

ATTACHMENT 3: Written Testimonies

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| 1. | Meredith Wellington, Montgomery County Office of the County Executive (County Executive's letter dated 8/14/20 including detailed comments by the county agencies are included as a separate document—ATTACHMENT 4) |
| 2. | Charles Boyd/ Susan Llareus, Maryland Department of Planning |
| 3. | Heather Murphy, Director, Office of Planning and Capital Programming (OPCP), Maryland Department of Transportation |
| 4. | Bruce Shulman, Silver Spring |
| 5. | Margaret Schoap |
| 6. | Scott Plumer, Staff Assistant for Research and Strategic Projects, Darnestown Civic Association Executive Board and Committees |
| 7. | Scott Plumer, testifying as an individual |
| 8. | Michael Dutka-- YIMBY MoCo |
| 9. | Alex Keller, Bethesda |
| 10. | Amy Medd, President, Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium |
| 11. | Sharon Canavan, Northwood Four Corners Civic Association |
| 12. | Andy O'Hare, President, East Bethesda Citizens Association (EBCA) |
| 13. | Heather Bruskin, Executive Director and Catherine Nardi, Program Manager, Montgomery County Food Council |
| 14. | Daniel L. Wilhelm, President, Greater Colesville Citizens Association |
| 15. | Michael English, Silver Spring |
| 16. | Brian Ditzler, 1225 Noyes Drive Silver Spring, MD 20910 |
| 17. | Nina Janopaul, President, Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing |
| 18. | Todd Hoffman, Town Manager, Town of Chevy Chase, Coalition of incorporated municipalities and community organizations |
| 19. | Irene Lane, Councilmember, Town of Chevy Chase |
| 20. | Robin A. Barr, Council member, Town of Somerset |
| 21. | Robert E. Oshel, Silver Spring |
| 22. | Susan Spock and Caldwell Harrop, Bethesda |
| 23. | Jean Cavanaugh, Silver Spring |
| 24. | David S. Forman, Bethesda |
| 25. | James W Olson, Action in Montgomery (AIM) |
| 26. | Naomi Spinrad, Chevy Chase West |
| 27. | Deborah Chalfie, Board member, Art Deco Society of Washington |
| 28. | Ethan Goffman, Rockville, In support of Montgomery for All's platform |
| 29. | Melanie Rose White, Chair, Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, which represents 18 communities in Montgomery County |
| 30. | Mark Pierzchala, Councilmember, City of Rockville, testifying as an individual |
| 31. | Denisse Guitarra, Maryland Conservation Advocate, Audubon Naturalist Society |
| 32. | Katie Nolan, Silver Spring, in support of Coalition for Smarter Growth |
| 33. | Elizabeth Merlo, Silver Spring |
| 34. | Harold Pfohl, Sumner Village |
| 35. | Alain Norman, Silver Spring |
| 36. | Ken Bawer, West Montgomery Citizens Association |
| 37. | Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager, Coalition for Smarter Growth |

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| 38. | Sanjida Rangwala, Silver Spring |
| 39. | Quentin Remein, President, Cloverly Civic Association. |
| 40. | Deborah Ingram, Chevy Chase |
| 41. | Don Slater, Silver Spring |
| 42. | Hannah Sholder, Silver Spring |
| 43. | Robert J. Tworkowski, Chair, Rustic Roads Advisory Committee |
| 44. | Peter Gray, Washington Area Bicyclist Association |
| 45. | Cary Lamari, Silver Spring |
| 46. | Alison Gillespie, President, Forest Estates Community Association, testifying as an individual |
| 47. | Benjamin Ross, Bethesda |
| 48. | John Paukstis, President and CEO of Habitat for Humanity, Metro Maryland |
| 49. | Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair, Sierra Club Montgomery County, MD |
| 50. | Diane Cameron, Director, Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended (TAME Coalition: Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery; Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition; Tony Cohen, The Menare Foundation; Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir; Pamela Lindstrom; Abel Olivo, Defensores De La Cuenca; Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance) |
| 51. | Diane Cameron, Director, Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended (TAME Coalition) |
| 52. | Thomas C. Hilton, P.E., Planning Division Manager, Engineering and Construction Department, WSSC Water |
| 53. | Madeline Amalphy, Gaithersburg |
| 54. | Suzan Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County |
| 55. | Stacy Silber, Lerch, Early & Brewer, testifying as an Individual, for Lerch Early & Brewer land use group, and as a Board member and Legislative Committee Chair for NAIOP DC/MD |
| 56. | Muriel Watkins, Rock Spring, CrossCreek Strategies, LLC |
| 57. | Scott Plumer, Darnestown, 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities |
| 58. | Scott Plumer testifying as an individual |
| 59. | Romulo Huezo, (Hydrogen Fuel Cell presentation, included as a separate document) |
| 60. | Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation |
| 61. | M. Allen |
| 62. | Aspen Hill Civic Association |
| 63. | Patricia Depuy Johnson |
| 64. | Friends of White Oak (FOWO) |
| 65. | Donna R. Savage |
| 66. | Barry Wides, President, North White Oak Civic Association |
| 67. | TAME Coalition and Montgomery Countryside Alliance |
| 68. | The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County, and other groups |
| 69. | Joseph & Kristina Gothard |

**TESTIMONY OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ON THE THRIVE MONTGOMERY GENERAL PLAN
PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT**

NOVEMBER 19, 2020

Meredith Wellington, on behalf of the County Executive. The County Executive incorporates his letter of August 14, 2020 with department comments into this testimony, and makes the following observation:

With the passage of the new Subdivision Staging Policy on Monday, November 16 (now called the Growth and Infrastructure Policy), development may proceed without assuring adequate public facilities. Absent a timing or staging requirement to coordinate new infrastructure with new development, we have no way of assuring that public facilities will keep pace with future growth.

Thrive Montgomery recommends rezoning single family neighborhoods and corridors over the next 30 years to allow new housing types in the single family zones, starting with neighborhoods near transit. Thrive Montgomery, however, does not restrict the rezoning to neighborhoods near transit, and it takes no position on when the rezoning would occur. ¹As a result, the Council may—through a single zoning text amendment--rezone the single family zones in the entire county (primarily R-60, R-90, R-200) to allow market rate townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and apartment buildings by right throughout the single family neighborhoods, requiring only a building permit to move forward. The rezoning of our single family neighborhoods and our corridors to permit new market rate housing types could occur at any time, long before the other recommended elements for Complete Communities and 15-minute living are in place, and with no guarantee that these elements —new parks, new sidewalks and bike trails, new street grids, and completion of our transportation plans for transit are feasible in all areas or will ever be built. It also could be done without sufficient engagement from the communities themselves.

The 1964 General Plan and its amendments set goals for the purchase of thousands of acres of parkland, mapped our land uses, and planned for our future. Thrive Montgomery 2050 would best serve current and future county residents by identifying our needs—amenities in our east county communities, affordable housing in our cost prohibitive communities, and improved transportation to bring our residents closer to jobs and closer to each other, and then lay out a plan to accomplish these goals. This focus would give more assurance that the county is able to maintain the quality of life that county residents have come to expect.

Finally, because of the seminal importance of the General Plan, and with the work sessions scheduled to occur during what will likely be the worst part of the pandemic, the County Executive requests and strongly urges the Planning Board to establish a process for residents and the Executive Branch to participate in the upcoming work sessions.

¹See discussion on page 42, and the following:

Goal 1.1: Retrofit existing communities and create new communities where people can meet their daily needs by walking, bicycling, or transit. P.54

Action 1.1.4.a: Further the Missing Middle Housing Study by identifying options and implementation strategies to increase the variety and density of housing types in areas zoned for single-family detached and semi-detached housing, particularly in areas located within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of rail and bus rapid transit (BRT). Thrive Montgomery, pp.54-55

The County Executive will also send comments by December 10 on the 2011 Housing Element of the General Plan.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Note: The County Executive's letter of August 14, 2020 with department comments is published as a separate document. See ATTACHMENT 4

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

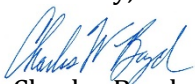
Dear Mr. Afzal:

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

November 2, 2020

Ms. Susan Llareus
Maryland Department of Planning
301 West Preston Street
Suite 1101
Baltimore MD 21201

Dear Ms. Llareus:

Thank you for coordinating the State of Maryland's comments on the working draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050, hereby referred to as the "Plan." The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following comments from The Secretary's Office, MDOT State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), and MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA).

General Comments

- Please note that safety for all users is MDOT SHA's top priority. As part of ensuring safety for all users, MDOT SHA is implementing its "Context Driven – Access and Mobility for All Users" guide that focuses MDOT SHA on creating a safe, accessible, and balanced multimodal transportation system. A core tenet reestablished in this guide is the need to appropriately balance accessibility and mobility. In this guide, MDOT SHA established six contexts, ranging from urban core to rural, to ensure this balance is set to meet the specific needs of Maryland's varied communities. In each context, MDOT SHA will pursue context-appropriate improvements that reinforce or newly implement the appropriate balance between accessibility and mobility. One of the approaches MDOT SHA now is taking is reducing roadway speed in Maryland's most urban areas, an approach that has been shown to reduce the likelihood and severity of pedestrian crashes. When applied appropriately, reducing speed limits not only improves safety for all users but also smooths traffic flow. In the near-term, MDOT SHA is evaluating opportunities to implement other low-cost, high-impact proactive treatments such as leading pedestrian intervals, lane reductions, continental crosswalks, right-turn on red restrictions, and improved lighting where appropriate.

Planning Context

- Page 20 – Regarding "7. We are not producing enough housing in accessible locations to meet our needs." The MDOT MTA supports the inclusion that the development of a new bus rapid transit network should be complemented by land use and zoning changes to create more attainable and affordable housing along those corridors. Additionally,

identifying and referencing the relationship between reliable and efficient transit and affordable housing is significant.

- Page 23 – Regarding “11. Declining trends in public health and well-being indicate a growing need for a healthier more active lifestyle.” The MDOT MTA supports the attention paid to the intersection of public health and transit.

A Plan to Thrive

- Page 34 – Regarding first mile/last mile problem. The MDOT MTA supports the focus on the significance of non-SOV access to transit.
- Page 34 – Regarding Figure 21: Map of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. It may be valuable to overlay the existing MARC / WMATA system and stations on this map to further demonstrate the connectivity of the system.

The Plan Vision

- Page 46 – Regarding “Resilient.” The MDOT MTA supports the inclusion of multimodal transportation within this context and suggests adding that individuals experience more resilient lives if they have lower-cost transit options for travel. This is especially significant for those who cannot utilize their normal mode of transportation while experiencing periods of economic hardship and disability.

Section 4 – Safe and Efficient Travel

Goals, Policies and Actions

- Page 75 – Regarding “Policy 4.1.4: Extend rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) directly to regional destinations such as Tysons and Arlington in Virginia; and Frederick, Columbia, and Downtown Baltimore in Maryland.”
 - Please note MDOT MTA is developing a Statewide Transit Plan to provide a 50-year vision of coordinated local, regional, and intercity transit across the state. This plan will define public transportation goals and strategies for Maryland’s rural, suburban, and urban regions with a vision toward increasingly coordinated, equitable, and innovative mobility. For questions or comments regarding the Statewide Transit Plan, please email mtastp@mta.maryland.gov.
- Page 75 – Regarding “Transportation is as much a regional issue as it is a local one.” The MDOT MTA is committed to working collaboratively with jurisdictions to increase access to transit.
- Page 76 – Regarding “Action 4.1.1.b: Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to consider whether to remove master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings.”
 - This is a noteworthy incorporation of iterative planning that allows the County to revisit previous plans and ensure they are considerate of current conditions and context.

- Page 76 – Regarding “Policy/Action 4.1.4/4.1.4.a.” The MDOT MTA and Virginia’s Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) are conducting a jointly led study of Transit Service and Traffic Demand Management (TDM) options across the American Legion Bridge with representation from local jurisdictions and stakeholders including Montgomery County and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC).
 - Consider ensuring that the 2050 Plan goals, policies, and actions support and/or align with the TDM study, especially as it relates to Action 3.2.2.a on page 68, Action 3.7.1.b on page 70, and Action 4.1.4.a on page 76.
- Page 77-78 – Regarding Policy 4.4.1 and Policy 4.4.3 with respect to transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries and crash locations analysis:
 - The MDOT SHA is advancing plans and policies and implementing best practices and guidance to work toward Vision Zero, especially, since the April 2019 adoption of House Bill 885 that established Maryland as a Vision Zero state. For MDOT, Vision Zero is the umbrella under which numerous safety strategies are housed. One of those strategies at MDOT SHA is Context Driven, which includes the Context Guide, a draft of which was published in September 2019. (Please see General Comments above for more information.)
- Page 78 – Regarding “Action 4.4.1.b: Develop an Access Management Plan.”
 - Please consider adding more detail to this action step. Also consider incorporating a requirement that local developers implement context sensitive design solutions into the County’s local area transportation reviews (LATR).
- Page 78-79 – Regarding two studies mentioned as short-term goals. Please clarify what MDOT’s role will be with these studies, if any. Is the County seeking technical assistance or participation?
 - Page 78 – Regarding “Action 4.5.2.a: Conduct a study to determine how to apply congestion pricing in Montgomery County, including how to foster equity and distribute the revenue to promote walking, bicycling, and transit.”
 - Page 79 – Regarding “Action 4.6.1.a: Conduct a study to reexamine the travel needs of vulnerable users of the transportation system and create strategies to improve their access to jobs, food centers, age restricted housing, health care, and other services. Prepare an Aging Readiness Functional Master Plan to support safe transportation options for the county’s aging population and address topics such as transit use, curbside management, and street infrastructure.”
- Page 80 – Regarding Goal 4.8. The MDOT MTA supports the focus on integration between systems and throughout the region.
- Page 80 – Regarding “Policy 4.8.3: Assemble a regional coalition of jurisdictions and other stakeholders to guide transportation technological change related to connected and autonomous vehicles in a way that supports our goals and that addresses the needs of disadvantaged populations.”
 - Please note, MDOT leads the statewide Maryland Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) Working Group, where all stakeholders can learn about CAV

Ms. Susan Llareus
Page Four

initiatives within the state and companies can submit an expression of interest form to test AVs in Maryland. For more information please email cavmaryland@mdot.maryland.gov.

- Page 88 – Regarding Goal 5.2/Policy 5.2.1. The MDOT MTA supports the inclusion of accessible, affordable housing for older adults and people with disabilities near high-capacity transit and encourages Montgomery County to coordinate with the Maryland Department of Disabilities to ensure mutually beneficial efforts.

Section 7 – Diverse and Adaptable Growth

- Page 107 – Regarding “Location of Growth.” It may be valuable to explicitly list some of the transit stations where growth will be focused, the connections between them, and the existing network of major corridors.
- Page 127 – Regarding “an aging readiness functional master plan.” The MDOT MTA supports the focus on planning for the transportation needs of older adults.

Section 8 – Design, Arts, and Culture

- Pages 119-120 – Regarding Action 8.3.3.c. Consider expanding the street tree-planting program to include all infrastructure improvements, not just bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Plan. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Kari Snyder, Regional Planner, MDOT Office of Planning and Capital Programming (OPCP) at 410-865-1305, toll free at 888-713-1414, or via email at ksnyder3@mdot.maryland.gov. She will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Heather Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Murphy
Director, OPCS, MDOT

cc: Ms. Kari Snyder, Regional Planner, OPCS, MDOT

From: [Bruce Shulman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Comments
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2020 2:15:40 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for sending me a post card advising that the Planning Board is soliciting comments concerning Thrive Montgomery 2050.

I believe that further development in Montgomery County to supply jobs, housing, shopping, restaurants and other commercial establishments is necessary to ensure that the County has sufficient resources to fund the government and for other purposes. However, the manner in which growth is being handled is clearly unsustainable because there is little or no room left to build additional roads for increased traffic. I believe that truly “smart growth” can limit or slow increases in the volume of automobile and truck traffic on our roads, which is the key issue in ensuring that Montgomery County is able to grow and prosper in the future.

1. **GROWTH AROUND METRO STATIONS AND MASS-TRANSIT FACILITIES**

The most natural areas for high-density growth in Montgomery County are those close to Metro stations and other mass-transit facilities. However, the growth in these areas has been uneven, sporadic and anything other than “smart” in several respects. For example, growth in Bethesda for jobs, retail and housing has progressed remarkably and fairly evenly while, in other areas, such as where I live in Wheaton, growth has been mainly limited to housing. If the County is to grow and traffic to be limited, the areas around Metro stations and other mass-transit facilities must be built up in a manner that encourages people to live, work, shop and entertain themselves within walking distance.

The above idea can be implemented by limiting the number of parking spaces in building garages. Wheaton has experienced a large increase in apartment and condominium housing built very close to the Metro station on Georgia Avenue. The very first thing which the developers of these multi-unit buildings erect are immense indoor parking garages. I find this to be ridiculous in areas adjacent to Metro stations. The residents in these buildings should be encouraged to take the subway to work or, even better, to find jobs within walking distance of their residences. Building additional parking garages does just the opposite. While I am not a traffic engineer, my experience is that traffic in Wheaton (and other areas in Montgomery County) has increased to the point where at certain times, such as at rush hour, I refrain from shopping or going anywhere else in my car because traffic is so bad.

The second key improvement is to construct multi-purpose buildings containing retail on the

lower floors, offices in the middle and housing at the upper levels. Such buildings have the advantage of encouraging residents to live, work, shop and entertain themselves within reasonable walking distance, thereby lessening traffic. Some of these types of buildings have been built in downtown Rockville and increasingly along Rockville Pike. However, there are not many which have been built elsewhere.

Note also that my proposal is limited to areas adjacent to Metro stations and to other mass-transit facilities such as the Purple Line and major bus facilities. It is not intended, for example, to apply to less urban locations such as Damascus.

Second, the land around Metro stations is likely to be the most expensive in the County to purchase and to build on. If this land is the most desirable, developers must be encouraged through changes in the law to build differently around mass-transit centers by implementing the above two suggestions.

2. COOPERATION AND PLANNING AMONG GOVERNMENTS

Growth in the metropolitan D.C. area has also been sporadic and uneven due to the multiplicity of governments competing for growth. Nowhere has this been worse than in the Virginia suburbs, most notably in Fairfax and Arlington Counties. This has resulted in a great daily westward exodus of traffic from Montgomery County to job centers such as Tysons Corner and a daily eastward commute from Fairfax County to Montgomery and Prince Georges County after work in the afternoon. That is the major reason why the Capital Beltway is now so clogged that Maryland is considering widening both it and Interstate 270, neither of which should be necessary.

Perhaps the major reasons for this uneven growth in jobs in Fairfax and Arlington is the availability of large pieces of undeveloped land, a large well-educated workforce, the absence of areas which some people consider as less desirable to develop and the existence of governments which strongly favor increased growth. Notwithstanding the above, it has resulted in the worst traffic in the area being in Virginia and less land being available for growth. I recall an occasion on a Friday afternoon when it took me and my wife over five hours to get home from Dulles Airport after returning from vacation. Preference for large job centers should be placed elsewhere. There are nearby areas in Prince Georges, Howard and even Anne Arundel Counties which contain large areas which can and should be developed instead of concentrating growth in Fairfax and Arlington. Increased cooperation among the various government units in the D.C. area is absolutely necessary to prevent this situation from getting worse or occurring in different parts of the metropolitan area.

Thank you for soliciting my comments.

Sincerely,

Bruce Shulman
1146 Kersey Road

Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: schoapm@aol.com
To: [Anderson, Casey](#); [MCP-Chair](#); [Wright, Gwen](#)
Subject: Follow-up on our phone call yesterday - ref: Thrive 2050 & TAME letter
Date: Thursday, November 5, 2020 8:33:01 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Hello Casey and Gwen,

Thank you for the phone call and your time yesterday, Casey and Gwen. It was good to talk with you about the TAME Coalition's letter sent to you on November 4, 2020.

This morning for the past several hours, I've been reviewing the PB sessions on Thrive 2050 recorded from this summer into October, and re-reading its content. In the recording sessions, there were comments by PB Commissioners suggesting delays of moving the public hearing two months from November 2020 to January 2021, which I also mentioned on our phone call yesterday. Your repetitive push-back, Casey, is to keep on the current timeline; and your strongest reasoning, voiced to me yesterday, was to work with this current Council and to not push the Thrive plan into the next Council cycle. This red-flags questions for me of not delaying two months.

The current County Council could still finish their worksessions and public hearing(s) on Thrive 2050 before the election in 2022. It would mean a vigorous work schedule for them, though would cut into their campaigning for re-election. To take on the job as elected government official means to serve the people first; and the Thrive 2050 work schedule you are repeatedly pushing benefits current Council members to not have this enormous project on their shoulders going into the election year. This is not serving the people first, but second.

Gwen stated on the PB sessions' recordings the enormous outreach efforts to County citizens, and the reasons for using the current data collected. That makes total sense. Delaying a public hearing two months is not going to make the data obsolete. If the November 19th PB public hearing stays as scheduled, there should also be a second PB public hearing in January. Thrive 2050 is a huge and County-transforming plan, and the PB should and could hold another public hearing in January 2021 because of the plan's magnitude and ramifications for the future. Yes, human nature always waits till the last minute to read reports and plans, so give those most concerned with any of the plan's content an additional two month window to make comments and share their voice.

I'll be talking to Diane Cameron about our conversation later this afternoon, passing on the generous offering from Gwen of meeting (on zoom or in-person social distance) together weekly with the the signers of the TAME Coalition letter.

Respectfully,

Margaret Schoap
240-5871-0518

From: [Scott Plumer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Sartori, Jason](#); [McCarthy, Caroline](#); thrive@montgomeryplanning.org
Subject: Two Thrive Must-Have Items
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 9:13:39 PM
Attachments: [envelope 2017 to 2026.png](#)
[thrive add 101.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Stewards of the Future,

The attached document has two must-have items for Thrive. People I have spoken with who live outside of the current sewer envelope, groups representing them, environmental groups, and transit advocacy groups all agree.

Also attached is a map of the current sewer envelope for your quick reference.

I'd like some immediate feedback on how big of an "ask" these items are, how I can monitor the progress of their consideration, and assist in their inclusion in the new General Plan.

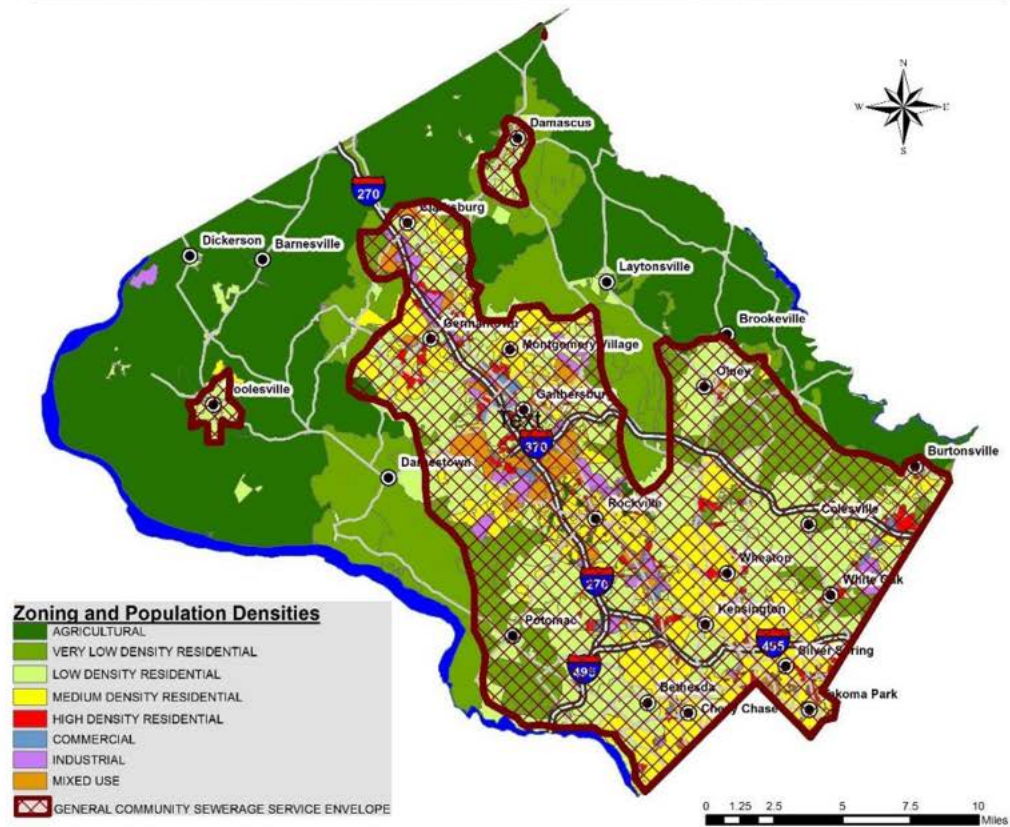
Please promptly advise.

Respectfully,

Scott Plumer

and General Community Sewerage Service Envelope

Montgomery County Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan, 2017 - 2026



Thrive needs protections at least as strong as the 1993 General Plan amendments regarding the environment and sprawl.

6/11/20 Draft Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions:

Policy 6.1.3: Support the concepts of compact form of development and complete communities to avoid sprawl. Limit expansion of new roads and of the sewer and water system to direct new development to areas served by existing infrastructure.

10/5/20 Public Hearing Draft:

Policy 6.1.4: Direct new development and redevelopment to areas with existing or master-planned infrastructure to support the concepts of compact form of development and Complete Communities, and to avoid sprawl.

PROPOSED ITEM ON SEWER ENVELOPE:

Proposed Addition to 6.1.4 and in the introductory pages of the general plan:

Expansion of the current sewer envelope should be extremely restricted.

Mitigate current and prevent future highway and arterial level non-transit traffic in areas outside the current sewer envelope.

PROPOSED ITEM ON COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE SEWER ENVELOPE:

Proposed Addition to the introductory pages of the general plan:

Communities outside of the sewer envelope represent a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life. Rural living is resilient, healthy, equitable living in a sustainable, harmonious coexistence with the natural environment and heritage sites. Stewardship of all ecosystem components, especially regionally critical systemic components such as native plants, watersheds, groundwater and soils is the prime guiding factor in planning human activities in Rural Communities. Curation of heritage sites and their surrounds is an exceptional feature of Rural Communities. Open spaces, low levels of impervious surfaces, and low occupancy densities span the entirety of Rural Communities. Rural Communities strive for sufficiency in production and consumption of water, food, energy, and waste disposal, first and foremost with local resources.

From: [Michael Dutka](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: YIMBY MoCo comments on the Thrive 2050 draft general plan
Date: Friday, November 13, 2020 8:09:04 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

The draft version of the thrive 2050 plan makes a number of important points that we support. We wholeheartedly agree that the rate of housing production should be doubled, that Montgomery county should become more urban and that the level of racial/economic segregation should be reduced. However, there are a few important points that need to be highlighted more prominently.

- The plan should highlight the original intent of single family zoning, currently the supreme court case Euclide vs. Ambler is not even mentioned once. Euclidean zoning was created to promote racial/economic segregation. If one of the chief goals of the new general plan is to reduce racial/economic segregation then the plan needs to launch an all out attack on the entire concept of Euclidean zoning and make a strong argument as to why we need to do something different now.
- The plan projects that we will need to accommodate 200,000 people in the future, we need to be careful that this projection does not become a cap. Rather than attempting to predict exactly how many people will move here we need to accommodate a huge cultural shift towards a preference for walkable urban living. Specific projections on future population numbers should be removed.
- A chief goal of the plan should be to make sure the median price of a home should decline. Montgomery county is already unaffordable, this needs to change. This can be accomplished by adding a greater variety of smaller housing types.
- The concept of overall density caps for master plans should be done away with within the general plan. Markets already regulate density, a cap set by available infrastructure gives legislators an avenue to prevent population growth. If infrastructure becomes overburdened then the solution is to improve the infrastructure rather than limit the ability of new residents to move to an area.

-YIMBY MoCo

From: [Alex Keller](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050 public comment
Date: Sunday, November 15, 2020 11:44:02 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Planning Commission,

I write to voice my support for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.

Equitable housing and food access, environmental protection, and an inclusive, vibrant economy are critical to a resilient future for our communities.

In particular, I support the prioritization of walkable and bikeable spaces, decreased reliance on car transportation, public transit accessibility of affordable housing, and an overarching ethic of environmentally responsible development.

Sincerely,
Alex Keller

7701 Woodmont Ave
Apt 908
Bethesda, MD 20814

From: [Amy Medd](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft
Date: Sunday, November 15, 2020 3:44:34 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson and Planning Board members.

In reviewing the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft, it is interesting to see the guidance for rural communities and to reflect on what it means for Ashton's rural village center. The plan espouses the compact form of development. The SSARPC certainly doesn't want sprawl in Ashton, but we would like the Planning Board and the County Council to heed what is written on page 33 of the public hearing draft: "Whether in urban, suburban or rural settings, the density and scale of compact development can vary to reflect the desired community character."

We believe that the design guidelines and maximum height and density proposed in the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan could reflect such a character. However, what the land owner and developer of the southeast quadrant requests will not look or feel rural.

On page 53, the draft plan states: "Complete communities... Will have distinguishing characteristics unique to each community and be based on factors such as the size of the community, proximity to transit, parks and public facilities, variation in physical features such as topography and environmental resources, and the unique history in building form of each neighborhood."

Ashton does not have much in the way of transit with only about four hours a day of bus service to Silver Spring. The lack of adequate public transportation results in the continued need for cars. Just identifying the need for additional bus lines does not make them happen.

Ashton has a distinct and unique history, as well as physical features of small- and medium-sized farms at its edges. These factors should result in lower density than in most Montgomery County crossroads. Clear design guidelines that will result in buildings that reflect the areas historic and rural context are paramount.

Policy 1.1.4 states that the County should "create diversity in housing types by allowing residential buildings of various densities and types suitable for their urban, suburban, and rural context for people at every phase of life."

The changes to the draft Plan the developer is proposing for the southeast corner of the intersection of Maryland Route 108 and Maryland Route 650/New Hampshire Avenue might be suitable for suburbia or even an urban center, but it will destroy any vestige of rural and historic character and Ashton. What happens on the southeast corner will define the entry-way into Ashton's village center into the future, so it is critical that it reflect design characteristics appropriate for a rural village

Finally, goal 8.1 says: "use design to shape Montgomery County as a collection of world class

towns, cities and rural villages with neighborhoods that celebrate their history, geography, and culture.” And action 8.1.1.a says to “create a countywide urban design vision and guidelines for growth using a rural-to-urban transect.”

Our question to you and your staff is where is the rural end of the transect? The kind of suburban development that has been happening in Sandy Spring at Thomas Village and Porter Road in Ashton do not fit a rural definition of design. Is the whole county going to become one monolithic townhouse development after another?

Thank you and the SSARPC looks forward to your discussion during the November 19 work session.

Sincerely,
Amy Medd
President, Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium

From: [Sharon Canavan](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Re: written comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Monday, November 16, 2020 11:43:46 AM
Attachments: [Thrive Montgomery Nov 2020 Testimony.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Catherine:

here are the written comments. Thanks for letting me know!

On Mon, Nov 16, 2020 at 11:18 AM MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org> wrote:

Good morning,

The written comments were not attached to your initial e-mail. Please feel free to resubmit so they can be included in the record.

Thank you,

**Catherine Coello, Administrative
Assistant**

The Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission

Montgomery County Chair's Office

2425 Reddie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

Main: 301-495-4605 | Direct: 301-495-4608

www.MontgomeryPlanningBoard.org

From: Sharon Canavan <sharon.m.canavan@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 14, 2020 3:23 PM
To: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: written comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

These written comments are being submitted on behalf of the Northwood Four Corners Civic Association (NFCCA). Please include this submission as part of the November 19, 2020 Montgomery County Planning Board hearing record regarding the Thrive Montgomery 2050 (TM 2050) planning process.



Northwood Four Corners Civic Association

These written comments are being submitted on behalf of the Northwood Four Corners Civic Association (NFCCA).¹ Please include this submission as part of the November 19, 2020 hearing record regarding the Thrive Montgomery 2050 (TM 2050) planning process.

The close-in community of Four Corners in Silver Spring, which is located in southeastern Montgomery County, is made up of three neighborhoods—Northwood-Four Corners, Woodmoor, and South Four Corners—each of which are represented by their own civic associations. Montgomery Blair High School sits on the fourth quadrant. Although these neighborhoods and the high school are separated by major thoroughfares (US 29—Colesville Road and Route 193—University Boulevard) they function together as a racially diverse, cohesive, and appealing community stitched together by a distinct commercial district, shared schools, active church and civic organizations, and small-lot single-family housing stock that remains affordable to moderate- and middle-income families.

Recognizing that the goal of TM 2050 is to envision planning concepts and goals for the entire county, NFCCA would nonetheless like to underscore that a thorough planning process should recognize that the whole is a sum of its parts. NFCCA represents an area covered by both the Four Corners Master Plan and the Kemp Mill Master plan. A detailed re-analysis of the Four Corners area's housing composition, economic and commercial development opportunities, walkability, community amenities, social services and place-making needs, as well as the environmental and neighborhood impact of transportation/highway decisions that have been implemented in this area is long overdue. The last Four Corners Master Plan was adopted in 1996—24 years ago. The Master Plan in nearby Kemp Mill was last updated in 2001. An in-depth planning effort to evaluate community-specific issues and update the Four Corners Master Plan and the Kemp Mill Master Plan, in our view, is a critical predicate to the TM 2050 planning exercise.

One could argue that the Four Corners community could serve as an ideal test case for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) effort to implement many of the goals expressed in the draft planning document: “Thrive Montgomery 2050 is proposing certain foundational elements that make places resilient and sustainable and have proven remarkably consistent over time. They are urbanism and Complete Communities, compact development, and transit and walkability. The

¹ A map illustrating the boundaries of the NFCCA community can be found at <http://www.nfcca.org/area.html>.

Plan relies on these elements to establish a framework for the next generation of our county's development. The goal is to create Complete Communities that are diverse and can provide most essential services within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, or drive. The Plan calls it 15-minute living."²

Transportation Barriers Impede 15-minute Living

The Four Corners area is a major portal to up-county and downtown Silver Spring. There are two Beltway exits near the Route 193/US 29 intersection. These two multi-lane thoroughfares serve as major east/west and north/south transportation routes in the eastern portion of the county. Traffic is particularly heavy on US 29 because the options for north/south travel in the southeastern portion of the county are extremely limited (alternative routes are New Hampshire Avenue and Georgia Avenue.)

The goal of more efficiently moving traffic along densely travelled major thoroughfares should not impact the quality of life in nearby communities.³ One of the primary goals of the TM 2050 planning process is to promote the concept of Connecting Communities so that "Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make use of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride."⁴ The need to move high traffic volume through the Four Corners Route 193/US 29 intersection should be balanced against the desire of local residents to enjoy a walkable community.⁵

To promote walkability and bike-ability in the Four Corners community, county planning and transportation agencies should take steps to reduce cut-through traffic and discourage speeding by installing traffic calming measures in residential neighborhoods and lowering highway speeds approaching this intersection. If east/west flow on University Boulevard Route 193 could be improved, fewer frustrated drivers would resort to cutting through these neighborhoods.

The Four Corners intersection is a busy crossroads that offers local residents the potential to safely enjoy a connected community. There are multiple public transportation stops (FLASH, Metro, and Rideon), as well as grocery stores, restaurants, a church, schools, a heavily used local park, senior housing, and multi-

² Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan.

³ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan , Policy 4.1.3: Prioritize safe, connected, low-stress bicycle, and pedestrian networks in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors, and community equity emphasis areas over projects that increase traffic capacity.

⁴ Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan , Policy 1.1.1: Allow and encourage a variety of uses within communities, with sufficient density to make these uses viable, so that people can experience 15-minute living. Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make use of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.

⁵ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 4.7.1: Prioritize implementing safe and connected low-stress bicycle and pedestrian networks in rail and BRT corridors over projects that increase traffic capacity.

sector commercial businesses.⁶ Done right, future planning steps will enhance walkability and reduce pedestrian injuries and fatalities.⁷

Walkability in Four Corners is not an amenity so much as it is a necessity. A number of pedestrians have been hit and even killed nearby on Colesville Road and University Boulevard.⁸ If this area is made safer, community residents will certainly walk to the many nearby businesses, restaurants, and public amenities.⁹

We urge the County to install pedestrian safety measures and make changes to increase the walkability of the Four Corners area. To make 15-minute living a reality in Four Corners, additional walk-signs, crosswalks, caution signage, or blinking lights, or other measures should be installed. In particular, there needs to be a crosswalk and walk sign or blinking caution light on University Boulevard traveling west to allow pedestrians to cross to Safeway and the post office (currently a crosswalk and walk sign only serves pedestrians crossing University Boulevard traveling east.) Also, transportation planners should consider decreasing the length of the traffic light cycles at the intersection of US 29 and Route 193 to give pedestrians more frequent opportunities to cross safely with the walk signals. Walkers often cross when the light is red because long signal times discourage waiting.

NFCCA also supports efforts to enhance “last mile” transportation options.¹⁰ At a public forum last spring, agency officials stated that RideOn is considering micro-transit in the Four Corners area to encourage heavier use of public transportation. “Flex” is envisioned as a first/last mile service using on-demand small passenger buses to transport local residents to the local FLASH stop or the Four Corners commercial shopping center. The boundaries for this proposed “Flex” service, however, have not yet been established. If implemented in this area, “Flex” micro-transit system would tie the Four Corners neighborhoods into the broader transit system as well as support the health of the commercial establishments in Four Corners by increasing patronage by the local community.

⁶ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 2.3.1: Ensure a network of equitably distributed, easily accessible neighborhood based services, ideally within walking or biking distance of residents’ homes to allow for increased social connections.

⁷ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Action 2.1.3.a: Create a pedestrian infrastructure improvements priority list in coordination with county and state transportation agencies in order to implement walkability standards in communities underserved by safe, walkable infrastructure. Use the Pedestrian Master Plan and the mapping analysis of community equity emphasis areas to inform this list.

⁸ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 4.4.3: Prioritize changes to the transportation system at locations with a history of high rates of crashes and address safety issues in areas with little or no crash history. Base priorities on an analysis of locations where future crashes are likely to occur.

⁹ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Goal 4.4: Eliminate all transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries. Provide a transportation system that is safe for everyone. See also, Policy 4.4.1: Prioritize eliminating transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries in public and private planning and development initiatives and programs, including master plans, capital Public Hearing Draft Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050 projects, and development projects. Area master plans and transportation capital projects must include safety analyses to inform plan recommendations and project design.

¹⁰ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 4.1.8: Strengthen access from low-density areas to rail and BRT stations, commercial areas and other services by providing flexible transportation services, including microtransit and micromobility.

Also, alternative local transportation modes, such as on-demand services for bicycles and scooters, would serve an important purpose in offering additional “last mile” options to connect to public transportation and limit the use of autos for short trips. TM 2050 should continue to support expanding the system of protected lanes to encourage the use of cleaner transportation options and increase their safety.

Economic Development

As mentioned previously, Four Corners is a major close-in urban community and sits at a major east/west/north/south transportation crossroad.¹¹ Strong consideration should be given to expanding economic development support to local businesses and providing social services facilities at this key intersection.¹² There is a higher concentration of low-to moderate-income households in the southeastern section of Montgomery County, creating a greater need for supportive social services, such as affordable child care and elder care, employment training, small business support and incubation, financial education coaching/counseling, recreation programs and assets, etc.¹³

The small-scale businesses in the Four Corners commercial district would benefit from redevelopment to connect the surrounding neighborhoods to a vibrant, well-designed, safely walkable shopping district.¹⁴ A more cohesive redesign that ties the businesses located on the three corners and in the median at this intersection would greatly enhance the inter-relation, unity, livability, walkability, attractiveness, and cohesion of the Four Corners communities.¹⁵

In the mid-nineties, the county contributed resources to “refresh” the Woodmoor Shopping Center in the northeast quadrant. However, today, commercial properties in the northwest quadrant of Four Corners fronting both US 29 and Rte. 193 remain a mish-mash of aging commercial-use buildings—a handful of which are converted single family residences. Also, several key businesses—the Capital One branch, the Veterinarian office, and the Gamestop recently closed and remain vacant today.

¹¹ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 7.2.1: Incentivize development and public realm improvements along rail and BRT corridors. See also, Action 7.2.1.a: Initiate master, sector, and corridor plans to transform rail and BRT corridors and station areas and identify opportunities to incentivize development and improvements.

¹² See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 3.1.1: Support the efforts of the county’s economic development agencies to retain and grow existing businesses and attract new businesses.

¹³ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan , Policy 2.1.1: Use public space to facilitate active lifestyles, physical connections and interactions among diverse populations. Ensure each neighborhood has public spaces that establish a culture of inclusion and that encourage people to linger. See also, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Action 7.2.1.b: Conduct an evaluation of the Commercial / Residential and Employment Zones Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines for development projects, including the required public benefits, and public benefit categories and criteria to provide incentives for increased density around rail and BRT corridors.

¹⁴ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 7.1.4: Encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties, particularly near rail and BRT, by updating zoning and developing a suite of financial tools needed to catalyze redevelopment.

¹⁵ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Goal 8.6: Ensure all communities benefit equitably from good design, regardless of their location or demographics.

Montgomery County agencies should work with commercial property owners to redevelop the land and buildings fronting University Boulevard to create a more vibrant and visually appealing commercial strip.¹⁶ Particular emphasis should be placed on providing additional parking to serve small businesses located on both Colesville Road and along University Boulevard by acquiring land for public parking to serve these local businesses.

Stores and restaurants fronting Colesville Road struggle, in great part due to lack of parking, which has contributed to the frequent failure and/or turnover of the small businesses located there. Customer parking spills over onto nearby streets; residents who can't find sufficient parking have resorted to paving much of their front yards. Although the TM 2050 plan seeks to discourage driving by reducing public parking availability, adding more parking in the Four Corners area could in fact reduce driving by encouraging local residents to patronize nearby local establishments.

Last, but not least, strong consideration should be given to purchasing available property to replace the current Four Corners post office, which is too small and for which access and parking are extremely limited. This action was recommended in the 1996 Four Corners Master Plan.

It is time for the TM 2050 plan to rethink how best to boost this area's economic and commercial potential and to consider a strategic move to invest in and revitalize the commercial zone in this quadrant of Four Corners.

Connecting Communities

TM 2050 planning should evaluate how best to leverage the potential benefit that the public transportation hub at the Four Corners intersection can offer to the wider community. Siting social services and training programs at this intersection would offer easy access to meet the needs of local community populations.¹⁷

Currently, there is second floor office space in the commercial properties that flank this intersection that could serve as an ideal location to offer small business education initiatives, workforce development programs, or house business incubators, e.g. kitchen space for small catering businesses.

Increasing support to businesses and social services facilities, such as affordable child care and elder care, employment training, small business support and incubation,

¹⁶ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan 2.1.1.b: Amend appropriate zones in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance to incentivize and prioritize design features in private development projects that facilitate day-to-day interactions. These features could include wide sidewalks, inviting and well-designed public gathering spaces, outdoor seating and lawn areas, and pathways and trails. See also, See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 8.6.1: Develop and implement tools and strategies to ensure that the quality of design of public and private buildings, streets, and public spaces in all parts of the county are equitable and respond to the needs of local residents.

¹⁷ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Goal 2.3: Improve access to neighborhood-based services such as housing, jobs, professional and government services, educational opportunities, and parks and open spaces at the local, county-wide, and regional level. Focus on county residents with the greatest socioeconomic needs and for those who are geographically isolated from these services.

financial education coaching/counseling, recreation assets, etc. would benefit low- and moderate- income residents who want to build a better future for themselves and their families.¹⁸

Environmental Protection

One of the TM 2050 goals is to: “Promote active lifestyles by making parks and open spaces a central element of the community.”

With the renovation and expansion of the Northwood Four Corners Local Park, both residents who live in the community as well as people from nearby communities enjoy easy access to this park, which now attracts a diverse community of users. The success of this major investment by the county and the parks department is evident in the significant number of people who are now using the playgrounds, walking tracks, picnic areas, and soccer field.¹⁹

Unfortunately, some time ago the parks planning agency decided to decommission the recreation center in this park. The building was leased to a private school. Instead of serving the community as a whole, this space is now occupied for use by a very limited number of people.

This recreational center facility should be repurposed for general public use when the current lease expires in 2023. Doing so will enhance the community by providing an all-season gathering space and offering access to electrical and kitchen facilities for both indoor and outdoor community events. The platform in front of this building could serve as an ideal stage for community concerts or movies.

In the northwestern portion of the Northwood Four Corners Local Park, there is a large field bounded by an oval walking track. Consideration should be given to how best this larger space could be used while still allowing free play. For example, installation of a gathering circle, gazebo, or combination band shell/movie screen could make this an even more successful community gathering place.²⁰

¹⁸ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 8.2.5: Use placemaking activities to engage residents in higher levels of social interaction in public spaces. Create public spaces that are welcoming and encourage all residents to gather and interact in ways that build a sense of community.

¹⁹ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Action 2.1.2.c: Update the state-mandated strategic plan for parks, recreation, and open spaces to reflect the evolving roles of parks in urban and urbanizing areas as platforms for social gathering, active and healthy living, and connection to nature.

²⁰ See Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Action 2.1.2.d: Create new design typologies for park facilities in urban areas such as community gardens, dog parks, skate parks, playgrounds, community open space, and picnic and grill spaces. Include guidance in the new typologies that the designs should reflect the culture and traditions of the communities where they are located.

Northwood Four Corners is also bordered by the Northwest Branch park system, which includes extensive natural surface trails, wetlands, and the stream. This park is heavily used by neighborhood residents as well as others who can park at Burnt Mills.

The heavily forested Northwest Branch corridor, which stretches from Bonifant Road to the southeastern county line, is a key natural resource in an otherwise highly built-up urban environment.²¹ The Northwest Branch feeds into the Anacostia/Potomac rivers. The environmental health of this natural setting contributes to cleaner air in a highly urbanized area, and, if properly managed, preserves clean water.

Natural trails in Northwest Branch near Four Corners are well-used; hikers and nearby residents regularly report sightings of a wide variety of wildlife—amazingly in an area that is within a mile of the Beltway and bisected by a heavily trafficked US 29. Preserving the environmental health and biodiversity of wildlife in the Northwest Branch corridor is an important environmental goal.²²

Northwest Branch would benefit from environmental improvements along feeder streambeds by removing over-growth and invasive vines and installing natural water-filtering plantings.²³ Specifically, the county recently made stormwater control improvements at the end of Lockridge Drive, however, no work was performed in the portion of the stream bed that runs the remaining three blocks from Glenwild to Eastwood. Steep banks continue to erode in this section allowing sediment and unfiltered stormwater, to flow down into Northwest Branch.

NFCCA strongly supports planning efforts to enhance environmental health and biodiversity conservation in both urban areas and parks in the county through resource conservation, clean water initiatives, and habitat preservation and restoration. The TM 2050 plan should be compatible with the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan. Also, TM 2050 findings should comport with Maryland's statutory and regulatory requirements for Environmental Impact Studies prior to commencing significant infrastructure changes or developments.

Conclusion

²¹ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 6.5.2: Protect, enhance, and increase 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. See also, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan Action 6.5.2.a: Conduct a study to identify forests and other natural areas with high value for climate mitigation, resilience, and biological diversity. Establish appropriate forest and nonforest canopy goals and strategies to protect plant and wildlife diversity and human health.

²² See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Action 6.5.2.d: Develop a long-range forest quality management plan to address fragmentation, deer pressure, invasive threats, and the forest's capacity to withstand and mitigate climate impacts.

²³ See, Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Policy 6.5.5: Reduce and manage invasive and other problem species to levels that pose no significant threats to green areas. See also, Policy 6.5.6: Protect watersheds and aquifers and improve water quality and stream conditions through enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increased tree canopy, and green stormwater management.

NFCCA appreciates the opportunity to express our views regarding the Thrive Montgomery 2050 planning process and requests that this statement be made part of the November 19th hearing record.

From: [Andy O'Hare](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Friedson, Andrew](#)
Cc: [Amanda Farber](#)
Subject: Thrive 2050
Date: Monday, November 16, 2020 12:05:49 PM
Attachments: [EBCA - Public Hearing Thrive 2050 EBCA Comments FINAL 11-16-20.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Chairman Anderson, Ms. Wright and Councilmember Friedson,

Attached please find the perspectives on the East Bethesda Citizens Association (EBCA) on the draft Thrive 2050 plan in advance of the Board hearing on November 19.

Please reach out with any questions regarding the perspectives of EBCA on this matter.

Regards,
Andy O'Hare
President, EBCA



November 16, 2020

TO: Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board
Gwen Wright, Director, Montgomery County Planning
Montgomery County Planning Staff

CC: Andrew Friedson, Montgomery County District 1 Councilmember

RE: THRIVE 2050 Public Hearing, November 19, 2020

I am writing on behalf of the East Bethesda Citizens Association to provide comments on the Public Hearing Draft Plan of the new county General Plan, called “Thrive 2050.”

EBCA is very concerned about the process being employed to develop this plan.

Specifically, we have serious concerns about the timing of the review of this Draft Plan during a worsening pandemic and amongst heated national and local elections. EBCCA believes that the approach to develop this far-reaching and long-term Plan needs to be much more deliberate and designed to engage as many Montgomery County residents as possible. The approach being used to date is insufficient and risks a serious community backlash.

Notwithstanding the above, it is clear that this draft Plan requires a considerable amount of additional work and input, and we are hopeful you will consider comments and suggestions thoroughly and take the time to answer the many outstanding questions from the community.

We support the High-Level Executive Summary of Suggestions & Concerns outlined in the Community Coalition Letter on Thrive Montgomery 2050 dated November 16, 2020, which includes the following points:

- I. Complete Communities: we were pleased to see that the draft Plan considered Complete Communities but the inclusion of a map that spotlights which or what proportion of urban, suburban and rural communities are to become Complete Communities replete with Missing Middle housing would be helpful; additionally, there is a paucity of relevant national best practices, omission of any description as to how both incorporated and unincorporated communities will be a part of the redevelopment process that recognizes building and setback authority, a disconnect with MCPS’ plans for larger or

magnet schools, and a lack of defined minimum amenities and metrics for determining a successful Complete Community with adequate public facilities, green space, transit infrastructure, and affordable housing. In short, the concept of, location of, and metrics for Complete Communities is incomplete.

