

Updated for Worksession 2

WEST MONTGOMERY COUNTY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

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Founded 1947

Testimony of Kenneth Bawer for West Montgomery County Citizens Association

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

November 19, 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank-you.

West Montgomery County Citizens Association (WMCCA) Specific Comments

PREFACE (p. 6)

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHY UPDATE THE GENERAL PLAN (p. 11)

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

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

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. The county is becoming older.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WMCCA Comment: We wholeheartedly agree with this.

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

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

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

12. Climate change threatens all aspects of life.

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

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

A PLAN TO THRIVE

RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

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

Corridors are the place for new growth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attainable housing for all income levels

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

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

Evolution of single-family neighborhoods near transit

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

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

THE PLAN VISION

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

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

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

- Urban.

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

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

Active.

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

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

Inclusive.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Issues and Challenges

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WMCCA Comment: Change to say, “Complete an Employment Growth and Access Functional Plan to determine if and where land use policies limit growth of and access to a variety of job types. Recommend strategies for addressing these limits only if they can be accomplished while maintaining sustainability (e.g. with a neutral carbon footprint), quality of life for existing residents, and the protection/enhancement of the natural environment.”

Goal 3.5: Lead nationally in innovation and entrepreneurship, building on existing assets and enhancing job and business growth for industries in which Montgomery County has a competitive advantage. (p.70)

WMCCA Comment: Add this language: This enhanced job and business growth must only be pursued on a sustainable basis, i.e., only if it can be attained without negatively impacting quality of life (e.g., air quality, traffic, happiness rating) and environmental quality of our natural areas (e.g., no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

Goal 3.6: Identify and remove regulatory and other barriers to encourage real estate development and business establishment and expansion.

WMCCA Comment: This is a dog whistle for developers. We need regulations so that we don't end looking like Tysons Corner. Add this language: These must only be removed if it can be proved that it can be done without negatively impacting quality of life (e.g., air quality, traffic, happiness rating) and environmental quality of our natural areas (e.g., no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRAVEL (p. 74)

Vision for Safe and Efficient Travel (p. 74)

WMCCA Comment: Define “micromobility”.

Focus on Transit and Walkability

These existing east-west corridors include the new Purple Line and the planned BRT along Randolph Road. (p. 76)

WMCCA Comment: Remove Purple line now that construction has stopped?

For example, early conceptual planning and regulatory review stages have begun on the proposed highspeed superconducting magnetic levitation (maglev) system between Washington, DC, and Baltimore, and a proposed 35-mile underground tunnel/loop to move electric vehicles between Washington and Baltimore in 15 minutes. (p.76)

WMCCA Comment: The County needs to come out against the maglev project due to the biodiversity, value, history, research and fossils on the federal, state, academic, and city land, refuges, and parklands that almost entirely comprise the footprint for the proposed maglev corporation’s trainyards, trainlines, power stations, road realignments, powerline realignments, parking lots, and new roads.

Supporters of regional connectivity have also discussed a Purple Line extension to create suburb-to-suburb connection between Tysons in Fairfax County, VA, and Largo in Prince George’s County. (p.76)

WMCCA Comment: Change to “have also discussed a Purple Line extension, BRT, and monorail to create....”

Goals, Policies and Actions (p. 76)

WMCCA Comment: Add new Policy & Action: Encourage people to move closer to their jobs by offering government subsidies for moving expenses, based on need, for people who wish to avoid long commutes by moving closer to their job. Not only would this reduce demand for new road construction, but it would also take cars off the road. Our guess is that this would be less expensive than building/widening roads. It is a given that housing costs increase the closer-in you move. That is one of the trade-offs that someone has to make: a longer commute with a bigger house vs. a shorter commute with a smaller house or

apartment/townhouse. The reason we have suburban sprawl was (and is) the lure of less expensive/larger houses coupled with relatively cheap (arguably government subsidized) gasoline and roads. Solving congestion is not a simple problem and there are many variables in the equation. Just to throw out one variable: what if gas was taxed the way it should be (as in Europe), say phasing in a tax of \$1 or more per gallon? This would have lots of possible repercussions: people buying smaller cars, moving closer-in, switching to transit, moving to Virginia (which may not be a bad thing), etc..

Action 4.1.1.b: Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to consider whether to remove master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings. (p. 77)

WMCCA Comment: Change to “Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways **to remove** master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings, **especially the M-83 highway.**” M-83 is unneeded, would be environmentally destructive, and takes funds away from mass transit projects.

Policy 4.1.3: Prioritize safe, connected, low-stress bicycle, and pedestrian networks in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors, and community equity emphasis areas over projects that increase traffic capacity. (p.77)

WMCCA Comment: Bicycle lanes must be separated from motor vehicle lanes by structures such as jersey walls. (See photo on p. 75)

Policy 4.1.4: Extend rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) directly to regional destinations such as Tysons and Arlington in Virginia; and Frederick, Columbia, and Downtown Baltimore in Maryland.

WMCCA Comment: Change to “Extend rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) **and possibly monorail...**”

Action 4.1.4.a: Provide dedicated transit lanes as part of the replacement of the American Legion Bridge. (p.77)

WMCCA Comment: Change to “Provide dedicated transit lanes as part of the replacement of the American Legion Bridge **as well as dedicated pedestrian and bicycle lanes so as to connect the C&O Canal NHP on the Maryland side to the Potomac Heritage Trail on the Virginia side. Pedestrian and bicycle lanes on a new bridge have been on the planning books for decades.**”

Policy 4.2.1: Expand the street grid in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors, and suburban communities to create shorter blocks, improve access and transportation system redundancy, and slow the speed of traffic. Use development projects and roadway modifications to provide new street connections. (p. 78)

WMCCA Comment: This is not a good idea. This will result in more miles of impervious roadway, leading to more stormwater runoff, leading to more degradation of stream valleys.

Action 4.2.2.a: Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to limit the number of through-lanes in downtowns and town centers to a maximum of four general purpose lanes and repurpose space for transit lanes, wider sidewalks, bikeways, trees, and stormwater management. Discourage new turn lanes in downtowns and town centers.(p.78)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Bikeways must be separated from motorized vehicles by solid barriers such as jersey walls, not simply low curbs.

Policy 4.5.1: Incentivize the use of modes other than single-occupant vehicles by providing high quality transit, walking, and bicycling networks. (p.79)

WMCCA Comment: Change to: Incentivize the use of modes other than single-occupant vehicles by providing high quality transit, **and safe** walking and bicycling networks, both of which are separated from motorized vehicles by solid barriers such as jersey walls, not simply low curbs.

Policy 4.9.3: Design streetscapes to mitigate disruption from climate change, manage stormwater effectively, and provide tree canopy for shade and habitat. (p.82)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Managing stormwater effectively in streetscape designs will eliminate the need for the destructive practice of so-called “stream restorations” in stream valleys.

Build More Housing, of More Types, in More Ways

Montgomery County needs to build more housing. Declining production and increased development costs have resulted in rising housing costs and an increase in the number of cost-burdened households. Without an appropriate range of housing types at attainable price points, the county will be unable to attract and retain the employment base necessary to support our economic well being. (p.86)

WMCCA Comment: To say, “Montgomery County needs to build more housing” begs the question, “When will Montgomery County have enough housing?” The current population is now about one million people. Do we want to plan for a county where the population is 10 million or 25 million people? The current draft Plan treats population growth as an expectation, rather than either a desired goal or a potential problem. Job and business growth must only be pursued on a sustainable basis, that is, only if they can be attained without negatively impacting quality of life (including, for example, air and water quality, traffic, and yes, our happiness rating) and without negatively impacting the environmental quality of our natural areas (for example, no stormwater or other water quality impacts, no ecological degradation, etc.).

The county needs housing growth in transit accessible locations including current and planned rail and bus rapid transit corridors. Predominantly single-family detached houses currently line these transit corridors limited by zoning that only allows only this type of housing. Low to moderate density increases would allow the introduction of more housing types near transit to serve a mix of incomes and household types. (p. 86)

WMCCA Comment: Up-zoning (density increases) in these areas need to be balanced by down-zoning (density decreases) in other areas.

In order to build more housing, community-led support for and championing of new housing development is critical. This support can promote the value that new residents and housing bring to our neighborhoods. Communities have become highly adept at using the public process to block new housing and solving the county’s housing shortage will require a shared vision throughout Montgomery County. (p. 86-87)

WMCCA Comment: Rather than criticizing the right of communities to protect their quality of life (“Communities have become highly adept at using the public process to block new housing...”), and rather than criticizing the rights of residents to provide input via the public process, planners should listen to the will of the people. As the draft plan states, “Residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and feel. Planners engage everyone in decision making about the future of their communities.” (p. 47) The county should be resident-centric rather than development-centric. Do the current 1 million residents want the county to become home to 25 million residents in the future?

Goal 5.1: Provide and produce housing units that meet the diverse household sizes and needs of all Montgomery County residents in terms of type, size, accessibility, affordability, and location. (p. 87)

WMCCA Comment: Add: “This will take place primarily through the slow conversion of existing housing units without necessarily increasing the total number of housing units.”

Action 5.1.1.a: Expand housing options in detached residential areas near high-capacity transit by modifying the zoning code to allow duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes, residential types by-right and with smaller lot areas.(p. 87)

WMCCA Comment: Add, “Any up-zoning must be balanced by down-zoning in other areas of the county.”

Action 5.1.2.b: Establish incentives to encourage conversion of existing high-vacancy office and retail sites into residential uses through adaptive reuse or redevelopment of the site. Create flexible zoning incentives for conversion of planned and existing office and retail sites to residential uses, including allowing properties to reallocate their non-residential Floor Area Ratio to residential use. (p.87)

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

Goal 5.2: Ensure that the majority of new housing is located near rail and BRT stations, employment centers and within Complete Communities that provide needed services and amenities for residents.

Policy 5.2.1: Pursue financial and zoning opportunities to increase residential density, especially for older adults and people with disabilities, near high-capacity transit that will result in increased walkability and access to amenities.(p. 89)

WMCCA Comment: Add, “Any up-zoning must be balanced by down-zoning in other areas of the county.”

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Issues and Challenges

Montgomery County is a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment through a broad range of planning initiatives, policies, and regulations to protect sensitive environmental resources. But many indicators such as stream water quality, forest loss, loss of plant and animal species, and increased imperviousness point to greater stewardship challenges. As the population expands and the region continues to develop, pressures on our natural systems increase. (p. 97)

WMCCA Comment: Change, “Montgomery County is a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment...” to “ **Montgomery County’s vision is to become** a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment....” There is no way we can claim to be a leader when, for example, we are trashing our natural areas by doing so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not always pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as “daylighting” piped streams and concrete culvert removal). We are not a leader in protecting our natural environment when over-development is degrading the water quality in Little Seneca Lake, our emergency drinking water supply.

Vision for Healthy and Sustainable Environment (p. 97)

WMCCA Comment: We need a goal and policy to require returnable bottles. The Northeast has done this for decades. We need to stand up to the retail stores who have pushed back on this forever.

WMCCA Comment: We need a goal and policy that retailers can only sell products in packaging that can be recycled by the County.

WMCCA Comment: We need conservation measures to be enacted to conserve water (for example, an “excessive use” charge which would a higher charge that kicks in when the “standard” per person daily usage is exceeded – to discourage lawn watering, for example).

WMCCA Comment: We need a County-wide education program about the need to conserve water.

WMCCA Comment: We need to change the code to allow grey-water systems and composting toilets.

WMCCA Comment: We need to change how WSSC sewage overflows are reported and how the public is notified:

1) Allowing overflows under 5,000 gal to be reported only quarterly or annually is unreasonably lax. A spill of that size would potentially have disastrous health effects for people and pets in a small stream. ANY overflow where sewage has reached surface water of any category (not just the ones listed) should have to be reported "immediately". Plus, any spill where raw sewage enters any surface water is a risk to public health - this is a giant loophole where someone can do a paper and pencil justification for claiming there is no risk to public health ("It was only X gallons which would be diluted by Y factor, etc."). If you dump 1 gallon of raw sewage where a child is playing in the water, that is a public health risk.

2) The current public notification requirement is woefully inadequate. The average person does not regularly check the health department websites. The requirement for notifications "WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME" is open to abuse - it should be more like "within one hour of the event "discovery". A requirement should be added to notify all local news outlets within one hour of the "discovery" of the overflow (especially radio and TV stations - so that the information can be immediately broadcast). Plus, local governments should be required to send health notifications to subscribers of their emergency alert service (For example, see - <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OEMHS/AlertMontgomery/index.html>). Sewage overflow reports should be reported as seriously and routinely as air quality alerts.

3) Another enhancement should be a requirement for more public transparency in overflow reporting. Currently, one can go to the WSSC (Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission) web site (<https://www.wsscwater.com/customer-service/emergency-sewerwater-problems/sanitary-sewer-overflow-reports.html>) and see reports of individual overflow events. However, it is next to impossible (without spending hours pouring over the data) to determine the total overflows by individual county or watershed. That level of detail is absolutely available - it can be requested and received via a spreadsheet from WSSC that can be easily sorted by the above, but this spreadsheet format should be posted to the WSSC web site, not be accessible only via special request. The spreadsheet format allows one to easily determine the cumulative volume of overflows.

WMCCA Comment: The county must get serious and honest about reporting true air quality conditions to residents. Currently, Montgomery County's has a single air quality monitoring station in the middle of an open field near Lake Frank surrounded by forest - not exactly where most people breathe the air (<https://youtu.be/FJNRY6TWmaU> & <https://montgomerycivic.org/files/CFN201803.pdf#page=4>). The county needs a network of near-road air quality monitoring stations to accurately enable assessments of public health and to daylight equity issues.

Reuse, recycling and composting of food and yard waste results in very little municipal solid waste generation. (p.97)

WMCCA Comment: With respect to reuse, county solid waste transfer stations must allow residents to remove items (such as electronics, metal items, etc.) for reuse instead of shipping it away. Home hobbyists can repair electronics, and do it yourselves can find uses for metal scraps and perfectly good metal filing cabinets, for example. This will, presumably, require signing of liability waivers, but this is already routinely done at Parks events.

Urbanism as Key to True Sustainability

Montgomery County has been a pioneer in protecting and preserving its natural environment.(p.97)

WMCCA Comment: Change to, "Montgomery County **strives to be a leader** in protecting and preserving its natural environment." Again, there is no way we can claim to be a pioneer or leader when we are trashing our natural areas by doing so-called "stream restorations" which convert natural (although not always pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as "daylighting" piped streams and concrete culvert removal).

Together, these two land uses and numerous regulatory mechanisms and policy initiatives have put the county in the forefront of environmental protection in the country. (p.97)

WMCCA Comment: Much as we would like, this statement is demonstrably false. Again, there is no way we can claim to be in the forefront of environmental protection in the country when we are trashing our natural areas by doing so-called "stream restorations" which convert natural (although not always pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as "daylighting" piped streams and concrete culvert removal).

Policy 6.2.3: Upgrade the county's water supply and distribution systems to withstand the effects of climate change and continue to meet the county's current and long-term needs for safe and adequate drinking water supply. (p. 101)

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

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

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

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

[\(https://www.peer.org/more-pfas-found-in-maryland-water-and-seafood/\)](https://www.peer.org/more-pfas-found-in-maryland-water-and-seafood/)

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

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

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

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

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

Goal 6.3: Improve health and well-being for all Montgomery County residents and address the health disparities that currently exist.

Policy 6.3.5: Promote active and healthy lifestyles and active transportation including walking and biking for all segments of the population in all parts of the county, by maintaining and improving built and natural environments. Ensure that all county residents in urban and suburban communities have access to a park or open space within walking distance from their homes. Enhance and protect our park system of natural and built elements to promote and increase opportunities for healthy active lifestyles and physical fitness. Foster human-to-human and human-to-nature connections. (p. 102)

WMCCA Comment: Add: Increase access to parks by asking for (possibly in exchange for a tax credit) or purchasing (via eminent domain) public access points (i.e., short connector trails between homes from a road or sidewalk to

parks. There are miles of parkland that is not easily accessible within neighborhoods because there are extremely limited access trails. Examples include both Muddy Branch and Watts Branch SVPs.

WMCCA Comment: Add: One way the County will protect our park system of natural elements is to ban so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances (with some exceptions such as “daylighting” piped streams and concrete culvert removal).

Policy 6.3.7: Achieve nighttime light levels near natural areas that protect wildlife and enhance our ability to enjoy the night sky. (p. 102)

WMCCA Comment: Change to read, “Achieve nighttime light levels near natural areas **and residential areas....**”

Goal 6.5: Preserve, restore, enhance, expand, and sustainably manage natural and other green areas to support human life and a diversity of animal and plant life. Provide appropriate and accessible outdoor recreation opportunities for all. (p. 103)

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Create private–public partnerships to align the profit motives of individuals to the environmental sustainability of the County.

