate and affordable housing, especially near transit and in Complete Communities. (Ec, En, Eq)

Plan for a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet diverse needs.

- Facilitate the development of a variety of housing types in every part of the county but especially in areas near transit, employment, and educational opportunities. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Support creative housing options including personal living quarters and/or micro units; “Missing Middle” housing types such as tiny houses, cottages, duplexes, multi-plexes, and small apartment buildings; shared housing, cooperative housing, co-housing, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), to help meet housing needs and diversify housing options throughout the county. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Consider features of other housing models such as social housing that, in addition to providing long-term affordability for low- and moderate-income households, emphasizes architectural quality, environmental performance, and social stability. (En, Eq)
- Encourage provision of multi-bedroom units suitable for households with children in multi-family housing. (En, Eq)
- Integrate people with disabilities, people transitioning from homelessness, and older adults into housing with appropriate affordability, amenities and services sized and designed to accommodate their households. (Eq)

/// What Is the Problem We Are Trying to Solve? Focusing Growth, Connecting Communities, and Reinvigorating East County

While the 1964 Plan was visionary in recognizing the consequences of sprawl and the value of land preservation, subsequent land use and transportation planning decisions did not always adhere to its guidance, illustrating the political economy of sprawl. On one hand, resistance to the kinds of dense infill and development in areas within the growth footprint the 1964 Plan identified left the urban form unrealized in many areas, with—for example—only a few Metrorail station areas developed with high density. On the other hand, the desire of property owners to maximize the value of their land in some cases led to more development in outlying areas than contemplated in 1964, with a proliferation of garden apartments and townhouses in places like Aspen Hill. The absence of tighter limits allowed development to disperse, consuming large amounts of land and increasing the cost of roads, water, sewer, and other public infrastructure by limiting economies of scale. This pattern of development also limited opportunities to offer cost-effective transit service.

Conversely, the 1964 Plan envisioned corridor cities along I-270, I-95, and U.S. 29, yet subsequent planning decisions, including the 1993 *Refinement*, disregarded and ultimately removed the growth corridor along U.S. 29 and I-95 in the eastern portion of the county. The excision of the U.S. 29 corridor contributed to effectively directing new public and private investment away from the East county and toward the established urban ring and I-270 corridor. As a result, the I-270 corridor has benefited from successive cycles of investment and reinvestment, even as other corridors—including Georgia Avenue, where Metrorail's Red Line was built—were largely left behind. This recurring pattern aggravated the racial and economic disparities between the eastern and western parts of the county that remain today.