- II. Financing Capacity: there is a lack of acknowledgement of COVID-19's impact on our economy, public revenue deficits, transit use changes, work preferences and lifestyle; in addition, there appears to be an unsupported premise that increased Missing Middle housing stock creates Complete Communities and no attempt in giving equal weight to the importance of job creation, transit, and housing; furthermore, there is a glaring omission of strategies for how public revenue will substantially increase in order to fund decentralized public facilities, small local schools, and transit infrastructure projects, and a dearth of strategies that attract new industries, companies and small businesses to the County.
- III. Housing Affordability: we encourage the County to consider increasing and diversifying areas for Missing Middle housing as well as provide more housing for essential workers and leverage naturally occurring affordable housing options including adaptive re-use of malls and other retail/office buildings which post COVID-19 may no longer be viable for their original and intended use; however the premise that we will need to house 200,000 more residents is based on pre-COVID-19 assumptions and providing Missing Middle housing is not ipso facto affordable.
- IV. Transportation Access: we encourage the County to develop a broader approach focused on BRT, specify how transit-centric transportation will be staged given COVID-19 realities, flexibly plan for traffic and technology advancements, integrate with other regional transportation plans, and accommodate demographics including aging, disabled, and young families that cannot always use public transit; also, coordination with MDOT will be essential along with the recognition that many County residents and visitors will use their cars.
- V. Public Facility Implementation Plans: the draft Plan will be expensive to implement so the County should specify payment plans for public facilities, pay more attention to how existing disadvantaged and low-income communities specifically will gain better access to transit and other amenities, coordinate with MCPS, Police and Fire & Rescue, and build in equity so that Complete Communities are available throughout the entire County.
- VI. General Implementation Plan: utilize Master & Sector Plans for implementation as well as design excellence standards; and update the Implementation Plan so that it reflects the realities of COVID-19.

Bethesda area residents have recently experienced a considerable amount of growth and change related to implementation of the Bethesda Downtown Plan, the construction of the Purple Line, a significant number of residential and commercial development projects proposed and under construction, and of course now the impacts of Covid-19 which have brought a tremendous amount of uncertainty to how people will live, work, and travel in

the future. We hope to be able to work with both the Planning Board, and ultimately the Council as well, to improve on the new General Plan and create a document that will truly allow Montgomery County to thrive. Thank you for considering the perspectives of EBCA on this matter. I may be reached at (202) 270-0094 or president@ebca.org to address any questions on our views.

Regards.

Andy O'Hare
President, EBCA

From: [Catherine Nardi](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Heather Bruskin](#); [Wendy Bazil](#)
Subject: Montgomery County Food Council Thrive 2050 Testimony
Date: Monday, November 16, 2020 1:46:33 PM
Attachments: [Food Council Thrive 2050 Comments November 2020 \(1\).pdf](#)

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Good afternoon Chair Anderson,

I hope this email finds you well. Please find attached the Montgomery County Food Council's testimony for the public hearing that will be held this Thursday, 11/19, regarding the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan. Please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback with the Planning Board.

Best,
Catherine Nardi

Catherine Nardi
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The Montgomery County Food Council is committed to building equity and racial justice in our local food system. Learn more [here.](#)





Thrive 2050 Comments

November 19, 2020

The Montgomery County Food Council is an independent council formed and led by individual community members and representatives of local businesses, government, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions that broadly represent the food system both substantively and geographically.

Our mission is to bring together a diverse representation of stakeholders in a public and private partnership to improve the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of Montgomery County, Maryland through the creation of a robust, local, sustainable food system.

The Food Council thanks Chair Casey Anderson and the Montgomery County Department of Planning for the continued opportunities to provide feedback on the Thrive 2050 plans, and for the time and careful thought that has been dedicated to this process. We appreciate the addition of new sections and clarity related to the food system, and have developed a few additional recommendations to better center food system priorities into the update of Montgomery County's General Plan. Food is a basic human right, and the food system is deeply connected to all aspects of a resident's life. Thrive 2050 should reflect this, by applying a food system lens to each of the plan elements, and by drawing insight from diverse County stakeholders when considering health equity and food justice, economic opportunity, and environmental resilience. Thank you for your consideration of our input.

Regarding Complete Communities, Connectedness, and Safe and Efficient Travel

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that the number of Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity has risen to more than 100,000, with Food Assistance Providers reporting increased demand ranging from 75-500%. Though people experiencing food insecurity live throughout the County, census tracts in East County,

Silver Spring, Aspen Hill, Wheaton, Gaithersburg and Germantown are pinpointed as areas of significant food access challenges.

While public transportation, walkability, and bike accessibility are critical priorities to reduce emissions, special consideration should be made to address food access barriers for residents without access to a car and/or with physical disabilities. First, the “Complete Communities” goals should include multiple food access points conveniently located within communities, at which culturally-appropriate, affordable, and nutritious food options are available. We support the establishment of healthy corner stores, farmers markets, and other access points for federal benefits usage in under-resourced communities as recommended in the [2017 Retail Trends Study](#).

The Food Council also supports the Better Buses Platform, developed by the Coalition for Smarter Growth, which seeks to prioritize buses as the mode of choice, being fare-free and carbon neutral. By ensuring accessibility to critical food access points through public transportation routes, residents will become more likely to rely on public transportation, which tends to be more inclusive of people with physical disabilities than bike or walking pathways.

Regarding a Resilient Economy, and Diverse and Adaptable Growth

Our local food system encompasses a diverse array of food and beverage producers, restaurants, caterers, food retailers, farms, and other food producers that are integral to our economy and food supply. The COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the need for a robust and resilient local food economy, including enhanced connectivity among our food producers and food assistance providers, as well as connectivity between food producers and residents. In order to develop Montgomery County into a national leader in the field of innovative food production, we must expand our food production infrastructure to ensure that our local food system can grow sustainably and collectively.

As climate and health emergencies continue to impact global food production and distribution, the local food supply will be increasingly important to feed our County and region; strengthening and supporting our local food production capacity should be a long-term goal. In addition to the goals set forth in the Thrive 2050 report, we recommend the following to further bolster our local food economy:

- Shared use kitchens, cut and wash facilities and processing equipment for farm produce, meat, and grains, and aggregation and distribution infrastructure, as well as long-term access to affordable farmland and protected land leases, particularly for

BIPOC and historically disadvantaged farmers, are needed for local businesses to meet these expanding market opportunities and address future crises.

- County institutions, including government-facility food service operations, hospitals, and academic institutions, should prioritize a percentage of food procurement from hyperlocal sources, while balancing affordability for local consumers and the true value of the product to ensure economic sustainability for the producers. [The Montgomery County Farm to Food Bank Program](#) serves as a model for these sourcing partnerships to follow.
- Free programming and resources should be made available to all County residents in accordance with the recommendations of the [Food Literacy Assessment](#), to increase awareness of the food production capabilities that lie within the 93,000 acre Agricultural Reserve and beyond, in various parts of the County and at various levels.

Regarding Affordability and Attainability

Food access is innately intertwined with the various community structures that support a growing population, such as affordable housing and workforce development opportunities. Planning goals in this section should incorporate food access as an intrinsic part of fostering an affordable and attainable lifestyle in Montgomery County.

Food is not simply an “amenity,” but a basic human necessity, and should be recognized as such in the planning process. Affordable, healthy food access considerations should be incorporated into the General Plan, focusing on people living below the self-sufficiency standard, seniors, children, people with disabilities, and foreign-born residents. The Food Council welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the Montgomery County Department of Planning to envision a roadmap to end food insecurity as a component of the General Plan and extension of the five year [Food Security Plan](#), which is entering its fourth year of implementation.

Regarding a Healthy Environment

The Food Council applauds the Department of Planning for addressing the need to ensure healthy food access for all residents within this section, and encourages the incorporation of additional “Actions” to accompany the “Policies” that have been established. Data collection and analysis are necessary to gain a better understanding of, and adequately address, the “concentration sources of unhealthy food” within our communities and work towards establishing more inclusive, nutritious, locally-produced offerings.

In recent months, the number of residents and community-based organizations exploring food production opportunities have grown tremendously, and support for urban and community gardening, as well as residential agriculture, through zoning and programming recommendations within the General Plan, should support the expansion of local food production efforts and ensure a sustainable, nutritious local food supply. The Plan should also include actions to explore and implement food waste composting infrastructure within the County's borders, which will improve the health of our soils and serve as valuable resource and economic opportunity for our farmers, residents, and the government, all while bringing us closer to meeting the County's Zero Waste goals in the near term.

Bringing together County partners who are guiding various aspects of this work already, including Montgomery Parks and the Department of Environmental Protection, along with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Food Council, will allow a coordinated, collaborative approach to establishing a healthy environment within Montgomery County. Simultaneously, we must integrate the voices of our community, including farmers and BIPOC residents who are most affected by the impacts of climate change and food access, to address these issues and develop solutions.

Finally, community education and outreach efforts, especially to residents in traditionally under-resourced neighborhoods with limited food access, should continue to be purposeful and focused, to ensure the inclusion of equitable food system support strategies within the Thrive 2050 Plan. These engagement efforts will effectively build relationships, strengthen trust, and foster partnerships within Montgomery County, and elevate the voices of community leaders seeking meaningful changes.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations, and we look forward to continuing to serve as a resource to the Planning Board throughout this process.

For additional information please contact Heather Bruskin, Executive Director, at the email address or phone number listed below.

Greater Colesville Citizens Association

PO Box 4087
Colesville, MD 20914
November 19, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
Attn: Casey Anderson, Chair
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Thrive Montgomery 2050

Dear Chairman Anderson:

There are many good ideas in the draft Thrive Montgomery Plan. After reading 166 pages, we had a hard time pointing out many goals and policies where we disagree. On the other hand, we also found it difficult to point out the document thrust. Rather, it is more like a collection of ideas from many different people put together with minimal organization and focus. We think that Chairman Anderson's comments in October are largely correct. The comments we provide below are intended to fulfill two purposes: identify proposals that we support or oppose, and provide suggestions for improving the document in terms of organization and focus. We think the suggested improvements will be a good start in addressing the Chairman's concerns as well.

Comments on Introduction

The current document takes 50 pages and six topics to provide what is effectively the introduction. This is too long and some of the topics need to be combined. This section needs substantial revision to make it clear and set the stage for the goals and policies that follow.

The 1964 General Plan had 158 pages that covered both Montgomery and Prince George's counties. It contained many illustrations, diagrams and tables. The Thrive version of almost the same number of pages covers only one county, and has few illustrations, diagrams and tables. In the first 50 pages, there is no thread but the text just jumps from one topic to another. As a result it is hard to understand the message. One step to address these shortcomings is to substantially reduce the amount of text and increase the number of illustrations, diagrams and tables.

The purpose section on page 31 misses the mark. The needed purpose is more than defining the basic land use setting and context. We suggest using the words of William J Stevens, Planning Commission Chair, in his January 22, 1964 letter to the residents transmitting the 1964 General Plan. Namely, "The General Plan is the foundation for an ambitious program which includes the development of planning area and watershed plans, the acquisition and development of park areas, the design of transportation facilities and the search for new plan effectuation measures." This certainly could be revised to reflect 2020 but it is more inclusive than what is written on page 31.

There are two sections addressing the same point and thus they should be combined: "Why update the General Plan" starting on page 11 and "Rationale and Content", starting on page 31. Much of what is discussed in "Rationale and Content" is not rationale but a proposed approach. It needs to be included

in the applicable element. The “Why Update” section should be short and point to the “Trends and Challenges” section which directly follows it.

The 12 Trends and Challenges topic is generally good and they should form the basis for the goals and policies provided later in the document. However, the seven trends (1-6 and 11) need to be separated from the five challenges (7-10 and 12). The most important challenges should be identified first. We think there are three overarching challenges that the county must face in order to be successful: economic development (#8), efficient mobility other than driving (#9) and the environment (#12). We agree that housing (#7) is an issue but addressing the three prior issues will go a long way toward addressing it (i.e. with Complete Communities). The Regional Solutions (#10) is not a challenge but rather part of an element and thus should be eliminated from this list.

The subject of equity should be included in the list of challenges discussed above. We suggest eliminating pages 25 and 26. Page 27, the top half of 28, and information after the bullets on page 29 should remain as the challenge. In the second bullet on page 29, the county should not be creating new communities for any race or ethnic group since communities should be available everyone. The equity text from page 35 needs to be included in this challenge.

The text on page 35 covering the three overarching outcomes should be deleted since these outcomes are the three major challenges.

The major themes on pages 36-44 need to be linked back to the five challenges and form the basis for the elements that follow. One vehicle to starting addressing all five challenges is through Complete Communities, which would be applied in the desired growth centers. They include CBDs, Metro Station Policy Areas and town centers, most of which will be located at select premium transit stations on Metrorail, Purple Line and BRT corridors. We don’t agree that there should be a lot of growth between these communities along the corridors (page 37). The existing single family housing between the centers will largely remain unchanged since large numbers of individual homeowners will not be converting them. The redevelopment will largely occur in existing retail centers or older multifamily housing. Since these locations today are of varying sizes, the centers will need to be of different sizes. The bulk of the redevelopment should occur in the larger centers. The number of illustrations (pages 38-40) should be reduced.

For each of the themes, text needs to be added to explain how it relates to the trends and addresses the challenges. Every challenge needs to be addressed by at least one theme. The linkage is largely missing.

Our comments on the other themes on pages 41-44 are:

- “Plan for people not cars”, we agree with providing more transit, walking and biking alternatives.
- “Eradicate, greenhouse gases” change “eradicate” to “reduce”. This needs to include improved building standards. This theme needs to be expanded to include other environment elements.
- “Affordable Housing.” Most of the new housing should be located in targeted growth centers, which should be in the Complete Communities. Most of the new housing should be multi-family and there needs to be more two and three bedroom units. To achieve affordable housing the county-imposed costs need to be substantially reduced. The recent tax and moratorium changes being considered by the council as part of the Subdivision Staging Policy are a good start.
- “Evolution of single-family neighborhood” should not be included as a separate theme since it is included in other themes.

- “Racial justice and equity” should be a theme. The comments above on equity also apply here.
- “The great design and the importance of place”. Eliminate this as a theme since it should be part of the Complete Community theme.
- “Regional solutions and strategies”. Eliminate this as a theme since it is not at the same level as the others. It should be included in the elements.

The section on pages 45-47 entitled “plan vision” needs to be deleted. A vision is another term for theme and those were covered above and under challenges. The ideas listed are not visions but are intended outcomes.

Comments for the Elements as a Group

We don’t disagree with many of the actions under the eight elements but this document is not where they should be considered. The actions make the document read more like a staff work plan rather than a vision of the future. Most of the actions identified in the document are studies and should be moved to an appendix and identified as possible work items. If any action should be retained, it should be included in the policy.

Page 49 identifies eight interrelated elements. Each element has goals and policies related to it but there are also many related to the other elements. The goals and policies need to be limited to one element to avoid duplication and frustrate the reader. A sentence could be added several places in the document to indicate each element interacts with the other elements.

The title “Issues and Challenges: needs to be changed to “Trends and Challenges” to match that in the introduction. The text here needs to include the ideals provided previously and built upon here.

Comments on Each Element

1. Complete Communities

We support the idea of complete communities but the following changes are needed:

- The land would fall into one of two categories: CBDs, Metro Policy areas, and town centers (which we just call town centers); and areas between them. There are many acres in urban and suburban areas that are not within a town center. The text reads as if everything is in a town center. The text needs to be changed to correct that impression.
- The 15 –minute walk applies to larger town centers but not the areas between them.
- The services will exist in larger town centers, but few if any would exist between them. The area between centers is largely made up of single family housing and that will change little over the life of the plan.
- Please modify or, better yet, delete the apparent value statement on the bottom of page 51. It is presumptuous to assume "most older adults" do or do not need or want "larger houses", or they are "forced" to live there.
- The town centers should largely be along premium transit corridors (Metrorail, Purple Line or BRT). The few town centers elsewhere will have limited transit and much fewer services
- Auto traffic will continue to be a primary means of mobility outside town centers where premium transit is not available. Therefore contrary to policy 1.1.3, walking and bicycling will not be the highest priority. A balanced approach for all modes of travel is needed.

Outside of larger town centers, transit and auto are probably the highest priority for travel and walking/biking are largely for leisure.

- Local bus service will not be everywhere outside of town centers, but will exist in some urban and suburban areas. However, as autonomous vehicles become available, they can be used to transport people to town center or premium transit stations.
- **In goal 1.1**, change the word “communities” in two places to “town center” since community is a general area while town center is more defined.
- **In goal 1.2**, many town centers will not have any public building or in some cases a park. The County needs to guard against over specifying design, art and public benefits. The private sector needs freedom to innovate.
- **In goal 1.3**, eliminate the first four words: “Promote active lifestyles by”.
- **In goal 1.4**, delete the first sentence so the second sentence becomes the goal. The idea of metrics is good but not to be used to monitor implementation, especially by the private sector. This goal might be moved to an equity element.

2. Connectedness

- a. **Issues.** There is a statement that we need to make neighborhoods more diverse. In east county, are you saying that we need more white people? People are going to move where they decide and we don’t think the government should be in the business of telling people where they should live. We recommend removing that statement. The implementation of complete communities will provide the interaction this element is after.
- b. **Goals 2.1 and 2.3.** Modify to say it applies to town centers. The policies and actions in them do not apply to other areas.
- c. **Goal 2.4.** Modify to say it is accomplished outside the master plan and development review process.
- d. **Goal 2.5** Move to the equity element.

3. Resilient Economy.

- a. **Name.** Change the name to “Strong Economy”. Strong is substantially different than resilient and that is what we need.
- b. **Issues.** The sentence in the middle of the first issues paragraph needs to be rewritten since it indicates that causes and effects are the same. The sentence is: “Slow job growth, limited new business formation, wage stagnation, rising economic and social inequity, a high cost of living and doing business, and increasing traffic congestion negatively affect economic activity”. Rather say: “The county is experiencing slow job growth, limited new business formation, wage stagnation, rising economic and social inequity, a high cost of living and doing business”. Page 21 contains information about the slow job growth and wage decline. It is uneconomical for businesses to locate here except in high cost areas like Bethesda. Also the traffic congestion and the long/uncertain regulatory approval process negatively affects businesses ability and willingness to locate or expand in the county. ”
- c. **All Goals and Policies in this element.** Throughout the policies in this element, eliminate reference to a good-paying job. While that is the desired outcome it is not something the county can directly control. Rather, the county can take actions which should lead to good-paying jobs.
- d. **Growth.** The most important goal is not included. That goal/policy is to reduce the cost for building here. The existing SSP is a good start in achieving this goal including:

- Elimination of the school moratorium
 - Reducing school impact taxes
 - Exempting some properties from both transportation and school impact taxes.
- The opportunity zone is the most important since federal incentives are provided. The enterprise zone is another vehicle for economically encouraging growth.
- e. **Goal 3.1.** The County streets and roadways will be the primary means of transportation for many years to come and need to be properly maintained and repaired. Poorly maintained streets are a major deterrent to investment and commerce. "Active Living" within a community is promoted when the residents feel pride in their neighborhood appearance, including the streets, and have safe access.
 - f. **Policy 3.2.1.** The zoning density has a bearing upon the cost to develop. Zoning density goes a long way to setting the value of the land. The policy should be to have lower density by right and provide density bonuses when developers propose features that the county wants. One such feature would be to provide more bedrooms in high rise multifamily buildings.
 - g. **Action 3.2.1a.** We don't agree with this proposed action.
 - h. **Policy 3.2.2** Move this to the transportation element. What about other major employment centers, including White Oak?
 - i. **Goal 3.3.** The idea of the second sentence is good so delete the first sentence. The result of training and education can be better paying jobs and in some cases retaining a job at the same income level. The focus needs to be on education, especially college and adult education. Employers need people with the desired skills. The needed skills can shift over time and people therefore need continuing education. There are also immigrants who need education in English, but that idea should not be included in the plan.
 - j. **Goal 3.4.** This goal should be deleted since land is needed for all enterprise activities, not just PDR.
 - k. **Policy 3.5.3.** Move into policy 3.3. Also, in policy 3.5.2 where a key federal facility exists, master plans should encourage nearby development that would provide a synergic relationship. The White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan is an example. LABQUEST is a good example of an organization to encourage the relationship.
 - l. **Goal 3.6.** The major objective should be to shorten the length of time to obtain regulatory approval. Also in the multiple stage planning process, once an item is approved at one stage it should not be reopened for decision at a later state, which often happens, especially when staff personnel change.
 - A policy should be added to review regulations to eliminate unnecessary or outdated ones.
 - Delete draft policies 3.6.2 (housing in the wrong element) and 3.6.3 (use technology – if anything this is an action).
 - m. **Goal 3.7.** Need to also work with other counties, especially for transportation.

4. Safe and Efficient Travel

- a. **Goal 4.1** Delete the first sentence since it is not a goal. The second sentence is a goal but reword it something like: Plan, design and implement the transportation system to encourage people to use public transit, walking and biking rather than the need to drive.

- b. **Policy 4.1.1.** There needs to be a balanced approach to using roads. Some roads will be primarily for vehicles and transit and others will also be used equally by all modes.
- c. **Policy 4.1.2.** High quality transit is not defined. The correct term is premium transit. Transit goes between places, not between places and itself.
- d. **Policy 4.1.4.** Eliminate rail since it is too costly.
- e. **Policy 4.1.6.** Eliminate this policy since it is an operational task and doesn't belong here.
- f. **Policy 4.1.7.** Eliminate since it is already covered elsewhere in Goal 4.1
- g. **Goal 4.2 and its policies.** The points here are already covered in Goal 4.1 and its policies.
- h. **Goal 4.5.** Eliminate this under transportation since it is covered under Element.6. Also, at most one can only reduce greenhouse gases, not eradicate it.
- i. **Goal 4.6.** Eliminate since actions dealing with funding priorities and fares don't belong in this document.
- j. **Goal 4.7.** Eliminate since it is already covered under Goal 4.1
- k. **Goal 4.8.** This goal is saying to form another COG, but it already exists. Are you proposing to create another COG? Coordination is also needed with Howard County and others counties northwest of Montgomery County.

5. **Affordability and Attainability**

- a. **Policy 5.1.7.** The zoning ordinance should be changed to allow increased density when additional bedrooms are built for multifamily units. See the SSP staff report for 10/30/2020 for information that relates number of bedrooms to the revenue the building owner receives.
- b. **Policy 5.5.12.** The SSP is not the correct vehicle for monitoring growth housing trends.
- c. **Goals 5.5 and 5.6.** Move these goals to the proposed equity element.

6. **Healthy and Sustainable Environment**

- a. **Goal 6.1 and polices 6.1.1, 6.1.2 and 6.1.4.** These have already been covered in the complete communities element and thus should be deleted from this element.
- b. **Policy 6.1.3.** This policy is a mix of ideas that are poorly explained and those ideas should be moved into goal 6.2.
- c. **Goal 6.2.** This goal and its policies contain multiple poorly written ideas. Many of the ideas are covered under Complete Communities; and Safe and Efficient Travel. Accordingly they should be deleted from here. The idea of action 6.2.1 should be made into a policy, and maybe a goal to increase the building designs to use less energy, less water, and less light and noise pollution. A policy also is needed to deal with reducing the amount of stormwater run-off and the negative effects from it (water temperature, and volume of run-off in a storm). The standards need to address 100 year storms since we are having them several times a decade. There needs to be a policy about retrofitting streams undergoing severe erosion. The other items in this goal should be deleted since they are not something the county can effect (redesign the electrical, and communications utility infrastructure)
- d. **Goal 6.3.** Improving health is not something that belongs in this document. It is handled by private industry and much of the regulation is undertaken by FDA and other federal agencies. Congress is the one who would establish policy. The plan should talk about parks and recreation facilities. Health will be improved as a bi-product of the remaining elements.
- e. **Goal 6.4.** Delete this goal since it is federal responsibility to regulate food safety and private industry to control where it is grown, stored, processes and distributed.

7. Diverse and Adaptable Growth

- a. **Goals 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3** should be deleted since the subject is already covered in under the Complete Communities element.
- b. **Title.** The title for this element needs to be changed to Agriculture Reserve.
- c. **Policy 7.4.3** The government should not be in the business of increasing public awareness, except as part of MCPS education.

8. Design, Arts and Culture

- a. **Goals 8.1 and 8.5.** The county can encourage art and culture in new development but it should not be part of the regulatory process. The way to do this is create a guide that developers could use if they desire. What is attractive for one person may not be for someone else. Also tastes change over time so regulating it would lock in something that will get dated.
- b. **Goal 8.2.** This largely deals with parks and that entire subject needs to be part of the Healthy and Sustainable Environment element.
- c. **Goal 8.3.** This goal talks about the environment and it needs to be part of Healthy and Sustainable Environment element.
- d. **Goals 8.4 and 8.6.** The design is a function of the private sector not the regulatory public sector and thus needs to be deleted from this document.
- e. This element needs to be deleted since after the above changes, there is nothing remaining.

9. Implementation.

Statements in this section about specific decisions that may or not be made in the future don't belong here.

- **Page 125.** The text in the next to last paragraph about state roads needs to be deleted. The County should not take over control of state roads. The County is unable to adequately fund repair of county roads and adding state roads would require a major tax increase.
- **Page 126.** The two bullets under master plans need to be deleted since our recommendation is to move all actions to an appendix as possible work programs. Employment objectives don't belong in master plans since the government can't control them.
- **Pages 126/127/132-134.** These sections need to be deleted and placed in an appendix.
- **Page 128.** The discussion on facility plans needs to be deleted since the Planning Board reviews them under mandatory review when public facilities are getting ready to be implemented. Master Plans provide guidance before that.
- **Page 131.** Delete the "getting started" discussion since it is setting actions. The previous discussion indicated the Thrive plan sets the vision and not actions.

Thanks for considering our ideas.

Sincerely

Daniel L. Wilhelm
GCCA President

From: [Mike English](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive 2050 Written Testimony from Michael English
Date: Monday, November 16, 2020 7:49:43 PM
Attachments: [Michael English Thrive 2050 Testimony.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good Evening

I am writing to you to submit my written testimony for the record for the Thrive 2050 hearing, in advance of my oral testimony. Please see the attached PDF

Thank you,

Michael English
8005 13th Street, Unit 304
Silver Spring, MD
20910

Dear Members of the Planning Board

My name is Michael English. I've lived in Downtown Silver Spring (DTSS) since 2012, and was lucky enough to be able to purchase a condo in DTSS late last year. Before I get into my detailed comments and concerns, I wanted to thank the planning department for its bold draft plan on Thrive 2050, and the planning board for allowing me to give my testimony, both in writing and verbally. The opportunity to be heard is deeply appreciated.

I'll get into more detail below, but all of my comments and concerns come down to the same thing. Montgomery County is in the midst of a severe affordable housing crisis, and unless housing supply of all shapes and sizes is added in great number, Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) and other affordable housing support are continued and expanded, and existing affordable housing stock preserved to the greatest extent that is economically feasible, this county will continue to become unaffordable for all but the most fortunate. That said, I am happy to see many of the wonderful ideas and proposals laid out in the current Thrive 2050 draft, particularly the acknowledgement of the affordable housing crisis, and the support for adding needed supply, including missing middle housing. If you take away only one thing from my testimony, either in writing or in person, let it be that the final draft of this plan absolutely must maintain this strong focus and expand upon it, otherwise this will cease to be the wonderful and welcoming county I have come to love. I would also like to stress that both renter and owner supply must be added. Even in DTSS, condo buildings, and other ownership opportunities near downtown that aren't outrageously priced single family homes are relatively rare, so while rental supply must be added, room must be made for those seeking to purchase a home as well.

I'm sure I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, but the affordable housing crisis the county faces is severe. In the last decade, only households making \$150,000 or more a year saw an increase in net home ownership in the county, and the household income required to afford the median-priced home exceeds the actual median income, a gap that has steadily widened. Meanwhile, the number of cost-burdened rental households is increasing, particularly in transit accessible areas.

Further, the current Thrive draft itself notes that unless the county grows its housing supply to make room for the projected 200,000 new residents moving here by 2045, existing communities will become more expensive, less diverse and integrated, and it will be difficult to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Further, this 200,000 number should be viewed as a guess, not a cap. I encourage the county to make room for even more people to the extent trends indicate it is feasible.

You will no doubt hear from others that people "don't have the right to live wherever they want" or, to paraphrase our current County Executive, that they can live in Frederick if they can't afford our county. These arguments are, to be polite, the height of oblivious privilege. The same people saying this no doubt rely on local, often low wage workers to serve them food, staff retail, manage and work in their offices, teach their children, maintain their roads, or any number of other important jobs that don't command the same wages us privileged few are lucky enough to

receive. I simply don't subscribe to the belief that there is no place for people to live near where they work, or at least have reasonable, reliable transportation to those areas. People who claim that others can live further out, and far away from transportation and other important infrastructure either forget this, or simply do not care. Failing to make room for people to live in vibrant, accessible, and prosperous areas is classist, cold, and not becoming of the progressive values that our county, justifiably, has come to stand for.

I am lucky enough to do fairly well financially, and even I have long had fears of being priced out of this region, as have most of the people I know even in my relatively affluent bubble. While my own prospects are currently a bit more stable, I worry for the quality of life of others, and, more selfishly, I worry that the wonderful diverse community I live in will gradually be replaced with a richer, sterile, and monochromatic populace as everyone else gets priced out. Simply put, I don't want Silver Spring to become "Bethesda East", and there are multiple neighborhoods with similar concerns throughout Montgomery County. While I understand the concern my fellow homeowners have about "protecting their investment" with increased property values, to me, owning a home is meant to provide some sense of financial and residential stability, and the ability to build forced savings through equity. It is not an entitlement to an ever growing return on investment.

In our county, and particularly downcounty, homeownership is increasingly becoming the domain of only the most fortunate. Even if property values go down, which I hope but sadly do not expect them to do, homeowners will by and large be fine. They are scared of the unknown, and I get that, but I'm more worried about the people scared about losing a roof over their heads, or of having a two hour commute to their jobs as they are priced further and further out. Even if median prices don't fall, renter and owner occupied smaller units, whether in the form of high rises or missing middle housing (small apartment and condo buildings, duplexes, triplexes, rowhomes, etc.) would allow for more of these cheaper alternatives to be on the market, making things more affordable for more people, regardless of what happens with the skyrocketing, and frankly ridiculous prices on standalone single family homes.

While affordability and the lack of a diverse housing stock is a problem throughout the county, I think the example of DTSS is very telling, and the one I can speak best to. The downtown core, which I live on the edge of by the community college, is dense and urban and vibrant, with a diverse housing stock ranging from affordable garden apartments, to small condo buildings like my own, to mid and high rise apartment and condo towers. And then, suddenly and starkly, it ends. Single family homes dominate across Fenton and Spring streets, and even modest half a century old single family homes in neighborhoods like Woodside and Takoma Park easily go for half a million dollars to start, often much higher. That kind of hard line of division of standalone homes directly adjacent to density, and all the transit, shopping, parks, and other amenities that come with it, provides these SFH with a free rider benefit on their property values. With the median price for a single family home in the county being over \$700,000, a county primarily made up of single family homes will never be able to provide shelter for the vast majority of the population without stretching budgets to, and past, the breaking point. High rises and MPDU

requirements are wonderful tools, are used fairly widely in Silver Spring and Bethesda, and I support them and their expansion, as well as other monetary aid and affordable housing requirements. However these two areas cannot bear the burden of supply on their own, the whole county needs to do its part.

Even for a more localized DTSS sector plan to be bold, it needs a strong general plan to support it. Further, in order to truly move the needle on affordability in Montgomery County tactics like adding missing middle housing will need to be deployed county wide. I would urge the planning board to expand missing middle housing into more single family home exclusive zoned neighborhoods throughout our county, particularly in areas accessible to transit, as they can better handle the density, and will help make transit accessible to those who need it most.

Lastly, I'm sure you will hear people complain about the "changing character of neighborhoods" that might be brought about by zoning changes. To that, I offer two responses. One, zoning is not a commandment from the county on what will be built. Single family homes will still be allowed everywhere, and people will be able to stay in their own homes. If the market dictates that SFH be built in a location, that is what will be built regardless of zoning. The "character of the neighborhood" will be preserved unless it was artificially imposed to begin with. If that type of change happens I will shed no tears for such an outcome.

Second, this is, at best, a classist viewpoint, and at worst, a racist one. Historical districts and other types of SFH exclusive zoning are simply the current manifestation of explicitly racist policies such as redlining in the past. Just because people don't mean for something to be racist doesn't mean it isn't so. "Character of the neighborhood" is another way of saying "we don't want 'those kinds of people' living here". It's fear mongering, and it has no place in our country, let alone our progressive county.

In closing, I truly love Montgomery County, and I think I would have trouble ever leaving, but if we don't do something fast, fewer and fewer people will be able to experience living in this place I know and love. We need to do all we can to make sure it stays a vibrant, diverse, and welcoming place for all, and this once in a generation General Plan isn't going to be something we can do over again anytime soon. It will set the framework for sector plans and other more specific zoning decisions for decades to come. If we don't dramatically expand the number and types of homes, rental and owner occupied alike, available now and in the future, it will be nothing short of a betrayal of the principles of progressivity, fairness, equality, and just plain decency we justifiably like to tout. Please don't let that happen.

Thank you,

Michael English
8005 13th Street, Unit 304
Silver Spring MD, 20910

From: [B Ditzler](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: My comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Monday, November 16, 2020 9:15:37 PM
Attachments: [Brian Ditzler comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050 for hearing on 11-19-20.docx](#)

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Please accept my comments on the Thrive plan for the hearing on November 19. I would appreciate confirmation from you that my comments have been received. Thanks.

Brian Ditzler

1225 Noyes Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20910
bditzler@gmail.com
November 16, 2020

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
SUBJECT: Thrive Montgomery 2020 Draft Plan

The walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented “15 minute living” advocated for in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan where racial and social equity, economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability are all paramount makes eminent sense and has my full support. What follows are some of the specific reasons for my positive view of the Thrive draft plan.

First, my family and I experienced such a lifestyle when we lived in a townhouse in southwest London, England, for a time during my 35-year career with a major multinational corporation. Our stay in England was fantastic. We didn’t own or need a car then because we could walk or take transit to wherever we wanted to go. Our two sons took the “tube” (subway) to school, and when station closures occurred, they caught a bus or two. I took a train to my job west of London, and on weekends and vacation, mass transit allowed us to explore and enjoy the city, the country and even a lot of Western Europe too.

We loved that way of living so much that when we decided to move to this area to take care of elderly parents and to retire, a primary requirement was that we find a house where we could easily walk to stores, restaurants, the library, doctors’ offices and Metrorail. We bought a home in Silver Spring within walking distance of the central business district and have enjoyed living here for 15+ years now. We are very much looking forward to the Purple Line and various Bus Rapid Transit lines being completed, and ideally Metrorail and MARC expanded too, so we will be able to drive even less than we do now.

I support Thrive Montgomery because it is fact-based and aspirational but reasonable too. It promotes both environmental resilience and sustainability. Despite many people wanting to keep life as it is or was in the past, change is inevitable, so it makes sense to move in a positive direction with smart growth that includes planning for people – not cars. With the shortage of open, buildable land and affordable housing in the county now, we need to allow (and encourage) a mix of housing types in areas near transit, including areas now zoned for single family homes.

The projected increase in people moving to our county in the future, together with already heavy traffic congestion on many of our roads, means far more transit is needed, which also will enable the safe, walkable and bikeable communities that Thrive seeks. More transit is also needed because numerous studies show expanding highways to lessen congestion works for a small number of years before the increased number of drivers an expanded highway attracts will cause traffic congestion again along with more pollution and more sprawl. The best way for our streets to handle increased walking, biking and transit safely is to have lower speed

limits and “complete streets”, with buses traveling on dedicated lanes to make them faster and more reliable so they will attract more riders.

Thrive recognizes climate change is happening and needs to be mitigated as much as possible. The plan must reduce the environmental impact of growth but also needs to help increase our energy independence as much as possible. This means requiring more energy efficiency in buildings, and greater use of solar in the county on government, school, commercial and residential building roof tops, parking lots and garages, as well as on farm land including the Ag Reserve.

My primary criticism of the draft plan is that it doesn’t sufficiently acknowledge the Ag Reserve must benefit the entire county and not just those who live there. One reasonable and necessary use of the Ag Reserve is to accommodate commercial solar farms that comply with appropriate restrictions and requirements such as contained in a text amendment now under consideration by the County Council.

In summary, I think the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft plan is fact-based and appropriately aspirational but reasonable too, and would bring about the smart growth our county needs. I am pleased to live in a county that recognizes change is inevitable and is planning the steps needed to move us forward in a positive, resilient, sustainable and equitable manner.

Brian Ditzler

From: [Annette Hennessey](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Written Testimony for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing | November 19 2020
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 11:15:58 AM
Attachments: [APAH Statement on Thrive Montgomery 2050 11.19.20.pdf](#)

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Attached is our written testimony for the Planning Board's public hearing official record. Please let me know if you need anything further.

My bet,
Annette Hennessey

Annette Hennessey

Executive Assistant

Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing

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Arlington Partnership
For Affordable Housing



CFC: 89863 | United Way NCA: 8403

**Written Testimony for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Update
November 19, 2020**

Dear Montgomery Planning Board,

We strongly support the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan as currently written. As one of the region's most productive affordable housing developers, Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH) thanks you for the opportunity to testify, and we are excited by the vision laid out in the plan. Although based in Arlington, APAH works throughout the DMV, including in Montgomery County, and we hope to provide more and more affordable housing in the county in the future. The Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan would greatly help us and other non-profit developers to further expand our work into Montgomery County.

One major reason why we are so excited about Montgomery County is because of the high quality of life there, and so we are glad to see such a forward-looking document that is welcoming of future population growth. As we know from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's 2019 housing targets, the region's population and economy is continuing to grow and every jurisdiction must accommodate new housing development to maintain affordability and diversity. These targets aim for 75% of new housing near transit and 75% affordable to low- and middle-income households. This plan is a positive step towards achieving these goals in Montgomery County. Specifically, APAH strongly supports the following goals in the draft plan:

- **Diversifying housing types in single-family areas, especially near transit (Goals 1.1 and 5.1).** Although the county's population continues to grow, building permits are at historic lows. This is mainly because the county has built out most of its residential zoned land to its capacity. To maintain housing production, the county should consider densifying, especially in single family areas around transit. Doing so is also equitable, because so many of the county's wealthiest neighborhoods are also single family. These areas tend to be those that benefited from exclusionary lending policies by the federal government in the mid-20th century. The county's original General Plan served to further institutionalize this segregation by making these areas off limits to growth. Allowing for more diverse housing types in these areas, such as duplexes, triplexes, or even small apartment buildings, would begin to break this history of racial and economic exclusion.
- **Allow for new housing near rail and BRT corridors (Goal 5.2).** The existing and future rail and bus rapid transit lines are some of the most valuable assets that the county has to offer, and we strongly endorse building housing near them. So many APAH residents in transit-oriented projects have benefited tremendously from quick and cheap access to schools and jobs. Projects near transit also allow for the potential of decreasing on-site parking spaces, which can save projects millions of dollars.

- **Streamlined development review (Goal 5.1.3.a).** Clear and certain county approval processes are critical for delivering affordable housing projects on time and on budget. APAH routinely spends tens of thousands of dollars in legal work during the development review process. With more streamlined entitlement processes for affordable housing projects, this money could instead go towards lowering rents for our residents. We particularly encourage you to consider more by-right development opportunities for majority or 100% affordable multi-family projects.
- **Enhanced right of first refusal (Goal 5.5.3).** Like other non-profit affordable housing developers in the region, APAH often must compete against much bigger market-rate developers for sites to build. We often pay brokers to help us find sites in this competitive marketplace. Preference from local jurisdictions through right of first refusal policies gives us a tremendous advantage over the competition and cuts out broker's fees. This helps ensure that committed affordable housing get built in the places that most need it at the lowest cost.
- **Faith-based/non-profit partnerships (Goal 5.1.4).** APAH has had great success in building affordable housing projects with faith-based or other non-profit partners, such as the American Legion. We would love to bring this experience to Montgomery County, and welcome county leadership in this effort.

One item that we would have liked to see more discussion about in the draft plan is:

- **Affordable housing bonus density, especially near transit.** Although we understand that Montgomery County already has an existing MPDU program, we would have liked to see more discussion of how to expand this tool. In particular, we encourage the county to consider raising the 22% bonus density cap for 100% affordable housing projects, particularly those near transit. We would also like to see further discussion on neighborhoods where affordable housing bonus density might be available, such as current low-density areas near transit corridors. Given their complex financing structure, affordable housing projects are difficult and expensive to build no matter the size. Because of this, APAH has found that our biggest projects are also often the most cost efficient. Such projects would not have been possible without generous bonus density programs.

In sum, we think that this draft plan is a significantly positive step forward toward a more affordable and inclusive Montgomery County, and an opportunity to further the County's reputation as a progressive community through forward-looking land use planning. We encourage its approval. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Nina Janopaul
President

From: [Todd Hoffman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov; [County Executive Marc Elrich](#)
Subject: Community Coalition Letter on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 1:06:01 PM
Attachments: [TM 2050 Coalition Response Letter 11-17-20.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

Please see the attached letter from a coalition of incorporated municipalities and community organizations regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050. The signatories of this letter request a meeting with Chair Anderson and Planning Director Gwen Wright, or their designees, to discuss and respond to our questions, suggestions, and concerns. Thank you.

Todd Hoffman
Town Manager
Town of Chevy Chase, Maryland
[4301 Willow Lane](#)
[Chevy Chase, MD 20815](#)
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F: [301-718-9631](tel:301-718-9631)
thoffman@townofchevyCHASE.org

November 17, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair,
and Members of the County Planning Board
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

On behalf of the 27 undersigned incorporated municipalities and community organizations that represent over 33,000 Montgomery County residents, we write to provide comments on the proposed Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan (the “Plan”), a transformational proposal that will impact all residents, business owners and employees, regional commuters, and visitors for decades to come. We support many of the principles that the Plan espouses, including equity, affordability, attainability, inclusiveness, social connections, environmental sustainability, green space, parks, and walkable communities, which will help our County grow and “thrive” under the guidance of an innovative and responsible Plan, and appreciate the hard work that the Planning Board and planning staff have put into its development. Before the Planning Board approves a Plan for consideration by the County Council to adopt for use by commercial and residential developers as the basis for large-scale community development projects and tax abatement strategies, we strongly recommend that careful attention be paid to and revisions be made based on the suggestions, concerns, and questions outlined in this letter, which reflect considerable community input and discussion.

As discussed in greater detail below, in order to be a living Plan for the County’s future, the draft Plan needs to reflect, analyze, and factor in the changed realities of living and working that have been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic this year. Among the changes are the new and greater technology and community needs during this time. The draft Plan should take these new realities into account, design for the likelihood that the County’s budget will be severely constrained for some years to come, and a 5-year review should be conducted in order to document the lasting impacts stemming from the pandemic.

The draft Plan should also reflect the diversity of communities and neighborhoods that exist throughout the County by defining the different ways in which different types of neighborhoods

can achieve the goals of Complete Communities. Montgomery County is not “one size fits all,” and the draft Plan should recognize the County’s differences by establishing separate parameters for determining what is a “Complete Community” in the urban, suburban, and rural parts of the County.

Also critical to the success of the Plan is making sure that residents fully support the Plan, and that changes and goals are implemented in a manner compatible with the features and characteristics of local neighborhoods that communities cherish. For these reasons we recommend that the draft Plan expressly recognize and state that local municipalities continue to retain regulatory authority over building regulations for all types of residential housing within their jurisdictions, including Missing Middle housing and that unincorporated neighborhoods have a real say about the physical changes that are made within their boundaries.

As leaders of the undersigned local governments and community organizations, we feel at a disadvantage to comment publicly given that the *Working Draft* of Thrive Montgomery 2050 is undergoing substantive changes. In the spirit of transparency, we would like to see the red-lined revisions of the draft and reserve the right to make further comments after review.

High-Level Executive Summary of Suggestions & Concerns

- I. **Complete Communities:** we were pleased to see that the draft Plan considered Complete Communities but the inclusion of a map that spotlights which or what proportion of urban, suburban and rural communities are to become Complete Communities replete with Missing Middle housing would be helpful; additionally, there is a paucity of relevant national best practices, omission of any description as to how both incorporated and unincorporated communities will be a part of the redevelopment process that recognizes building and setback authority, a disconnect with MCPS’ plans for larger or magnet schools, and a lack of defined minimum amenities and metrics for determining a successful Complete Community with adequate public facilities, green space, transit infrastructure, and affordable housing. In short, the concept of, location of, and metrics for Complete Communities is incomplete.
- II. **Financing Capacity:** as stated, there is a lack of acknowledgement of COVID-19’s impact on our economy, public revenue deficits, transit use changes, work preferences and lifestyle; in addition, there appears to be an unsupported premise that increased Missing Middle housing stock creates Complete Communities and no attempt in giving equal weight to the importance of job creation, transit, and housing; furthermore, there is a glaring omission of strategies for how public revenue will substantially increase in order to fund decentralized public facilities, small local schools, and transit infrastructure

projects, and a dearth of strategies that attract new industries, companies and small businesses to the County.

- III. **Housing Affordability:** we encourage the County to consider increasing and diversifying areas for Missing Middle housing as well as provide more housing for essential workers and leverage naturally occurring affordable housing options including adaptive re-use of malls and other retail/office buildings which post COVID-19 may no longer be viable for their original and intended use; however the premise that we will need to house 200,000 more residents is based on pre-COVID-19 assumptions and providing Missing Middle housing is not ipso facto affordable.
- IV. **Transportation Access:** we encourage the County to develop a broader approach focused on BRT, specify how transit-centric transportation will be staged given COVID-19 realities, flexibly plan for traffic and technology advancements, integrate with other regional transportation plans, and accommodate demographics including aging, disabled, and young families that cannot use public transit; also, coordination with MDOT will be essential along with the recognition that County residents and visitors will use their cars.
- V. **Public Facility Implementation Plans:** the draft Plan will be expensive to implement so the County should specify payment plans for public facilities, pay more attention to how existing disadvantaged and low-income communities specifically will gain better access to transit and other amenities, coordinate with MCPS, Police and Fire & Rescue, and build in equity so that Complete Communities are available throughout the entire County.
- VI. **General Implementation Plan:** utilize Master & Sector Plans for implementation as well as design excellence standards; and update the Implementation Plan so that it reflects the realities of COVID-19.

Appendices A and B with some requests and questions.

Detailed Suggestions, Concerns & Questions for Improving Thrive Montgomery 2050

I. Complete Communities

A major goal of the draft Plan is to move the County towards a network of Complete Communities. The brief description on page 52 of this major draft Plan component is inadequate and incomplete. Residents cannot give feedback on this major component of the draft Plan without a more concrete idea of what constitutes a Complete Community, whether they live in it or help to finance it through their taxes.

While the draft Plan does name Kensington as an example of a suburban Complete Community, there are no corresponding examples of urban or rural Complete Communities. In addition to providing more specifics about each type of Complete Community, it would be very helpful for the draft Plan to provide some additional examples of urban, suburban, and rural communities in the County that are close to being Complete Communities. It would also be helpful to include examples from elsewhere in the United States of how this concept has been applied and how effective it has been, particularly as applied to a county rather than just to a city. As a result of these gaps, the Goals, Policies, and Actions related to Complete Communities fail to answer many questions about how the goals will be achieved.

We recommend that more detailed information about Complete Communities be added to the draft Plan. Some of our specific suggestions follow:

1. **Provide a Map.** The draft Plan should contain information about the geographic location of the three types of Complete Communities. Specifically,
 - provide a map that shows in which parts of the County the urban, suburban, and rural Complete Communities will be located; and
 - clarify whether or not Complete Communities will be located in the Agricultural Reserve.Some information about key physical characteristics of each type of Complete Community should also be provided (e.g., ranges of acreage, desired population size and density, types of housing units and numbers of housing units per acre, mix of uses, amounts of and access to natural green space).
2. **Define Three Types of Complete Communities.** The Goals, Policies, and Actions for Complete Communities should describe what is required to be present in each of the three types of Complete Communities as well as how those areas of the County that will not be part of a Complete Community will be served.

Many of the Goals, Policies, and Actions relating to Complete Communities are written generally to apply to the entire County; as a result, as presented, they are unrealistic and effectively require considerably more effort and costs. For example, consider, “Policy 1.1.1: ...Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make use of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.” While this policy may be attainable in certain specific areas of the County, it is not feasible or possible for all parts of the County.

3. **Recognize Local Input and Building Authority.** We strongly urge that a policy be added to the draft Plan that gives residents a real role in decisions about changes to the physical characteristics of their neighborhood. There should be another policy that recognizes municipalities’ regulatory authority over various physical characteristics of residential

buildings within their borders. Neighborhoods and municipalities recognize that creation of complete communities will bring some changes to their neighborhoods and that Missing Middle Housing is needed in the County. However, the planning process must be inclusive and engage all residents in decision making about the future of their communities.

The draft Plan acknowledges that moving the County's land use pattern away from suburban sprawl towards potentially more resilient and efficient Complete Communities will require additional density and other changes to existing single-family neighborhoods. It recognizes that to make these changes, resident support will be *needed*.

Residents of both unincorporated communities and incorporated municipalities share concerns about maintaining the physical aspects of their neighborhoods that make them suitable for and attractive to an economically, racially, and ethnically diverse range of potential residents. These aspects include:

- continuation of regulatory authority to adopt ordinances as continuation of existing standards for lot coverage, setbacks, height, conformance to current compatibility requirements for development of non-single-family properties confronting, abutting, and adjacent to properties zoned for single-family residences;
- community-appropriate densities and heights for any building types new to existing single-family communities;
- green space and tree canopy;
- private and/or public areas for recreation;
- limited traffic and safe streets; and
- adequate parking.

The incorporated municipalities, which have regulatory authority over various physical characteristics of their neighborhoods (e.g., setbacks, height, mass, fences, walls, right of ways, residential parking, etc.) seek recognition in the Plan of the appropriateness and continuation of this authority for all residential housing including Missing Middle Housing types discussed in the draft Plan.

In addition, there needs to be a policy in place so that both unincorporated communities and incorporated municipalities are involved in discussions and have a real say about the inclusion of commercial entities within their borders.

Giving residents control over these aspects of the proposed infill development would not interfere with the goals of the Plan -- proponents of Missing Middle Housing state that this housing can be designed and applied in communities so that it is entirely compatible with existing buildings and not really noticeable. Local authority over these aspects would be consistent with these goals.

4. **Define Amenities and Features of Each Type of Complete Community.** The draft Plan should spell out the minimal basic and specialized services and amenities that each of the three types of Complete Communities (urban, suburban, and rural) should contain.
5. **Define Metrics.** The draft Plan should include a policy requiring development of metrics, designed to identify time frames, actions, and results, for each type of Complete Community so that we know what we are striving to achieve, when we have achieved it, and the consequences for not achieving it.
6. **Prioritize Green Space.** The draft Plan should include a policy which requires that Complete Communities have access to nearby natural green space (i.e., no artificial turf and wherever possible unchanged natural landscape).

The draft Plan suggests that residents of Complete Communities should have access to nearby green space but does not have a policy or action item to achieve this goal and does not address the minimum size of such space within rural, suburban, and urban areas. We believe that access to natural green space and the incorporation of a robust tree canopy is important to residents' health and quality of life, even more so as neighborhoods become denser in the process of creating Complete Communities.

7. **Assist Small Businesses.** The draft Plan should acknowledge the need to make sure small businesses can afford to start, operate, and remain in the community as those communities redevelop.

Complete Communities intend to provide residents with access to everything they need. As redevelopment and infill development occurs, affordable retail space is likely to be lost, and with it the small businesses that provide the goods and services needed for daily living. Retention of existing small businesses and establishment of new small businesses will be important in both economically disadvantaged areas and affluent areas. \

The need to retain small businesses and to attract new small businesses may come into conflict with some of the financing measures being considered such as split-rate taxing.