Policy 6.5.1: Minimize imperviousness by limiting and removing unnecessary impervious surfaces while respecting goals, needs, and conditions in different parts of the county. (p. 103)

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Prioritize limiting and removal of unnecessary impervious surfaces to achieve related goals, especially for MS4 permits.

Policy 6.5.2: Protect, enhance, and increase the coverage, connectivity, and health of natural habitats such as forests, non-forest tree canopy, wetlands, and meadows through land acquisition, easements, habitat restoration, and ecosystem management. (p. 103)

WMCCA Comment: Add: One way the county will accomplish this is by banning so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform educational outreach and provide incentives to cultivate private land by sustainable methods including organic lawns, native plants, meadow restoration, and zero-emission electric tools.

WMCCA Comment: The need for safe passage for wildlife between protected areas is critical to ensuring the healthy genetic diversity of animal and plant populations to withstand the challenges of habitat fragmentation and climate change. Residents will be encouraged to replace traditional turf lawns with conservation landscaping using native plants to support native pollinators and birds and control stormwater runoff. County codes will be revised so that residents do not get citations from a Housing Code Inspector that they are violating Chapter 58 of the Montgomery County Code by permitting weeds and grass to grow in excess of 12 inches when, in fact, they have replaced their turf grass with an area of conservation landscaping.

Action 6.5.2.a: Conduct a study to identify forests and other natural areas with high value for climate mitigation, resilience, and biological diversity. Establish appropriate forest and non-forest canopy goals and strategies to protect plant and wildlife diversity and human health.

Action 6.5.2.b: Conduct a study of the Special Protection Area (SPA) program law, regulations and implementation and determine what changes are needed to achieve the original SPA program goals and objectives.

WMCCA Comment: Our drinking water sources need to be protected by new Drinking Water Special Protection Areas that may include down-zoning, purchase of land outright or via eminent domain, enhanced tax credit for conservation easements, lower impervious surface caps, greater stormwater management requirements, etc.

Action 6.5.2.c: Study the County Forest Conservation Law and regulations intended to preserve specimen and champion trees. Identify improvements to the law and regulation's effectiveness and efficiency, including guidelines of native trees for inclusion in development and natural area protection projects that are resilient to climate change and support native wildlife, including pollinators.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform outreach and develop incentives to conserve forests on private lands. Increase accountability and penalties for violations.

Action 6.5.2.d: Develop a long-range forest quality management plan to address fragmentation, deer pressure, invasive threats, and the forest's capacity to withstand and mitigate climate impacts.

WMCA Comment: New Action: Create a million-tree initiative for Montgomery County. Plant 1,000,000 native trees on public and private lands by 2030.

Policy 6.5.3: Design and construct transportation and other infrastructure improvements using environmentally sensitive methods.

Policy 6.5.4: Preserve and enhance privately owned forest land through incentives and other approaches such as easements, forest mitigation bank programs, or transfer of development rights.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform educational outreach and develop incentives for partial and total conservation easements on private forest land.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Develop incentives to cultivate native trees that are robust to climate change on private forest land.

Policy 6.5.5: Reduce and manage invasive and other problem species to levels that pose no significant threats to green areas.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Perform educational outreach and develop incentives to reduce invasive and other problem species to insignificant levels by 2030.

Policy 6.5.6: Protect watersheds and aquifers and improve water quality and stream conditions through enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increased tree canopy, and green stormwater management.

WMCCA Comment: Add: One way the county will protect streams is by banning so-called "stream restorations" which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances.

WMCCA Comment: New Action: Create a County–State partnership to improve the integration of wetlands management and enforcement into County operations.

WMCCA Comment: Actively work with WSSC to propose and implement watershed protection plans for those watersheds that feed into WSSC Water Filtration Plants (for example, as an alternative to the previously proposed mid-Potomac River intake extension). This will NOT include so-called “stream restorations” which convert natural (although not necessarily pristine) areas into engineered stormwater conveyances.

Action 6.5.6.a: Develop incentives for developers to restore existing streams and daylight piped streams during the redevelopment process.

WMCCA Comment: No, no, no. Reword to say, “Develop incentives for developers to daylight piped and cement culvert-bound streams during the redevelopment process.” Other than that, most so-called “stream restorations” convert sections of natural stream valleys into artificial, engineered stormwater conveyances

END OF WMCCA COMMENTS

From: [Jane Lyons](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Thrive2050](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [councilmember.riemer@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Friedson's Office, Councilmember](#)
Subject: CSG Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Staff Draft
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:48:38 AM
Attachments: [2020.11.18 CSG Testimony on Planning Staff Draft Thrive 2050 - Full Unabridged - Final.pdf](#)

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

Good morning,

Please see attached for the Coalition for Smarter Growth's testimony on the Planning staff draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050, for submission to the official record.

Thank you,
Jane

--

Jane Lyons (she/her) | Maryland Advocacy Manager
Coalition for Smarter Growth
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November 18, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedy Dr, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Item 7 - Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Support)

Testimony for November 19, 2020

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

Thank you, Chair Anderson and Planning Commissioners. My name is Jane Lyons and I'm testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We strongly support the draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050, although we believe it can be made even better. Generally, Thrive creates a vision for a county that is more affordable, walkable, prosperous, resilient, and racially and economically integrated, and recognizes that the best way to achieve that vision is through embracing the principles of inclusive smart growth, urbanism, and equitable transit-oriented development.

We would like to highlight the following five points as our major recommendations for the draft:

1. Rethink single family zoning, not just around transit: We need to allow and encourage a range of housing types in neighborhoods near transit. However, we should not limit zoning reform to these areas. This has the potential to spark opposition to new transit, if single family homeowners know that new transit goes hand in hand with zoning reform. This also has the potential to leave out areas of the county that are predominantly white and high income — the kinds of places that are still exclusive today due to racist policies of the past, which will not be undone without intentional planning otherwise. While our priority for growth should be near high-capacity transit, we must include other measures to diversify housing options in other neighborhoods while also extending transit.

From the beginning, Euclidean zoning laws have perpetuated racial and economic segregation by separating housing of different types and thus different price points. This was further exacerbated by redlining and other racist lending practices, as well as restrictive covenants, but exclusively allowing single-family homes in certain neighborhoods still keeps communities exclusive today. Where you live affects your job prospects, education, health outcomes, access to healthy food, and so much more — it shouldn't. At the same time, we know from examples around our region that neighborhoods with a great diversity of housing types, and with a diversity of people and activity, are today some of the most in demand and successful today.

2. Provide a map to guide future growth: A map similar to the map from the 1993 general plan refinement will help residents and decision makers understand where growth should be directed, identifying the centers and web of corridors discussed in Thrive. We also urge you to bring MARC stations into the discussion about where to focus growth.

3. Reduce redundancies: This is a document that reads as if it were written by committee, and it was. This includes redundancies in arguments that could be improved by reorganization and inconsistencies in writing's voice. Tightening up language will also open up space to include more data visualizations that support the arguments made. Additionally, many goals and policies are almost repeated word-for-word in different chapters. Because so many of the policies and actions are interconnected, we suggest moving these to their own appendix that is not constrained by the plan's chapters.

4. Emphasize racial justice: We commend including the section about the history of redlining and other discriminatory housing practices. However, we believe the plan can better tell the story of segregation, identifying both past mistakes and successes so that we can better identify solutions for the future. Therefore, we also believe the goal of integration could be woven into the plan's vision and goals more.

5. Create implementation metrics now: We should not wait until two years have passed after the completion of Thrive to establish metrics for measuring the plan's success. Our itemized comments below offer recommendations for high-level metrics.

Further, we recommend the following itemized changes:

1. Preface

- a. We urge you to remove the phrase “stable residential neighborhoods.” This language goes against one of the main arguments of the plan — that neighborhoods near transit need to evolve to include a range of housing types. By qualifying certain neighborhoods as “residential,” this implies that urban hubs are not residential areas.
- b. We urge you to change “we need to accommodate the projected new population growth of 200,000 people over the next 30 years” to “we need to welcome at least 200,000 people over the next 30 years.” Montgomery needs to welcome as many new residents as possible near transit and jobs in order to jumpstart the economy and meet climate goals. Montgomery is uniquely positioned to help meet state and regional climate goals given its existing transit infrastructure, job centers, and proximity to DC. Given our values of diversity and inclusion, Montgomery is also well positioned to be a national leader in sustainable growth that is equitable, breaking down traditional barriers to racial and economic integration.

2. Introduction: No comments

3. Planning Context

- a. Page 13, Trend 1. It should be explained why the first identified trend (adding 200,000 residents over the next 25-30 years) is happening, as well as make the argument for why it is good for our economy and climate goals that this trend is happening in Montgomery County.
- b. Page 23, Trend 12. It would be helpful to identify which climate change impacts Montgomery County is projected to be the most at-risk for.
- c. Additional planning contexts and challenges should include: 1) Montgomery County's racial and economic segregation and 2) Montgomery County's greenhouse gas emissions by sector, and how both of these trends have changed over time.

4. A Plan to Thrive

- a. Page 32. "The goal is to create Complete Communities that are diverse and can provide most essential services within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, or drive." We urge you to remove driving from this definition of 15-minute living. The vast majority of county residents already live a 15-minute drive from their daily needs, rendering the Complete Communities a meaningless argument for embracing a more compact, mixed use, sustainable built environment. Moreover, the worldwide concept of the 15-minute neighborhood is specifically focused on walking and biking.
- b. Page 32-34. In general, the concept of Complete Communities needs more work. There is no standard definition and no explanation of how 15-minute living will be different in urban, suburban, and rural communities. There are certain critical amenities that are not mentioned, such as healthy food. We also believe it should be explicitly stated that no community is "complete" unless it is racially and economically diverse. There should be no enclaves of whiteness, wealth, or poverty in Montgomery County.
- c. Page 37. "This additional density will require change in existing single-family neighborhoods through the introduction of 'missing middle' housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, live-work units and small multi-family structures in areas where a moderate degree of intensification is appropriate." In addition to small multi-family structures, this section should also identify mid-rise multi-family structures as desirable along major transit corridors and high-capacity transit centers.
- d. Page 43, Racial Justice and Equity. This section should make the case that racial and economic integration is the best way to promote social mobility, achieve equitable outcomes, and shared prosperity.
- e. Page 45, Affordable. We urge you to change "housing closer to workplaces" to "housing closer to job centers, amenities, and other destinations."
- f. Page 46, Safe. This section should establish the vision that safety is enjoyed more equally by all; whereas currently, safety is experienced unequally by people of color, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with non-conforming gender identities or expressions.

- g. Page 46, Inclusive. “Residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and feel.” While this is true, residents having the loudest voice in how their neighborhoods look and feel is what led to segregation and our housing shortage. Thrive needs to grapple with how to take residents’ concerns into consideration while also ensuring broader public involvement and pursuing the greater public good.
 - h. Page 46, Resilient. “Our actions reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollution.” We suggest this be changed to read: “Our action eliminated greenhouse gas emissions and minimized air and water pollution.”
 - i. Page 46, Competitive. “We embrace the cultural, racial/ethnic, and linguistic diversity of our community as a competitive advantage, particularly in attracting employers recruiting staff who want to live and work in a diverse community.” While diversity is certainly a strength, it should not be the primary edge to our economic competitiveness.
 - j. Page 47. “We will need to make tradeoffs that may not be easy.” We urge you not to use language posing change as requiring tradeoffs. It is possible to make changes that grow the pie and result in a higher quality of life for all.
- 5. Plan Elements:** No comments
- 6. Complete Communities**
- a. Page 53, Policy 1.1.1. “Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make up of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.” This is contrary to the statement made about Complete Communities on page 32, which included driving. We prefer this definition.
 - b. Page 54, Policy 1.1.3. In addition to walking and bicycling, buses should also be considered the highest priority modes of transportation.
 - c. Page 54, Policy 1.1.5. Additional actions are required to ensure the co-location of essential services.
- 7. Connectedness**
- a. We encourage you to include goals, policies, and actions to actively pursue creating more public spaces, especially public meeting and event spaces. Additionally, we urge you to include actions for creating shared identity through signage, wayfinding, and other public communications, including to reflect the diversity of languages spoken in Montgomery County.
- 8. Diverse Economies**
- a. This chapter needs more about protecting and encouraging small businesses, as well as allowing and supporting neighborhood retail.
 - b. Page 65. “...increasing traffic congestion negatively affect economic activity.” We urge you to change this to “...high travel times negatively affect economic activity.” Traffic congestion does not necessarily correspond with high travel times, given destinations are located in relatively close proximity. In fact, traffic congestion in

walkable urban places is actually a reflection of a successful, vibrant urban economy.

- c. Page 66, Diversity. “Montgomery County already has several competitive industries such as biotechnology and the federal government, but it must cultivate new ones to ensure that its portfolio remains competitive.” We disagree with this approach to economic development. The county’s energy is better spent cultivating existing major industries and closely related industries, rather than trying to cultivate new industries. The positive spillover effect of having several large successful industries will result in a more diversified economy.
- d. Page 66-67, Connectedness. This section should make the argument that urbanism and a high-quality transportation system results in improved “connectedness” or agglomeration economies.

9. Safe and Efficient Travel

- a. This chapter still does not mention demand management policies, promoting pilot projects, or the importance of frequent transit — all of which are critical to achieve the outlined vision.
- b. Page 74. “We simply cannot be equitable, address climate change, and support a strong economy by building more roads.” We suggest replacing “roads” with “highways.” Building new roads should be permissible in cases where they improve connectivity of street grids.
- c. Page 76, Action 4.1.4.a. “Provide dedicated transit lanes as part of the replacements of the American Legion Bridge.” In accordance with the County Council’s most recent position, this action should also include engineering the new American Legion Bridge to be able to accommodate heavy rail.

10. Affordability and Attainability

- a. This chapter would generally benefit from stronger “both/and” messaging around market rate and subsidized housing, rather than “either/or.” Subsidized housing is incredibly important in order to make sure Montgomery’s neighborhoods are affordable for households of all incomes, including the lowest income households. Montgomery County cannot just keep doing what it has been doing — considering housing a right means that we need to think more boldly and go beyond existing programs.
- b. Page 83-84, Issues and Challenges. Montgomery needs to start thinking about housing supply and demand in submarkets rather than as Montgomery as a whole. An oversupply of moderately priced housing in Damascus doesn’t solve housing demand in Silver Spring.
- c. Page 84-85, Vision. We urge you to more explicitly include racial and economic integration.
- d. Page 85-86, Build More Housing, of More Types, in More Ways. “In order to build more housing, community-led support for and championing of new housing development is critical.” Community support is important for all issues addressed in Thrive. What should be highlighted is how many community members use the

current planning process to block new housing or zoning changes. How can the county lead a paradigm shift on this?

- e. Page 86, Policy 5.1.1. “Encourage the production of a broad variety of housing types to achieve attainable price ranges.” The actions associated with this policy should not only address breaking down zoning barriers, but also other land use regulations that make middle housing types difficult to build.
- f. Page 86, Action 5.1.1.a. We urge you to include “small apartment buildings,” in addition to “duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes.”
- g. Page 89, Goal 5.3. “Continue to promote the policy of mixed-income housing development through the implementation of county policies, programs, regulations, and other tools and incentives.” This goal’s associated policies and actions are too reliant on the moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) program. Montgomery County needs a strategic, targeted approach to intentionally create mixed-income neighborhoods, of which the MPDU program should only be one part.
- h. Page 90, Goal 5.5. “Minimize displacement of people, especially among low-income residents, people of color, people with disabilities and older adults.” This goal should include rent stabilization and just cause eviction in the associated policies and actions.
- i. Page 93, Goal 5.6. “Expand housing access through elimination of fair housing barriers and enforcement of fair housing laws to protect residents from discrimination.” This goal should include a right to legal counsel for people facing eviction in the associated policies and actions.

11. Healthy and Sustainable Environment

- a. We would like to see more integration with the county’s upcoming Climate Action and Resilience Plan; more about creating capacity in the electric grid and green buildings; strategies to attack food deserts; siting renewable energy with parking lots, and commercial and industrial rooftops preferred; and planting more street trees to build the urban canopy.
- b. Page 101, Goal 6.4. “Provide all residents with safe, convenient access to affordable, healthy food.” Creating mixed-income communities should be considered a key strategy for eliminating food deserts and providing access to healthy foods.

12. Diverse and Adaptable Growth

- a. This chapter, placed toward the end of the plan, doesn’t add much that hasn’t already been said. We believe it would be most beneficial for this section to focus on the policies that support diverse and adaptable growth — including the county’s tax regime, review/permitting processes, and adequate public facilities ordinance — in addition to the Agricultural Reserve. Moreover, most of this chapter is focused on the Agricultural Reserve without making a strong argument about how it should be used in the future. How can the Agriculture Reserve best help us meet our environmental, health, land use, economic, and food production goals, and balance those interests?

