



Committee: PHED
Committee Review: Completed
Staff: Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst
Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #Thrive, Montgomery 2050, M-NCPPC

AGENDA ITEM #2A
October 25, 2022
Action

SUBJECT

Action to approve the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan resolution.

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Tanya Stern, Deputy Director, Planning Department
Khalid Afzal, Special Projects Manager, Planning Department
Caroline McCarthy, Chief, Research and Strategic Projects, Planning Department

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan resolution which includes the Council's amendments to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee draft plan.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Upon completion of its review on October 25, 2021, the PHED Committee Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 was posted on the Council's website and is the basis for the Council's review of the plan. The Council held two listening sessions on the PHED Committee draft plan. One on November 30, and another on December 14, 2021.

On February 15, 2022, the County Council held its first worksession on the PHED Committee Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. After being briefed by the Office of Legislative Oversight regarding an equity analysis of the plan, the Council approved additional outreach and assistance with a racial equity and social justice review of the Plans recommendations.

On March 1, June 21, September 13, and September 20, 2022, the Council received updates and briefings regarding this effort. On September 22, October 4 and 11, 2022, the County Council held four more worksessions to review the PHED Committee Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Attached is a resolution approving the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. The resolution is consistent with the Council discussions, and the recommendations of the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- A summary of Council amendments to the PHED Committee Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan are on ©1-5

- The resolution for action to adopt the Council amended Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan is on ©28-94.
- A “clean” copy of the Council amended Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan can be found at: [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/2022/Draft%20for%20Resolution%20-%20Thrive%202050%20clean%2010 17 22.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/2022/Draft%20for%20Resolution%20-%20Thrive%202050%20clean%2010%2017%2022.pdf)

This report contains:

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Staff Report	1
Council Amendments to the PHED Committee Draft Plan	©1-5
Letters from Maryland Department of Planning dated 11/20 and 10/21	©6-27
Resolution to approve the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan	©28-94
County Executive letter dated October 20, 2022	©95-99

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MEMORANDUM

October 20, 2022

TO: County Council

FROM: Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst
Gene Smith, Legislative Analyst
Keith Levchenko, Senior Legislative Analyst
Selena Mendy Singleton, Racial Equity and Social Justice Manager
Dr. Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst

SUBJECT: Thrive Montgomery 2050

PURPOSE: Action to adopt Thrive Montgomery 2050

Last week the Council held its final worksession on Thrive Montgomery 2050, addressing comments received from Executive Branch Departments and follow up items requested regarding the three new chapters. The Council also reviewed a summary of their proposed amendments to the PHED Committee Draft. Attached on ©1-5 is a list of Council amendments to the PHED Committee Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Attached on ©6-27 are two letters received from the Maryland Department of Planning regarding compliance with State Law. Revisions to Appendix A incorporated suggested edits from the State such as adopting into the plan by reference several current plans, guidelines, and assessments, including the 2021 Environmental Guidelines¹ and the 2020 Housing Needs Assessment², for example.

The Council amended Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan also contains corrections and non-substantive edits for clarity, consistency, and readability. It should be noted that graphics, photographs, maps (with the exception of the 2050 Growth Map), tables, and charts will be updated and added to ensure relevant placement, headings, and references following adoption of the plan.

¹ <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-Environmental-Guidelines-Approved.pdf>

² <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MoCo-HNA-July-2020.pdf>

Council Amendments to the PHED Committee Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050

Introduction

- Clarified the relevance of the general plan to the municipalities that have land use planning and zoning authority.
- Added paragraphs describing relationship of general plan to master plans and functional plans.
- Confirmed adding 1993 Map for reference to the Plan.
- Revised section on outreach, removing references to data on meetings and adding an explanation of the further outreach conducted during the Committee and Council review.
- Concurred with adding text that notes the importance of participatory planning.

Economic Competitiveness

- Added this chapter to highlight the importance of economic development and competitiveness, expressing its relationship to future planning efforts, and its foundation as an overarching objective of the plan.
- Council staff and Planning staff collaborated on the text of this chapter; the Council did not have any additional edits.

Racial Equity and Social Justice

- Added this chapter to highlight the importance of racial equity and social justice, expressing its relationship to past, current, and future planning, and its foundation as an overarching objective of the plan.
- Nspiregreen provided a draft of this chapter to the Council based on their expertise in planning and engagement of under-represented communities. The Council amended this chapter as noted below.
- Added section with information on fair housing and tenants' rights and protections.
- Added more information on social justice and education and access to education.
- Added text to include current Montgomery County data on displacement and concentration of poverty.
- Added information on other County programs aimed at improving social justice.
- Noted other positive benefits or opportunities as a result of growth.
- Added policies and practices to help address the concerns related to congestion pricing and reduced parking expressed by focus group participants.
- Added reference to County programs and efforts to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing.

Environmental Health and Resilience

- Added this chapter to highlight the importance of environmental health and resilience, expressing its relationship to future planning efforts, and its foundation as an overarching objective of the plan.

- Council staff and Planning staff collaborated on the text of this chapter; the Council amended this chapter as noted below.
- Added information on the importance of the Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay, and County water resources.
- Added text noting that other environmental policies which will need to be considered in the context of future master planning efforts and other County land-use decisions.

Compact Growth

- Concurred with removing Darnestown from the 2050 Growth Map and concur with White Flint being renamed North Bethesda.
- Concurred with shading corridor-focused growth and limited growth areas of the map to depict the expected natural changes in density from corridor-focused growth areas to suburban areas to rural communities. The Plan will include the shaded 2050 Growth Map with the two corrections outlined above.
- Concurred with ensuring that the term “activity center” and references to it are used in a consistent manner throughout the draft.
- Added a practice to “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 redevelopment.”

Complete Communities

- Added a reference to Maryland’s Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 (Senate Bill 236) as a footnote.
- Added a reference to “parks and public space” as part of Complete Communities where referenced.
- Concurred with adding a reference to Community Benefit Agreements.
- Added a safeguard to minimize displacement as follows: “Prioritize neighborhood-level land use planning as a tool to enhance overall quality of community life and avoid reinforcing outdated land use patterns, with particular attention to preventing displacement.”
- Added a practice to support neighborhood stabilization for communities of color.
- Added text and the following practice acknowledging development and redevelopment should be done minimizing any associated negative environmental impacts, “Develop strategies to ensure that infill and redevelopment does not result in negative environmental consequences such as increased stormwater run-off, loss of tree canopy, and the expansion of heat islands.”

Design, Arts, and Culture

- Added a sentence to indicate the need for flexible design to support adaptive reuse.
- Added a practice to “Support the preservation of historic African American and Indigenous cultural sites and resources”.

- Added a practice to “Encourage investment in urban design and architecture that promotes safe communities and civic pride”.
- Added a practice to “Examine the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) or other standards in the development of Design Guidelines to encourage safe/welcoming public spaces”.
- Added a practice to “Promote the celebration of “Diversity Hubs” as places to reinforce inclusion”.

Transportation and Communication Networks

- Added text in several instances recognizing the need to address auto-mobility, especially where alternative modes are likely to have less effect.
- Added more explicit language promoting energy-efficient, zero-emission vehicles and the infrastructure needed to support them.
- Added text acknowledging that expanding demand-responsive transit service may be appropriate for certain areas and populations.
- Added references to micromobility where appropriate.
- Added text recognizing the need to consider equity in employment of pricing mechanisms and parking management.
- Added a practice to “Consider exemptions for policies such as congestion pricing and reduced parking for low-income individuals”.
- Added a practice under communication networks to “Support strategies and partnerships to address the “digital divide” and bring network resources to vulnerable communities”.

Housing

- Added a practice to “Support and strengthen housing code regulations and tenant protections to ensure healthy and fair housing.”
- Added a practice to “Examine options to expand housing access through the elimination of fair housing barriers and enforcement of fair housing laws to protect residents from discrimination.”
- Revised text regarding “over-housed” noting it may be a symptom of insufficient variety of housing types should a resident want to down-size.
- Revised text to highlight equity in efforts to increase affordable housing throughout the County, as follows “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.”
- Revised text related to Housing First as follows “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.”

- Added a practice to “Evaluate incentives and housing programs like the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program to align County housing programs, incentives, and tools with future housing needs.”
- Revised two practices to reinforce attention to the issue of displacement: “Develop targeted strategies to minimize gentrification and displacement while promoting integration and housing choice and avoiding a concentration of poverty.” And “Refine regulatory tools and financial and other incentives with the goal of minimizing displacement and avoiding a net loss of market-rate and income-restricted affordable housing stock without creating disincentives for the construction of additional units.
- Added a practice to Evaluate methods to maintain affordability in rental housing throughout the County.

Parks and Recreation

- The Council did not have any additional edits to this chapter.

Conclusion

- Added sections referencing compliance with State Planning requirements, and tools for implementation including master plans, functional plans, the zoning ordinance, the Capital Improvements Program, other regulations, and facility plans.
- Noted that the Action List of Resources submitted with the Planning Board Draft should be revised based on the Adopted Plan, and should include a section on indicators and metrics, using the measures of progress included at the end of each chapter to develop specific metrics. This supporting document should include detailed information on how the metric or indicator is measured, the agency responsible for collecting the associated data, the frequency the metric or indicator will be publicly reviewed and reported, and the frequency indicators and metrics will be evaluated to monitor their relevancy and use.

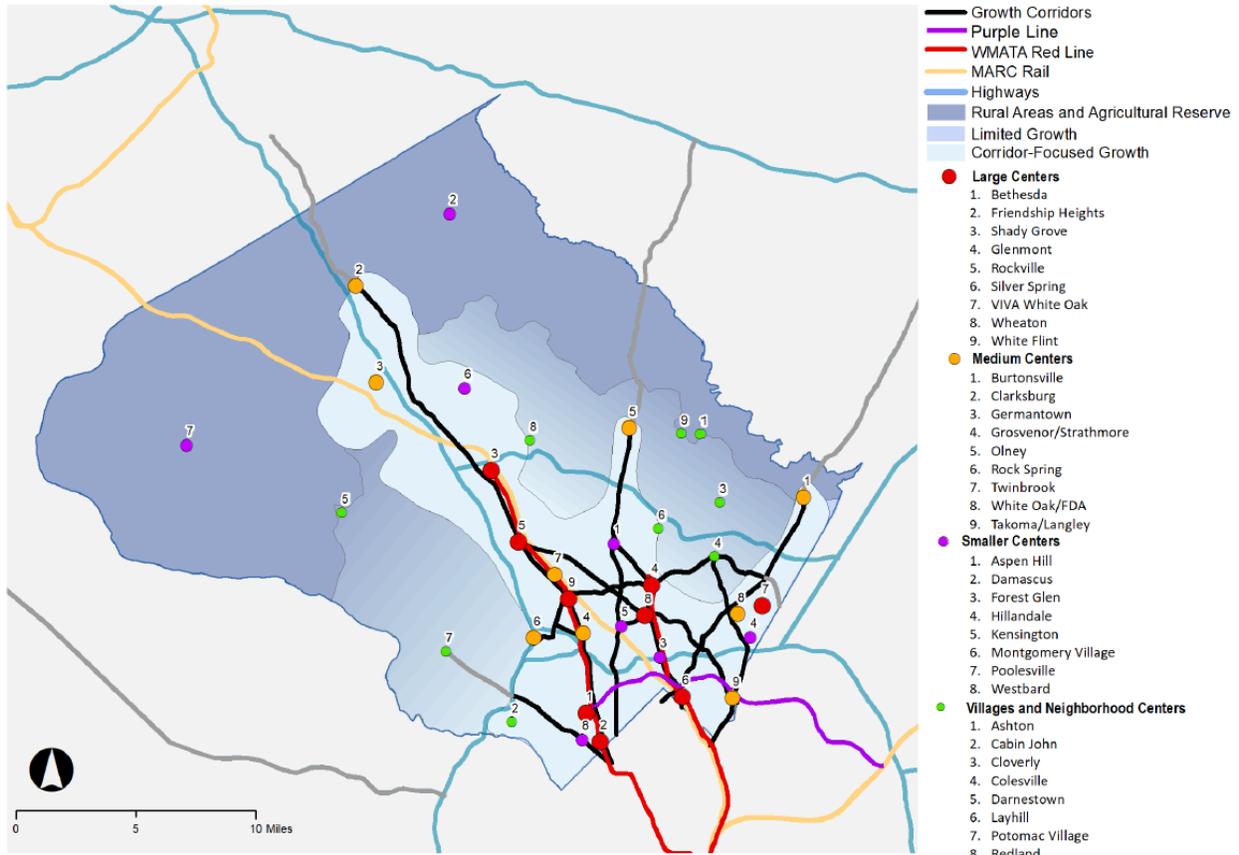
Appendix A:

- Updated information regarding Maryland’s 12 Planning Visions and clarified compliance with the State Land Use Article.

Appendix B: Glossary

- Updated defined terms, deleting a couple terms no longer referenced in the plan.

The Council draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 also contains corrections and non-substantive edits for clarity, consistency, and readability. In addition, the graphics (photographs, maps (with the exception of the 2050 Growth Map), tables, and charts) will be updated and added to the Adopted Plan ensuring relevant placement, headings, and references.



The Growth Map should be considered in the context of the Compact Growth and Complete Communities chapters. The centers of activity shown are not exhaustive of all existing or potential centers. Some of the centers listed on the growth map are not subject to Montgomery County zoning authority.

Two corrections: Village and Neighborhood Center #5 – Darnestown will be removed from the map, and Large Center #9 will be renamed North Bethesda.

November 6, 2020

Khalid Afzal
Special Project Manager
General Plan Update
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Thrive Montgomery County 2050 - Working Draft Plan and Implementation Guide

Dear Mr. Afzal:

Thank you for reaching out to Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) to provide comments on the Thrive Montgomery County 2050 Working Draft Plan (Draft Plan). It is our understanding that this Draft Plan is the basis for the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* Public Hearing Draft scheduled to be reviewed by the Montgomery County Planning Board on November 19, 2020 in public hearing.

As a charter county, a formal 60-day Clearinghouse review is not required. However, the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) agreed to facilitate informal comments to relevant state agencies. The plan was circulated to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT); Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE); Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce); Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD); Planning's Local Technical Assistance and Training, Resource Conservation and Infrastructure and Development Units; and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). Please see comments below from Planning separated by sections and the attached letters or e-mails that were received by the responding agencies. Any plan review comments received after the date of this letter will be forwarded upon receipt.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these comments, please email the Maryland Capital Regional Planner, Susan Llareus at susan.llareus@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Charles Boyd, AICP, Director
Planning Coordination

cc: Gwen Wright, Planning Director, Montgomery County
Tanya Stern, Deputy Planning Director, Montgomery County
Joseph Griffiths, Local Assistance and Training Manager, Maryland Department of Planning
Susan Llareus, Regional Planner for Maryland Capital Region, Maryland Department of Planning



**Maryland Department of Planning
Review Comments
November 2020**

Thrive Montgomery County 2050 - Working Plan and Implementation Guide

The Thrive Montgomery County 2050 Working Plan (Draft Plan) was sent to the Technical Advisory Group with a request to solicit comments from The Maryland Department of Planning (Planning). Planning received the Draft Plan on September 25, 2020 and sent the Draft Plan and the Implementation Guide to numerous state agencies for comment on September 29, 2020. These comments are offered as suggestions to improve the Draft Plan and better address the statutory requirements of the Land Use Article (LUA). Other state agencies, as noted below, have also contributed comments. Still others may have comments submitted under separate cover. If comments from other agencies are subsequently received by Planning, they will be forwarded to the city in a timely manner.

Summary of the Draft General Plan

The Draft Plan is a full rewrite of The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) (1964) and the Refinement of The General Plan (1993) and all associated amendments. The Abstract identifies the intent to include within the text and its supporting maps, amendments to the 2013 County-wide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, as amended; the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, as amended; The Purple Line Functional Plan, as amended; the Master Plan of Historic Preservation as amended; and the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan, as amended. Planning notes here and below that the Water Resource Plan (2010) is a required element and should be referenced as part of the final General Plan.

Overall, the Draft Plan, combined with the Implementation Guide, is an outstanding working draft of the general plan that addresses the many complex and competing influences that will impact the future of Montgomery County. In particular, the Draft Plan sets forth policies to achieve the county's "Three Overarching Outcomes" of Equity, Economic Health, and Environmental Resiliency. These themes are consistently intertwined throughout the document. Discussions on issues and challenges reveal how these three components of a community can be influenced through land use planning goals, policies, and actions. Below are statements summarizing the issues and challenges affecting the community at large:

Rationale and Context (p.31)

- "Weak wage and job growth....";
- "Persistent racial and economic inequalities";
- "Significant demographic shifts....";
- "Social changes...."; and
- "Dramatic shifts from technological innovation and climate change"

The Draft Plan is heavy on policy and will lead the way in planning for the county with a 30-year horizon. It sets a vision for the county and encompasses broad, county-wide land use policy recommendations for elements, including land use, zoning, housing, the economy, equity, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, and historic resources. These recommendations will provide guidance for the

development of future master plans, functional plans, sector plans, county capital improvement processes, and other public and private initiatives that influence land use and planning in the county.

Prior to the development the subject Draft Plan, Montgomery County (county) has adopted numerous functional plans, master plans and sector plans, as can be found on the following two websites:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/countywide/> (updated September 2020)

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/master-plan-list/> (updated April 2020).

Minimum State Law Requirements for Charter Counties

Division II of the LUA, Title 21, Regional District Plan, Subtitle 1, Section 21-104(a)(3) states the requirement for certain elements within a general plan and applies to Montgomery County. A planning commission must implement the Maryland State Visions through the general plan, as discussed in the subheading below, Maryland State Visions. Sections 406(a) and (b) of this article require the inclusion of the certain elements within the general plan. Finally, the plan must incorporate comprehensive plan growth tiers, if the jurisdiction adopted growth tiers in accordance with Section 1-502 of the Land Use Article.

Section 21-104 (a) Required elements. – The general plan and any amendment to the general plan shall contain:

(3) the elements required under Title 1, Subtitle 4 of this article.

Title 1, Subtitle 4, § 1-406. Elements – Charter counties

(a) Required elements. --

(1) The planning commission for a charter county shall include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:

(i) a development regulations element;

(ii) a housing element;

(iii) a sensitive areas element;

(iv) a transportation element; and

(v) a water resources element.

(2) If current geological information is available, the plan shall include a mineral resources element.

(b) Permissive element. – The planning commission for a charter county may include in the plan a priority preservation area element developed in accordance with § 2-518 of the Agriculture Article.

Maryland State Visions (Section 1-414 of the Land Use Article)

The Draft Plan provides its vision statements on pages 45-46, *The Plan Visions*. This section explains the concepts of retaining the original Wedges and Corridors land use planning of the 1964 General Plan and its subsequent amendments (1993)(2011) by envisioning complete communities connected by multimodal transportation systems and parks, stream valleys, and nature trails. The county plans to encourage future housing growth within existing communities where goods and services are available, and around transit stations. The Draft Plan's ten visions on page 46 are listed and explained in detail. Those visions promote urban character, affordability, connectivity, active lifestyles, safety, inclusivity, flexibility, resiliency, competitiveness, and inspiring the community at large.

Planning believes the Draft Plan has successfully addressed the 12 State Visions, as explained starting on page 143, within Appendix C. The county's visions correlate with the language set forth in the state's visions. The commonalities of the state and the county visions are evident; the county's eight visions are linked to the state's visions. Planning provides additional examples of how the commonalities could be emphasized:

- a.) The state has set forth as its first vision a high quality of life and clean land, water, and air for environmentally sustainability communities throughout Maryland. That vision combined with the resource, and environmental protection visions of the state are parallel the county's vision as stated in the Resilient Community Chapter.
- b.) The state envisions public participation in the general planning process. Montgomery county's public participation process has been phenomenal, and Planning suggests that the process be documented in the final Draft Plan through incorporation or as an appendix.
- c.) The Draft Plan's emphasis on the importance of growth areas occurring in the urban areas, utilizing existing infrastructure corresponds to the state's visions of growth areas, community design, and infrastructure.
- d.) The transportation vision of the state to include multimodal facilities has been sprinkled through-out the Draft Plan by de-emphasizing the automobile and putting more emphasis on other forms of transportation.
- e.) Locating housing near transportation hubs and convenience uses within neighborhoods, and the emphasis on transforming the physical environment to incorporated facilities to encourage walking and bicycling is included in the vision of a more active lifestyle for community residents.
- f.) The state's economic development and stewardship of community's visions are reflected in the county's vision of an economically competitive community.
- g.) The state's vision of housing for all income levels is reflected in the county's housing vision of promoting attainable, affordable, and suitable housing.

Maryland State Elements

Maryland’s Land Use Article sets forth the required components of a charter county comprehensive plan but does not mandate a specific format. As such, local governments have addressed these required elements in a manner that fits the needs of their community and the resources available to respond to the issues explored during the planning process. The following checklist indicates each required plan element and should be included in the Draft Plan, and the discussion that follows addresses how the Draft Plan adheres to these requirements.

Checklist of Maryland Code (Land Use Article)-Charter County Division II, Section 21-104(a) Required elements. (3) the elements required under Title 1, Subtitle 4 of this article.		
State Comprehensive Plan Requirements	MD Code Reference	Additional MD Code Reference
(1) The planning commission for a charter county shall include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:	L.U. § 1-406 (a)	
(i) a development regulations element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (i)	L.U. § 1-407 -- Development Regulations Element
(ii) a housing element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (ii)	L.U. § 1-407.1 -- Housing Element
(iii) a sensitive areas element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iii)	L.U. § 1-408 -- Sensitive Areas Element
(iv) a transportation element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iv)	L.U. § 1-409 -- Transportation Element
(v) a water resources element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (v)	L.U. § 1-410 -- Water Resources Element
(2) a mineral resources element, IF current geological information is available	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (2)	L.U. § 1-411 -- Mineral Resources Element
(b) A comprehensive plan for a charter county MAY include a priority preservation area (PPA) element	L.U. § 1-406 (b)	For PPA Requirements, see § 2-518 of the Agriculture Article
(4) Visions -- A county SHALL through the comprehensive plan implement the 12 planning visions established in L.U. § 1-201	L.U. § 1-414	L.U. § 1-201 -- Visions
(5) Growth Tiers -- If a county has adopted growth tiers in accordance with L.U. § 1-502, the growth tiers must be incorporated into the county's comprehensive plan	L.U. § 1-509	

Conformance to Section 1-406 (a) and (b) of the Land Use Article

The following is an analysis of the submitted Draft Plan regarding the required elements, as stated in the Land Use Article for a Charter County in accordance with Division II, Title 21, Section 104(a) Required elements.

- (1) The planning commission for a charter county shall include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:**

(i) a development regulations element;

The plan does not include a “development regulations element,” but many of the implementation actions in the plan reference the need to further analyze, and advance the goals and policies, in either the short, medium, or long terms, and may eventually lead to new legislation affecting the county regulatory tools. The second of these actions is to include the Action item 1.1.2(a) to “Review and revise the zoning categories and requirements of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance as needed to accommodate a variety of uses and densities within in complete communities.”(page 54) Planning recommends that the Implementation chapter also include an action to review and revise the Subdivision Regulations as needed to address the goals and policies of the general plan.

(ii) a housing element;

The passage of HB-1045 in 2019 requires a housing element in all comprehensive plans adopted after June 1, 2020. It should be noted the new law requires a comprehensive plan to address the need for low-income and workforce housing, using the definitions contained in §3–114 of the Land Use Article and §4–1801 of the Housing and Community Development Article. Since this General Plan will be adopted after June 1, 2020, Planning recommends that the county evaluate its Affordable & Attainability Chapter relating to the housing element (pages 88-93) for conformance to the requirements of HB-1045. The HB-1045 (2019) defines low-income households based on 60% of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Area Median Income (HUD AMI) and 60% - 120% HUD AMI for workforce households. Planning recommends that these definitions be included in the Draft Plan to clarify the terminology for the public. Planning notes that the Draft Plan includes a statistical analysis relating to the challenges of the future for the housing supply and demand. The Montgomery County Housing Needs Assessment, July 2020 does not appear to be referenced, but should be adopted by reference or included as an Appendix to the general plan.

Planning has developed Housing Element Models & Guidelines to address the recent legislation (HB-1045 [2019]), which is contained within the Maryland Department of Planning website as a tool for local jurisdictions. (Here is the link: <https://planning.maryland.gov/Pages/OurWork/housing-element-mg/housing-element-home.aspx>)

Planning notes that the Draft Plan includes an intent to move forward beyond the housing analysis contained within the Draft Plan relating to the policies and goals within, to achieve the Goal 5.1, under Policy 5.1.10 and Action 5.1.10:

“Create a housing Functional Master Plan to provide measurable housing goals and strategies for different market segments on Montgomery County as well as an analysis of affordable gaps and impediments to the housing supply.”

Planning commends the county for the success of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MDPU) program and its continued support to the program over the years to make it successful. Due to the county's robust growth rate, it is an appropriate tool to increase the supply of affordable housing. It would be beneficial to include statistics of the number of MDPU units that have been built over the life of the program and the time frame in which these units will continue to serve low-income residents. As the units reach their end of life and transition to market rate units in the next 10 years, those units may no longer be available. Providing a discussion in the Draft Plan of the termination process of affordable housing products is helpful information for the public to understand the future housing needs of the community at large.

