

MEMORANDUM

July 12, 2021

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

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SUBJECT: Thrive Montgomery 2050

PURPOSE: Worksession to begin the review of the Planning Board Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan

This is the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee's first worksession on the Planning Board's Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan. It is intended to lay the groundwork for the Committee's review of the General Plan update. It has been more than a decade since the Council reviewed an amendment to the General Plan¹ and almost thirty years since a wholesale revision has been considered.² This worksession will explain what a General Plan is, what elements it should include, and how it differs from an area master plan or functional master plan. It will also look at the structure of the 1964, 1969, and 1993 plans and consider the content of recent award-winning comprehensive plans.

What is a General Plan?

In short, the General Plan is a guide for land use and development in Montgomery County. According to the 1993 General Plan Refinement: "The General Plan is a comprehensive framework for guiding physical development and managing limited resources. It is a policy document whose concepts are general in nature. As the County's longest-range and most visionary document, it provides a broad image of how the County will evolve in the future and establishes a frame of reference for decisions to make that vision become a reality."

The General Plan provides a basis for the more specific area master plans and functional plans. In turn, each master plan, sector plan, and functional master plan, after approval by the County Council and adoption by the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), constitutes an amendment to the General Plan.

¹ An update to the Housing Element of the General Plan was adopted in 2011.

² The 1993 General Plan Refinement of the Goal and Objectives for Montgomery County.

The State of Maryland, Land Use Article defines all plans (comprehensive, general, master, and functional) as a guide³ for an area's future development. The Land Use Article requires each planning commission to review and, if necessary, to amend their comprehensive plan at least once every 10 years; however, the Land Use Article also allows the commission to prepare "comprehensive plans for one or more geographic sections or divisions of the local jurisdiction if the plan for each geographic section or division is reviewed and, if necessary, revised or amended at least once every 10 years", treating area master plans and functional plans as updates to the comprehensive plan. However, Section 1-417 of the Land Use Article requires that the County ensure its adopted plans and implementation mechanisms, such as zoning laws and other local land use regulations and provisions, are consistent with the comprehensive plan.

What should it contain?

So, if a general or comprehensive plan is a broad policy framework designed to guide future land use and development, what should it contain?

The 1964 Plan

The first General Plan for Montgomery County, *On Wedges and Corridors, a General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District*, adopted in 1964, was arranged in three parts: The Plan, Carrying Out the Plan, and Trends and Alternatives. Below is the list of chapters under each part, showing the breadth of information and analyses considered in the first General Plan.

Part I: The Plan

1. Goals
2. The Urban Pattern (identifying corridor cities)
3. The Rural Pattern
4. Public Services (including transportation, utilities, parks, and public facilities)

Part II: Carrying Out the Plan

5. Zoning
6. Tax Policies
7. Subdivision Controls
8. Park and Open Space Acquisition
9. Natural Resources Advisory Committee
10. Urban Renewal
11. Community Appearance Advisory Committee
12. Unifying Government Affairs
13. A Vigorous Planning Program

Part III: Trends and Alternatives

14. The Trends
15. The Alternatives

The 1969 Plan

Only five years later, the Plan was updated. According to the 1969 General Plan Update, part of the revision process included organizing the policy statements in "On Wedges and Corridors" (as well as those in area master plans) in a more systematic and logical manner. All policy statements found in the 1964 General Plan and in any of the adopted area master plans up to that time were extracted and grouped under the following headings, referred to as "elements" of the General Plan:

³ Containing the policies, statements, goals, and interrelated plans for private and public land use, transportation, and community facilities, documented in texts and maps.

- I. Land Use
 - (a) General
 - (b) Living Areas
 - (c) Employment Areas
 - (d) Community Facilities
 - (e) Agricultural, Open Space, Parks and Recreational
- II. Circulation
- III. Conservation
- IV. Environmental
- V. Housing

Each element contained policies statements classified as general goals to be accomplished, objectives leading to their accomplishment, and guidelines noting specific courses of action to satisfy each objective.

