

ATTACHMENT 1: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Introduction

Context and Background

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050?

Montgomery County is a great place to live, work and play. But it didn't happen by accident. We planned for that! The great communities, places and spaces of Montgomery County were shaped by planners and community members decades ago through the [1964 General Plan](#). They include our vibrant parks; quality schools; desirable urban, suburban and rural communities; and the Agricultural Reserve.

For Montgomery County to continue to thrive—and become an even better place and community for all—we must make those big decisions again and take bold steps for the future. Rapid social, environmental, technological, demographic and economic shifts over the next few decades necessitate revisions to Montgomery County's guiding framework for growth, called the General Plan.

The General Plan update, Thrive Montgomery 2050, builds upon the foundation set by the 1964 General Plan and all subsequent plans and policies. It will modernize the original plan's [Wedges and Corridors](#) concept (self-contained corridor cities connected by a transportation network) and refine it for the next 30 years to ensure its relevance for tomorrow's challenges. It will need to accommodate new growth in a highly developed county and harness technological innovations for the county to thrive in the future.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Outcomes

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 update we plan with the community will guide policy and investment decisions in the decades to come. Three broad outcomes developed as the [strategic framework](#) will shape our conversations and analysis:

Economic Health: We want to ensure a vibrant, strong and competitive economy by attracting and maintaining major employers, continuing to enhance our Federal campuses, supporting small businesses and innovation, and attracting and retaining a high-quality, diverse workforce.

Community Equity: We want to create a place where all residents have equal access to affordable housing, healthy foods, employment, transportation, education and more.

Environmental Resilience: We want to preserve our natural and built resources, and use the best strategies to fight climate change and mitigate the impact of both planned changes and unexpected events.

As we use this framework throughout the plan process, we're considering a host of forces that drive change, topics of interest and possible actions.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 isn't about reinvention—it's about making sure what is great about Montgomery County continues and creating solutions to improve what needs to work better.

The result of Thrive Montgomery 2050 will be a living and breathing plan that guides decision-making and helps secure resources to ensure Montgomery County is a place where everyone can

be successful, have opportunities and enjoy a high quality of life in a beautiful and resilient environment.

Montgomery County Today

The global pandemic in 2019 and 2020 has caused a radical shift in the life and work of communities nationwide. While the full impact of this crisis is not yet known, in recent history Montgomery County residents enjoyed a high quality of life supported by a strong economy, a public-school system ranked among the top in the country, a local and regional transit network, a highly prized network of parks and open spaces, low crime, extensive public services and other amenities. The county is entering the next phase of its evolution from a bedroom community of 50 years ago to a complex jurisdiction with major employment centers, urban hubs, stable single-family neighborhoods, rural landscapes and a diverse population of over a million people. We are no longer defined by our past as a suburban and rural white-majority county.

When the 1964 General Plan was written, much of Montgomery County was undeveloped. It made sense to lay out the broad planning principles based on the “Wedges and Corridors” concept of self-contained corridor cities connected by transportation networks to guide the growth of the county over the ensuing 50 years. The county has grown in an orderly fashion following the Wedges and Corridors approach.

Today, the development footprint in the county is largely in place. There are few remaining vacant or greenfield properties of the type that accommodated the growth of the post-World War II period, especially single-family subdivisions. Approximately 85 percent of the county’s land area is constrained by environmental and man-made factors leaving only about 15 percent available to accommodate growth.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

The overriding question for Thrive Montgomery 2050 is how do we plan for our future? Montgomery County 50 years ago didn’t face the same changes we do today: climate change, the rise of the sharing economy, increasing population diversity, regional and global economic developments, autonomous vehicles, new technologies and so much more. All of these changes will affect how we travel, how we live, work, play and interact with others.

With anticipated growth of more than 200,000 people within the next 25 to 30 years, how can we ensure our county will thrive with a strong economy, fairness and opportunity for a dynamic and diverse population, and environmental resilience to address the threats of climate change? And how can we grow in a way that will retain and enhance what we have and cherish today as a community while addressing challenges such as housing affordability, environmental degradation, social injustice and even traffic congestion?