8. **Retain Historic Preservation.** The draft Plan should include a policy that requires that historic designations for commercial and residential properties located in Complete Communities will continue under current Historic Preservation laws and rules.
9. **Change 15-minute Living.** Consider modifying the definition of 15-minute living.

Fifteen-minute living figures prominently throughout the draft Plan as a benefit of achieving Complete Communities. However, many areas of the County cannot realistically expect to

experience this ill-defined concept. Also, the draft Plan is unclear as to whether it means a 15-minute walk, cycle, complete transit ride, or car trip, and how this concept can be applied to rural, suburban, and urban Complete Communities (this is one area where examples could be quite helpful). Perhaps, given the lack of general applicability of 15-minute living across the County and the disconnect between a 15-minute walk, a 15-minute bike ride, 15-minute transit ride, or a 15-minute car ride, the concept of 15-minute living should be changed, and the goals, policies, and actions framed solely in terms of Complete Communities. The 15-minute living slogan is catchy but does not really work for the County as a whole.

10. **Integrate Environmental Sustainability.** The draft Plan does not integrate the goals of infill development and environmentally sustainable development. We recommend that this integration, with metrics, be fleshed out fully to support the County's goal of climate resilience.
11. **Update Infrastructure Policy.** A policy should be added to the draft Plan regarding the need for updated infrastructure in each instance infill development is occurring.

Policy 6.2.4 calls for infrastructure improvements to meet climate change challenges. But the draft Plan lacks a policy that calls for infrastructure improvements to meet added demands placed by infill development on water/sewer lines, electrical lines, communications facilities, stormwater capacity, and other critical infrastructure needs for communities.

II. Financing Capacity

A major flaw of the draft Plan is the sparse attention it gives to how the County will thrive economically and how it will pay for the improvements proposed in the draft Plan, given that increasing housing stock does not, in and of itself, lead to job growth or result in a healthier business climate.

While the draft Plan lists the County's sluggish economic growth as its 8th top challenge, it is concerning that the draft Plan does not address finances and the economic feasibility of the proposals, especially given the high infrastructure costs and lack of financing strategies associated with the draft Plan and in light of the budget shortfalls the County is likely to face for some years due to COVID-19.

The effects of Complete Communities on the County's economic health are uncertain and unproven given the lack of success stories both regionally and nationally. We recommend that greater attention be paid in the draft Plan toward the creation of incentives and other conditions for economic resilience, job creation, and industry diversification.

Our specific concerns about the financial elements of the draft Plan follow:

1. **Prioritize Economic Growth.** The draft Plan should recognize economic growth as one of the County's top challenges.

The county's sluggish economic growth should be listed in the draft Plan as, at least, one of the top 3 challenges the County is facing and job creation should be included as one of the major goals because good paying jobs will be significant in addressing the County's economic inequities.

2. **Consider Economic Resiliency.** Factors that affect the county's economic health and resilience should be considered when developing the draft Plan's Goals, Policies, and Actions.

The draft Plan notes that between 2004 and 2019 the number of jobs in the County grew by 5 percent, whereas the job growth in 20 similarly sized counties (defined as those ranking closest to Montgomery County in total number of jobs in 2004) during this period averaged 21 percent (page 22). The factors that led to the much greater economic growth in these 20 counties should be investigated and the draft Plan examined against those conditions to be sure that its Goals, Policies, and Actions reflect them.

The draft Plan should include Goals, Policies, and Actions that collectively create conditions that improve the County's economic resilience and diversity and enable the County to thrive and compete in the 21st century. The County needs to attract new industries and companies as well as retain those it already has. Potential new industries could include green manufacturing, healthcare technologies, agritourism.

3. **Add Financing Strategies.** We recommend that the draft Plan include high-level fiscal analyses or associated financing and investment strategies that address how amenities will be added to all communities around the County so that they become Complete Communities.
4. **Share the Costs Between Developers & Residents.** The draft Plan should indicate how the costs of achieving the goals of the Plan will be shared between developers and residents.

Constructing Complete Communities will put a great burden on the public treasury to provide (duplicative but equitable) public facilities for all communities. It is unclear where the vast sums that will be needed to fund the many capital improvement projects called for in the draft Plan will come from.

It is equally unclear how the burden of these costs will be shared between developers, commercial interests and residents. For example, the draft Plan should be clear on whether split-rate financing would apply to single-family properties rezoned for multifamily and/or commercial use. Given the reduced impact taxes and increased recordation taxes to be implemented in the 2020-2024 County Growth and Infrastructure Policy and the sparse detail in the draft Plan about increased recordation taxes and split-rate taxes for underutilized properties, we are concerned that too much of the costs will be imposed upon residents, especially those who would be potentially paying a value added tax on homes that are their primary residences.

III. Housing Affordability

A major goal of the draft Plan is increasing the amount of housing in the County: its target is to locate “at least 75 percent of new housing in mixed use centers near rail and BRT” (page 75), and to increase the County’s stock of affordable housing by introducing Missing Middle Housing into single-family neighborhoods within a half mile of rail stations and BRT lines. Given the high land values around transit, we recommend that the draft Plan expand the areas for which Missing Middle Housing can be introduced as well as repurposing certain commercial properties to provide affordable housing.

1. **Increase and Diversify Areas for Missing Middle Housing.** We recommend that the draft Plan increase and diversify the areas where Missing Middle Housing could be located. The draft Plan’s focus on putting infill development in existing neighborhoods within one-half mile of rail stations and BRT routes is too narrow and, in most places, the land is expensive, which may not achieve the stated goals. Putting Missing Middle Housing in these neighborhoods is likely to result in some additional housing if the market finds it profitable to build this type of housing there, but it is highly unlikely that the new market-rate housing units will be affordable or attainable by the income cohorts that the Plan seeks to help. Land within a half-mile proximity to primary public transit (Metro, BRT, Purple Line) in many neighborhoods is so expensive in Montgomery County today that the new housing will not even be affordable for families with moderate incomes. Allowing Missing Middle Housing in neighborhoods that are accessible via other public transit (e.g., Ride On bus and other bus routes on non-BRT routes) could produce additional housing that is far more realistically affordable. This change and expansion of focus and criteria would benefit underserved and disadvantaged communities and populations as the County’s housing stock overall is diversified in an upward direction. Additionally, expanding transit services in these neighborhoods seems desirable from an equity standpoint, will make them more attractive communities, and could result in increased investments there.

2. **Provide Housing for Essential Workers.** We recommend that the draft Plan add a policy and action item of providing convenient and affordable housing for public and other essential workers who provide essential services to communities. Our teachers, fire fighters, police, and others who directly contribute to the community as well as for other essential workers whose incomes are inadequate for most housing in the County (e.g., grocery workers, trash collectors) need to be able to afford housing near their workplaces.

3. **Leverage Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing.** The draft Plan should include some Goals, Policies, and Actions regarding naturally occurring affordable housing and adaptive rehousing.

The draft Plan focuses on creating new housing without adequately considering retaining naturally occurring affordable housing (including possible upgrades to older housing) and repurposing of non-residential properties (COVID-19 has made this particularly relevant). Further analysis should be done to determine current and potential future naturally occurring affordable housing, structural and system (wiring, plumbing, etc.) lifespans, and cost of retrofitting to extend the lifespan of existing structures.

This focus and review would give a better picture of the need for newly built housing, as well as data regarding what such housing would cost renters and buyers. Critically, one likely effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is diminished demand for commercial properties with a greater demand for suburban residential homes; converting certain of the commercial structures to residences, schools, or other public amenities, including co-located uses, should be analyzed as part of Thrive Montgomery.

IV. Transportation Access

A major goal of the draft Plan is to change the culture and use of County transportation modes, by getting people out of cars and instead focusing on mass transit and walkability. This set of goals underpins many of the recommendations in other parts of the draft Plan, such as Complete Communities. This ambitious goal, while laudable in some respects, does not recognize the substantive disconnect between the County's current transit infrastructure and the transportation network that would be needed to realize this goal. The draft Plan's focus is both unrealistic, not consistent with the transportation realities of other parts of the DMV, and not appropriate or equitable for many County businesses and residents.

We recommend that the draft Plan's transportation goals and policies be significantly revised to more realistically consider alternative transit options and substantially increase attention to traffic and future flexibility. Some of our specific suggestions follow. We believe that the Plan should:

1. **Focus on Developing Transit but with a Broader Approach.** The draft Plan focuses on improving mass transit through adding bus rapid transit (BRT) routes and to a lesser degree rail service. Other forms of transit should be considered and incorporated.
2. **Specify How an Evolution from Car-centric Transportation to Transit-centric Transportation Will be Staged and Managed.** The draft Plan does not adequately consider interim stages between the County's transportation situation as it exists now and as it may become over time. This evolution and its timing for items such as sidewalk and bicycle route installations or improvements as well as ADUs and infill development's demand for on-street parking are of particular interest given the large investment of public funds that would be needed and the uncertainties in obtaining funding.
3. **Continue to Plan for Traffic.** The proposed BRT and rail options, even when added to existing Metro and bus lines (and the future Purple Line and planned BRT routes), will not create a transit network sufficient to get most County residents out of cars and hence to reduce traffic. The County's size, current settlement patterns, diverse population, and demographics require continued planning for vehicles and traffic, and the draft Plan should include strategies to do so. The County must maintain policy goals that include the realities of vehicular mobility and support acceptable motor vehicle levels of service. Traffic impacts everyone and planning for motor vehicle traffic still matters. The draft Plan now ignores the vehicular traffic needs of both small businesses and apartment developers, who tell us that they need to provide parking.
4. **Reevaluate Transit Needs in Light of Lessons from the Pandemic.** The spread of COVID-19 and subsequent changes to all areas of work, retail, delivery services, and family life are an object lesson in changing needs. The information already gleaned from changes to travel and telecommuting patterns should be incorporated into the draft Plan.
5. **Provide Flexibility for Future Developments.** The draft Plan is not poised to accommodate future transportation solutions, which are constantly evolving. The impacts of conversion to electric vehicles over the next 25 years, growth in private multi-passenger services (e.g. Uber and Lyft), and new forms of transportation that are likely to become available soon, such as autonomous vehicles, are not considered. Development in areas near transportation hubs will progress and impose new transportation needs, and the ongoing pandemic will change transportation needs in ways that cannot yet be predicted. The draft Plan should exhibit adequate flexibility to respond to current conditions or adapt to changing conditions over its time frame.
6. **Integrate with Other Jurisdictions from the Outset.** Despite recognizing these realities, the draft Plan does not adequately consider that State and Federal roads crisscross the County

and will not be subject to the draft Plan, nor the need to integrate the County's transportation modes with other adjacent jurisdictions. It is unclear whether MDOT was consulted with on this draft Plan. Also, County residents and non-residents will still routinely need cars to travel to other parts of the County, to other parts of Maryland, to DC, and to Northern Virginia. Commercial traffic and delivery vehicles will continue to use, and depend, on adequate roadways and traffic control within the County.

7. **Accommodate Many Groups Who Cannot Use Mass Transit.** While the draft Plan focuses on equity, if the County does not plan for cars and insists on 'road diets', one direct consequence would be a significant negative impact on many groups of County residents, for whom the draft Plan would create inequities including:
 - Low income residents;
 - Senior citizens;
 - People with many types of disabilities.

Despite acknowledgment of these groups of people in the current draft Plan, the needs have not been adequately considered and appear to be based on assumptions more than data. Lower income residents often rely on cars to reach multiple jobs in a timely fashion and using mass transit can be more expensive and require significantly more time than making the same trip by car. Similarly, while the draft Plan discusses the County's growing aging population, it does not take into account the many who are not going to bike or walk, particularly in inclement weather, to meet their day-to-day needs. Crucially, the draft Plan does not provide adequately for people with all types of disabilities. Physically challenged residents are mentioned, but only in the context of being able to "roll" to places. Besides mobility, other physical and emotional challenges will always make it difficult for residents to use transit, to walk, or to cycle. The draft Plan does not adequately consider the issues that impact these large groups of people.

8. **Specify the Proportion of the County that Could Evolve into Complete Communities and Better Consider Transportation Needs for the Other Areas.** Many areas of the County will never become Complete Communities, and even those that do will have limits that cannot be circumvented by walking, cycling, or using only mass transit. Community amenities such as libraries, recreation centers, and sports fields are not likely to be included and/or accessible in all areas. It is not realistic to expect families with young children to avoid vehicles for all education, medical, and recreational needs.

V. Public Facility Implementation Plans

Although the draft Plan is intended to be visionary, rather than an exact road map for the future, its success relies on the development of costly infrastructure (e.g., rail, BRT routes, and public facilities such as schools, libraries, recreation centers, and possibly additional emergency facilities, etc.).

Public revenues, at least in the near future, are dwindling for infrastructure projects due to the county's slow economic growth and, more recently, to COVID-19. Further, reliance on private enterprises or Public Private Partnerships to “build our way forward” may be fraught with unintended financial burdens as well as social and equity consequences, as we have recently learned from the Purple Line.

We have the following specific concerns regarding the discussion and analysis of public facilities in the draft Plan:

1. **Specify Payment Plans for Public Facilities.** The Plan should address how the County will pay for decentralized public facilities.

Throughout the draft Plan there is lack of clarity regarding 15-minute living in general and 15-minute access to public facilities in particular. The draft Plan encourages co-location of “essential services such as schools, medical clinics, daycare centers, libraries and recreation centers within communities”. While the County in some instances does currently provide for co-location, it has an extensive range of centralized facilities, including swim centers, sports centers, motor vehicle offices, and immersion programs in schools. The draft Plan appears to be reversing this centralization and sharing of public facilities by calling for decentralizing these services so that residents have 15-minute access. Regardless of how the Plan ultimately defines 15-minute living, building and operating these decentralized facilities will add significant costs to the County's budget and should be addressed as part of the draft Plan.

2. **Coordinate with School Facilities and Programs.** We recommend that the Planning Board work closely with MCPS and the Board of Education to determine if decentralization of middle and high schools, plus the possible termination of magnet and immersion programs, is in the best interest of the County and its students.

While most elementary schools are a short walk for K through 5th graders, middle and high schools are clustered and today for many students require a car or bus ride. The decentralization of middle and high schools to accommodate 15-minute living will radically change that model. Even with compact designs or co-location with other public facilities, under the draft Plan a large number of additional schools will need to be built at a substantial

cost. Further, there is the question of whether magnet and immersion programs should be scaled back or eliminated in the interest of walkability, or made available more broadly, which raises issues of staffing. This is an important policy question for consideration by MCPS and the Board of Education. Related questions regarding athletic programs and the cost of fielding team sports at an increased number of schools as well as the feasibility of acquiring the land that will be needed in already fully built-out neighborhoods also need additional review and analysis.

In light of the County's national reputation for educational excellence and the significance of that reputation to the decision of many companies and families to relocate to the County, adopting the Compact Communities concept requires careful consideration of its impact on the County's educational system as well as whether it will help attract new families and business to the County.

3. **Prioritize Equity.** Public facilities are not equitably distributed throughout the county. The draft Plan should prioritize adding missing public facilities to disadvantaged neighborhoods and upgrading the facilities currently in those neighborhoods.

Transforming existing single-family neighborhoods near rail and BRT transit into Complete Communities will, in many places, involve improving access to public facilities such as libraries, recreation centers, schools, parks, government offices, and natural green spaces, among other things. This improved access may necessitate construction of new facilities. Transforming existing neighborhoods near transit into Complete Communities appears to be the draft Plan's priority. However, some of these neighborhoods are already more amenity-rich than many of the County's disadvantaged neighborhoods. Given budgetary constraints, it seems unlikely that improvements can be made in all neighborhoods simultaneously. To better serve those with greatest need in the County, the priority should be to make improvements in the neighborhoods with the greatest socioeconomic needs and the poorest access to those services.

4. **Coordinate with Police and Fire Protection Services.** We recommend that the Planning Board work closely with representatives of MCPD, County and local Fire Departments to ensure that the Plan does not adversely impact public safety and fire protection services.

Historically, there is a strong relationship between population density and the need for police and fire and emergency services. Decentralization may require expenditures for land acquisition and construction; how it might affect staffing is unclear. We believe extensive additional input is needed from MCPD, MCFRS, and private fire departments regarding urban, suburban, and rural Complete Communities and the most effective, cost-efficient deployment of these services.

VI. General Implementation Plan

1. **Use Master Plans and Sector Plans.** We strongly urge that zoning changes be established through a Master Plan or Sector Plan approach and not through a global ZTA approach. Implementing changes to housing and uses in neighborhoods through a Master Plan or Sector Plan is more appropriate than other approaches because the County's neighborhoods have such varied characteristics – one size does not fit all. This approach also allows communities and planners to have a dialog based on the actual experience of living and/or working in a neighborhood as decisions are made about changes to the physical characteristics of the neighborhoods (see item 5 in the Complete Communities section).
2. **Move Design Excellence Criteria to Other Plans.** Design excellence should be addressed in Master and Sector Plans rather than in Thrive Montgomery.

The promotion of design excellence in public buildings is a commendable goal but is beyond the scope of a general plan such as Thrive Montgomery. This goal is not clearly defined in the draft Plan and can be subject to changing trends and individual opinion; for these reasons we urge that it not be imposed on a community through the Plan. Within each Master or Sector Plan, a panel including relevant experts and community representatives, with input from neighboring properties, should be part of the design excellence process. Also, design guidelines should not be used in place of zoned density, but rather to enhance the aesthetic appearance of allowed density.

From a practical perspective, increased costs ascribed to design excellence will present a financial challenge, given the fiscal issues facing the County.

3. **Improve Implementation Timeline.** The implementation timeline should reflect the realities of obtaining financing to build the new mass transit, bicycle routes, sidewalks, parks, greenways, and decentralized public facilities that will be needed to create Complete Communities across the county and make the Plan a success. The timeline must include metrics to measure progress and success.

We appreciate your full consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert Goodwin, Jr., Board Vice Chair
Chevy Chase Village

Tracey Furman, Mayor
Town of Kensington

Joan Barron & Shelley Yeutter, Co-Presidents
Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association

James A. Ruspi, Mayor
Town of Laytonsville

Melanie Rose White, Chair
Citizens Coordinating Committee of Friendship
Heights*

Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor
Town of Somerset

David Barnes, President
Edgemoor Citizens Association

Marnie Shaul, Council President
Town of Somerset

Roger Conley, President
Kenwood Citizens Association

Susan Manning, Council Chair
Village of Chevy Chase Section 3

Cecily Baskir, Mayor
Town of Chevy Chase

Gregory S. Chernack, Council Chairman
Village of Chevy Chase Section 5

Paula Fudge, Council Chair
Town of Chevy Chase View

Melanie Rose White, Mayor
Village of Friendship Heights

Kacky Chantry, Mayor
Town of Garrett Park

Adrian Adreassi, Council Chair
Village of North Chevy Chase

Willem Polak, Mayor
Town of Glen Echo

*Representing the Communities of Brookdale, Chevy Chase Village, Chevy Chase West, Drummond, Kenwood, Kenwood Condominium, Kenwood Forest II, Kenwood House Cooperative, Little Falls Place, Somerset, Somerset House Condominiums, Sumner Village, Village of Friendship Heights, Westbard Mews, Westmoreland, Westwood Mews, and Wood Acres.

cc: Montgomery County Council
 Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive
 Gwen Wright, Director, Montgomery County Planning Department

Appendix A – Requests

1. The draft Plan contains a statement that disparages community participation in the planning process: “Communities have become highly adept at using the public process to block new housing and solving the county’s housing shortage will require a shared vision throughout Montgomery County.” (page 86). This statement is inappropriate and should be removed from the document.
2. The Plan should explain the impact its adoption will have on existing Master Plans and Sector Plans. Will recently adopted Master and Sector Plans be revised to reflect the Goals, Policies, and Action items in the Plan?
3. Some incorporated municipalities (e.g., Rockville, Gaithersburg, Takoma Park) and HOAs will not be impacted by Thrive Montgomery’s push to add Missing Middle housing types to existing single-family neighborhoods, potentially creating a disparate impact. Please add a map that shows where Missing Middle Housing could be located.
4. San Diego recently began allowing Missing Middle housing in formerly single-family detached house neighborhoods. It is a large and diverse county, much like Montgomery County. Please include best practices from San Diego in the Thrive Montgomery document.
5. The draft Plan is not well organized. For example, there are Complete Communities and housing items in nearly all of the chapters which makes it very difficult for the reader to get a comprehensive view of what is being proposed for these topics. We urge you to group Complete Communities items together, housing items together, transportation items together, and so forth. Additionally, quite a few of the policies and actions seem too granular for a general Plan and run the risk of becoming outdated; consider dropping them.

Appendix B – Specific Questions

Complete Communities:

1. The draft Plan proposes to grow commercial centers that are attractive as headquarters locations for large, multinational corporations, major regional businesses, federal agencies, and small and locally owned businesses. How do these commercial centers fit with the proposed Complete Communities?

Housing Affordability:

1. What housing types will be considered single-family housing? The draft Plan refers to attached single-family, semi-detached single family, and detached single-family housing, but does not define what housing types these terms include. Please add definitions for these to the Glossary.
2. Will HOAs be excluded from ZTAs or will their covenants override?

Transportation Access:

1. Some municipalities in other states are not exclusively dedicating one lane to BRT; rather the lane becomes dedicated during certain traffic conditions. What novel ways could streets be repurposed for BRT?
2. The draft Plan mentions developing a “logistics plan to facilitate increasing volumes of e-commerce-related deliveries.” However, downtowns and town centers are slated for more density. How will the increase in delivery vehicles factor into lane reduction, parking decreases, and zero emissions?

Businesses Growth:

1. County Planning staff have stated that corner stores and other businesses will be added to existing neighborhoods, but only on the edges of those neighborhoods, not in the middle of them. How will the placement of these businesses be determined and controlled? How will zoning be altered to allow these uses?
2. What business climate conditions will be created to attract companies and keep them in the County and what types of housing and transportation do employers need?
3. What metrics and consequences will be put into place to ensure minority business owners have equitable access?
4. Has the County considered focusing incentives and commercial land use policies to attract specific industries that take advantage of our unique access to DC so that these industries become synonymous with Montgomery County? Examples might include agritourism (in conjunction with Washington DC tourism and Agricultural Reserve), medical research (benefiting from proximity to the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration), and green manufacturing (converting ‘strip malls’ and department stores to manufacturing centers).

Role of Municipalities:

1. What are the expectations for “partners” in the implementation of Thrive Montgomery? We noticed that municipalities were not listed among the potential partners.

From: [Robin Barr](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Jeffrey Z. Slavin](#); [Marnie Shaul](#)
Subject: Comment on Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 2:46:16 PM
Attachments: [Middle-income problem comment.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I have attached a comment regarding the dilemma of middle-income families seeking homes in highly desirable complete communities and suggest a possible solution known as equity financing.

If you have any questions about the idea please contact me.

Robin A. Barr
Council member, Town of Somerset
robmattles@gmail.com

Middle-income families and complete communities

Thrive Montgomery 2050 seeks to introduce other housing types into corridor areas composed of single-family homes to achieve what is termed “complete communities”.

The critique from municipalities argues appropriately that were these new housing types to be built in our communities, middle income folks could not afford them as even these multi-family homes would be out of their price range. It is a generic problem because complete communities as they are envisioned will be highly desirable and so will drive home prices up. (Consider the prices of condos and town houses in downtown Bethesda.)

As Thrive Montgomery 2050 points out the County has a number of creative programs to help low income residents live in homes. These programs do not address the challenge for middle income residents who wish to own their own home in one of the highly desirable corridor communities. The challenge then is in achieving a mix of incomes/wealth in these communities.

What does address that challenge?

Some economists are now advancing a concept called equity financing. The idea is that rather than a loan where all of the risk of depreciation (reduction in value) is on the borrower, equity financing shares the risk. So, the lender takes a percentage of equity in the investment while providing a loan for the remainder of the investment. Then the lender carries some of the risk, but also some of the possibility of gain if the asset appreciates.

(Martin Sandbu in the Economics of Belonging (2020) has a nice account of it.)

Applied to home financing a bank would be a silent partner for homeowners. They would buy maybe 50% of the home and the homeowners would pay a down payment and take a loan for the remainder of the amount.

That means the owners need only 50% of the down payment they would otherwise need, and they pay a mortgage that is only 50% of the mortgage that they would otherwise pay. Middle income residents could afford such a mortgage.

Banks are likely to buy into the idea when the homes are in highly desirable areas. Their asset is likely to increase in value over time. They would be free to sell their share at some later time provided that the equity conditions travel with the sale.

As with most good ideas there is a likely downside to this one. If we make it easier for a larger number of people to buy homes and do not at the same time expand the supply of homes, then we increase demand for the limited stock of homes and so push up prices. The program could in the end price out of the market the very people it is intended to help.

One way of managing the program is to tie it to new developments. So, when a builder/developer constructs multi-family homes (homes that share at least one wall) then the program is offered through the builder/developer to middle income (household income less than X) families. That way supply and demand are managed and any effect on prices should be minimal.

Robin A. Barr
Council member, Town of Somerset
robmattles@gmail.com

From: [Robert Oshel](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Plan Public Comment
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 4:31:08 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

The goal of planning in Montgomery County should be to improve the quality of life of Montgomery County residents.

Unfortunately the proposed "Thrive" plan would not do that and, if implemented, would not result in the kind of county in which I would want to live. The plan seems intent on transforming Montgomery County, except for the Agricultural Reserve, into a more dense urban area rather than the suburban environment that led us to decide to live in Montgomery County. This proposed major change in direction is particularly unwise during a pandemic which has seen people increasingly leaving multi-family dwellings and seeking single family homes with private green space. At the very least no plan should be adopted which supports greater density until we see the degree to which the pandemic-related trend for people desiring lower density living continues and becomes permanent.

Increased density is not the answer to all our problems, and the goal of achieving social equity, which I think we all share, is not dependent on increasing density.

Although the plan says it does not change zoning, in effect it would result in zoning changes for higher density. Once the higher densities are in place, it would be difficult or impossible to go back. I am particularly concerned about statements such as:

"This additional density will require change in existing single-family neighborhoods through the introduction of "missing middle" housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, live-work units and small multi-family structures in areas where a moderate degree of intensification is appropriate."

and

"Action 5.4.2.a: Explore changes to the zoning code to support the creation of permanent supportive housing units like Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) or Personal Living Quarter (PLQ) units by-right in all residential and mixed-use zones."

The Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Areas plan defines small multi-family structures as usually having fewer than 20 units! Thus such development on single family lots could result in a density up to 19 times the current single family level. An almost twenty-fold increase in density of lots in single family neighborhoods is not a minor change and would completely overwhelm the infrastructure in existing single family neighborhoods. Adding duplexes or triplexes might not result in much of a change given that ADUs are already allowed, but adding up to 19 units on a single family lot is quite another thing. It would be a betrayal of all residents who expected their neighborhoods to remain low density.

Those of us who live in single family neighborhoods -- a very substantial portion of the

population -- sought such an environment because we value a lack of housing density, green space, and quiet. Having lived in both garden apartment and highrise apartment complexes before buying a single family home, I would not willingly want to move back to such a more dense environment or have that environment thrust upon me. I would not want to have my home next to such density. Allowing "small multi-family structures," i.e., up to 19 garden apartment type units on a lot, in the middle of existing single family home neighborhoods is simply not acceptable to me and, I think, many other county residents. It would destroy the low density environment I thought the County's zoning promised when I chose to live in Montgomery County. Simply put, forcing higher density into single family neighborhoods would not improve the quality of life of Montgomery County residents.

I also oppose the plan's transportation objectives. Again, the goal should be to improve the quality of life of Montgomery County residents. Doing this would involve facilitating the modes of transportation that are most convenient for County residents. The plan's emphasis on decreasing private automobile use and getting people out of cars and into public transportation or riding bikes or walking is arbitrary and does not take into account what may be most convenient for residents in many, if not most, situations. The following is particularly troubling:

"Goal 4.1: Get people out of their cars and transform Montgomery County into a community of walkable, people-centric places. Make public transit, walking, and bicycling the preferred travel mode for daily trips and substantially reduce the need for personal vehicles."

Instead, the goal should be to facilitate all transportation options so that residents can choose the one that works best for them in any given situation. Cars are not the enemy. They are simply a tool for transportation, as are shoes, bikes, buses, and trains. We should not favor one mode of transportation over the others in the plan, especially if doing so requires increasing density in single family neighborhoods to support public transportation.

I have commuted by walking, bicycling, moped, RideOn, Metro, and car. Each was the best option for me at the time, and all should be available. But it does not benefit us to make it less convenient to use private cars if that is the fastest or most convenient way to get where we are going for work, shopping, or other purposes. We live in too many diverse points of origin and travel to too many diverse destinations to make public transportation, even when combined with walking and biking, the most convenient option in many, if not most, situations. This is especially true during the heat of summer and the cold of winter.

When I walked and took Metro that was the best option. When my workplace moved, I could have walked to a bus stop, taken a bus, and then walked to my workplace, but that would have taken at least twice as long even without having to transfer. It is unrealistic to think that many people will voluntarily choose to walk to bus stops in the rain or cold, wait for a bus, then perhaps have to wait to transfer to another bus or Metro, only to repeat the cold or wet walk at the other end, if they can instead drive door to door. Forcing people to use public transportation, as the plan in effect proposes, by making it more difficult or infeasible to drive does not benefit Montgomery County residents or their quality of life. By all means, improve public transportation. But if we want more people to use public transportation, make it more attractive. Even make it free. But don't force people to use it by making other options worse. Making other options worse degrades Montgomery County's quality of life.

Overall, I think the plan as written would not result in the kind of equitable and desirable place

to live that I wanted when I moved to Montgomery County. Over the years we have made strides in equity, but we have a long way to go, especially in providing equal and high quality education for all county students. But improving equity, which we must do, does not require increasing density in single family neighborhoods and forcing people to use less convenient modes of transportation to get to where they need to go.

The draft plan as written should be rejected.

Robert E. Oshel
9114 Crosby Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910

From: [Susan S](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); [LYNNE BATTLE](#); [Jenny Sue Dailey](#); [Marnie Shaul](#); [Sarah Morse](#); [lgjreg@hotmail.com](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 5:05:40 PM
Attachments: [Comments on Thrive 2050 - Spock-Harrop 11-19-20.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Planning Board and Staff,

Please find attached our testimony for the hearing on Thursday regarding Thrive 2050.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Susan Spock and Caldwell Harrop

5206 Albemarle Street
Bethesda, MD 20816
301.229.4501
susanspk@verizon.net

Dear Planning Board and Staff,

My husband and I are in our mid-sixties and have lived in Bethesda for over 27 years. We support all of the goals of Thrive Montgomery 2050—community equity, better economic opportunities, and a cleaner and more sustainable environment. We like the concept that denser new development, such as at Pike and Rose, can help limit the use of cars and provide environmental and other benefits listed in the Thrive draft. We have serious concerns with the envisioned implementation Thrive 2050, however, particularly with the unrealistic and at times draconian limitations on parking and planning for cars. Car use should not be restricted so drastically when alternative transportation options are not available in many parts of the county, and will remain unaffordable, unreliable, and for many, not easily accessible.

We try to be the type of family you hope to encourage with the Thrive plan. We chose our home to be in a walkable location, and frequently walk, bike, and take a variety of mass transit. My husband (who signs below with me) has biked to work downtown for 26 years.

We can (and often do) walk:

- 5 minutes to access buses that go to the Metro, Bethesda, and downtown DC
- 10-30 minutes to three strip mall centers with a variety of services
- 25 minutes to the library
- 30 minutes to Friendship Heights & Metro
- 60 minutes to Bethesda

Over the past 35 years, we have owned only one car, except for 10 years when our girls were in school, when we owned two. Our use of a car and other types of travel is shown in a chart attached to this statement, designed to demonstrate that even though we live in a somewhat connected community, we still rely heavily on our car. The draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 ignores this reality of many people's lives: no matter how much they may walk, bike, or take transit, they still need to use a car, especially in parts of Montgomery County that are much less accessible than ours.

In general, we have tried to limit our use of cars, but local driving has been, and will be, necessary:

- to do major errands involving bulky items, such as grocery shopping, picture framing, dry cleaning, and mailing packages. This is true even for people who live near a shopping center, and yet the county continues to reduce parking around shopping centers.
- to take children on errands or to activities, often scheduled all over the DC metro area (and beyond). This can be difficult without a car, as many sports, specialized art classes, summer camps, and music lessons are dispersed throughout the area, and will never all be located within each of the proposed "Complete Communities" due to economies of scale. Further, transit with children can be prohibitively expensive, and cars can be helpful to transport children while doing errands.
- to visit friends, family, and go to meetings, often in places with no ready access to transit. Unless there is frequent transit that covers the entire county almost block by block, there is no way that transit from one neighborhood to another will be able to replace the convenience of car travel.

- in very hot or cold weather, in rain or snow, and at night, or when we are dressed up and cannot comfortably walk. Most people like comfort, and will not willingly give up their cars in subpar conditions.
- to drive elderly or injured people or anyone with mobility or vision problems. Many elderly and disabled people cannot walk or bike, even for short distances, and as we age we may not be able to walk or bike the distances we currently manage. The Thrive plan ignores the changing demographics of the county. With a growing senior population, it is rash to plan as if they will be biking and taking scooters, when even walking is difficult. And not all seniors will be able to move to Connected Communities.
- to access job opportunities outside concentrated employment centers. The draft is written as though all jobs will be in a few clusters of employment, easy for everyone to reach, but that is not the case. Housing near transit will continue to be prohibitively expensive for most lower income families, and jobs are widely spaced. The draft ignores the problems with getting from a suburban home to even one job cluster. This is unlikely to change. My daughters have had jobs in summer camps, in hospitals, and in nursery schools, and we know people with jobs as home health aides and landscapers. Cars have helped them to cover the vast territory of the county to reach jobs not on the Metro or a major bus route.
- when needed to save time. Time is of the essence for many people. It is virtually impossible for someone to drop children off at day care, get to work on time, attend a soccer game, and shop at a store after work quickly, without a car. Even if better transit were available, it would have to go everywhere all the time throughout the metro area to make sense for all residents. This is possible in New York; it is not financially feasible in Montgomery County.

A plan for the County's future should be realistic. What may work in some clusters in the county cannot work for the vast county as a whole; and it is simply magical thinking to plan otherwise. While Thrive very properly encourages denser development around major corridors, with the expectation that car use could be substantially lessened, it is not a panacea. Even if jobs were available in a condensed community, YOUR job could be somewhere else. Even if soccer fields were nearby, YOUR game could be far away. Thrive 2050 is not just a vision; it is an active plan that will require changes in Master Plans, and must therefore be written thoughtfully and pragmatically.

These points address the reality that Thrive 2050 tries to wish away:

- Bike trail availability may not substantially change commuting patterns, and while good for the powerful bike lobby, may not be a practical commuting option for the overwhelming majority of residents: The resources in the Thrive appendix do not appear to include a survey of county residents to determine if they would commute by bike should more trails be available. Our very reasonable guess is that most would not. We live only a few blocks from the Capital Crescent Trail, which leads directly downtown and to Bethesda, and yet very few of our neighbors use it to commute. Most people are not strong enough, or willing to brave all weathers; biking is not made feasible by their workplaces; and they have to use a car for other purposes during the day. In contrast, my husband is fit enough to bike 18 miles round trip each day, uphill much of the way on the return. He has bike racks and showers in his office, and a place to store his clothes. He does not have to carry equipment or large files back and forth with him. He has not had to worry about driving children or his parents, for I have done most of that during the week, as I work from home with a flexible schedule. Unlike most people, he actually enjoys biking, even in the dark and on days with inclement weather. He is clearly atypical.

- Transit will never be reliable, frequent, and universal: It is highly unlikely that various forms of transit other than cars will ever be able to satisfy the needs of people living throughout our large, spread-out county—it is far too expensive for the county to afford. Current transit is inadequate to meet resident needs:
 - o Access to the Metro or major bus stops is already difficult. Ride-on buses often run only twice an hour (where they run) and are frequently late, travel circuitous routes, can be a mile or much more from some homes, and are not always well-integrated into Metro schedules, particularly at night.
 - o Micro-transit options to reach transit are not widespread or attractive to busy people and families.
 - o We have found that apps showing expected times of Ride-on and Metro bus arrivals are often inaccurate or not functioning, making it difficult to plan.
 - o Changes from one bus to another are often required. Just to get across downtown Bethesda on the Circulator can involve a bus change, and it takes longer than walking.
 - o The Metro is often closed or slowed for repairs at night.

Even current plans to add transit are controversial, and difficult to implement. Note that the Purple Line project is now suspended, and the rapid bus route is far from completion. Wishing people would take more transit does not mean they will be able to do so.

- Urban areas still need parking: While an “urban” center like downtown Bethesda could attract some people to live there without frequent use of cars, it still needs parking for visitors from other areas and for its residents to reach parts of the metropolitan area not conveniently accessed by transit. Metro and rapid bus stops in urban areas should provide parking to promote transit use, but the Thrive plan limits parking in those areas, using the pie-in-the-sky theory that most people can access transit without cars.
- Employers need to provide easy access for employees: I do not have data on this point, but if I were an employer, easy access, including car travel and parking, would be a priority for me in deciding where to locate. Has the county thoroughly researched the needs of future employers? Job growth is essential to allow the county to thrive.
- Traffic congestion before the pandemic was already a problem, and Thrive may help, but will also hurt: Thrive calls for fewer lanes of traffic, and fewer left-turn lanes. While it is important that we be able to cross roads safely, it is also critical that left-turn lanes be used where necessary to prevent serious travel delays. Thrive calls for dramatic reductions in parking, but the lack of parking spaces in areas that need them will back up traffic as drivers circle, looking for a space, adding to climate problems. People will not stop driving just because there is no parking. They will become angry and frustrated, or go to another location. The zoning code already restricts parking in ways that are hard to understand and that harm working families. For example, my in-laws live at Fox Hill, a Bethesda retirement community that was approved with so few parking spaces that employees have to park at a nearby church and take a shuttle—certainly not anticipated under the zoning code. Even then, there are so many aides and visitors to the site, and so few spaces, that many people park in fire zones. There is also very poor transit to the site. My easy 12-minute drive would take at least 40-minutes by transit, using two buses and walking—hardly how I would choose to drop off groceries or pay a quick visit.
- Changing resident behavior is difficult unless the convenience outweighs the drawbacks: The Thrive plan does not propose any logical, convenient, affordable way for people to access transit or distant parts of the DC area. The plan is therefore unlikely to change residents’ car use radically, except within denser areas.

These portions of the plan (and others like them) are simply too extreme:

p. 42 “Start planning for people instead of planning for cars” – This sounds catchy, but it is meaningless. People drive cars and will continue to need cars. Planning for people means planning for cars as well as planning for walking and bikes. Traffic congestion after Covid may return, sucking economic prosperity out of the county.

p. 46 Thrive 2050’s vision for the future is that “most people can live without a car and meet daily needs with a short walk, bike ride, or transit trip.” As noted, this might be true in more urban areas, but impossible for people in rural and suburban areas, especially for the elderly, the disabled, and parents.

p. 76 “New micromobility solutions such as e-scooters and rideshare bicycles will provide new capabilities to solve the first mile/last mile problem to bring reliable daily access to high speed transit.” I cannot see myself or other older residents getting to the Metro either way, as I have osteopenia and can’t afford to fall. These are also not good solutions in the rain, heat, snow, or ice, which occur often in this area.

p. 35 “If most people have to drive to the Metro station or a bus stop to access transit, transit benefits are diminished.” That may be, but there is no other easy way to access transit; and using transit is better than driving to distant areas. Therefore Action 4.3.1.a (p. 78) makes no sense: “Eliminate motor vehicle parking minimums for new development projects in downtowns, town centers, and rail and BRT corridors to encourage travel by walking, bicycling, and transit.” If the county wants to promote transit use, it should have parking and drop-offs at Metro stations and major bus stops.

In other words, please do not severely restrict parking options, or eliminate left-turns to reduce traffic, or plan with the illusion that people will stop driving in order to go everywhere by bikes, walking, and scooters. But make no mistake – we believe that promoting walkable communities is essential to help combat climate change and meet many other objectives of the Thrive plan. Getting people out of their cars is a laudable goal that we wholeheartedly support.

So please: build more parks, safe bike trails, and pedestrian paths. Please increase transit reliability, frequency, and geographic accessibility. Please construct more affordable housing, especially near transit. But please do not make the mistake of thinking that people will stop wanting or needing to use cars.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Susan Spock and Caldwell Harrop

5206 Albemarle Street
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-229-4501

The chart below shows the way we use cars vs. other methods of movement.

| Transportation Need | Walk, Bike, Transit | Car |
|--|---|--|
| Commute to DC for work | bike almost always; Metro in bad weather; sometimes walk/bus to Metro | car drop off/pick Metro in bad weather |
| Other family commutes to jobs near U at Shady Grove, Silver Spring, etc. | never – too inconvenient | car only |
| Transport for elderly or injured friends or family | never | car only |
| To visit friends | never, except neighbors | cars 99% |
| Taking children to lessons or games after school | never | car only |
| Community meetings | rare | car almost always |
| Grocery store, dry cleaner, picture framer, post office | rare | car 99% |
| Drug store | often walk – 10 min. | car when en route or bad weather |
| Dentist and doctors | walk to some – 10-30 min.; some bus downtown | car to many – Friendship Heights or suburbs |
| Library | often walk – 25 min. | car when en route or bad weather |
| Restaurants | walk – 10-20 min. | car if out of area or in bad weather or to pick up hot take-out |
| Car repairs | walk one way sometimes if in Bethesda – an hour | car in bad weather or when car serviced elsewhere |
| DC evenings downtown | Metro if running well; sometimes bus to Metro | car to avoid late night or infrequent Metro or to get to the Metro |
| Bethesda – errands or entertainment | rare; bike occasionally | car almost always |
| To airport | sometimes Metro to National or Metro/MARC/shuttle to BWI; Ride-on to access Metro sometimes | car always to Dulles; often to National; usually to BWI; car often to get to Metro |

From: [Jean Cavanaugh](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#)
Subject: comments on thrive draft
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 8:58:32 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair,

Please share my comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft with the board. Thank you for considering these initial comments.

- 1) I agree with much in the letter sent by the **Town of Chevy Chase**.
- 2) I would like to see more emphasis on **preserving and growing the county's tree canopy** especially in urban and areas that are planned for densification. The literature I have read on 15-minute living applies to real cities, but regardless, all point to necessity of having community spaces, significant natural spaces, and trees for all the reasons we have all discussed ad nauseam over the years (environmental, health, agriculture/bees, reduce crime, manage stormwater, etc). Reduce lot coverage allowances in order to preserving and grow the tree canopy especially in denuded business districts and close in suburbs
- 2) Suggestions for financing increased public amenities, services, and infrastructure at the local level should be put aside until the county or the council **conducts a thorough review of commercial property tax and impact tax collection including identification of who gets discounts and how much**. Recent legislation such as the 15 year waiver of property tax for luxury high rises built on WMATA property, greatly reduced in impact tax payments for developers, potential impact of more impact and/or property tax discounts and waivers through "opportunity zones" (White Oak and Long Branch), impact tax waiver for providing 25% MPDUs, and more seriously impact the county's ability to collect revenue to pay for the amenities, infrastructure, and services imagined for the 15 minute complete community.
- 3) I suggest adding a **15 minute bus ride** to complete community definition. I do not support adding a 15 minute car ride.
- 4) There exist somewhere suggested **per capita standards for various amenities and services needed for complete communities**, eg for parks, police and fire. Thrive should identify these metrics and apply them. We don't know densities planned for different communities. It would help to have some metrics so communities could be assured they could keep

their green space and have adequate public services.

5) Add a **five-year check up** to review the impact of the pandemic on the long term plans.

6) Planning Director Wright in her speeches seems to rely quite a bit on "great design." However, our county doesn't have a form based zoning code or any other mechanism that requires a builder to build anything other than to the envelope (height, setback, FAR) defined. **Establish local design guideline panels** (implemented through master and sector plans, not the general plan) **that have more teeth than the Bethesda model has, or we won't get "great design."**

7) Clarify in Thrive that **"attainable housing" does not equal "affordable housing."** Attainable housing is a phrase that misleads the non-professional.

8) Here's my thought on Missing Middle - It is not defined in the zoning code yet. Specifically, threeplexes and quadplexes are not in zoning code. Zoning code could add to descriptions of existing Missing Middle building types (cluster housing?, townhouses, duplexes) that they are Missing Middle. I am not sure where small apartment buildings fit it, but they might need a new housing type like "mansion" which might include up to 6 or 8 apartments and have a defined outward appearance that includes house-like features like roof slope, set backs, 30% lot coverage max. I am not sure how to address the look of a building in the Thrive framework. But I am sure that missing middle is not a codified thing. I would like to see **missing middle promote reduced lot coverage to allow for green space and tree canopy instead of models that fill a height and FAR and setback envelope.** I know I am mixing zoning code and General Plan, but the General Plan can push the zoning code in a better direction.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Jean Cavanaugh
Silver Spring, MD 20901

From: [David Forman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Rice@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.Reimer@montgomerycountymd.gov; Marc.Elrch@montgomerycountymd.gov
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 9:25:13 PM

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November 17, 2020

Honorable Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board.
Planning Board Members Natalie Fani-Gonzalez (Vice-Chair),
Tina Patterson, Gerald R. Cichy, Partap Verma
CC: Montgomery County Council; County Executive, Marc Elrich

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

A fatal flaw in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan is its goal of achieving "15-minute" cities. Although in vogue among city planners, 15-minute cities are simply inappropriate for most of Montgomery County. The idea originated in Paris, where it makes some sense. People in Paris already live in densely populated multi-story apartment buildings in neighborhoods with streets that can't handle all the automobile traffic, and there are no supermarkets but instead people walk every day to the boulangerie on their block for their daily fresh baguette. But trying to recreate this in Montgomery county except in a few limited locations would be astronomically expensive, disruptive, and unwanted.

The plan in Thrive Montgomery 2050 is to minimize, and indeed discourage, automobile transportation and redirect everyone to amenities and infrastructure that is within a 15-minute walk or bicycle ride. A 15-minute walk, typically less than a half a mile, is not too daunting for most people, but a 15-minute bicycle ride, about 3 miles, is a deal-breaker.

Biking is simply not practical for older residents, residents who must travel some distance to their jobs, residents with disabilities, and residents with young children. Bicycles also do not work well for anyone in adverse weather conditions. Most people cannot walk to buy and carry home a week's supply of groceries on foot or by bike, even if a grocery store is only fifteen minutes away. Indeed, I would bet that every member of the Planning Board lives within 3 miles of a food store. Do any of you regularly bicycle when you buy the bulk of your groceries, or when you drop off and pick up your laundry? I am convinced that if you asked the public you would find that most of us do NOT want to live only in a Complete Community, bicycling to the grocery. A wonderful thing about living in Montgomery County is the great variety of parks, restaurants, entertainment venues, and stores that are more than 3 miles away and not easily accessible by public transport. Automobiles are an essential component of life in Montgomery County.

To thrive Montgomery county needs more job growth, a better business environment, improved transportation, continued great education, etc. The last thing we need is an enormous investment in an unwanted impractical social engineering project.

Sincerely yours,

David S. Forman
5344 Falmouth Road
Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [Ann Bradley](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [James Olson](#)
Subject: Testimony of Action in Montgomery for Thrive draft General Plan Public Hearing Nov. 19, 2020
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 9:34:29 PM
Attachments: [AIM Thrive comments.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Attached is my testimony for Action in Montgomery for the November 19, 2020 Public Hearing on the Thrive draft General Plan. Thank you.

James W Olson

Testimony of James W. Olson for Action in Montgomery Before the Montgomery County Planning Board Regarding the Draft Thrive Montgomery General Plan, November 19, 2020

My name is James Olson and I am testifying on behalf of Action in Montgomery (AIM). AIM is a non-partisan organization of almost 30 faith and civic institutions in Montgomery County which have come together to help solve pressing social issues. Since its founding 20 years ago, AIM has been involved in efforts to address the increasingly severe affordable housing problem in the County, starting with gaining increased funding for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF).

AIM agrees with the draft General Plan that the County is not producing enough housing and, in particular, enough affordable housing. While this is a region-wide problem (see the Council of Governments 2019 report on *The Future of Housing in Greater Washington*, which projects a regional shortfall of 75,000 housing units by 2030), Montgomery County consistently lags most other area jurisdictions in the rate of new residential construction and has actually had a substantial drop in the rate of addition of housing units over the past decade. Between 2012 and 2017, Montgomery's housing production declined from 3,981 units to 1,637 units while Fairfax's building permits increased by 90% and Prince Georges' by 93%.

Partially due to the lack of production, the number of cost-burdened renters in Montgomery County reached 40.1% by 2016. That figure is much higher among those earning less than 80% of the Area Median Income. In addition, majorities of Latino (62.6%) and Black (54.6%) households paid more than 30% of their income in rent.

The draft General Plan is generally headed in the right direction, but more should be done given the situation described above. More emphasis should be given to the provision of decent housing as a right for all citizens of the County. In addition, the Plan should more explicitly address the need for increased racial and economic integration in the County's housing pattern. As it is today, most areas of the County are highly segregated both racially and by income. One possible step toward remedying this situation would be to amend the zoning code to allow more "missing middle" housing (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, courtyard buildings, etc.) to be built throughout the County. The draft General Plan speaks of expanding such housing options near high-capacity transit, but that language should be expanded to reach beyond such zones.

As mentioned, the draft General Plan does contain many proposed policies and actions that AIM supports. Time does not allow for discussion of all the draft's ideas, but I will touch upon some of the more significant ones. AIM agrees that the MPDU program should be strengthened. In particular, MPDU requirements should be tweaked to incentivize more creation of three bedroom (or more) units. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used where necessary to ensure the development of affordable housing and the HIF should be expanded and leveraged to produce more affordable housing. In that regard, the HIF can be used in conjunction with use of the County's bonding authority both to support new construction and to preserve existing market-rate affordable housing, with particular attention to properties near the Purple Line. The ability of the Housing Opportunities Commission to preserve existing market rate affordable housing should also be enhanced.

AIM also believes that the proposal to create an inventory of all vacant and underutilized public lands (including parking facilities) is long overdue and should be undertaken, with priority being given to considering the use of such land for affordable housing. Public agencies should also be required to consider possibilities for co-location of affordable housing when deciding to build. In addition, the County should develop mechanisms to encourage and support the development of affordable housing by faith-based institutions and other non-profits. Another potentially useful idea is to encourage adaptive reuse of existing high-vacancy retail and office space, with some of that reuse dedicated to affordable housing.

AIM also supports the draft General Plan's suggestion that zoning should be changed to encourage creative housing options such as multi-generational housing, single-room occupancy units, shared housing, etc. and that the County should look for ways to further support the creation of accessory dwelling units (ADU).

The affordable housing crisis is such that all of the steps listed above, and many more, are necessary to reverse the current trend and help create a situation where all residents of the County are able to enjoy decent and affordable housing. Thank you.