The 1993 Plan

The General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County, adopted in 1993, amends the 1964 Plan and the 1969 Plan, providing a total replacement of the goals and objectives contained in the earlier plans. It is organized into two chapters as follows:

1. Vision for the Future
 - Definition of the General Plan
 - Impetus for the General Plan
 - Legislative History of the General Plan
 - General Plan Refinement Adoption Process
 - Guiding Principles of the General Plan Refinement⁴
 - Consistency with the Maryland Planning Act of 1992
 - Geographic Components of the General Plan Refinement⁵
 - Challenges of Implementing the General Plan
 - Conclusion
2. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies
 - Introduction
 - Land Use: (the following sections appear under each of the elements below)
 - Scope
 - Key Concepts
 - Changes from 1969 Plan
 - Interrelationship with other Goals
 - Goals, Objectives & Strategies
 - Housing
 - Employment/Economic Activity
 - Transportation
 - Environment
 - Community Identity and Design
 - Regionalism

⁴ Including: Wedges and Corridors Concept; Master and Sector Plans; Physically Concentrated Centers; Community Identity; Transit Serviceability; Compatibility; Variety and Choice in Housing, Jobs, and Transportation; Resource Management; Environmental Protection; and Public Investment.

⁵ Including: the Urban Ring, the Corridor; the Suburban Communities; and the Wedge - the Residential Wedge and the Agricultural Wedge.

The Maryland State Land Use Article

According to the Land Use Article, a comprehensive or general plan should include the following elements: a development regulations element; a housing element; a sensitive areas element; a transportation element; and a water resources element.⁶

In addition, local jurisdictions are required to include the following twelve visions⁷ in their comprehensive plan and implement them through zoning ordinances and regulations:

1. **Quality of Life and Sustainability:** A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.
2. **Public Participation:** Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.
3. **Growth Areas:** Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically-selected new centers.
4. **Community Design:** Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archaeological resources.
5. **Infrastructure:** Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally-sustainable manner.
6. **Transportation:** A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.
7. **Housing:** A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
8. **Economic Development:** Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged.
9. **Environmental Protection:** Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.
10. **Resource Conservation:** Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.
11. **Stewardship:** Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
12. **Implementation:** Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, State, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.

It's easy to see several consistent elements across the three plans/updates and the elements required under the Land Use Article, such as transportation, land use, the environment and conservation, community design, and housing. Elements contained/required in more than one document (but not all) include economic development/activity, public facilities/funding, and regionalism.

⁶ If current geological information is available, the plan should also include a mineral resources element. The plan may include a priority preservation area element developed in accordance with Section 2-518 of the Agriculture Article.

⁷ Adopted in 2009 under Maryland's Planning Visions law.

American Planning Association Award-Winning Plans

For decades, the County’s *On Wedges and Corridor Plan* has been touted as a seminal comprehensive plan. In the interest of seeing what current-day award-winning comprehensive plans look like, Council staff reviewed winners of the Daniel Burnham Award for National Planning Excellence. The award honors a comprehensive or general plan that advances the science and art of planning. The award is named in honor of one of America’s most famous planners, Daniel Burnham, for his contributions to the planning profession and to a greater awareness of the benefits of good planning.

Winners of the award for the past 5 years include:

| Year | Name of the Plan | City or County |
|------|--|-------------------|
| 2021 | Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth | Richmond, VA |
| 2020 | Memphis 3.0 Comprehensive Plan | Memphis, TN |
| 2019 | Kaua’i Kakou, Kaua’i County General Plan | Kaua’i, HI |
| 2018 | planokc | Oklahoma City, OK |
| 2017 | Plano Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan | Plano, TX |

1. **Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth**

A. Population 2021: approx. 233,000

B. Vision: Richmond 300 provides a citywide vision for 2037 (the 300th birthday of the City). It provides detailed descriptions of the core concepts that drive three important maps depicting Nodes, Future Land Use, and Future Connections, referenced throughout the document. The vision and core concepts make up 60 pages out the 203 page plan.