Likewise, the implementation of the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) use in certain zones is commendable but may not always lead to affordable dwellings. Planning commends the county for recognition of this concept and the proposal to explore incentivizing the production of ADU's in the county, in exchange for limiting the rental cost. Specifically, Action 5.1.6.C highlights this concept:

"Explore the possibility of county offered low cost financing or financial assistance to homeowners who are willing to enter their ADU units into a deed restriction that restricts the rent."

(iii) a sensitive areas element;

Environmental resilience is one of three overarching outcomes of the Draft Plan, which commits to using the best strategies to "fight climate change". The Draft Plan defines "environmental resilience" as including food systems, property and infrastructure, rippling effects that hamper commerce and impose extra costs on businesses and residents, loss of species, and the disruption of natural ecosystems. (p. 35)

The Draft Plan incorporates climate change extensively throughout – noting that "...climate change in particular illustrate(s) the need to adapt land use and transportation planning to make Montgomery County more sustainable and resilient while protecting what we cherish and avoiding the consequences of sprawl." (pg. 6). Two concepts included in the plan that are emphasized as related to the impacts of climate change are equity and resilience. Consistently woven throughout the plan are actions and policies that include these concepts.

The plan advocates foundational concepts that have proven to be consistent over time to make places resilient and sustainable, including compact development and complete communities. The vision of the plan is for climate change to be factored into all land use and planning initiatives. The plan also notes that economic health is important and acknowledges the diverse and intertwined impacts of climate change.

In 2017, Montgomery County declared a Climate Emergency and began working on a Climate Action and Resilience Plan in 2019. *Thrive Montgomery 2050* works in tandem with that plan (which is slated to be complete in early 2021) and the county's planning framework will be adjusted to achieve environmental resilience. Policy 6.2.2 includes "incorporate[ing] recommendations from the county's Climate Action Plan. (p. 99); also "collaborate with regional partners to seek and implement climate change solutions that address GHG reduction and sequestration, adaptation actions, and strategies for creating more resilient communities. Use the latest tools and resources to assess the impacts of planning initiatives in addressing climate change."

Planning is pleased to see the county's proposed goals and policies that emphasize climate change:

- "...the most serious environmental and public health issue to confront our society...negative impacts of climate change and diverse and far-reaching: heat waves, increased storm frequency and intensity, flooding, stormwater runoff and stream erosion, urban heat island effects, droughts,

loss of species and habitat and many others.”

- “Public health issues are exacerbated by climate change”
- Vision for Healthy and Sustainable Environment includes “climate change is factored into all land use and planning initiatives resulting in highly resilient and adaptive natural and build environments.” (p.96)

The goals, policies, and actions in the Healthy and Sustainable chapter of the Draft Plan aligns with the sensitive area element of the LUA. Policies in the Healthy and Sustainable chapter promoting compact development, healthy food access, green infrastructure, forest conservation, and the protection of water resources align with the LUA Sensitive Areas requirements by promoting fresh, affordable fruit and vegetables through increasing opportunities for community gardens and urban farms, preserving and restoring green areas to support human life and a diversity of animal and plant life, increasing and enhancing tree canopy wetlands, and meadows through land acquisition, easements, habitat restoration, and ecosystem management, and protecting watersheds and aquifers and improved water quality and stream conditions through enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increased tree canopy, and green stormwater management.

The following list provides insight into the goals and actions of climate change and the methods that the county is considering relating to land use planning to address the process – through either adaptation, reduction or simply slowing its pace, in each of the chapters of below.

Healthy and Sustainable

- Goal 6.1 includes encouraging “active lifestyles to reduce our carbon footprint, mitigate climate change, and protect natural resources.” (p.98)
- Action 6.1.1.a – Develop urban environmental guidelines to incorporate green features and amenities in urban areas that will address climate change; provide cleaner air, water and shading, and cooling features; and improve human health. (p. 98)
- Goal 6.2: Mitigate, reduce, and adapt to climate change through land use and infrastructure that is more resilient to climate change and moves the county to a climate positive future. (p. 99)
- Action 6.2.1.a: Develop guidelines and standards for climate-sensitive design principles (p. 99)
- Action 6.2.1.b: Conduct a study to identify areas vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. (p. 99)
- Action 6.2.2.a: Develop incentives such as a carbon tax or fee to reduce GHG emissions (p. 99)
- Action 6.2.4.a – Create performance standards for utility infrastructure to mitigate and adapt to climate change and track the effectiveness of climate adaption strategies for infrastructure. (p. 100)
- Action 6.5.2.c: Study the County Forest Conservation Law and regulations.... including guidelines of native trees for inclusion in development and natural area protection projects that are resilience to climate change and support native wildlife, including pollinators. (p. 103)

Most importantly, the Draft Plan includes in the Diverse and Adaptable Growth chapter the connection to the land use policies, programs and regulations that allow for flexibility to address unanticipated issues surrounding sensitive environmental features including climate change relationships in the following policy:

- “Policy 7.3.1: Create flexible and adaptable land use policies, programs and regulations that allow the county to respond to unanticipated changes in technology, economy, climate change, and other factors by quickly updated the county’s regulator mechanisms.” (p. 110)

- Emphasizing the interrelatedness of the elements of land use planning, Planning finds it refreshing that the Draft Plan provides for a discussion of the climate change within the *Safe and Efficient Travel* chapter. For example, “We simply cannot be equitable, address climate change, and support a strong economy by building more roads.” (p. 72) The Draft Plan acknowledges that transit and walkability are key to addressing climate change – building more roads must be avoided.

Goal 4.9 states:

“Increase resilience of the transportation system to withstand future climate conditions and natural or human-made disasters.” (p. 80)

The policies under this goal provides for resiliency in the transportation system to withstand future climate conditions. Actions 4.9.2 and 4.9.3– Promote the integration of climate-adaptive, resilient design into transportation projects.

- “Action 4.9.2.a: Prepare a plan to develop, prioritize, and implement flood mitigation measures for existing flood-prone county transportation facilities based on vulnerability assessments and consideration of extreme precipitation events and sea level rise.”
- “Policy 4.9.3 – Design streetscape to mitigate disruption from climate change, manage stormwater effectively, and provide tree canopy for shade and habitat.”

(iv) a transportation element;

The *Safe and Efficient Travel* chapter addresses the transportation element as required in the LUA. Planning staff is pleased to see the county proposes a transformative and bold transportation vision and associated goals and policies that emphasize non-single-occupancy-vehicle (SOV) transportation such as transit, walking, and biking. These will also support various forms of compact development and preservation of the county’s agricultural and resource lands to help achieve the overarching “economic health, equity, and environmental resilience” outcomes. The Draft Plan effectively integrates planning issues such as safe and efficient travel with economics, equity, and environmental resilience.

Specific to transportation issues, page 73 provides a good summary of major challenges facing the county’s transportation system. Planning suggests that the Draft Plan also discuss how the county’s increasingly aging population (page 16) will impact the demands on and adaptability of its transportation network. The county should also consider a brief discussion of emerging transportation technologies such as shared transportation, zero emissions vehicles, and connected and automated vehicles. These issues and challenges will also influence the development of transportation goals and policies. The following is a listing of the page number followed by Planning comments relating to each goal, policy or action:

- Page 75 (Goal 4.1):
 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), a more frequent bus service for peak and non-peak periods, is different from a commuter/express bus service which focuses on serving peak periods. A commuter or express bus service may be more appropriate for certain potential regional bus services such as to Tysons, VA and Columbia, Howard County. The county may want to add “commuter/express service” in transit policy statements if it is appropriate.
 - The county (in coordination with Prince George’s County) may want to assess if there would be additional needs for cross-county transit services to and from Prince George’s County, specifically between Rockville/Gaithersburg and areas in Prince George’s County.
 - The county may want to develop a policy to address improving walking and biking in

rural villages and communities. To assist small towns and rural communities to plan incremental bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements, the Federal Highway Administration published "Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks," a resource guide for pedestrian and bicycle facility design guidelines and best practices in a rural setting.

- Page 77 (Refer to Policy 4.3.2): The Draft Plan could include other parking management tools such as on- or off-site shared parking and connecting adjacent retail and business establishments to help manage parking effectively.
- Page 76 and 77 (Refer to Action 4.1.2.a and Action 4.2.2.a): The Draft Plan should add "total" as "the total number of through-lanes" in the action statements, to clarify the accommodation of two through-lanes in each direction of a rail or BRT corridor.
- Page 78 (Goal 4.5): Planning suggests that the county consider adding a policy to address the needs of teleworkers, ridesharing and park & ride facilities, and other Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies.
- Page 78 (Refer to Action 4.4.1.b): Planning suggests that the county prioritize BRT corridors for access management planning.
- Page 78 (Refer to Policy 4.5.3): The county may want to consider an action item to address all levels of electric vehicle (EV)-ready requirements, i.e., EV-capable, EV Supply Equipment (ES)-ready outlet, and EVES-Installed, for residential, commercial, and public buildings developments.
- Page 80 (Goal 4.8):
 - Please add "the state" in policy statements to indicate the state should be a partner for county's transportation needs.
 - The Draft Plan could include a policy to address existing interstate highways. Although the system is operated and maintained by the state, a county policy would help the state to develop plans for future improvements. Since the county is shifting its transportation focus on transit and non-single occupancy vehicle transportation, perhaps, the county will promote a multimodal transportation system and emphasize people, instead of the vehicle, throughout the interstate highway system in the county.
- Page 80 (Refer to Policy 4.8.3): Planning suggests adding "safety, economic, and environmental" to the policy statement to clarify the goals for connected and automated vehicles consideration.

(v) a water resources element.

The County Council approved the Water Resources Plan in July of 2010, which was adopted by the full Commission in September 2010, and states the following:

"The Plan provides information on County water and sewer service capacity in light of planned growth to 2030, summarizes an estimate of nutrient loadings on watersheds for existing and future conditions, and identifies the policies and recommendations to amend the General Plan that are needed to maintain adequate drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to 2030, and meet water quality regulatory requirements as the County continues to grow. It is meant to satisfy the requirements of House Bill 1141." (page 2)

The [Water Resources Plan](#) (WRP) functional plan examines Montgomery County's land use, growth, and stormwater management in the context of adequate drinking water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity, water quality regulatory requirements, and inter-jurisdictional commitments. Planning recommends that an action item be added to the Draft Plan to analyze the county's existing and proposed land use mapping in relation to the current WRP to determine whether any changes are needed to ensure conformance with or support of the Draft Plan, and if so, to include a proposal to update and revise the WRP in the appropriate time frame.

Planning notes that Environment Article Section 9-507 (b)(2) requires our department to review county water and sewer plans, including amendments, for consistency with local comprehensive plans. Planning understands that the Draft Plan is a high-level policy document, and that future planning efforts and regulatory instruments will address plan implementation. However, the Draft Plan, as now constituted, does not provide the required level of land use and growth policy detail for Planning to evaluate water and sewer plans or amendments for consistency. A jurisdiction's water and sewer infrastructure is one of the most effective tools to facilitate and/or restrict growth; therefore, Planning recommends including in the Draft Plan explicit references to the county's master plans for the intended implementation of water and sewer service policy and to provide clarity on how plan consistency should be evaluated in future master plans or water/sewer plan amendment proposals.

(2) If current geological information is available, the plan shall include a mineral resources element.

The mineral resources element has not been addressed. Planning recommends that the county provide information on current active mining or other geological resources if the information is available or add a proposal to do so in the future within the Implementation chapter.

(b) Priority Preservation Area –

In Montgomery County, the requirements of Priority Preservation Area Act are met through the county's existing Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space (1980). Page 131 of the Draft Plan states "The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 – House Bill 2 (HB 2) House Bill 2 (HB 2) requires counties certified under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to receive funding for farmland preservation to establish Priority Preservation Areas in their comprehensive or general plans and manage them according to certain criteria. In Montgomery County, the requirements of HB 2 are met through the county's existing Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space." Planning notes the discrepancy in the dates of the passage of the legislation in 2006 and the 1980 publication of the functional plan. It would be helpful to clarify if the 1980 functional plan is proposed to be adopted by reference into the general plan or if a future action should be added to the Draft Plan to update the Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space (1980).

The county plans to make the Agricultural Reserve more adaptable in the future. The plan says that "Conserving the Agricultural Reserve will also expand access to healthy food and agricultural employment through the diversification of the agricultural sector, including agritourism, farm alcohol production, and farming in urban, suburban, and rural communities" (page 109). The goals, policies, and actions for the Agricultural Reserve and the food system in general are significant and include the following:

- "Conduct a study of the economic impacts of the county's agricultural industry. Identify future trends and opportunities to remain competitive in food production and distribution."
- "Develop a strategic plan that builds upon the Agricultural Reserve to engage culinary entrepreneurs, leading food research organizations and high-tech rural and urban farmers in food-based innovation and self-reliance in food production."
- "Conduct a study of the impact of the evolution in agriculture on the Agricultural Reserve's economic viability and environmental resilience."
- "Analyze the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, including industrially zoned land, to support an evolving agricultural industry. Identify recommendations for flexibility in

accommodating industries and services that support agriculture including food processing, distribution, sale, consumption, and waste management.”

- “Explore opportunities” to increase the use of TDRs and the BLT program. Planning assumes that the “additional capacity” recommended in Action 7.4.2.c (on page 112) refers to more capacity for transferred rights in development zones, but perhaps the text should say this explicitly.
- “Connect students with growers and producers in the Agricultural Reserve and with relevant federal and state agencies to help develop a talent pipeline for sustainable agriculture.”

The actions for supporting new farmers and expanding urban agriculture are also good. With the decline of industrial employment and the other jobs losses resulting from the pandemic, jobs related to urban agriculture could provide a new sector for employment.

- “Identify opportunities for adaptive reuse of underutilized urban and suburban land for agriculture.”
- “Update the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance to identify urban and suburban farming as permitted uses.”
- “Examine the Urban Agricultural Property Tax Credit to identify opportunities to enhance and expand the tax credit to support urban and suburban farming.”
- “Revise the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines to identify urban and suburban farming as a public benefit.”
- “Support and enhance policies that provide opportunities for new farmers who want to own and operate their own farms in the county.”
- “Establish food production and distribution infrastructure to enable county growers to process their products locally and to reach residents through culinary, grocery, and wholesale outlets. This system will increase the competitiveness of farmers and reduce reliance on imported agricultural products and associated carbon emissions.”

Planning is interested in following the implementation of the Draft Plan’s goals, policies, and actions for the Agricultural Reserve and the food system, because the county’s experience could provide best practices for other counties to emulate.

Growth Tier Map

The Draft Plan states that growth areas will include “existing and planned population and business centers near existing and planned transit such as the Metro rail stations and the bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors” (p.143). Planning understands that specific areas designated for growth and conservation will be identified through future updates to master plans and county-wide functional plans based on the general guidance in the Draft Plan (pgs. 9-10). Page 131 indicates that “Montgomery County implemented Maryland Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 by adopting a Tiers Map and a legislative amendment to the county’s Subdivision Regulations, Chapter 50, §50.4.3.” Planning recognizes the adoption of Ordinance 17-20 on September 19, 2012 as the amendment to the Subdivision Regulations establishing the growth tiers under Maryland’s Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act.

While it should be noted that Montgomery County will need to make its own determination of compliance with the Maryland Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012, Planning does want to point out that § 1-509 of the LUA states, if the Growth Tier Map is not incorporated into the comprehensive plan by the time the county conducts the 10-year review of the plan under § 1-416(a) or § 3-301(a) of the Land Use Article, the county’s Growth Tier Map shall be considered not adopted for

purposes of § 9–206 of the Environment Article. Since this is a full comprehensive up-date to the general plan, and explicit incorporation of the Growth Tier Map into comprehensive plan is unclear, Planning suggests that a sentence be added under Other Regulations (page 127), that says "The official map displaying the Growth Tier areas is included in Chapter 50, Section 50.4.3 of the Subdivision Regulations and is adopted by reference into Thrive 2050 in accordance with the Maryland Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012."

As the county moves forward into the implementation phases of the planning process, the county is encouraged to follow Planning's [Septics Law Implementation Guidance](#) to determine whether the adopted mapping of the growth tier designations should be amended based on changes or modifications to the Rural Legacy Areas, Priority Preservation Area, sewer service areas, preserved lands, and/or other areas land uses planned or zoned for growth and conservation areas. Planning is happy to provide technical assistance or discuss the timing of any potential growth tier map amendments upon request.

Other General Comments:

Planning generated the following general comments in the review of the Draft Plan and are provided below in no order of significance:

- Planning is uncertain how the updated general plan will relate to the underlying planning documents that make up the vast array of functional plans, master plans, and sector plans that already exist. How will the county explain the relationship of the new general plan to the underlying previously adopted functional plans, master plan, and sector plans? Are there conflicts and will the updated general plan supersede the underlying plan's goals, policies, and actions? If so, it may be helpful to citizens and the development community to explain this relationship.
- In the Resilient Economy chapter, Planning recommends that the economic contribution of agriculture be included.
- Page 21 (Refer to Trends and Challenges 8.): The county could briefly explain if and how past and current planning policy and regulatory challenges (if any) contribute to the recent sluggish economic growth (besides Covid-19).
- Page 22 (Refer to Trends and Challenges 9): What level of the geographic area, i.e., the county or the region, does the number of the percentage of jobs represent? Please clarify.
- Page 31 states that there is enough theoretical capacity to accommodate the projected growth. Please clarify what number and percentage of projected future household growth can be accommodated through infill and redevelopment. Consider the number and percentage of future households can be accommodated inside designated growth areas and/or Priority Funding Areas. Consider what number and percentage of future households can be accommodated outside designated growth areas and/or PFAs. A development capacity analysis may help the county determine how much capacity is available. It is noted that the county plans on implementing the general plan using master plans, functional plans, and sector plans. However, a county -wide development capacity analysis could be useful in determining where to concentrate growth.
- Page 32 (Refer to Figure-19): Planning suggests using an urban-to-rural transect to reflect the different contexts of complete communities.
- Page 69 (Refer to Action 3.4.1.a): Planning suggests that the county coordinate with the Maryland Department of Transportation in the county-wide freight plan development process. The need for freight truck parking as it relates to I-270 and I-495 should also be addressed.
- Page 70 (Refer to Action 3.7.1.b): The county may want to add "commuter/express bus" to the action statement [see the comment above re: Page 75 (Goal 4.1)].
- Page 84 (Issues and Challenges): The information on aging population (page 16) should be

included. Providing housing for aging population could be a challenge for the county.

- Page 87 (Goal 5.1): The county may want to consider a policy to support livable and age-friendly housing communities.
- Page 87 (Refer to Policy 5.1.8): Planning staff suggests that the county consider building or retrofitting housing that meets the needs of older adults near transit stations/centers and service establishments.
- Page 128 (Partnership for implementation): The Draft Plan should include “cities and municipalities in Montgomery County” in the list of the partnership entities. The Draft Plan may also include a brief discussion on the need for the interjurisdiction coordination to help with Plan implementation.

- The following comments relate to the actions listed in the Implementation Guide:
 - Page 5 (refer to 3.4.1.a) could include MDOT Agency Roles
 - Page 5 (Refer to Action 4.5.3.a): Could include ZEEVIC in Agency Roles.
 - Page 6 (Refer to Action 4.5.1.a): Could include BRTB in Agency Roles.
 - Page 7 (Refer to Action 6.2.2.a): Could include MDE in Agency Roles.
 - Page 7 (Refer to Action 6.5.2.a): Could include the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in Agency Roles.
 - Page 8 (Refer to Action 6.5.2.d): Could include DNR in Agency Roles.
 - Page 7 (Refer to Action 6.2.2.b): There are three levels of EV-ready facilities, i.e., EV-capable, EVES-ready outlet, and EVES-Installed [see the comment above re: page 78 (Refer to Policy 4.5.3)]. A EV charge station as Action 6.2.2.b calls for is the highest level of EV-ready facilities. Considering one-size does not fit all, the county may consider expanding the requirement of providing EV-ready infrastructure at all levels. Could include [ZEEVIC](#) in Agency Roles.
 - Page 11 (Refer to Action 4.8.2.a): Could include [the Maryland CAV Working Group](#) in Agency Roles.

Montgomery County is a Sustainable Community

It should be noted that Montgomery County has a Sustainable Community Action Plan. As part of the Sustainable Community designation, quality of life, environment, economy, transportation, housing and local planning and land use are all subjects of the Action Plan. Planning suggests the county review the Action Plan for consistency with the Draft Plan and consider if any of the actions support implementation of the Draft Plan.

Please contact the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Sustainable Communities Program for more information.

<https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/dn/default.aspx>

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments
Draft Plan**

STATE AGENCY COMMENTS

The following pages contain comments from other state agencies in support of the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) review of the Draft Plan. Comments not included here may be submitted under separate cover, or via the State Clearinghouse. If comments from other agencies are received by Planning, they will be forwarded to the County in a timely manner.

Attachments

Page 16: Maryland Department of Transportation



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

October 15, 2021

The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building (EOB)
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Maryland Department of Planning Supplemental Review of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*

Dear County Executive Elrich:

Thank you for requesting the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) provide supplemental comments on the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* Planning Board Draft Plan (PB Draft Plan). We appreciate Montgomery County including the department in the planning process. Our staff have actively worked with the county's Technical Advisory Committee and have reviewed and provided comments on the earlier Working Draft, dated November 6, 2020. As noted in your letter, the "Working Draft" subsequently became the Public Hearing Draft, which was presented for public comment on November 19, 2020. While Planning did not review the Public Hearing Draft, in response to your request, we have completed our review of the PB Draft Plan and provide the attached comments. Based on recent conversations with county planning staff and confirmed in your letter of October 6, 2021, the PB Draft Plan is being discussed and possibly amended as part of the Montgomery County Council plan review process.

Planning understands and respects the uniqueness of each community, its vision and local planning practices, which are reflected in individual comprehensive plans. It is important to note that while state law establishes required plan elements, how a jurisdiction prepares a plan and what is included is a local decision. Therefore, our review focuses on the minimum state requirements for charter county comprehensive plans, as outlined in Land Use Article Division 1, Title 1, Subtitle 4, Part II (as referenced in Division II, Title 21, Section 21-104). The Land Use Article, and by extension the review of state agencies, outlines a jurisdiction's responsibility to meet minimum comprehensive plan standards.

One of Planning's fundamental responsibilities when reviewing plans is to ensure compliance with the comprehensive plan requirements in the Land Use Article. Beyond that core duty, and prior to the start of the public hearing process, Planning also provides local planning commissions and boards advisory comments. These can include information on best practices and possible resources to consider as part of the planning process, or later during plan implementation. Consequently, Planning provides support to local jurisdictions and does not seek to direct or influence local planning goals and objectives and land use decisions.

Beyond providing supplemental comments related to mandated Land Use Article items, our review summarizes some of the primary changes between the Working Draft and the PB Draft Plan and reiterates comments from our November 6, 2020, review letter that still apply. Consistent with our department policy, as a draft plan is being reviewed and potentially modified by appointed and elected bodies our department does not provide additional guidance, beyond analyzing consistency with minimum state standards.

Montgomery County has a long and rich history of forward-thinking planning, as well as a complex array of master, sector, and functional plans. Integrated vertically and horizontally, these plans establish policies, strategies, and actions impacting the county, its distinct communities, and specific planning topics. Because of this, Planning stresses that *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, which serves as a high-level policy document, is not the end of Montgomery County's update to its long-range planning effort. Planning encourages the county to continue to consider effective ways to communicate to local officials and the public how the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* may impact existing master and functional plans, and how future planning efforts can be designed to expand upon and strengthen the planning framework established during the general plan development and adoption process.

Planning thanks Montgomery County for working so closely with the state on the development of *Thrive Montgomery 2050* and is available to assist with future planning efforts. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me at chuck.boyd@maryland.gov or 410-767-1401.

Sincerely,



Charles W, Boyd, AICP
Director, Planning Coordination

- cc: Robert S. McCord, Esq, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
Ken Hartman, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive, Montgomery County
Gwen Wright, Planning Director, Montgomery County
Tanya Stern, Deputy Planning Director, Montgomery County
Khalid Afzal, Special Projects Manager-General Plan Update, Montgomery County
Sandra Schrader, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
Valdis Lazdins, Assistant Secretary for Planning Services, Maryland Department of Planning
Joseph Griffiths, Manager, Local Planning Assistance & Training, Maryland Department of Planning
Susan Llareus, Planning Supervisor for Maryland Capital Region, Maryland Department of Planning

**Maryland Department of Planning
Supplemental Review Comments
October 15, 2021
Thrive Montgomery County 2050 – Planning Board Draft Plan**

Pursuant to a request of County Executive Marc Elrich, dated October 6, 2021, the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) conducted a supplemental review of the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* Planning Board Draft Plan, dated April 2021. Planning previously provided comments on the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* Working Draft Plan, dated September 2020, as requested by the county’s Technical Advisory Committee. Included with the earlier Working Draft Plan was an Implementation Guide. The final page of the Planning Board Draft Plan (assumed to be page 162, but unnumbered) includes a summary of the three drafts that have been published thus far in the evolution of the general plan. https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/THRIVE-Planning-Board-Draft-2021-Pages_web.pdf

Summary of the Planning Board Draft Plan

The Planning Board Draft Plan is a full rewrite of The General Plan (*On Wedges and Corridors*) (1969) and the Refinement of The General Plan (1993) and all associated amendments, including master and functional plans and plan elements, as referenced on the first page of the introduction. The Planning Board Draft Plan continues the concept of setting forth policies to achieve the county’s “Three Overarching Outcomes” of Equity, Economic Health, and Environmental Resiliency. The Planning Board Draft Plan is a policy driven document, and implementation of the policies, goals, and strategies will occur through the development of future master plans, functional plans, sector plans, county capital improvement processes, and other public and private initiatives that influence land use and planning in the county. The Planning Board Draft Plan states, “Relevant area plans and functional plans will remain valid until modified pursuant to the guidance provided by this plan.” (page 4). Additionally, page 133 of the Conclusion references the need to update functional, master, and sector plans based on the adopted *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.