13. Culture and Design

- a. Page 117, Policy 8.2.1. “Make design excellence a priority, even when cost saving measures are considered.” We strongly disagree with this prioritization of values. Affordability and sustainability should be prioritized before subjective design considerations.
- b. Page 123, Action 8.5.6.c. “Amend the Zoning Ordinance to make public art a prerequisite of receiving incentive density within the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones.” Density, given its core importance in achieving the county’s vision of future growth, should not be held as a bargaining chip for public art.

14. Implementation

- a. Page 126-128, Tools to Implement the General Plan. The county’s adequate public facilities ordinance, the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, should be listed here.
- b. Page 129-130, Performance Measures. “The Plan recommends developing baseline performance measures as a Montgomery Planning work program item within two years of Plan adoption.” We strongly disagree with this. What gets measured gets done, and Montgomery County cannot wait for two years to get started on Thrive’s implementation. Therefore, we encourage you to create baseline performance measures in the next draft of Thrive. In our testimony on the draft vision, goals, policies, and actions, we recommended emphasizing the following when selecting metrics:
 - i. life outcomes of residents — the Montgomery of 2050 should not be a place where income, race, ethnicity, gender identity, or zip code are determinative of health, wealth, or educational outcomes;
 - ii. vehicle miles traveled and average residential distance from high-frequency transit;
 - iii. greenhouse gas and carbon emissions, by sector; and
 - iv. integration — whether our neighborhoods and communities include residents of different incomes, races, ethnicities, ages, etc.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: [Sanjida Rangwala](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony on Thrive 2050 General Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:54:38 AM

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

Dear Montgomery County Planning Board,

Below are my prepared remarks for the meeting tomorrow:

My name is Sanjida and I'm testifying for myself as a resident of the Four Corners area of Silver Spring. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts about the Thrive 2050 general plan. I had the opportunity to read over the draft plan earlier this fall. I am fully in support of the general principles outlined in the document. In particular, I approve of the idea of people-centred planning and building communities that are diverse, equitable, mixed-income, environmentally sustainable and socially and economically robust.

In this testimony, I want to take this opportunity to stress the importance of building neighborhoods with a variety and bounty of housing at all price points.

I bought a tiny little old house just outside the beltway in Silver Spring 6 years ago. If Zillow and Redfin are to be believed, in 6 years, my house has appreciated about 100,000 dollars, or about 30%. When I bought my house, I was a single and in my 30s making about the area median income. If I was that same person now, I would be stretched to be able to afford this house. I'd have to look somewhere further away, somewhere with worse transit and less walkable than my neighborhood.

A lot of people have this story, but mine happened in just 6 years. And there aren't many houses like mine available anymore in the county. Where lots are open for redevelopment, and a duplex or triplex could fit, I see larger and less affordable single family homes. All this is to say what many of you and us listening already know - there is an affordable housing crisis in this county.

I was reading through the Thrive Montgomery Plan and this section jumped out:

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposing regarding single-family zoning? ... Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes to increase the production of different types of housing near transit, including in existing singlefamily zones. This is an important step toward addressing past inequities in housing choice, while also creating more options for affordable and attainable housing. Specifically, Thrive Montgomery 2050

recommends increasing densities along corridors especially those served by transit...

I was very happy to read this. But I want to encourage further boldness. We should not merely be recommending duplexes and triplexes - that is, more affordable so-called missing middle housing - close to existing transit. Instead, the general plan needs to be clear that in the future, all communities in Montgomery County are going to be complete communities. I want to see everyone living in a neighborhood where they can get to all their household needs, including mass transit, by foot or bike safely within 15 min.

So I would suggest that right now in 2020, where we have existing housing, but not transit or shopping, we need to be making a plan to build transit and encouraging walkable retail. And where we have existing shopping, workplaces, and transit, we need to be building more housing. Where we are allowing housing to be built at all on a lot or parcel, it should be legal to build a duplex or fourplex by right. This is so as to ensure that we are building sustainable, complete communities everywhere we would allow construction to occur in the county.

Don't get me wrong, we absolutely should not be prohibiting the building of single family home. I like living in a single family home. A developer should be allowed to build one. But there is nowhere in the county where we should say that only single family homes are permitted to be built. That way lies the path to segregation, inequities, and housing shortages.

In short, in order to grow toward a sustainable, equitable, affordable future, we must make room for people of all incomes and means to live in existing communities - all our existing communities. When revising the general plan, please make sure that you are mapping out a future where housing is a right, and is legal everywhere.

Thank you,

Sanjida Rangwala
711 Dryden Street
Silver Spring, 20901

From: [Quentin Remein](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#)
Subject: Subject: Comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing November 19, 2020 Item #7
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 11:58:12 AM
Attachments: [Comments to Planning board on 20201119.docx](#)

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Chair Casey Anderson
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Please consider the following comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing November 19, 2020 Item #7

Thank you,
Quentin Remein, President, Cloverly Civic Association.
201 Bryants Nursery Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20905 Phone 301 421-1152

Chair Casey Anderson
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

**Subject: Comments for Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing
November 19, 2020 Item #7**

The Cloverly Civic Association recommends that the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Master Plan is not ready and more review is required before the document goes forward. At least a year or more of review and discussions are required. Much of this delay is due to Covid. While the Planning Board has moved ahead, residents are coping with major disruptions to their lives and do not have the time to devote to participate fully in the review and comment on this new master plan. This master plan is proposing major changes that will have great impacts on our lives, and in the present form, the Plan is not acceptable to our membership. In the October meeting of the Planning Board, Board members had major changes that needed to be made to the document. They voted to continue the public hearing with the current version and make these changes in January 2021. Don't the resident of Montgomery County deserve the opportunity to review these changes before the Plan moves on to the County Council?

The Cloverly Civic Association members have observed the Planning Board meeting on Thrive Montgomery 2050, read the plan, and held two meetings on the plan. Some of the comments from our members that were agreed to are included in the attached summary. Thank you for the staff and board's work on the plan and we look forward to participating in the development of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Master Plan.

Specific comments are attached.

Sincerely,
Quentin Remein, President, Cloverly Civic Association.
201 Bryants Nursery Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20905
Phone 301 421-1152
Email: cloverly@verizon.net

Cloverly Civic Comments on Thrive Montgomery Master Plan

November 16, 2020

Comments are listed based on the PowerPoint used on October 1 to brief the Planning Board. The original document is not numbered. Listing shows page and topic, major points. *Cloverly Civic Association comments are in italics.*

1. Thrive Montgomery 2050 title page

The name of the plan is confusing – people do not understand that this is a new Master Plan

2. Today's presentation
3. What is a General Plan?

The last major revision to the master plan was in 1964 and there were eight public hearings. Most residents have not experienced a master plan revision in their lifetime and do not even understand the significance of a General Master Plan.

4. Previous General Plan policies shifted priority from East County corridors - focus on I-270

Unfortunately, the County has been overtaken by decisions that have resulted in urban sprawl.

5. Montgomery County's Plan for Growth: Wedges and Corridors

The general master plan and Cloverly Master Plan have served the residents well.

6. Policy Outcomes of Previous General Plans
7. The geography of race and income are aligned

This chart is not understood since it just shows median income, but no racial data.

8. Racial/ethnic and income disparities are reflected in the educational system
9. Our current development pattern needs to evolve

Can a development plan create desirable places or make us economically resilient?

Probably not!

10. We need to accommodate 200,000+ people in a mature, built-out county

Why should we be growing the County at all? Build it better! Our schools need improvement, the public transportation system needs improvement, there are a lot of vacant buildings in the county, improvement of aging utility systems, etc. Much of the unconstrained area is land that is not buildable. Have you considered a Net Zero Growth Option?

11. Changes in current land-use patterns are needed to allow for infill and redevelopment

Why is infill required? Why expand urban sprawl?

12. The percentage of householders living alone have increased from 7% in 1960 to 25% in

2018

13. New single-family homes are getting larger

14. ...while new rental units are smaller

15. So What Should We Do About it?

16. Redevelopment is an opportunity & the currency to improve infrastructure & quality

17. We need redevelopment to transform... this into this

18. We need redevelopment to transform ...this into this

19. Compact development is more sustainable than sprawl

The development changes have already been done under the existing Master Plan.

20. Specific Thrive Montgomery ideas

Thrive Montgomery 2050 = more urban, more diverse, and more interconnected.

Growing while achieving three major outcomes—economies health, equity, and environmental resilience—requires refining our planning framework, not abandoning it.

Principles of smart urbanism—a compact form, a mix and diversity of uses, walkability, active and healthy lifestyles, and a focus on good design—are the future.

Why is more urban and growth needed? Why can't this be done under the current plan?

21. Corridors—the best option for infill & redevelopment

Why congest corridors with urban growth?

22. Plan for people instead of cars

Restricting the use of cars only makes life more difficult. People need more routes to work than can be efficiently provided by public transportation. Tradesmen need to use vehicles to

get to job sites and parking to do their jobs. Families need cars to transport children to schools and after school sports and other activities. Planning for people involves planning for cars needed by people for shopping, visiting friends and loved ones, and attending churches and other activities.

23. Produce more housing and different kinds of housing

The current master plan provides all these types of housing

24. Complete Communities will provide services & amenities close to home

Complete communities are a choice people can make under the existing master plan. If more complete communities are required, the marketplace can provide for them by the redevelopment of communities. People make choices to residential areas based on their own choices. Most retail/services are now available for delivery, so people do not even have to live near them. They can choose the type of exercise and play that they choose rather than being forced to accept walking and bike riding.

25. Complete Communities provide gathering places, parks, and needed facilities closer to home

Again people can make their own choices for places for social gathering rather than being restrained by what is in their neighborhood.

26. Diversity is our strength

First-generation immigrant residents often seek out and feel more secure and comfortable in communities of their ethnic background. Not everyone sees diversity as their strength.

27. Regional Solutions and strategies

28. Implementation

29. Covid-19 and requests to delay the Plan

A new revamped Master Plan is not required if we accept Net Zero Growth and make incremental changes to the plan to offer more possibilities to people without requiring everyone to give up their cars and housing choices. Covid has made it clear that many people can work at home reducing rush hours, and that urban lifestyles make control of pandemics more difficult.

30. Next steps

Take a year to re-evaluate the changes needed in the current master plan. Enjoy our transportation choices, communities, and lifestyle choices, and fight Covid.

From: [Dedun Ingram](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery comment
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 12:15:15 PM

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

November 17, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair,
and Members of the County Planning Board
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

I concur with the planning staff that it is time to update the County's general plan and appreciate all of the work the planning staff has put into Thrive Montgomery 2050 and their efforts to involve county residents. I would like to submit the following general comments on the proposed new general Plan.

1. The Planning Board placed the public at a disadvantage when it adopted the hearing draft at the October 1 Planning board meeting after going through a long laundry list of things that needed to be added to the draft, removed from the draft, reorganized within the draft. It would have been preferable to postpone the public hearing and give the planning staff the two months they said they would need to revise the draft so that residents could comment on a draft that more closely resembles the draft likely to be sent forward to the County Council. As planning staff have said frequently, this plan will be an important document going forward and will significantly impact how the county grows and develops.

I request that the period for public comment be left open during the time period when the Planning board is holding its work sessions on Thrive Montgomery. Doing so will partially address the disadvantage residents have been placed at because we have reviewed a "preliminary" draft.

2. Currently Thrive Montgomery does not adequately address the long-term impacts of COVID-19. I have heard the argument that this is not a flaw because the basic issues covered by the draft are not changed by COVID-19. However, But I disagree. COVID-19 will have significant impacts on our lifestyle and the economy. While we cannot know the full impacts at this time, the draft plan should address these changes more directly. The County's budget is likely to be constrained for some years to come and this needs to be factored into the long-term expectations for what can be

accomplished and the implementation timeline.

3. It is unclear how successful the key component of the draft plan, complete communities, have been when implemented elsewhere and it is especially unclear whether they are suitable for application to an entire county. They appear to be better suited for application to small areas.

The draft plan does not adequately develop the concept of complete communities which makes it difficult for residents to assess whether or not this is a good goal for the plan. Urban, suburban, and rural complete communities are referred to but never really defined. What are the expectations for what constitutes each of these types of complete communities? Where in the county are these types expected to be located? How does the Agricultural Reserve fit into this complete community scheme? The settlement patterns of Montgomery County and its vast size make the establishment of complete communities throughout the County seem impractical and unrealistic. Further, the seeming focus in the draft plan on development of complete communities within one-half mile of metro stations, Purple Line stations, and planned BRT routes seems inequitable. Many of these areas already have more amenities than other neighborhoods in the county. It would seem more equitable and desirable to initially focus on improving our underserved communities by adding public facilities, services, infrastructure, and transit in those areas so that we raise the standard of living and quality of life of the residents of those neighborhoods.

The concept of 15-minute living also is not adequately defined and developed. We are offered 15-minute living by walking, cycling, driving, and transit. This is all very vague and confusing. Many of the goals specifically talk about a 15-minute walk for all county residents which clearly is impractical. As for complete communities, the concept of 15-minute living does not appear to be a realistic one for a county as large and as sparsely settled as Montgomery County.

4. From an economic standpoint, establishment of complete communities and 15-minute living in the next 30 years seems not just visionary, but fantastical. Currently, the County does not have sufficient funds to update its schools, libraries, recreation centers, much less build new ones. Nor does the County have sufficient funds to build the sidewalks and bike lanes currently needed (e.g., sidewalks to get passengers to Purple Line stations). There also are no funds to significantly expand our transit system. The County has finally managed to open the BRT route on Rt. 29, but that took years and there is no money to implement other BRT routes that have been on the list for years, to expand MARC service, etc. We cannot expect Montgomery County to thrive under this new general plan if it does not have a sound economic footing.

5. A goal of Thrive Montgomery is to stop planning for cars and even to make it difficult for people to get around using a car. This is not a good goal for this Plan. A reasonable and more realistic goal would be to plan more for pedestrians and cyclists and to make it easier for people to move around without using their cars. But the county is too large and too connected with the greater metropolitan area, people are moving within and through the county in so many directions, making trips for so many diverse reasons, that making it hard for them to do so will be detrimental to our residents, the county's economy, and the region as a whole.

6. The draft plan as currently organized is very difficult to use. It would be far more useful if the goals, policies, and actions related to a given topic were contained in a single chapter rather than scattered throughout multiple chapters. A number of the goals, policies, and actions seem too detailed for a general plan and could also “date” the plan. For example, there are a number of very specific items related to communications technology. Those items should be written in more general terms because we have no idea what those technologies will be in 30 years. The transit items also are written primarily in terms of BRT with dedicated lanes. Again, this is too specific.

Thank you for your consideration,

Deborah Ingram

4312 Willow Lane
Chevy Chase, MD

From: [Don Slater](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Thrive2050](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on Draft General Plan
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 12:35:51 PM
Attachments: [Draft Thrive Testimony Don Slater.pdf](#)

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

See attached.

Don Slater

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Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-641-2925 (m)
Slater402@gmail.com

Don Slater Silver Spring, MD USA
slater402@gmail.com +1.301.641.2925 (m)

402 Mansfield Rd
Silver Spring MD 20910
13 November 2020

Chairman Anderson and members of the Commission:

Hello. My name is Don Slater. I reside at 402 Mansfield Road in the Park Hills neighborhood of Silver Spring. My wife, Tina, and I have lived in Silver Spring for 37 years and we have seen a lot of changes. I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the new plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050. It is an ambitious plan in many ways, but I have heard many express the notion that it does not go far enough. However, it is far from finished at this point. I will concentrate on a few aspects of the plan rather than trying to address all of it.

1. Complete Communities

- a. Montgomery County is a large, geographically diverse area. We have well defined urban spaces, several large suburban swathes, conventional small towns, and a significant agricultural expanse. 15-minute living will not look the same in Aspen Hill as it does in Chevy Chase. The county can change the nature of the suburbs and get people out of their cars by creating town centers on transit lines. Small towns have always had a level of self-sufficiency that supports 15-minute living. The plan should acknowledge the differences in the existing communities and work within their boundaries.
- b. The county population must reduce its dependency on automobiles. The county should incentivize the use of mass transit (including busses) and incentivize the use of electric vehicles (EVs) over fossil fuel ones.
- c. At the turn of the 20th century, much of the country was farmland and rural commerce centered on the small towns within that landscape. All of those little towns were connected to each other, and often to a larger city, by some kind of rail system. Most of those interurban rail lines are gone, but good bus service can take their place and provide that same level of connectivity without having to resort to a car with one person in it.