C. Elements of the Plan: The plan is organized around five topic areas:

- High-Quality Places includes recommendations related to
 - land use,
 - public facilities and public land,
 - historic preservation,
 - urban design, and
 - public engagement.
- Equitable Transportation includes recommendations related to
 - transportation planning,
 - vision zero,
 - bike/pedestrian/transit infrastructure,
 - streets, and
 - emerging mobility.
- Diverse Economy includes recommendations related to
 - growing, retaining, and attracting businesses,
 - tourism, and
 - anchor institutions.
- Inclusive Housing includes recommendations related to housing.

- Thriving Environment includes recommendations related to
 - clean air,
 - clean water, and
 - resilient communities.

D. Growth Scenarios: The Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA) at Virginia Commonwealth University developed three growth scenarios (moderate, strong, and aggressive), providing housing, land use, and population projections for 2037. These scenarios guided the development of the land use recommendations and map.

E. Maps: Richmond 300 consists of both written policy recommendations and maps, which the plan stresses should be used together when making decisions. The Nodes Map shows places in Richmond that can either accommodate additional growth in jobs and population or are major activity centers today and should be preserved/enhanced. There is also a Future Land Use Map and a map of Future Connections.

F. Outreach: At the first phase of outreach, for visioning, 1,558 people (at 40 existing community meetings and 7 open houses) participated and 1,030 survey responses were received. At the second outreach phase, for recommendations, 2,014 people (at 62 existing meetings, 21 sharing sessions and 7 forums) participated, and 1,015 survey responses, 612 comments on draft maps and strategies, 20 letters and emails were received. Last, during the third phase of outreach, on the draft plan, 1,187 people (at 23 existing meetings and 16 summits) participated, and 1,137 comments on the draft plan as well as 90 letters and emails were received.

G. Unique: Richmond 300 lists “6 Big Moves” for implementation. Noting that the sheer breadth and length of any comprehensive plan can make it difficult to execute, the plan outlines 6 Big Moves to advance over the next 5 years. They include rewriting the Zoning Ordinance, reimagining priority growth nodes, expanding housing opportunities, providing greenways & parks for all, reconnecting the city, and realigning city facilities. Each “move” lists key benefits of the “move”, indicates how it aligns with the vision and goals of other parts of the plan, and provides action steps that include lead agencies and timeframes for completion.

Richmond 300 also includes the results of a “Pandemic Survey”. The Department of Planning and Development Review hosted a questionnaire from April to August 2020 to gather ideas from more than 500 respondents on how the pandemic may change how they live in Richmond.

2. Memphis 3.0 Comprehensive Plan

A. Population 2021: approx. 651,000

B. Vision: Memphis 3.0, the City’s Comprehensive Plan for the next 20 years, lays the foundation for its vision and three plan elements in community values: that land is a valuable asset, that greater community connectedness and access are a priority, and that historically disadvantaged communities must gain greater access to resources and opportunities.

C. Elements of the Plan

The plan elements of Land, Connectivity, and Opportunity provide the framework for eight goals designed to describe the future condition of the City. Each goal is followed by several objectives, providing more detail and measurable desired outcomes. In turn, each objective is supported by a series of recommended actions to be considered in the short, medium, or long term.

- Land
 - Complete, Cohesive Communities
 - Vibrant Civic Spaces
 - Sustainable and Resilient Communities.
- Connectivity
 - High Performing Infrastructure
 - Connected Corridors and Communities.
- Opportunity
 - Equitable Opportunities
 - Prosperous and Affordable Communities
 - Engaged Communities.

D. Growth Scenarios: To guide community discussions, three scenarios of future growth were developed – Trend; Core and Corridors; and Neighborhood Centers. Scenario maps organized growth allocations in each planning district into four tiers: very low, low, medium, and high. The growth scenario exercise provided a guiding framework for the manner in which the plan process initiated the development of the focus on anchors and the Future Land Use Planning Map.