From: [Naomi Spinrad](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#)
Subject: Comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 10:17:05 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Casey, Vice Chair Fani-Gonzalez, and Commissioners Cichy, Patterson, and Verma:

I had planned to testify on Thrive Montgomery 2050 but will be unable to do so. I do want to make some comments about the draft plan and appreciate your attention to this letter.

It's clear that planners have devoted a great deal of time to pulling together many different strands on many issues, a necessary undertaking when starting a broad effort like this. However, as written, the draft is an ideological manifesto, often internally contradictory. rather than a clear path to the goals it seeks - largely because it lacks important definitions, metrics, timeline, and economic analysis.

For these reasons, as an individual I endorse the Community Coalition Letter on Thrive Montgomery 2050. But there are some elements I would like to emphasize. These comments are informed by my involvement in land use and development issues through civic organizations and through my service on the Bethesda Downtown Implementation Advisory Committee.

1. How the concept of “complete communities” can be applied to a county that has a variety of spaces is not explained.

The concept of “complete communities” is relatively new and is currently being applied in urban areas, many laid out with grids or within distinct relatively small neighborhoods. There is nothing comparable in Montgomery County. Nor does the draft plan provide any examples of how this might work here, or the likely differences in complete communities in our rural, suburban, or urban areas (actually semi-urban in contrast to those places, like Paris, Barcelona, and Houston TX already applying complete communities to land use plans). Without this information the plan's vision is blurred and there is no way to measure success contextually.

2. The draft does not pay enough attention to improving disadvantaged neighborhoods.

This is a serious flaw, given the goals of the plan. By improving I mean providing quality attainable housing to broaden the economic base of such communities, as well as convenient, reliable, affordable, and convenient transit so that it's possible for residents to

get to jobs more than 15 minutes away. While the challenge of gentrification must be addressed, enhancing the appeal of lower income communities to both potential residents and businesses should be as important as diversifying established communities.

3. Economic development is barely addressed, particularly as it can improve and diversify communities.

Although the draft plan speaks of minimizing the “negative externalities” of land development, it ignores the issue of locating beneficial economic development in or near communities that may be less attractive initially, but whose appeal can be improved with incentives.

4. As a document whose primary function is to guide land use the draft plan is very short on information about how to identify sites for parks and green space, schools, and other public facilities and services.

Do you envision eliminating adequate public facilities requirements? If not, more attention must be paid in the plan to how to provide for these.

5. Without metrics, we have no way of determining success, failure, and what may need to change.

Because this plan is moving forward despite the fact that it is based on pre-Covid-19 data and assumptions, there must be a point early in the plan – at 3-5 years in – to reevaluate whether the underlying assumptions and policies flowing from them are still valid. The plan should include a section listing all the elements that might be affected and what adjustments might need to be made as a result of this reevaluation.

As important, timelines and signposts need to be included for everything. How many additional housing units in how many years, located where. Priorities for transit routes, to be completed in what period. Eliminating food deserts, by what means, where, how soon. Restoration of tree canopy, by numbers of trees or acreage and locations as well as timing. And so on. Every metric allows for adjustment depending on success, so the measurement intervals must be clear.

6. Without economic analysis, it is difficult if not impossible to set priorities.

Metrics play a role as well in economic analysis. It is possible to estimate what creating a particular BRT route will cost given conditions along the route and the level of sophistication in the buses and service. Different types of housing can be costed out in different locations. Figures may vary depending on how quickly goals are to be achieved. But in the absence of metrics and economic analysis, we are provided with nothing more than a vision. And without metrics, the executive cannot do its required economic analysis. And without both metrics and economic analysis, setting realistic priorities is impossible.

7. The plan must clarify how its proposal will affect the tax burden on residents.

The plan suggests increasing the recordation tax, something already included in the Growth Policy. It also recommends split-rate property taxes but does not explain whether or how that might affect owners of single-family properties if there is ultimately any rezoning of such properties. These and any other revenue-raising considerations need to be addressed.

8. Staff and commissioners have stated the plan will give them tools they do not now have – these tools need to be explicitly identified.

For full transparency, the plan should state clearly what additional tools are necessary and why, and how they will be used.

There are many other elements and details that need extensive work in the plan, and a lot to refine and better explain in your work sessions. Commenting is particularly challenging for all those interested in participating because, based on comments from the Chair at the presentation of the draft plan, the current public version of the draft is apparently not what you will be working from. Making the latest version public as soon as possible is necessary for efficient and effective public comment, so I hope we'll see that on the website before work sessions start.

Again, I appreciate the challenge facing planning staff and the work they've put into the draft plan. Thank you for seriously considering these comments as well as those in the Community Coalition Letter.

Best regards,
Naomi Spinrad
Chevy Chase West

From: [Deborah Chalfie](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Comment letter of Art Deco Society of Washington for November 19, 2020 public hearing
Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 10:30:54 PM
Attachments: [ADSW Thrive2050 ltr 11-18-20 final.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Chair Anderson,

Please find attached a comment letter from the Art Deco Society of Washington. We will also be testifying at the hearing. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Deborah Chalfie, Boardmember
Art Deco Society of Washington



November 18, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Dr., 14th floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

RE: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan, Public Hearing, November 19, 2020

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

Founded in 1982, the Art Deco Society of Washington (ADSW) is a nonprofit membership organization covering the Washington DC region, whose mission is to foster awareness of, celebrate, and preserve the architectural, decorative, industrial, and cultural arts of the Art Deco era and adjacent modern movements of the 20th Century. Architectural preservation is a strong element of our mission, and we have had many successes, including right here in Montgomery County. ADSW was actively involved in the effort to obtain landmark designation for and restore the Silver Theatre, now the AFI & Cultural Center, and the Shopping Center at Colesville & Georgia. We also participated in supporting the preservation of the Falkland Chase Apartment and the Canada Dry Building. ADSW appreciates the opportunity participate in this process.

Making Historic Preservation a Higher Priority

"Redevelopment will put pressure on the county's historic resources and require a *greater emphasis* on preserving them for future generations."¹

ADSW was excited to see the draft plan's recognition that historic resources enrich the character of neighborhoods and communities, and that historic preservation is a key component of good design, promotion of the arts, and a vibrant culture. We strongly agree,

¹ Montgomery Planning, *Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan* 118 (Oct. 2020) (emphasis added), at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Public-Hearing-Draft-Plan-Thrive-Montgomery-2050-final-10-5.pdf> [hereinafter *Draft Plan*].

and believe that historic preservation advances other goals identified in the draft plan too, including promoting a diverse, resilient, and equitable economy. For instance, affordable rents at older, small buildings in Fenton Village have long provided a pathway to small businesses owned by women, people of color, and recent immigrants, that that provide unique services, and serve their communities. These buildings “preserve naturally occurring affordable space,”² enabling small entrepreneurs to gain an economic toehold and grow. These small businesses and the older buildings they occupy provide and protect multicultural character on an accessible scale that residents appreciate. Moreover, historic older buildings are often just “cooler” than new construction, adding a dynamic cultural and economic vibe. Diversity in the type and scale of architecture creates a more interesting and appealing environment.

The draft plan also makes a consequential commitment to adaptive reuse of existing historic structures, which we believe is often the most socially, environmentally, and culturally progressive alternative to building new construction. We were gratified to see that the draft plan calls for updating and strengthening “the Historic Preservation Ordinance to prioritize adaptively reusing or repurposing existing buildings,”³ and prioritizing “the reuse of existing structures where possible.”⁴ Importantly, the draft plan appears to create a floor of protection, urging the creation of “incentives for projects that adaptively reuse *at least* 50% of an existing structure or preserve *at least* 50% of all existing building materials on site.”⁵ Mitigation and offsets are also welcome. However, also within this same action step is permission to “fast track” projects that may *demolish* up to 50% of an existing structure or building materials, and the floor of protection is incentivized, but not required. ADSW is concerned that the 50% standard could lead to façadism and mismatched hybrids that technically meet the standard but violate the integrity of the original building and satisfy no one. We urge the Planning Board to strengthen the adaptive reuse action steps to reference the importance of taking a holistic view of projects, and to require the preservation standard to be higher when a lesser standard would undermine the integrity of the original building or the end product as a whole.

Update the Locational Atlas of Historic Resources

Montgomery County’s record on preserving the county’s agrarian past is admirable, but its record on preserving our 20th century architectural heritage is unsatisfactory. Many of our cities have seen a great deal of change over the last generation, while the County’s Locational Atlas for Historic Resources has only included piecemeal updates since its creation in 1976. Importantly, during this interim period, buildings erected in the 1950s and 1960s are now 60-70 years old and now warrant historic protection. Mid-century modern architecture is the next

² *Draft Plan*, *supra* n. 1, Policy 8.4.1, at 121.

³ *Id.*, Action 8.4.1.b, at 121.

⁴ *Id.*, Policy 8.4.1, at 121.

⁵ *Id.*, Action 8.4.1.a, at 121 (emphasis added).

frontier of historic preservation -- not only as unique examples of modernist design and architecture, but also because of the stories these buildings can tell. They coincide with a formative period in the County's history as both a DC suburban bedroom community and as an identifiable community in its own right. This was also a formative time in the community's and nation's history, as the civil rights and other social justice movements raged and made an impact on policies and practices.

The draft plan currently requires a program to periodically catalog "building types in the county with a high risk of obsolescence,"⁶ but it does not currently include a requirement for a systematic review and updated survey of the County's historic, and potentially historic, resources. ADSW believes it is absolutely critical for the Planning Board to add an Action Step under Goal 8 that would require more regular and systemic maintenance of the Atlas by the Historic Preservation staff to avoid a piecemeal approach and help prevent regrettable oversights until it is too late. Adequate funds need to be appropriated and allocated to enable them to document and inventory the list of historic resources for the Locational Atlas and Index. The Atlas must include midcentury buildings that are now of such age as to be considered historic.

On behalf of the Art Deco Society of Washington, thank you for the opportunity to share our views. If you have any questions, please contact Steve Knight, ADSW President, at president@adsw.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Deborah Chalfie".

Deborah Chalfie, Boardmember
Art Deco Society of Washington

⁶ *Id.*, Action 8.4.1.c, at 121.

From: [Ethan Goffman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Personal Testimony on Thrive Montgomery
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 7:56:58 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Planning Board,

I am a Montgomery County resident testifying in support of more smart growth, public transit, and equitable development. We are in a climate emergency and need to do everything possible to reduce emissions. In addition, we are in a public health crisis that would be alleviated by more walking and biking, and cleaner air. I support Montgomery for All's platform.

I believe that Thrive Montgomery is already a visionary document that points the county in the right direction in multiple ways. However, it could be even better. Here are some ideas that I believe Thrive Montgomery should consider to work toward a healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable future:

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Too often, economic growth is given priority above all else. Equity and environmental sustainability should be more important objectives than economic growth.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Improving conditions in low-income and vulnerable communities is not enough. Montgomery County needs to end racial, economic, and ethnic segregation to achieve full equity. This means a mechanism to override NIMBIES who work to keep low-income housing out of their neighborhoods.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->The county needs to work aggressively with the state to build schools in transit-oriented areas to facilitate smart growth. Lack of school capacity should not be a reason to stop dense, diverse, walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->The county should strive to bring quality jobs to east county, to help end the east-west imbalance in jobs and housing.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Silver Spring is at the hub of Metrorail, numerous buses, MARC, and the future Purple Line. This means that it should be the focus of future attempts to bring major projects, such as the bid to bring Amazon to Montgomery County. For instance, MARC would make it easy to live in Baltimore and work in Silver Spring, a strong selling point for future projects.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->The county should find ways to charge for the many problems associated with car use, such as congestion, traffic accidents, and air pollution. Drivers should pay for the problems they cause. If

possible, the county should institute a congestion charge. Another alternative would be a county-wide parking fee, since localities tend to provide free parking to get people to patronize their businesses, creating a kind of free-parking bidding war.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->· <!--[endif]-->The county should discourage SUVs and oversized cars, which not only have a disproportionate environmental impact but kill pedestrians at twice the rate of sedans. Perhaps some sort of health impact fee on these vehicles could be implemented? An educational campaign about the problems with SUVs would also be helpful.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->· <!--[endif]-->We basically need four transportation networks, one for public transit, one for cars, one for pedestrians, one for bicycles and other small vehicles that go under 15 mph. Cars have by far the greatest environmental and health impact and should stop receiving priority.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Ethan Goffman
523 N Horners Ln
Rockville, MD 20850
301-710-0230

From: [Scott Plumer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: November 19 - Item 7 - Thrive Montgomery 2050 - Public Hearing
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 8:16:59 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[thrive 201119 final 2.pdf](#)
[envelope 2017 to 2026.png](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Thank you for allowing us to testify. We plan to verbally present the attached written testimony on Thursday November 19, 2020.

If possible we would like the attached map of the sewer envelope or a similar map to be displayed during our testimony.

Thank you,

Scott Plumer

Staff Assistant for Research and Strategic Projects

Darnestown Civic Association Executive Board and Committees

scott.plumer@verizon.net

301-367-6632



Yes. Thank you. Hello everyone. For the record my name is Scott Plumer. The Darnestown Civic Association wishes to thank Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Fani-Gonzalez, and the rest of the board for allowing us to testify today. We also wish to thank Director Wright, Assistant Director Stern and the entire Montgomery Planning staff for their exceptional work as stewards of our future. We enjoy the results of your work every day as we live our lives in Montgomery County.

While reviewing the draft of the proposed new plan before us and after reviewing previously submitted public testimonies, previous plan drafts, notes from previous Planning Board sessions, a County Council PHED committee session which ended wonderfully with a discussion about the importance of history in planning the future, revisiting various community and advisory board presentations, and a re-read of the 1993 Refinements we and perhaps others arrived at a startling conclusion: the proposed new plan has less overarching protections for the environment and against sprawl than the plan it intends to replace.

The similarities between the 1993 Refinement and the proposed new plan are astounding.

The 1993 Refinement had many of the same elements as are contained in the proposed new plan, some worded a little differently but most of the foundational ideas are similar; redevelopment is now infill, physically concentrated centers is now compaction, community identity is now complete communities, and protection of the environment, regionalism and other precepts are all in both plans.

The proposed new plan is packed full of goodness. What it misses and its inability to contain the trajectory of future development is alarming. Most importantly it contains less protections for vital resources and communities than the 1993 Refinements.

An example from the narratives:

The 1993 Refinement states: “reduce development pressure on rural open space areas and farmland”

The proposed new plan states: “Montgomery County has always responded to development pressures by adjusting its land use framework and creating new, and updating its existing, master plans.”

What is worrisome are the important protections being dropped. They are not simply hiding in the proposed new plan, and even if they were hiding in vaguely worded obscurely placed narrative they are not well crafted goals policies and actions tightly worded to avoid circumvention by special interests who look to exploit the natural tensions of competing goals, policies, and actions.

As much goodness as is in the new plan, we are now focused on what is not in the new plan regarding traffic, the environment, and sprawl facilitated by sewer envelope expansion and roads. The new plan promotes many more desirable paths forward than its predecessors and if implemented take pressure off sensitive and strategic protected areas. Promoting preferred practices is not enough. Harmful practices must be banned or required to meet extremely difficult hurdles to be approved. Promoting infill and compaction near transit is not enough, you also have to protect against sprawl where it is likely to occur.

We have heard the new general plan is not a road map. Perhaps, but the use of guard rails and stringent rules of the road can and should be laid down in the new general plan.

We need easy to understand wording. We need the big important main points to be at the beginning. Clear statements are needed about how the plan will carve a path to the desired outcomes and prevent undesirable and unintended outcomes. We need a logically cohesive and compelling complimentary set of policies. Protections against sprawl and for the environment need to be upfront, concise, explicit, and take precedence.

The 1993 Refinement has a section in each chapter highlighting the changes from the previous plan. We suggest you provide the same cross reference for the proposed new plan.

We also suggest you provide an index of changes to guide us through the differences from the current draft to next draft. It is unlikely most of have the tools and the time to work though entire drafts compiling and cross checking whether the changes we saw in the last version made it into the next version. It is unnerving to know there could be significant changes across nearly four hundred goals, policies and actions.

The words “Limit expansion of new roads and of the sewer and water system to direct new development to areas served by existing infrastructure.” were dropped from policy 6.1.3 between the 6/11/20 draft and the current draft and the policy number was changed to 6.1.4. The wording may have needed improvement and granularity but its deletion spoke to volumes to us.

The sixteen square mile area of Darnestown where I live represents around three percent of the county’s total land area. Darnestown is surrounded by critical watersheds, heritage areas and green corridors and is especially threatened by anything other than strong increases in protections regarding infrastructure expansion, especially sewer and roads and plans that increase direct traffic or create overflow cut-through traffic from failed corridor level capacity.

We have found areas in the county like ours, not identical but similar. In fact, these are the very same areas we have been advocating for since our initial testimony submitted on January 16, 2020.

When we first began considering a new general plan we imagined a recognition of the Rural West Residential Wedge of Darnestown, Travilah and Boyds and envisioned something similar for our contemporaries in the Rural East.

We now have broadened our efforts to directly advocate for a wide area including our Rural West neighbors, our counterparts in the Rural East and most areas in

the Agricultural Reserve. We have refined and focused the area we are advocating for as being defined as the area outside the current sewer envelope.

The 1993 Refinement recognized these same areas as being unique and vital and were named The Wedge; part Agricultural, part Rural Residential. Rural Residential is an important transition zone and buffer between widely divergent gradients.

Right now, as we parse the currently in-force 1993 Refinement and the 2021 proposed new plan we are at risk.

Last week on November 10, 2020 I submitted to you two must have items for the proposed new plan simply titled “Two Must-Have Items”. **The first item seeks to control development and traffic outside the sewer envelope to protect the environment and reduce sprawl. The second item seeks acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.**

Our two items are narrow, well defined and focused. The proposed new plan protections as they stand today are fragile and vague as mentioned above. We have submitted specific draft language and suggested its prominent placement in the new plan.

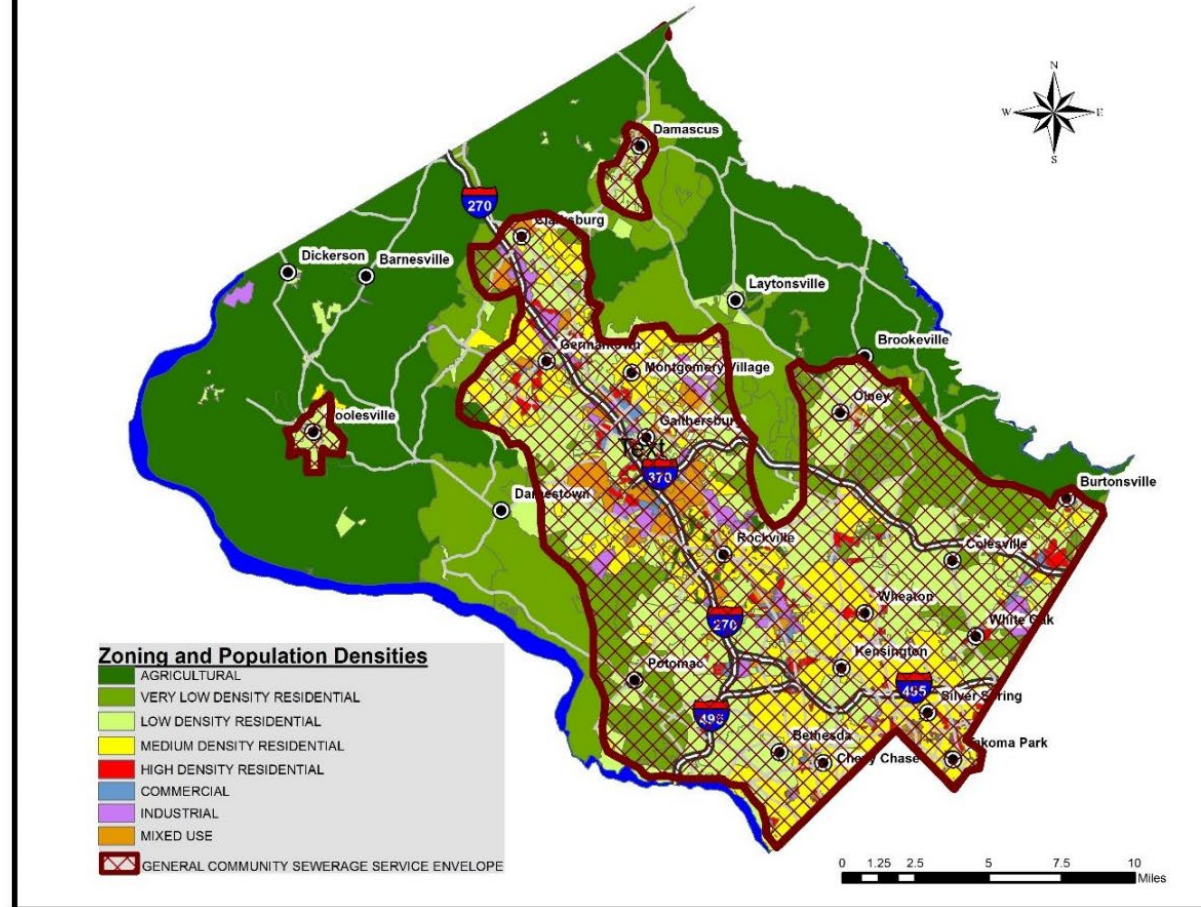
We look forward to working with staff to develop map overlays showing MPOHT, sewer categories, state tiers, special protections areas, and zoning to make the must have items easy to visually grasp.

We also look forward to continuing to help shape the collaborative nature of planning and lay the ground work for the efforts described in the civic capacity Goal 2.2 of the proposed new plan.

Thank you for your time and in advance for including our must have items.

and General Community Sewerage Service Envelope

Montgomery County Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan, 2017 - 2026



From: [Melanie Rose White](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Letter from CCCFH on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 8:36:09 AM
Attachments: [CCCFH Letter on Thrive Montgomery 2050 November 17, 2020.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Please see the attached letter from the CCCFH. Thank you for your consideration.

Melanie White

Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

November 17, 2020

Honorable Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board.
Planning Board Members Natalie Fani-Gonzalez (Vice Chair),
Tina Patterson, Gerald R. Cichy, Partap Verma

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

As Chair of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights which represents 18 communities in Montgomery County, I am clarifying points made in comments on the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan, a proposal that is described as a “blueprint and guiding policy document for (Montgomery County’s) future growth and development.”

We appreciate the hard work that the Planning Staff and Planning Board have put into the draft Plan’s development, as well as its goals regarding policies for the County in order to grow and thrive for the next 30 years. We understand that this is merely a working draft and that many of its assumptions and strategies for implementation need to be reworked and finalized.

However, we agree with Chair Anderson’s comments at the October 1, 2020 Planning Board meeting that the Plan as currently drafted is “confusing, not synthesized, or organized,” and that it is “too specific yet not developed enough to define why one would want to read it.”

Chair Anderson went on to say at that meeting that he had a “laundry list” of issues that needed clarity, one of which is the oft mentioned “Complete Communities” or “Fifteen Minute Living” neighborhoods, neither of which is well developed in the Plan. According to Chair Anderson, “Fifteen Minute Living” could mean “walking to the end of one’s driveway” or a “fifteen-minute drive” to a desired destination. In either scenario, Chair Anderson described the concept of a Complete Community as “meaningless.” Chair Anderson also listed many specific additional problems with the Plan in its present form.

We agree with Chair Anderson that the *draft* Plan needs to be reworked with more clarity and less redundancy, so that citizens as well as future elected and appointed officials can understand its recommendations for changes that will affect our communities for years to come. We hope that we residents can be actively involved in the shaping of this important document. **We ask that when the *draft* is final, the Planning Board conduct another public hearing.**

In this time of a pandemic, however, it is difficult to have an interactive dialogue about such issues that deeply impact our communities. **Perhaps there could be an advisory committee formed to discuss specific issues that would affect those neighborhoods where Thrive Montgomery would have the greatest impact?**

Representing the Communities of Brookdale, Chevy Chase Village, Chevy Chase West, Drummond, Kenwood, Kenwood Condominium, Kenwood Forest II, Kenwood House Cooperative, Little Falls Place, Somerset, Somerset House Condominiums, Springfield, Sumner Village, Village of Friendship Heights, Westbard Mews, Westmoreland, Westwood Mews, and Wood Acres

We suggest this because we have some important concerns of our own about the draft Thrive Montgomery Plan that need to be addressed. For example, the draft Plan does not address the diversity of communities and neighborhoods that currently exist throughout the County, and that should not be treated with a “one size fits all” approach. We believe that the draft Plan should define more precisely what constitutes a “Complete Community.” The Complete Community is not sufficiently delineated in terms of needed infrastructure, likely business entry and costs. The evolution toward these communities is not fairly described and whether they or the transition toward them are economically and fiscally realistic is not documented. It is problematic that there isn’t even one (although Kensington apparently approaches being one) in the county, yet the entire county is to be transformed to something unproven for the wide range of conditions (e.g., existing property ownership and uses, and state/county infrastructure that exist across our county, county fiscal condition). In fact, based on the vagaries of the draft plan we have no idea of approximately how many Complete Communities there would be and where they would likely be. This plan is too important as a practical matter to be close to an abstraction. There needs to be a thorough lengthy discussion that explicitly identifies the areas in the County where this concept would or would not work as a practical matter.

We are also concerned that the draft Plan also barely mentions, much less includes, specific strategies to achieve much needed affordable housing through the County. Despite its stated goals that focus on “Equity” considerations, affordable housing is given short shrift in the draft Plan.

CCCFH has long supported preservation and protection of the “naturally occurring” existing affordable housing units within and surrounding the County’s business districts. The Plan’s failure to seriously address this aspect of the County’s housing needs over the next 30 years is both glaring and inexplicable.

Instead, a major focus and goal of Thrive Montgomery 2050 is to encourage inclusion of market rate “missing middle housing” in the form of multi-unit housing projects, including duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and apartment units, into what are now single-family residential detached zones throughout the County.

It will be up to the Council to decide whether to fund a staggering amount of infrastructure needed for this proposal in general and to support a significant inventory of new market priced housing instead of focusing on the need for affordable housing. However, it is critically important for the public to understand the potential policy and practical impacts of allowing multi-family units of various types on a widespread basis in the County’s established single-family communities.

We also believe that the draft plan should specifically state that local municipalities should retain their current regulatory authority over building regulations relating to residential housing within their boundaries, including “missing middle housing”.

However, local neighborhoods should also be consulted with and allowed to speak to potential structural housing changes to be made within their boundaries. Zoning cannot arbitrarily be broadly changed to fit an overarching idea that will not be a good fit for all circumstances.

In this regard, change also cannot be capriciously imposed. We object to the statement on page 86 of the draft Plan that: “Communities have become highly adept at using public process to block new housing and solving the county’s housing shortage will require a shared vision throughout Montgomery County.” This statement is confrontational and should be removed from the plan.

We also note that the draft Thrive Montgomery Plan is anti-automobile. That is a noble goal given the need to adopt strategies to thwart climate change. However, the vast majority of county residents of necessity now rely on motor vehicles, and the infrastructure, including a huge mass transit system, are unlikely to exist even by 2050, given the incredible costs and questionable demand. Implementation would necessarily discriminate against large numbers of County residents for whom vehicular travel is a necessity in circumstances in which walking and biking are not practical.

These include older residents (whom the Plan notes are a growing part (now 25%) of the County's demographic), residents who have to travel some distance to their jobs, residents with disabilities, and residents with young children, to name just a few. Yet the emphasis on biking or walking is repeated on almost every page of the draft plan.

Those modes of transportation also do not work well for any County residents in adverse weather conditions (e.g., rain, snow, extreme cold or heat). Further, most people, old and young, can't walk to buy and carry home a week's supply of groceries on foot or by bike even if a grocery store is only fifteen minutes away. Relying almost exclusively on non-automobile modes of transportation is obviously not realistic; yet it is the heart of the draft Plan.

Perhaps most significantly, the draft Plan fails to recognize that the County is suffering from severe constraints on its operating and capital budgets, likely for many years to come. According to the County Executive's office, a \$1 billion deficit in the County budget is projected by the end of the next six years. The County has also had sluggish job growth over the last 15 years, which has stood at 5% annually. By comparison, job growth in similar counties has grown by 21%. Maryland has lagged Virginia in job growth and as of early this year, Prince George's County exceeded Montgomery County in job growth.

With these fiscal facts in mind, we question how Thrive Montgomery can assume that the County will be able to provide reliable and efficient transit, schools, utilities, healthcare facilities, parks, libraries, athletic fields, and community centers among other facilities that would be necessary to support new "Complete Communities" featuring "Fifteen Minute Living."

We also question how the County will be able to afford retrofitting existing established neighborhoods with the infrastructure and amenities that they currently lack to turn them into "Complete Communities." The draft Thrive Montgomery Plan will require a great deal of capital investment in new or existing County communities to achieve the Plan's goals. These funds, however, are not now available, and are unlikely to be available in the near or mid-term future, without substantial County tax increases.

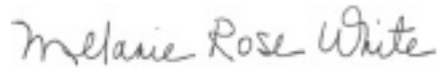
Finally, we note that the draft Plan assumes that "If you build it, they will come." This assumption won't work, however, unless a significant number of new jobs are created. In view of its staggering costs, which businesses would not want to absorb, there is a significant likelihood that this plan will exacerbate Montgomery County's failures in job growth.

This County, with its low job growth rate and looming revenue deficits, needs to focus on incentives and incubator policies that will bring industry and business to the County. Fill those empty office buildings with businesses and startups.

Although there have been some hopeful signs of expansion with Novavax and Autonomous Therapeutics Inc. relocating to Montgomery County, it will take more than just a few biotech companies to turn around the County's insufficient job growth statistics.

In closing, jobs creation and housing, particularly affordable housing, should be the County's primary goals for the future, rather than providing "Missing Middle" housing for which the priority and policy bases have not yet been established. Montgomery Thrive 2050 should focus on those goals, and the Planning Board should rework the draft Plan accordingly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Melanie Rose White". The script is cursive and fluid.

Melanie Rose White, Chair
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

CC: Montgomery County Council; County Executive, Marc Elrich

MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org
councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov
councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov
councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov
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councilmember.Reimer@montgomerycountymd.gov
Marc.Elrich@montgomerycountymd.gov

From: [Mark Pierzchala](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 9:48:46 AM
Attachments: [MMP Comments Thrive 2050 20201118.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

November 18, 2020

Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

Dear Mr. Anderson,

Attached are my comments for the November 19 public hearing on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft plan, for which I signed up to testify.

Though I am a Rockville Councilmember, I will testify as an individual and the opinions are mine alone. I will participate via Microsoft Teams.

Thank you,

Mark Pierzchala
816 Fordham Street
Rockville, MD 20850
301-529-0470
MPierzchala@RockvilleMD.gov

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Comments

Mark Pierzchala – Rockville Councilmember testifying as an individual

Good evening Chair Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board.

My name is Mark Pierzchala, testifying as an individual. However, my opinions are formed from 9 total years as a Rockville Councilmember.

Rarely do so many policy areas come together so nicely as in this plan. It well documents a terrible economic stagnation, and an acute shortage of housing on which I will focus.

The provision of housing units far lags population growth, resulting in high housing costs. The well-enough-off manage, and we take care of some of the poor, but we harm those in between. These are people who, 40 years ago, would have found reasonably priced housing in Montgomery County. Now, they pay too much, live marginally, or live elsewhere. We are not providing for teachers, health-care workers, first responders, or even **our own children**.

By transforming our many decrepit commercial properties into livable walkable communities near transit, we would get many wins and few negatives. Wins include reduced car trips, better transit, lower energy usage, more stormwater management, prosperity, higher tax base, money for school construction, and human-sized communities with local shops. So, what is the problem?

There is a political problem, and it has been around for years. There is a visceral reaction from many homeowners whenever and wherever high-density projects are proposed. Many anticipate more traffic, congestion, and overcrowded

schools. Opposition can be loud, ugly, and classist. These opponents vote in numbers and in blocs, and they have long memories.

However, to stop the king of development featured in the draft plan, in this day and age, is to hurt **our own children**.

Yes, people love their children, I know that. And I don't want our children in portable classrooms either. But the far bigger questions are these: "Where are **our own children** going to live when they grow up, and where will they work?" Increasingly, that is not in Montgomery County.

We have loaded so much baggage on our younger generations, including a crushing national debt, the huge and increasing burden of supporting baby boomer retirees, and an aging infrastructure that is not being replaced or maintained fast enough, if at all. **Our own children** will need all the economic opportunity they can get.

In conclusion, I support the recommendations of the plan for all the reasons it states. But even more for a reason it does not state, that is, this plan is the best way to support, and provide for, **our own children** when they become adults. Let's give **our own children** a chance to prosper here in Montgomery County.

Thank you.

Mark Pierzchala, 816 Fordham Street, Rockville, MD 20850

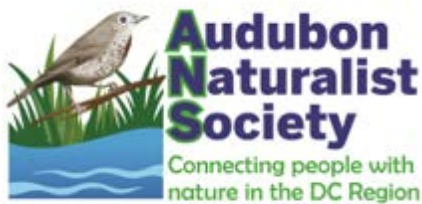
From: [Denisse Guitarra](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Thrive2050](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#)
Subject: Audubon Naturalist Society's written comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 - Working Draft Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 9:49:12 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[2020 11 18 ANS Comments ThriveMontgomery2050 WorkingDraftPlan.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good Morning Montgomery County Planning Board,

Please find attached in this email Audubon Naturalist Society's written comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan ahead of Montgomery County's Planning Board public hearing on November 19, 2020. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,
Denisse Guitarra
Maryland Conservation Advocate
Audubon Naturalist Society



Denisse Guitarra
Maryland Conservation Advocate
Pronouns: she / her / ella
denisse.guitarra@anshome.org
cell: 240-630-4703

In an effort to help contain the spread of Covid-19, ANS's offices are closed to the public. Email is the best way to reach me. I will respond to your message as quickly as possible. For information about programs, classes, and the Shop, please visit anshome.org/covid-19-updates/

November 19, 2020

Written Comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan¹ ahead of Montgomery County's Planning Board Public Hearing on November 19, 2020.

Submitted by Denisse Guitarra

Maryland Conservation Advocate, Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS)

Dear Montgomery County Planning Board,

For 123 years, Audubon Naturalist Society has inspired people to enjoy, learn about and protect nature. We thank the Montgomery Planning Department for the opportunity to comment on the *Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan*. ANS appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with Planning Staff on the plan's outreach efforts to both the environmental and the Latinx communities. The following are areas we support and propose to be amended in the draft plan.

ANS supports the following:

- **Urbanism:** The emphasis on urbanism as a strategy to protect natural spaces and reduce sprawl, while concentrating development around transit corridors is a balanced approach to sustainable development. Urbanism will ensure that county residents can easily access basic needs within a short distance and prioritize affordable and attainable housing. However, we would like to see an increase protection on stormwater management that not only meets but exceeds our current stormwater regulatory requirements in order to accommodate the upcoming increase in frequent and heavier rainstorms due to climate change.
- **Equity and justice:** We applaud that the plan looks at every policy with an equity and justice lens. The plan aims to ensure that everyone has equal access to benefits and opportunities in the county, and that these are carefully evaluated at key steppingstones. We support the creation of civic lead community engagement processes at every planning decision, especially of those individuals who have been historically underrepresented in land use and planning decision making process.

¹Montgomery Planning (October 2020) Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan. Available from: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Public-Hearing-Draft-Plan-Thrive-Montgomery-2050-final-10-5.pdf>

- **Healthy environments equal healthy communities:** We support the approach and emphasis given in the plan to connect people to their environment and promote healthy and active lifestyles as stated in the “15-minute living” policy recommendation. We support increasing access to green spaces for *all* people while simultaneously working to eliminate structural barriers that prevent individuals from accessing nature.

ANS recommends the following:

- **Net Zero forest loss:** Trees provide countless ecological services such as flood prevention, carbon sequestration, air and water purification, and reduction of urban heat island effects. None of these services could ever be replaced by built infrastructure. Despite the well-established benefits of trees and an existing Forest Conservation Law, Montgomery County continues to lose trees and forest cover. Between 2008 and 2016, development in the County cleared 1,383 acres of forests – the 5th highest amount of forest cleared among all counties in Maryland.² Updating the Forest Conservation Law, and setting a policy goal in the General Plan to do so, such that the county adopts a net zero forest loss would be an important step towards protecting our natural resources as key climate mitigation prevention measures. Such a step would also follow other counties around the state, such as Howard, Anne Arundel, and Frederick, the latter one passed Maryland’s strongest local “no net loss of forest” law this summer.³
- **Net zero buildings:** The plan does an excellent job emphasizing the need to plan for people and not for cars, but lacks strong policy recommendations for buildings, which are the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the county. It is therefore essential that the plan be able to have a stronger building greenhouse gas reduction policy in place to create sustainable, energy efficient buildings that reduce GHG while harmonizing between wildlife, waterways, and people. One approach is to set a policy goal in the General Plan to adopt the 2018 IgCC green construction code.⁴
- **Stronger climate change policies:** We strongly recommend closer agency cross-collaboration and merged policy goals between the new General Plan and Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). The General Plan should contain a clear and strong set of climate policies and actions that are consistent with CARP and will truly help the county meet its climate change

² CBF (2018) Based on data from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources from individual county Forest Conservation Act Annual Reports and compiled by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Some comparative data was only partial because counties did not submit at least two annual reports to the State, in violation of the State Forest Conservation Act law. Available from: <https://www.cbf.org/document-library/cbf-guides-fact-sheets/md-fca-fact-sheet.pdf>

³ Frederick County Government (2020) Frederick’s Forest Conservation Law Changes. Available from: <https://frederickcountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/324596/Protecting-Frederick-County-Environmental-Resources>

⁴ ANS (2020) 2018 IGCC. Available from: <http://conservationblog.anshome.org/blog/take-action-submit-your-green-building-code-comments-to-dps-before-april-30/>

goals of reducing our GHG emissions to 80% by 2027 and becoming carbon neutral by 2035.⁵ The General Plan should also provide guidance on where local renewable energy generation projects should be sited within the county, whether solar, wind, geothermal, or other such projects. These projects should first be sited on already-developed land, rooftops, brownfields, and county properties, prior to moving into undeveloped spaces such as the Agricultural Reserve. Such policies and guidance are completely missing in the General Plan, but are sorely needed as this year's debate over ZTA 20-01: Solar in the Agricultural Reserve⁶ makes clear.

- **Agricultural Reserve:** The plan lacks a complete analysis and policy recommendations on the pros and cons of continuing or changing the systems in place in the Agricultural Reserve. Reserve stakeholders have frequently expressed concern regarding the absence of specificity in long-term commitments to protect the Reserve in the Thrive 2050 update, and Planning should address that need proactively. The Plan should evaluate existing policies, clearly and strongly reaffirm protection of the Agricultural Reserve, and seek to create new policies that find a balance between food accessibility and sustainability under equity, justice and climate change lenses.
- **Metrics and Implementation:** We recommend that the plan incorporates clear and more specific metric requirements to ensure that the policies and actions stated in the plan are enforced.

Overall, we seek and recommend the continued protection of our green spaces and emphasize sustainable, equitable, transit-oriented early design planning which enhances quality of life, lowers upfront costs, and builds resilient communities with adaptable infrastructure that mitigate the worst effects of climate change. On behalf of ANS and our 28,000 members and supporters, we thank Montgomery Planning Board and Staff for considering our comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Denisse Guitarra
Maryland Conservation Advocate
Audubon Naturalist Society

⁵ Montgomery County's Climate Action Planning Overview (2019) Available from: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/green/Resources/Files/climate/workgroup-recommendations/overview-of-workgroup-recommendations.pdf>

⁶ Zoning Text Amendment No.: 20-01 Concerning: Solar Collection System – AR Zone Standards (2020) Available from: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/zta/2020/ZTA_20-01.pdf

Item 7 - Correspondence

From: [Katie Nolan](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive 2050 written testimony
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 10:08:12 AM
Attachments: [Katie Nolan Thrive 2050 Testimony.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good morning! Please find my written testimony for Thrive 2050 attached.

Katie Nolan (she/her/hers)
(410) 960-4979 (mobile)

Good afternoon and thank you for your time. My name is Katie Nolan. As a renter with no car in a single-income household, I'm very excited about plans to make the county more affordable and easier to travel around without a vehicle.

We need better public transportation. Before my roommate lost her job, she sometimes spent more time in transit than she did at work, despite the fact that her job was a mere seven minute drive from our apartment. People can't sustain their lives like that.

We also need more affordable housing and better support systems for the disabled. My friend Sebastian and his wife should be able to live in an actual home instead of pan-handling every day for an AirBnB in someone's basement because they can't get work.

But we also need to make racial equity and economic justice priorities for our future. I currently live in downtown Silver Spring, but for the seven years prior I lived on Flower Avenue where it intersects with Piney Branch Road. Every time I passed the Purple Line stop construction, I wondered whether Universal Supermarket, where I got most of my groceries, would get replaced by a 7-11; whether Beijing Delight would get replaced with a Panda Express. I worried that gentrification would drive out my neighbors, many of whom were Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Historically, "growth" without racial equity has led to the destruction of Black and Brown communities. In the 1950s and 1960s, "growth" along River Road in Bethesda led to the annihilation of River Road's African American community. My friend Harvey's childhood home is now a Whole Foods. Another friend's home is now a Bank of America. Because of "growth," County Executive Elrich has ignored Macedonia Baptist Church's calls for justice and allowed Bethesda Self-Storage to continue the desecration of a cemetery that predates the Civil War.

On the County Council's website for Bill 27-19, it says: "Racial equity and social justice are urgent moral and socioeconomic endeavors for our community. Our county's population has changed, both in numbers and in diversity, and this did not happen overnight. Addressing issues of racial equity is not only an ethical obligation; it is essential to ensure the continued economic vitality of our community."

Thrive 2050 has the potential to be life-changing for me and my community. If it's going to live up to that potential, it must prioritize racial equity.

From: [Beth Merlo](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050 testimony
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 10:38:52 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good morning,

I am writing this email in support of the Montgomery for All platform for Thrive Montgomery 2050. I have been a renter in the downtown Silver Spring area for 14+ years. From living with roommates to living on my own to now living with my husband (who I met standing on the Silver Spring metro platform), year after year I have chosen living in a walkable neighborhood to buying a home. I know I am not the only one.

In discussions with my local friends, affordability, lack of easy access to transportation, and the length of commutes are top reasons why so many of us have not bought into the community we are very happily living in, even as we age into the time of our lives when buying a house is "normal." We are the next generation of citizens, and yet, I do not feel as though there is a place for me as it currently stands.

I cannot afford the \$700,000 to \$1M+ homes that are in the neighborhood a block away from my apartment building and almost no new condo units have been built in the last eight years in downtown Silver Spring. Existing condos are hot commodities staying on the market for only a few days. Yet, most are only 1 or 2 bedrooms, which mean that a family may find themselves out of space quickly, especially with work-from-home becoming a new norm. Meanwhile, apartment building after apartment building has gone up. These create much needed density and living units, but apartments create a transient population, not one that stays and reinvests into the community they are tied to. And after years of experience renting in multiple complexes, older renters are often punished with rent increases, while new renters are given the discounts. This just reinforces the idea that I should not stay even though my husband and I love this area.

With the significant growth in the Montgomery County population, we cannot afford to rest on our suburban history. The communities built so many decades ago do not and cannot support the current needs of the people who live here. For those of us, like me, who work in downtown DC, metro is an excellent way to commute, but Montgomery County is NOT close to the business center of DC. Adding even a mile or two commute in current traffic can add 20+ minutes to an already long-enough commute. Buying a house in an "affordable" neighborhood would mean an hour+ commute for me and my husband for days we have to go into work. I watched my parents do this for years, and I know it's not sustainable in a healthy way.

I have no desire to see old neighborhoods torn down in favor of massive housing complexes, which is why I support Montgomery for All's approach of adding in the missing middle by supporting ADUs and low-rise, smaller housing units. This is smart growth.

I realize that my area of Montgomery County is very different from other areas, and I appreciate that Thrive 2050 must take into account all of our different needs, but walkable

communities that allow for people of all incomes to live well and for people to age in place with dignity need to be a priority. Population growth is not going away. We need to build for the future that is coming, not the suburban ideal of 1950 that proved to be unsustainable.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Elizabeth Merlo
8616 2nd Ave, Apt 420, Silver Spring, MD 20910
908-303-1254

From: [harold.pfohl](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: NOV 19TH - GEN PLAN TESTIMONY & RELEVANT HUD NEW COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCE
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 10:47:51 AM
Attachments: [Harold Pfohl General Plan testimony.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Please accept the attached document as my written testimony for the public hearing on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan.

Please confirm receipt of this, and thank you in advance for your assistance,
Harold Pfohl

GENERAL PLAN CRITIQUE
&
HUD NEW COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCE

November 19, 2020

My name is Harold Pfohl and I live in Sumner Village.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The concept of Complete Communities is a case of déjà vu for me. In 1976 I came down to Washington as part of a team to analyze the HUD New Communities Program. In the midst of all the civil rights strife and social upheaval of the 1960s the Johnson Administration listened to urban planners who believed that they had a solution to the social distress, New Communities.

As a result Congress passed legislation that enabled HUD to issue bond guarantees for the private development of 13 new cities on raw land in various parts of the country. These developments incorporated all of the avant-garde urban planning for bike paths, walkability, commercial centers, trails, architectural covenants, etc. The idea was Build It and They Will Come, black-and-white, rich and poor will love each other and live in peace and harmony. They were all failures. In the excitement of getting these dream communities created HUD had little interest in financial feasibility. The projects were incredibly complex, the front end costs were enormous, and HUD loaded them with social conditions.

From that perspective I look at the Thrive Montgomery 2050 concept of Complete Communities which is a result of a great deal of hard work by many good and well-meaning people. I see a utopian plan that is so vast in size, so broad in scope and so unbelievably expensive that it doesn't have a prayer of being implemented at any meaningful level over the course of the next 30 years.

Dense development with ready access to Metro stops makes a great deal of sense. But value of such property is so great; how do you incorporate parks, trails and open space? And by the way, how much of that is coming into existence as a result of the incredibly dense development occurring in downtown Bethesda?

Creation of Thrive Montgomery's Complete Communities within areas that are fully built out requires the acquisition, demolition and redevelopment of numerous residences. The cost of that is huge – will it be feasible? And the acquisition of land for trails? Parks?

The entire general plan is directed toward walking, bicycling, and the use of transit. The use of an automobile is anathema. In order for this to succeed the network served by public buses needs to increase astronomically along with the number of buses. The cost of that is huge. Not long ago there was a move to decrease the number of buses serving various lines due to cost. And now?

To dis-incentivize the use of automobiles the plan proposes to reduce public parking and increase the cost of remaining public parking to market rates. Diversity and inclusion are

core to the plan. If people in single-family residential neighborhoods need to walk 15 minutes to bus stop, wait for a bus to downtown Bethesda in order to shop, enjoy dining there or take in a movie the odds are that the plan will effectively have excluded them from Bethesda by making it arduous to get there. How much will the plan exclude people? What are the unintended consequences?

Pedestrian and bicycle safety receives great emphasis. Nowhere is there any plan dealing with the great danger that bicyclists pose to others in their nearly complete disregard of traffic laws whether on a street or on a trail. It is more than a little hazardous to be on a trail with bicyclists coming from behind, giving no warning, and often at considerable speed. I say this having cycled for thousands of miles.

With respect to housing and economic development the plan takes the position that if affordable housing is available then business will come to Montgomery County. The County most certainly needs affordable housing, but insofar as attracting business is concerned and insofar as employment is concerned transportation is far and away the most important consideration. Finish the purple line and radically improve bus service, thereby improving access to jobs and correspondingly, improved income.

There are four cornerstones to strategy: people, assets, time, and money. The County is suffering severe revenue shortfall as a result of the economic collapse due to Covid 19. Additionally there has been virtually no net new business formation over the past decade and hence very little increase in public revenue from business and little in the way of new job opportunities. The plan ignores the costs and at the end states that this will be dealt with on an individual project basis, and secondly that new resources and new solutions will be found.

Matters of money/revenue cannot be set aside in establishing a plan. The elements of the plan are interrelated and action on one part will affect another. For example, how can one demand walking and bicycling when bus service is poor and the cost of significant improvement of service is very high?

The authors posit that Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a necessary plan to deal with the unprecedented uncertainties we face. If so, where is the section dealing with the possibility of significant increase in population with no meaningful increase in employment/business? With long term diminished revenue? Proceeding with the assumption that uncertainties are limited to whether conditions will improve greatly, or moderately ignores the possibility that things will get worse. If the plan must be adopted now, then the plan must consider how to proceed if negative conditions are prolonged.

This plan is full of dreams and aspirations that are way beyond reach. It is being put forth at a time of chaos. Given the sheer size of it and amount of labor that has gone into it no doubt it has much bureaucratic inertia to proceed and with good and decent people behind it. But that is not a sound reason to impose a utopian plan on the County for the next 30 years.

Wait a couple of years until things settle down and we can get a better view of the future. Then let's revisit this.

From: [Todd Hoffman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Town of Chevy Chase Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 10:58:06 AM
Attachments: [TOCC Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050 11-19-20.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Attached is a copy of the Town of Chevy Chase's testimony to be provided at the Montgomery County Planning Board's November 19 Public Hearing on Thrive Montgomery 2050. Thank you.

Todd Hoffman
Town Manager
Town of Chevy Chase, Maryland
[4301 Willow Lane](#)
[Chevy Chase, MD 20815](#)
P: [301-654-7144](#)
F: [301-718-9631](#)
thoffman@townofchevyCHASE.org

Town of Chevy Chase Testimony
Montgomery County Planning Board Public Hearing on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Irene N. Lane, Town Councilmember
November 19, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Irene Lane and as a Town Councilmember, I speak on behalf of the Town of Chevy Chase. We very much appreciate the hard work that the Planning Board and staff have put into the development of this transformational plan with its laudable goals.

The Town along with 26 other communities representing over 33,000 residents has already submitted a united set of detailed written comments. Today, I would like to focus on four suggestions for improvement.

First, the **Definition of Complete Communities**: The Plan should specify the parameters for the diverse urban, suburban, and rural “Complete Communities” that exist throughout the County. In addition, in order to meet the County’s affordable and attainable housing goals, we encourage you to increase and diversify the areas for Missing Middle housing as affordable housing is more realistically achievable in areas outside the one-half mile zones around rail and BRT. Also, the Plan should leverage naturally occurring affordable housing options including adaptive re-use of malls and other retail/office buildings which post COVID-19 may no longer be viable for their original and intended use.

Second, the **Recognition of Municipal Regulatory Authority & Community Input**: While we understand the need for more affordable Missing Middle housing, the Plan’s implementation process should expressly state that the Plan’s policies and actions will be applied in a manner compatible with the current Master & Sector Planning process as well as within the current physical features of local neighborhoods. We recommend that the Plan expressly state that local municipalities continue to retain regulatory authority over building regulations for *all types* of residential housing within their jurisdictions, including Missing Middle housing, and that unincorporated neighborhoods have a *real say* about the physical changes that are being proposed within their boundaries.