2. Safe and Efficient Travel

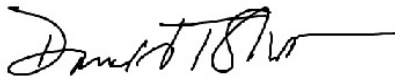
- a. In order to provide for this goal, we must work very hard to reduce our addiction to the fossil fuel automobile. Reduced car traffic is one of the keys to success for Vision Zero. Biking and walking are also risky in high traffic areas. For many in our lower income populations, a car is not an option and good bus service is critical. To accomplish this objective, we should build the entire Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network as quickly as possible. It is likely that the new administration will be more amenable to providing funding for this.
- b. We have a hidden transportation gem running through the county in the form of the MARC Brunswick Line. The county should work with MTA and USDOT to provide reverse service, weekend service, and midday service on this line. Like all mass transit, dependable and frequent service quickly creates ridership.

3. Affordability and Attainability

- a. Montgomery County has always been a place where people want to live. We have nice neighborhoods, great parklands, and among the best public schools in the country. Unfortunately, we do not have enough housing, particularly affordable housing, for all the folks who want to live among these amenities. If we continue to have a housing shortage, those who can least afford to live here will be disproportionately impacted and be forced to live elsewhere, typically further away from jobs and services, adding to the traffic and absorbing the additional commuting costs. As long as we have a homeless population, we are not thriving. The county should be actively searching for properties that can be used as housing for those coming out of homelessness. We need to look at how we can turn surface parking lots and former office space into new forms of residential / retail offerings. The MPDU requirement should be increased. This should be happening across all of our currently developed areas, particularly near transit hubs.
- b. Now that we have talked about getting people into housing, we have to address keeping them in housing and protecting them from rent increases and evictions. The county should adopt rent indexing as a means of stabilizing rental costs. No one should have to face an eviction without legal representation. The county should seriously consider programs to provide financial assistance and counseling to first time home buyers.

Obviously, this is only addressing a small portion of the plan, but it is the portion I am most interested in and most familiar with. Others in the county will speak to and write about the rest of it. Thank you for your time and your service to the county.

Best regards,



Don Slater

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From: [Hannah Sholder](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: written testimony - affordable housing
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 2:02:53 PM

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

Hello!

I think I just missed the deadline (by two hours) for submission of testimony for the Planning Board review of the draft Thrive 2050 plan, but hoping my comment can still be considered:

For the purposes of creating and preserving affordable housing I think our County should consider ways to **limit speculation on land value**. While the MPDU program is a great step in this direction, preserving properties in perpetuity through **Community Land Trusts** would be another strategy to consider.

Why I find the CLT strategy particularly compelling is that it enables limited-equity in the sale of residential and commercial properties (based on investments) but prevents inflation beyond this (which is largely related to proximity to public assets). This would prevent the flipping of properties as we have seen recently, for example, in frequent numbers in the East Silver Spring neighborhood (which has proximity to a permanently preserved urban farm and downtown silver spring shops).

Thank you for your consideration!
Best,
Hannah

From: [Buckley, Darcy B.](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Written Testimony: Thrive - Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 2:34:42 PM
Attachments: [Thrive 2050 - RRAC Comments Letter - Revised Final copy.pdf](#)

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

Please see the attached testimony on the Thrive 2050 plan from the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee. Thank you.

Darcy Buckley, AICP
Transportation Planner, Director's Office
Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
Montgomery County, MD
Darcy.Buckley@montgomerycountymd.gov



For COVID-19 Information and resources, visit:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COVID19

November 18, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
Montgomery Planning, M-NCPPC
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050 – Public Hearing Draft – Final 10-5

Dear Board Chair Anderson and Board Members Cichy, Fani-Gonzalez, Patterson, and Verma:

Our Committee oversees the Rustic Roads Program and the 99 roads currently protected under the Program. Under County Code, we advise you as well as the County Executive and the County Council on County policies and programs that may affect the Rustic Roads Program. In accordance with this responsibility we have reviewed the above-referenced draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 (the Draft) and offer the following observations and suggestions for your consideration.

The Committee noted the scope of the Draft and the aspirations for the future of Montgomery County expressed therein. The Committee has taken the Draft section titled “The Plan Vision” (pages 46-48) as a starting point since it presents a compact statement of the where the county will be in 2050 if the aspirations contained in the Draft’s many elements are achieved.

In this vision, corridors are one of two encompassing components. Two types of corridors are described: (1) Multimodal transportation and services; and (2) green parks, stream valleys, and trails. While it is understandable that the focus of the Draft is on corridors linking the developed areas of the County, the committee believes that rustic roads deserve mention in the Draft as they provide access to and links between the rural areas of the County, most notably the Agricultural Reserve.

Rustic roads are valuable, irreplaceable assets to the county, and especially to the Agricultural Reserve. The following are among the many ways in which rustic roads will contribute to the realization of the Draft’s aspirations over the next thirty years.

- Rustic roads allow us to experience our history and develop an appreciation of shared culture. Our earliest roads followed animal migration routes and Native American trails. They are narrow, low volume roads in our rural areas and the Agricultural Reserve that reflect our past and how people moved and carried goods across time—to and from the Port of Baltimore, mills along our streams, warehouses along the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, stations along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and our county farms. These roads were not planned, but rather they evolved over time in response to area needs.
- These roads have economic impacts generated by visitors and tourists who enjoy them, travel them to visit our County’s many historical, natural and recreational rural attractions, and follow them to agritourism locations such as pick-your-own farms, produce farms with Community Supported Agriculture, horse boarding farms and other equestrian operations, and wineries and

breweries. Nine rustic roads lead to the C&O Canal and lock houses. In 2018, 4.4 million visitors spent an estimated \$84.5 million in the local gateway regions while visiting that park.

- The attraction of the Agriculture Reserve with its lovely historic rustic roads to employers and businesses cannot be overstated. Rustic roads provide a way for employees to unwind on weekends and after work. The driving experience on a rustic road, with the tree canopy and natural hedgerows, broad views of farms and fields, and access to beneficial activities are a salve for one's physical as well as mental health. Rustic roads help bring a feeling of connectedness by having a pleasant, safe "go to" place for everyone.
- Rustic roads epitomize many of the goals of Thrive 2050. Many have tree canopies and roadside forests and hedgerows that protect plant and wildlife diversity. The roadside drainage through grasses and vegetation prevents the erosion caused by ditches and swales, protecting our streams from harmful runoff. Most do not have streetlights, thus limiting harmful nighttime light pollution. The narrow rustic roads in the Ag Reserve maintain slower (safer) traffic speeds and promote sharing of the road with farm equipment, bicyclists, and equestrians.

Given the many ways in which rustic roads will contribute to the realization of the Draft over the next thirty years, the Committee recommends incorporating the following additions and modifications (shown in **bold**) into the Draft.

Theme 4: Safe and Efficient Travel, Goal 4.7, Page 80. Add the following Policy 4.7.3 and Action 4.7.3.a.

Policy 4.7.3: Ensure that the system of designated rustic roads is protected and maintained to preserve important historic, cultural, and natural features enabling a strong agritourism benefit to both farms and residents.

Action 4.7.3.a: Montgomery County Planning Department in coordination with MCDOT, the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee, and producers and advocates for the Agricultural Reserve, review and recommend safety measures, such as reduced speed limits, for rustic roads and all roadways in the Agricultural Reserve with the goal of increasing safe travel for bicyclists and pedestrians, while continuing to protect rustic roads.

Theme 7: Diverse and Adaptable Growth, Goal 7.4, Policy 7.4.3, Page 113. Add the following Action 7.4.3.1.

Action 7.4.3.1: Promote the County's rustic roads as the primary means for the public to access the Agricultural Reserve and thereby not only achieve the desired awareness of its agricultural, environmental, and economic benefits through direct experience, but also come to appreciate the many opportunities for personal benefits from access to health-enhancing nature, outside recreation, and artistic experiences.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document. If you have any questions, you may reach our Committee through our staff coordinator, Darcy Buckley, at Darcy.Buckley@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Tworowski, Chair
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Committee Members: Laura Van Etten, Dan Seamans, Robert Wilbur, Kamran Sadeghi, Lonnie Luther, Anne Davies, Leslie Saville (M-NCPPC)



From: [Coello, Catherine](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: FW: Thrive Testimony
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 3:17:42 PM
Attachments: [Montgomery Planning Board Testimony - November 19, 2020 Hearing - Thrive Montgomery 2050.pdf](#)
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[image012.png](#)
[image013.png](#)

From: Afzal, Khalid <khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 3:07 PM
To: chair@mncppc-mc.org; Coello, Catherine <catherine.coello@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: FW: Thrive Testimony



Khalid Afzal

Special Projects Manager-General Plan Update
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902
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301-495-4650



Let's Plan Our Future. Together.  **THRIVE**
THRIVEMONTGOMERY.COM MONTGOMERY 2050



WE'VE MOVED!

THE NEW PARK AND PLANNING HEADQUARTERS IS NOW LOCATED AT
2425 REEDIE DRIVE, WHEATON, MD 20902

From: Peter Gray <peter@waba.org>
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 1:53 PM
To: Afzal, Khalid <khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org>; Anderson, Casey <Casey.Anderson@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: Thrive Testimony

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

Hope this is not too late for tomorrow night's hearing.



Montgomery Planning Board Testimony - November 19, 2020 Hearing - Thrive
Montgomery 2050

My name is Peter Gray and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the 1500+ WABA members who live in Montgomery County, plus the additional thousands of other County residents who have joined in actions in support of better bicycling in the region.

As an advocate for cyclists, but also for pedestrians and transit users, I applaud the Plan's highlighting the trend/challenge number 9 (page 22), that the County needs to stop planning for cars and should emphasize transit, walking and biking. As we emerge from the COVID crisis, it is even more clear that we will not thrive, transportation-wise, if we do not emphasize non-auto alternatives to get around the County. This idea is further reinforced by trend numbers 11 relating to health and 12 relating to climate change; we need to take more trips, especially shorter ones, by biking, walking and taking transit. In addition, the plan's emphasis on equity, means we should be planning and implementing ideas that allow County residents who cannot afford to use cars, to have reasonable and safe alternatives to the automobile. Moreover, WABA wholeheartedly endorses the Plan's commitment to a compact form of development which will facilitate the use of non-auto modes of transportation by placing more jobs and commercial activities in easier reach of County residents.

As a resident of the Forest Estates neighborhood in Silver Spring, I am very fortunate to be a 10 minute walk from a metro station. But my neighbors and I still lack truly walkable commercial amenities, such as groceries and restaurants which development adjacent to the Forest Glen metro might bring. We also suffer from a lack of safe, walkable and bikeable connections from our neighborhood to the Silver Spring and Wheaton CBDs which are both only a few miles away. The neighborhood's children should also have a safe route to get to the public schools that they attend. These problems could be resolved by a fulsome implementation of Goal 4, including a full buildout of the County Bike Master Plan and BRT implemented along Georgia Avenue.

Most residents of the County suffer even more from a lack of walkable, bikeable and transit connections to commerce and jobs to a much larger degree than me and my

neighbors. The concepts in the Plan you are considering can solve those problems once the plan is approved and funding is provided to implement the solutions the Plan proposes. (See Goal 1.1 and 1.2 pages 54-55).

In summary, WABA calls for the approval of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan by the Planning Board and the County Council and then a robust set of legislative and budget initiatives that ensure the Plan is fully realized.

Cary Lamari

Chairman Case Anderson and

Members of the planning board

2425 Reddie Drive

Wheaton Md. 20902

Thrive Montgomery Testimony on Staff Draft:

I would respectfully request the Planning Board postpone the Staff Draft hearing for the new Thrive Montgomery (General Plan) until after our residents have had an opportunity to regain some semblance of normalcy. I also request the Planning staff conduct a County Wide forum with all stakeholders brought to the discussion so that the many vast details on how this plan will affect our residents should be considered. The Staff since the beginning of this planning exercise has used to approach of reaching out to certain residents of which I was one, however there has not been a County wide forum such as what was done during the Potter Administration where we refined the wedges and corridors plan. Our County residents have endured almost 8 months of some level of quarantine, they have been involved with one of the most contentious elections for the Presidency in our history. They have had to respond to closing of businesses, foreclosures, many cannot pay rent, many work week to week just to stay ahead of bills and The Planning Board expects the vast community of Montgomery County to be able to digest and comprehensively respond to a Proposed General Plan which in my opinion is a major departure from what people in our County have come to expect in the current Wedges and Corridors Plan.

Reading the new Thrive Montgomery and its new Urbanist vision throughout our County expects people who live and chose to live in suburbia and our Semi Rural areas to accept this vision. While I agree we must make every attempt to encourage new growth and accommodate new residents to our County, I believe Thrive Montgomery in its new urbanist approach takes things way too far. I also believe this new plan is unrealistic and does not completely respect the new dynamics which the pandemic has created.

Telecommuting is here to stay. Our County economy must come to terms with an entirely new paradigm for business and for our Urban Office and Commercial Areas. We will no longer or at least not for the foreseeable future have viable economic patronage for many of the retail and restaurants within our urban areas. We cannot simply rely on anchor businesses like Discovery to keep Silver Spring viable. After talking with many in the business community I have learned of their frustration of not having a seat at the table on many of the growth policy and General plan discussions. I respectfully believe the public is not prepared to focus and respond to such a dynamic document and hearings should be postponed so more residents may participate in this Discussion.

One example of the failings in this plan is the lack of respect to the lack of equity between the up County, Mid County and the Down County. Traditionally in the Wedges and Corridors Plan it put emphasis in the urban core, the satellite cities and chose to protect suburbia and our semi-rural and rural areas. This Plan focuses on specific transit corridors most within the down county area and promotes the lion's portion of investment in perpetuity or at least 30 years into these areas. This Plan expects that Transit is and will be the main form of transportation and this plan goes so far to claim we

must stop planning for the Automobile. While these goals may be notable, I suggest they are unrealistic in a 500 square mile County. While relying on Transit as our ultimate mode of transportation we must acknowledge that according to planning data the best years of transit only 5.6% of commuters over the age of 16 rely on buses. Our County General Plan should be thinking about expanding its Revenue and housing sources, it should be encouraging as a main emphasis the completion to the Satellite Cities approach in the Wedges and Corridors Plan. It should bolster investment in Germantown, Clarksburg as new major employment resources. The Plan should highly emphasize the County and State commitment to promote infrastructure and services into these areas so as to balance our economic reliance on our Down County Area all the while building more affordable housing within these communities. Today and for the last couple of decades our County has invested much in re-inventing Silver Spring and other down county areas because as the Down County goes so does Montgomery. These efforts however have put a strain on the rest of our County. By supporting the up county in an effort to make it a major economic engine for the County and the State we balance our needs for economic growth and with that balance we also create balance for some of the transportation needs of our County by reducing commute time and creating jobs closer in for many residents. To comprehensively evaluate this new Thrive Montgomery Plan would take writing a book and I am not prepared to do this. As I have articulated many dynamics such as those I have expressed and many more should be explored by all stakeholders in our County. This Plan at this moment in time should not go forward without a major public forum at a time and place where the community has the opportunity to participate and discuss concerns and ideas.

Respectfully,

Cary Lamari.

15411 Baileys Lane

Silver Spring, Md. 20906

My name is Alison Gillespie. I serve on the board of the MCCPTA, and I'm president of the Forest Estates Community Association, but tonight I am making comments as an individual.

I'm pleased to see that the Thrive 2050 plan addresses three really big, urgent needs: racism, climate change and economic polarization. We should not deny it any longer: much of this county is urban and needs to be managed accordingly. I am heartened that this document clearly addresses the need to see our urbanization as something that can be made positive if it is addressed honestly and thoughtfully.

I support the need to undo so many of the past's exclusionary zoning policies, many of which divided our community along racial lines. Although we like to think of Montgomery County as a very progressive place, there are many ways we codified racism through housing policies during the twentieth century. I support changing that through better housing policy and zoning changes that will be inclusive of multifamily options. Really anything that goes beyond single family homes will be a great benefit to all who live here. We need more places for people to live.

We can't just create boxes for people to live in, we have to create livable communities, and this plan embraces that idea. I am really excited about the idea of changing our huge, dangerous arterials full of multilane cars into green, walkable boulevards.

I want us to redouble our efforts to make this a fully transit-oriented community, and I see that supported in the pages of the Thrive report, too.

And as a parks advocate, I'm grateful to know that open space and green space will be a big part of the entire scheme. High quality parks are important for people to enjoy and also for the ecosystem services they provide through things like increased air and water quality and habitat for a wildlife.

I also want to underscore my confidence in MNCPPC. Over the last few years, I advocated for amendments and additions to three different sector plans – the Veirs Mill Corridor plan, the Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen sector plan and now the Silver Spring downtown plan. I also participated in many, many hours of meetings over the recent Subdivision Staging Policy and housing moratorium. And as a transportation advocate, I've sat in countless hours of meetings over road-related issues. I've found that this is a skilled team of highly engaged professionals who work hard and prioritize community engagement and stakeholder consideration. I have seen the enormous amount of effort they've put into talking to people in all parts of the county about this plan. The pandemic has not stopped or even slowed this process as far as I can ascertain. In fact, I'd argue that due to an increased focus on technology, a more diverse group has been involved recently than used to be involved when we all had to drive across the county to attend meetings at specific times in specific locations.