COVID-19 is a good example of how unpredictable the future is. It has forced us to adapt, even if temporarily, to new realities unthinkable a few weeks ago. Before the coronavirus crisis, only about 6 to 7 percent of the workforce worked remotely full-time. What if in the post-COVID-19 era the share of people working remotely goes up to 20 or 30 percent? What kind of impact will it have on traffic congestion? How much reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will we experience? What if that share goes up to 50 percent? It may be unthinkable today, but COVID-19 has demonstrated that it is not only possible but quite feasible. Since it is futile to predict the future, the best we can do is to prepare for multiple possibilities and try to influence the outcomes in our favor.

The events taking place as we write this plan place new emphasis on two concepts that we have included from the beginning: community equity and resilience. Related to equity, the pandemic

exacerbates existing social and economic disparities and distresses that existed prior to the crisis. The concept of resilience, while frequently used in the environmental context as a response to climate change, is also about developing policies that help communities withstand economic and social challenges.

The main purpose of Thrive Montgomery 2050 is to lay a foundation to help the county withstand the threats and challenges known to us and seize opportunities and achieve our goals in a future that is hard to imagine today.

Our future growth is defined by infill¹ and redevelopment for a diverse community living in a far advanced technological era with future economic and social changes and threatened by climate change. Planning for this next stage of growth requires new ways of thinking to accommodate growth in a highly built-out county and to harnesses technological innovations.

Issue Areas

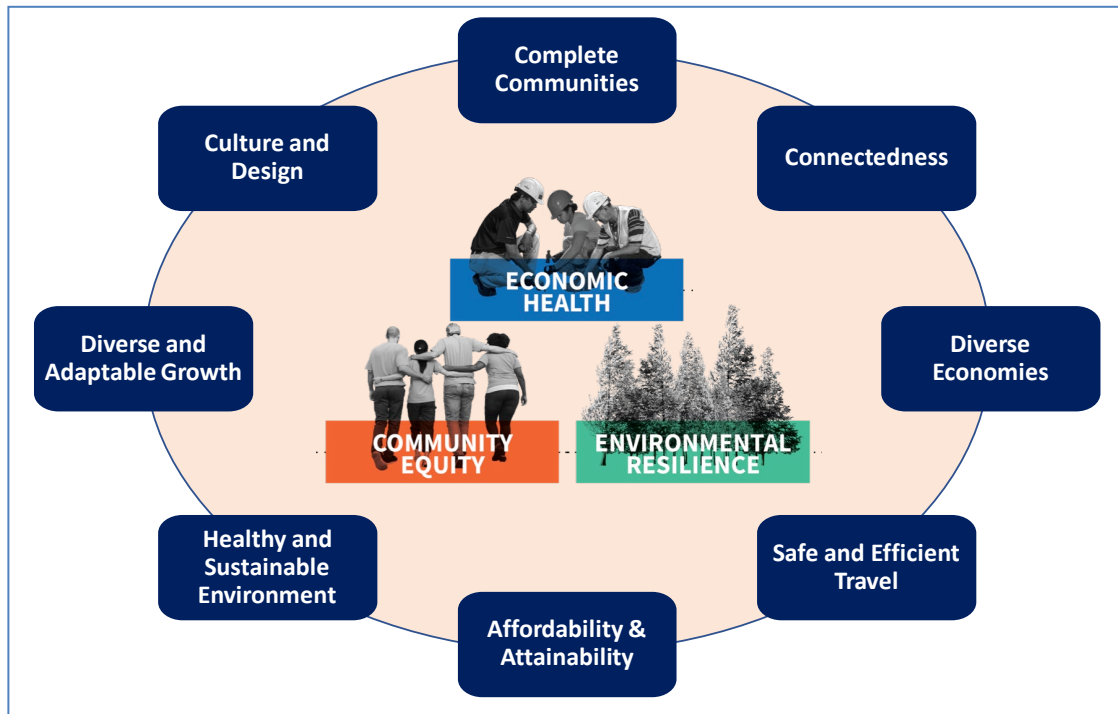
The Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan will be organized using the framework of eight issue areas that relate to the three primary outcomes for the Plan: Economic Health, Community Equity and Environmental Resilience. These issue categories are the foundation for Thrive Montgomery 2050's goals, policies and actions that will guide the county over the coming decades to accomplish the vision of a thriving Montgomery County.