E. Maps: The plan provides several maps: a map of anchors; a map showing the degree a change surrounding each anchor; a Future Land Use map; and maps showing street and transit network. Each of these maps was produced for each district within the City of Memphis.

F. Outreach: More than 15,000 Memphians directly participated in the plan process in some form – by attending a community meeting, taking a survey, or serving as a community outreach partner.

G. Unique: Memphis 3.0 includes a section titled “Using the Plan”. It includes district-specific priorities that are based on major issues identified by the community that should be resolved over time. In addition to the priority list by district, several district-specific maps show connections within the district and from the district to the city as a whole.

3. Kaua’i Kakou: Kaua’i County General Plan

A. Population 2021: approx. 72,500

B. Vision: Kakou means “working together”. The 2035 vision presented in Kaua’i Kakou is centered around four over-arching goals - a sustainable island, a unique and beautiful place, a healthy resilient people, and an equitable place with opportunity for all. To support these goals, the Plan lays out nineteen polices to articulate the county’s direction and priorities in accommodating and managing future growth.

C. Elements of the Plan

- **Future Land Use**
A primary focus of the Plan is on future land use. It lists eight objectives for future land use planning and decisions and describes twelve land uses that are applied to each of six districts that make up Kaua'i.
- **Sectors for Action**
Objectives and actions are categorized into 10 sectors, representing important areas to be addressed when planning Kaua'i's growth and development. The sectors are:
 - Watershed
 - Housing
 - Land Transportation
 - Critical Infrastructure
 - Shared Spaces
 - Economy
 - Heritage Resources
 - Energy Sustainability and Climate Change Mitigation
 - Public Safety and Health Resiliency
 - Opportunity and Health for All.

D. Growth Scenarios: Early in the planning process a Land Use Buildout Analysis was conducted which examined two growth scenarios for the island, directed growth and status quo, that also factored in socioeconomic projections by Planning District. The growth scenarios helped in development of the Future Land Use map.

E. Maps: The Plan provides a Future Land Use map which includes growth allocations by Planning District based on housing unit demand from 2010-2035 and estimates of job growth from 2020-2035.

F. Outreach: The public engagement process was broken into three phases: (1) visioning; (2) policy and land use outreach; and (3) Discussion Draft outreach. During each phase, public engagement efforts were conducted island-wide and at different locations to ensure a diverse range of people participated in the process. During the 32 months of public outreach, the team reached over 100,000 people.

G. Unique: Under each objective in the Sectors for Action section of the Plan, actions are categorized as one of the following: a permitting or code change; a plan or study; a project and program; or a partnership need. The Plan also establishes a biennial monitoring process using performance measures reporting on the 19 policies and a system to track action implementation.

4. planokc

A. Population 2021: approx. 669,000

B. Vision: planokc is Oklahoma City's first new comprehensive plan since 1977. It provides long-range policy direction for land use, transportation, economic development, housing, public services, and natural and cultural resources. The vision for planokc is rooted in seven "big ideas": develop a transportation system that works for everyone; increase housing choice and diversity for all lifestyles; build an urban environment that facilitates health and

wellness; develop great places that attract people and catalyze development and innovation; ensure stable, safe, attractive, and vibrant neighborhoods; develop efficiently to achieve fiscal sustainability and improve our quality of life; and preserve rural character and natural resources.

C. Elements of the Plan: planokc is organized around nine chapters covering:

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Communities
- Preservation, Appearance and Culture
- Parks and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Public Services.

Each chapter starts with “our situation” – providing context for the goals and initiatives that follow. For each initiative, the Plan includes a cross-reference of all the goals it helps to achieve.