Minimum State Law Requirements for Charter Counties

- Division II of the Land Use Article, Title 21, Regional District Plan, Subtitle 1, Section 21-104(a)(3) states the requirement for certain elements within a general plan and applies to Montgomery County. (See discussion below)
- A planning commission must implement the Maryland State Visions through the general plan. The Planning Board Draft Plan has addressed the 12 State Visions, as explained in Appendix A on pages 141-142 and required under §1-406 of the LUA.
- Finally, the plan must incorporate comprehensive plan growth tiers, in accordance with Section 1-502 of the Land Use Article, which has been fulfilled by the reference in Appendix A on page 143.

Maryland State Elements

Maryland’s Land Use Article Sections 406(a) and (b) of this article require including certain elements within the general plan, but do not mandate a specific format. As such, local governments have addressed these required elements in a manner that fits the needs of their community and the resources available to respond to the issues explored during the planning process. The following checklist indicates if each required plan element is included in the Planning Board Draft Plan.

**Checklist of Maryland Code (Land Use Article)-Charter County
Division II, Section 21-104(a) Required elements.
(3) the elements required under Title 1, Subtitle 4 of this article.**

State Comprehensive Plan Requirements	MD Code Reference and Additional MD Code Reference	Reference in the Planning Board Draft
(1) The planning commission for a charter county shall include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:	L.U. § 1-406 (a)	
(i) a development regulations element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (i) L.U. § 1-407 -- Development Regulations Element	This element is expressed in terms relating to the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, etc...as the plan sets forth the policies that will amend those regulations to meet the goals of the plan, through the appropriate legislative process (page 32).
(ii) a housing element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (ii) L.U. § 1-407.1 -- Housing Element	Chapter: Affordable and Sustainable Housing: More of Everything (pages 87-110)
(iii) a sensitive areas element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iii) L.U. § 1-408 -- Sensitive Areas Element	This element is expressed in terms such as environmental resilience, sustainability and climate change through-out the document.
(iv) a transportation element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iv) L.U. § 1-409 -- Transportation Element	Chapter: Transportation and Communication Network: Connecting People, Places and Ideas
(v) a water resources element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (v) L.U. § 1-410 -- Water Resources Element	Not addressed. See discussion below.
(2) a mineral resources element, IF current geological information is available	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (2) L.U. § 1-411 -- Mineral Resources Element	Appendix A (page 144)
(b) A comprehensive plan for a charter county MAY include a priority preservation area (PPA) element	L.U. § 1-406 (b) For PPA Requirements, see § 2-518 of the Agriculture Article	Appendix A (page 143) Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space reference.
(4) Visions -- A county SHALL through the comprehensive plan implement the 12 planning visions established in L.U. § 1-201	L.U. § 1-414 L.U. § 1-201 -- Visions	Appendix A (pages 141-142)
(5) Growth Tiers -- If a county has adopted growth tiers in accordance with L.U. § 1-502, the growth tiers must be incorporated into the county's comprehensive plan	L.U. § 1-509	Appendix A (page 143)

Conformance to Section 1-406 (a) and (b) of the Land Use Article

In accordance with Division II, Title 21, Section 104(a) Required elements.

(1) The planning commission for a charter county shall include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:

(i) a development regulations element;

The plan does not include new “development regulations” because it is policy driven, with policies, goals, and strategies. Once these elements are endorsed through the plan review and adoption process, changes to development regulations may coincide with new area master plans or functional plans. Such regulatory changes are part of the legislative process, so participation will again be afforded to the public. This concept is recognized in many parts of the Planning Board Draft plan, and a good example can be found in the chapter titled *Design, Arts, & Culture*, under the heading “Use design-based tools to create attractive places with lasting value that encourage social interaction and reinforce a sense of place” (page 64).

(ii) a housing element;

The Planning Board Draft includes a housing element in the Chapter titled *Affordable and Sustainable Housing: More of Everything* (pages 87-110). As previously noted by Planning, the passage of HB-1045 in 2019 requires all comprehensive plans adopted after June 1, 2020, to have a housing element. The new law requires comprehensive plans to address the need for low-income and workforce housing, using the definitions contained in §3-114 of the Land Use Article and §4-1801 of the Housing and Community Development Article. Planning recommends that the county evaluate the housing element chapter for conformance to the requirements of HB-1045. HB-1045 (2019) defines low-income households based on 60% of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Area Median Income (HUD AMI) and 60% - 120% HUD AMI for workforce households. Planning recommends that these definitions be included in the Planning Board Draft. Planning further notes that the Draft Plan includes an analysis related to future housing supply and demand challenges. The Montgomery County Housing Needs Assessment, July 2020 does not appear to be referenced, but should be adopted by reference, or included as an Appendix.

(iii) a sensitive areas element;

When Planning previously reviewed the Working Draft plan, it commented that, “The goals, policies, and actions in the Healthy and Sustainable chapter of the Draft Plan align with the sensitive area element of the LUA. Policies in the Healthy and Sustainable chapter promoting compact development, healthy food access, green infrastructure, forest conservation, and the protection of water resources align with the LUA Sensitive Areas requirements by promoting fresh, affordable fruit and vegetables through increasing opportunities for community gardens and urban farms, preserving and restoring green areas to support human life and a diversity of animal and plant life, increasing and enhancing tree canopy wetlands, and meadows through land acquisition, easements, habitat restoration, and ecosystem management, and protecting watersheds and aquifers and improved water quality and stream conditions through enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increased tree canopy, and green stormwater management.” Planning also previously found that the Working Draft Plan included the Diverse and Adaptable Growth chapter, which connects to the land use policies, programs and regulations that allow for flexibility to address unanticipated issues surrounding sensitive environmental features, including climate change.

The Healthy and Sustainable chapter and the Diverse and Adaptable Growth chapters have been deleted in the Planning Board Draft, but it appears that concepts of environmental resilience,

sustainability and climate change have all been included in the Planning Board Draft Plan. Whether the specific goals and actions previously noted by Planning are reiterated in the Planning Board Draft is difficult to assess at this time.

It should be noted that the Planning Board Draft does address the Sensitive Areas requirement by stating, "In Montgomery County, the sensitive areas element was satisfied by the Planning Board's approval of the Guidelines for Environmental Management of Development in Montgomery County (the Guidelines). The Guidelines are a compilation of policies and guidelines that affect the protection of sensitive resources during the development review process" (page 143 of Appendix A).

(iv) a transportation element;

The *Transportation and Communication Network: Connecting People, Places and Ideas* chapter addresses the transportation element as required in the LUA.

(v) a water resources element.

The County Council approved the *Water Resources Plan* in July of 2010, which was adopted by the full Commission in September 2010, and states the following:

"The Plan provides information on County water and sewer service capacity in light of planned growth to 2030, summarizes an estimate of nutrient loadings on watersheds for existing and future conditions, and identifies the policies and recommendations to amend the General Plan that are needed to maintain adequate drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to 2030, and meet water quality regulatory requirements as the County continues to grow. It is meant to satisfy the requirements of House Bill 1141." (Abstract of the Approved and Adopted Water Resources Functional Plan)

The [Water Resources Plan](#) (WRP) functional plan, which examines Montgomery County's land use, growth, and stormwater management in the context of adequate drinking water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity, water quality regulatory requirements, and inter-jurisdictional commitments, should be adopted by reference in the body of the Planning Board Draft Plan, or at a minimum be included by reference in Appendix A of the Planning Board Draft Plan.

(2) If current geological information is available, the plan shall include a mineral resources element.

The requirement of the mineral resource element has been fulfilled in Appendix A on page 144.

(b) Priority Preservation Area

In Montgomery County, the requirements of Priority Preservation Area Act are met through the county's existing Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space, as referenced in Appendix A on page 143.

Growth Tier Map

As previously stated, Planning understands that specific areas designated for growth and conservation will be identified through future updates to master plans and county-wide functional plans. Montgomery County implemented Maryland Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 by adopting a Tiers Map and a legislative amendment to the county's Subdivision Regulations (Ordinance 17-20 on September 19, 2012) and has been incorporated by reference as noted in Appendix A (page 143).

Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992, as amended

[(House Bill 1141 Land Use Planning – Local Government Planning, 2006 (HB 1141)]

Sensitive Area Element

The 1992 Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act required local jurisdictions to adopt a “sensitive areas” element designed to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development. Sensitive areas include streams and their buffers, 100-year floodplains, habitats of threatened and endangered species, steep slopes, wetlands and other areas in need of special protection.

In Montgomery County, the sensitive areas element was satisfied by the Planning Board’s approval of the Guidelines for Environmental Management of Development in Montgomery County (the guidelines). The Guidelines are a compilation of policies and guidelines that affect the protection of sensitive resources during the development review process.

House Bill 1141 Land Use Planning – Local Government Planning, 2006 (HB 1141)

Water Resources Element

Local jurisdictions are also required to include a water resources planning element in their comprehensive plans. This element ensures that drinking water and other water resources will be adequate and suitable receiving waters and land areas will be available to meet stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs of existing and future development. Montgomery County met this requirement through its Water Resources Functional Plan, which was approved by the County Council in July of 2010 and adopted by the full Commission in September 2010.

Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
SITTING AS THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THAT PORTION
OF THE MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT
WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

By: County Council

SUBJECT: Approval of Thrive Montgomery 2050

1. On April 13, 2021, the Montgomery County Planning Board transmitted to the County Executive and the County Council the Planning Board Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.
2. The Planning Board Draft 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 and Prince George's Counties, 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.
3. The County Council held two public hearings on the Planning Board Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, one on June 17, 2021, and another on June 29, 2021. The General Plan was referred to the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee for review and recommendations.
4. On September 21, 2021, the Office of Management and Budget transmitted to the County Council the Executive's Fiscal Impact Statement for the Planning Board Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.
5. On July 14, 21, 26, September 20, 27, October 4, 11, 13, and 25, the PHED Committee held worksessions to review the issues raised in connection with the Planning Board Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. In September, the Committee started its review based on a revised version of each chapter. Council and Planning staff worked together at the direction of the Committee to incorporate suggestions made during the July worksessions. The bulk of these revisions focused on adding definitions, information and explanations, and deleting or rearranging text for clarity and readability.

6. Upon completion of its review on October 25, 2021, the PHED Committee Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 was posted on the Council’s website and is the basis for the Council’s review of the plan.
7. On February 15, 2022, the County Council held its first worksession on the PHED Committee Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. After being briefed by the Office of Legislative Oversight regarding an equity analysis of the plan, the Council approved additional outreach and assistance with a racial equity and social justice review of the plan’s recommendations.
8. On March 1, June 21, September 13, and September 20, 2022, the Council received updates and briefings regarding this effort.
9. On September 22, October 4 and 11, 2022, the County Council held four more worksessions to review the PHED Committee Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, sitting as the District Council for that portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The PHED Development Committee Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050, which revises the Planning Board Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050, is approved with revisions. County Council revisions to the PHED Committee Draft plan are identified below. Deletions to the text of the plan are indicated by [brackets], additions by underscoring. All page references are to the October 2021 PHED Committee Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.

Page 2: Delete the section titled “Highlights of the PHED Committee Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Page 4: Amend the table of Contents to reflect changes in headings and updated page numbers as a result of the addition of new chapters and changes to text and graphics.

Page 5: Amend the third paragraph under “INTRODUCTION” as follows:

In addition, we now see that not all of the changes in our approach to planning were beneficial. The 1993 refinement established the residential wedge, identified as an area for “maintaining a low-density residential character” and directed most growth to the “urban ring” and I-270 corridor. However, the removal of the eastern portion of the County as a location suitable for corridor-focused development discouraged public and private investment in this area. The establishment of the residential wedge consigned more than one-third of the County to zoning exclusively for single family homes, leaving many of our neighborhoods reliant on automobiles and disconnected from many amenities and services. These decisions, in conjunction with discriminatory land use and planning-related practices such as redlining and restrictive covenants (both created by the real estate and financial industries and then adopted by government agencies), established inequitable patterns of development that must be recognized and addressed in ways that do not compound the issues caused by displacement and gentrification.

Page 6: Amend the second paragraph under “WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?” as follows:

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the county’s update to our general plan. It is a framework for future plans and development that defines the basic land use policies and context for all public and private development in the county. It provides direction for decisions about land use, transportation, and related issues under local government influence, but it does not by itself change zoning or other detailed land use regulations although implementation of its recommendations may require such changes. Its recommendations also touch on the objectives and actions of other public and private entities that are responsible for implementing and providing land use related services and amenities. However, while the general plan provides guidance to the entire county, that guidance is not binding upon those municipalities that have independent planning, zoning, and subdivision authority¹.

¹ This includes the Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg, and the municipalities of Barnesville, Brookeville, Laytonsville, Poolesville, and Washington Grove

Page 6: Insert two new paragraphs after the fourth paragraph under “WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?” as follows:

To that end, Thrive Montgomery 2050 will inform future master and functional plans. Master plans (or area master plans or sector plans) are long-term planning documents for a specific place or geographic area of the county. All master plans are amendments to the General Plan. They provide detailed land use and zoning recommendations for specific areas of the county. They also address transportation, the natural environment, urban design, historic resources, affordable housing, economic development, public facilities, and implementation techniques. Many of Thrive Montgomery 2050’s recommendations cannot be implemented with a one-size- fits-all approach. Area master plans will help refine Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations and implement them at a scale tailored to specific neighborhoods.

Functional plans are master plans addressing a system, such as traffic circulation or green infrastructure, or a policy, such as agricultural preservation or housing. A functional master plan amends the General Plan and may include recommendations on land use and zoning. The Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan, and the Master Plan for Historic Preservation are functional plans that do not include land use or zoning recommendations; however, the Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan does. New and revised functional master plans can help refine and implement Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations that affect county-wide systems and/or policies.

Page 6: Amend second sentence of the third paragraph under “A Blueprint for the Future” as follows:

These strategies [will] aim to accommodate growth in ways that make room for new residents and also improve the quality of life for the people who already live here.

Page 7: Amend the first paragraph under “Plan Framework and Overarching Objectives” as follows:

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 plan is designed to integrate arts and culture into the fabric of our community and open opportunities for creative expression.]

Page 7: Amend the first sentence of the third paragraph under “Economic Performance and Competitiveness: Opportunities and Challenges” as follows:

As we work to fortify the county’s economic performance, we must simultaneously bolster our dominance in existing sectors, diversify our job base, improve connections to centers of employment and innovation throughout the region, and provide the kinds of infrastructure, services, and amenities that [will] can strengthen our ability to compete effectively in the future.

Page 7: Amend the first paragraph under “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses economic health” as follows:

Thrive Montgomery 2050 can play[s] an important role in strengthening our economic competitiveness by fostering the creation [creating the kind] of places where people with diverse choices want to live and work. Its recommendations for land use, transportation, parks, and other public and private infrastructure lay the groundwork for economic development initiatives undertaken by other entities. For example, the county’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be aligned with Thrive Montgomery 2050’s recommendations to make our neighborhoods more attractive for private development by providing high quality transit, sidewalks and a walkable grid of streets, great urban parks, and high-performing and racially integrated schools. The combination of these kinds of investments is a reliable long-term strategy for attracting workers to well-designed and planned complete communities, which in turn will entice businesses and employers to locate here.

Page 8: Amend the second sentence of the second paragraph under “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses economic health” as follows:

Re-energizing the county’s commercial centers is a major goal of the plan, but so is the recognition that small offices or storefronts in Complete Communities and even home offices [will] are likely to be common workplaces in the 21st century.

Page 8: Amend the last sentence of the third paragraph under “Racial Equity and Social Inclusion, Opportunities and Challenges” as follow:

The 1993 Refinement of the Wedges and Corridor plan’s focus on the I-270 corridor and related planning decisions exacerbated this problem by discouraging growth in the East County, focusing public and private investment to the west.

Page 9: Insert a sentence at the end of the third paragraph under “Impacts of Past Practices” as follows:

As we seek a future that is more equitable and inclusive, improved access to infrastructure and amenities in racially, socially, and economically isolated areas will not be enough. We also must

facilitate the integration of neighborhoods by race and income, across all ages. Increasing the share of racially and economically mixed neighborhoods and schools across all parts of the county is critical to ensure that the inequities of the past will not be perpetuated in the future. To this end, planning must establish working, on-going relationships with communities that prioritize participatory planning and must bring the voices of vulnerable communities forward.

Page 9: Amend the second sentence of the first paragraph under “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses Racial Equity and Social Justice” as follows:

Different measures of social capital, including trust in public and private institutions, the planning process, political participation, whether neighbors know each other, and other indicia of connection and cohesion are influenced by qualities of the built environment.

Page 9: Amend the first sentence of the second paragraph under “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses Racial Equity and Social Justice” as follows:

Advancing racial equity through just planning policies and public investments in underserved communities, promoting the racial and economic integration of neighborhoods, and focusing on the potential for the design of communities to help build social trust and inclusion while encouraging civic participation and participation in the planning process are among the most significant elements of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Page 10: Amend the last sentence of the first paragraph under “Environmental Resilience, Opportunities and Challenges” as follows:

Along with [aggressive] improved stormwater and forest conservation regulations, these efforts have established a strong framework for the protection of natural resources.

Page 10: Amend the second paragraph under “Environmental Resilience, Opportunities and Challenges” as follows:

Despite these policies, however, additional work is still needed in these areas, including increased attention to localized flooding and loss of mature tree canopy. The County cannot avoid the impact of global climate change. Precipitation in northeastern United States increased by 55 percent between 1958 and 2016. This trend has meant more frequent violent weather events like the flash flooding that occurred in July 2019, when the D.C. region received a month’s worth of rain in a single day, causing streams to rise 10 feet in less than an hour, inundating vehicles, businesses, roads and closing the Metrorail system. The past decade has also been the hottest 10-year period in the region’s recorded history, with rising hospitalizations due to extreme heat impacts. Public health issues are exacerbated by climate change and intertwined with the quality of the built and natural environment. Where possible, these and other effects of climate change must be addressed in our land use policies. The adverse effects of a changing climate will be felt most acutely by low-income residents and people of color, who are likely to suffer a disproportionate share of the damage to real property and personal health due to past and current patterns of discrimination.

Page 11: Amend the third sentence of the second paragraph under “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 address environmental resilience” as follows:

It prioritizes the equitable distribution and expansion of green infrastructure throughout the County.

Page 11: Amend the last sentence of the third paragraph under “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 address environmental resilience” as follows:

Together these plans [will] strive to create a comprehensive approach to climate change at the local level.

Page 11: Amend the paragraph under “Improving Public Health and Encouraging Active Lifestyles” as follows:

The length and quality of human life are strongly influenced by both the natural and built environment. In 2018, more than three-fifths of adults in Montgomery County were overweight or obese. Five of the seven zip codes in the county with household incomes in the lowest quartile are also among the zip codes with the lowest average life spans. And even though low-income residents and people of color are more likely to suffer from negative health outcomes for several reasons, all residents can benefit from a more active lifestyle supported by an emphasis on transit, walking, and biking, and easy access to parks, [and]recreational opportunities, and nature. The importance of healthy living for seniors and the disabled will also remain a significant area of focus as our ageing population continues to grow. Active lifestyles supported by improved housing choices in compact, complete communities can serve to improve public health for all, while simultaneously reducing the ecological footprint of human activity.

Page 11: Amend the first paragraph under “Elevating Quality of Design and Highlighting Role of Arts and Culture” as follows:

The Wedges and Corridors Plan envisioned a variety of living environments and encouraged “imaginative urban design” to avoid sterile suburban sprawl. Nonetheless, like every plan, that plan was a product of its time. It relied on design approaches that were typical of the 1960s, emphasizing the convenience of driving and rigid separation of land uses.

Page 12: Amend the second paragraph under “Elevating Quality of Design and Highlighting Role of Arts and Culture” as follows:

Good design is not a luxury but a critical economic development tool. Businesses and workers [now]today prefer walkable, accessible, amenity rich, mixed-use places that facilitate the interaction and exchange of ideas that feed innovation. A greater share of residents, across all ages, prefer walkable, transit-rich neighborhoods too. Combined with the lack of undeveloped land far from transit, these forces [dictate] indicate the need for a shift toward redevelopment and infill that converts “parking lots to places” near existing or planned transit lines and incorporating walkable form.

Page 12: Amend the last sentence of the third paragraph under “Elevating Quality of Design and Highlighting Role of Arts and Culture” as follows:

Supporting a healthy and diverse arts and culture ecosystem will not only enrich the lives of our residents and bring us closer together but can also [will] help attract talent and spur innovation.

Page 12: Amend the second, and third paragraphs under “URBANISM AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE” as follows:

This approach calls for focusing growth in a limited number of locations rather than dispersing it, avoiding “sprawl.” It means encouraging in appropriate areas the agglomeration of different uses such as retail, housing, and office space as well as diversity within each type of use. For example, a variety of housing sizes and types near employment and retail can help[s] to ensure that people of diverse income levels can live and work in proximity to each other. This over time can produce[s] more racially and socioeconomically integrated neighborhoods and schools, [providing]and more equitable access to economic opportunities, public services, and amenities. It also emphasizes the importance of walking, biking and transit and reduces reliance on cars.

Of course, other factors – particularly quality and thoughtfulness in the design of buildings, streets, neighborhoods,[and] public spaces, and the incorporation of nature into urban areas – are also essential. Combined with the fundamentals of urbanism, design excellence and biophilic design² can help create a sense of place, facilitate social interaction, [and]encourage active lifestyles, and contribute to environmental resiliency. Compact development can also provide[s] other advantages including efficient use of scarce land, more natural areas for recreation and preservation, and reduced expense for building and maintaining infrastructure.

² Biophilic Design is the practice of connecting people and nature within our built environments and communities.

Page 12: Amend the first sentence of the fourth paragraph under “URBANISM AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE” as follows:

These principles of urbanism [are equally relevant to]benefit rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Page 12: Amend the fifth paragraph under “URBANISM AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE” as follows:

With attention to both the functional and aesthetic aspects of design, urbanism is not only consistent with a commitment to maintaining the best of what has made Montgomery County attractive in the past but is necessary to preserve and build on these qualities while [correcting]addressing the challenges of auto-centric planning and its effects on the environment, racial equity, and social cohesion.

Page 13: Amend the section “Organization of the Plan” as follows:

Related to the three primary objectives of economic competitiveness, racial and social equity, and environmental sustainability, the plan is organized into [six]nine chapters:

- Economic Competitiveness
- Racial Equity and Social Justice
- Environmental Resilience and Sustainability
- 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 [first three] fourth, fifth and sixth chapters move from the countywide scale (Compact Growth) to the [district]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 Housing for All chapter recommendations are intended to diversify our housing stock across incomes, building types and geography. 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 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 [metrics] 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.

Page 14: Amend the second paragraph under “Equitable Communications and Community Outreach” as follows:

From June 2019 through April 2021, Montgomery Planning organized multiple in-person and virtual engagement activities to imagine what life in Montgomery County will be like in 2050 and what will be needed to ensure that we thrive in the decades to come. Planners participated in more than 180 meetings with community members and organizations; created and distributed a “Meeting-in-a-Box” for residents and organizations to host their own discussions about Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the county’s future; created an online quiz soliciting feedback on values and priorities for the plan; built a dedicated website (accessible both in English and in Spanish), [thrivemontgomery2050.com (and MontgomeryProspera.com in Spanish),] with a wealth of materials in multiple languages, and distributed tens of thousands of postcards and e-newsletters to reach community members across the county. The outreach effort was challenging because of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic nine months into the planning process; however, the

outreach work responded to this challenge with innovative new tools – including successful virtual meetings, social media campaigns, and outdoor pop-up events. More detailed information about this award-winning equitable engagement strategy is included in the Outreach Appendix.

Page 14: Delete the third paragraph and sections that follow under “Equitable Communications and Community Outreach” as follows:

[Montgomery Planning estimates that these efforts resulted in interactions with approximately 12,000 people.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 looked at the largest minority languages where limited English proficiency was greater than 10% and created materials and advertising in multiple languages.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Engagement by the Numbers

- Over 180 meetings with community
- 1,635 people completed online Thrive Montgomery 2050 Quiz
- 1,300 Meeting-in-a-Box postcards sent to HOAs + Community Associations
- 91,000 postcards to equity emphasis areas
- ThriveMontgomery.com – 102,641 web views
- E-letter signup – 1,384, with open rate of 40% (double industry average)
- Estimated participation – approximately **12,000**

Top five topics that received the most comments:

1. Public transit
2. Affordable housing
3. Parks
4. Walkability
5. Education/Schools]

Page 15: Insert three new paragraphs at the end of “Equitable Communications and Community Outreach” as follows:

For a typical master or sector plan, one public hearing is held by the County Council. For plans that encompass a large area or contain recommendations for a large number of properties, the Council will hold two public hearings. For Thrive Montgomery 2050, the Council held two public hearings in June 2021.