Third, the **Strategy for Finance & Investment**: We strongly recommend that Thrive Montgomery provide equal weight to the importance of job creation, transit, and housing and include strategies for how public revenue will substantially increase in order to fund the Complete Community concept with its decentralized public facilities, small local schools, and transit infrastructure projects. Essentially, there needs to be a plan for how the County will thrive *economically* by attracting new industries, companies and small businesses to the County.

Fourth, the **Economic & Lifestyle Impact of COVID-19**: As this Plan will impact all residents, business owners, employees, regional commuters, and visitors for decades to come, we feel it is

important to factor in the changing realities of living and working as a result of the pandemic. Let us not forget that only two weeks ago, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve stated that while recent progress toward a vaccine was welcome news, it was “just too soon to assess with any confidence the implications of the news for the path of the economy...and that the post-pandemic economy (was) going to be different in some fundamental ways.” The Plan should design for the likelihood that the County’s budget will be severely constrained for some years to come – something that no number of PPPs will remedy.

We strongly recommend that careful attention be paid to and revisions be made based on the suggestions, concerns, and questions outlined in the Community Coalition’s detailed letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: [Alain N](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony on behalf of Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:43:41 AM
Attachments: [Thrive Montgomery 2050 - Testimony of A. Norman \(Nov. 19, 2020\).docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

Please find attached my written statement which I hope you have incorporated into testimonies considered by the Planning Board as regards the draft plan Thrive Montgomery 2050.

I also hope to be able to read the same in person tomorrow evening at the meeting, but certainly thank you in advance for including the written statement which I hope you all will find is a positive contribution to the effort.

Best regards,

Alain Norman
Silver Spring

Testimony of Alain Norman on behalf of the “Thrive Montgomery 2050” Draft Plan
November 19, 2020

Chairman Anderson, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some brief remarks in favor of the new, draft, plan “Thrive Montgomery 2050.” My name is Alain Norman, I currently reside in Silver Spring and I grew up in Montgomery County.

I would like to focus on what I see as three key pillars to the future success of this County, each of which is – I’m happy to note – covered by the draft plan, although they are mentioned across more than one of the plan’s nine “Plan Elements.”

First, having attended public schools in the County, I know that maintaining an excellent public school system is crucial to the ensuring that people can thrive in this County, in this country, and in the face of global competition. So, I applaud the plan for repeatedly emphasizing the need to facilitate access to schools at all levels. I might urge the County to ensure that funding goes to build as many schools as possible to avoid overcrowding and – given current trends – to take all relevant steps necessary to ensure students have access to computers and the Internet to be able to receive excellent education virtually.

Second, let me touch on the intertwined issues of economic wellbeing and environmental sustainability. I am thrilled that the draft plan repeatedly notes the need to facilitate access by foot or on bicycle to places of work, shops, parks, and other points of interest. I have worked with the County to have a multi-use path installed on what remains a sidewalk-less, but important, roadway, and so I know first hand how important it will be for the County to incorporate such facilities more frequently throughout the County. Moreover, helping people move around without resorting to cars will enhance safety, improve quality of life, encourage consumers to shop at local businesses, and help Maryland meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals. Similarly, ensuring that people have access to green spaces, and/or opportunities to engage in, say, community gardening throughout the County, will help improve quality of life, sustainability, and the sort of community cohesion likely to support local small and medium businesses.

In short, I agree with the thrust of the plan to improve everyone’s quality of life through efforts to improve access to educational opportunities, generally, and by planning for sustainability, notably in the form of more bike lanes and/or ensuring walkability in future developments. I might simply suggest that the plan, which is quite ambitious and often aspirational, be pruned of words like “ideally” so as to make its tone a bit more forceful, as that might later help with getting funding for implementation of the plan when battles over budgets take place during the next 30 years.

Thank you.

From: [Ken Bawer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: WMCCA Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:43:50 AM
Attachments: [WMCCA Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Written Final.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson,

Please find attached the WMCCA testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Sincerely,

Ken Bawer

West Montgomery Citizens Association

WEST MONTGOMERY COUNTY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 59335 • Potomac, Maryland 20854

Founded 1947

Testimony of Kenneth Bawer for West Montgomery County Citizens Association

**Montgomery County Planning Board Public Hearing for
Thrive Montgomery 2050
Public Hearing Draft Plan**

November 19, 2020

**West Montgomery County Citizens Association (WMCCA)
General Comments**

Thank-you Chair Anderson and members of the Planning Board. My name is Kenneth Bawer. I am representing the West Montgomery County Citizens Association. We would like to thank the Planning Board for this opportunity to comment on the draft General Plan revision. We acknowledge the efforts of those who have contributed to this very important document. Clearly, a lot of time and thought went into this document and we thank you.

The pandemic: First, we would like to suggest that the time frame for finalizing this document be greatly extended due to the pandemic. The pandemic is a once-in-a-century disaster. It has been extremely disruptive and will have uncertain consequences. Some residents still may not have commented on the plan during this pandemic for any number of reasons.

These reasons might be a trauma due to loss of a loved one, hardships caused by loss of a job or a closed business, or having a student doing remote learning at home causing challenges for the entire family. It would be helpful to post on the Thrive web site what percent of residents have commented to date.

Furthermore, the long-term consequences of the pandemic are unknown. The current draft plan could be inappropriate for the reality of a post-pandemic County. As a result of our shared experiences during the pandemic, personal and professional choices may

change. People may favor less dense housing arrangements for health reasons. Transportation preferences and commuting patterns may change dramatically if workers are allowed to continue telecommuting after the pandemic. Continued high levels of telecommuting may cause a drastic downturn in the commercial office space market. Therefore, we recommend pausing the finalization of this plan at least until the consequences of the pandemic start to become clear.

We appreciate this opportunity to make comments to improve this draft plan. There is a lot in this draft that we do like. While we agree with many of the principles, we do have suggestions that differ in their focus.

(NOTE: Some suggestions in our written comments may be too specific for the General Plan, so please consider them as food for thought and input to functional plans, for example.)

Our vision for 2050 is a County where we don't compare our growth to other jurisdictions, but where our main goal and indicator of success is not growth but is being at the top of the Happiness Ratings using the same metrics as the World Happiness Report. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Happiness_Report#Methods_and_philosophy)

Our vision for 2050 is a County which is not developer-centric but rather is resident-centric and environment-centric, where the focus is on sustainable growth, not simply population, business, and job growth. The current draft Plan treats population growth as an expectation, rather than either a desired goal or a potential problem. Job and business growth must only be pursued on a sustainable basis, that is, only if they can be attained without negatively impacting quality of life (including, for example, air and water quality, traffic, and yes, our happiness rating) and without negatively impacting the environmental quality of our natural areas (for example, no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

Our vision for 2050 is a County where our TRENDS AND CHALLENGES (p. 13) has climate change, which is an existential threat, as number **one** on the list, not number **twelve**. And where the HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT section is closer to page one than the current page 94.

Our vision for 2050 is a County that has taken stronger actions to achieve sustainability. We believe that sustainability should be a prerequisite for economic growth. Even as Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a conceptual plan, actions to protect and remediate the environment such as “conduct a study” and “develop a plan” are so general as to be potentially ineffective.

Considering the urgency of climate change and other environmental issues in the County, we believe that strong actions with certain goals are necessary to achieve sustainability, even as the many details of implementing these actions will be left to the future.

Our vision for 2050 is a County that has maintained the green Wedges & Corridors structure from the current General Plan rather than being “disappeared” from the current draft document. It is stated that “Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes to reinforce this web of centers and corridors by focusing growth around transit stations and along the major corridors.”

Where exactly are the corridors and centers? The first time that specific roads are identified as being corridors is on p.76, but it is unclear if these are all the proposed corridors

It appears that we are doomed to a County of all corridors and no Wedges. So, what happened to the green Wedges? If the wedges have disappeared, does that mean that the County completely disregarded the principles of the existing General Plan? Does this mean that, no matter what is said in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, the County will disregard this plan as well? We need to go back to the Wedges & Corridors concept which more clearly delineates areas of development.

The 1993 General Plan Refinement states that, “...Wedges of open space, farmland, and lower density residential uses have been preserved.” (p. 8). Unfortunately, in spite of this sentiment, open space and lower density areas have not been preserved, and even the Agricultural Reserve is under attack by proposals, for example, for industrial solar facilities. The 1993 document further says, “The Wedge is as important today as it was 30 years ago. It permits the renewal of our air and water resources and the protection of natural habitats. It is very much the green lung of Montgomery County. ...The proximity of the Wedge to the Corridor provides a sanctuary for those who need a change from the concrete and glass of more urban settings.” (p. 9). Or, to put it a different way, the Corridor may be a place to visit or work, but we may not want to live there. The 1993 Plan also says, “The Wedge provides a low density and rural housing opportunity which adds to the diversity of land use in Montgomery County.” (p. 9).

Our vision for 2050 is a County in which the creation of wildlife and plant corridors has the same priority as development corridors. The need for safe passage for wildlife between protected areas is critical to ensuring the healthy genetic diversity of animal and plant populations to withstand the challenges of habitat fragmentation and climate

change. Residents will be encouraged to replace traditional turf lawns with conservation landscaping using native plants to support native pollinators and birds and control stormwater runoff. County codes will be revised so that residents do not get citations from a Housing Code Inspector that they are violating Chapter 58 of the Montgomery County Code by permitting weeds and grass to grow in excess of 12 inches when, in fact, they have replaced their turf grass with an area of conservation landscaping.

Our vision for 2050 is a County in which low density and rural areas in the County (those areas outside the Sewer Envelope) are afforded special protection since these areas contain watersheds which contribute drinking water to millions of people in the DC area from the WSSC Water Filtration Plants and the Little Seneca Lake emergency drinking water reservoir. Astonishingly, the County water supply is mentioned in only one paragraph (*Policy 6.2.3*) on page 101. Our drinking water sources need to be protected by new Drinking Water Special Protection Areas, downzoning, purchase of land outright or via eminent domain, enhanced tax credit for conservation easements, etc.

In the absence of action by EPA, we envision the County working with the state to develop health-based standards for PFAS chemicals (among the so-called “Forever Chemicals”) in water and food.”

“New testing conducted on seafood in Saint Mary’s County, Maryland and drinking water in Montgomery County reveals high levels of PFAS chemicals, according to results released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The chemicals damage the immune system and may make consumers more vulnerable to COVID-19 and/or aggravate COVID afflictions.

PEER also tested drinking water for 36 PFAS at homes in three locations in Montgomery County: two in Bethesda and one in Poolesville. The first Bethesda site had 26.94 ppt of ten PFAS, while the second Bethesda site had 48.35 ppt of 11 PFAS. The Poolesville site had 15.4 ppt of seven different PFAS. The levels detected at the two homes in Bethesda were higher than the levels found by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), which tested drinking water for 18 PFAS at its Potomac and Patuxent Filtration Plants.” (<https://www.peer.org/more-pfas-found-in-maryland-water-and-seafood/>)

Furthermore, the residents in these rural and low-density areas that have well water need to have their groundwater supplies protected. To protect our drinking water supply, these areas should be accorded policies such as severe limitations on sewer line extensions (including closing loopholes and backdoors in the Water & Sewer Plan such

as the abutting mains policy and the Potomac peripheral sewer service policy) coupled with education for septic system owners on proper care and maintenance of their systems. Our vision for 2050 is for a County that is no longer totally negligent on this issue - to date there are no required septic inspections, no required pump-outs, and no proactive education programs.

The county is forcing our 30,000 septic system owners to go it alone until their systems fail and the County can recommend sewer line extensions as the only option.

Currently, there is little protection for well water quality in Montgomery County and the state. Our vision is that the County ask our legislators to support the Maryland Private Well Safety Program bill (once finalized).

At a high level, the Maryland Private Well Safety program will: (1) require the state to offer well owners financial and technical assistance with well water quality testing and remediation when contamination is found, (2) create an online well water quality database to give the public a better sense of the quality of our groundwater resources, (3) require disclosure of well water quality test results upon property transfer, (4) require landlords to test and disclose well water quality for tenants every three years, (5) require the state to conduct source tracking of common contaminants found in ground water and annual public reporting on the program, building transparency around the state's groundwater protection efforts.

Our vision is for the County to help fund research for new, innovative septic systems at the University of Maryland. Also, in the rural and low-density areas, our vision is for severe limitations on new road construction and road widening, and stricter requirements to control stormwater and impervious surfaces than within the sewer envelope. And our vision is that the County reaffirm its opposition to a second Potomac River crossing in western Montgomery County.

Our vision for 2050 is a County where all decisions and policies are informed by science. Decisions will be based on the fact that any amount of impervious surface degrades our water quality (as exemplified by the continuing battle for Ten Mile Creek). So-called "stream restorations" will be banned (both inside and outside of the MS4 Permit) - with some exceptions such as "daylighting" piped streams and concrete culvert removal - which convert our natural areas into engineered stormwater conveyances with no ecological uplift and without addressing the root cause of the problem - stormwater from impervious surfaces in over-developed areas. Finally, it will be acknowledged that there are better ways to protect the Bay than to trash our natural areas and parks.

Our vision is that, if stormwater runoff is mandated to be controlled outside of stream valleys, there would be no reason for stream construction work.

Our vision for 2050 is a County where the use of synthetic turf fields is prohibited.

Plastic synthetic turf is a urethane-backed carpet of colored plastic blades placed on top of a layer of rocks. The plastic contains known toxic chemicals such as heavy metals, phthalates, UV inhibitors, colorants, and flame retardants. Such carpets usually have anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 pulverized, used tires added for cushioning impacts from falls. The tire crumb waste contains additional known toxic substances including lead, mercury, benzothiazoles, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, carbon black (a known carcinogen), and volatile organic compounds like benzene.

A growing number of studies underscore the danger posed by synthetic surfaces to public health and the environment. The turf industry acknowledges that dangerous heavy metals such as lead are found in dust from playing fields. There is no safe level of lead exposure to children according to the CDC. Aside from chemical exposure, safety is a paramount concern, such as over-heating, unexpected failure of infill to cushion falls, sanitation problems (spit, snot, blood that is never cleaned from plastic carpet), and injuries such as skin abrasions and more frequent joint injury to knees and ankles.

Our vision for 2050 is a County committed to actually enforcing County codes and regulations across the board. We have witnessed an erosion of this principle. Waivers to requirements are being granted and rulings are being made in a seemingly arbitrary and capricious manner, from stormwater management waivers to conservation easement waivers, to monetary fines for forest conservation easement violations that are so low that they have no deterrent value whatsoever - a mere slap on the wrist.

While there will always be extenuating circumstances that warrant a common-sense exception, these cases should be the vanishingly small rather than the increasingly common rule that we are witnessing. Our vision for 2050 is a County where rules are enforced, not ignored by whim. Our vision is where the practice of revolving door employment is severely restricted - this happens when County employees leave to work for the companies they had been regulating.

Our vision for 2050 is a County that is finally honest about air and water quality conditions. The county must commit to honestly reporting true air quality conditions to residents. Currently, we have a single air quality monitoring station in the middle of an open field near Lake Frank surrounded by forest - not exactly where most people

breathe the air. Our vision is for a network of near-road air quality monitoring stations to accurately enable assessments of public health and to daylight equity issues.

Our vision is that Code Red days are declared if any ONE of the monitoring stations in the greater DC area goes over the trigger level, not the current, meaningless practice where Code Red days are declared by averaging all monitoring stations. Residents have a right to know if there is a health threat from a high reading at ANY monitoring station. Loudon County air might be great on a given day while the air quality in Montgomery County might be horrible on the same day - when the results are averaged, residents get the message that all is fine.

Our vision for 2050 is for emergency text, email, and radio alerts for sewer overflows similar to air quality alerts. Last year (in 2019), the WSSC sewer system spilled over 5 million gallons of raw sewage, almost 9M gallons in 2018, and over 5M gallons in 2017. So much for people who say septic systems are bad for the environment.

(ref: Wash Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/local-opinions/a-frolic-along-the-river-could-be-good-for-your-mental-health-but-bad-for-your-physical-health/2020/10/22/20dfbb86-117e-11eb-ba42-ec6a580836ed_story.html and <https://www.wsscwater.com/customer-service/emergency-sewerwater-problems/sanitary-sewer-overflow-reports.html>)

Our vision for 2050 includes a County government that actually works to achieve a reduction in noise pollution from Reagan National Airport airplane traffic due to re-routing caused by the ill-conceived NextGen project.

Ever since the FAA changed flight patterns without a public hearing or a transition period a few years back, many of our previously peaceful neighborhoods have been subjected to low flying airplane noise to the tune of sometimes one every minute. We would like to see a return to pre-NextGen flight patterns followed by a ten-year notice of intent to change flight paths so that both home buyers and sellers can act accordingly.

Our vision for 2050 concurs with the need to concentrate density along transportation corridors to encourage the use of mass transit. However, our vision also balances any up-zoning along development corridors and centers with downzoning in other areas.

This includes the protection of our low-density and rural areas outside of the sewer envelope from creeping sewer sprawl (and resulting development pressure to increase zoning density once sewer lines are extended).

We don't envision "flexible regulations and zoning controls" and "flexible zoning initiatives". We don't have flexible speed limits for a reason. Regulations and zoning controls should be fixed, not flexible.

We appreciate this opportunity to make our comments to improve this draft Plan.

Thank-you.

West Montgomery County Citizens Association (WMCCA) Specific Comments

PREFACE (p. 6)

Is population growth a goal? The Preface states that “...we need to accommodate the projected new population growth of 200,000 people over the next 30 years.” This is presented without evidence. First of all, who is projecting this population growth, and what are the underlying assumptions for this projection? Second, the plan treats population growth as an expectation, rather than as either a desired goal or a potential problem. As written, the plan assumes we have no control over our own destiny. If it is assumed that population growth will occur, then it is reasonable to plan to limit sprawl and concentrate growth. However, what population size does the current residents of the County want? Were residents surveyed on their opinion? Would a higher population lead to a lower quality of life, regardless of where in the County they live? Rather than planning around an assumed population growth, would current residents prefer to set goals of sustainable growth including sustainable population growth, sustainable economic growth, sustainable/increased natural resources protection, and sustainable/increased quality of life?

WMCCA recommends gathering citizen input on this issue, perhaps with a county-wide survey of residents. And, of course, a survey should be crafted so as to not lead to a desired response.

“The way we think about growth needs to change.”

WMCCA Comment: We agree. The focus should be on sustainable growth, not simply growth, given that we have finite resources (both natural and economic). Instead of saying, “The way we think about growth needs to change,” which is true as far as it goes, we should make a more declarative statement such as, “We need to think in terms of sustainable growth. Sustainable growth is defined as growth that both enhances the quality of life for residents but also enhances the environmental health of our remaining natural areas.” For each “item” in the plan, is the above reflected? See the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_Development_Goals)

“The Plan recognizes that our quality of life depends on the ability to attract and retain employers and the employees they need.”

WMCCA Comment: Change to read, “The Plan recognizes that our quality of life depends not only on the principle of full employment with living wages, but also on maintaining and enhancing our environment to provide clean air and water, natural areas for plant and animal life, and passive recreation.

WHY UPDATE THE GENERAL PLAN (p. 11)

“... we also are struggling to attract businesses, grappling with a legacy of racial and economic inequities, and fighting to protect the natural environment.”

WMCCA Comment: What is the evidence that we are struggling to attract businesses and why is this a problem? Simply saying that we lag behind other jurisdictions such as Fairfax in the number of businesses attracted in a given time frame does not necessarily make this a problem if the overriding concern is sustainable growth. Replace this with “...we are also seeking to attract businesses within our sustainable growth objectives, grappling with a legacy of racial and economic inequities, and fighting to protect the natural environment from the effects of overdevelopment and lack of government oversight and lax regulatory enforcement to the point of being arbitrary and capricious.” For example, the maximum fine of \$1,000 for violating a Forest Conservation Easement is nowhere high enough to be a deterrent to future violations. Another example is the liberal use of stormwater management waivers and special exemptions (zoning waivers) for businesses at the expense of residents’ quality of life considerations.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

1. The county is growing at a slower rate than in the past, but it will still add more than 200,000 residents in the next 25-30 years. (p. 13)

WMCCA Comment: See above comments on population. This is developer-centric view meant to scare people into believing that we must grow, grow, grow at all costs. The emphasis must be on sustainability.

2. The amount of unconstrained land available for growth is very limited.

The county must shift its focus to redevelopment and reuse of underdeveloped land, which requires a different set of public policies and approaches to growth than those that have guided the county over the past decades.

WMCCA Comment: What does “underdeveloped” land mean? As written, the implication is that it is a mistake to have lower density land because there is money to be made by overdevelopment. We disagree with that premise. The county must shift its focus from growth which benefits primarily developers to only allowing growth either 1) in those areas where more environmental damage (e.g. to stream water quality) will not be inflicted, or 2) in areas which are designated as stormwater control zones which require, for example, containment of stormwater from 100 year (or greater) storm events.

3. Over one-third of the county is used for single-family homes (detached and townhouses).

A recommendation of Thrive Montgomery is to build on the concept of focusing growth along corridors, even if this may require changes to land use and densities along these corridors.

WMCCA Comment: As written Thrive Montgomery is declaring war on single-family homes. If we follow the money, who stands to profit from this? Not the residents. To meet our objective of sustainable growth, for every up-zoned area, there should be an equal down-zoned area. The down-zoned areas should be given Transfer of Developable Rights (TDRs), similar to what happened in the Ag Reserve, that can be sold to developers in the up-zoned areas. Without a balance between up-zoning and down-zoning, the overall density in the County will continued ratcheting up.

5. The county is becoming older.

The aging population may put downward pressure on household incomes. ...An aging population, without a commensurate increase in younger workers, means lower average household incomes and changing needs for social services.

WMCCA Comment: The baby boom bubble of older people is a temporary phenomenon. Expenses such as “retirement programs for old people” may be more than offset by the lower need for public education expenses.

7. We are not producing enough housing in accessible locations to meet our needs.

While the number of housing units in Montgomery County increased 32% from 295,723 in 1990 to 390,673 in 2018, this increase was lower than the 53% increase in the region.

But we cannot continue to rely on a few, high-density Metro station areas to provide enough housing to bring down costs. We need other locations where lower land prices will support low- to medium-density residential building types.

WMCCA Comment: Why are we using the “must keep up with the Jones” mentality? We need to focus on sustainability. If you want to compare us with other parts of the region, we need to ask what has the housing increase in those regions done for their quality of life and the environment. Moving construction to areas with lower land prices has been the driver of suburban sprawl for decades.

8. Recent sluggish economic growth requires that the county strengthen its competitive advantages in the global economy.

WMCCA Comment: The emphasis should not be on job growth, but rather sustainability and quality of life. Fairfax County emphasized attracting more businesses for job growth (to “broaden the tax base”) and look at what happened. Taxes never went down, and the only ones who benefitted were landowners, realtors, and builders, not the average citizen.

9. We need to stop planning for cars and emphasize transit, walking and biking.

WMCCA Comment: We wholeheartedly agree with this.

11. Declining trends in public health and well-being indicate a growing need for a healthier more active lifestyle. ...all residents can benefit from a more active lifestyle supported by a renewed emphasis on transit, walking, and biking.

WMCCA Comment: We agree on the need to emphasize transit, walking, and biking. However, the County has done an extremely poor job of promoting safe walking and biking in the past. Especially in the lower density areas, many roads have no sidewalks or trails alongside them. Even the lack of bicycle racks at retail centers sends the message, “Bikes are not welcome here.” This is not only

a public health issue, it is a climate change issue - walking and biking to destinations means less automobile exhaust.

12. Climate change threatens all aspects of life.

We will need significant investments in upgrading our infrastructure to withstand the threats of extreme weather and other disruptions. These improvements will put extra burden on the county's financial resources.

WMCCA Comment: Upgrades to our infrastructure to handle weather conditions have been woefully inadequate for decades. Therefore, to only point the finger at climate change is highly disingenuous. Some of our stream valleys are highly degraded due to decades of inadequate stormwater control regulations - yes, this will be made worse by climate change. We expect more intense storms caused by global warming. To lessen the burden on the County's financial resources, a Thrive 2050 goal should be to enact more stringent stormwater control requirements for new build homes and home renovations (i.e., much more than the current 1 inch or so of rain in 24 hours). For the huge number of existing homes, there should be a new regulation that properties must be retrofitted to control storm water to "new build standards" upon property transfer – who pays the cost could be negotiated between buyer and seller. For commercial property, stormwater control to "new build standards" should be required upon sale. Grandfathering for commercial property should not be allowed.

A PLAN TO THRIVE

RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

"We do not have the land available for more suburban subdivisions, so we need to change how we design our communities and transportation network to accommodate new growth." (p. 32)

WMCCA Comment: Instead of "new growth", this should say "sustainable growth".

"The redevelopment of the 8.78-acre shopping center site with housing, shops, offices and open spaces reduced its stormwater runoff by 77%." (p. 34)

WMCCA Comment: This is a misleading "victory", since the Pike and Rose site before development was mostly just a large parking lot. The implication is that we

need higher density development to reduce stormwater runoff. What is needed is more stringent stormwater control regulations and elimination of waivers.

Corridors are the place for new growth

This additional density will require change in existing single-family neighborhoods through the introduction of “missing middle” housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, live-work units and small multi-family structures in areas where a moderate degree of intensification is appropriate. (p.38)

WMCCA Comment: To ensure sustainable growth, for every up-zoned area, there should be an equivalent down-zoned area. The down-zoned areas should be given TDRs (similar to what happened in the Ag Reserve) that can be sold to developers in the up-zoned areas.

Equally useful as opportunities for connection, we must enhance and connect the growth corridors with trails in the stream valley corridors at their intersections to expand active transportation options via walking and cycling.

WMCCA Comment: Trails for bicycles should be built along all existing and planned rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors. Bicycle trails should be separated with jersey-type barriers, for example, to completely shield bicycles from vehicular traffic. Trails in the stream valleys should be natural surface only so as to not add to impervious surface coverage.

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposing regarding single-family zoning?

Specifically, Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends increasing densities along corridors especially those served by transit. These densities should be commensurate with context of the surrounding areas. In some cases, this will involve increasing densities in areas that have been historically characterized by single-family housing and could include duplexes, triplexes and small multi-family buildings. (p.42)

WMCCA Comment: To meet our objective of sustainable growth, for every up-zoned area, there should be an equivalent down-zoned area. The down-zoned areas should be given TDRs (similar to what happened in the Ag Reserve) that can be sold to developers in the up-zoned areas.

Attainable housing for all income levels

Housing attainability and affordability is an economic as well as an equity issue. Unless we grow our housing supply to make room for the projected 200,000 new residents moving to the county by 2045, our existing communities will become more expensive, less diverse, and integrated, and it will be difficult to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

WMCCA Comment: See our comments above. We don't see the projection of 200,000 new residents as a fait accompli. If the housing supply is not grown, there will be no place for new residents to move into, and the county's population will not grow as projected. This is a decision for residents to make, not the authors of the General Plan or developer interests.

Evolution of single-family neighborhoods near transit

Single-family neighborhoods near employment centers and transit need to have a greater mix of housing types that provide less expensive options for our growing population and for existing residents, making our communities more affordable and equitable. This will require a comprehensive review of impediments to increasing the housing supply; a will to change current policies when necessary, such as reexamining our zoning and other controls to create a greater mix of housing types in new and existing communities; and an acceptance by all that more housing and new residents are a benefit to the county and the region.(p.43)

WMCCA Comment: To meet our objective of sustainable growth, for every up-zoned area, there should be an equal down-zoned area. The acceptance of more housing and new residents should be the decision of residents, not the authors of the General Plan or developer interests. See above comments on population growth. In addition, tax breaks (such as multi-year tax abatements) should not be given to developers - they need to pay their own way and not be subsidized by taxpayers.

THE PLAN VISION

Thrive Montgomery 2050 envisions a county that is more urban, more diverse, and more connected, providing a high quality of life for existing residents while also welcoming new residents and new ideas. (p. 46)

WMCCA Comment: The envisioning of the county being more urban should be the decision of residents, not the authors of the General Plan or developer interests.

This pattern of sustainable growth and development creates multiple benefits for Montgomery County and results in a future county that is:

- **Urban.**

Compact form of development, coupled with conservation of the Agricultural Reserve, has proven to be better for the environment resulting in improved stream water quality.

WMCCA Comment: This is unrealistic. With compact development comes more impervious surfaces which leads to degraded stream water quality. Unless compact (read more dense) development is balanced by down-zoning of other areas, the amount of impervious surface in the county will increase. We call for down-zoning and increased protections in the low density and rural areas outside of the sewer envelope to balance the proposed increased density areas. Plus, conservation of the Ag Reserve is already under attack with the proposal for commercial solar.

Active.

County residents enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle. Connecting to the outdoors and their neighbors boosts their physical and mental health. Every resident has walkable access to opportunities for social engagement, physical activity, and quiet contemplation, whether in parks or other public spaces. The county's built and natural resources are designed to encourage physical activity. Fewer vehicles using clean energy, have resulted in drastically reduced greenhouse gas emissions. (p. 46)

WMCCA Comment: Increased housing density will probably not lead to increased physical health. Most urbanized areas suffer from reduced air quality due to more vehicular traffic. Assuming a gradual conversion to all electric vehicles, increased urbanization will hurt the health of residents within the time span of Thrive 2050.

Inclusive.

Various housing types at a mix of price points in Complete Communities and along rail and BRT corridors accommodate diverse populations and help achieve equity and integration on a neighborhood scale. Residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and feel. Planners engage everyone in decision making about the future of their communities. (p. 47)

WMCCA Comment: While it sounds nice to imagine that planners will engage everyone in the decision making, our experience is that sometimes this engagement is merely to check off the box of public input. In recent years, residents have their say and then planners do what they want, sometimes seeming to favoring development interests over the interests of residents. If this plan wants to give residents a say, then we suggest that residents, not the Planning Board, be allowed to vote on decisions in their communities. Alternatively, there could be equal numbers of Planning Board members and voting representatives from communities for each project.

Flexible. Residents have a variety of choices when selecting their preferred community setting and housing type. The bulk of new residents live in more dense, urban areas. Concentrating new growth in already developed areas makes the best use of the county's available land and infrastructure, and helps to protect the environment. Flexible regulations and zoning controls result in a vibrant mix of residential and commercial uses. (p. 47)

WMCCA Comment: We object to the concept of "flexible regulations and zoning controls." We don't have flexible speed limits for a reason. We don't want an officer to say, "The speed limit is 25, but I'll be flexible and make it 45 for you, Mr. Jones." Regulations and zoning controls should be fixed, not flexible. The implication is that the Planning Board can change regulations and zoning controls based on a whim or developer influence.

Competitive. The county retains and attracts large companies, small businesses, and high quality educational institutions.

WMCCA Comment: Add to this: "...only insofar as they do not negatively impact our goal of environmental sustainability and improved quality of life. This includes having no negative impact on our natural areas, including streams. We will not sacrifice water and air quality, overcrowding of roads and schools, or other indicators of quality of life simply to add jobs.

This vision respects the original 1964 "Wedges and Corridors" General Plan, with a greater emphasis on a compact form of development and the role of corridors as places to grow. It continues to protect and honor the Agricultural Reserve—a nationally recognized planning landmark that provides economic and environmental benefits. (p. 47, 48)

WMCCA Comment: See our comments on the Green Wedge at the top. The term “compact form of development” should be replaced by “higher density development” to avoid euphemisms

Figure 25: Lining corridors with appropriate densities provides housing options. (p. 48)

WMCCA Comment: The “before” image of a tree-lined street with a fully wooded forest on the right is replaced with cheek-to-jowl buildings in the computer graphic image at the bottom. While this may represent a cash cow for developers, it represents a horror show for residents whose local woodland has been clear cut. This is just another example of the developer-centric vision represented by the Thrive 2050 document in its current form.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Issues and Challenges

“Zoning techniques like minimum lot size requirements in single-family neighborhoods created uniform housing, which resulted in neighborhoods defined primarily by income.” (p. 52)

WMCCA Comment: It would be more accurate to include the fact that minimum lot size requirements was used to protect drinking water supplies in some areas.

“The lack of housing diversity by unit type and size is also a significant burden for the county’s older adults. Most would continue to live in the same neighborhood where they raised their families if there were options to downsize. However, the current pattern of development forces them to continue to stay in larger houses they don’t need or move to locations away from their families and social support network.” (p. 52)

WMCCA Comment: What is the evidence to support the above statements? What is the average distance from existing homes of older adults to the closest retirement community?

“Today there are few remaining vacant properties to accommodate new growth. Approximately 85% of the county’s land area is constrained by existing development, environmental constraints and other factors, leaving only 15% of land available to accommodate growth (see Issues Report for details).”

WMCCA Comment: There is too much emphasis on the need for new growth. It is never explained why growth is good for existing residents. What kind of growth are we talking about: jobs, population, number of buildings, etc.? The emphasis should be on sustainable growth.

Action 1.1.2.a: Review and revise the zoning categories and requirements in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance as needed to accommodate a variety of uses and densities within Complete Communities. (p. 55)

WMCCA Comment: Add, “In conjunction with this, review and revise the zoning categories to 1) better protect our drinking water supplies in those watershed areas that feed into WSSC Water Filtration Plants and Little Seneca Lake (an emergency drinking water source) and 2) better protect rural and low-density areas outside the sewer envelope from sprawl.

Action 1.1.4.a: Further the Missing Middle Housing Study by identifying options and implementation strategies to increase the variety and density of housing types in areas zoned for single-family detached and semi-detached housing, particularly in areas located within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of rail and bus rapid transit (BRT). (p. 55)

WMCCA Comment: For every up-zoned area, there should be an equal down-zoned area. The down-zoned areas should be given Transfer of Developable Rights (TDRs), similar to what happened in the Ag Reserve, that can be sold to developers in the up-zoned areas. Without a balance between up-zoning and down-zoning, the overall density in the County will continued ratcheting up.

Policy 1.3.2: Employ the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan to identify opportunities for new parks or open spaces, such as publicly owned land, property acquisition or public-private partnerships to more equitably serve communities with limited access to parks and public spaces. (p. 56)

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Move aggressively to acquire new park land through creative measures including the use of eminent domain and bond referendums (see Fairfax County). This must be done in all areas in the county, not primarily down county.

Policy 1.3.1: Ensure all people in urban and suburban communities have access to parks or public spaces that provide opportunities for vigorous physical activity, social engagement, and quiet contemplation or connections to nature within a comfortable 15-minute walk from their homes. (p. 55)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Increase access to parks by asking for (possibly in exchange for a tax credit) or purchasing (via eminent domain) public access points (i.e., short connector trails between homes from a road or sidewalk to parks. There are miles of parkland that is not easily accessible within neighborhoods because there are extremely limited access trails. Examples include both Muddy Branch and Watts Branch SVPs. Note: Muddy Branch SVP does have a few access trails between homes, but these are signed as being private. It should not be allowed to have private access trails to public parks.

Policy 3.1.1: Support the efforts of the county's economic development agencies to retain and grow existing businesses and attract new businesses. (p. 68)

WMCCA Comment: New Policy: Such efforts will not include the use of subsidies in the form, for example, of tax breaks such as multi-year tax abatements. Tax-payer subsidies of large corporations will no longer be tolerated - these enterprises need to pay their own way and not be subsidized by taxpayers. In addition, new business development will not get ahead of infrastructure and public services. New businesses will contribute funds to the roads, sidewalks, schools, fire departments, community centers, parks, etc., required to support the needs of the new residents that they employ.

Goal 3.2: Grow vibrant commercial centers that are attractive as headquarters locations for large, multinational corporations, major regional businesses, federal agencies, and small and locally owned businesses. (p. 68)

WMCCA Comment: New Policy: The County will not use tax breaks (e.g., payment in lieu of taxes, property tax exemptions, etc.) for any commercial development projects. Development must proceed on its own merits with any risks shouldered by commercial enterprises, not the public. Tax concessions to sports arenas, for example, have been shown to not return the public's initial "investment".

Action 3.2.2.a: Establish a one-seat transit service from major employment centers to at least one of the three international airports in the region (Baltimore-Washington International, Dulles International, or Reagan National Airport). (p.69)

WMCCA Comment: Use less jargon. Aren't taxis a one-seat transit service?

Policy 3.3.1: Prioritize job access and job generation in land use planning, including development review processes, master planning and functional plans. (p.69)

WMCCA Comment: No! Prioritize sustainability (e.g. carbon footprint neutrality), quality of life for existing residents, and protection/enhancement of the natural environment in land use planning, including development review processes, master planning and functional plans.

Action 3.3.1.a: Complete an Employment Growth and Access Functional Plan to determine if and where land use policies limit growth of and access to a variety of job types. Recommend strategies for addressing these limits. (p.69)

WMCCA Comment: Change to say, “Complete an Employment Growth and Access Functional Plan to determine if and where land use policies limit growth of and access to a variety of job types. Recommend strategies for addressing these limits only if they can be accomplished while maintaining sustainability (e.g. with a neutral carbon footprint), quality of life for existing residents, and the protection/enhancement of the natural environment.”

Goal 3.5: Lead nationally in innovation and entrepreneurship, building on existing assets and enhancing job and business growth for industries in which Montgomery County has a competitive advantage. (p.70)

WMCCA Comment: Add this language: This enhanced job and business growth must only be pursued on a sustainable basis, i.e., only if it can be attained without negatively impacting quality of life (e.g., air quality, traffic, happiness rating) and environmental quality of our natural areas (e.g., no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

Goal 3.6: Identify and remove regulatory and other barriers to encourage real estate development and business establishment and expansion.

WMCCA Comment: This is a dog whistle for developers. We need regulations so that we don't end looking like Tysons Corner. Add this language: These must only be removed if it can be proved that it can be done without negatively impacting quality of life (e.g., air quality, traffic, happiness rating) and environmental quality of our natural areas (e.g., no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRAVEL (p. 74)

Vision for Safe and Efficient Travel (p. 74)

WMCCA Comment: Define “micromobility”.

Focus on Transit and Walkability

These existing east-west corridors include the new Purple Line and the planned BRT along Randolph Road. (p. 76)

WMCCA Comment: Remove Purple line now that construction has stopped?

For example, early conceptual planning and regulatory review stages have begun on the proposed highspeed superconducting magnetic levitation (maglev) system between Washington, DC, and Baltimore, and a proposed 35-mile underground tunnel/loop to move electric vehicles between Washington and Baltimore in 15 minutes. (p.76)

WMCCA Comment: The County needs to come out against the maglev project due to the biodiversity, value, history, research and fossils on the federal, state, academic, and city land, refuges, and parklands that almost entirely comprise the footprint for the proposed maglev corporation’s trainyards, trainlines, power stations, road realignments, powerline realignments, parking lots, and new roads.

Supporters of regional connectivity have also discussed a Purple Line extension to create suburb-to-suburb connection between Tysons in Fairfax County, VA, and Largo in Prince George’s County. (p.76)

WMCCA Comment: Change to “have also discussed a Purple Line extension, BRT, and monorail to create....”

Goals, Policies and Actions (p. 76)

WMCCA Comment: Add new Policy & Action: Encourage people to move closer to their jobs by offering government subsidies for moving expenses, based on need, for people who wish to avoid long commutes by moving closer to their job. Not only would this reduce demand for new road construction, but it would also take cars off the road. Our guess is that this would be less expensive than building/widening roads. It is a given that housing costs increase the closer-in you move. That is one of the trade-offs that someone has to make: a longer commute with a bigger house vs. a shorter commute with a smaller house or

apartment/townhouse. The reason we have suburban sprawl was (and is) the lure of less expensive/larger houses coupled with relatively cheap (arguably government subsidized) gasoline and roads. Solving congestion is not a simple problem and there are many variables in the equation. Just to throw out one variable: what if gas was taxed the way it should be (as in Europe), say phasing in a tax of \$1 or more per gallon? This would have lots of possible repercussions: people buying smaller cars, moving closer-in, switching to transit, moving to Virginia (which may not be a bad thing), etc..

Action 4.1.1.b: Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to consider whether to remove master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings. (p. 77)

WMCCA Comment: Change to “Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways **to remove** master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings, **especially the M-83 highway.**” M-83 is unneeded, would be environmentally destructive, and takes funds away from mass transit projects.

Policy 4.1.3: Prioritize safe, connected, low-stress bicycle, and pedestrian networks in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors, and community equity emphasis areas over projects that increase traffic capacity. (p.77)

WMCCA Comment: Bicycle lanes must be separated from motor vehicle lanes by structures such as jersey walls. (See photo on p. 75)

Policy 4.1.4: Extend rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) directly to regional destinations such as Tysons and Arlington in Virginia; and Frederick, Columbia, and Downtown Baltimore in Maryland.

WMCCA Comment: Change to “Extend rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) **and possibly monorail...**”

Action 4.1.4.a: Provide dedicated transit lanes as part of the replacement of the American Legion Bridge. (p.77)

WMCCA Comment: Change to “Provide dedicated transit lanes as part of the replacement of the American Legion Bridge **as well as dedicated pedestrian and bicycle lanes so as to connect the C&O Canal NHP on the Maryland side to the Potomac Heritage Trail on the Virginia side. Pedestrian and bicycle lanes on a new bridge have been on the planning books for decades.**”

Policy 4.2.1: Expand the street grid in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors, and suburban communities to create shorter blocks, improve access and transportation system redundancy, and slow the speed of traffic. Use development projects and roadway modifications to provide new street connections. (p. 78)

WMCCA Comment: This is not a good idea. This will result in more miles of impervious roadway, leading to more stormwater runoff, leading to more degradation of stream valleys.

Action 4.2.2.a: Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to limit the number of through-lanes in downtowns and town centers to a maximum of four general purpose lanes and repurpose space for transit lanes, wider sidewalks, bikeways, trees, and stormwater management. Discourage new turn lanes in downtowns and town centers.(p.78)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Bikeways must be separated from motorized vehicles by solid barriers such as jersey walls, not simply low curbs.

Policy 4.5.1: Incentivize the use of modes other than single-occupant vehicles by providing high quality transit, walking, and bicycling networks. (p.79)

WMCCA Comment: Change to: Incentivize the use of modes other than single-occupant vehicles by providing high quality transit, **and safe** walking and bicycling networks, both of which are separated from motorized vehicles by solid barriers such as jersey walls, not simply low curbs.

Policy 4.9.3: Design streetscapes to mitigate disruption from climate change, manage stormwater effectively, and provide tree canopy for shade and habitat. (p.82)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Managing stormwater effectively in streetscape designs will eliminate the need for the destructive practice of so-called “stream restorations” in stream valleys.

Build More Housing, of More Types, in More Ways

Montgomery County needs to build more housing. Declining production and increased development costs have resulted in rising housing costs and an increase in the number of cost-burdened households. Without an appropriate range of housing types at attainable price points, the county will be unable to attract and retain the employment base necessary to support our economic well being. (p.86)

WMCCA Comment: To say, “Montgomery County needs to build more housing” begs the question, “When will Montgomery County have enough housing?” The current population is now about one million people. Do we want to plan for a county where the population is 10 million or 25 million people? The current draft Plan treats population growth as an expectation, rather than either a desired goal or a potential problem. Job and business growth must only be pursued on a sustainable basis, that is, only if they can be attained without negatively impacting quality of life (including, for example, air and water quality, traffic, and yes, our happiness rating) and without negatively impacting the environmental quality of our natural areas (for example, no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

The county needs housing growth in transit accessible locations including current and planned rail and bus rapid transit corridors. Predominantly single-family detached houses currently line these transit corridors limited by zoning that only allows only this type of housing. Low to moderate density increases would allow the introduction of more housing types near transit to serve a mix of incomes and household types. (p. 86)

WMCCA Comment: Up-zoning (density increases) in these areas need to be balanced by down-zoning (density decreases) in other areas.

In order to build more housing, community-led support for and championing of new housing development is critical. This support can promote the value that new residents and housing bring to our neighborhoods. Communities have become highly adept at using the public process to block new housing and solving the county’s housing shortage will require a shared vision throughout Montgomery County. (p. 86-87)

WMCCA Comment: Rather than criticizing the right of communities to protect their quality of life (“Communities have become highly adept at using the public process to block new housing...”), and rather than criticizing the rights of residents to provide input via the public process, planners should listen to the will of the people. As the draft plan states, “Residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and feel. Planners engage everyone in decision making about the future of their communities.” (p. 47) The county should be resident-centric rather than development-centric. Do the current 1 million residents want the county to become home to 25 million residents in the future?

Goal 5.1: Provide and produce housing units that meet the diverse household sizes and needs of all Montgomery County residents in terms of type, size, accessibility, affordability, and location. (p. 87)

WMCCA Comment: Add: “This will take place primarily through the slow conversion of existing housing units without necessarily increasing the total number of housing units.”

Action 5.1.1.a: Expand housing options in detached residential areas near high-capacity transit by modifying the zoning code to allow duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes, residential types by-right and with smaller lot areas.(p. 87)

WMCCA Comment: Add, “Any up-zoning must be balanced by down-zoning in other areas of the county.”

Action 5.1.2.b: Establish incentives to encourage conversion of existing high-vacancy office and retail sites into residential uses through adaptive reuse or redevelopment of the site. Create flexible zoning incentives for conversion of planned and existing office and retail sites to residential uses, including allowing properties to reallocate their non-residential Floor Area Ratio to residential use. (p.87)

WMCCA Comment: We object to the concept of “flexible regulations and zoning controls” and “flexible zoning initiatives”. We don’t have flexible speed limits for a reason. We don’t want an officer to say, “The speed limit is 25, but I’ll be flexible and make it 45 for you, Mr. Jones.” Regulations and zoning controls should be fixed, not flexible. The implication is that the Planning Board can change regulations and zoning controls based on a whim or developer influence.

Goal 5.2: Ensure that the majority of new housing is located near rail and BRT stations, employment centers and within Complete Communities that provide needed services and amenities for residents.

Policy 5.2.1: Pursue financial and zoning opportunities to increase residential density, especially for older adults and people with disabilities, near high-capacity transit that will result in increased walkability and access to amenities.(p. 89)

WMCCA Comment: Add, “Any up-zoning must be balanced by down-zoning in other areas of the county.”

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Issues and Challenges

Montgomery County is a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment through a broad range of planning initiatives, policies, and regulations to protect sensitive environmental resources. But many indicators such as stream water quality, forest loss, loss of plant and animal species, and increased imperviousness point to greater stewardship challenges. As the population expands and the region continues to develop, pressures on our natural systems increase. (p. 97)

WMCCA Comment: Change, “Montgomery County is a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment...” to “ **Montgomery County’s vision is to become** a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment....” There is no way we can claim to be a leader when, for example, we are trashing our natural areas by doing so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not always pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as “daylighting” piped streams and concrete culvert removal). We are not a leader in protecting our natural environment when over-development is degrading the water quality in Little Seneca Lake, our emergency drinking water supply.

Vision for Healthy and Sustainable Environment (p. 97)

WMCCA Comment: We need a goal and policy to require returnable bottles. The Northeast has done this for decades. We need to stand up to the retail stores who have pushed back on this forever.

WMCCA Comment: We need a goal and policy that retailers can only sell products in packaging that can be recycled by the County.

WMCCA Comment: We need conservation measures to be enacted to conserve water (for example, an “excessive use” charge which would a higher charge that kicks in when the “standard” per person daily usage is exceeded – to discourage lawn watering, for example).

WMCCA Comment: We need a County-wide education program about the need to conserve water.

WMCCA Comment: We need to change the code to allow grey-water systems and composting toilets.

WMCCA Comment: We need to change how WSSC sewage overflows are reported and how the public is notified:

1) Allowing overflows under 5,000 gal to be reported only quarterly or annually is unreasonably lax. A spill of that size would potentially have disastrous health effects for people and pets in a small stream. ANY overflow where sewage has reached surface water of any category (not just the ones listed) should have to be reported "immediately". Plus, any spill where raw sewage enters any surface water is a risk to public health - this is a giant loophole where someone can do a paper and pencil justification for claiming there is no risk to public health ("It was only X gallons which would be diluted by Y factor, etc."). If you dump 1 gallon of raw sewage where a child is playing in the water, that is a public health risk.

2) The current public notification requirement is woefully inadequate. The average person does not regularly check the health department websites. The requirement for notifications "WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME" is open to abuse - it should be more like "within one hour of the event "discovery". A requirement should be added to notify all local news outlets within one hour of the "discovery" of the overflow (especially radio and TV stations - so that the information can be immediately broadcast). Plus, local governments should be required to send health notifications to subscribers of their emergency alert service (For example, see - <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OEMHS/AlertMontgomery/index.html>). Sewage overflow reports should be reported as seriously and routinely as air quality alerts.

3) Another enhancement should be a requirement for more public transparency in overflow reporting. Currently, one can go to the WSSC (Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission) web site (<https://www.wsscwater.com/customer-service/emergency-sewerwater-problems/sanitary-sewer-overflow-reports.html>) and see reports of individual overflow events. However, it is next to impossible (without spending hours pouring over the data) to determine the total overflows by individual county or watershed. That level of detail is absolutely available - it can be requested and received via a spreadsheet from WSSC that can be easily sorted by the above, but this spreadsheet format should be posted to the WSSC web site, not be accessible only via special request. The spreadsheet format allows one to easily determine the cumulative volume of overflows.

WMCCA Comment: The county must get serious and honest about reporting true air quality conditions to residents. Currently, Montgomery County's has a single air quality monitoring station in the middle of an open field near Lake Frank surrounded by forest - not exactly where most people breathe the air (<https://youtu.be/FJNRY6TWmaU> & <https://montgomerycivic.org/files/CFN201803.pdf#page=4>). The county needs a network of near-road air quality monitoring stations to accurately enable assessments of public health and to daylight equity issues.

Reuse, recycling and composting of food and yard waste results in very little municipal solid waste generation. (p.97)

WMCCA Comment: With respect to reuse, county solid waste transfer stations must allow residents to remove items (such as electronics, metal items, etc.) for reuse instead of shipping it away. Home hobbyists can repair electronics, and do it yourselves can find uses for metal scraps and perfectly good metal filing cabinets, for example. This will, presumably, require signing of liability waivers, but this is already routinely done at Parks events.

Urbanism as Key to True Sustainability

Montgomery County has been a pioneer in protecting and preserving its natural environment.(p.97)

WMCCA Comment: Change to, "Montgomery County **strives to be a leader** in protecting and preserving its natural environment." Again, there is no way we can claim to be a pioneer or leader when we are trashing our natural areas by doing so-called "stream restorations" which convert natural (although not always pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as "daylighting" piped streams and concrete culvert removal).

Together, these two land uses and numerous regulatory mechanisms and policy initiatives have put the county in the forefront of environmental protection in the country. (p.97)

WMCCA Comment: Much as we would like, this statement is demonstrably false. Again, there is no way we can claim to be in the forefront of environmental protection in the country when we are trashing our natural areas by doing so-called "stream restorations" which convert natural (although not always pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as "daylighting" piped streams and concrete culvert removal).

Policy 6.2.3: Upgrade the county's water supply and distribution systems to withstand the effects of climate change and continue to meet the county's current and long-term needs for safe and adequate drinking water supply. (p. 101)

WMCCA Comment: Our vision for 2050 is a County in which low density and rural areas in the County (those areas outside the Sewer Envelope) are afforded special protection since these areas contain watersheds which contribute drinking water to millions of people in the DC area from the WSSC Water Filtration Plants and the Little Seneca Lake emergency drinking water reservoir. Astonishingly, the County water supply is mentioned in only one paragraph (*Policy 6.2.3*) on page 101. Our drinking water sources need to be protected by new Drinking Water Special Protection Areas, downzoning, purchase of land outright or via eminent domain, enhanced tax credit for conservation easements, etc.

