

ATTACHMENT 5, Part 1: Written Testimonies Received by 12/10/20

Updated for Worksession 2

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
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. Tworowski, 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.	Benjamin H. Wu, President and CEO MCEDC
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
70.	Charisse Callender-Scott
71.	Dave Helms
72.	Griffin Benton--MBIA
73.	Marilyn Balcombe for Germantown Chamber of Commerce
74.	Robert Stubblefield
75.	Matteo

76.	Virginia Bunke, Silver Spring
77.	Patricia A. Thomas, Silver Spring
78.	Mark Quinn, President, Heritage Walk Home Corporation (Windermere) HOA
79.	Nathalie Peter, Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
80.	Linda and Gary Mullings
81.	Elisabeth Barallon, Germantown
82.	Francis H. Koh, Bethesda
83.	Galen Tromble, Silver Spring
84.	Fatma Onmus, Gaithersburg
85.	League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD
86.	Bernadine (Bernie) Karns, Acting President, Calverton Citizen Association
87.	Michele Alborno
88.	Quentin Remein, President, Cloverly Civic Association
89.	Laura Mol, Silver Spring
90.	Aspen Hill Advocates
91.	Phyllis Edelman, Bethesda
92.	Dominic and Bonnie Patterino, Germantown
93.	Asma M. Seneca Park, Gaithersburg
94.	Lloyd Guerri, South of Bethesda
95.	George Oyedele, Gaithersburg
96.	Harold Pfohl, Bethesda
97.	Martha A. Schoonmaker, Executive Director, Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science & Technology at Montgomery College. Margaret Latimer, Vice President and Provost, Germantown Campus
98.	Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group
99.	Vickie Baldwin
100.	Patty McGrath
101.	Herb Simmens, The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County chapter
102.	Josh Silverstein, President, Randolph Civic Association
103.	Maria Carmona, Silver Spring
104.	Edmund Morris
105.	Heidi Lovett, Chair, Montgomery County Solid Waste Advisory Committee
106.	John Parish
107.	Roberta Steinman

**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 5, Part 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

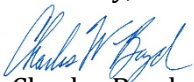
Dear Mr. Afzal:

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.

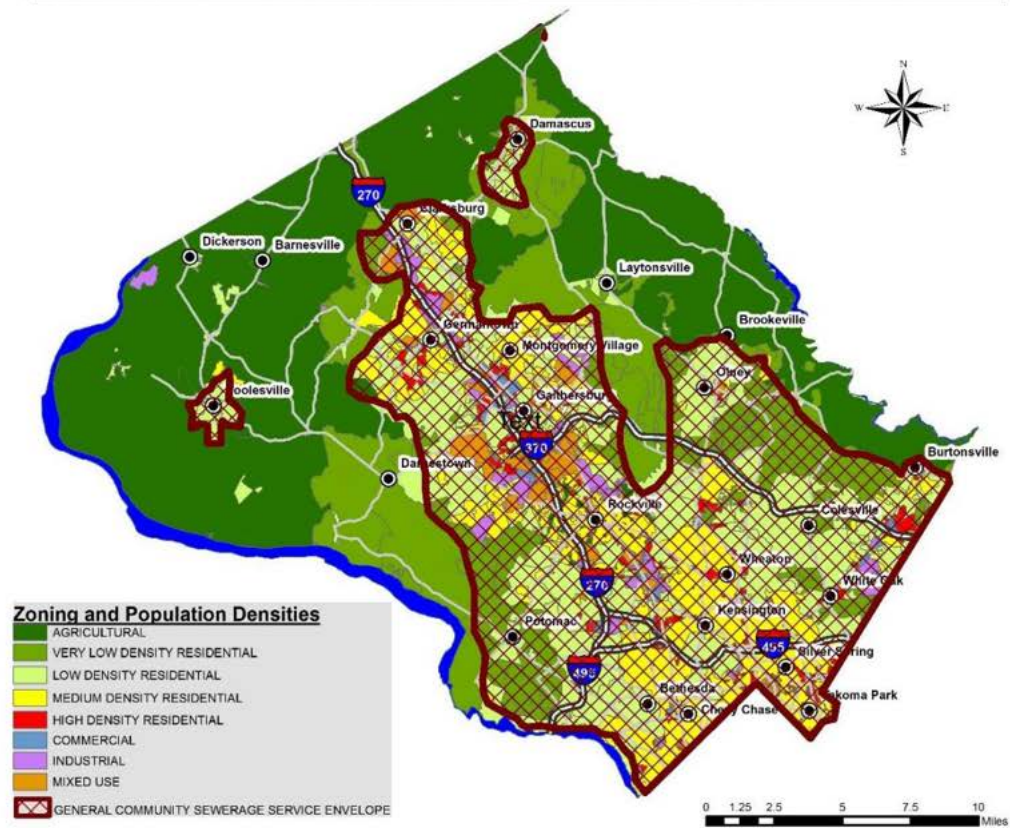
Please promptly advise.