Recognizing the interest in the plan and hoping to receive input from as diverse a group of County residents and business-owners as possible, the Council created additional opportunities for community members to weigh in. Following completion of the Committee Draft, the Council held two Community Listening Sessions, encouraging participation focused on the overarching goals of the plan and the updates made by the Committee. In early 2022 at the request of the Council President, the Citizen Advisory Board of the County’s five Regional Service Centers hosted a discussion of the draft plan, providing yet another opportunity to gather diverse thoughts on the updated plan from residents across the County.

During this time of extended outreach, the Council also requested the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) conduct a racial equity and social justice review of the plan. The primary finding from this review was that meaningful input on plan recommendations from Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color as well as other under-represented residents would require more targeted outreach best handled by a consultant with expertise in this area. In response, a consultant team with extensive experience engaging under-represented communities on a variety of topics, including land use planning, transportation, economic development, and housing were hired. In executing their work, the consultant team spent three months gathering input from communities of color and other under-represented groups within the County; specifically engaging these community members on the policies and practices recommended in the Committee Draft. As a result, the consultant team produced a report that includes recommended revisions based on input aimed at advancing racial equity and social justice, detailed information on targeted community engagement, a description of the community engagement process and the methodologies used to gather feedback, and recommendations applicable to any future outreach efforts. The consultant team also provided a draft chapter on racial equity and social justice, which is the basis of the chapter in this plan.

Page 16: After the “INTRODUCTION”, insert three new chapters titled “ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS”, “RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE”, and “ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY” as follows:

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Montgomery County is in the 99th percentile of all counties in the United States in terms of household income, household net worth and educational attainment, and the county’s gross economic output exceeds \$81 billion a year - more than 13 states. These statistics, however, do not tell the whole story. The County’s economic performance has been mixed at best since the Great Recession of 2008. Job growth over the past two decades has been slow and household incomes have been flat. These trends, if unaddressed, threaten Montgomery County’s future success. The county has several mechanisms to address these issues. Thrive Montgomery 2050 complements economic development initiatives developed by other organizations, such as the Economic Development Strategic Plan developed by Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC)³ and business-supportive legislation adopted by the Montgomery County Council.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is primarily focused on land use, so it addresses only the aspects of economic development with a strong connection to real estate and public infrastructure. Thrive’s recommendations are designed to strengthen the County’s ability to compete for economic opportunities by creating great places. Employers want to locate and expand in places where their employees want to live and work. Well-designed “complete” communities that include a mix of uses and forms with safe and attractive walking and biking infrastructure along with public amenities such as parks and recreational facilities are essential to ensuring the quality of life that employers want and that residents deserve. Quality of place is not a comprehensive economic strategy, but it is a solid foundation for success.

³ The Montgomery County Economic Development Strategic Plan aligns its vision and priorities with the four pillars of the County’s Economic Development Platform in its four strategic priorities: (1) Accelerate innovation, economic drivers, and entrepreneurship; (2) Provide greater workforce and educational opportunities; (3) Build livable communities that connect residents to jobs; and (4) Create an inclusive economy for shared prosperity. The plan is slated to be updated every two years.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 emphasizes quality of place, amenities, and infrastructure instead of focusing on policies to attract specific types of employers or development designed to accommodate certain employment uses. There is limited value in trying to predict how factors such as technological change or a pandemic, might impact the demand for office space or other aspects of land use and transportation planning. The county has an excess of office space in existing buildings, and flexible zoning already in place in major business districts to accommodate just about any demand that that may emerge for development or redevelopment of office buildings in the near to intermediate term. This puts the County in a position to respond and adapt to market changes.

It is also vital to recognize that housing is a critical form of infrastructure that supports efforts to attract and retain the workforce that employers need. Thrive Montgomery 2050 recognizes the importance of abundant housing choices and convenient regional transportation options to maintaining a competitive workforce and workforce development has been recognized as key to making Montgomery County economically strong. By providing attractive housing options that are physically and economically accessible to people with a wide range of incomes, skills, and preferences, we can help ensure that the workers that employers need will find housing that they find appealing, convenient, and affordable. In addition, by investing in transportation and communications networks, we can help our residents take advantage of all of the economic and educational opportunities the county and region have to offer.

Montgomery County's Economic Performance: the Good, the Bad, and the Future

Montgomery County continues to benefit from proximity to the nation's capital, which draws skilled, educated, and motivated people from all over the world, but the total number of jobs in Montgomery County grew by only five percent between 2004 to 2019 even as 20 similarly sized counties grew their employment base by an average of 21 percent.

Household incomes in Montgomery County grew by 14 percent from 2009 to 2019, a slower rate than the rest of the region. Despite a median household income of \$111,812, more than one-fifth of households make less than \$50,000 and almost two-fifths of public-school students qualify for free or reduced meals.

This weak growth in household incomes and the number of high-paying jobs shrinks the County's tax base, limiting the County's ability to provide and maintain high quality infrastructure, amenities, and services. It also limits the ability of many county residents to buy homes, a key tool for building household wealth and investing in the community. This is particularly the case for younger households and households earning less than the median household income, who struggle to afford a home and put down roots. Montgomery County is capturing a smaller share of young adults than similar jurisdictions across the country.

The Aging of the Workforce and Implications for the Tax Base

All of this is happening at a time when large numbers of residents are reaching retirement age, creating the region's highest elder-adult dependency ratio. Unless the County can attract and retain more young adults, the aging of the workforce will put pressure on the tax base as the proportion of Montgomery County residents in retirement grows and the percentage of residents in their peaking earning years shrinks.

This demographic shift means that the county's economic performance will have to get better just to maintain current levels of tax revenue and the services it funds, thus making economic competitiveness an even more pressing concern.

Strength in Hospitality and Life Sciences

Despite our challenges, Montgomery County retains significant assets that will help us compete for economic opportunities in the future. For example, Montgomery County is home to companies representing 50 percent of the market capitalization of the entire national hospitality sector, and the Washington area is consistently ranked as one of the top life science clusters in the nation, with bio-health businesses located in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and in several transit-oriented downtowns throughout the County.

Our strength in pharmaceutical research and related fields has sparked a wave of investment in vaccine development. The University of Maryland is leading ground-breaking research in emerging fields such as quantum computing, the National Institutes of Health and Food and Drug Administration are overseeing development of new drugs and medical devices, and several local companies stand to benefit from a focus on testing, prevention, and treatment of infectious disease.

Human Capital: Montgomery County's Ace in the Hole

Perhaps even more important than Montgomery County's strengths in any particular sector is our diverse workforce. Montgomery County has a highly educated workforce. Among adults in the County age 25 and over, 58 percent of people have a bachelor's degree, compared to 41 percent in Maryland, and only 31 percent in the United States overall in 2019. The County also has residents who work in service industries that support all kinds of businesses and residents, from restaurant workers and landscapers to laboratory and clerical staff. The future of employment and the prospects for growth in any particular field are difficult to predict, so the availability of people with a wide range of knowledge and skills may prove to be our most valuable asset of all.

Thrive Montgomery 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 percent 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 chapter on Parks and Recreation.*

Finally, the forms of growth and the creation of quality places promoted by Thrive are economically sustainable. The intuition that compact development leads to efficient use of infrastructure—and has the potential to reduce both private household and infrastructure costs—has been supported by decades of research. Almost all high-quality studies comparing the infrastructure and service costs of spread-out development to those of compact communities have shown that compact urbanism reduces cost burdens on the public sector. For example, a study comparing infrastructure expenditures of 283 counties over a ten-year period found that counties with compact growth patterns spent less than less densely developed counties (controlling for size and property values) on total direct infrastructure costs and capital facilities, as well as several subcategories of infrastructure and services including roads, trash collection, police, fire, parks and recreation, education, and libraries.⁴ In addition to lowering costs, compact development also tends to increase municipal revenues,⁵ strengthening the case for focusing growth in centers and along corridors.

Walkable, Bikeable, Transit-Connected Places Expand Economic Opportunity

Just about any other form of daily transportation—walking, biking, or riding a bus or train—is potentially less expensive (monetarily) than driving a single-occupancy vehicle, both on a personal basis and in terms of public spending. The two comprehensive reviews of the voluminous literature on the relationship between the built environment and travel behavior conducted in the past decade agree that features of compact development such as household density, job accessibility, and intersection and street network density, reduce driving.⁶

In addition, better transit connections to job centers make the County a more attractive choice for employers by making it easier for their current and future employees to get to work. With drive times and pass-through automobile traffic predicted to continue growing, investments in transit can significantly increase our “commute shed” and avoid ever-longer drives to and from work, which makes Montgomery County economically competitive.

⁴ Carruthers, J. I., & Ulfarsson, G. F. (2003). Urban sprawl and the cost of public services. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 30(4), 503-522.

⁵ Litman, T. (2021). *Understanding smart growth savings*. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. https://www.vtpi.org/sg_save.pdf

A higher priority for investments in transit, walking, rolling, and bicycling infrastructure is critical to building complete communities that have the amenities, sense of place, and level of activity that more and more people of all backgrounds and ages seek. Transit improvements exert a kind of gravitational pull on real estate development by creating incentives and opportunities to locate a variety of uses, services, and activities close to station locations – and to each other.

Housing for the Workforce Needed for a Strong Economy

Increasing the supply of new housing near transit, jobs, and amenities may help to 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 places. 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 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.

Conclusion: Great Places as a Common Denominator for Economic Performance

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a comprehensive land use plan, not a comprehensive economic development plan, so it focuses on ways to help create the kind of places where people with diverse choices want to live and work rather than workforce development, financial incentives for business relocation and retention, or other important topics related to economic competitiveness. *It is not intended as a substitute for the county’s broader economic programs, policies and plans, but in an era with limited demand for new office construction and a strong market preference for locating businesses in high-quality, mixed-use, walkable, and transit-*

oriented areas, it is one of the best strategies available to local government for growing our work force and our tax base.

In making decisions about how to allocate scarce resources available for subsidies, incentives and workforce development, the tension between reinforcing existing strengths and looking for ways to diversify into new sectors often presents difficult choices. Fortunately, the kinds of infrastructure, services and amenities that make a place appealing to employees and employers are generally not sector specific. Put another way, the things that will make Montgomery County attractive to people working in life sciences or hospitality are the same things that draw people in other fields and at a variety of skill-levels.

The recommendations in the following chapters lay the groundwork for economic development initiatives undertaken by other entities. For example, the County’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be aligned with Thrive Montgomery 2050’s recommendations to make our neighborhoods more attractive for private development by providing high quality transportation networks, sidewalks and a walkable grid of streets, great urban parks, and high-performing and racially integrated schools. In addition, communities designed with sufficient affordable and accessible housing options integrated into our neighborhoods to limit displacement will ensure existing and new community members benefit from these improvements. The combination of these kinds of investments is a reliable long-term method for attracting and retaining workers and their employers to well-designed and planned complete communities.

The purpose of the various policy recommendations in this plan is less about identifying new locations for large government or corporate tenants and more about making parts of the county that already have been developed or planned more attractive and accessible to all residents and workers across all fields, which in turn will help attract employers.

Racial Equity and Social Justice

Planning for Racial Equity and Social Justice

The modern planning profession was born out of social movements like the ‘Tenement House Reform’ movement which broadly exposed substandard living conditions endured by immigrant and working-class residents in New York City in the late 19th century. The resulting Tenement House Act of 1901 established one of the first laws governing how buildings should be constructed and regulated to account for human health and safety. Since that time, countless academics, organizers, politicians, and agitators alike have contributed to establishing urban planning as the ‘epistemological field of study’ which informs how so many of the decisions that impact our lives are made. Planning is the tool that the state wields when exercising its ‘police power’ to regulate and govern the development of land and infrastructure through plans, codes, and ordinances, and their associated administrative processes. As such, planning decisions have significant and cross-cutting impacts; how and where things are built (or not built) directly correlates to the physical quality of place and the quality of life for inhabitants. It is precisely because of the tremendous importance of planning why who gets to participate in the planning process matters so much in determining future outcomes.

Historically, there has frequently been an atmosphere of distrust around planning because there are often limited opportunities for everyday citizens to participate and truly be empowered in making the important decisions regarding the future growth and development of their communities. This dynamic is compounded by a legacy of exclusion reinforced through racism and classism. Generally speaking, power and decision-making authority in planning has been reserved for those with either direct political access, or those with privileges associated with wealth, education, race, and/or social status. This imbalance has contributed to a dynamic where the interests of 'capital' have often trumped the interest of the public good. While capitalism's market theory has its merits, one of its flaws is that there is no mechanism by which externalities (like pollution) get paid for. Planning's prescriptions are designed to correct for market failure when the market is not able to correct itself. As such, planning is one of the primary tools available to us to deal with the problems of racial inequities and social injustices, which most often show up in the form of segregation, poverty, and its associated impacts.

Survey before Plan

Foundational to planning theory is the work of Patrick Geddes, a planning pioneer, who theorized that you must 'survey before you plan'. The underlying idea is that before you can apply a prescription, you must thoroughly understand and diagnose the issues. Meaningful public engagement is the prerequisite to building the transparency, trust, and collaborative relationships with communities that are needed to establish the two-way learning process which supports holistic planning solutions. Without careful consultation with the community, it is unlikely that a comprehensive understanding of place can be achieved. John Forester, preeminent urban planning professor who writes on participatory planning processes emphasizes that the ears are the practitioners most useful tool, and that listening the most important planning exercise.

Two Americas

During the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a speech about the "Two Americas" which highlighted the legacy of racial and economic oppression and the plight of poor people and how their lived experiences juxtapose with the promise of America as the land of opportunity, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, for the decades since this speech was given there are still significant swaths of the black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities that continue to be 'stuck' in cyclical poverty. The persistent challenges of social and economic mobility are clearly highlighted in the land use and economic patterns observed in Montgomery County, today.

In 2022, across America, we are still seeing communities of color disproportionately dealing with eroding infrastructure, substandard living conditions, and environmental justice issues like unsafe drinking water. These neighborhoods across the United States do not exist by coincidence, they were 'carved out' on the map, years ago, by people who wielded planning power. Too often, when these communities are finally paid attention, the original residents are displaced and unable to benefit. The cycle of divestment and real estate speculation in communities of color nationwide has been well documented over time, making 'Gentrification' one of the hottest issues impacting urban America today.

According to the 2022 Neighborhood Change in the Washington DC Area study by Montgomery Planning, while displacement and poverty concentration both take place in Montgomery County, poverty concentration affects more people and more neighborhoods than displacement. Neighborhoods seeing increasing poverty concentration face the risk of further disinvestment

and deprivation of opportunities for their residents. Thrive Montgomery 2050 and Planning's Equity Agenda emphasize that County resources should be prioritized in these areas to spur investment. While the Neighborhood Change study shows that areas in Montgomery County that saw sufficient new housing construction avoided both displacement and concentration of poverty while experiencing inclusive socio-economic growth, continued evaluation of these dynamics is essential to racial equity and social justice in the County.

Educational Attainment

This map depicts Educational Attainment by showing, at the census tract level, the percent of the population 25 years and over who has at least obtained a bachelor's degree.

Census tracts with low proportions (20 to 36 percent) of those holding a bachelor's degree or higher are concentrated in tracts within Germantown, Montgomery Village, and Gaithersburg. The Rock Creek, Wheaton, and Oakview communities have tracts with the lowest proportion (1.4 to 20 percent) of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The tracts with lowest concentrations of educational attainment are also those that overlay the primary and secondary target areas with high concentrations of BIPOC and Low to Middle Income residents.

As the county becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, our neighborhoods are still largely separated along income and racial lines. This geographic separation has important consequences for access to educational opportunities and the life prospects of our county's children. There are differences in the quality of education across K-12 public schools and the achievement gaps among different racial groups. In 2019, three-quarters of Black, Hispanic, and English-learning students in Montgomery County Public Schools – along with more than 80 percent of all low-income students in the system – were enrolled in high-poverty-focus schools. By comparison, more than two-thirds of all white, Asian, and multi-racial students were enrolled in low-poverty schools.

As we seek a future that is more equitable and inclusive, access to quality education will continue to be an important driver of equitable development. Improved access to infrastructure and amenities in racially, socially, and economically isolated areas will not be enough. We must also facilitate the integration of our neighborhoods and schools, by race and income – through increasing opportunities for employment and housing in all areas of our County. The growth of online learning is also changing post-secondary education, creating more opportunities for people to access courses online and reducing opportunities for formal and informal interactions on campuses. Increasing the share of racially and economically mixed neighborhoods and schools across all parts of the county is critical to ensure that the inequities of the past will not be perpetuated in the future.

Racial Equity

Racial equity work seeks to heal; implementation of its ideals requires an honest and careful examination of history to inform deliberate actions aimed at repairing past injustices which have disproportionately impacted black and indigenous communities in America. The legacy of racist policies, and the land-uses they influenced reverberate throughout the entire spectrum of communities of color with Latin/x, Asian, and other BIPOC communities experiencing different, but familiar challenges as their predecessors. Addressing racial equity requires an honest look at root causes of social problems and recognizing that some form of restitution is required to fix them.

To make planning more equitable we have to acknowledge the systems of racial discrimination and privilege which reinforce disparate outcomes for Montgomery County households. Planning alone cannot end racism and segregation or prevent the erosion of cultural communities that wish to remain intact, it can however be an important tool to begin the work of dismantling long-established systems of privilege.

Social Justice

In a planning sense, wealth affords you the opportunity for exclusion: to live in an environment where you do not have to interact with poor people. However, due to the time value of money, the compound nature of wealth creation, and other factors the wealth gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots' is growing. This imbalance creates a strain on society which makes it unstable.

Social justice is a process by which working class people begin to access the privileges only enjoyed by the historically privileged class[es], to afford healthy lifestyles and to experience education and built environments which inspire them to lead happier and more productive lives. In modern times, this is becoming increasingly important as more and more people are finding it hard to thrive economically. Montgomery County has at times taken forward-thinking steps to address inequality, such as adoption of the nation's first – and to this day, most successful – inclusionary zoning law, the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program, which guarantees that income-restricted housing will be built in every part of county as part of market-rate development projects. The County has also prioritized using its own resources to help build affordable housing by both co-locating housing with other public uses and disposing of excess public land in exchange for the creation of more affordable housing. In addition to these housing related programs, Montgomery County, through its Department of Health and Human Services, has created a robust set of social service to address health and other wrap-around service needs of County residents. As the County plans for the future, it should continue to find ways to address the specific needs of vulnerable populations impacted by the hidden costs of poverty and determine more ways to design communities to reduce problems associated with public health, crime, housing instability, food insecurity, and segregation.

Justice in Planning

A Right to the City?

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights (Harvey 23).

Property and Pacification

Quality of urban life has become a commodity, as has the city itself, in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major aspects of the urban political economy. The postmodernist penchant for encouraging the formation of market niches— in both consumer habits and cultural forms—surrounds the contemporary urban experience with an aura of freedom of choice, provided you have the money. Source: David Harvey, Rebel Cities

Examining History

After the Civil War, African Americans suffered from all forms of discrimination (social, housing, education, employment, commerce, health, etc.). The resulting alienation led to the creation of self-reliant kinship communities in many parts of Montgomery County in the late 19th century. A significant part of the history of racial injustice and discrimination suffered by African Americans includes the formation and subsequent decline (in some cases, destruction) of kinship communities in the early 20th century.

Over time, these communities suffered from lack of public investment in infrastructure such as new roads, sewer and water, schools, health clinics, and other public amenities and services needed to be viable places to live. Some communities suffered the devastating impacts of urban renewal policies of the 1960s. Others faced pressure to sell their houses or farms to developers for housing subdivisions. These communities declined because of an accumulation of racially motivated actions paired with social, political, and economic circumstances. The very few of these communities that survived in some way include Ken-Gar in Kensington, Lyttonsville in Silver Spring, River Road in Bethesda, Scotland in Potomac, Stewarttown in Gaithersburg, and Tobytown in Travilah.

From the 1890s to the 1920s, the first suburban subdivisions in Silver Spring and Chevy Chase used racial covenants prohibiting African Americans and other racial and religious groups from purchasing land or homes. Well into the mid-20th century, these types of covenants were placed in the land records. Even after the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 to end these practices, a development pattern of segregation continued. Injustices were evident in unfair banking and lending practices; federal immigration policies; unequal public investment in schools, parks and other public facilities; and siting a disproportionately high number of undesirable uses, such as landfills, near communities of color.

In Montgomery County, the legacy of such discriminatory policies and the exclusionary zoning and other land use controls led to neighborhoods defined by income, race, and housing types. As a result of these practices and other societal factors, a significant quality of life gap exists for various racial and ethnic groups in the county.

On Wedges and Corridors

Thrive seeks to "modernize" the old Wedges and Corridors Plan. While it is prudent to not throw the proverbial "baby out with the bathwater," the Wedges and Corridor plan created "land use patterns... which left neighborhoods disconnected and reinforced segregation along racial and economic lines." If the old had plan adverse outcomes for historically disadvantaged groups, how do we address/mitigate its failures? What does "modernization" of the Wedges and Corridors Plan look like?

To address segregation and economic inequality established in past zoning/land use planning, deliberate mechanisms need to be introduced to create racially and economically inclusive communities. Planning needs to consider social and economic consequences of efforts to integrate. Communities that face historic challenges need special attention paid to community development and stabilization to ensure that existing social networks and institutions are strengthened so that it is not harder for the existing community to survive in the reimagined one, but they feel a central part of it. Conversely, established areas need to create opportunities for

less privileged to access the schools, jobs, natural resources, and other benefits through housing opportunity and improved physical access.

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 the very low-income, and permanent supportive housing.

To promote racial equity and economic diversity in housing in every neighborhood, the plan recommends targeted strategies be developed 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.

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 accommodation for low-income housing in areas which are already wealthy and thus providing new residents who want the choice of living somewhere else to achieve immediate access to communities that have close 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 provision of new low-income housing in high income areas to allow for housing choice in different markets.

The justification for this strategy is doubled when you consider that to support economic competitiveness and sustainability Thrive's number one transportation priority is connecting low-income communities to job areas, but the housing strategy should also seek to provide workforce

housing locally. Consequently, areas of high wealth and business activity such as Bethesda should also include sufficient workforce and low-income housing to support housing choices for people who work in the area. Future planning should conduct detailed market analysis of labor markets and determine thresholds by which area plans should promote low-income, workforce, and middle-class housing options to support a truly local community where commuting is “optional” because the mathematical possibility of the local workforce is reflected in the housing availability.

Attention should be paid to tenants as well as homeowners. Currently, about 1 in 3 households are renter households in Montgomery County. Almost 50 percent of renter households in the county are cost-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Renter households are also more likely to be people of color. While 75 percent of white householders own their own homes in the county, this number declines to 53 percent for householders of color. To address these disparities between renters and homeowners and to ensure housing stability for renters in the county, the county should aim to strengthen its protections for its renters. This requires investments in rental housing quality and code enforcement, as well as increasing access to affordable, safe, stable, and decent housing. In addition, the county should pursue policies that protect and increase tenants’ rights and ensure that renters’ contributions to the community are emphasized and valued.

There are plenty of challenging stories about housing experiences. It is clear that many of the mechanisms put in place to help are being offset by personal bias (racism) in the system or by individual actors. The County will need to be vigilant to seek accountabilities for all actors. Successfully addressing racism in housing will require deliberate action and systems of checks and balances.

Compact Growth

Encouraging growth in already developed areas, has ripple effects. Density brings economic opportunity as well as increased diversity of population and housing opportunities, social capital, and promotion of social justice, but it can also strain existing infrastructure, impacting the quality of natural resources, parks, schools, and neighborhoods. If new development occurs areas where existing naturally occurring affordable housing exists, the County must continue its progressive policies and programs and create new mechanisms and infrastructure to ensure that as the population density increases, residents maintain equitable access to parks, recreation, natural resources, and high-quality places which influence quality of life. Additionally, as density increases, increased consideration needs to be made towards maintenance and operations of public spaces and institutions to ensure that effective stewardship is achieved and maintained.

Environmental Justice

As the County grows, special attention will need to be paid to Environmental Justice issues. New residents may strain existing infrastructure, suggesting the need for sustainable practices to ensure that the County is able to maintain good air and water quality, preserve urban tree canopy, manage stormwater, and invest in renewable sources of energy. Analysis of environmental quality shows that residents of the Target Areas where the majority of BIPOC and Low-Income residents live are more likely to be exposed to poor environmental conditions and live next to polluting land uses. As we look towards the future, and grapple with issues like climate change we need to be deliberate in protecting the County's vulnerable residents to ensure they do not have their life challenges compounded by disproportionate exposure to environmental threats.

Transportation

The plight of the working class and many BIPOC people we talked to felt that the needs of working-class families were not considered in the planning themes of Thrive. They felt that many of the “progressive” policies did not consider their current status in life and expressed how proposed changes would adversely impact their quality of life. Some people showed great resistance to the idea of '15-minute living' because they relied on their work vehicles to take them to different parts of the county where they had access to jobs. Many expressed that they rely on vehicle miles and parking availability to make a living. For some, getting a vehicle represented the possibility of financial independence. To others, the idea of riding a bike for leisure or to commute was seen as a luxury that comes with a level of economic empowerment they did not have yet. These sentiments are compounded by the long commutes even more traditional workers faced while using locally available transit options. There was a general sentiment that root issues needed to be addressed before new ideas could be successfully implemented.