In the absence of action by EPA, we envision the County working with the state to develop health-based standards for PFAS chemicals (among the so-called "Forever Chemicals") in water and food."

"New testing conducted on seafood in Saint Mary's County, Maryland and drinking water in Montgomery County reveals high levels of PFAS chemicals, according to results released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The chemicals damage the immune system and may make consumers more vulnerable to COVID-19 and/or aggravate COVID afflictions.

PEER also tested drinking water for 36 PFAS at homes in three locations in Montgomery County: two in Bethesda and one in Poolesville. The first Bethesda site had 26.94 ppt of ten PFAS, while the second Bethesda site had 48.35 ppt of 11 PFAS. The Poolesville site had 15.4 ppt of seven different PFAS. The levels detected at the two homes in Bethesda were higher than the levels found by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), which tested drinking water for 18 PFAS at its Potomac and Patuxent Filtration Plants."

[\(https://www.peer.org/more-pfas-found-in-maryland-water-and-seafood/\)](https://www.peer.org/more-pfas-found-in-maryland-water-and-seafood/)

Furthermore, the residents in the rural and low-density areas that have well water need to have their groundwater supplies protected. To protect our drinking water supply, these areas should be accorded policies such as severe limitations on sewer line extensions (including closing loopholes and backdoors in the Water &

Sewer Plan such as the abutting mains policy and the Potomac peripheral sewer service policy) coupled with education for septic system owners on proper care and maintenance of their systems. Our vision for 2050 is for a County that is no longer totally negligent on this issue - to date there are no required septic inspections, no required pump-outs, and no proactive education programs.

The county is forcing our 30,000 septic system owners to go it alone until their systems fail and the County can recommend sewer line extensions as the only option.

Currently, there is little protection for well water quality in Montgomery County and the state. Our vision is that the County ask our legislators to support the Maryland Private Well Safety Program bill (once finalized).

At a high level, the Maryland Private Well Safety program will: (1) require the state to offer well owners financial and technical assistance with well water quality testing and remediation when contamination is found, (2) create an online well water quality database to give the public a better sense of the quality of our groundwater resources, (3) require disclosure of well water quality test results upon property transfer, (4) require landlords to test and disclose well water quality for tenants every three years, (5) require the state to conduct source tracking of common contaminants found in ground water and annual public reporting on the program, building transparency around the state's groundwater protection efforts.

Goal 6.3: Improve health and well-being for all Montgomery County residents and address the health disparities that currently exist.

Policy 6.3.5: Promote active and healthy lifestyles and active transportation including walking and biking for all segments of the population in all parts of the county, by maintaining and improving built and natural environments. Ensure that all county residents in urban and suburban communities have access to a park or open space within walking distance from their homes. Enhance and protect our park system of natural and built elements to promote and increase opportunities for healthy active lifestyles and physical fitness. Foster human-to-human and human-to-nature connections. (p. 102)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Increase access to parks by asking for (possibly in exchange for a tax credit) or purchasing (via eminent domain) public access points (i.e., short connector trails between homes from a road or sidewalk to

parks. There are miles of parkland that is not easily accessible within neighborhoods because there are extremely limited access trails. Examples include both Muddy Branch and Watts Branch SVPs.

WMCCA Comment: Add: One way the County will protect our park system of natural elements is to ban so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as “daylighting” piped streams and concrete culvert removal).

Policy 6.3.7: Achieve nighttime light levels near natural areas that protect wildlife and enhance our ability to enjoy the night sky. (p. 102)

WMCCA Comment: Change to read, “Achieve nighttime light levels near natural areas **and residential areas....**”

Goal 6.5: Preserve, restore, enhance, expand, and sustainably manage natural and other green areas to support human life and a diversity of animal and plant life. Provide appropriate and accessible outdoor recreation opportunities for all. (p. 103)

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Create private–public partnerships to align the profit motives of individuals to the environmental sustainability of the County.

Policy 6.5.1: Minimize imperviousness by limiting and removing unnecessary impervious surfaces while respecting goals, needs, and conditions in different parts of the county. (p. 103)

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Prioritize limiting and removal of unnecessary impervious surfaces to achieve related goals, especially for MS4 permits.

Policy 6.5.2: Protect, enhance, and increase 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. (p. 103)

WMCCA Comment: Add: One way the county will accomplish this is by banning so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform educational outreach and provide incentives to cultivate private land by sustainable methods including organic lawns, native plants, meadow restoration, and zero-emission electric tools.

WMCCA Comment: The need for safe passage for wildlife between protected areas is critical to ensuring the healthy genetic diversity of animal and plant populations to withstand the challenges of habitat fragmentation and climate change. Residents will be encouraged to replace traditional turf lawns with conservation landscaping using native plants to support native pollinators and birds and control stormwater runoff. County codes will be revised so that residents do not get citations from a Housing Code Inspector that they are violating Chapter 58 of the Montgomery County Code by permitting weeds and grass to grow in excess of 12 inches when, in fact, they have replaced their turf grass with an area of conservation landscaping.

Action 6.5.2.a: Conduct a study to identify forests and other natural areas with high value for climate mitigation, resilience, and biological diversity. Establish appropriate forest and non-forest canopy goals and strategies to protect plant and wildlife diversity and human health.

Action 6.5.2.b: Conduct a study of the Special Protection Area (SPA) program law, regulations and implementation and determine what changes are needed to achieve the original SPA program goals and objectives.

WMCCA Comment: Our drinking water sources need to be protected by new Drinking Water Special Protection Areas that may include down-zoning, purchase of land outright or via eminent domain, enhanced tax credit for conservation easements, lower impervious surface caps, greater stormwater management requirements, etc.

Action 6.5.2.c: Study the County Forest Conservation Law and regulations intended to preserve specimen and champion trees. Identify improvements to the law and regulation's effectiveness and efficiency, including guidelines of native trees for inclusion in development and natural area protection projects that are resilient to climate change and support native wildlife, including pollinators.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform outreach and develop incentives to conserve forests on private lands. Increase accountability and penalties for violations.

Action 6.5.2.d: Develop a long-range forest quality management plan to address fragmentation, deer pressure, invasive threats, and the forest's capacity to withstand and mitigate climate impacts.

WMCA Comment: New Action: Create a million-tree initiative for Montgomery County. Plant 1,000,000 native trees on public and private lands by 2030.

Policy 6.5.3: Design and construct transportation and other infrastructure improvements using environmentally sensitive methods.

Policy 6.5.4: Preserve and enhance privately owned forest land through incentives and other approaches such as easements, forest mitigation bank programs, or transfer of development rights.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform educational outreach and develop incentives for partial and total conservation easements on private forest land.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Develop incentives to cultivate native trees that are robust to climate change on private forest land.

Policy 6.5.5: Reduce and manage invasive and other problem species to levels that pose no significant threats to green areas.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform educational outreach and develop incentives to reduce invasive and other problem species to insignificant levels by 2030.

Policy 6.5.6: Protect watersheds and aquifers and improve water quality and stream conditions through enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increased tree canopy, and green stormwater management.

WMCCA Comment: Add: One way the county will protect streams is by banning so-called "stream restorations" which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Create a County–State partnership to improve the integration of wetlands management and enforcement into County operations.

WMCCA Comment: Actively work with WSSC to propose and implement watershed protection plans for those watersheds that feed into WSSC Water Filtration Plants (for example, as an alternative to the previously proposed mid-Potomac River intake extension). This will NOT include so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances.

Action 6.5.6.a: Develop incentives for developers to restore existing streams and daylight piped streams during the redevelopment process.

WMCCA Comment: No, no, no. Reword to say, “Develop incentives for developers to daylight piped and cement culvert-bound streams during the redevelopment process.” Other than that, most so-called “stream restorations” convert sections of natural stream valleys into artificial, engineered stormwater conveyances

END OF WMCCA COMMENTS

From: [Jane Lyons](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Thrive2050](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [councilmember.riemer@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Friedson's Office, Councilmember](#)
Subject: CSG Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Staff Draft
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:48:38 AM
Attachments: [2020.11.18 CSG Testimony on Planning Staff Draft Thrive 2050 - Full Unabridged - Final.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good morning,

Please see attached for the Coalition for Smarter Growth's testimony on the Planning staff draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050, for submission to the official record.

Thank you,
Jane

--

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November 18, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedy Dr, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Item 7 - Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Support)

Testimony for November 19, 2020

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

Thank you, Chair Anderson and Planning Commissioners. My name is Jane Lyons and I'm testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We strongly support the draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050, although we believe it can be made even better. Generally, Thrive creates a vision for a county that is more affordable, walkable, prosperous, resilient, and racially and economically integrated, and recognizes that the best way to achieve that vision is through embracing the principles of inclusive smart growth, urbanism, and equitable transit-oriented development.

We would like to highlight the following five points as our major recommendations for the draft:

1. Rethink single family zoning, not just around transit: We need to allow and encourage a range of housing types in neighborhoods near transit. However, we should not limit zoning reform to these areas. This has the potential to spark opposition to new transit, if single family homeowners know that new transit goes hand in hand with zoning reform. This also has the potential to leave out areas of the county that are predominantly white and high income — the kinds of places that are still exclusive today due to racist policies of the past, which will not be undone without intentional planning otherwise. While our priority for growth should be near high-capacity transit, we must include other measures to diversify housing options in other neighborhoods while also extending transit.

From the beginning, Euclidean zoning laws have perpetuated racial and economic segregation by separating housing of different types and thus different price points. This was further exacerbated by redlining and other racist lending practices, as well as restrictive covenants, but exclusively allowing single-family homes in certain neighborhoods still keeps communities exclusive today. Where you live affects your job prospects, education, health outcomes, access to healthy food, and so much more — it shouldn't. At the same time, we know from examples around our region that neighborhoods with a great diversity of housing types, and with a diversity of people and activity, are today some of the most in demand and successful today.

2. Provide a map to guide future growth: A map similar to the map from the 1993 general plan refinement will help residents and decision makers understand where growth should be directed, identifying the centers and web of corridors discussed in Thrive. We also urge you to bring MARC stations into the discussion about where to focus growth.

3. Reduce redundancies: This is a document that reads as if it were written by committee, and it was. This includes redundancies in arguments that could be improved by reorganization and inconsistencies in writing's voice. Tightening up language will also open up space to include more data visualizations that support the arguments made. Additionally, many goals and policies are almost repeated word-for-word in different chapters. Because so many of the policies and actions are interconnected, we suggest moving these to their own appendix that is not constrained by the plan's chapters.

4. Emphasize racial justice: We commend including the section about the history of redlining and other discriminatory housing practices. However, we believe the plan can better tell the story of segregation, identifying both past mistakes and successes so that we can better identify solutions for the future. Therefore, we also believe the goal of integration could be woven into the plan's vision and goals more.

5. Create implementation metrics now: We should not wait until two years have passed after the completion of Thrive to establish metrics for measuring the plan's success. Our itemized comments below offer recommendations for high-level metrics.

Further, we recommend the following itemized changes:

1. Preface

- a. We urge you to remove the phrase “stable residential neighborhoods.” This language goes against one of the main arguments of the plan — that neighborhoods near transit need to evolve to include a range of housing types. By qualifying certain neighborhoods as “residential,” this implies that urban hubs are not residential areas.
- b. We urge you to change “we need to accommodate the projected new population growth of 200,000 people over the next 30 years” to “we need to welcome at least 200,000 people over the next 30 years.” Montgomery needs to welcome as many new residents as possible near transit and jobs in order to jumpstart the economy and meet climate goals. Montgomery is uniquely positioned to help meet state and regional climate goals given its existing transit infrastructure, job centers, and proximity to DC. Given our values of diversity and inclusion, Montgomery is also well positioned to be a national leader in sustainable growth that is equitable, breaking down traditional barriers to racial and economic integration.

2. Introduction: No comments

3. Planning Context

- a. Page 13, Trend 1. It should be explained why the first identified trend (adding 200,000 residents over the next 25-30 years) is happening, as well as make the argument for why it is good for our economy and climate goals that this trend is happening in Montgomery County.
- b. Page 23, Trend 12. It would be helpful to identify which climate change impacts Montgomery County is projected to be the most at-risk for.
- c. Additional planning contexts and challenges should include: 1) Montgomery County's racial and economic segregation and 2) Montgomery County's greenhouse gas emissions by sector, and how both of these trends have changed over time.

4. A Plan to Thrive

- a. Page 32. "The goal is to create Complete Communities that are diverse and can provide most essential services within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, or drive." We urge you to remove driving from this definition of 15-minute living. The vast majority of county residents already live a 15-minute drive from their daily needs, rendering the Complete Communities a meaningless argument for embracing a more compact, mixed use, sustainable built environment. Moreover, the worldwide concept of the 15-minute neighborhood is specifically focused on walking and biking.
- b. Page 32-34. In general, the concept of Complete Communities needs more work. There is no standard definition and no explanation of how 15-minute living will be different in urban, suburban, and rural communities. There are certain critical amenities that are not mentioned, such as healthy food. We also believe it should be explicitly stated that no community is "complete" unless it is racially and economically diverse. There should be no enclaves of whiteness, wealth, or poverty in Montgomery County.
- c. Page 37. "This additional density will require change in existing single-family neighborhoods through the introduction of 'missing middle' housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, live-work units and small multi-family structures in areas where a moderate degree of intensification is appropriate." In addition to small multi-family structures, this section should also identify mid-rise multi-family structures as desirable along major transit corridors and high-capacity transit centers.
- d. Page 43, Racial Justice and Equity. This section should make the case that racial and economic integration is the best way to promote social mobility, achieve equitable outcomes, and shared prosperity.
- e. Page 45, Affordable. We urge you to change "housing closer to workplaces" to "housing closer to job centers, amenities, and other destinations."
- f. Page 46, Safe. This section should establish the vision that safety is enjoyed more equally by all; whereas currently, safety is experienced unequally by people of color, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with non-conforming gender identities or expressions.

- g. Page 46, Inclusive. “Residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and feel.” While this is true, residents having the loudest voice in how their neighborhoods look and feel is what led to segregation and our housing shortage. Thrive needs to grapple with how to take residents’ concerns into consideration while also ensuring broader public involvement and pursuing the greater public good.
 - h. Page 46, Resilient. “Our actions reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollution.” We suggest this be changed to read: “Our action eliminated greenhouse gas emissions and minimized air and water pollution.”
 - i. Page 46, Competitive. “We embrace the cultural, racial/ethnic, and linguistic diversity of our community as a competitive advantage, particularly in attracting employers recruiting staff who want to live and work in a diverse community.” While diversity is certainly a strength, it should not be the primary edge to our economic competitiveness.
 - j. Page 47. “We will need to make tradeoffs that may not be easy.” We urge you not to use language posing change as requiring tradeoffs. It is possible to make changes that grow the pie and result in a higher quality of life for all.
- 5. Plan Elements:** No comments
- 6. Complete Communities**
- a. Page 53, Policy 1.1.1. “Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make up of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.” This is contrary to the statement made about Complete Communities on page 32, which included driving. We prefer this definition.
 - b. Page 54, Policy 1.1.3. In addition to walking and bicycling, buses should also be considered the highest priority modes of transportation.
 - c. Page 54, Policy 1.1.5. Additional actions are required to ensure the co-location of essential services.
- 7. Connectedness**
- a. We encourage you to include goals, policies, and actions to actively pursue creating more public spaces, especially public meeting and event spaces. Additionally, we urge you to include actions for creating shared identity through signage, wayfinding, and other public communications, including to reflect the diversity of languages spoken in Montgomery County.
- 8. Diverse Economies**
- a. This chapter needs more about protecting and encouraging small businesses, as well as allowing and supporting neighborhood retail.
 - b. Page 65. “...increasing traffic congestion negatively affect economic activity.” We urge you to change this to “...high travel times negatively affect economic activity.” Traffic congestion does not necessarily correspond with high travel times, given destinations are located in relatively close proximity. In fact, traffic congestion in

walkable urban places is actually a reflection of a successful, vibrant urban economy.

- c. Page 66, Diversity. “Montgomery County already has several competitive industries such as biotechnology and the federal government, but it must cultivate new ones to ensure that its portfolio remains competitive.” We disagree with this approach to economic development. The county’s energy is better spent cultivating existing major industries and closely related industries, rather than trying to cultivate new industries. The positive spillover effect of having several large successful industries will result in a more diversified economy.
- d. Page 66-67, Connectedness. This section should make the argument that urbanism and a high-quality transportation system results in improved “connectedness” or agglomeration economies.

9. Safe and Efficient Travel

- a. This chapter still does not mention demand management policies, promoting pilot projects, or the importance of frequent transit — all of which are critical to achieve the outlined vision.
- b. Page 74. “We simply cannot be equitable, address climate change, and support a strong economy by building more roads.” We suggest replacing “roads” with “highways.” Building new roads should be permissible in cases where they improve connectivity of street grids.
- c. Page 76, Action 4.1.4.a. “Provide dedicated transit lanes as part of the replacements of the American Legion Bridge.” In accordance with the County Council’s most recent position, this action should also include engineering the new American Legion Bridge to be able to accommodate heavy rail.

10. Affordability and Attainability

- a. This chapter would generally benefit from stronger “both/and” messaging around market rate and subsidized housing, rather than “either/or.” Subsidized housing is incredibly important in order to make sure Montgomery’s neighborhoods are affordable for households of all incomes, including the lowest income households. Montgomery County cannot just keep doing what it has been doing — considering housing a right means that we need to think more boldly and go beyond existing programs.
- b. Page 83-84, Issues and Challenges. Montgomery needs to start thinking about housing supply and demand in submarkets rather than as Montgomery as a whole. An oversupply of moderately priced housing in Damascus doesn’t solve housing demand in Silver Spring.
- c. Page 84-85, Vision. We urge you to more explicitly include racial and economic integration.
- d. Page 85-86, Build More Housing, of More Types, in More Ways. “In order to build more housing, community-led support for and championing of new housing development is critical.” Community support is important for all issues addressed in Thrive. What should be highlighted is how many community members use the

current planning process to block new housing or zoning changes. How can the county lead a paradigm shift on this?

- e. Page 86, Policy 5.1.1. “Encourage the production of a broad variety of housing types to achieve attainable price ranges.” The actions associated with this policy should not only address breaking down zoning barriers, but also other land use regulations that make middle housing types difficult to build.
- f. Page 86, Action 5.1.1.a. We urge you to include “small apartment buildings,” in addition to “duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes.”
- g. Page 89, Goal 5.3. “Continue to promote the policy of mixed-income housing development through the implementation of county policies, programs, regulations, and other tools and incentives.” This goal’s associated policies and actions are too reliant on the moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) program. Montgomery County needs a strategic, targeted approach to intentionally create mixed-income neighborhoods, of which the MPDU program should only be one part.
- h. Page 90, Goal 5.5. “Minimize displacement of people, especially among low-income residents, people of color, people with disabilities and older adults.” This goal should include rent stabilization and just cause eviction in the associated policies and actions.
- i. Page 93, Goal 5.6. “Expand housing access through elimination of fair housing barriers and enforcement of fair housing laws to protect residents from discrimination.” This goal should include a right to legal counsel for people facing eviction in the associated policies and actions.

11. Healthy and Sustainable Environment

- a. We would like to see more integration with the county’s upcoming Climate Action and Resilience Plan; more about creating capacity in the electric grid and green buildings; strategies to attack food deserts; siting renewable energy with parking lots, and commercial and industrial rooftops preferred; and planting more street trees to build the urban canopy.
- b. Page 101, Goal 6.4. “Provide all residents with safe, convenient access to affordable, healthy food.” Creating mixed-income communities should be considered a key strategy for eliminating food deserts and providing access to healthy foods.

12. Diverse and Adaptable Growth

- a. This chapter, placed toward the end of the plan, doesn’t add much that hasn’t already been said. We believe it would be most beneficial for this section to focus on the policies that support diverse and adaptable growth — including the county’s tax regime, review/permitting processes, and adequate public facilities ordinance — in addition to the Agricultural Reserve. Moreover, most of this chapter is focused on the Agricultural Reserve without making a strong argument about how it should be used in the future. How can the Agriculture Reserve best help us meet our environmental, health, land use, economic, and food production goals, and balance those interests?

13. Culture and Design

- a. Page 117, Policy 8.2.1. “Make design excellence a priority, even when cost saving measures are considered.” We strongly disagree with this prioritization of values. Affordability and sustainability should be prioritized before subjective design considerations.
- b. Page 123, Action 8.5.6.c. “Amend the Zoning Ordinance to make public art a prerequisite of receiving incentive density within the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones.” Density, given its core importance in achieving the county’s vision of future growth, should not be held as a bargaining chip for public art.

14. Implementation

- a. Page 126-128, Tools to Implement the General Plan. The county’s adequate public facilities ordinance, the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, should be listed here.
- b. Page 129-130, Performance Measures. “The Plan recommends developing baseline performance measures as a Montgomery Planning work program item within two years of Plan adoption.” We strongly disagree with this. What gets measured gets done, and Montgomery County cannot wait for two years to get started on Thrive’s implementation. Therefore, we encourage you to create baseline performance measures in the next draft of Thrive. In our testimony on the draft vision, goals, policies, and actions, we recommended emphasizing the following when selecting metrics:
 - i. life outcomes of residents — the Montgomery of 2050 should not be a place where income, race, ethnicity, gender identity, or zip code are determinative of health, wealth, or educational outcomes;
 - ii. vehicle miles traveled and average residential distance from high-frequency transit;
 - iii. greenhouse gas and carbon emissions, by sector; and
 - iv. integration — whether our neighborhoods and communities include residents of different incomes, races, ethnicities, ages, etc.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: [Sanjida Rangwala](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony on Thrive 2050 General Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:54:38 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Montgomery County Planning Board,

Below are my prepared remarks for the meeting tomorrow:

My name is Sanjida and I'm testifying for myself as a resident of the Four Corners area of Silver Spring. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts about the Thrive 2050 general plan. I had the opportunity to read over the draft plan earlier this fall. I am fully in support of the general principles outlined in the document. In particular, I approve of the idea of people-centred planning and building communities that are diverse, equitable, mixed-income, environmentally sustainable and socially and economically robust.

In this testimony, I want to take this opportunity to stress the importance of building neighborhoods with a variety and bounty of housing at all price points.

I bought a tiny little old house just outside the beltway in Silver Spring 6 years ago. If Zillow and Redfin are to be believed, in 6 years, my house has appreciated about 100,000 dollars, or about 30%. When I bought my house, I was a single and in my 30s making about the area median income. If I was that same person now, I would be stretched to be able to afford this house. I'd have to look somewhere further away, somewhere with worse transit and less walkable than my neighborhood.

A lot of people have this story, but mine happened in just 6 years. And there aren't many houses like mine available anymore in the county. Where lots are open for redevelopment, and a duplex or triplex could fit, I see larger and less affordable single family homes. All this is to say what many of you and us listening already know - there is an affordable housing crisis in this county.

I was reading through the Thrive Montgomery Plan and this section jumped out:

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposing regarding single-family zoning? ... Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes to increase the production of different types of housing near transit, including in existing singlefamily zones. This is an important step toward addressing past inequities in housing choice, while also creating more options for affordable and attainable housing. Specifically, Thrive Montgomery 2050

recommends increasing densities along corridors especially those served by transit...

I was very happy to read this. But I want to encourage further boldness. We should not merely be recommending duplexes and triplexes - that is, more affordable so-called missing middle housing - close to existing transit. Instead, the general plan needs to be clear that in the future, all communities in Montgomery County are going to be complete communities. I want to see everyone living in a neighborhood where they can get to all their household needs, including mass transit, by foot or bike safely within 15 min.

So I would suggest that right now in 2020, where we have existing housing, but not transit or shopping, we need to be making a plan to build transit and encouraging walkable retail. And where we have existing shopping, workplaces, and transit, we need to be building more housing. Where we are allowing housing to be built at all on a lot or parcel, it should be legal to build a duplex or fourplex by right. This is so as to ensure that we are building sustainable, complete communities everywhere we would allow construction to occur in the county.

Don't get me wrong, we absolutely should not be prohibiting the building of single family home. I like living in a single family home. A developer should be allowed to build one. But there is nowhere in the county where we should say that only single family homes are permitted to be built. That way lies the path to segregation, inequities, and housing shortages.

In short, in order to grow toward a sustainable, equitable, affordable future, we must make room for people of all incomes and means to live in existing communities - all our existing communities. When revising the general plan, please make sure that you are mapping out a future where housing is a right, and is legal everywhere.

Thank you,

Sanjida Rangwala
711 Dryden Street
Silver Spring, 20901

From: [Quentin Remein](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#)
Subject: Subject: Comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing November 19, 2020 Item #7
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:58:12 AM
Attachments: [Comments to Planning board on 20201119.docx](#)

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Chair Casey Anderson
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Please consider the following comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing November 19, 2020 Item #7

Thank you,
Quentin Remein, President, Cloverly Civic Association.
201 Bryants Nursery Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20905 Phone 301 421-1152

Chair Casey Anderson
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

**Subject: Comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing
November 19, 2020 Item #7**

The Cloverly Civic Association recommends that the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Master Plan is not ready and more review is required before the document goes forward. At least a year or more of review and discussions are required. Much of this delay is due to Covid. While the Planning Board has moved ahead, residents are coping with major disruptions to their lives and do not have the time to devote to participate fully in the review and comment on this new master plan. This master plan is proposing major changes that will have great impacts on our lives, and in the present form, the Plan is not acceptable to our membership. In the October meeting of the Planning Board, Board members had major changes that needed to be made to the document. They voted to continue the public hearing with the current version and make these changes in January 2021. Don't the resident of Montgomery County deserve the opportunity to review these changes before the Plan moves on to the County Council?

The Cloverly Civic Association members have observed the Planning Board meeting on Thrive Montgomery 2050, read the plan, and held two meetings on the plan. Some of the comments from our members that were agreed to are included in the attached summary. Thank you for the staff and board's work on the plan and we look forward to participating in the development of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Master Plan.

Specific comments are attached.

Sincerely,
Quentin Remein, President, Cloverly Civic Association.
201 Bryants Nursery Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20905
Phone 301 421-1152
Email: cloverly@verizon.net

Cloverly Civic Comments on Thrive Montgomery Master Plan

November 16, 2020

Comments are listed based on the PowerPoint used on October 1 to brief the Planning Board. The original document is not numbered. Listing shows page and topic, major points. *Cloverly Civic Association comments are in italics.*

1. Thrive Montgomery 2050 title page

The name of the plan is confusing – people do not understand that this is a new Master Plan

2. Today's presentation
3. What is a General Plan?

The last major revision to the master plan was in 1964 and there were eight public hearings. Most residents have not experienced a master plan revision in their lifetime and do not even understand the significance of a General Master Plan.

4. Previous General Plan policies shifted priority from East County corridors - focus on I-270

Unfortunately, the County has been overtaken by decisions that have resulted in urban sprawl.

5. Montgomery County's Plan for Growth: Wedges and Corridors

The general master plan and Cloverly Master Plan have served the residents well.

6. Policy Outcomes of Previous General Plans
7. The geography of race and income are aligned

This chart is not understood since it just shows median income, but no racial data.

8. Racial/ethnic and income disparities are reflected in the educational system
9. Our current development pattern needs to evolve

Can a development plan create desirable places or make us economically resilient?

Probably not!

10. We need to accommodate 200,000+ people in a mature, built-out county

Why should we be growing the County at all? Build it better! Our schools need improvement, the public transportation system needs improvement, there are a lot of vacant buildings in the county, improvement of aging utility systems, etc. Much of the unconstrained area is land that is not buildable. Have you considered a Net Zero Growth Option?

11. Changes in current land-use patterns are needed to allow for infill and redevelopment

Why is infill required? Why expand urban sprawl?

12. The percentage of householders living alone have increased from 7% in 1960 to 25% in

2018

13. New single-family homes are getting larger

14. ...while new rental units are smaller

15. So What Should We Do About it?

16. Redevelopment is an opportunity & the currency to improve infrastructure & quality

17. We need redevelopment to transform... this into this

18. We need redevelopment to transform ...this into this

19. Compact development is more sustainable than sprawl

The development changes have already been done under the existing Master Plan.

20. Specific Thrive Montgomery ideas

Thrive Montgomery 2050 = more urban, more diverse, and more interconnected.

Growing while achieving three major outcomes—economies health, equity, and environmental resilience—requires refining our planning framework, not abandoning it.

Principles of smart urbanism—a compact form, a mix and diversity of uses, walkability, active and healthy lifestyles, and a focus on good design—are the future.

Why is more urban and growth needed? Why can't this be done under the current plan?

21. Corridors—the best option for infill & redevelopment

Why congest corridors with urban growth?

22. Plan for people instead of cars

Restricting the use of cars only makes life more difficult. People need more routes to work than can be efficiently provided by public transportation. Tradesmen need to use vehicles to

get to job sites and parking to do their jobs. Families need cars to transport children to schools and after school sports and other activities. Planning for people involves planning for cars needed by people for shopping, visiting friends and loved ones, and attending churches and other activities.

23. Produce more housing and different kinds of housing

The current master plan provides all these types of housing

24. Complete Communities will provide services & amenities close to home

Complete communities are a choice people can make under the existing master plan. If more complete communities are required, the marketplace can provide for them by the redevelopment of communities. People make choices to residential areas based on their own choices. Most retail/services are now available for delivery, so people do not even have to live near them. They can choose the type of exercise and play that they choose rather than being forced to accept walking and bike riding.

25. Complete Communities provide gathering places, parks, and needed facilities closer to home

Again people can make their own choices for places for social gathering rather than being restrained by what is in their neighborhood.

26. Diversity is our strength

First-generation immigrant residents often seek out and feel more secure and comfortable in communities of their ethnic background. Not everyone sees diversity as their strength.

27. Regional Solutions and strategies

28. Implementation

29. Covid-19 and requests to delay the Plan

A new revamped Master Plan is not required if we accept Net Zero Growth and make incremental changes to the plan to offer more possibilities to people without requiring everyone to give up their cars and housing choices. Covid has made it clear that many people can work at home reducing rush hours, and that urban lifestyles make control of pandemics more difficult.

30. Next steps

Take a year to re-evaluate the changes needed in the current master plan. Enjoy our transportation choices, communities, and lifestyle choices, and fight Covid.

From: [Dedun Ingram](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery comment
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 12:15:15 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

November 17, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair,
and Members of the County Planning Board
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

I concur with the planning staff that it is time to update the County's general plan and appreciate all of the work the planning staff has put into Thrive Montgomery 2050 and their efforts to involve county residents. I would like to submit the following general comments on the proposed new general Plan.

1. The Planning Board placed the public at a disadvantage when it adopted the hearing draft at the October 1 Planning board meeting after going through a long laundry list of things that needed to be added to the draft, removed from the draft, reorganized within the draft. It would have been preferable to postpone the public hearing and give the planning staff the two months they said they would need to revise the draft so that residents could comment on a draft that more closely resembles the draft likely to be sent forward to the County Council. As planning staff have said frequently, this plan will be an important document going forward and will significantly impact how the county grows and develops.

I request that the period for public comment be left open during the time period when the Planning board is holding its work sessions on Thrive Montgomery. Doing so will partially address the disadvantage residents have been placed at because we have reviewed a "preliminary" draft.

2. Currently Thrive Montgomery does not adequately address the long-term impacts of COVID-19. I have heard the argument that this is not a flaw because the basic issues covered by the draft are not changed by COVID-19. However, But I disagree. COVID-19 will have significant impacts on our lifestyle and the economy. While we cannot know the full impacts at this time, the draft plan should address these changes more directly. The County's budget is likely to be constrained for some years to come and this needs to be factored into the long-term expectations for what can be

accomplished and the implementation timeline.

3. It is unclear how successful the key component of the draft plan, complete communities, have been when implemented elsewhere and it is especially unclear whether they are suitable for application to an entire county. They appear to be better suited for application to small areas.

The draft plan does not adequately develop the concept of complete communities which makes it difficult for residents to assess whether or not this is a good goal for the plan. Urban, suburban, and rural complete communities are referred to but never really defined. What are the expectations for what constitutes each of these types of complete communities? Where in the county are these types expected to be located? How does the Agricultural Reserve fit into this complete community scheme? The settlement patterns of Montgomery County and its vast size make the establishment of complete communities throughout the County seem impractical and unrealistic. Further, the seeming focus in the draft plan on development of complete communities within one-half mile of metro stations, Purple Line stations, and planned BRT routes seems inequitable. Many of these areas already have more amenities than other neighborhoods in the county. It would seem more equitable and desirable to initially focus on improving our underserved communities by adding public facilities, services, infrastructure, and transit in those areas so that we raise the standard of living and quality of life of the residents of those neighborhoods.

The concept of 15-minute living also is not adequately defined and developed. We are offered 15-minute living by walking, cycling, driving, and transit. This is all very vague and confusing. Many of the goals specifically talk about a 15-minute walk for all county residents which clearly is impractical. As for complete communities, the concept of 15-minute living does not appear to be a realistic one for a county as large and as sparsely settled as Montgomery County.

4. From an economic standpoint, establishment of complete communities and 15-minute living in the next 30 years seems not just visionary, but fantastical. Currently, the County does not have sufficient funds to update its schools, libraries, recreation centers, much less build new ones. Nor does the County have sufficient funds to build the sidewalks and bike lanes currently needed (e.g., sidewalks to get passengers to Purple Line stations). There also are no funds to significantly expand our transit system. The County has finally managed to open the BRT route on Rt. 29, but that took years and there is no money to implement other BRT routes that have been on the list for years, to expand MARC service, etc. We cannot expect Montgomery County to thrive under this new general plan if it does not have a sound economic footing.

5. A goal of Thrive Montgomery is to stop planning for cars and even to make it difficult for people to get around using a car. This is not a good goal for this Plan. A reasonable and more realistic goal would be to plan more for pedestrians and cyclists and to make it easier for people to move around without using their cars. But the county is too large and too connected with the greater metropolitan area, people are moving within and through the county in so many directions, making trips for so many diverse reasons, that making it hard for them to do so will be detrimental to our residents, the county's economy, and the region as a whole.

6. The draft plan as currently organized is very difficult to use. It would be far more useful if the goals, policies, and actions related to a given topic were contained in a single chapter rather than scattered throughout multiple chapters. A number of the goals, policies, and actions seem too detailed for a general plan and could also “date” the plan. For example, there are a number of very specific items related to communications technology. Those items should be written in more general terms because we have no idea what those technologies will be in 30 years. The transit items also are written primarily in terms of BRT with dedicated lanes. Again, this is too specific.

Thank you for your consideration,

Deborah Ingram

4312 Willow Lane
Chevy Chase, MD

From: [Don Slater](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Thrive2050](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on Draft General Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 12:35:51 PM
Attachments: [Draft Thrive Testimony Don Slater.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

See attached.

Don Slater

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Don Slater Silver Spring, MD USA
slater402@gmail.com +1.301.641.2925 (m)

402 Mansfield Rd
Silver Spring MD 20910
13 November 2020

Chairman Anderson and members of the Commission:

Hello. My name is Don Slater. I reside at 402 Mansfield Road in the Park Hills neighborhood of Silver Spring. My wife, Tina, and I have lived in Silver Spring for 37 years and we have seen a lot of changes. I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the new plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050. It is an ambitious plan in many ways, but I have heard many express the notion that it does not go far enough. However, it is far from finished at this point. I will concentrate on a few aspects of the plan rather than trying to address all of it.

1. Complete Communities

- a. Montgomery County is a large, geographically diverse area. We have well defined urban spaces, several large suburban swathes, conventional small towns, and a significant agricultural expanse. 15-minute living will not look the same in Aspen Hill as it does in Chevy Chase. The county can change the nature of the suburbs and get people out of their cars by creating town centers on transit lines. Small towns have always had a level of self-sufficiency that supports 15-minute living. The plan should acknowledge the differences in the existing communities and work within their boundaries.
- b. The county population must reduce its dependency on automobiles. The county should incentivize the use of mass transit (including busses) and incentivize the use of electric vehicles (EVs) over fossil fuel ones.
- c. At the turn of the 20th century, much of the country was farmland and rural commerce centered on the small towns within that landscape. All of those little towns were connected to each other, and often to a larger city, by some kind of rail system. Most of those interurban rail lines are gone, but good bus service can take their place and provide that same level of connectivity without having to resort to a car with one person in it.

2. Safe and Efficient Travel

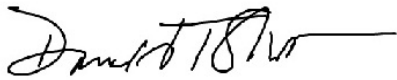
- a. In order to provide for this goal, we must work very hard to reduce our addiction to the fossil fuel automobile. Reduced car traffic is one of the keys to success for Vision Zero. Biking and walking are also risky in high traffic areas. For many in our lower income populations, a car is not an option and good bus service is critical. To accomplish this objective, we should build the entire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network as quickly as possible. It is likely that the new administration will be more amenable to providing funding for this.
- b. We have a hidden transportation gem running through the county in the form of the MARC Brunswick Line. The county should work with MTA and USDOT to provide reverse service, weekend service, and midday service on this line. Like all mass transit, dependable and frequent service quickly creates ridership.

3. Affordability and Attainability

- a. Montgomery County has always been a place where people want to live. We have nice neighborhoods, great parklands, and among the best public schools in the country. Unfortunately, we do not have enough housing, particularly affordable housing, for all the folks who want to live among these amenities. If we continue to have a housing shortage, those who can least afford to live here will be disproportionately impacted and be forced to live elsewhere, typically further away from jobs and services, adding to the traffic and absorbing the additional commuting costs. As long as we have a homeless population, we are not thriving. The county should be actively searching for properties that can be used as housing for those coming out of homelessness. We need to look at how we can turn surface parking lots and former office space into new forms of residential / retail offerings. The MPDU requirement should be increased. This should be happening across all of our currently developed areas, particularly near transit hubs.
- b. Now that we have talked about getting people into housing, we have to address keeping them in housing and protecting them from rent increases and evictions. The county should adopt rent indexing as a means of stabilizing rental costs. No one should have to face an eviction without legal representation. The county should seriously consider programs to provide financial assistance and counseling to first time home buyers.

Obviously, this is only addressing a small portion of the plan, but it is the portion I am most interested in and most familiar with. Others in the county will speak to and write about the rest of it. Thank you for your time and your service to the county.

Best regards,



Don Slater

402 Mansfield Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-641-2925 (m)
Slater402@gmail.com

From: [Hannah Sholder](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: written testimony - affordable housing
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 2:02:53 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Hello!

I think I just missed the deadline (by two hours) for submission of testimony for the Planning Board review of the draft Thrive 2050 plan, but hoping my comment can still be considered:

For the purposes of creating and preserving affordable housing I think our County should consider ways to **limit speculation on land value**. While the MPDU program is a great step in this direction, preserving properties in perpetuity through **Community Land Trusts** would be another strategy to consider.

Why I find the CLT strategy particularly compelling is that it enables limited-equity in the sale of residential and commercial properties (based on investments) but prevents inflation beyond this (which is largely related to proximity to public assets). This would prevent the flipping of properties as we have seen recently, for example, in frequent numbers in the East Silver Spring neighborhood (which has proximity to a permanently preserved urban farm and downtown silver spring shops).

Thank you for your consideration!
Best,
Hannah

From: [Buckley, Darcy B.](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Written Testimony: Thrive - Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 2:34:42 PM
Attachments: [Thrive 2050 - RRAC Comments Letter - Revised Final copy.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Please see the attached testimony on the Thrive 2050 plan from the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee. Thank you.

Darcy Buckley, AICP
Transportation Planner, Director's Office
Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
Montgomery County, MD
Darcy.Buckley@montgomerycountymd.gov



For COVID-19 Information and resources, visit:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COVID19

November 18, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
Montgomery Planning, M-NCPPC
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050 – Public Hearing Draft – Final 10-5

Dear Board Chair Anderson and Board Members Cichy, Fani-Gonzalez, Patterson, and Verma:

Our Committee oversees the Rustic Roads Program and the 99 roads currently protected under the Program. Under County Code, we advise you as well as the County Executive and the County Council on County policies and programs that may affect the Rustic Roads Program. In accordance with this responsibility we have reviewed the above-referenced draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 (the Draft) and offer the following observations and suggestions for your consideration.

The Committee noted the scope of the Draft and the aspirations for the future of Montgomery County expressed therein. The Committee has taken the Draft section titled “The Plan Vision” (pages 46-48) as a starting point since it presents a compact statement of the where the county will be in 2050 if the aspirations contained in the Draft’s many elements are achieved.

In this vision, corridors are one of two encompassing components. Two types of corridors are described: (1) Multimodal transportation and services; and (2) green parks, stream valleys, and trails. While it is understandable that the focus of the Draft is on corridors linking the developed areas of the County, the committee believes that rustic roads deserve mention in the Draft as they provide access to and links between the rural areas of the County, most notably the Agricultural Reserve.

Rustic roads are valuable, irreplaceable assets to the county, and especially to the Agricultural Reserve. The following are among the many ways in which rustic roads will contribute to the realization of the Draft’s aspirations over the next thirty years.

- Rustic roads allow us to experience our history and develop an appreciation of shared culture. Our earliest roads followed animal migration routes and Native American trails. They are narrow, low volume roads in our rural areas and the Agricultural Reserve that reflect our past and how people moved and carried goods across time—to and from the Port of Baltimore, mills along our streams, warehouses along the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, stations along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and our county farms. These roads were not planned, but rather they evolved over time in response to area needs.
- These roads have economic impacts generated by visitors and tourists who enjoy them, travel them to visit our County’s many historical, natural and recreational rural attractions, and follow them to agritourism locations such as pick-your-own farms, produce farms with Community Supported Agriculture, horse boarding farms and other equestrian operations, and wineries and

breweries. Nine rustic roads lead to the C&O Canal and lock houses. In 2018, 4.4 million visitors spent an estimated \$84.5 million in the local gateway regions while visiting that park.

- The attraction of the Agriculture Reserve with its lovely historic rustic roads to employers and businesses cannot be overstated. Rustic roads provide a way for employees to unwind on weekends and after work. The driving experience on a rustic road, with the tree canopy and natural hedgerows, broad views of farms and fields, and access to beneficial activities are a salve for one's physical as well as mental health. Rustic roads help bring a feeling of connectedness by having a pleasant, safe "go to" place for everyone.
- Rustic roads epitomize many of the goals of Thrive 2050. Many have tree canopies and roadside forests and hedgerows that protect plant and wildlife diversity. The roadside drainage through grasses and vegetation prevents the erosion caused by ditches and swales, protecting our streams from harmful runoff. Most do not have streetlights, thus limiting harmful nighttime light pollution. The narrow rustic roads in the Ag Reserve maintain slower (safer) traffic speeds and promote sharing of the road with farm equipment, bicyclists, and equestrians.

Given the many ways in which rustic roads will contribute to the realization of the Draft over the next thirty years, the Committee recommends incorporating the following additions and modifications (shown in **bold**) into the Draft.

Theme 4: Safe and Efficient Travel, Goal 4.7, Page 80. Add the following Policy 4.7.3 and Action 4.7.3.a.

Policy 4.7.3: Ensure that the system of designated rustic roads is protected and maintained to preserve important historic, cultural, and natural features enabling a strong agritourism benefit to both farms and residents.

Action 4.7.3.a: Montgomery County Planning Department in coordination with MCDOT, the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee, and producers and advocates for the Agricultural Reserve, review and recommend safety measures, such as reduced speed limits, for rustic roads and all roadways in the Agricultural Reserve with the goal of increasing safe travel for bicyclists and pedestrians, while continuing to protect rustic roads.

Theme 7: Diverse and Adaptable Growth, Goal 7.4, Policy 7.4.3, Page 113. Add the following Action 7.4.3.1.

Action 7.4.3.1: Promote the County's rustic roads as the primary means for the public to access the Agricultural Reserve and thereby not only achieve the desired awareness of its agricultural, environmental, and economic benefits through direct experience, but also come to appreciate the many opportunities for personal benefits from access to health-enhancing nature, outside recreation, and artistic experiences.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document. If you have any questions, you may reach our Committee through our staff coordinator, Darcy Buckley, at Darcy.Buckley@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Tworowski, Chair
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Committee Members: Laura Van Etten, Dan Seamans, Robert Wilbur, Kamran Sadeghi, Lonnie Luther, Anne Davies, Leslie Saville (M-NCPPC)



From: [Coello, Catherine](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: FW: Thrive Testimony
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 3:17:42 PM
Attachments: [Montgomery Planning Board Testimony - November 19, 2020 Hearing - Thrive Montgomery 2050.pdf](#)
[image008.png](#)
[image009.png](#)
[image010.png](#)
[image011.png](#)
[image012.png](#)
[image013.png](#)

From: Afzal, Khalid <khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 3:07 PM
To: chair@mncppc-mc.org; Coello, Catherine <catherine.coello@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: FW: Thrive Testimony



Khalid Afzal

Special Projects Manager-General Plan Update
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902
khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org
301-495-4650



Let's Plan Our Future. Together.  **THRIVE**
THRIVEMONTGOMERY.COM MONTGOMERY 2050



WE'VE MOVED!

THE NEW PARK AND PLANNING HEADQUARTERS IS NOW LOCATED AT
2425 REEDIE DRIVE, WHEATON, MD 20902

From: Peter Gray <peter@waba.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 1:53 PM
To: Afzal, Khalid <khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org>; Anderson, Casey <Casey.Anderson@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: Thrive Testimony

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Hope this is not too late for tomorrow night's hearing.



Montgomery Planning Board Testimony - November 19, 2020 Hearing - Thrive
Montgomery 2050

My name is Peter Gray and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the 1500+ WABA members who live in Montgomery County, plus the additional thousands of other County residents who have joined in actions in support of better bicycling in the region.

As an advocate for cyclists, but also for pedestrians and transit users, I applaud the Plan's highlighting the trend/challenge number 9 (page 22), that the County needs to stop planning for cars and should emphasize transit, walking and biking. As we emerge from the COVID crisis, it is even more clear that we will not thrive, transportation-wise, if we do not emphasize non-auto alternatives to get around the County. This idea is further reinforced by trend numbers 11 relating to health and 12 relating to climate change; we need to take more trips, especially shorter ones, by biking, walking and taking transit. In addition, the plan's emphasis on equity, means we should be planning and implementing ideas that allow County residents who cannot afford to use cars, to have reasonable and safe alternatives to the automobile. Moreover, WABA wholeheartedly endorses the Plan's commitment to a compact form of development which will facilitate the use of non-auto modes of transportation by placing more jobs and commercial activities in easier reach of County residents.

As a resident of the Forest Estates neighborhood in Silver Spring, I am very fortunate to be a 10 minute walk from a metro station. But my neighbors and I still lack truly walkable commercial amenities, such as groceries and restaurants which development adjacent to the Forest Glen metro might bring. We also suffer from a lack of safe, walkable and bikeable connections from our neighborhood to the Silver Spring and Wheaton CBDs which are both only a few miles away. The neighborhood's children should also have a safe route to get to the public schools that they attend. These problems could be resolved by a fulsome implementation of Goal 4, including a full buildout of the County Bike Master Plan and BRT implemented along Georgia Avenue.

Most residents of the County suffer even more from a lack of walkable, bikeable and transit connections to commerce and jobs to a much larger degree than me and my

neighbors. The concepts in the Plan you are considering can solve those problems once the plan is approved and funding is provided to implement the solutions the Plan proposes. (See Goal 1.1 and 1.2 pages 54-55).

In summary, WABA calls for the approval of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan by the Planning Board and the County Council and then a robust set of legislative and budget initiatives that ensure the Plan is fully realized.

Cary Lamari

Chairman Case Anderson and

Members of the planning board

2425 Reddie Drive

Wheaton Md. 20902

Thrive Montgomery Testimony on Staff Draft:

I would respectfully request the Planning Board postpone the Staff Draft hearing for the new Thrive Montgomery (General Plan) until after our residents have had an opportunity to regain some semblance of normalcy. I also request the Planning staff conduct a County Wide forum with all stakeholders brought to the discussion so that the many vast details on how this plan will affect our residents should be considered. The Staff since the beginning of this planning exercise has used to approach of reaching out to certain residents of which I was one, however there has not been a County wide forum such as what was done during the Potter Administration where we refined the wedges and corridors plan. Our County residents have endured almost 8 months of some level of quarantine, they have been involved with one of the most contentious elections for the Presidency in our history. They have had to respond to closing of businesses, foreclosures, many cannot pay rent, many work week to week just to stay ahead of bills and The Planning Board expects the vast community of Montgomery County to be able to digest and comprehensively respond to a Proposed General Plan which in my opinion is a major departure from what people in our County have come to expect in the current Wedges and Corridors Plan.

Reading the new Thrive Montgomery and its new Urbanist vision throughout our County expects people who live and chose to live in suburbia and our Semi Rural areas to accept this vision. While I agree we must make every attempt to encourage new growth and accommodate new residents to our County, I believe Thrive Montgomery in its new urbanist approach takes things way too far. I also believe this new plan is unrealistic and does not completely respect the new dynamics which the pandemic has created.

Telecommuting is here to stay. Our County economy must come to terms with an entirely new paradigm for business and for our Urban Office and Commercial Areas. We will no longer or at least not for the foreseeable future have viable economic patronage for many of the retail and restaurants within our urban areas. We cannot simply rely on anchor businesses like Discovery to keep Silver Spring viable. After talking with many in the business community I have learned of their frustration of not having a seat at the table on many of the growth policy and General plan discussions. I respectfully believe the public is not prepared to focus and respond to such a dynamic document and hearings should be postponed so more residents may participate in this Discussion.

One example of the failings in this plan is the lack of respect to the lack of equity between the up County, Mid County and the Down County. Traditionally in the Wedges and Corridors Plan it put emphasis in the urban core, the satellite cities and chose to protect suburbia and our semi-rural and rural areas. This Plan focuses on specific transit corridors most within the down county area and promotes the lion's portion of investment in perpetuity or at least 30 years into these areas. This Plan expects that Transit is and will be the main form of transportation and this plan goes so far to claim we

must stop planning for the Automobile. While these goals may be notable, I suggest they are unrealistic in a 500 square mile County. While relying on Transit as our ultimate mode of transportation we must acknowledge that according to planning data the best years of transit only 5.6% of commuters over the age of 16 rely on buses. Our County General Plan should be thinking about expanding its Revenue and housing sources, it should be encouraging as a main emphasis the completion to the Satellite Cities approach in the Wedges and Corridors Plan. It should bolster investment in Germantown, Clarksburg as new major employment resources. The Plan should highly emphasize the County and State commitment to promote infrastructure and services into these areas so as to balance our economic reliance on our Down County Area all the while building more affordable housing within these communities. Today and for the last couple of decades our County has invested much in re-inventing Silver Spring and other down county areas because as the Down County goes so does Montgomery. These efforts however have put a strain on the rest of our County. By supporting the up county in an effort to make it a major economic engine for the County and the State we balance our needs for economic growth and with that balance we also create balance for some of the transportation needs of our County by reducing commute time and creating jobs closer in for many residents. To comprehensively evaluate this new Thrive Montgomery Plan would take writing a book and I am not prepared to do this. As I have articulated many dynamics such as those I have expressed and many more should be explored by all stakeholders in our County. This Plan at this moment in time should not go forward without a major public forum at a time and place where the community has the opportunity to participate and discuss concerns and ideas.