This is a team that has earned my trust and my respect as a citizen.

With that in mind, I'd like to offer a cautionary note: we cannot delay the work that this document details.

What we need, I believe, is an overarching philosophy that can engender action and be written in language plain enough to be accessible to average citizens of all walks of life.

If COVID has taught us anything, it is the need to remain flexible and nimble. I would urge you to not chain yourself to a long list of prescriptions. Trust the sector plan process, and the hearings that follow, to do what they are designed to do. I certainly do at this point. Let the planners that come after you in the ensuing decades be inspired by concepts and ideals. Don't shackle them to tightly prescribed parameters.

As much as possible, we should set up the future staff members of MNCPPC and future residents of Montgomery County for success by envisioning something better and allowing them the room to get there, even if another global crisis interrupts.

What I would hate to see is any kind of delay. We need to get started now. There is no sense in waiting until some perfect moment arrives and an encyclopedia-like document has been completed.

My kids, both of whom are on the precipice of adulthood, are counting on us, and we owe it to them and the next generations, too, to get to work on a better future RIGHT NOW.

Let's go, let's dig in.

Let's begin to THRIVE right now.

Tetsimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan

Benjamin Ross
4710 Bethesda Ave., Apt. 819, Bethesda 20814

The draft plan, especially in its specifics, points us in the right direction. But it does not clearly explain the need for that direction.

A reader of the first 50 pages of the report could easily take away the message that this plan is a course correction in an already successful plan, intended only to update in the light of new developments. That is not so.

It's true that the county's land use, as it has evolved over the last half century, has worked out much better than most of our suburban peers. But our successes are due to departures from the 1964 Wedges and Corridors Plan as much as they are due to following it. And there are failures, significant failures, that we need to acknowledge if we are to correct them.

The great success of the 1964 plan is the wedge - the Agricultural Reserve. But the corridors have succeeded by growing very differently from how that plan foresaw them. The 1964 plan envisioned high-density urbanized centers built on greenfields outside the Beltway. Downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring were to remain low-density commercial districts serving the surrounding neighborhoods.

Despite verbal nods to transit, the plan foresaw a county designed around automobile travel. The corridor cities are pictured like denser versions of Tysons Corner, built with wide streets around expressways. The plan needs to explicitly acknowledge the failures that we inherit from that orientation. One of them is office parks along I-270 that are full of empty space.

Another is the townhouses and garden apartments built in seas of parking lots. Now aging into affordability, they are poorly adapted to house working-class families. It's difficult and dangerous to walk to the bus stop or to stores. Children don't have space to play near home. Residents are isolated from surrounding neighborhoods. This is one of the county's biggest land use failures, and the plan does not address it at all.

The promise of the 1964 plan was: Your neighborhood will never change. That concept must be explicitly rejected. We need to change and evolve toward a future of greater variety, greater interconnectedness, and greater sustainability. We need bridges not buffers, change in place of stasis, walkability rather than high-speed traffic, mixing of people and activities instead of single-use zones.

Specific Comments

Page 39 - The “possible future” should eliminate the cloverleaf.

Page 74 - In second paragraph, replace “Locations with good access... are generally too expensive...” with “The scarcity of housing in locations with good non-automobile access... makes them generally too expensive...”

Policy 1.1.2 - The necessary legalization of missing-middle neighborhood housing is a change of general policy. It should not and as a practical matter cannot be accomplished through individual master plans and rezonings. It requires a zoning text amendment that changes the allowable housing in existing residential zones based on proximity to transit.

Policy 1.2.3 - Add: Preserve the integrity of historic preservation by preventing its use as a backdoor means of downzoning.

Policy 2.2.2 - Actions should be more concrete and specific. Add: “Outreach to groups that are underrepresented in traditional planning meetings by collecting opinions at gathering points such as bus stops.”

Action 3.2.2b - Add White Flint.

Action 3.4.1a - Minimize impacts rather than eliminate. Elimination is not feasible and setting it as a goal will impede location of needed industrial sites.

Action 4.1.1b - Delete “consider whether to”.

Action 4.1.2b - Delete “Develop a strategy to”.

Policy 4.1.8 - Delete microtransit. Microtransit is geometrically unworkable and consistently fails in practice.

Action 4.3.2a - Rather than market rates, which are depressed by parking subsidies embedded in past policies, parking charges should be at rates sufficient to support the cost of construction and operation.

Goal 4.4 - Add new policy 4.4.5: “Eliminate all slip lanes, diverging diamonds, and cloverleafs.”

Policy 4.4.3 - The priority for pedestrian safety should be the places with high fatality rates (mostly high-speed arterials), not places with high crash rates (mostly downtowns with heavy foot traffic, slow vehicle speeds, and less serious injuries).

Action 4.8.2a - Delete. This already exists in the Washington Suburban Transit Commission. Creation of a regional road-building authority would be directly contrary to the plan’s aim of shifting transportation priorities.

November 19, 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board
Casey Anderson, Board Chair
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Subject: Thrive 2050

Montgomery County Planning Board,

My name is John Paukstis and I am the President and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland. We are a nonprofit provider of affordable housing, working to provide equitable access to homeownership in Montgomery County since 1982.

Habitat for Humanity is extremely pleased with the Thrive 2050 draft. We applaud planning staff for lifting up housing as a right for all people, for highlighting the importance of housing in addressing racial inequities, and supporting increased density along transit corridors.

Segregated neighborhoods have led to incalculable inequities in wealth, policing, education, health, and access to high quality transit, green space, and other important amenities. It is critical that as a County we implement policies that ensure housing affordability at all income levels in all communities. We must also ensure that affordable housing includes both rental and ownership opportunities. Habitat is particularly concerned with the homeownership gap between white and Black households and between white and Latinx households, a gap of 36 points and 22 points respectively. Habitat strongly supports the Actions in section 5.1.9 and encourages the inclusion of programs that provide financial education and credit training to young adults.

The County can also reduce the homeownership gap by increasing opportunities to build Missing Middle housing. Habitat strongly supports rezoning along transit corridors and throughout the County to allow for affordable housing options including duplexes, triplexes, ADUs, quads, and garden style apartments. All families should have the opportunity to live near their jobs, public transit, and high quality school and amenities.

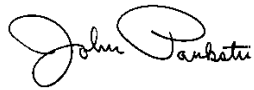
Through its work with older adults and individuals with disabilities, Habitat has seen a significant need for accessible housing across the County. Nonprofits often play a critical role in providing accessibility modifications, but are unable to access tax credit incentives. The County must ensure that there is both funding available and tax and non-tax incentives in place to encourage retrofits of existing housing and the development of accessible homes.

More broadly, Montgomery County needs more housing, especially at levels affordable to lower income households. The County can help affordable housing providers by increasing the Housing Initiative Fund, streamlining the entitlement process, utilizing Right of First Refusal for both rental and ownership opportunities, providing flexible zoning, creating an affordable housing ombudsman, reducing costs to build, and prioritizing public land for housing.

Thrive 2050 is an exciting vision for the future of Montgomery County, but the real work starts after the approval of the general plan. We must work together to ensure this vision is enacted through tangible legislative, administrative, and policy changes.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Paukstis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Paukstis" clearly distinguishable.

John Paukstis
President & CEO



To,
The Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

November 18, 2020

Reg: Thrive Montgomery 2050

Dear Chairman Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board,

Sierra Club Montgomery County group is pleased that the Planning Board is preparing this major planning document and supports the draft plan for Thrive 2050.

We believe this plan will set a strong foundation for the county over the next 30 years, as we move forward to address our many challenges and fully embrace some great opportunities. Together we can create a more vibrant, equitable, and livable community!

We believe the major themes of THRIVE are accurate descriptors of where the county needs to move over the coming decades. THRIVE advocates for a robust future that includes compact development, creation of diverse neighborhoods to promote racial justice and equity, growth concentrated around transit, a wider range of housing options throughout the county, transportation that focuses on moving people, not cars, and eradication of greenhouse gas emissions. Equally important is the vision of complete communities connected also by green corridors. These corridors serve as critical natural infrastructure because they increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and protect water quality.

Sierra Club believes that America's most critical environmental issue is climate change and our most critical social issue is racial justice and equity. We also understand that we cannot address one without addressing the other. So Sierra Club fully understands that the various themes of THRIVE are intimately interconnected. For instance, enabling more kids to walk or bike to equitable and diverse neighborhood schools is only going to work when we have created, across the county, neighborhoods with a wide variety of housing types and costs.

This plan can, and should, be consulted often over the coming decades. We do not want a good document that just "sits on the shelf." Thus, we advocate for a shorter, punchier THRIVE that will truly inspire elected officials and a wide range of key actors in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The reader of this plan should walk away excited about what a great place Montgomery County is going to become to live and work over the next 30 years – and be energized to roll up her sleeves to get to work on achieving the plan's vision.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present Sierra Club's strong support for THRIVE.

Shruti Bhatnagar,
Chair, Sierra Club Montgomery County, MD
Shruti.bhatnagar@mdsierra.org | 240.498.3459

From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Will Jawando](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Evan Glass](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Hans Riemer](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [County Executive Marc Elrich](#); [Ward, Tiffany](#); [Royce Hanson](#); [Tibbitts, Dale](#); [Spielberg, Debbie](#); [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Abel Olivo, Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [MenareFoundation@aol.com](#); [Anne James](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Olson, Shannon](#); [Neam, Dominique](#); [Eatmon, Jake](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [Jeanne Braha](#)
Subject: TAME Coalition Testimony_and Sign-On Letter to Chair Anderson requesting greater public input at this stage of Thrive
Date: Thursday, November 19, 2020 2:53:35 PM
Attachments: [TAME Coalition testimony + Sign-On Letter to Chair Anderson Thrive 2050 Oct 2020 draft plan 11.19.2020.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Commissioners,

Attached please find the TAME Coalition testimony on the October 2020 draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, the update to our General Plan.

Attached to the TAME Coalition testimony is a sign-on letter, calling for greater public input now, at this stage of the Thrive 2050 project, co-signed by six organizations along with Pamela Lindstrom. This memo was previously submitted on November 4; since then, two additional groups - Defensores De La Cuenca, a Latinx environmental conservation group; and The Menare Foundation, representing Historic Freeman Communities in our Agricultural Reserve, have signed on.

Due to a family emergency, I'm unable to testify "live" at today's hearing. We understand that the public comment record on this Thrive draft plan remains open until December 10, 2020.

Thank you for considering the input of TAME Coalition and allied groups on both the process, and the substance, of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Respectfully,

Diane Cameron

--

Diane Cameron, Director
301-933-1210
Margaret Schoap, Organizer
240-581-0518

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org





**Testimony of Diane Cameron, Director
TAME Coalition
Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended
on Thrive 2050 October 2020 Draft Plan
Thursday, November 19, 2020**

On behalf of the TAME Coalition, we appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony to the record for Thrive Montgomery 2050, the update to our General Plan. TAME stands for Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended. TAME Coalition advocates for a people-centric transportation system, including transit, safe walkable and bikeable streets, and climate justice for residents of the Upcounty communities of Clarksburg, Germantown, Montgomery Village, and Gaithersburg.

We continue to work with community groups whom we feel should be part of this Thrive 2050 project. We've reached out to groups including Defensores de la Cuenca (Defenders of the Watershed) and The Menare Foundation (a representative of the Freeman Communities in our Agricultural Reserve), who've co-signed our letter attached to this testimony. This letter calls on the Planning Board and planners to increase your efforts to obtain public input from the most-affected communities.

We believe you need to meet with these communities now, to ask their leaders to respond to the top points in the October 2020 draft plan of Thrive. Please contact them and we are also asking them to contact you. (Contacts are listed in the attached letter.)

We applaud the hard work of the planning staff in meeting with us; we strongly support the movement to a people-centric transportation system. We support Action 4.1.1.b: "Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to consider whether to remove master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings." While specific projects are not listed in the General Plan, this text will only be meaningful when it's implemented.

We've had a series of conversations with Chair Anderson, including with smart growth and environmental advocates, between April 2019 and November 2020. Over the course of these conversations, we've asked Chair Anderson to commit to working with all parties to remove the proposed M83 Highway, from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways and other master plans, and he's expressed a willingness to do so, provided it's a combined effort of the County Council, County Executive, and Planning Board.

Removing this dinosaur of a highway from the master plans will free up resources for transit and will be a notable climate justice action. Thank you for considering our views on Montgomery's General Plan Update. Attachment: Sign-on letter to Chair Anderson.

To: Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson

cc Planning Director Gwen Wright; Council President Sidney Katz and Councilmembers; and County Executive Marc Elrich

Re: Thrive 2050 needs greater and deeper public participation

From: Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended); Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir; Pamela Lindstrom; Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery; Abel Olivo, Defensores De La Cuenca; Tony Cohen, The Menare Foundation.

Date: November 19, 2020

Within the current Thrive 2050 effort, we ask the Planning Board and staff to act immediately to invite effective public participation methods to creating a new visionary General Plan. The new Vision must build on existing structures that have worked well, including Wedges and Corridors, then add new elements and changes needed to make our county a more inclusive, economically and racially just, and ecologically and economically healthy place to live and work.

On the need for greater, substantive public input at this point in the Thrive process

For a subject as complex and as consequential as a new General Plan, the Planning Department and Board have programmed surprisingly little opportunity for substantive public input during this crucial stage in this process.

Planners have catalogued their extensive and appreciated campaigns of public outreach. But *outreach* from the staff is not a substitute for deeper discussion, i.e. genuine public *input* opportunities. The public input opportunities provided to date have not been adequate to the need for in-depth public understanding and input to craft the Vision for Montgomery County for 2050. Much of the outreach preceded the release of the October 2020 Draft Plan, thus has been unconstrained and not directed at eliciting final content. In particular, very little public input has responded to the October 2020 Public Hearing Draft Plan.

Insufficient public engagement to draft a Plan that has public approval -- and enthusiasm.

The staff's summary of the public engagement program is divided into four phases. Curiously, the final phase, starting this past September 2020 "will leverage the diverse community members and groups who have engaged throughout the plan process *to endorse the plan and testify to elected and appointed officials in favor of the plan...* Motivate community members to support of the Working Draft and advocate to the Board. Form new groups to support the main goals of the plan if there is strong opposition to certain parts of the plan. Leverage diverse supporters to endorse and testify in support of the plan. Help residents understand how their advocacy is needed."

This process skips the essential step of working with the community to craft an updated General Plan that strongly reflects public needs and community priorities, and that has public approval and even enthusiasm!

Examples of communities that could be more engaged with, and give more in-depth input to, Thrive 2050 and the October 2020 draft plan: renters' organizations; high school and college students; immigrant community groups; Black and Latinx organizations; Historic Freeman communities; rural residents; public health advocates; and groups representing low-income, elderly, and disabled people.

A few environmental and smart growth coalitions have participated extensively in the Thrive process. The draft Thrive document has evolved, as staff has incorporated some of their input. But, troubling questions remain. These include questions about whether the land use policy reflected in this proposed General Plan update fully reflects and is representative of the needs of all communities who are directly affected by these land use policies, and who have significant input to provide, but are now constrained by the coronavirus pandemic shutdowns, economic inequities, and other limitations. Since Thrive 2050 will guide and heavily influence the quality and extent of different communities' access to housing, transportation, land, food, clean drinking water, parks and natural areas, it's crucial that wider and deeper public input be sought and provided to Thrive 2050 now, in Fall 2020 and the Winter of 2021.

Greater public input on these topics is required now, before the Thrive 2050 plan is adopted:

- The continuation of the Wedges and Corridors structure of the General Plan - the current draft creates confusion with its use of the term "web of corridors."
- Housing, Food, and Transit Justice are intertwined, and much more robust public participation by communities most burdened by housing, transportation and food costs is required now at this stage. These communities' input is especially needed on whether the Thrive 2050 proposed land use structure and policies are the best and clearest path to achieving housing, food, water, climate and transit justice.
- The role of the Agricultural Reserve in providing food, fiber, and clean water through continued protection of its farms and forests – and the need to avoid conflicts from non-agricultural uses including commercial solar. While the October draft plan has strengthened the support for the Agricultural Reserve overall, there remains the need for much greater review and input from producers in the Ag Reserve. The Council's and Planning Board's support for commercial solar in the Ag Reserve must be reversed, since solar developers are offering tenfold and greater land rents, and farmers are being priced off of the land they now farm.
- The quality and quantity of Montgomery County's drinking water supplies

and how Thrive 2050 will result in their greater protection.