Instead of welcoming these ideas as positive, they are often seen as a harbinger for gentrification and displacement. Ideas such as congestion pricing and reduced parking requirements that promote “good urbanism” are sometimes outside of the reality for working class people. There is a concern that shifting to this new way of life will make it harder for them to live in the county. Such programs and requirements could impact service providers such as building contractors, landscape services, plumbers, etc., and their workforce, and they can also impact the range of services provided by these contractors. As stated in the Transportation chapter, such policies should be evaluated to ensure equitable outcomes for business and workers who rely on vehicles for their livelihood and provide essential support services for the county residents.

Social Capital

In order for a shared sense of purpose to exist, it is not a one-way process. Communities where wealthy white residents are the norm also have to achieve integration and inclusivity. It could be argued that it is in fact more important for these communities to begin to see their communities as having a shared sense of purpose instead of only addressing racial and economic inequality at the "problem" side of the spectrum. Part of the inequality equation is the exclusivity of the wealthy, some of these doors need to start being opened to truly create a shared sense of purpose and belonging for ALL County residents. Exclusivity reinforces the racial and class divides within society.

Cultural Competence

It is vital to have practitioners who can relate to the communities they serve. In executing planning in communities of color, practitioners must lead with deference. Being able to understand cultural cues and nuance plays a large role in comprehension and meaningful engagement. If communities feel that they are not being respected or understood, real conversations will not occur.

Community Development

The County has a tremendous opportunity, with Thrive, to develop partnerships with its communities that it can leverage to rebuild trust, strengthen relationships, and celebrate everything that is great about the region. Montgomery County has had success with diversifying by implementing inclusionary zoning in the 70's and 80's. Now, it is important to do the work to protect the existing communities. Planning should seek to leverage and strengthen the existing

social networks and identify opportunities to empower local actors to be directly involved in the work of community development.

Economic Empowerment

Throughout the public engagement process, it was clear that displacement is a big fear for residents with fewer means, as they are witnessing escalating prices. The vast majority of working-class people expressed that they want access to better education and economic opportunity. Most people who struggle to make 'ends meet' prioritize economic advancement as their number one priority and planning for their communities should reflect that reality.

Neighborhood Change and Displacement Risk

The Montgomery County Planning Department is engaged in important work to understand the displacement risk in the County. These types of analysis need to be leveraged to understand how to protect neighborhoods and encourage Inclusive Growth. Across the board, low-income and BIPOC residents are very worried about displacement as a result of new development.

More work needs to be put into understanding how to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing and establishing new affordable housing to ensure that Montgomery County doesn't lose the rich diversity, both racial and economic, to make it a complete community. If housing conditions continue on their trajectory, 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.

Conclusion

Racial equity and social inclusion are essential to our economic success as well as to our ability to produce more equitable outcomes for all our residents. Thrive Montgomery 2050 provides an assessment of the challenges that stand in our way and proposes policies and practices that can help remove these obstacles. As the demographics of our community change rapidly along dimensions of age, race and ethnicity, income and wealth, culture and language, the need to confront inequity is urgent.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE

Montgomery County has been a leader in the adoption of forward-thinking policies that emphasize land preservation for resource conservation and agriculture, protection of our streams, forests, specimen trees, wetlands, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Much of our success has resulted from the long-range vision cast in our General Plan. The “Wedges and Corridors” concept of development has focused most development along our major transportation corridors and created the large Agricultural Reserve that provides critical environmental services, such as watershed protection, habitat preservation, biodiversity conservation, and the protection of forests and open spaces that filter air and water pollution and sequester and store carbon.

However, climate change has exacerbated existing environmental challenges, and it requires us to refocus our planning framework on sustainability and resilience. This is all the more important because communities with larger populations of people of color and low-income communities

are more vulnerable to the worst impacts of climate change due to past and present patterns of discrimination.

Building Resiliency and Sustainability

Thrive Montgomery builds on the “Wedges and Corridors” concept and refines and updates the corridor growth strategy to reflect Montgomery County’s status as a mature, 21st century jurisdiction. This pattern of growth is the primary way that Montgomery County can effectively address climate change.

Thrive supports the well-established “smart growth” strategy of creating dense, compact development with mixed uses, served by transportation infrastructure and design approaches that encourage walking and biking and transit use, concentrated in areas where existing infrastructure can support additional development while minimizing environmental impacts. This land use pattern can reduce driving, which will reduce emissions from the operation of internal combustion engines now and reduce demand on the power grid in the future as more of our power for both building use and transportation will be supplied by clean, renewable energy sources. These kinds of compact, mixed-use communities are also becoming more desirable places for people to live and creation of these types of communities strengthens our economic competitiveness.

Of course, not even the most forward-thinking transportation planning and growth strategies will be able to resolve every environmental challenge facing the county. Thrive Montgomery 2050 builds on the tradition of robust conservation and protection of the natural environment, continuing to prioritize protection of air and water quality and preservation of the County’s biological diversity as key elements of its environmental vision. Climate change adds new concerns to be addressed in each of these areas. In response to our growing understanding of human impacts on the environment and the role of our history in creating an inequitable society, Thrive Montgomery 2050 emphasizes three aspects of environmental stewardship and performance: mitigating and adapting to climate change, focusing on environmental justice, and protecting and improving human health.

- Climate change: Thrive Montgomery’s recommendations are designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help the County adapt to the effects of climate change impacts that are already evident and growing worse, and improve the County’s ability to bounce back from major disruptions. The most significant proposals to address climate change include:
 - Air Quality: Most air pollution in Montgomery County is produced by the burning of fossil fuels. Rising temperatures can exacerbate the effect of this pollution by increasing ground-level ozone generation, among other things. Strategies for reducing air pollution and improving air quality overlap with Thrive’s recommendations on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
 - Water Quality, Flooding, and Drinking Water Supply: Climate change adds new concerns around water quality, flooding, and the supply of potable water. More severe storms interspersed with more frequent droughts make management of Montgomery County’s watersheds imperative both to reduce flooding and to protect our water supply. Most of the drinking water for Montgomery County comes from the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers, with the Potomac River supplying a larger amount. Some properties, especially

in the northern and western portions of the county, are served instead by private wells instead of public water. Protection of these water supplies depends on protecting and managing the watersheds that sustain them and the streams that drain the watersheds. Thrive Montgomery 2050's recommendations to preserve and protect the Agricultural Reserve and implement Smart Growth recommendations help to protect large watersheds to the north and west that drain to the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers and Little Seneca Lake, which serves as an emergency water reservoir when the flow in the Potomac River is low. Stormwater management and sediment and erosion control systems are especially important for managing flooding and protecting and improving water quality in the developed and developing areas of the County, especially as our climate continues to change. Due to future regional water supply uncertainties that may result from contamination events, and the potential impacts from climate change, additional off-river water supply projects are currently being studied by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in coordination with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and the County.

More distant regional water resources such as the Chesapeake Bay are also affected by land use in our County. Runoff from the County's land eventually makes its way downstream to the Chesapeake Bay, which is a priceless natural resource of national significance. The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States, and has tremendous economic, environmental, and recreational value. In 1983, the Chesapeake Bay Program was founded to plan and implement programs and policies to restore Bay functions that have been impaired due to human activities throughout the Bay's watershed. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, signed in 2014 and amended in 2020, establishes goals and desired outcomes for restoration of the Bay and management of the watersheds that drain to it. Montgomery County is also subject to Total Maximum Daily Load limits for certain pollutants to bring surface water bodies into compliance with State water quality standards. These standards were created under requirements established in the Clean Water Act and are administered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The same Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations for protecting and enhancing watersheds, streams and aquifers that supply our vital natural ecosystems, maintain our local water quality, and supply our drinking water will also contribute to meeting the goals and outcomes for restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.

- Biological diversity: Worldwide concern is growing over the continuing loss of biological diversity, with most species extinctions resulting from habitat damage. The decline of species diversity is exacerbated by the changing climate. Most of Montgomery County's critical habitats are either within existing parks or in the Agricultural Reserve. Thrive Montgomery 2050 focuses new growth in existing areas of development and corridors, preserving habitat in stream valley parks, regional parks, and outlying areas of the County. Recommendations for parks and forests renew our commitment to environmental stewardship, including support for biodiversity through habitat management practices such as the control of invasive species.
- Environmental justice: Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends examining land use decisions to identify vulnerable communities that have become receiving areas for unwanted and potentially harmful land uses, and that have not received equitable investments in environmentally beneficial green infrastructure.

- Human health: Thrive Montgomery 2050 promotes policies that reflect the growing body of research demonstrating the physical and mental health benefits of reducing air pollution and extreme heat and providing facilities and opportunities for walking and biking. In addition, stronger support for active recreation can facilitate social interaction and community-building while improving physical health.

To address these issues, Thrive Montgomery prioritizes policies and practices that address climate mitigation, adaptation, and creation of community resilience. It facilitates the transition to renewable energy generation, distributed energy systems, modernization of the power grid, and energy conservation. It recommends incorporating green infrastructure into our urban areas, paying particular attention to our equity focus areas. It supports improvements in our organic waste management systems, including food waste composting and other natural solutions to address climate change. The plan also anticipates the need to improve the resilience of public and private infrastructure to withstand more severe weather and protect us from the effects of environmental degradation. These recommendations appear throughout the plan and are consistent with the County's Climate Action Plan.

Some environmental policies which will need to be considered in the context of future master planning efforts and other County land-use decisions should include: minimizing imperviousness in new development and redevelopment and removing unnecessary impervious surfaces where feasible, protecting, enhancing, and increasing the coverage, connectivity, and health of natural habitats such as forests, non-forest tree canopy, wetlands, and meadows through land acquisition, easements, habitat restoration, and ecosystem management, and protecting watersheds and aquifers and improving water quality and stream conditions through enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increased tree canopy, and green stormwater management.

Key Aspects of Thrive's Focus on Environmental Resilience

Reducing sprawl, which degrades air and water quality, is a central theme of Thrive. The chart below compares the environmental impact of different development patterns: (1) the least compact – low density sprawl, (2) a more compact footprint (typically mixed-use) and (3) the most compact form, usually associated with large cities. The data shows that a starting point for improving the environmental performance of the built environment is compact form – that is, keeping our growth footprint from spreading outward.

Thrive urges a reorientation of public and private investment around walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented development. Focused growth and a mix of uses reduces driving even in places not served by high quality transit. As shown in the chart below, people who live closest to Metrorail stations drive much less than people who live farther away. These areas, shown in dark red, are within walking distance to high-quality transit service as well as numerous services and establishments. More surprisingly, perhaps, is the fact that households in the orange areas inside the Beltway and up the I-270 corridor also generate relatively low vehicle miles traveled (VMT), even though they are not in a central business district or located next to a Metro station. People who live in these areas are not within walking distance of Metrorail and most are unlikely to feel that they can give up their cars – but most of their daily needs are just a short drive away because of a robust mix of uses in these communities. As a result, people in these areas drive more than people who live within walking distance of Metrorail but far less than people who live farther away from major centers of activity.

The intended result of Thrive’s focus on compact growth and complete communities is to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and to meet environmental goals. Even with conversions to electric cars, driving puts strains on our infrastructure and potentially on our electric grid – which will need to accommodate more building energy use as structures move away from using natural gas.

Other environmental resilience recommendations in Thrive flow from this focus on compact growth and complete communities. For example, new compact development along corridors that provides modern stormwater management allows for a continued emphasis on open space preservation elsewhere in the County. This combination of improved stormwater management through redevelopment with green infrastructure and public investment along with continued protection of stream valleys and larger watersheds in our parks and in the Agricultural Reserve creates a comprehensive approach to protecting the County’s water resources. Thrive also includes urban design recommendations that will promote site and building energy efficiency and adaptations for combatting urban heat island effect.

As noted above, parks serve an environmental function through protection of open space and natural resources. They also contribute to physical and mental health by providing facilities and opportunities for walking, biking and other forms of active recreation. Stronger support for active recreation can facilitate social interaction and community-building while improving physical health.

Relationship Between the Climate Action Plan and Thrive Montgomery 2050

Thrive Montgomery 2050 was drafted in parallel with the county’s 2021 Climate Action Plan (CAP). Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a high-level land use document that focuses on long-range planning and policies to guide the physical development of the county, while the CAP recommends specific near-term actions to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 as called for in Council Resolution 18-974 “Emergency Climate Mobilization” adopted in December 2017, and to mitigate or and to mitigate or adapt to the effects of increased heat and flooding, high winds, and drought. Thrive Montgomery 2050 incorporates a wide range of recommendations related to climate change and its connection to land use, transportation, and parks. The Planning and Parks Departments will implement recommendations in the CAP that are within the scope of the M-NCPPC’s responsibilities. Together these plans constitute a comprehensive approach to climate change at the local level. Specific strategies, recommendations, and performance measures to implement the sustainability and resilience goals of Thrive Montgomery are contained in each chapter.

Conclusion: A Comprehensive and Coordinated Approach to a Sustainable Future

The environmental challenges facing our county are driven by many factors, some local and some that stretch far beyond our borders and control. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a land use document and is clear eyed about what this discipline can do to mitigate the effects of climate change. Accommodating growth in compact, transit-served developments, using redevelopment and infill to upgrade the environmental performance of buildings and sites, and mixing and collocating uses in Complete Communities along with increased support for walking, biking, and transit are among the most powerful strategies at our disposal.

The approach recommended by this plan also will enable the county to preserve parks and large tracts of land in the Agricultural Reserve that provide critical environmental services, including habitat preservation, watershed and water supply protection, air and water quality improvement,

and carbon sequestration and storage. This pattern of development, first established in the original “Wedges and Corridors” plan, continues to provide a strong framework for addressing climate change and fostering environmental resilience.

The interconnection of land use, transportation, climate change/sustainability, and equity require us to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to growth instead of the more compartmentalized way of approaching each topic. The nature of the severe and changing climate impacts that are becoming more prevalent and may grow worse will require a shared understanding among all decisionmakers of the overlap between land use, transportation, housing, parks, and the environment that is necessary for a comprehensive and well-coordinated approach to achieving our environmental sustainability and resilience goals.

Page 17: Insert a generalized land use map from the 1993 Refinement after the second paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve? Focusing Growth, Connecting Communities, and Reinvigorating East County”.

Page 18: Amend the first sentence of the third paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve? Focusing Growth, Connecting Communities, and Reinvigorating East County” as follows:

Moreover, the Wedges and Corridors plan [neglected to] did not fully articulate how the broader public should expect to benefit from maintaining a rural pattern over much of the county’s land area⁷.

⁷ Approximately 1/3 of Montgomery County makes up the Agricultural Reserve.

Page 19: Amend the first and second paragraph under “What policies will solve the problem? Refining – and Recommitting to a Compact Footprint” as follows:

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 [and intensively developed centers of activity, or nodes,]. And makes a new commitment to promoting growth along major transportation corridors to maximize the efficient use of land and create Complete Communities. These corridors [establish] 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 includes 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.

Page 19: Amend the second sentence of the fourth paragraph under “What policies will solve the problem? Refining – and Recommitting to a Compact Footprint” as follows:

By [identifying] describing the types of places where context-sensitive growth should be encouraged, this chapter aims to establish[es] the foundation for Complete Communities, which depend on a compact footprint to give them the coherence, focus, and mix of activities necessary to succeed.

Page 20: Revise the 2050 Growth Map to reflect the Council decisions: rename Large Center #9 White Flint as North Bethesda; remove Darnestown, Villages and Neighborhood Center #5; and add a color gradient to the Limited Growth Area.

Page 22: Amend the first bullet under “Concentrate growth in centers of activity and along corridors through compact, infill development and redevelopment to maximize efficient use of land.” As follows:

- Focus future land use and public infrastructure planning in activity centers and on growth corridors so as 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, Env, Eq)

Page 22: Amend the second bolded policy as follows:

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.

Page 22: Amend the third bullet under “Promote and prioritize public investment in infrastructure along growth corridors and leverage it to attract future private investment in a compact form.” as follows:

- Leverage federal, state, and local incentive programs, publicly owned land and land investment opportunities for [corridor] infill development and redevelopment in activity centers and along corridors. (Ec, Env, Eq)

Page 22: Insert a fourth bullet under “Promote and prioritize public investment in infrastructure along growth corridors and leverage it to attract future private investment in a compact form.” as follows:

- 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)

Page 23: Amend the third bullet under “Preserve and enhance the Agricultural Reserve and manage it to maintain a rural pattern of development for the benefit of the entire county.” as follows:

- Improve awareness of and multi-modal access to the Agricultural Reserve for the public to experience and directly benefit from this valuable resource for locally grown food, outdoor recreation, and tourism. (Ec, Eq)

Page 24: Amend the last sentence of the first paragraph under “Compact Development to Support Vibrant, Diverse, and Sustainable Places” as follows:

If we fail to maintain effective barriers to sprawl, we will likely paint ourselves into a corner where space for farming, recreation, and resource management is exhausted along with space for additional growth.

Page 24: Amend the second paragraph under “Compact Development to Support Vibrant, Diverse, and Sustainable Places” as follows:

We must encourage compact, infill development and redevelopment to accommodate anticipated population growth in a way that supports appropriately dense, vibrant, energized communities. The strategy of concentrating context-sensitive growth within [nodes] centers of activity and along corridors will direct population and employment to locations served by infrastructure, services, and amenities – including transit – and create focused centers of activity. This focus [will] should in turn reduce the cost of public infrastructure and deliver more favorable returns on both public and private investment. Compact, infill development and redevelopment also align with the increasing desire of residents, businesses and employers seeking walkable, transit-oriented communities, as demonstrated by transit-oriented areas across the region and country.

Page 24: Amend the last sentence of the first paragraph under “Economic Health: Compact Form as the Foundation for More Appealing Places” as follows:

The related ideas of Compact Form, Complete Communities and Design Excellence will [result in] encourage the development of places that attract both businesses and residents.

Page 24: Amend the second paragraph under “Economic Health: Compact Form as the Foundation for More Appealing Places” as follows:

Compact development footprint is an important tool in creating the kind of centers that support a strong economy. The lack of large tracts of vacant, unconstrained land does not mean that Montgomery County cannot grow its economy. However, [the focus needs to switch to thinking] we need to think differently about where growth happens and compactly developing areas that have not been considered in the past, such as surface parking lots and colocation of facilities. Even though the county is running out of greenfields to accommodate [sprawling]campus-like employment centers or new residential neighborhoods, this plan does not recommend expanding our development footprint well beyond the Corridor-Focused Growth area. Instead, it emphasizes that the current supply of redevelopable land – if developed compactly and creatively – is sufficient to attract and retain a variety of employers, especially advanced knowledge-based industries looking for vibrant centers and a highly trained, diverse workforce. It is important to note that form alone will not create more jobs. Increased density, great transit options and a regulatory environment that supports investment are all required. Other changes are needed in terms of financial incentives, tax reform and investment in infrastructure.

Page 25: Amend the first paragraph under “Racial Equity and Rebalancing the Geographic Distribution of Opportunity” as follows:

The identification of growth corridors in the East County – particularly along Route 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 [P]olitical opposition to development in the East County – most clearly expressed by the removal of the I- 95/Route 29 corridor in the 1993 Refinement of the Wedges and Corridors Plan 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.

Page 25: Amend the first paragraph under “Racial Equity and Rebalancing the Geographic Distribution of Opportunity” as follows:

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. While the potential for displacement must always be considered – and [this plan calls for] 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 [that will] and create a more prosperous and equitable future in all parts of the county.

Page 26: Amend the first paragraph under “Compact Growth and Environmental Performance: Improved Air and Water Quality with More Efficient Use of Land” as follows:

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[s] walking, biking, and transit use and reduce[s] 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.

Page 27: Amend the first sentence of the second paragraph under “Compact Growth and Environmental Performance: Improved Air and Water Quality with More Efficient Use of Land” as follows:

Compact growth can also improve[s] the environmental performance of both sites and buildings, as it allows the redevelopment of areas developed prior to the adoption of modern stormwater controls and often characterized by high proportions of impervious surface cover.

Page 28: Amend the first, second, and fourth bullets under “How will we evaluate progress?” as follows:

- Amount of infill development/redevelopment in activity centers and along major corridors.

- Proportion of new population, employment and housing within a mile (or half-mile) of activity centers and priority corridors.
- Amount of public and private investment in infrastructure, services, and amenities in activity centers and along corridors, overall and by area of county.

Page 29: Amend the first bullet under “What is the problem we are trying to solve? A Mixed Record with Mixed Use” as follows:

- The separate-and-buffer approach failed to anticipate – much less meet – the demand for housing in mixed-use centers of activity. For the most part, the corridor cities neither achieved the densities nor provided for the variety of uses, building types and services necessary to maximize their value in attracting residents and workers looking for more vibrant and appealing places to both live and work.

Page 30: Amend the last sentence of the third paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve? A Mixed Record with Mixed Use” as follows:

By separating uses and investing heavily in roads, we have historically made driving the only practical way for many residents and workers to meet their daily needs – including trips that should be feasible on foot, on a bicycle, or on a train or bus, including for those with disabilities and those with young children.

Page 30: Amend the second sentence of the fourth paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve? A Mixed Record with Mixed Use” as follows:

Our land use policies have evolved in recent years to reflect a changing social and demographic context as well as changing preferences and planning approaches.

Page 30: Amend the third sentence of the second paragraph under “Beyond Transit-Oriented Development: Complete Communities and 15-Minute Living” as follows:

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 [district] community; proximity to transit, [parks and public facilities;] variation in physical features such as topography and environmental resources; and other factors unique to the history and context of each place.

Page 31: Add a footnote to “the State’s four growth tiers” to provide the following reference:

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

Page 31: Amend the last sentence of the first bullet under “Different Ingredients for Different Communities” as follows:

- Complete community 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.

Page 31: Amend the last sentence of the second paragraph under “Different Ingredients for Different Communities” as follows:

The recommendations in this chapter and elsewhere in the plan can help make these [neighborhoods] developing centers of activity more walkable and livable.

Page 32: Amend the last sentence of the second paragraph under “The Connection Between Complete Communities and Corridor-Focused Growth” as follows:

Specific strategies will be needed to recognize and minimize the negative impacts of gentrification on communities and businesses at risk of displacement, including the recommendations described in the chapter on housing together with policies outside the scope of this plan, such as direct assistance to small and minority-owned businesses, Community Benefit Agreements, and housing subsidies.

Page 32: Insert a sentence after the last sentence of the second paragraph under “The Connection Between Complete Communities and Corridor-Focused Growth” as follows:

Specific strategies also will be needed to ensure that the infill and redevelopment does not have negative environmental consequences such as expanding urban heat islands and increasing stormwater run-off problems.

Page 32: Amend the third and fifth bullets under “Identify and integrate elements needed to complete centers of housing, retail, and office development and plan to make 15-minute living a reality for as many people as possible.” as follows:

- Prioritize neighborhood-level land use planning as a tool to enhance overall quality of community life and avoid reinforcing outdated land use patterns, with particular attention to preventing displacement. (Eq)
- Ensure that Complete Communities are integrated into their surroundings and supported by a public realm that encourages walking, biking and rolling, accessible for all, as well as social interaction through the configuration of sidewalks, paths, landmarks, parks, and gathering spaces. (Ec, Env, Eq)

Page 32: Insert the following two bullets under “Identify and integrate elements needed to complete centers of housing, retail, and office development and plan to make 15-minute living a reality for as many people as possible.”:

- Support the creation of neighborhood stabilization strategies for communities of color. (Eq)
- Develop strategies to ensure that the infill and redevelopment does not result in negative environmental consequences such as increased stormwater run-off, loss of tree canopy, and the expansion of heat islands. (En)

Page 33: Amend the first two bullets under “Encourage co-location and adjacency of all essential and public services, especially along growth corridors and in Complete Communities.” as follows:

- Maximize the accessibility and utility of public facilities by locating them in places that promote integration with other public and private uses and infrastructure. (Env, Eq)
- Promote active transportation improvements that prioritize walking, biking, rolling, and transit use to enhance public access to these co-located facilities, including access for seniors and those with disabilities. (Env, Eq)

Page 33: Amend the bolded policy as follows:

“Retrofit centers of activity and large-scale older facilities such as shopping centers, abandoned federal campuses, office parks, and other single-use developments to include a mixture of uses and diversity of housing types and to provide a critical mass of housing, jobs, services, and amenities necessary for vibrant, dynamic Complete Communities.”

Page 33: Amend the first bullet under “Retrofit centers of activity and large-scale older facilities such as shopping centers, abandoned federal campuses, office parks, and other single-use developments to include a mixture of uses and diversity of housing types and to provide a critical mass of housing, jobs, services, and amenities for vibrant, dynamic Complete Communities.” as follows:

- Ensure employment uses in economic clusters develop in a mixed-use format along with housing, retail, amenities, parks and public spaces, and transit, and ensure they are integrated into the surrounding communities in a context sensitive manner. (Ec, Env, Eq)

Page 33: Amend the second sentence of the second paragraph under “Economic Health: Complete Communities as Magnets for a Variety of People, Businesses, and Jobs” as follows:

The central premise is that making [individual neighborhoods and districts] centers of activity, regardless of scale more complete is among the most effective ways to accomplish this goal.