D. Growth Scenarios: Three future land use and transportation scenarios were created for the year 2050: Scenario A (past trends continue), Scenario B (trends + market + efficiency), and Scenario C (market + efficiency + revitalization). By 2050 Oklahoma City is projected to have gained approximately 312,000 new residents and 172,000 new jobs. While all scenarios assumed the same number of future residents and jobs, each had important differences related to how future housing and employment centers would be distributed across the landscape. Citizens were presented with a series of benefits and trade-offs about quality of life characteristics available in each scenario.

E. Maps: planokc uses maps to convey many of the elements of the Plan. There are scenario maps, land typology maps, and maps showing the supply of land, sewer and water service, forested areas, and street typologies.

F. Outreach: According to the plan, in all, over 20,000 people participated in the public engagement process.

G. Unique: In an attempt gauge the effectiveness of the major planokc components as they relate to community health in Oklahoma City, a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) was completed to evaluate the potential for various citywide development patterns to influence opportunities related to health.

5. Plano Tomorrow

A. Population 2021: approx. 286,000

B. Vision: Plano Tomorrow is the city’s long range guide for the future growth, priorities, services, development, and redevelopment of the city. Plano Tomorrow is based on five pillars: the built environment, the social environment, the natural environment, the economic environment, and regionalism. Within these five pillars the Plan lays out 10 key components under which the goals, challenges, and actions of the Plan are referenced.

C. Elements of the Plan: The 10 key components designed to support the 5 pillars are:

- Land Use & Community Design
- Transportation
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Quality of Life
- Sense of Community
- Building & Site Efficiency
- Environmental Quality
- Diverse & Resilient Economy
- Jobs & Workforce Development
- Our Place in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region.

Within these 10 components, there are 41 policies and over 270 action statements.

D. Growth Scenarios: In developing the Land Use and Transportation components of the plan, three scenarios (proactive growth and redevelopment, moderate growth and redevelopment, and no growth nor redevelopment) were developed to evaluate the impact of changes in land use on the transportation network.

E. Maps: The plan posts several supportive maps (including a future land use map, a bicycle transportation map, a map showing parks, and one showing growth and change) that are linked to each of the 10 components of the plan. Readers are encouraged to consider the policies and supportive maps in concert with one another to realize the full nature of the plan.

F. Outreach: The plan was developed after 26 months of public engagement that reached more than 4,000 individuals through surveys, open houses, and on-site meetings and received more than 20,000 comments and ideas.

G. Unique: Plano Tomorrow is the first web-based comprehensive plan in Texas. It contains numerous interactive components to help residents engage. Main sections of the plan are in video format instead of text and graphics. Note: The plan is currently on hold due to litigation by 5 residents who believed the plan makes it too easy for the city to approve the development of multifamily buildings.

What do these plans have in common?

1. They all provide a thorough vision for the future, laying out core concepts, values, goals, pillars or “big ideas” as a foundation. They provide context in their history, where they are today **and** what they expect for their future. All reference community input in the formation of their vision.
2. They all specify particular elements (such as land use, transportation, housing, the environment) under which a hierarchy of goals, objectives, and actions (or initiatives) provide a guide for implementation and future decisions.
3. Land use is a prominent element of each plan, having its own section or chapter which includes a Future Land Use map.

4. Growth Scenario planning was referenced in all plans. Scenario maps were used to inform the development of the Future Land Use Map.
5. Maps are a prominent feature in all plans, providing geographic illustrations of conditions (past, current, and future) and policy recommendations.
6. Outreach efforts were successful in engaging thousands of participants; in some cases this represented an impressive percentage of residents based on the population of the jurisdiction.

Upcoming Reviews

A worksession is tentatively scheduled for July 21 to cover any material remaining from this worksession or, if needed, to cover any requested follow-up items.

A third worksession is scheduled for July 26. Council staff suggests the Committee start with the General Plan vision. After that, each worksession can be organized around a specific element in the Plan. This will provide the Committee with an opportunity to discuss not only the recommended goals, objectives, and related actions associated with each element but also an opportunity to evaluate the broader structure of the Plan and each element.