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. EBCA 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](#)

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

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
Programs Manager, Montgomery County Food Council
Pronouns: she/her/hers

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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 policies 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](#)
P: [301-654-7144](tel:301-654-7144)
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](#)

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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 Reddie 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 an 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,



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.

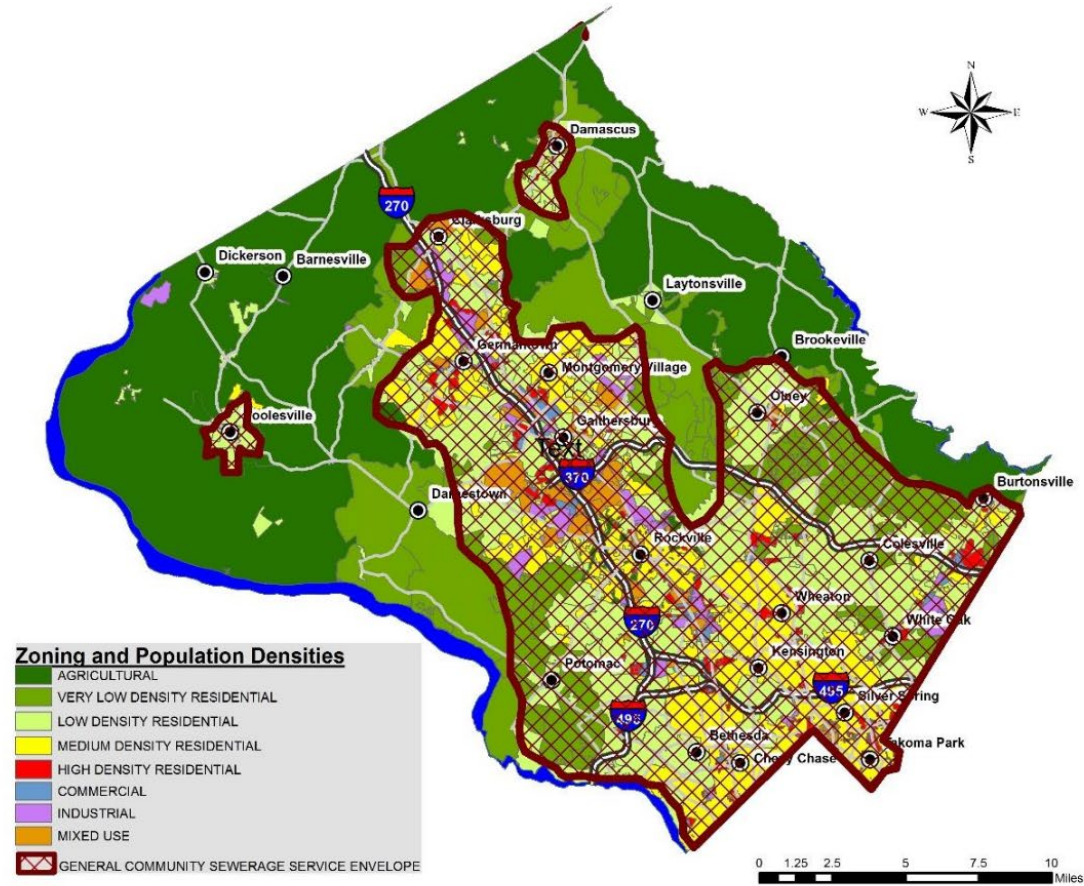
We look forward to working with staff to develop map overlays showing MPOHT, sewer categories, state tiers, special protections areas, and zoning to make the must have items easy to visually grasp.

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.

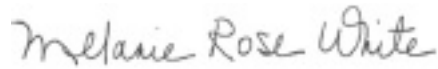
Finally, we note that the draft Plan assumes that "If you build it, they will come." This assumption won't work, however, unless a significant number of new jobs are created. In view of its staggering costs, which businesses would not want to absorb, there is a significant likelihood that this plan will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