Page 34: Amend the fourth paragraph under “Economic Health: Complete Communities as Magnets for a Variety of People, Businesses, and Jobs” as follows:

As previously explained, the creation of vibrant, dynamic Complete Communities that include housing, a diversity of jobs, services, amenities, parks and public spaces, and opportunities for social gathering and interaction [will]are likely to attract employment, advancing our economic performance and competitiveness. This approach will not be sufficient standing alone and it is not intended as a substitute for other elements of a comprehensive economic development strategy. In an era with limited demand for new office construction and a strong market preference for locating businesses in high-quality, mixed- use, walkable and transit-oriented areas, however, it is currently considered one of the best strategies available to local government to attract and retain employers.

Page 34: Amend the paragraph under “The Role of Complete Communities in Environmental Resilience: Community Gap-Filling as Sustainability Strategy” as follows:

Finally, Complete Communities [will also] have the potential to create long-term sustainability for both human and environmental health. A mixture of uses and forms, together with a built environment that facilitates active lifestyles, allows more trips to be completed by walking, biking, rolling, and transit, reducing vehicle miles traveled and dependence on cars while

increasing physical fitness and opportunities for social interaction. Establishing Complete Communities in the corridor-focused growth areas and within centers throughout the county reduces the distance that people, particularly those within suburban and rural areas, must drive to meet their daily needs, further reducing vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Likewise, the mixture of uses, co-location and adjacency of public services and amenities can improve[s] sustainability by reducing building footprints and cutting energy use. Co-location can also help[s] to maximize community use and social interaction.

Page 36: Amend the first sentence of the first paragraph under “Introduction: Why Design Matters” as follows:

Design of the built environment can strongly influence[s] our quality of life.

Page 36: Amend the last sentence of the fourth paragraph under “Introduction: Why Design Matters” as follows:

And it emphasizes [supporting] the importance of a healthy arts and culture ecosystem that can highlight new perspectives, preserve local history and traditions, deepen our understanding of others, and expand our imaginations.

Page 37: Amend the second sentence of the second paragraph under “Greenfield Regulatory Tools in a Post-Greenfield County” as follows:

We [must]should prioritize whenever possible the attributes of neighborhood and site design that strongly influence perceptions of the quality and potential of a place.

Page 38: Insert a sentence after the last sentence of the second paragraph under “Design for Cars at the Expense of People – and Adaptability” as follows:

Commercial buildings designed to accommodate single uses, while less expensive when considered in isolation, are inflexible and costly to reuse. Malls, office parks, and other large, single-use buildings are often difficult to repurpose and the high cost of adapting their layouts to meet new spatial needs due to technological shifts, demographic changes, and market preferences shrinks their useful lives and makes them less sustainable. The consequences of the limited adaptability of our building stock are evident in persistently elevated office vacancy rates accompanied by an acute shortage of housing. In the future, flexible design should allow for adaptive reuse with floor-to-ceiling heights and floor plates that can accommodate a variety of uses and changing needs.

Page 38: Amend the first paragraph under “What policies will solve the problem? Better design and more reliance on form-based tools to provide clear direction and build great places” as follows:

In order to maximize the contributions of design – along with arts and culture - toward creating strong communities with lasting value, the county [will] should pursue the following policies and practices:

Page 39: Amend the second and fifth sub-bullets under the bullet “Consider changes to codes, design guidelines, and regulatory tools as well as broader use of form-based zoning that focuses on the

physical forms of buildings, streets, and spaces to ensure development across the county satisfies the following:” as follows:

- Link individual architectural projects seamlessly to their surroundings irrespective of style, discouraging walls and buffers that can separate and disconnect communities. Civic buildings and public gathering places [must] should be treated as important sites whose design reinforces community identity and a culture of inclusion and democracy. (Eq)
- Physically integrate government and private development sites into their surrounding neighborhoods such that they welcome the public and support economic development by facilitating movement and fostering interaction [of] between people and the transfer of ideas and innovation. (Ec, Env)

Page 39: Insert two sub-bullets under the bullet “Consider changes to codes, design guidelines, and regulatory tools as well as broader use of form-based zoning that focuses on the physical forms of buildings, streets, and spaces to ensure development across the county satisfies the following:” as follows:

- Encourage investment in urban design and architecture that promotes safe communities and civic pride. (Eq)
- Examine the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) or other standards in the development of Design Guidelines to encourage safe/welcoming public spaces. (Ec, Eq)

Page 39: Amend the second bullet “Use design-based tools to create attractive places with lasting value that encourage social interaction and reinforce a sense of place and inclusion.” as follows:

- Support the development of housing by replacing [vague and subjective] concepts such as “compatibility” with clear standards for form, site layout, setbacks, architecture, and the location of parking.

Page 39: Amend the third bullet under “Use design-based tools to create attractive places with lasting value that encourage social interaction and reinforce a sense of place and inclusion.” as follows:

- Consider updating [Update]the zoning code to include basic form-based elements for all zones. Adopt context-sensitive design guidance for all master planning efforts.

Page 40: Amend the second bullet under “Support arts and cultural institutions and programming to educate, connect and build communities that celebrate our diversity and strengthen pride of place.” as follows:

- Promote public art, cultural spaces, and cultural hubs along corridors and in Complete Communities, leveraging the County’s rich cultural and socio-economic diversity. (Ec, Eq)

Page 40: Insert a bullet under “Support arts and cultural institutions and programming to educate, connect and build communities that celebrate our diversity and strengthen pride of place.” as follows:

- Promote the celebration of “Diversity Hubs” as places to reinforce inclusion. (Eq)

Page 40: Amend the second paragraph under “Great Design Creates Great Places that Draw People and Businesses” as follows:

Design and public art, through their contribution to the built environment, help to create economically successful communities. Design-based tools [will] help to create attractive buildings, streets, and public spaces that are likely to retain greater economic value over time. The thoughtful arrangement of these elements [will] can create places that become destinations for commerce and social activity and add value to their surroundings, encouraging neighboring owners to reinvest in their own properties to match and take advantage of adjacencies. Places designed with pedestrians in mind will lead to more healthy physical activity as well as human interaction, facilitating the exchange of ideas, attracting innovative companies and creative professionals. Comfortable, tree-lined streets will meet market demand for walkable places.

Page 41: Amend the third paragraph under “Great Design Creates Great Places that Draw People and Businesses” as follows:

In addition to contributing to the built environment, the entire arts-and-culture sector generates energy and creativity that spur economic growth. Affordable living, administrative, working, and presentation spaces for artists [will]can help to showcase our diversity and attract and retain cultural uses and arts-related businesses. Strategic investments in these kinds of spaces can increase the economic contribution of arts and culture over the long run by reinforcing the role of the sector in building centers for social gathering and cultural events which may in turn attract other business and investment.

Page 41: Amend the second sentence of the first paragraph under “Better Design Strengthens Community and Highlights the Benefits of Cultural Diversity” as follows:

Public spaces that encourage [Encouraging] different kinds of people to interact [in public spaces] is important to building a sense of community with shared interests and values.

Page 41: Amend the second paragraph under “Better Design Strengthens Community and Highlights the Benefits of Cultural Diversity” as follows:

Design codes that are well thought out, developed with community input, and based on physical form [will]can serve as more predictable guides for change, address community concerns [over]about accommodating growth, and illustrate hard-to-define concepts such as “character” and “compatibility.” A shift away from [these kinds of] vague and subjective standards will help make regulatory decisions more equitable by applying more objective criteria in evaluating development proposals and their relationship to their surroundings. Clear standards governing acceptable form [will] may, depending on market conditions, encourage the introduction of different housing types and neighborhood- serving retail, facilitating the creation of mixed income neighborhoods where essential services are within walking distance of most residences.

Page 42: Delete the first sentence of the third paragraph under “Better Design Strengthens Community and Highlights the Benefits of Cultural Diversity”.

Page 42: Amend the first paragraph under “Design Plays a Critical Role in Environmental Performance” as follows:

Sustainable design strategies for new construction and retrofits will enhance the environmental performance of buildings and neighborhoods. Promoting sustainability features in new public and private buildings will restrain and may reduce the ecological impact of growth. Strategies for onsite energy generation, new tree plantings in redeveloped parking lots and along streets, and state-of-the-practice stormwater management will help increase the resilience of the power grid and mitigate the negative effects of flooding and excessive heat, resulting in more adaptable development in the face of a changing climate.

Page 42: Amend the first sentence of the second paragraph under “Design Plays a Critical Role in Environmental Performance” as follows:

Encouraging adaptive reuse of existing buildings and incentivizing cost-effective retrofits of single-use sites into mixed-use projects will help reduce energy consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions.

Page 44: Amend the third paragraph under “The interdependence of transportation and land use” as follows:

Thrive Montgomery’s 2050’s focus on compact growth and infill – along with the limited availability of land for expanding rights-of-way – makes it essential that over the 30 years of the plan we [decisively reject the impulse to ensure that driving remains as easy and convenient as possible in favor of] work to make[making] walking, rolling, bicycling, and transit the most practical, safe and attractive ways of getting from one place to another. Cars – even cars equipped with autonomous driving technology - require much more space per passenger than buses and trains, and walking, rolling, and bicycling are the most spatially efficient forms of travel of all. Market preferences have shifted [dramatically] in recent decades to favor locations with transit, bike and pedestrian access over place oriented around automobile travel, and the importance of reduced reliance on driving to meet our greenhouse gas emissions goals is obvious. However, we must keep in mind the importance of roads for the delivery of goods and services, including police, fire, and emergency services, as well as the fact that until other forms of transit are more fully developed, adequate roads that are also safe for walking, rolling, and biking are necessary. In addition, roads in Montgomery County serve as evacuation routes during natural disasters and national security events, including Continuity of Government plans.

Page 45: Amend the first sentence of the fourth paragraph under “The interdependence of transportation and land use” as follows:

[Just as importantly, the addition of highways, travel lanes and grade-separated interchanges may help to relieve congestion in the short term, but] Particular characteristics of the currently planned roadway network - new highways, wide roads, and high-speed access ramps – in some locations are fundamentally at odds with efforts to design neighborhoods and districts to encourage human interaction and foster a sense of place.

Page 45: Amend the first sentence of the first paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve? Successive generations of investment in automobility have created a vicious cycle” as follows:

Our dependence on driving is rooted in part in generations of efforts to facilitate the movement of as many automobiles as quickly as possible while funneling traffic to a handful of north-south arterial roadways that tie otherwise disconnected subdivisions to job and retail centers.

Page 46: Amend the first, second and third paragraphs under “Excessive dependence on cars threatens safety, erodes quality of life and reduces resilience” as follows:

The most obviously and acutely damaging consequence of this dynamic is that pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers are killed or seriously injured with disturbing frequency. Somewhat more subtle [, but perhaps just as significant,] is the effect that automobile-oriented design has on the vitality and appeal of neighborhoods and commercial districts alike. Safe, attractive streets encourage people to get out and walk, pedal, or roll, whether simply to get some exercise, to run an errand, to go to work or school, or to reach an intermediate destination such as a bus stop or rail station. This kind of activity supports physical and mental health and facilitates the casual social interaction that build a sense of place and community. [Ugly, unsafe roadways are] Some roadways can be barriers that degrade the quality of life of everyone who lives and works near them, even if they are never involved in a traffic collision [and even if they do not personally enjoy walking, rolling or bicycling].

Although Montgomery County’s investment in transit has contributed to a slight decline in vehicle miles travelled (VMT) per capita, due to population growth overall VMT has continued increasing, which has a huge impact on the county’s efforts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. In 2018, 42 percent of the County’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were generated by the transportation sector (on-road transportation, aviation, rail, and off-road vehicles). Motor vehicles accounted for 36 percent of emissions in 2018. Private cars accounted for approximately 75 percent of all trips taken in the county followed by buses at 10 percent, rail with 5 percent, walking at 2 percent, taxi/ride hailing services (such as Uber and Lyft) with 1 percent, and biking at less than 1 percent. [Without a significant intervention] Until a majority of the current fleet transitions to electric and other zero-emission power sources, the current pattern will continue to increase our transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of pollution.

The 1964 hub-and-spoke model of arterial corridors radiating from Washington [, The radial pattern of automobile-centric corridors,] limited infrastructure to support alternatives to driving, and the absence of street grid connections also make our transportation network less adaptable and resilient. The radial pattern of road corridors [The hub-and-spoke model of arterial corridors] was a logical way to link suburban enclaves to jobs in and around the District of Columbia, but other important centers of activity have emerged since then. Our prosperity depends on access

to Frederick, Prince George's, Howard, and Baltimore as well as Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun. The lack of efficient transit connections to schools, businesses, laboratories, and other important centers of economic, intellectual, and social activity in these jurisdictions leaves us unable to take full advantage 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.

Page 48: Amend the second paragraph under "What policies will solve the problem?" as follows:

Recent and ongoing advances in technologies and travel modes may have a dramatic impact on the nature of travel demand. These include—but are not limited to—the introduction of or expansion in electric and other zero-emission vehicles, connected and automated vehicles, delivery drones, ridehailing, bikesharing, dockless bikes and scooters, and telecommuting.

Page 49: Amend the third paragraph under "What policies will solve the problem?" as follows:

Finally, robust investment in the county's digital infrastructure is needed to connect residents to online job opportunities, encourage continued teleworking to reduce commuting trips, dilute rush-hour traffic, enhance worker productivity and improve quality of life, increasing the county's overall [attraction] attractiveness and competitiveness.

Page 49: Move the second and third bullets under "Develop a safe, comfortable and appealing network for walking, biking, and rolling." to "Adapt policies to reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone."

Page 49: Amend the fifth bullet under "Develop a safe, comfortable and appealing network for walking, biking, and rolling." as follows:

- Prioritize the provision of safe, comfortable, and attractive sidewalks, bikeways, roadway crossings, micromobility infrastructure and services, and other improvements to support walking, bicycling, micromobility, and transit usage in capital budgets, development approvals and mandatory referrals. (Env)

Page 49: Amend the second bolded policy as follows:

Build a [world-class] frequent, fast, convenient, reliable, safe, and accessible transit system.

Page 49: Amend the first and third bullets under "Build a world-class transit system." as follows:

- Build a network of rail, bus rapid transit, and local bus infrastructure and services—including demand-responsive transit service—that make transit the fastest, most convenient and most reliable way to travel to centers of economic, social and educational activity and opportunity, both within and beyond Montgomery County. (Ec, Eq, Env)
- Connect historically disadvantaged people and parts of the county to jobs, amenities, and services by prioritizing investments in increasing access to frequent and reliable [all-day] morning to late night transit service. (Eq, Env)

Page 49: Insert four bullets under “Build a world-class transit system.” as follows:

- Improve travel times and the travel costs of transit services to achieve greater parity with automotive travel. (Eq)
- In rural areas with sufficient density and along freeways and major highways consider Park & Rides, microtransit, micromobility, and bikeways to connect large geographic areas to the transit network. (Eq, Env)
- Provide for transit needs associated with transit related facilities, including but not limited to depots, substantial layover areas, zero-emission bus infrastructure and charging/power requirements, Park & Ride and similar facilities, and road design. (Eq, Env)
- Support efforts to increase Amtrak and MARC access, services, and utilization, including additional trains and infrastructure, off-peak service, and bidirectional service. (Ec, Eq, Env)

Page 49: Amend the third bolded policy as follows:

Adapt policies to reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone, recognizing car-dependent residents and industries will remain.

Page 49: Amend the first and second bullets under “Adapt policies to reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone.” as follows:

- Employ pricing mechanisms, such as congestion pricing or the collection and allocation of tolls, equitably, to support walking, rolling, bicycling, micromobility and transit. (Eq, Env)
- Manage parking efficiently and equitably by charging market rates and reducing the supply of public and private parking where appropriate. (Ec, Env)

Page 50: Amend the third bullet under “Adapt policies to reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone.” as follows:

- Encourage [the proliferation] increasing the share of [non-polluting] zero-emission vehicles by requiring appropriate transportation, charging, and power infrastructure, as well as upgrading government fleets. [and requiring appropriate infrastructure]. (Env)

Page 50: Insert a fourth and fifth bullet under “Adapt policies to reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone.” as follows:

- Consider exemptions for policies such as congestion pricing and reduced parking for low-income individuals. (Eq)
- Expand and intensify transportation demand management efforts beyond the existing Transportation Management Districts (TMD). (Ec, Env)

Page 50: Insert a fourth bullet under “Develop and extend advanced communications networks” as follows:

- Support strategies and partnerships to address the “digital divide” and bring network resources to vulnerable communities. (Eq)

Page 50: Amend the last paragraph under “Develop and extend advanced communications networks” as follows:

These proposed transportation and communication policies should be evaluated to ensure equitable impacts from policies affecting certain types of vehicles users – like congestion pricing on minorities with high auto ownership.

Page 50: Amend the first paragraph under “Walkable, bikeable, transit-connected neighborhoods and commercial districts support economic vitality” as follows:

These policies are not enough by themselves to ensure the county’s economic success, but they are [essential] significant building blocks for stronger economic performance. Better transit connections to job centers, for example, will help make the county a more attractive choice for employers by making it easier for their current and future employees to get to work. The total number of jobs within a 30-minute commute is a common measure of an area’s suitability for investment. With drive times and pass-through automobile traffic predicted to continue growing, investments in transit can significantly increase our “commute shed” and help to avoid ever-longer drives to and from work.

Page 51: Amend the last sentence of the second paragraph under “Walkable, bikeable, transit-connected neighborhoods and commercial districts support economic vitality” as follows:

This can create [is true because transit exerts a gravitational pull on real estate development by creating] incentives and opportunities to locate a variety of uses, services, and activities near station locations – and to each other.

Page 53: Amend the third sentence of the first paragraph under “Expanding alternatives to driving helps build more equitable communities” as follows:

People in these communities are less likely to own a car and lack access to high-quality transit service that operates frequently, [and] reliably, and at an accessible cost throughout the day and into the evening.

Page 53: Amend the second paragraph under “Expanding alternatives to driving helps build more equitable communities” as follows:

The [reordered] transportation priorities in this plan will help meet the county’s goal of eliminating all traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries by 2030, which is especially important in making transportation more equitable because people of color are more likely to be hurt or killed in crashes. Streets that go beyond safety to make walking, rolling, and bicycling preferred ways of getting around [will] can enhance human interaction and build social capital. Pedestrian-friendly rural, suburban, and urban centers [will enjoy the benefits of] can build a stronger sense

of place where the conditions for high levels of civic participation and a feeling of community are far easier to create and maintain.

Page 53: Amend the last sentence of the third paragraph under “Expanding alternatives to driving helps build more equitable communities” as follows:

Future communication infrastructure and technologies should be deployed equitably throughout the county, especially among low-income residents.

Page 54: Amend the first and second paragraphs under “Land use and transportation strategies that encourage walking, biking and transit use improve environmental performance” as follows:

The evolution of corridors originally planned for the convenience of drivers into multimodal streets where transportation and land use are harmonized to support [focused] development of a compact mix of uses and building types will reduce driving and make our transportation system more sustainable and resilient. In particular, filling in missing connections between streets and breaking up large blocks to create a finer-grained network of streets along our suburban corridors will be challenging [,]. [but a] A more connected street grid is perhaps the single most important step to make our streets safer, more attractive for walking, biking and rolling, and to reconnect communities divided by [overbuilt] highways. An interconnected grid system will increase choice of modes, provide multiple routes for travel, and be better equipped to handle extreme weather and other disruptions. For this reason, the addition of local street connections should be a top priority in both capital budgets and development review.

Investing in pedestrian, bicycling, and transit infrastructure will make active transportation a viable alternative to many vehicle trips and should also be a high priority in capital budgets. For many, [B]bicycling has especially strong potential as a substitute for automobile trips of less than 3 miles, which comprise about half of all trips taken in the region. Survey research demonstrates that bicyclists are much more likely to say they enjoy their commute than people who use other modes to get to work. Integrating pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure in parks and open spaces will extend the transportation network and expose more residents to nature on a daily basis, boosting mental and physical health. In addition, funding for frequent and reliable transit service should be a priority in annual operating budgets.

Page 55: Amend the sixth and eighth bullets under “How will we evaluate progress?” as follows:

- Accessibility by all modes and especially via transit to jobs and amenities
- Transportation system’s [GHG] greenhouse gas emissions

Page 57: Amend the first paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve?” as follows:

Montgomery County has an insufficient supply of housing. The current supply does not meet the needs of current or future households. A significant mismatch of supply and demand exists, where demand exceeds supply, raising the price of housing for both renters and those who want to own their home. While the county’s median household income remains relatively high,

disproportionate growth in the number of households at the high and low ends of the income spectrum has created a barbell effect, with increasing numbers of low-income renters burdened by housing costs. Economic development strategies that improve incomes and employment options can help to combat this problem, but more attention and resources directed at affordable housing are also necessary. [Weak supply, raising the price of housing for both renters and those who want to own their home.] The number of households spending at least 30 percent of their income on housing has continued to grow. Housing price increases have outpaced growth in incomes, leading some people to leave the county in search of more affordable places to live. Homeownership rates have been in decline, especially for adults under the age of 35. The obstacles faced by young workers in finding housing they can afford makes it harder for employers to attract and retain the employees they need, [~~damaging~~hurting] our economic competitiveness.

Page 58: Insert at the end of the second paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve?” the following sentences:

While household configurations have remained fairly stable since 1990, the percentage of households consisting of a married couple with children has fallen from 28 percent to 23 percent and the percentage of households consisting of one person living alone has increased from 22 percent to 25 percent. These trends plus an increasing population of County residents over age 65 suggests average household size is decreasing and will likely continue to fall.

Page 59: Amend the third paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve?” as follows:

Despite the shrinking size of households, new single-family homes are getting larger, [and] with single-family dwellings [~~make~~making] up two-thirds of the county’s housing stock. Options to buy a starter home [or downsize] are limited. [, and] So are options to downsize. By some estimates, as many as one in three owner households are “over-housed”- that is, they have at least two more bedrooms than residents. [~~Because~~] With more than one-third of the county’s land area [is] zoned for single family housing, more than ten times the area zoned for mixed use development, our ability to provide a greater variety of housing units in desirable locations is constrained. This limits the ability of long-time residents who want to relocate to a different type of home in their neighborhoods and limits the availability of starter homes.

Page 61: Amend the fourth paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve?” as follows:

The high cost and limited variety of available housing exacerbate inequality and segregation by race and economic class. Home prices vary widely in different parts of the county, closely tracking the racial and economic characteristics of neighborhoods, with [~~predominantly~~] white residents living in more expensive neighborhoods with better access to jobs, schools, and transportation options than the [African American or Latino] residents of less expensive neighborhoods, which are home to a disproportionate number of the County’s African American, Latino, and other resident of color. These inequities reinforce the legacy of racism and both de facto and de jure segregation and continue to influence the geographic distribution of opportunities and resources, too often leading to inequitable outcomes in educational attainment, economic opportunity, and public health.

Page 62: Amend the sixth paragraph under “What is the problem we are trying to solve?” as follows:

Between 2020 and 2040, Montgomery County is expected to [need to] add 63,031 new households, both working households and non-working households with [, specifically] new residents who are seniors or persons with disabilities.

Page 64: Amend the first, second, and third paragraphs under “What policies will solve the problem?” as follows:

Montgomery County needs housing at a wide range of prices. [because t]The current crisis of housing affordability affects households at all income levels [(except the most affluent)], not just low-income households. The term affordable housing, generally used for subsidized housing, does not encompass the housing needs of middle-income households that constitute the largest segment of the county’s population who are hurt by [the] rising housing costs and limited supply. [In addition,] All non-subsidized market rate housing needs attention if Montgomery County is [ever] going to change the current trajectory of housing affordability. Montgomery County must view access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing as a basic human right. Every resident of Montgomery County should have a place to call home and no resident should be homeless.

[Expansion and diversification of our housing stock also is an essential step toward reducing racial and socioeconomic inequality.] By 2045, people of color are forecast to make up 73 percent of the county’s population, with a significant percentage of these residents earning less than \$50,000 a year. [Unless]Without economic strategies that are successful in reducing the projected percentage of households at low incomes, about half of all new dwellings will need to be rental units in multifamily buildings (including both apartment and townhome, duplex, triplex, and quadplex units) and more than one quarter will need to be for-sale units in multifamily buildings (including condominiums and other attached and semi-detached building types) in order to match the amount and types of housing to the needs of our residents. Expansion and diversification of our housing stock is an essential step toward reducing racial and socioeconomic inequality.