Respectfully,

Cary Lamari.

15411 Baileys Lane

Silver Spring, Md. 20906

My name is Alison Gillespie. I serve on the board of the MCCPTA, and I'm president of the Forest Estates Community Association, but tonight I am making comments as an individual.

I'm pleased to see that the Thrive 2050 plan addresses three really big, urgent needs: racism, climate change and economic polarization. We should not deny it any longer: much of this county is urban and needs to be managed accordingly. I am heartened that this document clearly addresses the need to see our urbanization as something that can be made positive if it is addressed honestly and thoughtfully.

I support the need to undo so many of the past's exclusionary zoning policies, many of which divided our community along racial lines. Although we like to think of Montgomery County as a very progressive place, there are many ways we codified racism through housing policies during the twentieth century. I support changing that through better housing policy and zoning changes that will be inclusive of multifamily options. Really anything that goes beyond single family homes will be a great benefit to all who live here. We need more places for people to live.

We can't just create boxes for people to live in, we have to create livable communities, and this plan embraces that idea. I am really excited about the idea of changing our huge, dangerous arterials full of multilane cars into green, walkable boulevards.

I want us to redouble our efforts to make this a fully transit-oriented community, and I see that supported in the pages of the Thrive report, too.

And as a parks advocate, I'm grateful to know that open space and green space will be a big part of the entire scheme. High quality parks are important for people to enjoy and also for the ecosystem services they provide through things like increased air and water quality and habitat for a wildlife.

I also want to underscore my confidence in MNCPPC. Over the last few years, I advocated for amendments and additions to three different sector plans – the Veirs Mill Corridor plan, the Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen sector plan and now the Silver Spring downtown plan. I also participated in many, many hours of meetings over the recent Subdivision Staging Policy and housing moratorium. And as a transportation advocate, I've sat in countless hours of meetings over road-related issues. I've found that this is a skilled team of highly engaged professionals who work hard and prioritize community engagement and stakeholder consideration. I have seen the enormous amount of effort they've put into talking to people in all parts of the county about this plan. The pandemic has not stopped or even slowed this process as far as I can ascertain. In fact, I'd argue that due to an increased focus on technology, a more diverse group has been involved recently than used to be involved when we all had to drive across the county to attend meetings at specific times in specific locations.

This is a team that has earned my trust and my respect as a citizen.

With that in mind, I'd like to offer a cautionary note: we cannot delay the work that this document details.

What we need, I believe, is an overarching philosophy that can engender action and be written in language plain enough to be accessible to average citizens of all walks of life.

If COVID has taught us anything, it is the need to remain flexible and nimble. I would urge you to not chain yourself to a long list of prescriptions. Trust the sector plan process, and the hearings that follow, to do what they are designed to do. I certainly do at this point. Let the planners that come after you in the ensuing decades be inspired by concepts and ideals. Don't shackle them to tightly prescribed parameters.

As much as possible, we should set up the future staff members of MNCPPC and future residents of Montgomery County for success by envisioning something better and allowing them the room to get there, even if another global crisis interrupts.

What I would hate to see is any kind of delay. We need to get started now. There is no sense in waiting until some perfect moment arrives and an encyclopedia-like document has been completed.

My kids, both of whom are on the precipice of adulthood, are counting on us, and we owe it to them and the next generations, too, to get to work on a better future RIGHT NOW.

Let's go, let's dig in.

Let's begin to THRIVE right now.

Tetsimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan

Benjamin Ross
4710 Bethesda Ave., Apt. 819, Bethesda 20814

The draft plan, especially in its specifics, points us in the right direction. But it does not clearly explain the need for that direction.

A reader of the first 50 pages of the report could easily take away the message that this plan is a course correction in an already successful plan, intended only to update in the light of new developments. That is not so.

It's true that the county's land use, as it has evolved over the last half century, has worked out much better than most of our suburban peers. But our successes are due to departures from the 1964 Wedges and Corridors Plan as much as they are due to following it. And there are failures, significant failures, that we need to acknowledge if we are to correct them.

The great success of the 1964 plan is the wedge - the Agricultural Reserve. But the corridors have succeeded by growing very differently from how that plan foresaw them. The 1964 plan envisioned high-density urbanized centers built on greenfields outside the Beltway. Downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring were to remain low-density commercial districts serving the surrounding neighborhoods.

Despite verbal nods to transit, the plan foresaw a county designed around automobile travel. The corridor cities are pictured like denser versions of Tysons Corner, built with wide streets around expressways. The plan needs to explicitly acknowledge the failures that we inherit from that orientation. One of them is office parks along I-270 that are full of empty space.

Another is the townhouses and garden apartments built in seas of parking lots. Now aging into affordability, they are poorly adapted to house working-class families. It's difficult and dangerous to walk to the bus stop or to stores. Children don't have space to play near home. Residents are isolated from surrounding neighborhoods. This is one of the county's biggest land use failures, and the plan does not address it at all.

The promise of the 1964 plan was: Your neighborhood will never change. That concept must be explicitly rejected. We need to change and evolve toward a future of greater variety, greater interconnectedness, and greater sustainability. We need bridges not buffers, change in place of stasis, walkability rather than high-speed traffic, mixing of people and activities instead of single-use zones.

Specific Comments

Page 39 - The “possible future” should eliminate the cloverleaf.

Page 74 - In second paragraph, replace “Locations with good access... are generally too expensive...” with “The scarcity of housing in locations with good non-automobile access... makes them generally too expensive...”

Policy 1.1.2 - The necessary legalization of missing-middle neighborhood housing is a change of general policy. It should not and as a practical matter cannot be accomplished through individual master plans and rezonings. It requires a zoning text amendment that changes the allowable housing in existing residential zones based on proximity to transit.

Policy 1.2.3 - Add: Preserve the integrity of historic preservation by preventing its use as a backdoor means of downzoning.

Policy 2.2.2 - Actions should be more concrete and specific. Add: “Outreach to groups that are underrepresented in traditional planning meetings by collecting opinions at gathering points such as bus stops.”

Action 3.2.2b - Add White Flint.

Action 3.4.1a - Minimize impacts rather than eliminate. Elimination is not feasible and setting it as a goal will impede location of needed industrial sites.

Action 4.1.1b - Delete “consider whether to”.

Action 4.1.2b - Delete “Develop a strategy to”.

Policy 4.1.8 - Delete microtransit. Microtransit is geometrically unworkable and consistently fails in practice.

Action 4.3.2a - Rather than market rates, which are depressed by parking subsidies embedded in past policies, parking charges should be at rates sufficient to support the cost of construction and operation.

Goal 4.4 - Add new policy 4.4.5: “Eliminate all slip lanes, diverging diamonds, and cloverleafs.”

Policy 4.4.3 - The priority for pedestrian safety should be the places with high fatality rates (mostly high-speed arterials), not places with high crash rates (mostly downtowns with heavy foot traffic, slow vehicle speeds, and less serious injuries).

Action 4.8.2a - Delete. This already exists in the Washington Suburban Transit Commission. Creation of a regional road-building authority would be directly contrary to the plan’s aim of shifting transportation priorities.

November 19, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
Casey Anderson, Board Chair
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Subject: Thrive 2050

Montgomery County Planning Board,

My name is John Paukstis and I am the President and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland. We are a nonprofit provider of affordable housing, working to provide equitable access to homeownership in Montgomery County since 1982.

Habitat for Humanity is extremely pleased with the Thrive 2050 draft. We applaud planning staff for lifting up housing as a right for all people, for highlighting the importance of housing in addressing racial inequities, and supporting increased density along transit corridors.

Segregated neighborhoods have led to incalculable inequities in wealth, policing, education, health, and access to high quality transit, green space, and other important amenities. It is critical that as a County we implement policies that ensure housing affordability at all income levels in all communities. We must also ensure that affordable housing includes both rental and ownership opportunities. Habitat is particularly concerned with the homeownership gap between white and Black households and between white and Latinx households, a gap of 36 points and 22 points respectively. Habitat strongly supports the Actions in section 5.1.9 and encourages the inclusion of programs that provide financial education and credit training to young adults.

The County can also reduce the homeownership gap by increasing opportunities to build Missing Middle housing. Habitat strongly supports rezoning along transit corridors and throughout the County to allow for affordable housing options including duplexes, triplexes, ADUs, quads, and garden style apartments. All families should have the opportunity to live near their jobs, public transit, and high quality school and amenities.

Through its work with older adults and individuals with disabilities, Habitat has seen a significant need for accessible housing across the County. Nonprofits often play a critical role in providing accessibility modifications, but are unable to access tax credit incentives. The County must ensure that there is both funding available and tax and non-tax incentives in place to encourage retrofits of existing housing and the development of accessible homes.

More broadly, Montgomery County needs more housing, especially at levels affordable to lower income households. The County can help affordable housing providers by increasing the Housing Initiative Fund, streamlining the entitlement process, utilizing Right of First Refusal for both rental and ownership opportunities, providing flexible zoning, creating an affordable housing ombudsman, reducing costs to build, and prioritizing public land for housing.

Thrive 2050 is an exciting vision for the future of Montgomery County, but the real work starts after the approval of the general plan. We must work together to ensure this vision is enacted through tangible legislative, administrative, and policy changes.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Paukstis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "P".

John Paukstis
President & CEO



To,
The Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

November 18, 2020

Reg: Thrive Montgomery 2050

Dear Chairman Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board,

Sierra Club Montgomery County group is pleased that the Planning Board is preparing this major planning document and supports the draft plan for Thrive 2050.

We believe this plan will set a strong foundation for the county over the next 30 years, as we move forward to address our many challenges and fully embrace some great opportunities. Together we can create a more vibrant, equitable, and livable community!

We believe the major themes of THRIVE are accurate descriptors of where the county needs to move over the coming decades. THRIVE advocates for a robust future that includes compact development, creation of diverse neighborhoods to promote racial justice and equity, growth concentrated around transit, a wider range of housing options throughout the county, transportation that focuses on moving people, not cars, and eradication of greenhouse gas emissions. Equally important is the vision of complete communities connected also by green corridors. These corridors serve as critical natural infrastructure because they increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and protect water quality.

Sierra Club believes that America's most critical environmental issue is climate change and our most critical social issue is racial justice and equity. We also understand that we cannot address one without addressing the other. So Sierra Club fully understands that the various themes of THRIVE are intimately interconnected. For instance, enabling more kids to walk or bike to equitable and diverse neighborhood schools is only going to work when we have created, across the county, neighborhoods with a wide variety of housing types and costs.

This plan can, and should, be consulted often over the coming decades. We do not want a good document that just "sits on the shelf." Thus, we advocate for a shorter, punchier THRIVE that will truly inspire elected officials and a wide range of key actors in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The reader of this plan should walk away excited about what a great place Montgomery County is going to become to live and work over the next 30 years – and be energized to roll up her sleeves to get to work on achieving the plan's vision.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present Sierra Club's strong support for THRIVE.

Shruti Bhatnagar,
Chair, Sierra Club Montgomery County, MD
Shruti.bhatnagar@mdsierra.org | 240.498.3459

From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Will Jawando](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Evan Glass](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Hans Riemer](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [County Executive Marc Elrich](#); [Ward, Tiffany](#); [Royce Hanson](#); [Tibbitts, Dale](#); [Spielberg, Debbie](#); [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Abel Olivo, Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [MenareFoundation@aol.com](#); [Anne James](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Olson, Shannon](#); [Neam, Dominique](#); [Eatmon, Jake](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [Jeanne Braha](#)
Subject: TAME Coalition Testimony_and Sign-On Letter to Chair Anderson requesting greater public input at this stage of Thrive
Date: Thursday, November 19, 2020 2:53:35 PM
Attachments: [TAME Coalition testimony + Sign-On Letter to Chair Anderson Thrive 2050 Oct 2020 draft plan 11.19.2020.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Commissioners,

Attached please find the TAME Coalition testimony on the October 2020 draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, the update to our General Plan.

Attached to the TAME Coalition testimony is a sign-on letter, calling for greater public input now, at this stage of the Thrive 2050 project, co-signed by six organizations along with Pamela Lindstrom. This memo was previously submitted on November 4; since then, two additional groups - Defensores De La Cuenca, a Latinx environmental conservation group; and The Menare Foundation, representing Historic Freeman Communities in our Agricultural Reserve, have signed on.

Due to a family emergency, I'm unable to testify "live" at today's hearing. We understand that the public comment record on this Thrive draft plan remains open until December 10, 2020.

Thank you for considering the input of TAME Coalition and allied groups on both the process, and the substance, of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Respectfully,

Diane Cameron

--

Diane Cameron, Director
301-933-1210
Margaret Schoap, Organizer
240-581-0518

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org





**Testimony of Diane Cameron, Director
TAME Coalition
Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended
on Thrive 2050 October 2020 Draft Plan
Thursday, November 19, 2020**

On behalf of the TAME Coalition, we appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony to the record for Thrive Montgomery 2050, the update to our General Plan. TAME stands for Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended. TAME Coalition advocates for a people-centric transportation system, including transit, safe walkable and bikeable streets, and climate justice for residents of the Upcounty communities of Clarksburg, Germantown, Montgomery Village, and Gaithersburg.

We continue to work with community groups whom we feel should be part of this Thrive 2050 project. We've reached out to groups including Defensores de la Cuenca (Defenders of the Watershed) and The Menare Foundation (a representative of the Freeman Communities in our Agricultural Reserve), who've co-signed our letter attached to this testimony. This letter calls on the Planning Board and planners to increase your efforts to obtain public input from the most-affected communities.

We believe you need to meet with these communities now, to ask their leaders to respond to the top points in the October 2020 draft plan of Thrive. Please contact them and we are also asking them to contact you. (Contacts are listed in the attached letter.)

We applaud the hard work of the planning staff in meeting with us; we strongly support the movement to a people-centric transportation system. We support Action 4.1.1.b: "Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to consider whether to remove master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings." While specific projects are not listed in the General Plan, this text will only be meaningful when it's implemented.

We've had a series of conversations with Chair Anderson, including with smart growth and environmental advocates, between April 2019 and November 2020. Over the course of these conversations, we've asked Chair Anderson to commit to working with all parties to remove the proposed M83 Highway, from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways and other master plans, and he's expressed a willingness to do so, provided it's a combined effort of the County Council, County Executive, and Planning Board.

Removing this dinosaur of a highway from the master plans will free up resources for transit and will be a notable climate justice action. Thank you for considering our views on Montgomery's General Plan Update. Attachment: Sign-on letter to Chair Anderson.

To: Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson

cc Planning Director Gwen Wright; Council President Sidney Katz and Councilmembers; and County Executive Marc Elrich

Re: Thrive 2050 needs greater and deeper public participation

From: Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended); Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir; Pamela Lindstrom; Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery; Abel Olivo, Defensores De La Cuenca; Tony Cohen, The Menare Foundation.

Date: November 19, 2020

Within the current Thrive 2050 effort, we ask the Planning Board and staff to act immediately to invite effective public participation methods to creating a new visionary General Plan. The new Vision must build on existing structures that have worked well, including Wedges and Corridors, then add new elements and changes needed to make our county a more inclusive, economically and racially just, and ecologically and economically healthy place to live and work.

On the need for greater, substantive public input at this point in the Thrive process

For a subject as complex and as consequential as a new General Plan, the Planning Department and Board have programmed surprisingly little opportunity for substantive public input during this crucial stage in this process.

Planners have catalogued their extensive and appreciated campaigns of public outreach. But *outreach* from the staff is not a substitute for deeper discussion, i.e. genuine public *input* opportunities. The public input opportunities provided to date have not been adequate to the need for in-depth public understanding and input to craft the Vision for Montgomery County for 2050. Much of the outreach preceded the release of the October 2020 Draft Plan, thus has been unconstrained and not directed at eliciting final content. In particular, very little public input has responded to the October 2020 Public Hearing Draft Plan.

Insufficient public engagement to draft a Plan that has public approval -- and enthusiasm.

The staff's summary of the public engagement program is divided into four phases. Curiously, the final phase, starting this past September 2020 "will leverage the diverse community members and groups who have engaged throughout the plan process *to endorse the plan and testify to elected and appointed officials in favor of the plan...* Motivate community members to support of the Working Draft and advocate to the Board. Form new groups to support the main goals of the plan if there is strong opposition to certain parts of the plan. Leverage diverse supporters to endorse and testify in support of the plan. Help residents understand how their advocacy is needed."

This process skips the essential step of working with the community to craft an updated General Plan that strongly reflects public needs and community priorities, and that has public approval and even enthusiasm!

Examples of communities that could be more engaged with, and give more in-depth input to, Thrive 2050 and the October 2020 draft plan: renters' organizations; high school and college students; immigrant community groups; Black and Latinx organizations; Historic Freeman communities; rural residents; public health advocates; and groups representing low-income, elderly, and disabled people.

A few environmental and smart growth coalitions have participated extensively in the Thrive process. The draft Thrive document has evolved, as staff has incorporated some of their input. But, troubling questions remain. These include questions about whether the land use policy reflected in this proposed General Plan update fully reflects and is representative of the needs of all communities who are directly affected by these land use policies, and who have significant input to provide, but are now constrained by the coronavirus pandemic shutdowns, economic inequities, and other limitations. Since Thrive 2050 will guide and heavily influence the quality and extent of different communities' access to housing, transportation, land, food, clean drinking water, parks and natural areas, it's crucial that wider and deeper public input be sought and provided to Thrive 2050 now, in Fall 2020 and the Winter of 2021.

Greater public input on these topics is required now, before the Thrive 2050 plan is adopted:

- The continuation of the Wedges and Corridors structure of the General Plan - the current draft creates confusion with its use of the term "web of corridors."
- Housing, Food, and Transit Justice are intertwined, and much more robust public participation by communities most burdened by housing, transportation and food costs is required now at this stage. These communities' input is especially needed on whether the Thrive 2050 proposed land use structure and policies are the best and clearest path to achieving housing, food, water, climate and transit justice.
- The role of the Agricultural Reserve in providing food, fiber, and clean water through continued protection of its farms and forests – and the need to avoid conflicts from non-agricultural uses including commercial solar. While the October draft plan has strengthened the support for the Agricultural Reserve overall, there remains the need for much greater review and input from producers in the Ag Reserve. The Council's and Planning Board's support for commercial solar in the Ag Reserve must be reversed, since solar developers are offering tenfold and greater land rents, and farmers are being priced off of the land they now farm.
- The quality and quantity of Montgomery County's drinking water supplies

and how Thrive 2050 will result in their greater protection.

- The October 2020 draft plan promotes use of autonomous vehicles and a network of urban sensors, new technologies that would require so-called “5G” radiofrequency cellular networks. The General Plan Update should not promote this highly questionable change. Residents’ input on this major change, along with that of public health experts familiar with the international scientific literature on radiofrequency exposures must be sought and thoroughly examined.¹
- The role of the Montgomery Parks system must be further highlighted, including the role of Park forests and other Park natural areas in the health and well-being of County residents. Further community input, including through in-depth discussion with diverse groups about their needs including adequacy of parkland access, is required.

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conversations. While we appreciate the opportunity for the private conversations, and staff may respond favorably at these meetings, the words in the draft Plan are what matters. *It is especially hard to discuss the major overall changes being proposed, such as set out by Chairman Anderson and Executive Elrich, when only a few citizen groups and individuals are in the conversation and are seeing their needs reflected.*

Given the economic inequities in our County reflected in the digital divide, and the lack of rural broadband, we believe face-to-face meetings are also needed.

Meetings are necessarily remote via various media that pose additional problems. These meetings are not available to those without fast internet access and are unreliable in rural areas. We all need to think about ways to overcome these problems, maybe with some way of conducting meetings face-to-face.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><u>Contact Information for the Signatories to this Memo</u></p> <p>Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery Ginnybarnes94@gmail.com</p> <p>Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition tamecoalition@gmail.com</p> <p>Tony Cohen, The Menare Foundation menarefoundation@aol.com</p> <p>Anne James Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir acjamesfineart@gmail.com</p> | <p>Pamela Lindstrom pamela.lindstrom@gmail.com</p> <p>Abel Olivo, Defensores De La Cuenca abel@defensoresdelacuenca.org</p> <p>Caroline Taylor Montgomery Countryside Alliance caroline@mocoalliance.org</p> |
|---|--|

From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [Anderson, Casey](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Hans Riemer](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Will Jawando](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [Evan Glass](#); [County Executive Marc Elrich](#); [Tibbitts, Dale](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Anne James](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Jeanne Braha](#); [William Roberts](#); [Elissa Laitin](#); [Frank Fritz](#); [MoCo DSA listserv](#); [Susanne Lowen](#); [Susan Eisendrath](#); [Abel Olivo](#); [Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [Joe Heiney-Gonzalez](#); [Walter Weiss](#); [Philip Bogdonoff](#); [Marion Edey](#); [Sylvia Tognetti](#); [Miriam Schoenbaum](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Alan Bowser](#); [Lauren Greenberger](#); [Lauren Brown](#); [Amanda Farber](#); [Mike Hersh](#)
Subject: Greater public input is needed at this stage for Thrive 2050.
Date: Wednesday, November 4, 2020 4:01:23 PM
Attachments: [Thrive 2050 needs greater public review & input.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson,

Attached is a memo to you signed by four organizations: Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended - TAME Coalition; Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Conservation Montgomery; and Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir, along with Pamela Lindstrom, calling for greater public input to Thrive 2050 at this stage of the process of updating our General Plan.

We acknowledge the hard work of the Planning staff in outreach thus far for Thrive 2050. The document has evolved and improved over time, through staff's responses to feedback from many groups. Building on the foundation your staff have laid with their extensive outreach, the current stage of Thrive now requires more public input, using various public participation modes that fit the needs of diverse groups.

This letter is a call for greater and deeper public input to Thrive 2050, now at this stage of the process, from diverse communities. Our four groups work on environmental, agricultural, and transportation issues. There are other groups focused on housing justice, food security, public health, and other priorities, whose review and considered input at this stage are also needed.

Our letter lists some of the outstanding issues; of course this is only a partial list of concerns raised by the October 2020 draft of Thrive 2050. Through greater and intensified efforts at public input to this draft document, more communities will be able to fully contribute their needs and their vision for life here in thirty years.

Sincerely,

Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended)

Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir

Pamela Lindstrom

Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery

--

Diane Cameron, Director
301-933-1210
Margaret Schoap, Organizer
240-581-0518

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org

TAME

Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended

To: Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson
cc. Planning Director Gwen Wright; Council President Sidney Katz and Councilmembers; and
County Executive Marc Elrich
Re: Thrive 2050 needs greater and deeper public participation
From: Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended);
Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek
and Little Seneca Reservoir; Pamela Lindstrom; Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery
Date: November 4, 2020

Within the current Thrive 2050 effort, we ask the Planning Board and staff to act immediately to invite effective public participation methods to creating a new visionary General Plan. The new Vision must build on existing structures that have worked well, including Wedges and Corridors, then add new elements and changes needed to make our county a more inclusive, economically and racially just, and ecologically and economically healthy place to live and work.

On the need for greater, substantive public input at this point in the Thrive process

For a subject as complex and as consequential as a new General Plan, the Planning Department and Board have programmed surprisingly little opportunity for substantive public input during this crucial stage in this process.

Planners have catalogued their extensive and appreciated campaigns of public outreach. But *outreach* from the staff is not a substitute for deeper discussion, i.e. genuine public *input* opportunities. The public input opportunities provided to date have not been adequate to the need for in-depth public understanding and input to craft the Vision for Montgomery County for 2050. Much of the outreach preceded the release of the October 2020 Draft Plan, thus has been unconstrained and not directed at eliciting final content. In particular, very little public input has responded to the October 2020 Public Hearing Draft Plan.

Insufficient public engagement to draft a Plan that has public approval -- and enthusiasm.

The staff's summary of [the public engagement program](#) is divided into four phases. Curiously, the final phase, starting this past September 2020 "will leverage the diverse community members and groups who have engaged throughout the plan process *to endorse the plan and testify to elected and appointed officials in favor of the plan...* Motivate community members to support of the Working Draft and advocate to the Board. Form new groups to support the main goals of the plan if there is strong opposition to certain parts of the plan. Leverage diverse supporters to endorse and testify in support of the plan. Help residents understand how their advocacy is needed."

This process skips the essential step of working with the community to craft an updated General Plan that strongly reflects public needs and community priorities, and that has public approval and even enthusiasm!

Examples of communities that could be more engaged with, and give more in-depth input to, Thrive 2050 and the October 2020 draft plan: renters' organizations; high school and college students; immigrant community groups; Black and Latinx organizations; rural residents; public health advocates; and groups representing low-income, elderly, and disabled people.

A few environmental and smart growth coalitions have participated extensively in the Thrive process. The draft Thrive document has evolved, as staff has incorporated some of their input. But, troubling questions remain. These include questions about whether the land use policy reflected in this proposed General Plan update fully reflects and is representative of the needs of all communities who are directly affected by these land use policies, and who have significant input to provide, but are now

constrained by the coronavirus pandemic shutdowns, economic inequities, and other limitations. Since Thrive 2050 will guide and heavily influence the quality and extent of different communities' access to housing, transportation, land, food, clean drinking water, parks and natural areas, it's crucial that wider and deeper public input be sought and provided to Thrive 2050 now, in Fall 2020 and the Winter of 2021.

Greater public input on these topics is required now, before the Thrive 2050 plan is adopted:

- The continuation of the Wedges and Corridors structure of the General Plan -- the current draft creates confusion with its use of the term "web of corridors."
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From: [Hilton, Thomas C](#)
To: [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Caudill, Joel V](#)
Cc: [Shofar, Steven \(Montgomery County Dept of Environment\)](#); douglas.weisburger@montgomerycountymd.gov; [Katherine.Nelson](#); [Findley, Steve](#); amy.quant@wsscwater.com; [Kamazani, Nasser](#)
Subject: RE: Montgomery County General Plan Update - Long Term Water Supply
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 3:15:14 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image019.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image009.png](#)
[image011.png](#)
[image013.png](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Khalid,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the County General Plan Update. My comments are as follows:

Policy 6.2.3 - Reword: "Integrate climate change with the planning efforts on the County's water supply to ensure that an adequate and safe supply of drinking water will be available to meet current and future needs."

General – Throughout the Plan, reference is made to focusing on infill and redevelopment. WSSC Water cannot comment on the impact that this policy will have on the capacity of the water and sewer systems which serve the County without specific data provided. This data would need to include an update from the latest COG Demographic Projections Round 9.1, broken down by Transportation Area Zones that reflect the increase in business and housing proposed from the latest 2045 Round 9.1 projections. Piecemeal Sector plans do not allow for a comprehensive county-wide analysis required. If such data is available, please know that it will take several months for us to analyze using our computerized hydraulic models of the water and sewer systems if our budget allows.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you
Tom



THOMAS C. HILTON, P.E.

Planning Division Manager
Engineering and Construction Department

240.459.4928 (C)
thomas.hilton@wsscwater.com

From: [Madeline Amalphy](#)
To: [Thrive2050](#)
Subject: Thrive 2050 and Climate Change
Date: Saturday, October 3, 2020 12:21:22 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Montgomery Planning,

As a Gaithersburg resident who is extremely concerned about the climate crisis, I applaud Montgomery County for including measures designed to fight climate change in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan, such as phasing out planning for cars while increasing housing density near accessible public transportation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I strongly urge you to do everything in your power to prioritize sustainability in domains such as transportation, renewable energy, recycling and composting, forest conservation, and agriculture before it's too late to stop the climate crisis from claiming millions of lives.

Madeline Amalphy
radchic05@gmail.com
651 Saybrooke Oaks Boulevard
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

November 18, 2020

Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Casey,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan Update.

As you know, the Arts and Humanities Council is the designated local arts agency for Montgomery County. We work in partnership with the community to cultivate and support excellence in the arts and humanities, expand access to cultural expression, and contribute to economic vitality in the County. Our core commitment is to build an arts and culture sector that is empathetic, equitable, inclusive, resilient and vital.

That is why we were so pleased to be invited to be part of the Design-Arts-Culture Working Group that helped prepare this draft of the plan update, and especially thank the M-NCPPC staff who wholeheartedly embraced our suggestions.

We endorse the three overarching outcomes in the plan – Economic Health, Equity and Environmental Resilience. We would like to stress their interconnected nature, and our belief that the arts and culture sector can contribute to achieving all of those outcomes. We believe that arts and culture are not only a means of beautifying, entertaining or inspiring; or for people to express themselves; or to building a creative and competitive economy. Arts and culture play an essential encouraging people to connect and share with each other, to feel like they belong, to participate in their communities, and therefore to work collectively towards these aspirational goals. They are a foundation of civic life.

We are therefore pleased to support the plan goal that aims towards a sustainable and equitable arts and culture ecosystem, with policies and actions that strengthen capacity of artists and arts organizations; integrate the arts into a range of government, social service and

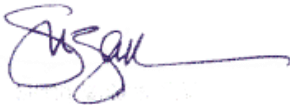
community-based organizations; fully coordinate planning of public art, cultural space and cultural hubs with future planning efforts; and to improve the documentation and coordination of County arts investments.

We also endorse the significant recommendation to create a new arts and culture master plan for the County. Our current plan dates back 20 years, and much has evolved in our field, and in our community, since then.

We note the emerging emphasis on placemaking. This is a quickly-evolving field that involves both public art and urban planning, and we believe that close collaboration between AHCMC and M-NCPPC is vital to embrace best practices from both fields to ensure inclusion and equity in both processes and outcomes.

Finally, we are attaching a mark-up of the Chapter, “Design, Arts and Culture,” with more specific suggestions.

Our work with M-NCPPC on this plan draft is filled with hope and promise. We appreciate your support of the plan and eagerly anticipate moving forward with you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Suzan", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Suzan Jenkins, CEO

DESIGN, ARTS, AND CULTURE

Issues and Challenges

Today, Montgomery County's arts and culture sector is considerable in its scope; taken as a whole, it would be the sixth-largest employer in the county. Aspects of arts and culture sector reach into almost every corner of life and are one of the most visible barometers of our increasing cultural diversity. While the sector holds great promise in helping the county achieve the goals of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, it faces some key challenges.

While Montgomery County is home to one of the most diverse populations in the nation this diversity is not fully represented in its arts and cultural institutions. This holds back the arts and culture sector's ability to provide social, civic and economic benefits to all

While the county makes numerous direct and indirect investments in its arts and culture sector, they are not made in a strategic and holistic manner. We lack comprehensive tracking and data-driven alignment of these investments to broader county goals.

Artists and arts organizations cite the lack of affordable living, working, and sales spaces as a key challenge to their sustainability. Emerging and stabilizing arts organizations that support underserved communities lack the funding and operational resources of their well-established counterparts.

The public art field at large has been expanding to embrace a wider range of approaches, including civic and placemaking practices, but the county's public art programs are lagging in their ability to deliver such projects.

Similarly, not all communities in the county have benefitted equitably from the positive impacts of good design principles. The 1964 Plan envisioned a variety of living environments and encouraged "imaginative urban design" to avoid sterile suburban sprawl. Different parts of the county have achieved this vision to varying degrees. Development in many parts of the county lacks character and appears "cookie-cutter." Major corridors within the county have become auto-dominated traffic arteries, devoid of a sense of place, mostly due to poor decisions regarding land use and urban design. Many residents must drive to meet their daily needs and commercial areas and civic facilities lack gathering spaces for residents to interact.

As we seek to retrofit our existing neighborhoods to become Complete Communities, good urban design and equitable, inclusive planning processes will help resolve conflicts and concerns about the changes needed in our built environment. These design changes include introducing new housing types in our single-family neighborhoods and creating a more resilient infrastructure in the face of climate change. As the county strives to create more places with an emphasis on walkability and opportunities for social interaction, the design of every part of our built environment—buildings, streets, parks and open spaces, public facilities and infrastructure—needs greater attention.

Vision for Design, Arts, and Culture

In 2050, Montgomery County is home to diverse cultures and is a leader in new ideas and emerging trends in culture, arts, and entertainment. Arts and culture is integrated into the daily lives and well-being of county residents, the built environment and community services — with resources accessible to all county residents, regardless of their socioeconomic, racial, or geographic circumstances. Arts and culture activities offer everyone an opportunity for creative

expression, support the county's cultural diversity, strengthen civic connection and engagement, deepen residents' attachment and commitment to their communities, and spur economic vibrancy.

A comprehensive urban design vision strengthens and creates a collection of great towns, cities, and rural villages across Montgomery County. Each of these places has a rich character with neighborhoods built around walkable centers of varying densities. Montgomery County's buildings, public spaces, streets, and infrastructure are designed to meet the needs of a changing population and combat climate change. Beautiful buildings frame walkable streets and welcoming public spaces that engage residents in activities that build relationships. All buildings and infrastructure contribute positively to the environment and improve the physical and mental health of users by encouraging an active lifestyle and exposure to nature at various scales. Streets are designed as a part of the public space network, offering a reliable and delightful journey that encourages people to walk, bike or take transit. Public buildings and major infrastructure projects are conceived by world-class designers who work directly with residents to integrate art, showcase local cultures and set a high bar for innovative design.

All residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and everyone benefits equally from good design. The county celebrates its heritage while welcoming newcomers. Urban design and planning policies protect vulnerable communities, including communities of color and low-income residents, against gentrification and displacement, and the planning process engages all residents in decision making about the future of their communities. Architecture is used as a problem-solving tool to encourage innovation, increase affordability and provide access to well-designed buildings for everyone. A strong emphasis on design, arts and culture in Montgomery County makes our communities equitable, resilient, and economically competitive.

Good Design, Arts, and Culture Build Resilient Places

Montgomery County is one of the most livable places in the country with a high per capita income. It has a wealth of cultural, economic, and natural resources. However, not all residents can equitably access these assets that make Montgomery County a great place to live. In addition, we are facing increased competition regionally to attract jobs and are projected to add 200,000 residents over the next 30 years. All this is set to unfold in a period certain to be marked by increased disruption caused by climate change, technological advancement, and a higher frequency of unforeseen events such as the current pandemic.

Design affects all aspects of the built environment—overall land use pattern, infrastructure, public facilities, buildings, open spaces and physical accessibility. Good design is not a luxury. It must be considered as a critical tool to create resilient places that can adapt to change, be attractive to workers and businesses and house residents in diverse neighborhoods with welcoming public spaces that build social trust.

As the county strives to increase walking, biking, and accessibility for people with disabilities, the design of every part of our communities will need to prioritize people over cars.

Redevelopment will put pressure on the county's historic resources and require a greater emphasis on preserving them for future generations. Likewise, communities in areas of the county where development and upkeep has not been as active will need to be supported and retrofitted with good design interventions. Ensuring that all communities benefit from good design is key to a successful Thrive Montgomery 2050 effort.

The county will support a healthy arts and culture sector that taps into creative, social, and economic ecosystems and provides collaborative tools that support other county goals. Its practitioners have developed creative strategies that can express untold stories, encourage empathy, and empower creative and civic voices, fostering civic dialogue and connectedness. The

sector also grows its role as a significant contributor to the county's economy by attracting talent, spurring innovation through exchange of ideas, and sustaining a robust creative economy.

Good design and a healthy arts and culture ecosystem can create a resilient foundation, where the county's residents feel a strong sense of belonging to places that reflect their values and history and are offered equitable opportunities to express their creativity and prosper.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 8.1: Use design to shape Montgomery County as a collection of world-class towns, cities and rural villages, with neighborhoods that celebrate their history, geography, and culture.

Policy 8.1.1: Use form-based codes, design guidelines, and other innovative regulatory tools to ensure future developments across the county respond to their context through massing, architecture, public spaces, landscape, and street design.

Action 8.1.1.a: Create a county-wide urban design vision and guidelines for growth using a rural-to-urban transect.

Policy 8.1.2: Use public art tools to strengthen the involvement of artists in planning and design of county facilities and private development, and to recognize the diverse cultures of communities throughout the county.

Goal 8.2: Create and preserve great places with attractive streets and public spaces, inspired urban design, and high-quality architecture that delivers lasting beauty.

Policy 8.2.1: Ensure high quality design for all public and private architecture, infrastructure, and open space projects using design guidelines, design advisory panels, and other tools. Make design excellence a priority, even when cost saving measures are considered. Use design competitions for major new civic facilities to create the highest-quality public structures that are a source of civic pride.

Action 8.2.1.a: Create county-wide or area-specific design guidelines that facilitate the construction of well-designed, accessible, cost-efficient housing at various price points.

Action 8.2.1.b: Create design guidelines for projects that deliver high levels of affordable housing to illustrate how great architecture can be achieved at an affordable price point through simple design and new construction technologies that reduce costs.

Action 8.2.1.c: Collaborate with the Public Art Trust to improve coordination for public art in county construction and to develop standardized public art interventions for basic infrastructure elements.

Policy 8.2.2: Create a variety of existing and new parks and trails to support and connect existing and new development in Complete Communities using compact development and sustainable design.

Policy 8.2.3 : Implement the [Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan](#)'s analysis tool and implementation framework. Promote an integrated system of parks and public spaces where every resident is within walking distance of an appropriate space for community gathering, physical activity, and events.

Policy 8.2.4: Through the regulatory process, incorporate accessible design features such as a no-step entrance, wider doors, and barrier-free entrances. These and other improvements in housing will help people age in place, assist those living with a temporary or permanent disability, and accommodate populations with mobility limitations.

Policy 8.2.5: Use public art and placemaking tools to engage residents in higher levels of social interaction in public spaces. Create public spaces that support the cultural and social practices of the people who will use them, provide for equitable access and use, and generate respect for diversity while building community.

Policy 8.2.6: Develop placemaking plans that define and highlight distinctive identities for all neighborhoods based on local history and culture in collaboration with local community leaders.

Action 8.2.6.a: Establish and fund a program that invites communities to submit applications to implement their placemaking ideas within their neighborhoods.

Action 8.2.6.b: Expand access to professional resources in anthropology, ethnography, public history and related fields to support community placemaking projects.

Policy 8.2.7: Integrate on-the-ground placemaking activities as a part of community engagement for master plans intended to transform infill and redevelopment sites. Include placemaking recommendations in new sector plans, functional plans, and studies when appropriate.

Policy 8.2.8: Maximize use of county and state-owned rights-of-way to create more opportunities for active transportation and public use spaces.

Policy 8.2.9: Encourage walking and bicycling through smaller blocks, narrower streets, buffered bike lanes and sidewalks, the lowest possible auto speeds, and no new surface parking.

Action 8.2.9.a: Adopt a Vision Zero approach regarding public service vehicles (e.g., purchasing smaller fire engines) so that street safety improvements, quality urban design, and public safety are not compromised.

Action 8.2.9.b: Adopt the 8-80 Principle as official county policy. This policy promotes the idea that if all buildings, streets, and public spaces are safe and easily accessible for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then they will function well for all people.

Action 8.2.9.c: Create a “Ciclovía” or “open streets” program for the county that facilitates temporary and long-term closures of streets for community events, recreation, and play.

Action 8.2.9.d: Create a Parklet program for the county that facilitates the creation of small-scale public spaces to support retail businesses and provide gathering places within rights-of-way.

Goal 8.3: Use design as a tool to avoid and mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

Policy 8.3.1: Maximize the environmental benefits of transit-oriented development by increasing density and removing regulatory barriers such as parking requirements within one-half mile of Metro and Purple Line stations.

Policy 8.3.2: Retrofit the design of single-use commercial developments and car-oriented residential communities to reduce their energy consumption. Promote walking and biking to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and minimize disruptions caused by a changing climate.

Action 8.3.2.a: Develop a sprawl repair manual for the county that highlights strategies to retrofit the design and mix of uses for single-use commercial areas and car-oriented residential communities on a neighborhood as well as a county-wide scale. The manual

can also be used as a guide to prioritize capital improvement projects and to implement new and existing master plans and studies.

Policy 8.3.3: Make high-impact sustainability features such as net-zero/positive buildings, biophilic design and district-level energy generation a top priority for the design of structures, blocks and neighborhoods across the county.

Action 8.3.3.a: Create design guidelines, regulations and incentives that help achieve the goal of having all new and retrofitted buildings and projects in the county be net-zero by 2035.

Action 8.3.3.b: Create a funding stream that provides incentives for upgrading existing buildings to minimize their energy consumption.

Action 8.3.3.c: Create an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment and analyze trends from 1990 to 2020. Establish policies to regain and exceed 1990 tree canopy levels. Ensure a county-wide net-zero loss of tree canopy through a robust street tree-planting program in coordination with bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Goal 8.4: Make buildings in the county more resilient to disruption through flexible design and high adaptive reuse potential.

Policy 8.4.1: Prioritize the reuse of existing structures where possible through incentives to maintain building diversity, preserve naturally occurring affordable space and retain embodied energy of structures.

Action 8.4.1.a: Partner with DPS and other county agencies to update the County Code to fast track and create incentives for projects that adaptively reuse at least 50% of an existing structure or preserve at least 50% of all existing building materials on site.

Action 8.4.1.b: Update and strengthen the Historic Preservation Ordinance to prioritize adaptively reusing or repurposing existing buildings. Require mitigation and other offsets to benefit arts and cultural uses in the community when demolition is required.

Action 8.4.1.c: Create a program that periodically catalogs building types in the county with a high risk of obsolescence such as suburban office buildings and shopping malls and promotes their conversion and adaptive reuse through design guidelines and ideas competitions.

Action 8.4.1.d: Conduct a study exploring future uses for parking and automobile related transportation infrastructure in the context of impending automation and shared mobility trends.

Policy 8.4.2: Design all buildings and parking structures to be adaptable to changing demographics, technologies, generational and program needs over time. Prioritize resilient design for all buildings and promote ideas through design guidelines that enable buildings and communities to function well during periods of disruption. For example, encourage residential building types in the county to incorporate semi-public spaces such as porches, stoops, and balconies that can function well during periods requiring social distancing.

Action 8.4.2.a: Update the Zoning Ordinance and Commercial-Residential (CR) Public Benefit Guidelines to prioritize flex-use buildings to serve as venues for multiple functions throughout a typical day or week.

Policy 8.4.3: Encourage trade organizations, colleges, and high schools to teach building trades and connect them with local businesses that repair structures and reuse building materials.

Goal 8.5: Sustain an arts and culture ecosystem that enriches the lives of county residents and the vitality of its communities, supporting Thrive Montgomery 2050's strategic goals for economic health, community equity, and environmental resilience.

Policy 8.5.1: Provide a framework for managing the resources that the county invests in its arts and culture sector in an equitable and sustainable manner. Establish goals, criteria, and priorities for arts and culture investments that are aligned with *Thrive Montgomery 2050*'s strategic goals. Strengthen ongoing data collection and analysis practices to inform policy and investment strategies.

Action 8.5.1.a: Document all county arts and culture investments and track their impacts in a centralized, easy-to-use database.

Action 8.5.1.b: Create a broadly inclusive Cultural Plan that establishes a refreshed vision, sets goals, criteria, and priorities for the county's support of the arts and culture sector and addresses the processes by which the county's resources are allocated.

Action 8.5.1.c: Create a new Public Art Trust Master Plan that guides the provision of public art and better aligns it with planning processes, development review, capital project budgeting, county services and *Thrive Montgomery 2050* policies regarding the design of county facilities. The plan should also examine the applicability of an expansive view of public art practice — including civic practice, social practice and creative placemaking — and consider the management of the county's expansive legacy public art collection.

Policy 8.5.2: Provide a framework for an equitable and sustainable arts and culture ecosystem.

Action 8.5.2.a: Collaborate with arts advocacy partners to develop shared service strategies to support the capacity of small- and medium-sized arts and culture organizations.

Action 8.5.2.b: Partner with educational institutions to evaluate issues and overcome obstacles related to the provision of bachelor's- and master's-level art, design, and cultural management programs.

Action 8.5.2.c: Develop strategies, in collaboration with arts advocacy partners, for building arts capacity as a component of economic development, housing, social service and other community-based organizations.

Policy 8.5.3: Support ongoing efforts to develop technical resources to assist arts and culture organizations in addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and resilience in programming and audience development.

Policy 8.5.4: Improve access for artists and arts organizations to affordable living, administrative, working, and presentation spaces. Prioritize economic, geographical, and cultural equity in the allocation of these spaces.

Action 8.5.4.a: Create an "arts space bank" of underused spaces and a non-profit entity that will facilitate the use of these spaces by artists and arts and culture. The "arts space bank" could include new or existing county facilities (such as community centers, libraries, and schools) as well as underused commercial (office, retail) and institutional buildings.

Action 8.5.4.b: Update the county's Zoning Ordinance to further incentivize the provision of affordable space for arts and cultural uses (live/work space; rehearsal and workshop

space; presentation and exhibition space, etc.). Eliminate regulatory barriers to live-work spaces, home studios, galleries, and other small-scale art-making and creative businesses.

Action 8.5.4.c: Strengthen incentives for repurposing historic properties for arts uses.

Action 8.5.4.d: Research the applicability of the concept of “naturally occurring cultural districts” to the county and develop policies that will support these places.

Action 8.5.4.e: Invest in and activate small-scale creative hubs, which could be co-located in community anchors such as community centers, housing developments, places of worship, educational institutions, or in commercial spaces. Make them low cost and easily accessible for all county residents.

Policy 8.5.5: Include recommendations promoting public art, cultural spaces, and cultural hubs in all future sector plans and, when applicable, functional plans.

Policy 8.5.6: Provide every resident in the county with opportunities to experience art and culture daily by making public art an integral part of the public realm, physical infrastructure, and public services.

Action 8.5.6.a: Update the county’s public art ordinance to allocate 0.5% of the county capital budget to the Public Art Trust.

Action 8.5.6.b: Develop a policy, in collaboration with arts advocacy partners, for allocating funds from the Public Art Trust into county construction projects, such as buildings, parks, transportation infrastructure, public schools and Montgomery College.

Action 8.5.6.c: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to make public art a prerequisite of receiving incentive density within the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones. Update the Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines and Art Review Panel review processes to streamline, expand, and clarify options for the provision of public art benefits.

Policy 8.5.8: Implement recommendations of the county’s Public Art Roadmap in partnership with arts advocacy organizations.

Policy 8.5.7: Partner with private property owners, non-profit organizations, and county agencies to maximize the economic potential of parks and public spaces through programming, activation, placemaking events, and updates to operating procedures.



Policy 8.5.9: Partner with arts advocates, arts and community organizations, field leaders and county agencies to develop specialized arts initiatives related to topics such as youth, elder issues, environment, restorative justice, public health, food justice, and other public issues.

Action 8.5.9.a: Develop an artist residency program in county agencies.

Goal 8.6: Ensure all communities benefit equitably from good design, regardless of their location or demographics.

Policy 8.6.1: Develop and implement tools and strategies to ensure that the quality of design of public and private buildings, streets, and public spaces in all parts of the county are equitable and respond to the needs of local residents.

Action 8.6.1.a: Create a design literacy campaign for the county, with a focus on educating residents regarding the positive impacts of equitable and innovative design.

Action 8.6.1.b: Partner with Montgomery County Public Schools to introduce all students to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 vision as a part of the standard educational curriculum.

Action 8.6.1.c: Establish a neighborhood design center within the Planning Department that equitably supports citizens through community-engaged design and planning services for projects identified by neighborhood residents.

Testimony of Stacy Silber

Thrive Montgomery 2050

November 19, 2020

Good evening. My name is Stacy Silber, an attorney with Lerch, Early & Brewer. I'm testifying today on behalf of myself and my Lerch Early land use group colleagues. I'm also testifying today as a Board member and Legislative Committee Chair for NAIOP DC/MD, an association representing many of the mixed use developers in the region.

We would like to commend the efforts of your Staff and particularly Khalid Afzal. We know this was a significant undertaking and the Draft Plan provides an excellent framework for the next thirty years. Furthermore, we appreciate Staff's recognition that to ensure a vibrant, strong and competitive economy, we need to attract and maintain major employers, support small business and innovation and attract a diverse workforce. Of great importance, the Plan stresses the notion of equity – creating a place where residents have equal access to affordable housing, employment, transportation, and education.

In reviewing the Thrive Plan, it is clear that there is an understanding that economic health and economic disruption need to be drivers to effect change. The Plan identifies many issues and challenges that should be solved over the years. We submit that without the influx of private economic investment and public investment in infrastructure, the County will not be able to fully solve and address these issues. As such, the Thrive Plan must prioritize economic health for such will serve as a catalyst for attracting investment and in turn provide the necessary ingredients for the County to achieve its other goals of environmental resilience and community equity. With that in mind, as Staff and the Board work through the Draft, we ask that you consider the following:

1. The Plan acknowledges that in promoting the long-term economic health of the County, there needs to be policies and visions in place that incentivize investment. With construction costs continuing to rise and rents remaining flat, developers and investors no longer just evaluate whether to invest in Montgomery, Fairfax or DC. Rather, they consider places like Charlotte and

Atlanta that also have great needs for housing and the policies in place to attract businesses.

2. Thus, to ensure economic investment in the County, the Plan needs to set a hierarchy of priorities so that Policies, which encourage investment in housing and commercial growth, are not inadvertently negated by other costly Policies and Actions that act as deterrents. To that end, certain Policies and/or Actions may need to be removed.
3. By way of example, an executive with a Montgomery County based advanced immunology and life sciences company, was asked at a Business Roundtable discussion yesterday “what would be helpful to stay and expand in Montgomery County?” He answered that his company needed more real estate to accommodate lab space, and the ingredients to attract and house talent in the County.
4. To that end, we commend Staff in its creative thinking on increasing housing and promoting diverse housing types in the County.
5. While encouraging development along corridors and near transit is key, there also needs to be policies that allow missing middle type housing *throughout* the County. In order for supply to meet housing demand over the next 30 years, multiple tools and approaches are required.
6. We appreciate the Plan’s clear advocacy that tax abatements, PILOTS and TIFs should be used to encourage diverse housing types and high-density housing near transit. We recommend this type of advocacy throughout the Plan.
7. Furthermore, the Plan rightfully focuses on identifying and removing regulatory barriers that slow down delivery of development.
8. Finally, we suggest you consider distilling the Plan’s prioritized Goals and Actions, and shorten the overall content.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with you in the coming months.

From: [Muriel Watkins](#)
To: [Sharma, Atul](#)
Cc: [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Rock Spring: Advancing a Life Sciences Cluster
Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 10:48:12 AM
Attachments: [Rock Spring Advancing a Life Sciences Cluster MWatkins.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Atul Sharma,

I have reviewed Thrive Montgomery 2050 and thought this might be an appropriate time to provide comments on a recommendation for Advancing a Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring. I attended the Marriott Headquarters (HQ) Team Community Meeting and presentation on the new Marriott HQ in Bethesda and have followed the announced plans by Erickson Living Retirement Community to repurpose the current location at 10400 Fernwood Road as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). The approved relocation of the Marriott HQ and plans for a CCRC were announced after the Rock Spring Sector Plan was completed, leading up to Approval and Adoption.