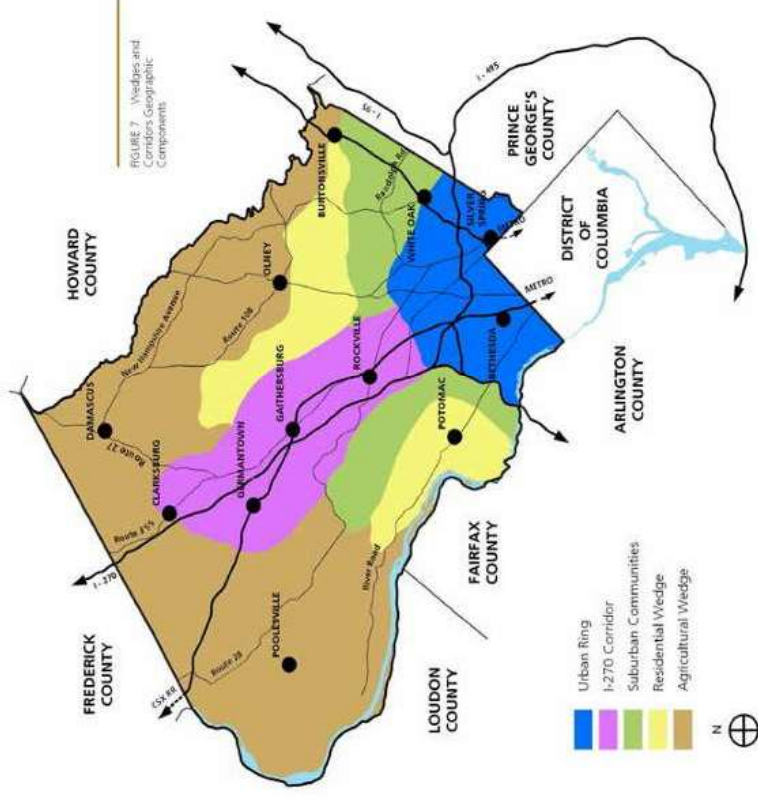


Figure 33: Wedges and Corridors Geographic Components— from the 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County*

Moreover, the 1964 Plan did not fully articulate how the broader public should expect to benefit from maintaining a rural pattern over much of the county's land area⁸. The 1964 Plan explained that land preservation is important to recreation, agriculture, and conservation of natural resources but did not describe how people living in urban parts of the county would access these opportunities. The result is that many people who live outside of what became the Agricultural Reserve are unfamiliar with it and do not take full advantage of opportunities to visit, enjoy and develop an appreciation for the value of continued preservation of land for farming, recreation, and environmental stewardship. Awareness of, and access to,

⁸ Approximately 1/3 of Montgomery County makes up the Agricultural Reserve.

Racial Equity and Rebalancing the Geographic Distribution of Opportunity

The identification of growth corridors in the East county—particularly along U.S. 29 and the Georgia Avenue corridor along Metrorail's Red Line—is vital to reversing decades of no growth and ensuring that the benefits of growth are more equitably distributed across lines of geography, class, and race. These areas also offer the opportunity for greater return on investment, financially and in terms of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*'s goals. Previous political opposition to development in the East county—most clearly expressed by the removal of the I-95/U.S. 29 corridor in the 1993 *Refinement* from the areas identified as appropriate for growth—pushed public and private investment to the west. Subsequent public and private investment was focused along the I-270 corridor because this area appeared to offer the best prospects for growth and success. Meanwhile, the East county became relatively less attractive for employers and residents, feeding a cycle of stagnation.

This pattern is consistent with what real estate developer and scholar Christopher B. Leinberger has described as the phenomenon of the “favored quarter.” Leinberger observes that in many metropolitan areas, decisions about the geographic allocation of resources made decades in the past are reinforced and repeated. Once an area receives resources and attention from the government and private sector, Leinberger argues, future investment tends to follow in the same location, reinforcing its head start and leaving other areas farther behind.

The evolution of the I-270 corridor as the “favored quarter” and accompanying limits on development in the East county were not the sole—or even the most important—cause of the racial and economic divide between the eastern and western part of the county. The logic of the favored quarter, however, was and is a significant factor in reinforcing disparities in access to investment, infrastructure, and services as well as the concentration of poverty and diminished access to opportunity.

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While the potential for displacement must always be considered—and monitoring and addressing dislocation caused by rising real estate values must be part of this Plan—by the same token public and private investment are essential to expanding economic opportunity for people and communities that have been left behind or economically and socially isolated. By focusing investment and encouraging development along corridors in the East county, this Plan will help to establish the foundation for Complete Communities and create a more prosperous and equitable future in all parts of the county.

Compact Growth and Environmental Performance: Improved Air and Water Quality with More Efficient Use of Land

Among the most clear-cut benefits of the efficient use of land, including compact corridor- focused growth together with reinforcement of the rural pattern outside of the corridors, is to make development more environmentally sustainable in general and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in particular. By concentrating development in a limited footprint, corridor-centered growth can facilitate walking, biking, and transit use and reduce emissions from motor vehicles. A compact form of development reduces driving even among people who continue to rely on cars, because trip distances are likely to decline as a wider range of needs can be met within a short distance, reducing vehicle miles traveled.