- The October 2020 draft plan promotes use of autonomous vehicles and a network of urban sensors, new technologies that would require so-called “5G” radiofrequency cellular networks. The General Plan Update should not promote this highly questionable change. Residents’ input on this major change, along with that of public health experts familiar with the international scientific literature on radiofrequency exposures must be sought and thoroughly examined.¹
- The role of the Montgomery Parks system must be further highlighted, including the role of Park forests and other Park natural areas in the health and well-being of County residents. Further community input, including through in-depth discussion with diverse groups about their needs including adequacy of parkland access, is required.

Inadequate opportunities remaining for public input.

The County Executive wrote on August 14: “With greater cooperation and mutual understanding – and with undivided time for full discussion with the community – I believe we will define a better, more equitable future for all County residents.” Among others, Mr. Elrich asked that the date for adoption of the new plan be delayed for six months to allow this discussion to happen.

The Planning Board and PHED Committee turned down this request. That can be acceptable, but only *if* the Board and Council schedule more substantial public input along the lines we suggested above, before the Plan is adopted. All that is currently scheduled is the one public hearing by the Planning Board on November 19, 2020, which is 4-5 months before the final draft Plan is adopted by the Planning Board, and one public hearing by the Council at least six months before they finalize the Plan. These public hearings are essential steps, but are inadequate to meeting the need for robust public review of, and input on, the October 2020 draft plan.

Request for more opportunities to discuss the General Plan with decision-makers.

We ask the Planning Board, PHED Committee and Council to offer and publicly-schedule additional opportunities to discuss the October 2020 draft plan with us and to invite public input from the broad array of community groups listed above. Many of us have a lot to say about the draft Plan. Staff has invited us to schedule private meetings and

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conversations. While we appreciate the opportunity for the private conversations, and staff may respond favorably at these meetings, the words in the draft Plan are what matters. *It is especially hard to discuss the major overall changes being proposed, such as set out by Chairman Anderson and Executive Elrich, when only a few citizen groups and individuals are in the conversation and are seeing their needs reflected.*

Given the economic inequities in our County reflected in the digital divide, and the lack of rural broadband, we believe face-to-face meetings are also needed.

Meetings are necessarily remote via various media that pose additional problems. These meetings are not available to those without fast internet access and are unreliable in rural areas. We all need to think about ways to overcome these problems, maybe with some way of conducting meetings face-to-face.

<p><u>Contact Information for the Signatories to this Memo</u></p> <p>Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery Ginnybarnes94@gmail.com</p> <p>Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition tamecoalition@gmail.com</p> <p>Tony Cohen, The Menare Foundation menarefoundation@aol.com</p> <p>Anne James Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir acjamesfineart@gmail.com</p>	<p>Pamela Lindstrom pamela.lindstrom@gmail.com</p> <p>Abel Olivo, Defensores De La Cuenca abel@defensoresdelacuenca.org</p> <p>Caroline Taylor Montgomery Countryside Alliance caroline@mocoalliance.org</p>
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From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [Anderson, Casey](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Hans Riemer](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Will Jawando](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [Evan Glass](#); [County Executive Marc Elrich](#); [Tibbitts, Dale](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Anne James](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Jeanne Braha](#); [William Roberts](#); [Elissa Laitin](#); [Frank Fritz](#); [MoCo DSA listserv](#); [Susanne Lowen](#); [Susan Eisendrath](#); [Abel Olivo](#); [Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [Joe Heiney-Gonzalez](#); [Walter Weiss](#); [Philip Bogdonoff](#); [Marion Edey](#); [Sylvia Tognetti](#); [Miriam Schoenbaum](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Alan Bowser](#); [Lauren Greenberger](#); [Lauren Brown](#); [Amanda Farber](#); [Mike Hersh](#)
Subject: Greater public input is needed at this stage for Thrive 2050.
Date: Wednesday, November 4, 2020 4:01:23 PM
Attachments: [Thrive 2050 needs greater public review & input.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chair Anderson,

Attached is a memo to you signed by four organizations: Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended - TAME Coalition; Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Conservation Montgomery; and Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir, along with Pamela Lindstrom, calling for greater public input to Thrive 2050 at this stage of the process of updating our General Plan.

We acknowledge the hard work of the Planning staff in outreach thus far for Thrive 2050. The document has evolved and improved over time, through staff's responses to feedback from many groups. Building on the foundation your staff have laid with their extensive outreach, the current stage of Thrive now requires more public input, using various public participation modes that fit the needs of diverse groups.

This letter is a call for greater and deeper public input to Thrive 2050, now at this stage of the process, from diverse communities. Our four groups work on environmental, agricultural, and transportation issues. There are other groups focused on housing justice, food security, public health, and other priorities, whose review and considered input at this stage are also needed.

Our letter lists some of the outstanding issues; of course this is only a partial list of concerns raised by the October 2020 draft of Thrive 2050. Through greater and intensified efforts at public input to this draft document, more communities will be able to fully contribute their needs and their vision for life here in thirty years.

Sincerely,

Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended)

Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir

Pamela Lindstrom

Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery

--

Diane Cameron, Director
301-933-1210
Margaret Schoap, Organizer
240-581-0518

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org

TAME

Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended

To: Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson
cc. Planning Director Gwen Wright; Council President Sidney Katz and Councilmembers; and
County Executive Marc Elrich
Re: Thrive 2050 needs greater and deeper public participation
From: Diane Cameron, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended);
Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Anne James, Friends of Ten Mile Creek
and Little Seneca Reservoir; Pamela Lindstrom; Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery
Date: November 4, 2020

Within the current Thrive 2050 effort, we ask the Planning Board and staff to act immediately to invite effective public participation methods to creating a new visionary General Plan. The new Vision must build on existing structures that have worked well, including Wedges and Corridors, then add new elements and changes needed to make our county a more inclusive, economically and racially just, and ecologically and economically healthy place to live and work.

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From: [Hilton, Thomas C](#)
To: [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Caudill, Joel V](#)
Cc: [Shofar, Steven \(Montgomery County Dept of Environment\)](#); douglas.weisburger@montgomerycountymd.gov; [Katherine.Nelson](#); [Findley, Steve](#); amy.quant@wsscwater.com; [Kamazani, Nasser](#)
Subject: RE: Montgomery County General Plan Update - Long Term Water Supply
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 3:15:14 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image019.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image009.png](#)
[image011.png](#)
[image013.png](#)

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

Khalid,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the County General Plan Update. My comments are as follows:

Policy 6.2.3 - Reword: "Integrate climate change with the planning efforts on the County's water supply to ensure that an adequate and safe supply of drinking water will be available to meet current and future needs."

General – Throughout the Plan, reference is made to focusing on infill and redevelopment. WSSC Water cannot comment on the impact that this policy will have on the capacity of the water and sewer systems which serve the County without specific data provided. This data would need to include an update from the latest COG Demographic Projections Round 9.1, broken down by Transportation Area Zones that reflect the increase in business and housing proposed from the latest 2045 Round 9.1 projections. Piecemeal Sector plans do not allow for a comprehensive county-wide analysis required. If such data is available, please know that it will take several months for us to analyze using our computerized hydraulic models of the water and sewer systems if our budget allows.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you
Tom



THOMAS C. HILTON, P.E.

Planning Division Manager
Engineering and Construction Department

240.459.4928 (C)
thomas.hilton@wsscwater.com

From: [Madeline Amalphy](#)
To: [Thrive2050](#)
Subject: Thrive 2050 and Climate Change
Date: Saturday, October 3, 2020 12:21:22 AM

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

Montgomery Planning,

As a Gaithersburg resident who is extremely concerned about the climate crisis, I applaud Montgomery County for including measures designed to fight climate change in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan, such as phasing out planning for cars while increasing housing density near accessible public transportation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I strongly urge you to do everything in your power to prioritize sustainability in domains such as transportation, renewable energy, recycling and composting, forest conservation, and agriculture before it's too late to stop the climate crisis from claiming millions of lives.

Madeline Amalphy
radchic05@gmail.com
651 Saybrooke Oaks Boulevard
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

November 18, 2020

Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Casey,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan Update.

As you know, the Arts and Humanities Council is the designated local arts agency for Montgomery County. We work in partnership with the community to cultivate and support excellence in the arts and humanities, expand access to cultural expression, and contribute to economic vitality in the County. Our core commitment is to build an arts and culture sector that is empathetic, equitable, inclusive, resilient and vital.

That is why we were so pleased to be invited to be part of the Design-Arts-Culture Working Group that helped prepare this draft of the plan update, and especially thank the M-NCPPC staff who wholeheartedly embraced our suggestions.

We endorse the three overarching outcomes in the plan – Economic Health, Equity and Environmental Resilience. We would like to stress their interconnected nature, and our belief that the arts and culture sector can contribute to achieving all of those outcomes. We believe that arts and culture are not only a means of beautifying, entertaining or inspiring; or for people to express themselves; or to building a creative and competitive economy. Arts and culture play an essential encouraging people to connect and share with each other, to feel like they belong, to participate in their communities, and therefore to work collectively towards these aspirational goals. They are a foundation of civic life.

We are therefore pleased to support the plan goal that aims towards a sustainable and equitable arts and culture ecosystem, with policies and actions that strengthen capacity of artists and arts organizations; integrate the arts into a range of government, social service and

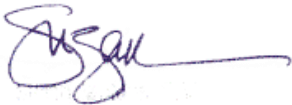
community-based organizations; fully coordinate planning of public art, cultural space and cultural hubs with future planning efforts; and to improve the documentation and coordination of County arts investments.

We also endorse the significant recommendation to create a new arts and culture master plan for the County. Our current plan dates back 20 years, and much has evolved in our field, and in our community, since then.

We note the emerging emphasis on placemaking. This is a quickly-evolving field that involves both public art and urban planning, and we believe that close collaboration between AHCMC and M-NCPPC is vital to embrace best practices from both fields to ensure inclusion and equity in both processes and outcomes.

Finally, we are attaching a mark-up of the Chapter, “Design, Arts and Culture,” with more specific suggestions.

Our work with M-NCPPC on this plan draft is filled with hope and promise. We appreciate your support of the plan and eagerly anticipate moving forward with you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Suzan", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Suzan Jenkins, CEO

DESIGN, ARTS, AND CULTURE

Issues and Challenges

Today, Montgomery County's arts and culture sector is considerable in its scope; taken as a whole, it would be the sixth-largest employer in the county. Aspects of arts and culture sector reach into almost every corner of life and are one of the most visible barometers of our increasing cultural diversity. While the sector holds great promise in helping the county achieve the goals of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, it faces some key challenges.

While Montgomery County is home to one of the most diverse populations in the nation this diversity is not fully represented in its arts and cultural institutions. This holds back the arts and culture sector's ability to provide social, civic and economic benefits to all

While the county makes numerous direct and indirect investments in its arts and culture sector, they are not made in a strategic and holistic manner. We lack comprehensive tracking and data-driven alignment of these investments to broader county goals.

Artists and arts organizations cite the lack of affordable living, working, and sales spaces as a key challenge to their sustainability. Emerging and stabilizing arts organizations that support underserved communities lack the funding and operational resources of their well-established counterparts.

The public art field at large has been expanding to embrace a wider range of approaches, including civic and placemaking practices, but the county's public art programs are lagging in their ability to deliver such projects.

Similarly, not all communities in the county have benefitted equitably from the positive impacts of good design principles. The 1964 Plan envisioned a variety of living environments and encouraged "imaginative urban design" to avoid sterile suburban sprawl. Different parts of the county have achieved this vision to varying degrees. Development in many parts of the county lacks character and appears "cookie-cutter." Major corridors within the county have become auto-dominated traffic arteries, devoid of a sense of place, mostly due to poor decisions regarding land use and urban design. Many residents must drive to meet their daily needs and commercial areas and civic facilities lack gathering spaces for residents to interact.

As we seek to retrofit our existing neighborhoods to become Complete Communities, good urban design and equitable, inclusive planning processes will help resolve conflicts and concerns about the changes needed in our built environment. These design changes include introducing new housing types in our single-family neighborhoods and creating a more resilient infrastructure in the face of climate change. As the county strives to create more places with an emphasis on walkability and opportunities for social interaction, the design of every part of our built environment—buildings, streets, parks and open spaces, public facilities and infrastructure—needs greater attention.

Vision for Design, Arts, and Culture

In 2050, Montgomery County is home to diverse cultures and is a leader in new ideas and emerging trends in culture, arts, and entertainment. Arts and culture is integrated into the daily lives and well-being of county residents, the built environment and community services — with resources accessible to all county residents, regardless of their socioeconomic, racial, or geographic circumstances. Arts and culture activities offer everyone an opportunity for creative

expression, support the county's cultural diversity, strengthen civic connection and engagement, deepen residents' attachment and commitment to their communities, and spur economic vibrancy.

A comprehensive urban design vision strengthens and creates a collection of great towns, cities, and rural villages across Montgomery County. Each of these places has a rich character with neighborhoods built around walkable centers of varying densities. Montgomery County's buildings, public spaces, streets, and infrastructure are designed to meet the needs of a changing population and combat climate change. Beautiful buildings frame walkable streets and welcoming public spaces that engage residents in activities that build relationships. All buildings and infrastructure contribute positively to the environment and improve the physical and mental health of users by encouraging an active lifestyle and exposure to nature at various scales. Streets are designed as a part of the public space network, offering a reliable and delightful journey that encourages people to walk, bike or take transit. Public buildings and major infrastructure projects are conceived by world-class designers who work directly with residents to integrate art, showcase local cultures and set a high bar for innovative design.

All residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and everyone benefits equally from good design. The county celebrates its heritage while welcoming newcomers. Urban design and planning policies protect vulnerable communities, including communities of color and low-income residents, against gentrification and displacement, and the planning process engages all residents in decision making about the future of their communities. Architecture is used as a problem-solving tool to encourage innovation, increase affordability and provide access to well-designed buildings for everyone. A strong emphasis on design, arts and culture in Montgomery County makes our communities equitable, resilient, and economically competitive.

Good Design, Arts, and Culture Build Resilient Places

Montgomery County is one of the most livable places in the country with a high per capita income. It has a wealth of cultural, economic, and natural resources. However, not all residents can equitably access these assets that make Montgomery County a great place to live. In addition, we are facing increased competition regionally to attract jobs and are projected to add 200,000 residents over the next 30 years. All this is set to unfold in a period certain to be marked by increased disruption caused by climate change, technological advancement, and a higher frequency of unforeseen events such as the current pandemic.

Design affects all aspects of the built environment—overall land use pattern, infrastructure, public facilities, buildings, open spaces and physical accessibility. Good design is not a luxury. It must be considered as a critical tool to create resilient places that can adapt to change, be attractive to workers and businesses and house residents in diverse neighborhoods with welcoming public spaces that build social trust.

As the county strives to increase walking, biking, and accessibility for people with disabilities, the design of every part of our communities will need to prioritize people over cars. Redevelopment will put pressure on the county's historic resources and require a greater emphasis on preserving them for future generations. Likewise, communities in areas of the county where development and upkeep has not been as active will need to be supported and retrofitted with good design interventions. Ensuring that all communities benefit from good design is key to a successful Thrive Montgomery 2050 effort.

The county will support a healthy arts and culture sector that taps into creative, social, and economic ecosystems and provides collaborative tools that support other county goals. Its practitioners have developed creative strategies that can express untold stories, encourage empathy, and empower creative and civic voices, fostering civic dialogue and connectedness. The

sector also grows its role as a significant contributor to the county's economy by attracting talent, spurring innovation through exchange of ideas, and sustaining a robust creative economy.

Good design and a healthy arts and culture ecosystem can create a resilient foundation, where the county's residents feel a strong sense of belonging to places that reflect their values and history and are offered equitable opportunities to express their creativity and prosper.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 8.1: Use design to shape Montgomery County as a collection of world-class towns, cities and rural villages, with neighborhoods that celebrate their history, geography, and culture.

Policy 8.1.1: Use form-based codes, design guidelines, and other innovative regulatory tools to ensure future developments across the county respond to their context through massing, architecture, public spaces, landscape, and street design.

Action 8.1.1.a: Create a county-wide urban design vision and guidelines for growth using a rural-to-urban transect.

Policy 8.1.2: Use public art tools to strengthen the involvement of artists in planning and design of county facilities and private development, and to recognize the diverse cultures of communities throughout the county.

Goal 8.2: Create and preserve great places with attractive streets and public spaces, inspired urban design, and high-quality architecture that delivers lasting beauty.

Policy 8.2.1: Ensure high quality design for all public and private architecture, infrastructure, and open space projects using design guidelines, design advisory panels, and other tools. Make design excellence a priority, even when cost saving measures are considered. Use design competitions for major new civic facilities to create the highest-quality public structures that are a source of civic pride.

Action 8.2.1.a: Create county-wide or area-specific design guidelines that facilitate the construction of well-designed, accessible, cost-efficient housing at various price points.

Action 8.2.1.b: Create design guidelines for projects that deliver high levels of affordable housing to illustrate how great architecture can be achieved at an affordable price point through simple design and new construction technologies that reduce costs.