I am responding to the comment at page 33 of the Sector Plan, “Rock Spring is still a viable employment center, and has the potential to be strengthened and fortified if new uses are introduced to the area that help create a more vibrant, interesting, and marketable location.”

A recent report from Morgan Stanley Research, “Why COVID-19 Could Reshape the Future of Health Care,” highlights CARES ACT provisions that offer promise for advances in telemedicine and digital health technologies, noting the surge of telehealth services as in-person medical appointments were being canceled. Our primary care physician and medical specialists are located at the medical complex affiliated with Johns Hopkins and have followed the County’s COVID-19 guidance and are integrating telemedicine as a component of their practice. Rock Spring could serve as a Life Sciences Cluster capitalizing on the physical infrastructure of senior housing in proximity to an existing medical complex shared by top ranked medical specialists in the Metropolitan Washington region, many of whom are affiliated with Suburban Hospital. This would be a value-added to Erickson Living in attracting residents to the retirement community and for attracting businesses with medical and healthIT services and products as an economic driver for the County.

I am including an excerpt from a draft Storyboard I have developed outlining the concept of a Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring focused on **Connectivity – the integration of mobility alternatives** and the following Themes of Thrive Montgomery 2050: 1) Create Complete Communities through urbanism and a mix of uses and 2) Make corridors the place for new growth. I would welcome opportunity to discuss the specifics of the proposed concept and can be reached by telephone at 202.237.1225.

Best Regards,

Muriel Watkins, EVP

CrossCreek Strategies, LLC

Potomac, MD
P: 202.237.1225
E: murielwatkins@me.com

Advancing A Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring



Excerpt from Draft Storyboard

Muriel Watkins, EVP CrossCreek Strategies, LLC

Johns Hopkins Health Care and Surgery Center and Rock Spring Court Medical Office Complex



The medical complex has three (3) entrances_
Fernwood Road, Rockledge Drive, and Rock Spring Drive

Advancing A Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring



Marriott International Hotel
10400 Fernwood Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

With the announcement of the development of a new Marriott International Headquarters in downtown Bethesda, Erickson Living Retirement Community made an early offer to acquire the 775,000 square-foot property at 10400 Fernwood Road to repurpose as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC).

Advancing A Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring



The Montgomery County Planning Department began the review of the ELP Bethesda at Rock Spring Preliminary Plan of Subdivision, Sketch Plan and Local Map Amendment H-135, dated March 26, 2020. Plans call for 1,300 independent dwelling units, 160-210 assisted living and memory care units, and 30 to 50 skilled nurses units. Up to 15,000 square feet of commercial space was proposed with approximately 5,000 square feet of neighborhood serving retail.

There is considerable parking associated with the Rock Spring medical complex off Fernwood and Rockledge Drive, including structured parking facilities and open at-grade parking lots.



Even with the mix of parking, the parking garages and lots reach maximum capacity during the early morning hours between 8:30 to 9:00 AM, resulting in patients circling to find an available parking space.



Driving and parking can be problematic for a number of seniors who exit their cars with a cane or walker, indicators that a retirement community with proximity to the medical complex would be a value added.

GRAND OAKS at JOHNS HOPKINS SIBLEY HOSPITAL



A Rock Spring Life Sciences Cluster or healthcare district would represent an expansion of the Grand Oaks Assisted Living Community, developed by Johns Hopkins at Sibley Hospital.



Developed in 2000, Grand Oaks Assisted Living Community offers seniors a continuum of care options, including assisted living, memory care, respite care, and personalized care plans. Montgomery County based Forrester Construction completed the 4-story Georgian-style brick structure with 104 private apartments and common areas.



Grand Oaks is celebrating 20 Years with the banner "Heroes Work Here."

The proximity of Erickson Living Retirement Community to Johns Hopkins and the medical center complex provides an opportunity to create a connector to link CCRC residents to their primary care physicians and medical specialists without having to drive and park – using a pedestrian bridge or other people mover.

Example: The pedestrian bridge provided for safe passage from The Metropolitan apartments to the Safeway across Old Georgetown Road in Bethesda.



Example: The pedestrian bridge provides for a safe passageway from the Grosvenor Parking Garage to the Strathmore Music Center.

A low-speed autonomous self-driving vehicle could serve as an alternative safe-crossing option.

Relay Shuttle



Developed by Perrone Robotics, the Relay self-driving shuttle is now being tested in the Mosaic District in Fairfax County, Virginia. Perrone Robotics programmed a Polaris Industries GEM 6e for use as a Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV).

Olli Shuttle



The Olli, is an eight-passenger self-driving electric shuttle, developed by Robotic Research, has been tested in Montgomery County

Corporate and Professional Profile

Presentation developed by: Muriel Watkins, Executive Vice President (EVP)
CrossCreek Strategies, LLC, Potomac, MD 20854

CrossCreek Strategies, LLC is a Montgomery County-based small business providing Executive Coaching and Strategic Consulting services to select corporate and private clients.

Jay B. Watkins, President, is a former senior executive with extensive experience in urban infrastructure, public policy, business operations, business development, and strategic innovation. During his career in the Transportation (now Critical Infrastructure) Group at Parsons Corporation, Mr. Watkins served variously as Vice President and Area Manager, Washington, DC; Vice President, Strategy and Development; Senior Vice President, Technology; Senior Vice President, Transportation Operations, Senior Vice President, Capital Programs East. Mr. Watkins holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a Bachelor's Degree from Brandeis University, where he was a Thomas J. Watson Fellow. He also completed The Senior Executive Program at London Business School.

Muriel Watkins, EVP, is a Harvard Graduate School of Design trained City and Regional Planner. Ms. Watkins has had a career specializing in the marketing, sale, and repositioning of real estate assets financed by federal agencies. This focus has capitalized on her role as a former Senior Executive in federal government with the FDIC | Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) with operational responsibility for bringing online national sales to sell foreclosed residential properties as affordable housing and to enhance the competitive position of small businesses in purchasing real estate assets and bidding on federal contracts. Ms. Watkins has also provided program support to federal agencies with credit, asset sales, and grant programs and has supported strategic funding goals of major nonprofit organizations and public-private partnerships.

Point of Contact:

Muriel Watkins | E: 202.237.1225 | E: murielwatkins@me.com

Highlights of Telemedicine and Telehealth Experience

A 2020 report by Morgan Stanley Research, “***Coronavirus & the Future of U.S. Health Care***,” reviews CARES ACT provisions that offer promise for advances in telemedicine and digital health technologies for accelerating opportunities for healthcare professionals, commercial enterprises, and investors in a post COVID-19 environment. Early trials of telemedicine and telehealth projects were funded from 1994 to 2004 by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Technology Opportunities Program (TOP). Ms. Watkins served as an Expert Consultant to provide Program Support to TOP and supported strategic funding goals in developing TOP grant applications, including the following:

Telehealth Aging-in-Place Trial: Helped secure a \$679,282 Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) grant on behalf of a collaboration between a nonprofit affordable housing developer and The Catholic University of America (CUA) Biomedical Engineering Department. Project goals focused on developing e-health technologies to link residents of a 290-unit senior building to health care providers as a test of an *aging-in-place* model. A related goal was to define the skill requirements for an entry-level “telehealth technician” and to integrate individual electronic medical records. Total Project Cost: \$1,360,273 | TOP Grant: \$679,282 | 2004

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

Project: BenefitsCheckUp.org. Served as a consultant to NCOA to help secure a \$750,271 Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) grant to support the launch of BenefitsCheckUp.org, an Internet web portal designed to provide federal benefit eligibility information to senior citizens and their families. TOP funding enabled NCOA to establish a network of non-profit organizations that could aid with the prescreening of seniors lacking access or proficiency in using the Internet. Lucent Technologies was an initial partner in supporting the development of the software and software licenses. Total Project Cost: \$1,500,542 | TOP Grant: \$750,271

Project: HomeEquityAdvisor.org | Served as Expert Consultant and Technical Writer to revise and draft content for an online decision tool, *Home Equity Advisor*, to help older homeowners (ages 55 and over) understand options and risks for using home equity as a source of funds for retirement. Areas of focus include financing home improvements for “*Aging-in-Place*” using a Reverse Mortgage, FHA’s Energy Efficient Mortgage, and Department of Energy funding for energy efficiency. The website also includes a section on how to Prepare for a Natural Disaster under Strategies to Stay in Your Home Longer. Home Equity Advisor was funded by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation.

From: [Scott Plumer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [McCarthy, Caroline](#); [Sartori, Jason](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Thrive Public Hearing Testimony - 2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES
Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 3:26:22 PM
Attachments: [2020 COALITON ACCORD on RURAL LIVING FINAL V105 circ 201209.pdf](#)
[envelope 2017 to 2026.png](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I am honored to submit for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing record the attached 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities (The Accord) as testimony.

As reflected in The Accord the signatories to date are Darnestown Civic Association (DCA), Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA), Boyds Civic Association (BCA), West Montgomery County Citizens Association (WMCCA), and Sugarloaf Citizens Association (SCA).

Invitations to prospective signatories are ongoing.

The 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities controls development and traffic outside the sewer envelope to protect the environment and reduce sprawl.

The Accord builds community support across the county to achieve three objectives:

- Extremely restrict expansion of the current sewer envelope.
(helps stop dense development in rural areas and protects natural resources)
- Mitigate current and prevent future highway and arterial level non-transit traffic in areas outside the current sewer envelope. (reduces traffic in rural areas)
- Acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.

Respectfully,

Scott Plumer

2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES
(C ARC 2020)

We seek General Plan level and other legal protections for Rural Communities. Rural Communities as referenced herein are areas that are outside the current sewer envelope. The protections we seek are to 1a) ensure extremely high restrictions on sewer service and 1b) mitigate current and prevent future corridor level (highway and arterial) non-transit traffic in Rural Communities.

We seek explicit General Plan 2) acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.

The Signatories implore the Planning Commission to work collaboratively to enumerate and the County Council to enact legislation required to specifically provide for and codify via Montgomery County's new General Plan; and as otherwise required in other plans such as the Ten-Year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan and throughout the Montgomery County Code, Zoning Ordinance, and Code of Montgomery County Regulations (COMCOR); and work to effect the same with area, state, county, local jurisdictions, agencies, and commissions; and reiterate and reinforce at county operational levels; in a manner to cause:

1. Protections for areas that are outside the current sewer envelope to ensure
 - a. Extremely high restrictions on sewer service, and
 - b. Mitigation of current and prevention of future corridor level (highway and arterial) non-transit traffic in these areas.
2. Recognition of Rural Communities and their vital characteristics.

Rural living is resilient, healthy, equitable living in a sustainable, harmonious coexistence with the natural environment and heritage sites. Stewardship of all ecosystem components, especially regionally critical systemic components such as native plants, watersheds, groundwater and soils is the prime guiding factor in planning human activities in Rural Communities. Curation of heritage sites and their surrounds is an exceptional feature of Rural Communities. Open spaces, low levels of impervious surfaces, and low occupancy densities span the entirety of Rural Communities. Rural Communities strive for sufficiency in production and consumption of water, food, energy, and waste disposal, first and foremost with local resources.

2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES
(C ARC 2020)
SIGNATORY STATEMENT

_____ hereby attaches our name to
and express our support for the 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities.

We seek General Plan level and other legal protections for Rural Communities. Rural Communities as referenced herein are areas that are outside the current sewer envelope. The protections we seek are to 1a) ensure extremely high restrictions on sewer service and 1b) mitigate current and prevent future corridor level (highway and arterial) non-transit traffic in Rural Communities.

We seek explicit General Plan 2) acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.

Signed

Printed Name

Date

Title

Organization

My signature represents and warrants that I have full authority to execute this Signatory Statement on behalf of the organization named above and said execution has been duly entered in the records of the organization.

Please return via fax to 301-963-4031, via text to 301-963-9799, or via email to scott.plumer@verizon.net

Should your organization ever wish to withdraw just submit this form again with a notation indicating your desire to withdraw.

2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES

(C ARC 2020)

LIST OF SIGNATORIES

(as of December 9, 2020)

| DATE | ORGANIZATION |
|------------|---|
| 11/8/2020 | Darnestown Civic Association |
| 11/15/2020 | Montgomery Countryside Alliance |
| 11/16/2020 | Boyds Civic Association |
| 11/16/2020 | West Montgomery County Citizens Association |
| 11/23/2020 | Sugarloaf Citizens Association |

Montgomery County Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan, 2017 - 2026



My name is Scott Plumer testifying as an individual for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing record.

As I reviewed the new General Plan draft and found common themes with previous General Plans I began to wonder what items were missing from previous general plans that allowed special interests and external trends to create undesired development. I wondered how twenty-seven years into transit oriented development my community is overrun with corridor level traffic overflow. I looked at protections afforded to various areas in previous plans and then was shocked as essential items dropped out of the current draft and a myriad of implied exceptions were included rather than strongly worded protections. Protections between goals when they collide, compete or otherwise impinge on each other and prevention of interference when goals overrun one another and create collateral damage causing goals to suffer in an unintended or undesired manner are also notably absent.

The more I read, the more concerned I become over gaps in policy intentions, expressions, and direction, especially for the area I live in, areas like it, and the Ag Reserve and Rural Open Space.

These concerns all coalesced into a coherent, concise General Plan level policy regarding Rural Communities and specifically those communities outside the sewer envelope. The focus was on achievable General Plan additions.

The result was the 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities (The Accord).

The Accord's intent is to stop enablement of higher densities by containing the sewer envelope, prevent corridor overflow which is likely by far the primary cause of vehicle miles travelled and congestion on roads outside the envelope, and embrace low density green living in the areas outside the sewer envelope. These things protect the environment, prevent sprawl, and celebrate rural living.

I've taken to calling the area outside the sewer envelope the **Heirloom Area**. I think the name reflects its heritage, its ecosystem, its preciousness, and our intent to pass it on to future generations. The Heirloom element comprises around a third of the land area of the county. Of course, "Area" may not be the best descriptor to use for the Heirloom land and is pro tem.

The Accord does not endorse miniature cities dotting the landscape. It does not envision densities anywhere near enough to justify those kinds of centers. Nor do we want to create high density housing in them to justify them. The unique challenges of living in harmony with the immediate ecosystem require a much lighter human imprint.

The Accord does allow for growth at extremely low densities as exists today because it is needed for the basic functioning of our communities. You cannot preserve a way of life or an ecosystem by bottling it up like a fossil, it must thrive.

Sprawl to me means when a density gradient exceeds its planned boundaries. At the low densities we use in our definitions, additional rural residential development would not require new infrastructure.

The Accord adds a layer of stewardship to occupancy and ownership. Correcting wayward stewardship of land by residents is vital. The rural living description in Item 2 is intended to lead to a code of conduct for rural residents. It speaks generally to good land stewardship and having sufficiency meaning a negative GHG profile, power from the community first, and much more. It is a creed not fluff. There are huge policy implications throughout Item 2 speaking to stewardship and more.

The Accord calls out native plants as regionally critical systemic ecosystem components. As we get to regulatory zoning language we can, for example, advocate for a high percent of cover to be native plants on all new development over a certain size and support programs that move to correct already decimated lands.

It is not enough to encourage density where you want it, you need to stop its increase where it is most likely to undesirably occur. Where I live is ground zero for that battle and has been for decades. The second crossing and outer beltway were right here or next door. We are on the edge of the sewer envelope. We have a high density of Rustic Roads. We have four state roads and two more to our east and two more to our west. Our western and northern border is the largest watershed in the County (Seneca Creek), on the east a smaller watershed (Muddy Branch) and on the south the Potomac River. We border the Agricultural Reserve and the largest Historic District in Maryland.

I believe it is time to stand on the shoulders of giants and up the ante on The Reserve, our critical natural resources, undesirable corridor level traffic overflow, protect the environment, prevent sprawl, and celebrate Heirloom communities.

From the perspective of recent Montgomery County planning evolution, The Accord seeks to extend the area of the 1980 Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space to most of the areas originally excluded and then defined as Rural Residential in the 1993 General Plan refinements. The Accord also seeks to strengthen protections for those areas. The Accord has redefined the area as those lands outside the current sewer envelope.

I invite the Montgomery County Planning Board and staff to join The Accord by adopting it into the mainstream elements of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan.

I look forward to the collaborative work needed to improve the planning practice with respect to the Heirloom element and allow its communities to thrive. The challenges include:

- allow our Heirloom Area to thrive without being overrun
- codify the Heirloom community creed
- detail the much neglected T1 and T2 transects of New Urbanism
- explore the notion of compaction as a one size fits all form of human settlement that has persisted in various forms ever since the Neolithic Revolution
- examine conventional wisdom of minimum densities required for well-functioning communities
- disprove the accepted ubiquitous mutual exclusivity between investing space and money in the private realm versus the public realm
- distinguish between the higher density rural communities with their rural villages and the lower density Heirloom communities and Heirloom junctions

The strategic policies of the Accord

- Fortify the commitment to Agricultural, Rural Residential, and Open Space
- Celebrate our heritage
- Protect natural resources and local ecosystems
- Prevent sprawl
- Allow for our rural residential communities to thrive sustainably without density

My sincere thanks to each of you and your staff for the work you do as stewards of our community and for allowing me and my community to be a small part of the new General Plan. It was a great moment of serendipity to stumble upon the effort, carve out time to participate, and a treasured opportunity to bid a fond farewell to 8787.

Respectfully,
Scott Plumer

From: [Romulo Huezo](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Cc: [Romulo Huezo](#)
Subject: Fwd: 2050 Vision
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 6:54:25 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Attachment available until Dec 10, 2020

Greetings,

I like to ask you to please forward this information to the [Montgomery County Planning Board](#) and for the Vision for 2050. Environmental issues are a priority around the world and some countries are taking leap steps to approach this issue different ways.

My vision is to leave a better world for our children, and we know for a fact that CO2 emissions is a contributing factor to the climate change. In fact, there is a world organization that is addressing this issue with technology and resources, the organization is The World Hydrogen Council, <https://hydrogencouncil.com/en/>, where they have a vision just like the Montgomery County for the year 2050.

Therefore, I like to share with the board the attached presentation(in PDF) so they are aware of the benefits and opportunities that this technology can offer to the Montgomery county, Maryland, and the USA. California is implementing a plan for the year 2050 as well, and they are on their way to achieve it.

Please make sure that the board members receive a copy of this presentation and I available for questions and to present the importance of this technology to the board members and how can they include in their planning the use of clean fuels technologies.

Thank you, and looking forward to hear form you.

Romulo Huezo
+1669-294-1181
romuloh01@gmail.com
rhuezo@gmx.com

Note: the presentation is published as a separate document



December 10, 2020

Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Written Testimony on the Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board Commissioners,

The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) appreciates the Planning Board's creation of the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan to update Montgomery County's General Plan that seeks to guide future land use and growth for the next 30 years.

MCEDC supports the draft plan's vision to work toward a more competitive, inclusive, and resilient economy in Montgomery County. MCEDC shares in the plan's Economic Health priority 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.

The draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan acknowledges the foundation of the 1964 Wedges and Corridors Plan and builds on those concepts that helped the County become a top-tier community nationally. Like Wedges and Corridors, the goals and policies described in Thrive 2050 will only help the County succeed if they are implemented. MCEDC recognizes implementation of such a plan is not a simple task. It requires a wide network of partners and long-term thinking. MCEDC is committed to working with the Planning Board in the advancement of the plan so that we can all be collectively synchronized in the development of the best corridors for our Montgomery County attraction, retention, and expansion efforts.

In the Thrive 2050 Resilient Economy section, MCEDC aligns with Goal 3.7 to create a culture of regionalism. We agree that regional initiatives can play a crucial role to ensure that Montgomery County and the region continue to be globally competitive. MCEDC is focusing an increasing amount of its efforts on promoting regionalism within the Greater Washington and Maryland National Capital area. MCEDC is a founding member of the Maryland National Capital Regional Economic Development Alliance (MNCREDA), a partnership of six Maryland counties (Anne Arundel, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's) designed to collectively address regional economic development

challenges and opportunities. In addition, MCEDC is also playing a leadership role with ConnectedDMV, a public-private regional collaboration of executives in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. ConnectedDMV is creating initiatives to support regional economic development initiatives such as: a Regional Economic Development Strategy; a Global Pandemic Prevention & Biodefense Center; a Quantum Innovation Center; and a Regional Cybersecurity Initiative, among others. These efforts can further the plan's Goal 3.7.

Becoming a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, as described in Goal 3.5, has also been an increasingly large focus of MCEDC. Home to nearly 40 federal laboratories—more than any other county in the nation—federal technology transfer presents immense opportunities for entrepreneurship locally. Further collaborations with the County Executive's team regarding a potential university research presence at White Flint, as well as ongoing conversations with the University System of Maryland, the Universities at Shady Grove, and Montgomery College, will support technology and workforce development with our local academic institutions. We continue to seek new methods to leverage our Montgomery County federal and university assets to promote increased local innovation and entrepreneurship.

Goal 3.2, to grow vibrant commercial centers that are attractive to our business recruitment targets, is also a focus of MCEDC. Although we do not directly develop land use policy, MCEDC can serve as a key connection to relay feedback from the business community to entities like the Montgomery Planning Board, the County Executive, and the County Council. Through these continued collaborations, we can grow communities that meet the needs of future business prospects.

Thank you for your consideration of MCEDC's comments. We welcome the opportunity to help promote a more diverse, inclusive, and stronger economy in Montgomery County. We look forward to further discussion and collaboration regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050 and its implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin H. Wu".

Benjamin H. Wu
President and CEO

From: Afzal, Khalid
To: Afzal, Khalid
Subject: FW: Tangible constraints and lack of specifics seen in the material available for Public comment in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 11:17:44 AM

From: M O <chiapetfarmer@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2020 1:01 AM
To: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>
Cc: Kronenberg, Robert <robert.kronenberg@montgomeryplanning.org>
Subject: Tangible constraints and lack of specifics seen in the material available for Public comment in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

Myself and hundreds of my nearby neighbors have found the time for public comment in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan to be unduly limiting, onerous and constraining during this time of Pandemic COVID-19. As I was unable to physically be present at the November 19, 2020 Planning Board Meeting for Thrive Montgomery 2050, I did watch all 6+ hours of this recorded public hearing for Thrive Montgomery 2050. I echo the concerns of many of the public testimonies delivered in this hearing that there simply hasn't been enough time for the Public to adequately review such a varied and involved vision for the future of Montgomery County. Many of the presenters and speakers were representing special interest groups in the County and many from East and Down County, notably much more experienced in the "urban" lifestyle highlighted throughout the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. A representation of 85 citizens from the County is not nearly statistically relevant to show a cross-section of civic involvement in the County. I did not hear of this Planning Meeting until after it had occurred and in summary on WTOP on the radio. I understand only the Washington Times, a paper of much lower circulation than the Washington Post, had carried notice of this planned meeting. I went back and tried to find as much information as I could on the earlier, formative community outreach Zoom meetings this Summer on Thrive Montgomery 2050 and found these Zoom calls covering the Elements of Thrive Montgomery 2050 had been viewed at most by 10 to 20 Viewers, with even less actual Zoom call participants. I find this to be a poor representation and miscalculation of vital information the Public should be made well aware of. I feel the Public should be given additional consideration of more time to review the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan and even the opportunity to speak up at another Zoom Public Hearing on Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Specific to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan, I found a lack of specificity or alignment of tangible measures that the Thrive Montgomery 2050 hopes to convey. Highlighting areas of notable departure from a specific vision for Thrive Montgomery 2050, include a lack of a primary emphasis on at least three critical factors in the future of Montgomery County: Climate change, a lack of emphasis for Commercial Tech Sector Development long envisioned in the Up-County, and a lack of consideration for the Economic value to the County reflective of personal "agency" contributions-seen through a lens as a possible quality of life determinant or measurement, a motivating factor in pursuing a life-rewarding career and compensation, and as a factor in civic Environmental innovation, where area HOAs can contribute to address Climate Change.

I will attempt to concisely highlight these three areas of concern. Climate change is the smothering 800 lbs. elephant in the room. Not only does it have the potential to be a perennial "black swan", it also has the potential to spin off other potential "black swan" events, such as devastation to our watershed storm-water management and the encroachment we've seen on the endemic flora and fauna of our varied

environmental landscape. COVID-19 can be seen to be related to a considerable Environmental encroachment and deterioration of undeveloped areas. Besides COVID-19, our area public utilities pay billions of dollars a year in remediation for the effects of storm-water runoff and disastrous storms, including the unpredictable derecho we had a few years back. The billions a year one public utility pays to the U.S. Government under consent decree for unpredictable and unmanageable run-off into the Chesapeake Bay and our waterways will not diminish with the heavy infrastructure upheaval envisioned by the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. Our most cherished waterway, the Chesapeake Bay is at an inflection point in whether it can adequately meet the Water Quality measures mandated by the EPA and if it will continue to be a generational amenity which brings tourism and much needed vacations to the area. All this to say is that I echo a foremost priority of the Environment and Climate Change in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan heard at the Public Hearing on November 19, 2020 from my fellow neighbors such as David Blockstein, Walter Weis, Lauren Brown, Howard Simms, Ken Bower. Harold Phori, Ms. Wilkinson from Friendship Heights and Ms. Denise from the Audobon Society. Climate change, Environmental protection and the risk of further Environmental incursion, fostering further impervious landscapes, should be the primary and main type of topics by which any greater long-term vision of Montgomery County is examined.

A second highlight the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is short on is the emphasis of Up-County Commercial development of the technology sector, long envisioned by many previous administrations. It is vital to the Up-County tax base and the livelihood of our well-educated citizenry to bring technology, including biotech, from Rockville, all the way to Frederick, particularly in the much needed Germantown, MD area. By emphasizing an expansion of the tax base through Commercial enterprise, more and more of Montgomery's publicly-educated finest can take advantage of the quality of life that has sustained this region for decades. Commercial development in the tech sector should be a primary plank in the vision for Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Thirdly, a thorough appreciation of personal "agency" should be a hallmark of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. Personal "agency" at all levels of development is huge motivational and dignified value that both the individual and many cultures esteem throughout our society. Why would you take away this personal "agency" from our beloved senior population which will make up more than 21% of the County population, just to consign them to living cramped with few transportation options, from jammed buses to potentially crowded thoroughfares? Confinement of living spaces for our seniors is like asking them to live in a group home mentality. Such an honored generation should be appreciated for their years of contribution to the Montgomery County tax base and wisdom and knowledge they've conveyed to successive generations. Why would they want to be told that the community they lived in for decades may be re-zoned and they would have to resort to a limited quality of life option? Equally, it's hard to envision a Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan limited to foot traffic, bicycles and buses when the car made the American Dream a reality and a journey of epic personal evolution. From Moses to early America, Life is all about the journey, isn't it? It should also be reflected that little credence is given to the fact that many of the cars Americans come to experience as their sense of freedom will be electric cars, run on 5G technology, which will help to control coordinated traffic patterns, as much as big city buses. Surely one can find many more autonomous things to do in their own self-driving car than a packed self-driving bus. Which is why I feel any successful vision of Thrive Montgomery 2050 should include quality of life measurements and the individual's right to have their own "agency". The Scandinavian countries are known by their perennial ranking as some of the happiest countries in the World and I think we should look at their cherished values of self-reliance and agency as factors for emphasis for quality of life indicators and metrics for any practicalities that are demonstrated by the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. As some of your demographic data that went into the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan show, as a population becomes more educated, they have less and less children, and if Scandinavia is any leading indicator, many people are deciding to live separately, in individual or much smaller family units, **by choice**. In the era of social media and personalized medicine the trend-line is moving towards the individual and not the larger family unit. What demographic groups have built for themselves and their contributions to the County should be dignified, not warehoused. My second point emphasizing a personal "agency" of career vocation and related compensation is another trend-line where the corporation has shifted health benefits and other previous job amenities to the responsibility of the individual job-seeker. The knowledge Economy rewards the individual who has capitalized and crystallized years of education in a life-sustaining career. The current Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan doesn't take in account the increasing emphasis on distance-learning

education nor the further societal changes after COVID-19. Combining the notion of "agency" with Environmental Community stewardship efforts underway by organized communities and the governance of HOAs large and small, I think we're discounting these organic, bottom-up inspired efforts. The "agency" myself and my fellow neighbors find in our Community HOA help us come up with innovative ideas for Community Clean-up Day to thinking how we can plan for Community charging stations for our greenhouse gas-emission free cars.

With even our County Executive Marc Elrich acknowledging an extenuating COVID-19 related recession may shortchange County budgets by up to a billion dollars a year for the next six years, is now really the ideal time to consider a sizeable infrastructure development plan as outlined Thrive Montgomery 2050? I think this is a significant reason the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan should give priority to the three significant practicalities I outlined above and give the public more time to season their opinion and take in account this "New Normal" prior to closing the time for Public comment on this Plan and even consider holding another Public Zoom hearing.

My Best Regards,
M. Allen

From: [Josephine Rios-Davis](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Marc.Elrch@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Rice@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [councilmember.riemer](#)
Subject: Written Testimony - THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 FEEDBACK. From - Aspen Hill Civic Association
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 11:56:26 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Honorable Montgomery County Leadership,

The Aspen Hill community has expressed serious concerns about the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan. Their inquiries and associated uncertainties have been brought to the attention of the Aspen Hill Civic Association.

We will educate our community, follow-up with their priorities, perspectives and desires, and ensure you are fully aware of our community's position regarding the Thrive Montgomery 2050 vision.

Thank you,

Aspen Hill Civic Association

From: Patricia Johnson <pdjohnson01@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2020 12:21 PM
To: Anderson, Casey <Casey.Anderson@mncppc-mc.org>; MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>; Wright, Gwen <gwen.wright@montgomeryplanning.org>
Cc: Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov; Marc.Elrach@montgomerycountymd.gov; Councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov
Subject: Comments on Thrive Montgomery / Public Hearing Nov 19

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson,

I virtually observed the Planning Board hearing on TM2050 on November 19th. It was alarming that such an important plan would have limited participation by County citizens. We were allowed to testify, voice concerns or praise the program. However, there was no give and take, nor were questions answered. The only interaction was your acknowledgement of citizens for their testimony. The rest of the PB were silent and invisible spectators.

What is being proposed in Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a sea change for a citizen's right to choose to live in the type of area where they want to live. Montgomery County is known for welcoming R60 and R90 zoned neighborhoods, and outstanding schools. These are both endangered within the TM plan of density with the lack of funding for infrastructure for transit and education. A vision as huge and all encompassing as Thrive Montgomery cannot exist without having a sound fiscal system in place to fulfill it.

The Plan's premise, as it is written, appears to be "that one size fits all" and "if you build it, they will come". This is a flawed theory unless the County has the enormous funds to create and retrofit *Complete Communities/ and 15Minute Living* into existing areas. The actual composition of a plan, as important as this, is in enormous need of editing. It is redundant on almost everyone one of the 167 pages. There are no specifics and the repetitive nature of the document doesn't lend clarity. The Plan is also fatally flawed without a county wide effort to generate new jobs. To pass this plan without an economic or employment blueprint, that is realistic, during this time of severe budgetary deficits, is not in the best interests of its citizens. It is especially difficult to express such interests during this time when there is no opportunity for close interaction. This is extremely worrisome to many Montgomery County citizens who have been silent on the sidelines, only able to watch. I also virtually attended the meeting on Tuesday evening, December 8th when two Council Members of the Town of Chevy Chase asked questions of Chairman Anderson and Director Wright. I applaud Council Members Cornelius and Lane for their efforts. I also thank Chair Anderson and Director Wright for answering questions for two hours. However, again, there were no specifics but at least an acknowledgement that the plan needed to be rewritten and more brief.

A very troubling aspect of this Plan is the reference to racism, restrictive covenants and red-lining. I was appalled to see in big black letters on a white screen during the public hearing on the November 19th, that "*zoning is racist*". Those words are destructive to a community that, for the most part, tries to work together for the common good. Overall, Montgomery County has good spirited people. The language in this Plan does not bring out the best in us. **It is polarizing.** It is reflective of the miasma that is now gripping us at a federal level. The Plan is cavalier in its depiction of restrictions and is an incomplete story. My community has not had restrictive covenants since the 1960's. In fact, it has organically grown diverse over the years. I also find it curious that the Planning Staff refers to racism and zoning at this time, when earlier, they consciously overlooked an African American cemetery buried beneath cement in their haste to give developers one more piece of property to build on.

The goal for Thrive Montgomery is to produce more housing that is affordable and attainable with the idea that the ability to live equitably will attract businesses and will bring jobs to the area. The idea is that Complete Communities with mass transit

and walkability will attract young people who will come and jobs will follow. It doesn't work that way. I have two daughters who grew up here and migrated to Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively because jobs were offered, then they found places to live. The latter part wasn't easy, but the jobs were good, so they stayed.

One more thing about my family's migration, my youngest daughter was the recipient of a \$35000 incubator grant from LA County. Six years later her company employs 80 people, and will do 100 million dollars in on-line sales during a pandemic.

The key to Thrive Montgomery seems to be in "missing middle housing" that will create economic growth (and somehow..jobs), fix deficits and equalize inequity. Many listening and unable to speak, think this is a simplistic solution that looks like a Global ZTA that will override a General Plan. We already see a ZTA proposed by Councilmember Jawando, which looks to invade the R60 neighborhoods. We know that the Planning Staff is not an author of this ZTA. Though Chair Anderson stated that "missing middle housing" is just a "small piece of it", that doesn't ring true. Those of us that live in single family homes are afraid that we will wake up one day to find a townhouse development, duplex or triplex springing up next door where a single home has been torn down. The impact to infrastructure is real. The additional density of "missing middle housing" puts a strain on already antiquated electrical grids, sewage and water supplies, garbage collection, storm water management, internet capacities, and roads in need of repair. The skeleton of the county has aging bones that are crumbling. To depend on developers to solve these infrastructure problems in a bad business model. In fact, when you took your program to those parts of the county that were underserved, many asked that the county services mentioned above be improved where they live. Residents weren't asking for new housing, they were asking for improvements where they lived. The other idea in jeopardy is that "missing middle housing" will be affordable. Those units will be built at market prices, especially if they are to be built in areas that are already developed. They will not be "affordable" or equitable. Why not support the protection and preservation of "naturally occurring" existing affordable housing units within and surrounding the County's business districts. Why tear down those affordable buildings to put up dense high-rises that are out of reach financially for most? Your failure to identify and protect those existing areas is inexplicable. The threat is that these policies create a land-grab for developers which will leave the diverse segment of the County behind.

One must also take into account that 21% of the population in MoCo is over 65. Many of us remain at home to "age in place". The anti-car philosophy throughout the plan is ambitious but impractical. *Fifteen Minute Complete Communities* has to be specifically redefined. As Chair Anderson said: "Fifteen minutes can mean many things in Montgomery County." It can mean walking to a neighborhood store, biking 5 miles or driving 15. It can mean "walking to the end of one's driveway." In bad weather (hot, cold, rain, snow) it can mean getting in a car to do simple errands.

When buying a week's groceries it also means driving. As far as *old people* are concerned. We are not about to give up driving and move into a condo even "at 81" as Chair Anderson suggested. You underestimate the 'baby boomers'. We are independent, mobile, like to walk and bike, but depend on a car for vital necessities as well as entertainment. This Plan waves off a significant population in the county. It is not a representative plan.

The Plan also mentions the need for these *Complete Communities* to have "a sense of place", availability of healthy food, good education, mass transit and green spaces. These necessary green spaces are earmarked for exercise, community gatherings as well as contemplative spots, all within *15 minutes* of living. Forgive me, if I distrust this philosophy so easily expounded upon. I have to recall the Planning Board's agreement to the density of Westwood Shopping Center and it's postage stamp sized "*civic green*" that was supposed to supply all those things to the community of 200 multi- bedroom condo units and 75 townhomes on the same section of land. That "civic green" even has a "jewel box" of a commercial structure on it. It is less than a 1/2 acre. It also brings to mind the plans for Kensington Senior Living. A cement building projected at 82 feet high with 112 units and no green space *at all* on the developers plans. If you remember, the jewel in the crown of the Westbard Sector Plan was the naturalization of the Willett Branch to become a "park". Those plans are back burnered until all the development of the area has been done. That green space is accounted for on the Planning Board's paper, but will not be a reality for 40 years, if then. The size of the green space described in that Sector Plan is shrinking as developers expand into its borders.

I am aware that *TM2050* is a longterm vision. This is only a *draft*. It needs clarity, specifics and a tremendous amount of editing. We, who live in areas that will be impacted, request that we have input into this draft as it goes through changes at work sessions at the Council level. How can you include us? Will you include us? The virtual implementation is limited, and we sit as an audience. We need active discussion. This is too important to leave to a one-sided conversation. It is a long-term plan that will evolve over 50 years time according to it's authors. However, damaging short term changes, like ZTAs that affect cherished, historic neighborhoods can be shoe-horned in place using this overriding plan as a blueprint. We have to get this right or it will irreparably hurt Montgomery County. Tell us how to work with you so that you will listen. Please enter my letter into the public record.

Sincerely,
Patricia Depuy Johnson
5301 Oakland Road
Chevy Chase, Md. 20815
#3019225382



Friends of White Oak Board of Directors

December 10, 2020

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board Members:

Friends of White Oak appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Thrive 2020 Public Hearing Draft (10/5/2020).

Friends of White Oak is a board composed of and representing residents and business owners in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan area. As way of background, we'd like to provide information on the demographics of the Master Plan area (data based in 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan):

- population 35,655; 14,195 households
- renters account for 36 percent of households (11 percent higher than countywide)
- 43% of the residential units are multifamily, 57% single family
- median household income \$75,400 which is 22% below the countywide median
- 64% of residents non-white (39% African American (compared to 16 percent countywide), 14% Hispanic, 9% Asian)
- 42% speak a language other than English at home

Friends of White Oak supports the overall objectives of the plan and appreciate the plan's recognition of the historic inequities of public resource allocation in Montgomery County, which has shortchanged our area on many fronts. We agree with the statement that future planning decisions must dictate "[p]olicies that specifically support racial equity and social justice includ[ing]...ensuring existing and new communities of color receive an equitable share of services and investments".

We'd like to highlight a couple of specific areas where we feel the recommendations are particularly actionable in support of the objectives of the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan:

-Develop guidance to conduct a racial equity and social justice impact analysis when planning, designing, and budgeting for new community facilities such as libraries, recreation centers,

schools, parks, and public infrastructure to determine whether the new amenity will be accessible to nearby residents of all backgrounds and will reduce any existing inequities in access.

-Ensure that every community has a network of inclusive, safe, and accessible public parks, trails, and other recreational spaces that connect neighborhoods, increase opportunities for social interaction, encourage active lifestyles, and connect residents to nature by “study[ing] the walking and transit accessibility of the existing network of parks and trails, nature centers, and cultural sites to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to parks and trails for all residents.”

Given proximity of the Paint Branch and Northwest Branch to the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, we wholeheartedly support the recommendation for the county to develop an interconnected web of transportation and green corridors focused on pedestrians and bicyclists. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Planning Board, County Council, and County Executive to identify transportation and green corridors in White Oak and develop an action plan to link stream valleys, natural lands, parks, open spaces with trails for walking and biking and to link Paint Branch and Northwest Branch (Action 7.2.2.a and 7.7.7b)).

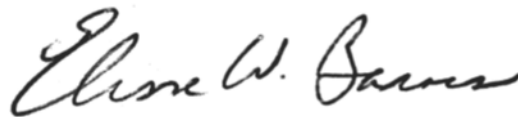
In conclusion, Planning Staff has correctly acknowledged that the current general plan and principally the 1993 amendment, led to the current and longstanding dearth of meaningful development, amenities and progress in the White Oak Master Plan area and other east-county communities. While we applaud the core objectives under the draft plan, the plan should outline the prioritized implementation of these objectives in areas of the county in most need (east-county).

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to further discussions with the Planning Board on these, and other, recommendations in the report.

Sincerely,



David M. Feehan
FOWO Co-chair



Elisse W. Barnes, JD, PhD
FOWO Co-chair

Friends of White Oak Board of Directors
Office of the County Executive 101 Monroe Street Rockville Maryland 20850

From: [Donna R. Savage](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050 written comments
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 4:21:31 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

To Mr. Anderson & the Board:

(Sorry for last-minute comments.) I hope that there will be a special committee and timeline established to review the goals and implementation of Thrive Montgomery 2050 in light of the pandemic and its aftermath. As we are seeing now, our community life -- and all that entails -- has changed radically and continues to evolve as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In my opinion, our life in Montgomery County will never be quite the same, which changes have both positive and negative aspects. We need to ensure that this incredibly powerful Plan for our County's future remains as relevant as possible after these pandemic-induced changes take hold.

Specifically, 2-year and 4-year (or 1-year and 3-year) evaluations of the Plan should be scheduled after its adoption, with focus on the changes that occur after the final adoption. A committee of 5 individuals, from diverse stakeholder sectors, should be tasked with this specific focus and should be established soon after the Plan's adoption. This committee should be as transparent as possible, should hold hearings to get resident & business input, and should be given the mandate (and power) to provide the publicly recommended tweaks to planners, the Planning Board, and the Council.

Thank you for hearing my comments. Be well, and best wishes for the upcoming holidays.

-- Donna

Donna R. Savage
10804 McComas Ct.
Kensington, MD 20895
301-942-2447
intfingers@aol.com

"Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it." - Chinese proverb

North White Oak Civic Association

December 10, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson
Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I am submitting this letter on behalf of the North White Oak Civic Association in response to the Thrive 2050 staff draft.

Our association appreciates the staff report's recognition of the historic inequities of public resource allocation in Montgomery County, which has short-changed our eastern Montgomery County community many fronts over the years.

One of the areas where our community has been shortchanged pertains to transportation. Since the 1981 White Oak Master Plan, there had been recommendations for separated lanes on US 29 for bus transit. While we pleased to see the launch of the Flash bus, we look forward to the County addressing ways the US 29 can be reconfigured to allow the Flash bus by-pass rush hour congestion.

The other area where our community has been shortchanged pertains to the limited accessibility of the forested areas of the nearby Paint Branch and Northwest Branch Parks. While there have been many recommendations in Master Plans over the years for improved trails and connectors to our nearby parks, very few have ever been

implemented.¹ However, have watched major trail improvements be made throughout parts of the county that are west and northwest of White Oak.²

To this point, we are supportive of the report's recommendation that every community has a network of inclusive, safe, and accessible public parks, trails, and other recreational spaces that connect neighborhoods, increase opportunities for social interaction, encourage active lifestyles. We support the recommendation that the walking and transit accessibility of the existing network of parks and trails, nature centers, and cultural sites be studied to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to parks and trails for all residents.

We wholeheartedly support the recommendation for the county to develop an interconnected web of transportation and green corridors focused on pedestrians and bicyclists. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Planning Board, County Council, and County Executive to identify transportation and green corridors in White Oak and develop an action plan to link stream valleys, natural lands, parks, open spaces with trails for walking and biking and to link Paint Branch and Northwest Branch as described in footnote 1.

The other area of the report we'd like to comment on pertains to the recommendation that the Planning Board explore changes to the zoning code to support the creation of single room occupancy (SRO) or personal living quarters (PLQ) by-right in all residential zones. Our association has provided input to the county as to how best to regulate and oversee unlicensed single-family rentals, which these SROs and PLQs would be. The county typically does not license these rentals and has nowhere near the resources today to inspect these properties for which an owner does apply for a license. Major increases in county resources and strengthening of the county's rental housing code would be needed to ensure the health and safety of residents of these units.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to further discussions with the Planning Board on these, and other, recommendations in the report.

¹ (1) Provide a Class I bikeway along the ICC right of way (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (2) Class I bikeway through the Naval Surface Warfare Center between Powder Mill and New Hampshire (1981 White Oak Master Plan). (3) Extend Paint Branch trail from Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park to Old Columbia Pike. This path connection would greatly benefit the regional hiking and bikeway network because it allows passage underneath US 29, which otherwise forms a barrier to recreational bicycle and pedestrian travel. The best location for this path appears to be on the east side of the stream (Fairland Master Plan area), with a new bridge crossing at the existing southern end of the Paint Branch trail. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (4) Extend Paint Branch trail north of Fairland Road to the ICC right of way. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (5) Improve the Northwest Branch trail from Randolph Road to US 29 on the west side of the stream (located in the Kemp Mill-Four Corners Planning Area) by providing boardwalk from the Randolph Road underpass to Old Randolph Road. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (6) Provid[e] a paved trail from Old Randolph Road south to Kemp Mill Road on the west side of the stream. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (7) Improve the existing unpaved trail from Kemp Mill Road to US 29. (1997 White Oak Master Plan).

² See Montgomery County Parks Department trail directory:
<https://www.montgomeryparks.org/activities/park-trails/>

Sincerely,

Barry Wides

Barry Wides
President, North White Oak Civic Association
11803 Ithica Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20904

From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [councilmember.riemer](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [Evan Glass](#); [Ward, Tiffany](#); [Wellington, Meredith](#); [Iseli, Claire](#); [MenareFoundation@aol.com](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Abel Olivo](#); [Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [jeffrey.weisner@gmail.com](#); [Rick Sullivan](#); [Walter Weiss](#); [mtidwell@chesapeakeclimate.org](#); [Philip Bogdonoff](#); [David Blockstein](#); [Susanne Lee](#); [Susanne Lowen](#); [Susan Eisendrath](#); [Libertelli, Joe](#); [Joseph Heather Bruskin](#); [Wurglitz, Al](#); [Anne James](#); [John Parrish](#); [rq steinman](#); [Sylvia Tognetti](#); [Shruti Bhatnagar](#); [Pablo Blank](#); [Scott Fosler](#); [Galen Tromble](#); [Alan Bowser](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Lauren Greenberger](#); [Tina Slater](#); [Kit Gage](#); [Ken Bawer](#); [Deby Sarabia](#)
Subject: Request adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in Thrive 2050 - now at this stage of Planning Board review & revision.
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 5:47:44 PM
Attachments: [Letter to Chair Anderson 12-10-2020 requesting extension of Thrive deadlines to enable greater & more diverse public input.pdf](#)
[The Climate Mobilization & Co-Signatores letter to Chair Anderson on thrive comment delay Dec. 4 2020.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson,

Attached is a letter to you from TAME Coalition and Montgomery Countryside Alliance, echoing a prior sign-on letter to you of November 19, requesting greater public input at this stage of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Today's letter renews this request, based on the need for greater inclusion of, and equity of opportunities to participate, for frontline communities who have not participated to date in Thrive, and adds the imperative, in support of the December 4, 2020 letter to you from The Climate Mobilization - Montgomery County and their associates (also attached), that the Planning Board enable full public participation and integration of Thrive with the County's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP).

In summary, we request that you provide adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in discussions, and further planning staff work, on the draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, for three reasons: (1) to provide greater diversity and equity, and full participation by all affected communities, in the process for the General Plan Update; (2) the General Plan must contain comprehensive recommendations to address Climate Change that are consistent and in harmony with the CARP; and (3) the public must be able to review and provide comment on the revised draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, before it's submitted to the Council.

As our letter notes, it's essential that there be robust public comment on the Thrive recommendations, and so far, that has not happened. Thank you for your consideration.

Diane Cameron

(co-signers Margaret Schoap, TAME Coalition, and Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance)

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Diane Cameron, Director
301-933-1210
Margaret Schoap, Organizer
240-581-0518

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org

The logo for TAME (Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended) features the word "TAME" in a bold, italicized, green sans-serif font.

Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended

To: Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson and Commissioners
Cc: Council President Tom Hucker and Councilmembers
Date: December 10, 2020
Re: Need for Greater Public Input to Thrive Montgomery 2050 & CARP Coordination
From: Diane Cameron and Margaret Schoap, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended); Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance

On November 19, 2020, six organizations along with Pamela Lindstrom, submitted a letter requesting greater public input to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 process, in order to enable broader and deeper public conversations, from a more-diverse set of communities, on the direction of our County's land use policy over the next 50 years.

Today, we repeat our call for greater effort to gather public input to the Thrive draft plan, focused on the need for greater diversity and equity in the process for the General Plan Update, and for full participation by all affected communities. We also are in support of The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County, and six other climate and food policy organizations' December 3 request for an extension, of the Thrive Montgomery comment period, set to close today. This deadline is four days before the release of the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), thus making it impossible for public comment to be informed by the draft CARP.

We emphasize the need for this extension, and join in the following request from The Climate Mobilization and its partner groups that:

“the December 10th, 2020 deadline for comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft be extended by at least ten days after the draft CARP is released by the county in the first half of this month...We also ask that the county and Montgomery Planning hold a joint public meeting in January to discuss and take questions from the public on the critical connections between these two documents and how their recommendations can best be advanced.”

Environmental Resilience is one of Thrive Montgomery 2050's three primary goals, yet the Thrive Montgomery Public Hearing Draft makes few recommendations as to how the county can reach the Council-set goals for greenhouse gases, water quality protection, and natural resources. All of that information will come from CARP.

In conclusion, we request that you provide adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in discussions, and further planning staff work, on the draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, for three reasons: (1) to provide greater diversity and equity, and full participation by all affected communities, in the process for the General Plan Update; (2) the General Plan must contain comprehensive recommendations to address Climate Change that are consistent and in harmony with the CARP; and (3) the public must be able to review and provide comment on the revised draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, before it's submitted to the Council.

It is essential that there be robust public comment on the recommendations, and so far, that has not happened. Thank you for your consideration.

December 4, 2020

Thrive Montgomery 2050/CARP Coordination

Thrive Montgomery 2050, Montgomery Planning's plan for the next 30 years, and the county's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP) that lays out the strategy for meeting the goals set forth in the Emergency Climate Mobilization Resolution adopted on December 5th, 2017 must be consistent with and reinforce each other.

Yet the December 10th deadline for public comment on Thrive will be just before or after the CARP is released thus making it impossible for public comment on Thrive to be informed by the draft CARP.

We, the undersigned groups, therefore ask that the December 10th, 2020 deadline for comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft be extended by at least ten days after the draft CARP is released by the county in the first half of this month.

We also ask that the county and Montgomery Planning hold a joint public meeting in January to discuss and take questions from the public on the critical connections between these two documents and how their recommendations can best be advanced.

Signatures:

The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County
350MoCo

Walter Weiss, Mont Co Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

The Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

Montgomery County Food Council

Montgomery County Planning Board
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/>

Ref: countywide transit corridors plan 2013-12.pdf

Joseph Gothard
19050 Wheatfield Drive
Germantown, MD 20876
Gothard1@verizon.net
Date: 12-10-2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Montgomery County Chair:

RE: Montgomery County outlines long-term growth plan through 2050

This is to respectfully request that the Montgomery County Planning Board identify the laws applicable to implement the Montgomery County Plans. Our concerns are summarized below.

1. Potential impact to property value
2. Height of buildings near existing residential areas (houses)
3. Potential impact to transportation
4. Environment
5. Noise control

Montgomery County shall not proceed with any on-site activities until they address and resolve the concerns above. These concerns shall be resolved in good faith to ensure that we and our community can live in harmony.

Detailed plans shall provide the objective evidence of how each concern was resolved. The updated plans and testimonies shall attest the same outcome. It would be unacceptable to hear testimony that it will resolved, and produce final drawings that are different from testimonies.

Respectfully.

Joseph & Kristina Gothard

Cc: khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org

Cc: attorney