

Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) Meeting Notes

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Susanna Parker moderated the meeting.

Council President Gabe Albornoz joined the meeting to listen in, and he made a brief remark. Albornoz mentioned the importance of diverse feedback from the community.

Delegate Al Carr also joined the meeting to listen in.

Pamela Dunn explained where we are in the Thrive 2050:

The Council Committee Sessions have held several work sessions for Thrive Montgomery 2050.

She mentioned the Fed Committee Draft and a two-page description in bullet points.

The PHED Committee affirmed many of the policies and practices put forth in the Planning Board's Draft.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Vision for Growth:

In the Planning Committee's draft, recommendations that support and encourage vision for growth for the County include maintaining a constrained growth area that focuses on growth centers of activity and along growth corridors.

Reintroducing East County growth corridors as key to racial equity and economic competitiveness.

Emphasizing walking, biking, and transit.

Land-use planning.

Incorporating arts and culture into public and private infrastructure and recognizing quality of place as integral to economic health.

Questions for community input include:

Question # 1- Is this vision consistent with your views of how the County should develop and grow over the next three decades?

Answers from Advisory Board Members:

Most input says yes- especially the efforts for East County.

Some say they would like to see more balance and growth along with the infrastructure.

Emphasis on biking walking and transportation.

A question on the importance of affordable housing.

The importance of the County taking advantage on Technology growth.

Concerns about the impact of Thrive on the water shed and stormwater management.

Answers for question #1 from the community:

Cary Lamari from the Wheaton area says the current Thrive achievements will not be met anytime soon because it will take time over the next 30 years to get done.

Karen Cordry from the Wheaton area says the Thrive plan is either too broad or not broad enough and doesn't specifically propose how things including housing, ZTA's, and population growth that need will get done.

Monica Reyes says she fears gentrification in certain neighborhoods and doesn't think Thrive includes affordable housing.

Question # 2- In your opinion, what are the three most important issues facing the County as it relates to land use (such as availability of affordable housing, accessible and reliable transportation, access to parks and open space in the community, preservation of historic and environmental resources, and proximity to jobs, retail, entertainment and more? –

Answers from Advisory Board members:

Phillip Ardanuy- the changes that will come, especially with the teleworking option being more frequent now.

Gary Fellman- would like more information and details about development propositions in the Wheaton areas.

Debra Liverpool- Expressed the need for affordable housing.

Rob Fox- Expressed the importance of affordable housing.

Serge Thomas- Expressed the importance of transportation/ traffic congestion/metro, and affordable housing.

Arquilla Ridgell – Says the lack of land needs to be addressed in Thrive. She also mentioned transportation opportunity needs in certain parts of the County.

Answers from community members for question # 2:

Diane Cameron says transportation, full housing for all, and agricultural reserve to be supported and reflected more in the current Thrive Plan.

Joan Cohen from Aspen Hill thinks Thrive is very general, and significant issues are not being addressed. She feels like there's no action plan.

Question # 3- Does Thrive address these issues in its vision, policies, or practices? If not, what would you add or change?

Answers from Advisory Board members:

Rob Fox says he hopes that multiple town centers and more downtown areas will be developed from the Thrive 2050 plan. He says we should agree and move forward with details.

Debra Liverpool asked if there is anything about community gardens included in the Thrive 2050 plan. She mentioned that it could help with population growth.

Gary Fellman says the Thrive 2050 does not really include the impact artificial intelligence will have in the future.

Answers from community members for question # 3:

Conor Crimmins says he thinks reliable transit in the growth corridors is not reflected in the current Thrive Plan. Especially for MARC trains which he says should run more often.

Diane Cameron says the plan has great goals, but the way the draft is written won't provide a clear plan, especially for transportation needs.

Cary Lamari says he opposed Thrive, and the plan is not realistic and not ready for "prime time" at the moment.

QUESTION # 4- In order to maintain and improve the County's quality of life, what issues should the County focus on in the next 20-30 years– if these are different from the issues discussed earlier?

Answers from Advisory Board members:

Gary Fellman- thinks population growth could impact the quality of life for residents.

Rob Fox- says the climate action plan should be emphasized more in the Thrive Plan, including car charging stations and land use issues.

Tameka Nicholson- says she agrees with most of the Thrive Plan but challenges the team to look at plans from similar jurisdictions across the country. She says technology should be revisited.

Answers from community members for question # 4

Diane Cameron says focusing on the agricultural reserve is very important.

Sean Tyson from Wheaton Crest- says he's reconsidering living in Montgomery County due to the traffic and parking concerns and would like to know how it will be addressed in the future.

Kimblynn Persaud lives in Wheaton and asks what the immediate plan is for addressing racial equity, including housing and transportation. She says the County Council is not addressing the current need. She complained about high fences in urban neighborhoods near streets in certain neighborhoods.

Cary Lamari says with Thrive comes gentrification and densification, and our neighbors will be displaced as they will not be able to afford to live here.

QUESTION #5 – Do the policies and practices in Thrive provide sufficient guidance to address these issues. If not, what would you change or add?

Answers from Advisory Board members:

Serge Thomas would like to hear the County's plan for economic development moving forward.

Arquilla Ridgell says more safety concerns need to be addressed in the current plan.

Rob Fox says the importance of an industrial policy and the increase in teleworking. He also mentioned the importance of land use.

Answers from community members for question # 5:

Cary Lamari- says the County Council needs to address the action report and receive community input to help make Thrive Montgomery 2050 real and work for the better. He says that it does not address the main issues such as stormwater management and affordable housing. He also mentioned The Facebook group "Responsible Growth for Montgomery County."

MaryAnn Shirven from Derwood- says the density of development is a concern for her. She says some townhomes on Redland Road are \$800,000, which she says is not affordable. She says there is a lack of foresight in the current plan.

Karen Cordry says townhouse communities balance the density with common green spaces (part of the overall planning process). Some of these ZTA proposals would do nothing like that – she suggests building very big properties that would cover the whole lot over and over again.

Committee Meetings: The February Committee meeting will be held on February 3, 2022, at 7 pm on Zoom.