In order to address the county’s need to increase the amount and variety of housing, the county [will]should pursue the following policies and actions:

Page 64: Amend the second, third, fourth, and fifth bullets under “Encourage the production of more housing to better match supply with demand” as follows:

- 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 [to] reduce costs by accommodating innovative construction methods and materials including modular prefabricated housing and mass

timber. (Eq, Env)

- Continue to prioritize use of public land for co-location 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. (Eq, Env)

Page 65: Amend the second bullet under “Plan for a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet diverse needs.” as follows:

- Support creative housing options including personal living quarters and/or micro units; “missing middle” housing types such as tiny houses, cottages, duplexes, multiplexes, 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, Eq, Env)

Page 65: Amend the first, second, and third bullets under “Promote racial and economic diversity and equity in housing in every neighborhood.” as follows:

- [Calibrate]Adjust the applicability of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program and other affordable housing programs to provide price-regulated units appropriate for income levels ranging from deeply affordable to workforce. (Ec, Eq,)
- Develop targeted strategies to minimize gentrification and displacement while promoting integration and housing choice and avoiding a concentration of poverty. (Eq)
- Refine regulatory tools and financial and other incentives with the goal of minimizing displacement and avoiding a net loss of market-rate and income-restricted affordable housing stock without [erecting]creating disincentives for the construction of additional units. (Eq)

Page 65: Insert four bullets under “Promote racial and economic diversity and equity in housing in every neighborhood.” as follows:

- Evaluate incentives and housing programs like the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program to align County housing programs, incentives, and tools with future housing needs. (Ec, Eq)
- Support and strengthen housing code regulations and tenant protections to ensure healthy and fair housing. (Eq)
- Examine options to expand housing access through the elimination of fair housing barriers and enforcement of fair housing laws to protect residents from discrimination. (Eq)
- Evaluate methods to maintain affordability in rental housing throughout the County. (Eq, Ec)

Page 66: Amend the paragraph under “How will these policies serve the goals of Thrive Montgomery 2050?” as follows:

A healthy supply of [new] housing that is suited to meet the needs of households of different sizes, incomes, needs, and preferences is central to achieving Thrive Montgomery's key objectives:

Page 66: Amend the first sentence of the paragraph under "Housing Supports the Workforce Needed to Grow Our Economy" as follows:

First, increasing the supply of [new] housing near transit, jobs, and amenities will improve the quality of life for everyone in the county while helping to attract and retain the broadly skilled workforce that employers need, helping to make [making] the county more economically competitive.

Page 68: Amend the second paragraph under "A Range of Housing Types Priced for a Range of Incomes Is Essential to Integration and Equity" as follows:

Adding more "Missing Middle" housing types – ranging from low to medium densities such as accessory dwelling units (ADU's); duplexes; triplexes; quadplexes; live-work units; and clustered housing such as townhouses, courtyard dwellings and smaller apartment buildings to more neighborhoods is intended to [will] provide more choice, enhance intergenerational interaction, promote aging in place, and build social capital.

Page 68: Amend the first sentence of the third paragraph under "A Range of Housing Types Priced for a Range of Incomes Is Essential to Integration and Equity" as follows:

Missing middle housing will not necessarily be "affordable" in the same sense as price- or income-restricted units that receive public subsidies or are covered by the County's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program, but it [will]can fill crucial gaps in the housing market.

Page 69: Amend the last sentence of the fourth paragraph under "A Range of Housing Types Priced for a Range of Incomes Is Essential to Integration and Equity" as follows:

We need less expensive alternatives to single-family detached dwellings because a wider variety of options accessible across the spectrum of incomes, family sizes, and lifestyles will make the housing market function more effectively for all of our residents at every stage of their lives.

Page 69: Amend the fifth paragraph under "A Range of Housing Types Priced for a Range of Incomes Is Essential to Integration and Equity" as follows:

Preservation of both naturally occurring and regulated existing affordable units will minimize gentrification and displacement as these communities see future investments in transit infrastructure, schools, and amenities. Building new affordable housing for families in existing amenity-rich neighborhoods will expand access to quality education for a wider range of students, leading to more integrated schools and helping close the achievement gap for people of color. Over time, these efforts are expected to minimize de facto segregation based on income between school districts and encourage greater social mobility. Mixed-income housing in communities lagging in investment will help mitigate the concentration of poverty and enhance access to amenities and recreational opportunities for current residents.

Page 70: Amend the first sentence of the first paragraph under “A Wider Variety of Housing Types Is Crucial to Reducing the Environmental Impact of Growth” as follows:

Third, a broader range of housing types – particularly the inclusion of multifamily buildings of varying scale depending on their location – will reinforce the benefits of Complete Communities because flexible residential zoning [will] should allow more people to live closer to work, increase the walkability of neighborhoods, and limit the development footprint on the environment.

Page 70: Amend the second and third paragraphs under “A Wider Variety of Housing Types Is Crucial to Reducing the Environmental Impact of Growth” as follows:

Historically, many people who fill critical jobs in Montgomery County, such as teachers, police and first responders, and the service workforce have lived in [had to move to] more remote parts of the County or outside [of] Montgomery County altogether, [and] driving long distances to reach their places of employment. Creating a wider range of more housing options through infill, redevelopment and adaptive reuse of existing buildings [will] should provide these workers the opportunity to live closer to their employment, which would also reduce vehicle miles traveled while using valuable land more sustainably.

Montgomery County’s naturally occurring affordable housing can also [have] play a role in mitigating [their] its environmental impact as [they] the housing ages. The rehabilitation of these facilities presents an opportunity to shepherd in environmentally sustainable practices [as they age and are rehabilitated]. Rehabilitation offers environmental benefits through adding more eco-friendly and modern features, like newer appliances and HVAC systems.

Page 71: Amend the first paragraph under “How will we evaluate progress?” as follows:

In assessing proposals related to the supply of housing and measuring the success or failure of the approaches [recommended] proposed in this plan, relevant measures may include:

Page 71: Amend the first, second, fourth, and seventh bullets under “How will we evaluate progress?” as follows:

- Rates of homeownership by race, income, age, and area

- Number of and proportion of cost-burdened households disaggregated by race, income, and age
- Rent and mortgage payments as a proportion of household income disaggregated by race, income, and age
- Racial and income diversity [within neighborhoods] across a variety of communities throughout the County

Page 80: Insert a sentence before the first sentence of the third paragraph under “Conclusion”, as follows:

This plan seeks to ensure that we are prepared to face multiple futures.

Page 80: Amend the second paragraph under “Montgomery County has a lot going for it yet there’s room for improvement” as follows:

The federal government’s presence has given us a foundation of good jobs and a concentration of public investment in life sciences and information technology that provide enviable opportunities. But [T]the stability and reliability of the base of employment tied to government should not make us complacent. Policies and investments need to capitalize on those opportunities and ensure that Montgomery County is a strong competitor with a diverse economy that brings our residents good paying jobs. Because land is scarce, there is less room for error and discipline is needed in how land is used, and design excellence [is]can be fostered to respond to market forces and attract both businesses and residents to call Montgomery County home.

Page 81: Insert a paragraph after “How Thrive Montgomery 2050 will be Implemented” as follows:

Thrive Montgomery 2050, as the County’s General Plan, is a guidebook, not a roadmap. It lays out an overarching vision for the future of the county. Its policies and practices are not self-implementing. Instead, the General Plan’s role in land use is to guide future decision-making and actions so that its policies become a reality on the ground. Some of these actions we know are needed now, others will become clear as conditions, opportunities, challenges, and technologies change over time. Thrive Montgomery’s vision of compact growth, complete communities, and integrated design arts and culture serve as an umbrella under which tactical tools such as master plans, regulations, codes, and future development will be the building blocks for a more equitable, sustainable, compact, and walkable Montgomery County where all residents can thrive.

Page 81: Amend the second paragraph under “Cooperation among public and private sectors in implementation” as follows:

The Planning and Parks Departments will lead much of the work, but full implementation of Thrive 2050’s recommendations will require collaboration or approval of other government bodies and public input. For example, updating the zoning code will require coordination with Department of Permitting Services, while changes to street design standards require coordination with the Department of Transportation and the State Highway Administration. Agencies such as the Arts and Humanities Council [will lead] can embark on the creation of a new

cultural plan, and the Department of Recreation, working with the Parks Department, will help expand opportunities for physical activity. The County Council will be asked to review and approve many of these efforts in both land use and budget decisions.

Page 82: Amend the third sentence of the first paragraph under “The Role of the Public and Private Sectors” as follows:

Future growth will need to be focused in a compact footprint through private sector-led real estate projects.

Page 82: Amend the second paragraph under “The Role of the Public and Private Sectors” as follows:

Of course, growth requires improvements and additions to public infrastructure and services. Public infrastructure is provided mainly through the county’s Capital Improvements Program (CIP), but the private sector makes important contributions pursuant to the county’s Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance and impact tax law, which require property developers to build, dedicate, or provide money for parks, roads, schools, and affordable housing. These rules are the mechanism by which new development at its inception generates revenue for the public sector to fund infrastructure improvements. New sources of funding and more effective use of county assets, such as public land and right-of-way, also may be needed. The combination of such public and private investments is the most reliable long-term strategy for creating built environments likely to attract[attracting] new residents, businesses, and a skilled workforce to the County [high-quality Complete Communities]. The anticipated outcome [will be]is an economically competitive and sustainable county with a strong tax base and broadly shared opportunities.

Page 82: Insert two sections after the second paragraph under “The Role of the Public and Private Sectors” as follows:

Compliance with Maryland State Requirements for Planning

Maryland law requires local jurisdictions and agencies to meet specific standards and requirements for the exercise of planning authority delegated by the state. Thrive Montgomery 2050 complies with multiple state laws that govern requirements for comprehensive/general plans by local jurisdictions. For further details, please refer to Appendix A: Compliance with State Law Requirements.

Tools to Implement the General Plan

Thrive Montgomery 2050 sets a high-level policy framework to guide the future land use. While non-government entities will play a role in its implementation, the public sector—Montgomery Planning, Montgomery Parks, the Montgomery County government, and other government agencies—will all play critical roles in implementing the plan. The following section describes the tools the public sector can use to implement the plan’s policies over the coming decades.

Master Plans

Master plans (or area master plans or sector plans) are long-term planning documents for a specific place or geographic area of the county. All master plans are amendments to the General Plan. They provide detailed land use and zoning recommendations for specific areas of the

county. They also address transportation, the natural environment, urban design, historic resources, affordable housing, economic development, public facilities, and implementation techniques. Many of Thrive Montgomery 2050's policies and practices cannot be implemented with a one-size-fits-all approach. Area master plans will help refine and implement them at a scale tailored to specific neighborhoods.

Functional Plans

Functional plans are master plans addressing a system, such as traffic circulation or green infrastructure, or a policy, such as agricultural preservation or housing. A functional master plan amends the General Plan and may include recommendations on land use and zoning. The Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan, and the Master Plan for Historic Preservation are functional plans that do not include land use or zoning recommendations; however, the Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan does. New and revised functional master plans can help refine and implement Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations that affect county-wide systems and/or policies.

Montgomery County Code Chapter 59 – Zoning Ordinance

The division of a locality into zones is done for the purpose of regulating the use of private land. All land in Montgomery County is zoned. Within each zone, the Zoning Ordinance allows certain uses by right and allows others conditionally with approval by the Hearing Examiner. The Ordinance also excludes or limits certain uses from each zone. For each zone, the text of the Ordinance specifies the uses allowed, the density of development, the bulk of buildings, the required open space, the necessary off-street parking, and other prerequisites to obtaining permission to develop. The County Council, acting as the District Council (which has the legal oversight authority over land use), makes the final decision on changes to the Ordinance and changes to a property's zone.

The Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance is maintained as Chapter 59 of the Montgomery County Code. Updates to the Ordinance are proposed as zoning text amendments and must be adopted by the County Council. Implementing Thrive Montgomery 2050 policies will likely require changes to the zoning code.

Other Regulations

In addition to Chapter 59, other chapters in the Montgomery County Code include regulations governing land use and development in the county. Chapter 50 of the County Code contains the subdivision regulations, which govern the legal division and subsequent transfer of land to ensure new developments are coordinated with other existing and planned developments. Chapter 50 also includes the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance which ensures transportation and public-school facilities are planned and in place to serve new development.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

The implementation of Thrive Montgomery 2050 will require major public investments in infrastructure over many years. The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is the mechanism by which the County plans for and funds major infrastructure projects, including new and renovated schools, streets, and parks. The County adopts a new six-year CIP on even

numbered years. The General Plan, master plans, functional plans, and the Growth and Infrastructure Policy are important planning tools for informing which projects are prioritized in the CIP. These plans provide a link between the needs for specific projects and county-wide or neighborhood development needs.

Facilities Plans

Thrive Montgomery 2050 includes guidance that applies specifically to the design, placement, and funding of public facilities. Future planning for public facilities, including County government facilities, park facilities, public schools, and Montgomery College, should reflect this guidance and direction in order to ensure they are compatible with and help implement the goals of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Other Funding Sources

Given constraints on the amount of money the county can borrow, Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends consideration of new sources that could fund the provision of more community amenities. The Plan recommends, for example, exploring the creation of alternative funding tools to support the acquisition and development of parks in urban areas.

Other Resources

Other county plans with tactical guidance such as the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Economic Development Strategic Plan are key resources beyond master plans to implement the vision of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Page 83: Move the section titled “Relationship between Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the Climate Action Plan” prior to the section titled “Modifications to other plans, policies, and rules”.

Page 83: Amend the section titled “Modifications to other plans, policies, and rules” as follows:

As stated many times already, Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a broad policy document and does not, in and of itself, change land uses, zoning or transportation. Key to implementing Thrive Montgomery 2050, Montgomery County will need to undertake a variety of future actions. These actions will guide the priorities for future work programs of the Planning Department, the Parks Department, and other government agencies over the next several years. The “Action List of Resources”, a supplementary document to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan that includes a list of actions and Plan resources, should be revisited after the Plan is adopted. [are not specified in detail in this document but will be fleshed out in future work programs for the Planning Department and other agencies. Some future actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Reviews of existing policies, regulations, and programs;
- Studies and new master, functional, or facility plans to delve more deeply into the topics addressed in the policies, collect and analyze data, and identify detailed strategies for decision making and implementation;
- Development of tools and templates to support master planning, regulatory review and other planning processes; and

- Changes to agency governance and practices that shape how decisions are made.]

Page 83: Amend the second sentence of the paragraph under “Relationship between Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the Climate Action Plan” as follows:

Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses generally where and how land will be conserved or developed for housing, office buildings, parks, agriculture, recreation, transportation, and other types of public and private infrastructure - decisions that have a major influence on greenhouse gas emissions, carbon sequestration, and adaptation to climate change.

Page 84: Amend the last paragraph under “Measuring Progress – Indicators” as follows:

The indicators, along with the [metrics]measures provided in the preceding chapters, will be further refined over time. The supplementary document “Action List of Resources”, that includes a list of actions and Plan resources should be revisited [that will be developed and reviewed] after Thrive is adopted, evaluating the proposed list of actions and associated timeframes. [should]It should also include a section on indicators and metrics, using the measures of progress included at the end of each chapter to develop specific metrics. The section on indicators and metrics should include [providing] detailed information on how the metric or indicator [will be]is measured, the agency responsible for collecting the associated data, [and how frequently] the frequency the metric or indicator will be publicly reviewed and reported, and the frequency indicators and metrics will be evaluated to monitor their relevancy and use. An overall assessment of Plan progress should be conducted on a regular basis.

Page 84: After the “CONCLUSION”, insert “APPENDIX A” and “APPENDIX B” as follows:

APPENDIX A: Compliance with State Law Requirements

Maryland law requires local jurisdictions and agencies to meet specific standards and requirements for the exercise of planning authority delegated by the state. In Montgomery County, these requirements are usually met through new master plans, which amend the General Plan. In some cases, state planning requirements are met through the adoption of county regulations or guidelines, which are summarized below and are incorporated by reference.

12 Visions of the State Planning Act

Maryland’s 2009 Planning Visions law created 12 “visions” to guide sound growth and development policy. The visions address quality of life and sustainability; public participation; growth areas; community design; infrastructure; transportation; housing; economic development; environmental protection; resource conservation and stewardship, and implementation.

Thrive Montgomery 2050’s goals and policies are consistent with and support these visions:

1. Quality of Life and Sustainability

Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends policies and practices designed to improve the quality of life of the county's residents by making the distribution of public services and amenities more equitable; improving housing affordability; and broadening access to economic, educational, social, recreational, and open space opportunities. The Plan also emphasizes sustainability and protection of natural resources coupled with environmental resilience and adaptation to climate change.

2. Public Participation

The Plan has been developed with broad and deep engagement with neighborhood organizations, businesses, cultural groups, religious institutions and other stakeholders. The role of land use, transportation and park planning in building civic capacity and social capital is among its central themes.

3. Growth Areas

Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes that almost all new residential and non-residential development should be located in existing and planned population and business centers near existing and planned transit such as the Metro rail stations and the bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors. All of these places are within the county's Priority Funding Areas.

4. Community Design

The Plan emphasizes the importance of design excellence in creating Complete Communities that are attractive and lovable, foster social engagement, build a stronger sense of community, and create social and economic value.

5. Infrastructure

The Plan concentrates future growth in transit accessible places where infrastructure to support current and planned growth is either already available or can be provided in an efficient, sustainable, and equitable manner. It recommends continuing support of agriculture and protecting environmental resources such as forests and streams.

6. Transportation

A safe, efficient, and multimodal transportation system with transit as the predominant mode of travel is key to creating economically resilient, equitable, and sustainable communities. The Plan emphasizes walking, biking, rolling and other non-motorized modes of travel with emphasis on moving people rather than vehicles. The plan's recommendations for reducing travel by car are critical to meeting the county's goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

7. Housing

The Plan emphasizes the need to produce more housing of all types and sizes, especially near transit, for a range of incomes to deal with the housing affordability crisis. It recommends a range of tools and mechanisms such as rezoning for a wider variety of residential building types and adopting innovative financing and construction techniques to increase housing choices for a diverse and aging population.

8. Economic Development

The Plan is based on the idea that a compact form of development with a mix of uses and forms and high quality parks and public spaces supported by infrastructure designed to make walking, rolling, and riding transit attractive and convenient is the best way to make communities attractive to employers who need highly educated workers and want to take advantage of public and private health care and technology related assets in the county and within the Washington region.

9. Environmental Protection

The Plan emphasizes the role of “smart urbanism” incorporating a compact form of development, preservation of land for agriculture and conservation and natural resources, a strong park system, and reduced reliance on driving is the most effective way to make population growth and economic activity more sustainable. The Plan includes ambitious recommendations designed to reduce vehicle miles traveled, encourage more energy efficient buildings, and a variety of other steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions, protect water quality, and enhance tree cover and other environmental resources.

10. Resource Conservation

The Plan’s recommendations on Complete Communities; compact development; heavier reliance on walking, rolling, and transit with reductions in vehicular travel; stewardship of parks and land conservation; and other environmental management strategies such as stream restoration will help protect and conserve the county’s waterways, forests, farmland, and other natural resources.

11. Stewardship

Thrive Montgomery 2050 provides policy guidance to be implemented by numerous public and private entities. Successful implementation will require sustained support from government agencies, businesses, community-based organizations, and residents.

12. Implementation

Thrive Montgomery 2050 emphasizes the importance of indicators to track progress and evaluate how new ideas and proposals will help achieve the Plan’s objectives. It discusses the roles of public agencies, the private sector, and the community in implementing the Plan’s ideas. It provides high level guidance on funding sources that will be tapped to support capital investments as well as the need to identify new funding sources and financing strategies. It also describes the policy and regulatory tools available for implementation.

Conformance to Section 1-406 (a) and (b) of the Land Use Article

Maryland’s Land Use Article Sections 406(a) and (b) require certain elements be included within the general plan, but do not mandate a specific format. As such, local governments have addressed these required elements in a manner that fits the needs of their community and the resources available to respond to the issues explored during the planning process.

Development Regulations Element

The plan does not include new “development regulations” because it is policy driven, with objectives, policies, and proposed practices. Once these elements are supported through the

adoption of the Plan, changes to development regulations may coincide with new area master plans or functional plans. Such regulatory changes are part of the legislative process, so participation will again be afforded to the public. This concept is recognized in many parts of the Plan with several policies and practices suggesting future changes and refinements to code, guidelines and other regulatory tools.

Housing Element

Thrive Montgomery 2050 includes a housing element in the Chapter titled Housing for All: More of Everything. The passage of HB-1045 in 2019 requires all comprehensive plans adopted after June 1, 2020, to have a housing element. As part of this element, several of the policies and practices in Thrive Montgomery 2050 address the need for low-income and workforce housing. The Montgomery County Housing Needs Assessment (July 2020) provides an analysis of current demographic, economic and housing market conditions in the County, and a detailed household and housing demand forecast for the County out to 2045. The Housing Needs Assessment was used to develop several of the policies and proposed practices related to housing in Thrive Montgomery 2050 and is adopted by reference into the Plan.

Transportation Element

The Transportation and Communication Network: Connecting People, Places and Ideas chapter addresses the transportation element as required in the Land Use Article.

Senate Bill 236 -Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012 (SB 236)

Senate Bill 236 (SB 236) requires local jurisdictions to map and adopt specified growth tier designations to limit the proliferation of onsite sewage disposal systems and protect and conserve agricultural and other open space land.

The law stipulates the creation of four tiers of land use categories to identify where major and minor residential subdivisions may be located in a jurisdiction and what type of sewerage system will serve them. It includes a four-tier classification for all areas within a jurisdiction:

- Tier I - Areas currently served by sewerage systems.
- Tier II - Growth areas planned to be served by sewerage systems.
- Tier III - Areas not planned to be served by sewerage systems. These are areas where growth on septic systems can occur.
- Tier IV - Areas planned for preservation and conservation.

Montgomery County implemented SB 236 by adopting a Tiers Map through an amendment to the County's subdivision regulations (codified at Chapter 50, §50.4.3 of the County Code). The official map displaying the County's Growth Tier areas is located on the Planning Department's website and is incorporated by reference into Thrive Montgomery 2050.

The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006 – House Bill 2 (HB 2)

House Bill 2 (HB 2) requires counties certified under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to receive funding for farmland preservation to establish Priority Preservation Areas in their comprehensive plans and manage them according to certain criteria. In Montgomery County, the requirements of HB 2 are met through the Functional

Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space.

Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992, as amended
Sensitive Areas Element

The 1992 Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act required local jurisdictions to adopt a “sensitive areas” element designed to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development. Sensitive areas include streams and their buffers, 100-year floodplains, habitats of threatened and endangered species, steep slopes, wetlands, and other areas in need of special protection.

In Montgomery County, the sensitive areas element was satisfied by the Planning Board’s adoption of the Guidelines for Environmental Management of Development in Montgomery County (July 2021). The Guidelines include goals, objectives, principles, policies and standards designed to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development; they provide detailed criteria and methods for regulatory review of development in sensitive areas and are included by reference into the Plan.

House Bill 1141 Land Use Planning – Local Government Planning, 2006, (HB 1141)
Water Resources Element

Local jurisdictions are also required to include a water resources planning element in their comprehensive plans. This element ensures that drinking water and other water resources will be adequate and suitable receiving waters and land areas will be available to meet stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs of existing and future development. Montgomery County’s Water Resources Functional Plan, which was approved by the County Council in July of 2010, and adopted by the full Commission in September 2010. The Plan examines land use, growth, and stormwater management in the context of adequate drinking water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity, water quality regulatory requirements, and inter-jurisdictional commitments, and is included by reference into the Plan.

Mineral Resources Element

HB 1141 also requires local jurisdictions to include a mineral resources element in their comprehensive plans if current geological information is available.

There are currently only two remaining mineral extraction operations in the county: The Aggregate Industries Travilah Quarry near Rockville; and the Tri-State Stone quarry on Seven Locks Road near River Road. The Travilah Quarry is zoned Heavy Industrial (IH), covers over 320 acres and is over 400 feet deep in places. It produces much of the aggregate used in construction for the National Capital Region. The Tri-State Stone quarry is a 21.5-acre operation that produces natural stone (mica-schist quartzite) products for residential construction. Both quarries still have significant reserves and are expected to be in operation for some years to come.

When the quarries are depleted or otherwise closed, the sites will be reclaimed for other uses. In the case of the Travilah Quarry, studies have long been underway by the Interstate

Commission on the Potomac River Basin, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, DC Water, and the Washington Aqueduct to use the open pit as an emergency water supply reservoir.

The Potomac Master Plan recommends that should redevelopment of the area of the quarry that is not needed for the reservoir be proposed prior to another master plan amendment, an advisory group will be formed to provide the opportunity for public review.

The Tri-State Stone quarry is located in a residential development, is zoned R-200, and is a legal non-conforming use as the quarry and building supply operation predate implementation of the zone. Like similar nearby mines that were eventually closed and redeveloped as residential areas, the Tri- State quarry will also be evaluated for reclamation and redevelopment when it closes.

Given the dwindling of commercially viable mineral deposits throughout the county, the preferred use of land in the Agricultural Reserve for agriculture, and the importance of the two large sole-source aquifers in the county, new operations to extract mineral resources are not currently expected. All existing or new mining operations will continue to be guided by master plans and other applicable law.

APPENDIX B: Glossary

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU): A residential unit on the same lot as an existing single-family dwelling and used as a complete, independent living facility with provisions for cooking, eating, sanitation, and sleeping. It can be within the main structure of the house, an addition to the main structure, or a separate structure on the same lot.

Active transportation: Non-motorized forms of transportation, such as walking, biking and rolling via wheelchair, scooter, or other conveyance.

Affordable housing: Housing that is either built under a government regulation or a binding agreement that requires the unit to be affordable to households at or below specified income levels or is available at market prices that achieve the same result. The moderately-priced dwelling unit (MPDU) program's income requirements typically set the price of units at levels affordable to households earning 65 percent of area median income (AMI) for garden apartments, and 70 percent (AMI) for high-rise apartments.

Agricultural Reserve: A designated area of Montgomery County planned and zoned primarily for agricultural uses that includes the majority of the county's remaining working farms and certain other non-farm land uses.