The issues categories are detailed in the [Issues Report](#), presented to the Planning Board on February 27, 2020. They are, in no particular order:

- Complete Communities
- Connectedness
- Diverse Economies
- Safe and Efficient Travel
- Affordability and Attainability
- Healthy and Sustainable Environment
- Diverse and Adaptable Growth
- Culture and Design

The issues are intertwined, impacting each other in complex ways, so they must be addressed together, not independently. Each relates to the three major outcomes noted above—Economic Health, Community Equity and Environmental Resilience. Their relationships are illustrated in the graphic on the following page.

¹ Infill means development of the remaining vacant parcel of land generally surrounded by already developed land. Redevelopment refers to properties with low intensity developments being redeveloped with higher intensity uses. One example of redevelopment is the Pike & Rose mixed use development that replaced a one-story strip shopping center in White Flint.



Draft Vision and Goals

In order to face the challenges ahead, we must agree upon a shared vision and set goals, policies and actions for reaching those goals with the support of the community. That’s what Thrive Montgomery 2050 is all about.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the umbrella under which we can plan and move forward together. Defining our shared vision for Montgomery County in 2050 provides a desired future state to guide us in our planning, help us secure investment, develop policies and take action to preserve what we love while improving what can be better.

The goals of [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#) define the intent of the Plan: what we want to achieve in 30 years. Goals support the high-level framework of the three major outcomes for the Plan: Economic Health, Community Equity and Environmental Resilience. Goals are broad aspirational statements about the long-range impact we want to accomplish over the next 30 years by implementing the General Plan. Goals are accomplished through multiple General Plan policies. General Plan policies are high-level guidance for future planning and development and are the heart of the Plan. Policies are implemented on an ongoing basis over multiple decades, by multiple public and private sector entities. They will shape and inform how land use, facilities, infrastructure and other planning and public investment decisions will be conducted into the future. Policies also shape how and where future development will occur in the county. General Plan actions are specific, tangible activities to implement a particular policy. Actions typically result in a tangible product, such as a new master or functional plan or new or modified regulations, procedures or programs. An important thing to keep in mind regarding General Plan actions is that they are not the definitive list of actions to implement the Plan. These actions—the concrete actions we know now that need to occur to implement the plan—are only a starting point. As the General Plan is implemented over decades, new actions will be needed to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Moving from Vision and Goals to Action

When the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is complete in 2021, recommendations will be implemented through subsequent, more detailed plans and initiatives of:

- Montgomery Planning;
- Montgomery Parks;
- Montgomery County departments and agencies;
- Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation;
- State of Maryland agencies;
- the private sector and non-profit organizations; and
- regional entities such as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and neighboring jurisdictions.

Most of the Plan's recommendations will need further study before becoming actionable items. For example, this draft Vision and Goals document recommends that the county's major corridors accommodate a greater share of future growth than they have in the past. Further analysis of this recommendation will determine the specific characteristics of each corridor; the capacity of each corridor to absorb additional growth; the type, size and scale of development and the related zoning changes that will be appropriate in each corridor; the type of amenities needed to support this additional growth; and cost estimates for public infrastructure (schools, parks and open spaces, utilities, transit, sidewalks and bike paths, etc.) needed to support the additional growth. Accomplishing the goal of corridors accommodating a greater share of future growth may be done by amending individual local master plans that cover these corridors or through a single countywide functional master plan in one step, or in another manner.