



## THE OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Jeremy V. Criss  
*Director*

September 28, 2022

Gabe Alborno, President  
Hans Riemer, Chair,  
Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee (PHED)  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050 PHED Draft--The PHED Recommendations

Dear President Alborno, Chair Riemer, and Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture-OAG, please accept this letter with our thoughts on the PHED Committee's recommendations for the PHED Draft - Thrive Montgomery 2050.

The Agricultural Reserve was created in 1981 to establish a preferred area for farming as the primary use. The OAG does not believe the PHED's recommendation to "manage it to maintain a rural pattern of development for the benefit of the entire county" (PHED draft, p. 22) is consistent with, and will fulfill the legislative spirit and intent of the Master Plan that established the Agricultural Reserve to protect farmland and agriculture. Rather, the PHED draft should recommend, "Preserve farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve." It should also either remove references to "outdoor recreation" (pgs. 18, 23) and "tourism" (p. 23) or add language to make clear that land set aside for farms and rural open space will not be turned into playing fields or tourist attractions that displace farms and open space with development, and that recreation refers to passive recreational activities, like walking, hiking, picnicking, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, or nature photography.

The new General Plan should recognize the economic significance of the Agricultural Reserve as well as its role to help address the impacts of climate change and its contributions to the food and water supplies. The new General Plan should provide policy and program recommendations that reinforce the importance of the Reserve and provide critical support for the success of farming and agricultural operations in Montgomery County. The County's scenic vistas of working farms, pick-your-own fruit farms, wineries, breweries, bike routes, and water resources need your continued support.

We ask that you do not support the PHED Committee's recommendations on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 that pertain to the Agricultural Reserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy V. Criss". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jeremy V. Criss, Director