Attainable housing: Housing that is both affordable to households at a range of income levels and suitable for needs of these households. Implicit in the concept of attainable housing is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exists in the local market.

Area median income (AMI): The midpoint of a region’s income distribution – half of households in a region earn more than the median and half earn less than the median. For housing policy, income thresholds set relative to the area median income—such as 50% of the area median income—identify households eligible to live in income-restricted housing units and the affordability of housing units to low-income households.

Biophilic design: The practice of designing the built environment with a focus on connecting people with nature.

Built environment: Any manmade building, structure, or other intervention that alters the natural landscape for the purpose of serving or accommodating human activity or need. It includes cities, buildings, urban spaces, infrastructure, roads, parks, and any ancillary features that serve these structures.

Bus rapid transit (BRT): A fixed-guideway transit system where buses operate in dedicated lanes, either physically or through signing and marking, distinct from general purpose lanes used by automobiles. BRT systems also typically include off-board fare collection systems and advanced transit information systems.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): A six-year comprehensive statement of the objectives with cost estimates and proposed construction schedules for capital projects and programs for all agencies for which the county sets tax rates or approves budgets or programs. Examples include the construction of public schools, street maintenance, and parks improvements.

Central Business Districts (CBDs): downtowns or major commercial centers. Montgomery County has four areas officially designated in the County Code as Central Business Districts: Bethesda; Friendship Heights; Silver Spring; and Wheaton.

Civic capacity: The capacity of individuals in a democracy to become active citizens and to work together to solve collective problems and of communities to encourage such a participation in their members.

Climate Action Plan: In July 2019, Montgomery County launched a planning process to develop prioritized actions and strategies to meet the county’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. The county released a draft Climate Action Plan in 2020.

Climate change: A change in global or regional climate patterns, particularly the change apparent from the late 20th century onwards attributable largely to increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Co-housing: Semi-communal housing consisting of a cluster of private homes and a shared community space (such as for cooking or laundry facilities).

Co-location: Locating more than one public facility in one place. For example, locating a library and a park on the same property or next to each other.

Commercial centers: A broad grouping of areas of high commercial activity with a concentration of jobs, retail, housing, transit and other ancillary uses and support services. It includes Central Business Districts, downtowns, and town centers.

Compact form of development: The practice of consolidating development of the built environment in ways that place buildings and infrastructure close together to reduce walking, biking, or driving distances and to make efficient use of land. According to Growing Cooler, The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change, “The term “compact development” does not imply high-rise or even uniformly high density, but rather higher average “blended” densities. Compact development also features a mix of land uses, development of strong population and employment centers, interconnection of streets, and the design of structures and spaces at a human scale.”

Concentration of poverty: Neighborhoods where a high proportion of residents live below the federal poverty threshold.

Conditional use: A conditional use, previously known as a “special exception,” is a use that is not permitted as a matter of right in the zone where it is located but may be allowed subject to a review process administered by a hearing examiner.

Congestion pricing: Congestion pricing (also called decongestion pricing) is a mechanism to reduce traffic congestion by charging a fee for vehicles entering a certain area, usually a commercial center, during rush hours. In addition to reducing traffic through shifting some of the traffic to non-rush hours, it also helps improve air quality and other modes of travel such as walking and bicycling.

Connectivity: The number of ways and variety of options to reach multiple destinations. There are many different ways to define connectivity for land use purposes. For example, subdivisions with dead end streets may have poor connectivity with surrounding land uses. A grid street pattern often provides more options to connect with destinations within or outside a neighborhood or commercial center. Connectivity also implies non-physical means (telephone, internet, social media, etc.) to connect with others.

Cooperative housing (or co-op housing): An alternative to the traditional method of homeownership. In cooperative housing, the residents own a part of a corporation that owns and manages the building.

Corridor: An uninterrupted area of developed or undeveloped land paralleling a transportation route (such as a street, highway, or rail) or the land within one- quarter mile of both sides of designated high-volume transportation facilities, such as arterial roads. If the designated transportation facility is a limited access highway, the corridor extends one-quarter mile from the interchanges.

Cost-burdened household: A household that spends 30% or more of its income on housing costs.

Density: A measure of the amount of development on a property. Density is often expressed as the number of residential units per acre of land (or another unit of measure), or the total amount of residential or commercial square footage on a property. When expressed as the ratio of residential or commercial square footage to square footage of lot area, it is called Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Design guidelines: A set of guidelines intended to influence the design of buildings, landscapes and other parts of the built environment to achieve a desired level of quality for the physical environment. They typically include statements of intent and objectives supported by graphic illustrations.

Disadvantaged People: Places that are affected most by economic, health and environmental burdens, including low-incomes, poverty, high unemployment, lack of access to jobs and quality education, and increased risk of health problems.

Downtowns: Downtowns are Montgomery County's highest density areas including Central Business Districts and urban centers. They are envisioned to have dense, transit-oriented development and a walkable street grid (existing or planned). These areas are envisioned to share several of the following characteristics: identified as Central Business Districts and/or major employment centers; high levels of existing or anticipated pedestrian and bicyclist activity ; high levels of transit service; street grid with high levels of connectivity; continuous building frontage along streets, with minimal curb cuts; and mostly below ground or structured parking.

Duplex: A residential structure that typically resembles a single housing unit but contains two dwelling units. It can be arranged as two units next to each other sharing a common wall, or one unit above the other.

Employment centers: Areas with a high concentration of jobs.

Equity: just and fair inclusion into a society where all can participate and prosper. The goal of equity is to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential. Equity and equality are often confused, but equality only achieves fairness if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. Equality may be defined as treating every individual in the same manner irrespective of needs and requirements.

Equity Focus Areas: Equity Focus Areas are parts of Montgomery County that may experience the highest inequities in access to community amenities and other resources to support a good quality of life.

Functional master plan: A master plan addressing either a county-wide system, such as circulation or green infrastructure, or a policy, such as agricultural preservation or housing. A functional master plan amends the General Plan but does not make land use or zoning recommendations.

Green infrastructure: The interconnected network of natural areas (forests, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, meadows, and streams and their buffers) and conservation parks that comprise natural ecosystems and provide environmental services.

Greenfield development: Development on undeveloped land or land previously used for agriculture or left to evolve naturally.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases.

Growth and Infrastructure Policy: A set of rules and guidelines governing the obligations of private developers to contribute toward the cost and construction of public facilities such as roads and schools needed to accommodate new growth.

High-Quality Transit: Includes rail and bus rapid transit service that is reliable, frequent, fast and comfortable. Generally, the transit service should be so frequent that passengers do not need to consult a schedule.

Housing First: Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues.

Housing Initiative Fund (HIF): Administered by the County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs, funding is used to provide loans to support production of new affordable housing, acquisition and preservation of existing affordable housing, and subsidies to make housing affordable to very low-, low-, and moderate-income tenants. Funding is also used to support homeownership programs. The fund receives revenue from a variety of sources including taxes, proceeds from bonds, and loan repayments.

Impervious surfaces: Any surface that prevents or significantly impedes the infiltration of water into the underlying soil, including any structure, building, patio, road, sidewalk, driveway, parking surface, compacted gravel, pavement, asphalt, concrete, stone, brick, tile, swimming pool, or artificial turf.

Infrastructure: The built facilities, generally publicly funded, required to serve a community's development and operational needs. Infrastructure includes roads, water supply and sewer systems, schools, health care facilities, libraries, parks and recreation, and other services.

Land use: The use of any pieces of land through buildings or open land for activities including housing; retail; commerce; manufacturing; roads; parking; parks and recreation; and institutional uses such as schools, healthcare and all other human activities.

Land use plan: The land use element of an approved and adopted general, master, sector, or

functional plan.

Mandatory Referral: The Maryland State law and review process that requires all county, state and federal agencies and public utilities to refer any land use changes/improvements and infrastructure projects in Montgomery and Prince George's counties to the M-NCPPC for advisory review and approval.

Master plans: Master plans (or area master plans, or sector plans) are long- term planning documents that provide detailed and specific land use and zoning recommendations for a specific place or geography of the county. They also address transportation, the natural environment, urban design, historic resources, public facilities, and implementation techniques. All master plans are amendments to the General Plan.

Mass timber: Specialized wood building construction using engineered wood products created through lamination and compression of multiple layers to create solid panels of wood that are used as structural elements to frame a building's walls, floors, and roofs.

Missing middle housing: The term missing middle housing encompasses a variety of housing types that range from low- to medium densities such as duplexes; triplexes; quadplexes, live-work units; and clustered housing such as townhouses, courtyard dwellings and smaller apartment buildings.

Mixed-income housing: Housing units affordable to a broad range of income levels.

Mixed-use development: A development that typically contains residential and commercial uses in the same building or within a small area. For example, a residential building with ground floor retail is a typical mixed-use development.

Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU): Montgomery County's inclusionary zoning program that requires a minimum of 12.5-15 percent of new units in a development to be affordable to renter's households earning up to 65 percent of area median income for garden-style apartments and up to 70 percent for high-rise apartments and for-sale affordable units for households earning 70% or less of area median income.

Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance: Chapter 59 of the Montgomery County Code, which contains the zoning controls to regulate the use and development of all private property in the county. It generally defines permitted uses, maximum building floor area or the maximum number of units permissible on each property, and maximum building heights, minimum setbacks, open space and other requirements to shape all buildings and related improvements.

Multifamily housing: A building containing three or more dwelling units on a single lot.

Naturally occurring affordable housing: Market-rate residential units that are affordable to low and middle-income households without public subsidies. It generally refers to rental housing but can include ownership properties as well.

Public space: Open area or building space available for use and enjoyment by the public.

Public realm: Any open space or built environment that is open to the public for access and enjoyment. Typically, the public realm includes roads, sidewalks, streetscapes, and public spaces. An expanded definition of public realm includes all that is visible from a public space. For example, building facades of private buildings as they line the streets or surround a public plaza are part of the experience of walking through the street or the plaza. A neon sign on a private building becomes part of the perception of the overall space.

Public-private partnership: A cooperative arrangement between at least one public and one private sector entity to carry out a project or initiative.

Purple Line: A 16-mile rapid transit line extending from Bethesda, MD, (Montgomery County) to New Carrollton, MD, (Prince George's County). The Purple Line will connect directly to the Metrorail Red, Green, and Orange Lines.

Race: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (including color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period. This definition is cited directly from Montgomery County Bill 27-19 (lines 49-53).

Rail or Rail transit: In Montgomery County rail transit includes Metrorail, the Purple Line, and Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) train service.

Redlining: Redlining in the context of land use refers to discriminatory real estate practices designed to prevent African American or other groups from obtaining mortgage loans in certain neighborhoods. In 1935, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) asked the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) to look at 239 cities and create "residential security maps" to indicate the level of security for real estate investments in each surveyed city. On the maps, the newest areas— those considered desirable for lending purposes—were outlined in green and known as "Type A." These were typically affluent suburbs on the outskirts of cities. "Type B" neighborhoods, outlined in blue, were considered "Still Desirable," whereas older "Type C" were labeled "Declining" and outlined in yellow. "Type D" neighborhoods were outlined in red and were considered the riskiest for mortgage support. These neighborhoods tended to be the older districts in the center of cities; often they were also African American neighborhoods.

Right-of-way: The legal right, established by usage or grant, to pass along a specific route through grounds or property belonging to another. In this document, this term generally describes the land available for roads, sidewalks, utility lines, and transit infrastructure.

Shared housing: A housing unit where two or more people live and share rent or mortgage, utilities, and other housing related costs.

Single-family home (or dwelling): A single-family home or dwelling unit is one primary

residence on a recorded piece of land. A single-family detached home is a stand-alone structure that does not share any walls with another housing unit. A duplex has two side-by-side units with a shared party wall. Duplexes are considered semi-detached single-family units. Townhouses are considered attached single-family homes.

Social capital: the combination of trust, interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging, shared norms and values, respect and appreciation for diversity, sense of mutual obligation and reciprocity, and other factors that contribute to the willingness and ability of members of a community to cooperate and communicate with each other effectively to achieve shared objectives.

Social justice: Equitable access to wealth, opportunity, and privileges. It encompasses the idea that no individual and group should have a disproportionately higher share of political and economic power than all other individuals and groups leading to a just society.

Sprawl: A pattern of low-density suburban development that is highly dependent upon the automobile as the main form of travel and is considered the source of today's traffic congestion, environmental degradation and other issues associated with the growth of suburbs since at least World War II.

Stormwater management: The collection, conveyance, storage, treatment, and disposal of stormwater runoff to prevent accelerated channel erosion, increased flood damage, and degradation of water quality.

Streetscape: The improvements within and adjoining a street right-of-way that influence our perception of streets. It includes the width of the roadway, street trees and landscaping, sidewalk/pavement, street lighting, and other street furniture.

Sustainability: the practice of meeting the economic, social, and environmental needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future.

Town centers: Town centers are similar to downtowns but generally feature less intense development and cover a smaller geographic area. They typically have high- to moderate-intensity residential development, including multi-family buildings and townhouses, and retail (existing or planned). Town centers share the following characteristics: a regional or neighborhood-serving retail node with housing and other uses; medium to high levels of pedestrian and bicyclist activity; medium levels of existing or planned transit service; a street grid that ties into the surrounding streets; continuous building frontage along streets, with some curb cuts; a mix of structured and underground parking as well as surface parking lots.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): A zoning mechanism that, in Montgomery County, grants property owners in the Agricultural Reserve one development right for each five acres of land. These development rights can be sold (transferred) to landowners or developers who can use them to develop at a higher density in designated areas elsewhere in the county.

Transit: In Thrive Montgomery 2050, transit, or public transit, means a public transportation

system for moving passengers by rail, buses, and shuttles.

Transit-oriented Development (TOD): A mixed-use development within walking distance (up to one-half mile) of a transit stop. TODs typically have sufficient development density to support frequent transit service and a mix of residential, retail, office, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, or foot.

Transportation networks: A set of transportation facilities including highways and roads, rail lines, transit facilities, trails, and bike paths that together form the transportation system of a jurisdiction or a region.

Tree canopy: The layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above and that can be measured as a percentage of a land area shaded by trees.

Triplex: A residential structure that contains three units.

Urbanism: The best characteristics of cities and centers of human settlements including a compact building form; shorter distances between destinations; a mix of uses such as a mix of living and work places in a variety of buildings types in close proximity to each other; and streets that are safe for walking, biking and other forms of travel without being dominated by vehicles.

Urban design: The process of giving form, shape, and character to the arrangement of buildings on specific sites, in whole neighborhoods, or throughout a community. Urban design blends architecture, landscaping, and city planning concepts to make an urban area accessible, attractive, and functional.

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT): The amount of travel for all vehicles in a geographic region over a given period.

Walkable Urban Places (WalkUPs)

WalkUPS are high-density places, walkable places with multiple modes of transportation and the integration of many different real estate products in once place. A 2019 study by the Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis, using the Brookings methodology as a guide, defines WalkUPs as urban places with more than 1.4 million square feet of office and/or more than 340,000 square feet of retail in pedestrian friendly walkable environment with a Walk Score® of 70 or greater.

Wedges and Corridors: The planning framework underlying the 1964 General Plan for Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The concept was created in 1960 for the entire Washington, DC, region. The corridors were the major interstate highways radiating out of Washington, DC, which was envisioned to be the major employment center of the region. Each corridor was meant to have a string of cities (corridor cities) designed to accommodate most future residential. The wedges were the triangular-shaped pieces of land between the corridors.

Zone: A land classification under the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance intended to regulate the land uses and buildings allowed in each zone. Certain uses are permitted by right and others as conditional uses. Any use not expressly allowed is prohibited. A zone also regulates building height, setback open space and other requirements.

Zoning: The practice of classifying different areas and properties in a jurisdiction into zones for the purpose of regulating the use and development of private land. Each zone specifies the allowed uses within each zone, the maximum size and bulk of buildings, the minimum required front, side and back yards, the minimum off-street parking, and other prerequisites to obtaining permission to build on a property.

Zoning Ordinance: see Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance.

General

All illustrations and tables included in the Plan will be revised to reflect the District Council changes to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 (October 2021). The text and graphics will be revised as necessary to achieve and improve clarity and consistency, to update factual information, and to convey the actions of the District Council. Graphics and tables will be revised and re-numbered, where necessary, to be consistent with the text and titles.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Judy Rupp,
Clerk of the Council



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

M E M O R A N D U M

October 20, 2022

TO: Gabe Albornoz, President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Thrive 2050

The Council's loss of confidence in, and decision on October 12 to accept the resignations of every member of the Planning Board, effective immediately, has shaken our planning process to its core, creating confusion and dismay as the public and all stakeholders try to understand why this grave, unprecedented step was necessary. In the midst of this crisis, the Council has decided to move forward with Thrive, and is scheduled to approve it on the same day that it will appoint a temporary Planning Board. In making this decision, the Council seems to believe that Thrive was not affected by the pattern of misconduct that led to the wholesale termination of the Board. I disagree.

It is impossible to separate the preparation and presentation of Thrive from the Board's misconduct. While working on Thrive, the Board broke significant rules with respect to the Open Meetings law, the registration of lobbyists, and the use of the consent calendar. These violations impugn the Board's work product, and raise concerns that the Board, in search of a certain result, might have been willing to bend the rules on other occasions.

There have also been Council reprimands of the Chair and two other Board members for inappropriate conduct in the workplace due to the knowing violation of long-standing, established M-NCPPC policy. And there appear to be ongoing investigations of other violations.

Rather than approving Thrive, and sweeping everything under the rug, the public deserves a full explanation, a written report, that explains what has happened, whether more investigations are ongoing or needed, and what steps have been taken to ensure that this doesn't happen again. The Council should not move forward with Thrive until it can assure itself, the public and

stakeholders that there are no improprieties with respect to Thrive.

On September 12, after reviewing the report from the Council's consultants identifying serious concerns and recommending significant changes, I wrote to request that the Council disapprove Thrive in order to allow more outreach and engagement of BIPOC and low-income residents. There are more reasons now to disapprove Thrive and send it back to a new Planning Board. As I explain below, the current Thrive draft contains significant errors that could have been avoided if the Planning Board and the PHED Committee had respected and taken seriously the comments of the Executive branch and the public. A more open-minded, even-handed Planning Board, with fresh eyes, may be the antidote that cures Thrive.

For reasons only known to the defunct Planning Board and PHED Committee, the vast majority of the Executive¹ and public comments have been ignored, minimized or disputed. One consequence is that the Plan contains significant errors that have never been reviewed.

Error No. 1 - At its September 22, 2022 work session, at the last minute in the review process, the Council added three new chapters on Economic Development, Environmental Resilience, and Racial Equity, without any recommendations. These brand-new chapters, none of which contain recommendations, were never the subject of a public hearing because they were written over a year after the public hearings that were held in June 2021.

The public never saw the new chapters until the Saturday before the work session. During the work session, the Council did not review any of the concerns of the public, pro or con, that had been expressed in over 1500 pages of correspondence; instead, it reviewed two sets of comments--those from Jane Lyons of the Coalition for Smart Growth (CSG) and those of staunch Thrive supporter Dan Reed, of Greater Greater Washington. The Council didn't mention the absence of recommendations in the new chapters. I have been told that there were no recommendations because there was "not enough time."

Error No. 1 Remedy - Disapprove the Plan and send it back to a new Planning Board. At a minimum, the Council needs to hold a public hearing on the three new chapters since the public has never had an opportunity to review and comment on them. The public hearing should not be held until there are substantive recommendations for each new chapter. After the public hearing, the Council should hold another work session on these chapters to review them and the public comments. The absence of recommendations for economic development and the environment is particularly difficult to understand because the original Public Hearing Draft from Planning staff included chapters on these subject matters along with extensive recommendations.

¹ The Thrive Montgomery Working Group (OMB, DHCA, MCDOT, MCPL, OAS, DGS, MCFRS, DEP, MCPD, DTS, DHHS, and the Office of Racial Equity) commented on Thrive to the Planning Board in August 2020, after the Planning Department circulated a draft in June 2020. The Working Group prepared extensive comments then, and also for subsequent drafts and revisions both at the Planning Board and Council. The County Executive testified at public hearings at the Planning Board and before the County Council.

Error No. 2 - Throughout the process, the Thrive drafts have had the wrong Growth Map in the Compact Growth chapter. Thrive has the Growth Map for the 1964 Plan, when, in fact, the current Growth Map is in the 1993 Refinement. The 1964 Plan had only two land uses: urban and rural. The 1993 Plan added new land uses, Suburban Communities and Residential Wedge. Thrive removes those land uses without ever acknowledging their existence. As a result, Thrive is misleading on a critical component of the General Plan. This material error has never been addressed despite the fact that the Executive branch wrote the Planning Board in August 2020 to highlight this issue:

In the past, Montgomery County planning has been based on offering land use choices over its 507 square miles. See the 1993 Plan—Geographic Components of the General Plan Refinement. “The General Plan Refinement divides Montgomery County into four geographic components: the Urban Ring, the Corridors, the Suburban Communities, and the Wedge....” P. 20, see also, the Growth Map on p. 22. The draft does not explain why this plan omits any discussion of the suburbs or rural areas. Will suburban and large lot rural areas still exist in 30 years, or is this plan proposing that for the next 30 years all development will be compact and dense? In the next draft, please clarify whether this plan still supports the geographic areas of Suburban Communities and the Rural Wedge as part of the future of this County. If not, what does the plan support for those geographic areas? The plan should include a schematic map.

The Executive branch never received an answer to these questions.

Error No. 2 Remedy - Disapprove the Plan and send it back to a new Planning Board. Alternatively, as with the three new chapters, there needs to be a public hearing on the 1993 Growth Map and how Thrive changes it. The public needs to know that Thrive Montgomery removes Suburban Communities, and the Residential Wedge as recognized land uses in certain geographic locations in the County. It has a right to know what effect, if any, this change will have on their individual properties and on future growth in their neighborhood. Council staff referred to the Thrive Growth Map as “likely the most important graphic in Thrive...”

I have been told that the 1993 Growth Map may be included in the final draft that goes to the Council next week on October 25. Obviously, finally including the map on the day that the plan is approved does not cure the underlying error of omitting it throughout the entire Thrive process, and, in some ways, it makes matters worse because it is a tacit recognition that the omission of the current Growth Map is a material error that must be corrected before the plan is finalized.

The importance of the Growth Map cannot be underestimated. Council staff notes in the Staff Report of October 4 that the Growth Map “is likely the most important graphic in Thrive and provides the basis for understanding policies recommended in this chapter.” PDF, p. 9.

Error No. 3 - Throughout the Thrive process, County and Planning officials have misled residents and other County officials about the significance of Thrive for rezoning and changes in subdivision and other land use policies. These County and Planning officials claimed over and

over in many different forums that “Thrive is a policy document and does not change any zoning in any neighborhood.” (See Myths vs. Facts, Montgomery Planning Department website.) The PHED draft similarly stated that Thrive “provides direction for decisions about land use, transportation, and related issues under local government influence, but it does not change zoning or other detailed land use regulations.”

The Updated Council draft for approval next week, however, finally explains Thrive’s true significance as a prerequisite for rezoning. It states: Thrive “provides direction for decisions about land use, transportation, and related issues under local government influence, but it does not by itself change zoning or other detailed land use regulations although implementation of its recommendations may require such changes.” See PDF, p. 4, Emphasis added. This clarification, added this month, comes far too late.

In other words, the County Council can only rezone the area recommended for “Limited Growth” in Thrive if Suburban Communities and the Residential Wedge are removed from Thrive as valid land uses and replaced by “Limited Growth.” There is already a ZTA waiting in the wings to accomplish the rezoning, called the Attainable Housing Initiative. The Planning Board and the PHED Committee failed to tell the public what the current land uses are, while also withholding the information that a massive rezoning to urbanize most of the County could only take place after Thrive was enacted with the new Growth map—thus, the most important graphic in Thrive. Whether or not public officials withheld or buried this information, this information should be shared with the public now so that there is a clear understanding that while Thrive itself doesn’t accomplish the rezoning of all single-family neighborhoods, it provides the basis for doing so.

Error No. 3 Remedy - Disapprove this Plan and send it back to a new Planning Board so that the implications of changes in the Growth Map can be fully vetted and understood by the public.

Error No. 4 - The current Thrive draft (PDF pgs. 14-15) misstates the success of the consultants’ RESJ report by omitting the consultants’ conclusion that their own outreach and engagement efforts to BIPOC and low-income residents were inadequate due to insufficient time (only three months), and the greater difficulty in identifying participants during the summer.

Error No. 4 Remedy - Disapprove Thrive to allow more outreach to BIPOC and low-income residents.

Here is my letter of September 12, 2022, detailing the reasons why Thrive should be disapproved to allow more outreach.

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OPI/Resources/Files/2022/Thrive2050_CEmemo_9-12-22.pdf

The Council made a consequential decision to dismiss the entire Planning Board for the first time in modern Montgomery County history. It has a responsibility to be transparent about that decision, and to explain its reasons to the public in a written report. In the meantime, the wholesale dismissal has cast a shadow over the entirety of the Planning Board’s actions and

work product, including Thrive Montgomery 2050. There is no urgency to pass Thrive 2050 immediately and there are many good reasons to disapprove it and send it back to the new Planning Board. As one of the racial equity consultants hired by the County Council stated, “Compressed timeframes are the enemy of equity.” Let’s take the time to get it right – we owe it to our residents and everyone who wants to see Montgomery County thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.