Action 8.2.1.c: Collaborate with the Public Art Trust to improve coordination for public art in county construction and to develop standardized public art interventions for basic infrastructure elements.

Policy 8.2.2: Create a variety of existing and new parks and trails to support and connect existing and new development in Complete Communities using compact development and sustainable design.

Policy 8.2.3 : Implement the [Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan](#)'s analysis tool and implementation framework. Promote an integrated system of parks and public spaces where every resident is within walking distance of an appropriate space for community gathering, physical activity, and events.

Policy 8.2.4: Through the regulatory process, incorporate accessible design features such as a no-step entrance, wider doors, and barrier-free entrances. These and other improvements in housing will help people age in place, assist those living with a temporary or permanent disability, and accommodate populations with mobility limitations.

Policy 8.2.5: Use public art and placemaking tools to engage residents in higher levels of social interaction in public spaces. Create public spaces that support the cultural and social practices of the people who will use them, provide for equitable access and use, and generate respect for diversity while building community.

Policy 8.2.6: Develop placemaking plans that define and highlight distinctive identities for all neighborhoods based on local history and culture in collaboration with local community leaders.

Action 8.2.6.a: Establish and fund a program that invites communities to submit applications to implement their placemaking ideas within their neighborhoods.

Action 8.2.6.b: Expand access to professional resources in anthropology, ethnography, public history and related fields to support community placemaking projects.

Policy 8.2.7: Integrate on-the-ground placemaking activities as a part of community engagement for master plans intended to transform infill and redevelopment sites. Include placemaking recommendations in new sector plans, functional plans, and studies when appropriate.

Policy 8.2.8: Maximize use of county and state-owned rights-of-way to create more opportunities for active transportation and public use spaces.

Policy 8.2.9: Encourage walking and bicycling through smaller blocks, narrower streets, buffered bike lanes and sidewalks, the lowest possible auto speeds, and no new surface parking.

Action 8.2.9.a: Adopt a Vision Zero approach regarding public service vehicles (e.g., purchasing smaller fire engines) so that street safety improvements, quality urban design, and public safety are not compromised.

Action 8.2.9.b: Adopt the 8-80 Principle as official county policy. This policy promotes the idea that if all buildings, streets, and public spaces are safe and easily accessible for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then they will function well for all people.

Action 8.2.9.c: Create a “Ciclovía” or “open streets” program for the county that facilitates temporary and long-term closures of streets for community events, recreation, and play.

Action 8.2.9.d: Create a Parklet program for the county that facilitates the creation of small-scale public spaces to support retail businesses and provide gathering places within rights-of-way.

Goal 8.3: Use design as a tool to avoid and mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

Policy 8.3.1: Maximize the environmental benefits of transit-oriented development by increasing density and removing regulatory barriers such as parking requirements within one-half mile of Metro and Purple Line stations.

Policy 8.3.2: Retrofit the design of single-use commercial developments and car-oriented residential communities to reduce their energy consumption. Promote walking and biking to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and minimize disruptions caused by a changing climate.

Action 8.3.2.a: Develop a sprawl repair manual for the county that highlights strategies to retrofit the design and mix of uses for single-use commercial areas and car-oriented residential communities on a neighborhood as well as a county-wide scale. The manual

can also be used as a guide to prioritize capital improvement projects and to implement new and existing master plans and studies.

Policy 8.3.3: Make high-impact sustainability features such as net-zero/positive buildings, biophilic design and district-level energy generation a top priority for the design of structures, blocks and neighborhoods across the county.

Action 8.3.3.a: Create design guidelines, regulations and incentives that help achieve the goal of having all new and retrofitted buildings and projects in the county be net-zero by 2035.

Action 8.3.3.b: Create a funding stream that provides incentives for upgrading existing buildings to minimize their energy consumption.

Action 8.3.3.c: Create an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment and analyze trends from 1990 to 2020. Establish policies to regain and exceed 1990 tree canopy levels. Ensure a county-wide net-zero loss of tree canopy through a robust street tree-planting program in coordination with bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Goal 8.4: Make buildings in the county more resilient to disruption through flexible design and high adaptive reuse potential.

Policy 8.4.1: Prioritize the reuse of existing structures where possible through incentives to maintain building diversity, preserve naturally occurring affordable space and retain embodied energy of structures.

Action 8.4.1.a: Partner with DPS and other county agencies to update the County Code to fast track and create incentives for projects that adaptively reuse at least 50% of an existing structure or preserve at least 50% of all existing building materials on site.

Action 8.4.1.b: Update and strengthen the Historic Preservation Ordinance to prioritize adaptively reusing or repurposing existing buildings. Require mitigation and other offsets to benefit arts and cultural uses in the community when demolition is required.

Action 8.4.1.c: Create a program that periodically catalogs building types in the county with a high risk of obsolescence such as suburban office buildings and shopping malls and promotes their conversion and adaptive reuse through design guidelines and ideas competitions.

Action 8.4.1.d: Conduct a study exploring future uses for parking and automobile related transportation infrastructure in the context of impending automation and shared mobility trends.

Policy 8.4.2: Design all buildings and parking structures to be adaptable to changing demographics, technologies, generational and program needs over time. Prioritize resilient design for all buildings and promote ideas through design guidelines that enable buildings and communities to function well during periods of disruption. For example, encourage residential building types in the county to incorporate semi-public spaces such as porches, stoops, and balconies that can function well during periods requiring social distancing.

Action 8.4.2.a: Update the Zoning Ordinance and Commercial-Residential (CR) Public Benefit Guidelines to prioritize flex-use buildings to serve as venues for multiple functions throughout a typical day or week.

Policy 8.4.3: Encourage trade organizations, colleges, and high schools to teach building trades and connect them with local businesses that repair structures and reuse building materials.

Goal 8.5: Sustain an arts and culture ecosystem that enriches the lives of county residents and the vitality of its communities, supporting Thrive Montgomery 2050's strategic goals for economic health, community equity, and environmental resilience.

Policy 8.5.1: Provide a framework for managing the resources that the county invests in its arts and culture sector in an equitable and sustainable manner. Establish goals, criteria, and priorities for arts and culture investments that are aligned with *Thrive Montgomery 2050*'s strategic goals. Strengthen ongoing data collection and analysis practices to inform policy and investment strategies.

Action 8.5.1.a: Document all county arts and culture investments and track their impacts in a centralized, easy-to-use database.

Action 8.5.1.b: Create a broadly inclusive Cultural Plan that establishes a refreshed vision, sets goals, criteria, and priorities for the county's support of the arts and culture sector and addresses the processes by which the county's resources are allocated.

Action 8.5.1.c: Create a new Public Art Trust Master Plan that guides the provision of public art and better aligns it with planning processes, development review, capital project budgeting, county services and *Thrive Montgomery 2050* policies regarding the design of county facilities. The plan should also examine the applicability of an expansive view of public art practice — including civic practice, social practice and creative placemaking — and consider the management of the county's expansive legacy public art collection.

Policy 8.5.2: Provide a framework for an equitable and sustainable arts and culture ecosystem.

Action 8.5.2.a: Collaborate with arts advocacy partners to develop shared service strategies to support the capacity of small- and medium-sized arts and culture organizations.

Action 8.5.2.b: Partner with educational institutions to evaluate issues and overcome obstacles related to the provision of bachelor's- and master's-level art, design, and cultural management programs.

Action 8.5.2.c: Develop strategies, in collaboration with arts advocacy partners, for building arts capacity as a component of economic development, housing, social service and other community-based organizations.

Policy 8.5.3: Support ongoing efforts to develop technical resources to assist arts and culture organizations in addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and resilience in programming and audience development.

Policy 8.5.4: Improve access for artists and arts organizations to affordable living, administrative, working, and presentation spaces. Prioritize economic, geographical, and cultural equity in the allocation of these spaces.

Action 8.5.4.a: Create an "arts space bank" of underused spaces and a non-profit entity that will facilitate the use of these spaces by artists and arts and culture. The "arts space bank" could include new or existing county facilities (such as community centers, libraries, and schools) as well as underused commercial (office, retail) and institutional buildings.

Action 8.5.4.b: Update the county's Zoning Ordinance to further incentivize the provision of affordable space for arts and cultural uses (live/work space; rehearsal and workshop

space; presentation and exhibition space, etc.). Eliminate regulatory barriers to live-work spaces, home studios, galleries, and other small-scale art-making and creative businesses.

Action 8.5.4.c: Strengthen incentives for repurposing historic properties for arts uses.

Action 8.5.4.d: Research the applicability of the concept of “naturally occurring cultural districts” to the county and develop policies that will support these places.

Action 8.5.4.e: Invest in and activate small-scale creative hubs, which could be co-located in community anchors such as community centers, housing developments, places of worship, educational institutions, or in commercial spaces. Make them low cost and easily accessible for all county residents.

Policy 8.5.5: Include recommendations promoting public art, cultural spaces, and cultural hubs in all future sector plans and, when applicable, functional plans.

Policy 8.5.6: Provide every resident in the county with opportunities to experience art and culture daily by making public art an integral part of the public realm, physical infrastructure, and public services.

Action 8.5.6.a: Update the county’s public art ordinance to allocate 0.5% of the county capital budget to the Public Art Trust.

Action 8.5.6.b: Develop a policy, in collaboration with arts advocacy partners, for allocating funds from the Public Art Trust into county construction projects, such as buildings, parks, transportation infrastructure, public schools and Montgomery College.

Action 8.5.6.c: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to make public art a prerequisite of receiving incentive density within the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones. Update the Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines and Art Review Panel review processes to streamline, expand, and clarify options for the provision of public art benefits.

Policy 8.5.8: Implement recommendations of the county’s Public Art Roadmap in partnership with arts advocacy organizations.

Policy 8.5.7: Partner with private property owners, non-profit organizations, and county agencies to maximize the economic potential of parks and public spaces through programming, activation, placemaking events, and updates to operating procedures.



Policy 8.5.9: Partner with arts advocates, arts and community organizations, field leaders and county agencies to develop specialized arts initiatives related to topics such as youth, elder issues, environment, restorative justice, public health, food justice, and other public issues.

Action 8.5.9.a: Develop an artist residency program in county agencies.

Goal 8.6: Ensure all communities benefit equitably from good design, regardless of their location or demographics.

Policy 8.6.1: Develop and implement tools and strategies to ensure that the quality of design of public and private buildings, streets, and public spaces in all parts of the county are equitable and respond to the needs of local residents.

Action 8.6.1.a: Create a design literacy campaign for the county, with a focus on educating residents regarding the positive impacts of equitable and innovative design.

Action 8.6.1.b: Partner with Montgomery County Public Schools to introduce all students to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 vision as a part of the standard educational curriculum.

Action 8.6.1.c: Establish a neighborhood design center within the Planning Department that equitably supports citizens through community-engaged design and planning services for projects identified by neighborhood residents.

Testimony of Stacy Silber

Thrive Montgomery 2050

November 19, 2020

Good evening. My name is Stacy Silber, an attorney with Lerch, Early & Brewer. I'm testifying today on behalf of myself and my Lerch Early land use group colleagues. I'm also testifying today as a Board member and Legislative Committee Chair for NAIOP DC/MD, an association representing many of the mixed use developers in the region.

We would like to commend the efforts of your Staff and particularly Khalid Afzal. We know this was a significant undertaking and the Draft Plan provides an excellent framework for the next thirty years. Furthermore, we appreciate Staff's recognition that to ensure a vibrant, strong and competitive economy, we need to attract and maintain major employers, support small business and innovation and attract a diverse workforce. Of great importance, the Plan stresses the notion of equity – creating a place where residents have equal access to affordable housing, employment, transportation, and education.

In reviewing the Thrive Plan, it is clear that there is an understanding that economic health and economic disruption need to be drivers to effect change. The Plan identifies many issues and challenges that should be solved over the years. We submit that without the influx of private economic investment and public investment in infrastructure, the County will not be able to fully solve and address these issues. As such, the Thrive Plan must prioritize economic health for such will serve as a catalyst for attracting investment and in turn provide the necessary ingredients for the County to achieve its other goals of environmental resilience and community equity. With that in mind, as Staff and the Board work through the Draft, we ask that you consider the following:

1. The Plan acknowledges that in promoting the long-term economic health of the County, there needs to be policies and visions in place that incentivize investment. With construction costs continuing to rise and rents remaining flat, developers and investors no longer just evaluate whether to invest in Montgomery, Fairfax or DC. Rather, they consider places like Charlotte and

Atlanta that also have great needs for housing and the policies in place to attract businesses.

2. Thus, to ensure economic investment in the County, the Plan needs to set a hierarchy of priorities so that Policies, which encourage investment in housing and commercial growth, are not inadvertently negated by other costly Policies and Actions that act as deterrents. To that end, certain Policies and/or Actions may need to be removed.
3. By way of example, an executive with a Montgomery County based advanced immunology and life sciences company, was asked at a Business Roundtable discussion yesterday “what would be helpful to stay and expand in Montgomery County?” He answered that his company needed more real estate to accommodate lab space, and the ingredients to attract and house talent in the County.
4. To that end, we commend Staff in its creative thinking on increasing housing and promoting diverse housing types in the County.
5. While encouraging development along corridors and near transit is key, there also needs to be policies that allow missing middle type housing *throughout* the County. In order for supply to meet housing demand over the next 30 years, multiple tools and approaches are required.
6. We appreciate the Plan’s clear advocacy that tax abatements, PILOTS and TIFs should be used to encourage diverse housing types and high-density housing near transit. We recommend this type of advocacy throughout the Plan.
7. Furthermore, the Plan rightfully focuses on identifying and removing regulatory barriers that slow down delivery of development.
8. Finally, we suggest you consider distilling the Plan’s prioritized Goals and Actions, and shorten the overall content.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with you in the coming months.

From: [Muriel Watkins](#)
To: [Sharma, Atul](#)
Cc: [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Rock Spring: Advancing a Life Sciences Cluster
Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 10:48:12 AM
Attachments: [Rock Spring Advancing a Life Sciences Cluster MWatkins.pdf](#)

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

Atul Sharma,

I have reviewed Thrive Montgomery 2050 and thought this might be an appropriate time to provide comments on a recommendation for Advancing a Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring. I attended the Marriott Headquarters (HQ) Team Community Meeting and presentation on the new Marriott HQ in Bethesda and have followed the announced plans by Erickson Living Retirement Community to repurpose the current location at 10400 Fernwood Road as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). The approved relocation of the Marriott HQ and plans for a CCRC were announced after the Rock Spring Sector Plan was completed, leading up to Approval and Adoption.

I am responding to the comment at page 33 of the Sector Plan, “Rock Spring is still a viable employment center, and has the potential to be strengthened and fortified if new uses are introduced to the area that help create a more vibrant, interesting, and marketable location.”

A recent report from Morgan Stanley Research, “Why COVID-19 Could Reshape the Future of Health Care,” highlights CARES ACT provisions that offer promise for advances in telemedicine and digital health technologies, noting the surge of telehealth services as in-person medical appointments were being canceled. Our primary care physician and medical specialists are located at the medical complex affiliated with Johns Hopkins and have followed the County’s COVID-19 guidance and are integrating telemedicine as a component of their practice. Rock Spring could serve as a Life Sciences Cluster capitalizing on the physical infrastructure of senior housing in proximity to an existing medical complex shared by top ranked medical specialists in the Metropolitan Washington region, many of whom are affiliated with Suburban Hospital. This would be a value-added to Erickson Living in attracting residents to the retirement community and for attracting businesses with medical and healthIT services and products as an economic driver for the County.

I am including an excerpt from a draft Storyboard I have developed outlining the concept of a Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring focused on **Connectivity – the integration of mobility alternatives** and the following Themes of Thrive Montgomery 2050: 1) Create Complete Communities through urbanism and a mix of uses and 2) Make corridors the place for new growth. I would welcome opportunity to discuss the specifics of the proposed concept and can be reached by telephone at 202.237.1225.

Best Regards,

Muriel Watkins, EVP

CrossCreek Strategies, LLC

Potomac, MD
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Advancing A Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring



Excerpt from Draft Storyboard

Muriel Watkins, EVP CrossCreek Strategies, LLC

Johns Hopkins Health Care and Surgery Center and Rock Spring Court Medical Office Complex



The medical complex has three (3) entrances_
Fernwood Road, Rockledge Drive, and Rock Spring Drive

Advancing A Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring



Marriott International Hotel
10400 Fernwood Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

With the announcement of the development of a new Marriott International Headquarters in downtown Bethesda, Erickson Living Retirement Community made an early offer to acquire the 775,000 square-foot property at 10400 Fernwood Road to repurpose as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC).

Advancing A Life Sciences Cluster at Rock Spring



The Montgomery County Planning Department began the review of the ELP Bethesda at Rock Spring Preliminary Plan of Subdivision, Sketch Plan and Local Map Amendment H-135, dated March 26, 2020. Plans call for 1,300 independent dwelling units, 160-210 assisted living and memory care units, and 30 to 50 skilled nurses units. Up to 15,000 square feet of commercial space was proposed with approximately 5,000 square feet of neighborhood serving retail.

There is considerable parking associated with the Rock Spring medical complex off Fernwood and Rockledge Drive, including structured parking facilities and open at-grade parking lots.



Even with the mix of parking, the parking garages and lots reach maximum capacity during the early morning hours between 8:30 to 9:00 AM, resulting in patients circling to find an available parking space.



Driving and parking can be problematic for a number of seniors who exit their cars with a cane or walker, indicators that a retirement community with proximity to the medical complex would be a value added.

GRAND OAKS at JOHNS HOPKINS SIBLEY HOSPITAL



A Rock Spring Life Sciences Cluster or healthcare district would represent an expansion of the Grand Oaks Assisted Living Community, developed by Johns Hopkins at Sibley Hospital.



Developed in 2000, Grand Oaks Assisted Living Community offers seniors a continuum of care options, including assisted living, memory care, respite care, and personalized care plans. Montgomery County based Forrester Construction completed the 4-story Georgian-style brick structure with 104 private apartments and common areas.



Grand Oaks is celebrating 20 Years with the banner "Heroes Work Here."

The proximity of Erickson Living Retirement Community to Johns Hopkins and the medical center complex provides an opportunity to create a connector to link CCRC residents to their primary care physicians and medical specialists without having to drive and park – using a pedestrian bridge or other people mover.

Example: The pedestrian bridge provided for safe passage from The Metropolitan apartments to the Safeway across Old Georgetown Road in Bethesda.



Example: The pedestrian bridge provides for a safe passageway from the Grosvenor Parking Garage to the Strathmore Music Center.

A low-speed autonomous self-driving vehicle could serve as an alternative safe-crossing option.

Relay Shuttle



Developed by Perrone Robotics, the Relay self-driving shuttle is now being tested in the Mosaic District in Fairfax County, Virginia. Perrone Robotics programmed a Polaris Industries GEM 6e for use as a Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV).

Olli Shuttle



The Olli, is an eight-passenger self-driving electric shuttle, developed by Robotic Research, has been tested in Montgomery County

Corporate and Professional Profile

Presentation developed by: Muriel Watkins, Executive Vice President (EVP)
CrossCreek Strategies, LLC, Potomac, MD 20854

CrossCreek Strategies, LLC is a Montgomery County-based small business providing Executive Coaching and Strategic Consulting services to select corporate and private clients.

Jay B. Watkins, President, is a former senior executive with extensive experience in urban infrastructure, public policy, business operations, business development, and strategic innovation. During his career in the Transportation (now Critical Infrastructure) Group at Parsons Corporation, Mr. Watkins served variously as Vice President and Area Manager, Washington, DC; Vice President, Strategy and Development; Senior Vice President, Technology; Senior Vice President, Transportation Operations, Senior Vice President, Capital Programs East. Mr. Watkins holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a Bachelor's Degree from Brandeis University, where he was a Thomas J. Watson Fellow. He also completed The Senior Executive Program at London Business School.

Muriel Watkins, EVP, is a Harvard Graduate School of Design trained City and Regional Planner. Ms. Watkins has had a career specializing in the marketing, sale, and repositioning of real estate assets financed by federal agencies. This focus has capitalized on her role as a former Senior Executive in federal government with the FDIC | Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) with operational responsibility for bringing online national sales to sell foreclosed residential properties as affordable housing and to enhance the competitive position of small businesses in purchasing real estate assets and bidding on federal contracts. Ms. Watkins has also provided program support to federal agencies with credit, asset sales, and grant programs and has supported strategic funding goals of major nonprofit organizations and public-private partnerships.

Point of Contact:

Muriel Watkins | E: 202.237.1225 | E: murielwatkins@me.com

Highlights of Telemedicine and Telehealth Experience

A 2020 report by Morgan Stanley Research, “***Coronavirus & the Future of U.S. Health Care***,” reviews CARES ACT provisions that offer promise for advances in telemedicine and digital health technologies for accelerating opportunities for healthcare professionals, commercial enterprises, and investors in a post COVID-19 environment. Early trials of telemedicine and telehealth projects were funded from 1994 to 2004 by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Technology Opportunities Program (TOP). Ms. Watkins served as an Expert Consultant to provide Program Support to TOP and supported strategic funding goals in developing TOP grant applications, including the following:

Telehealth Aging-in-Place Trial: Helped secure a \$679,282 Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) grant on behalf of a collaboration between a nonprofit affordable housing developer and The Catholic University of America (CUA) Biomedical Engineering Department. Project goals focused on developing e-health technologies to link residents of a 290-unit senior building to health care providers as a test of an *aging-in-place* model. A related goal was to define the skill requirements for an entry-level “telehealth technician” and to integrate individual electronic medical records. Total Project Cost: \$1,360,273 | TOP Grant: \$679,282 | 2004

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

Project: BenefitsCheckUp.org. Served as a consultant to NCOA to help secure a \$750,271 Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) grant to support the launch of BenefitsCheckUp.org, an Internet web portal designed to provide federal benefit eligibility information to senior citizens and their families. TOP funding enabled NCOA to establish a network of non-profit organizations that could aid with the prescreening of seniors lacking access or proficiency in using the Internet. Lucent Technologies was an initial partner in supporting the development of the software and software licenses. Total Project Cost: \$1,500,542 | TOP Grant: \$750,271

Project: HomeEquityAdvisor.org | Served as Expert Consultant and Technical Writer to revise and draft content for an online decision tool, *Home Equity Advisor*, to help older homeowners (ages 55 and over) understand options and risks for using home equity as a source of funds for retirement. Areas of focus include financing home improvements for “*Aging-in-Place*” using a Reverse Mortgage, FHA’s Energy Efficient Mortgage, and Department of Energy funding for energy efficiency. The website also includes a section on how to Prepare for a Natural Disaster under Strategies to Stay in Your Home Longer. Home Equity Advisor was funded by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation.

From: [Scott Plumer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [McCarthy, Caroline](#); [Sartori, Jason](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Thrive Public Hearing Testimony - 2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES
Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 3:26:22 PM
Attachments: [2020 COALITON ACCORD on RURAL LIVING FINAL V105 circ 201209.pdf](#)
[envelope 2017 to 2026.png](#)

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

I am honored to submit for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing record the attached 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities (The Accord) as testimony.

As reflected in The Accord the signatories to date are Darnestown Civic Association (DCA), Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA), Boyds Civic Association (BCA), West Montgomery County Citizens Association (WMCCA), and Sugarloaf Citizens Association (SCA).

Invitations to prospective signatories are ongoing.

The 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities controls development and traffic outside the sewer envelope to protect the environment and reduce sprawl.

The Accord builds community support across the county to achieve three objectives:

- Extremely restrict expansion of the current sewer envelope.
(helps stop dense development in rural areas and protects natural resources)
- Mitigate current and prevent future highway and arterial level non-transit traffic in areas outside the current sewer envelope. (reduces traffic in rural areas)
- Acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.

Respectfully,

Scott Plumer

2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES
(C ARC 2020)

We seek General Plan level and other legal protections for Rural Communities. Rural Communities as referenced herein are areas that are outside the current sewer envelope. The protections we seek are to 1a) ensure extremely high restrictions on sewer service and 1b) mitigate current and prevent future corridor level (highway and arterial) non-transit traffic in Rural Communities.

We seek explicit General Plan 2) acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.

The Signatories implore the Planning Commission to work collaboratively to enumerate and the County Council to enact legislation required to specifically provide for and codify via Montgomery County's new General Plan; and as otherwise required in other plans such as the Ten-Year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan and throughout the Montgomery County Code, Zoning Ordinance, and Code of Montgomery County Regulations (COMCOR); and work to effect the same with area, state, county, local jurisdictions, agencies, and commissions; and reiterate and reinforce at county operational levels; in a manner to cause:

1. Protections for areas that are outside the current sewer envelope to ensure
 - a. Extremely high restrictions on sewer service, and
 - b. Mitigation of current and prevention of future corridor level (highway and arterial) non-transit traffic in these areas.
2. Recognition of Rural Communities and their vital characteristics.

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

2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES
(C ARC 2020)
SIGNATORY STATEMENT

_____ hereby attaches our name to
and express our support for the 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities.

We seek General Plan level and other legal protections for Rural Communities. Rural Communities as referenced herein are areas that are outside the current sewer envelope. The protections we seek are to 1a) ensure extremely high restrictions on sewer service and 1b) mitigate current and prevent future corridor level (highway and arterial) non-transit traffic in Rural Communities.

We seek explicit General Plan 2) acknowledgement of Rural Communities as a viable, desirable, vital, wholly appropriate, important type of development, place making, and way of life.

Signed

Printed Name

Date

Title

Organization

My signature represents and warrants that I have full authority to execute this Signatory Statement on behalf of the organization named above and said execution has been duly entered in the records of the organization.

Please return via fax to 301-963-4031, via text to 301-963-9799, or via email to scott.plumer@verizon.net

Should your organization ever wish to withdraw just submit this form again with a notation indicating your desire to withdraw.

2020 COALITION ACCORD on RURAL COMMUNITIES

(C ARC 2020)

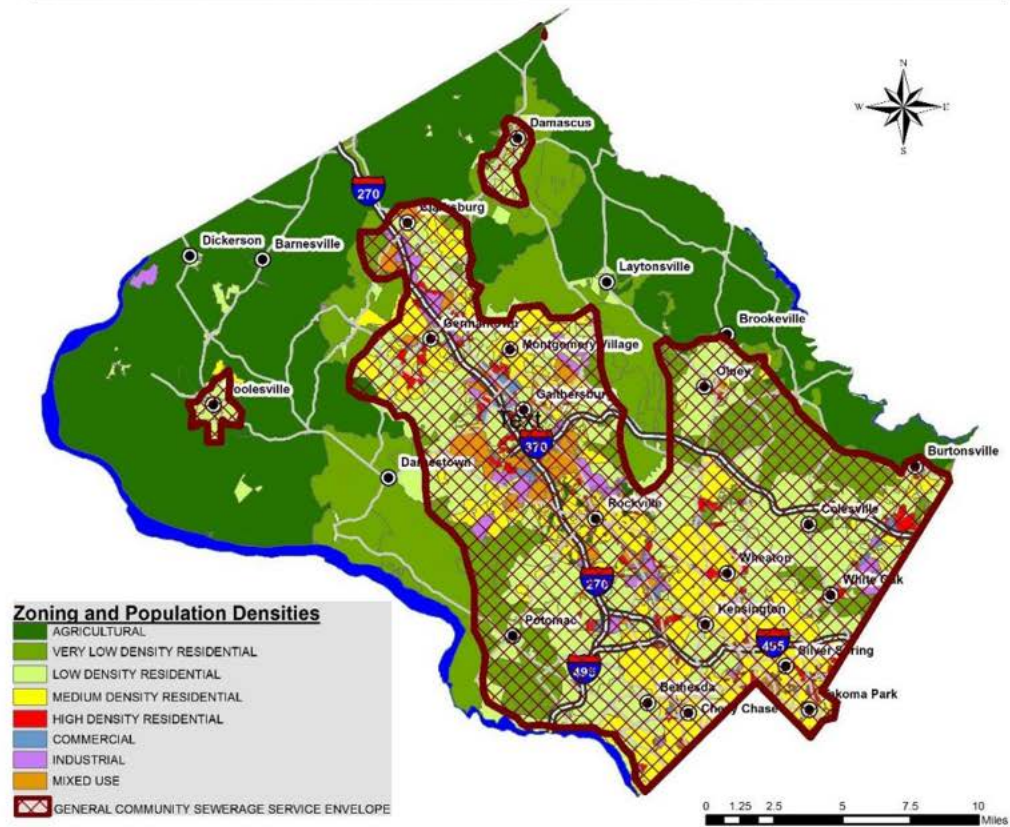
LIST OF SIGNATORIES

(as of December 9, 2020)

DATE	ORGANIZATION
11/8/2020	Darnestown Civic Association
11/15/2020	Montgomery Countryside Alliance
11/16/2020	Boyds Civic Association
11/16/2020	West Montgomery County Citizens Association
11/23/2020	Sugarloaf Citizens Association

and General Community Sewerage Service Envelope

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



My name is Scott Plumer testifying as an individual for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing record.

As I reviewed the new General Plan draft and found common themes with previous General Plans I began to wonder what items were missing from previous general plans that allowed special interests and external trends to create undesired development. I wondered how twenty-seven years into transit oriented development my community is overrun with corridor level traffic overflow. I looked at protections afforded to various areas in previous plans and then was shocked as essential items dropped out of the current draft and a myriad of implied exceptions were included rather than strongly worded protections. Protections between goals when they collide, compete or otherwise impinge on each other and prevention of interference when goals overrun one another and create collateral damage causing goals to suffer in an unintended or undesired manner are also notably absent.

The more I read, the more concerned I become over gaps in policy intentions, expressions, and direction, especially for the area I live in, areas like it, and the Ag Reserve and Rural Open Space.

These concerns all coalesced into a coherent, concise General Plan level policy regarding Rural Communities and specifically those communities outside the sewer envelope. The focus was on achievable General Plan additions.

The result was the 2020 Coalition Accord on Rural Communities (The Accord).

The Accord's intent is to stop enablement of higher densities by containing the sewer envelope, prevent corridor overflow which is likely by far the primary cause of vehicle miles travelled and congestion on roads outside the envelope, and embrace low density green living in the areas outside the sewer envelope. These things protect the environment, prevent sprawl, and celebrate rural living.

I've taken to calling the area outside the sewer envelope the **Heirloom Area**. I think the name reflects its heritage, its ecosystem, its preciousness, and our intent to pass it on to future generations. The Heirloom element comprises around a third of the land area of the county. Of course, "Area" may not be the best descriptor to use for the Heirloom land and is pro tem.

The Accord does not endorse miniature cities dotting the landscape. It does not envision densities anywhere near enough to justify those kinds of centers. Nor do we want to create high density housing in them to justify them. The unique challenges of living in harmony with the immediate ecosystem require a much lighter human imprint.

The Accord does allow for growth at extremely low densities as exists today because it is needed for the basic functioning of our communities. You cannot preserve a way of life or an ecosystem by bottling it up like a fossil, it must thrive.

Sprawl to me means when a density gradient exceeds its planned boundaries. At the low densities we use in our definitions, additional rural residential development would not require new infrastructure.

The Accord adds a layer of stewardship to occupancy and ownership. Correcting wayward stewardship of land by residents is vital. The rural living description in Item 2 is intended to lead to a code of conduct for rural residents. It speaks generally to good land stewardship and having sufficiency meaning a negative GHG profile, power from the community first, and much more. It is a creed not fluff. There are huge policy implications throughout Item 2 speaking to stewardship and more.

The Accord calls out native plants as regionally critical systemic ecosystem components. As we get to regulatory zoning language we can, for example, advocate for a high percent of cover to be native plants on all new development over a certain size and support programs that move to correct already decimated lands.

It is not enough to encourage density where you want it, you need to stop its increase where it is most likely to undesirably occur. Where I live is ground zero for that battle and has been for decades. The second crossing and outer beltway were right here or next door. We are on the edge of the sewer envelope. We have a high density of Rustic Roads. We have four state roads and two more to our east and two more to our west. Our western and northern border is the largest watershed in the County (Seneca Creek), on the east a smaller watershed (Muddy Branch) and on the south the Potomac River. We border the Agricultural Reserve and the largest Historic District in Maryland.

I believe it is time to stand on the shoulders of giants and up the ante on The Reserve, our critical natural resources, undesirable corridor level traffic overflow, protect the environment, prevent sprawl, and celebrate Heirloom communities.

From the perspective of recent Montgomery County planning evolution, The Accord seeks to extend the area of the 1980 Functional Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space to most of the areas originally excluded and then defined as Rural Residential in the 1993 General Plan refinements. The Accord also seeks to strengthen protections for those areas. The Accord has redefined the area as those lands outside the current sewer envelope.

I invite the Montgomery County Planning Board and staff to join The Accord by adopting it into the mainstream elements of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan.

I look forward to the collaborative work needed to improve the planning practice with respect to the Heirloom element and allow its communities to thrive. The challenges include:

- allow our Heirloom Area to thrive without being overrun
- codify the Heirloom community creed
- detail the much neglected T1 and T2 transects of New Urbanism
- explore the notion of compaction as a one size fits all form of human settlement that has persisted in various forms ever since the Neolithic Revolution
- examine conventional wisdom of minimum densities required for well-functioning communities
- disprove the accepted ubiquitous mutual exclusivity between investing space and money in the private realm versus the public realm
- distinguish between the higher density rural communities with their rural villages and the lower density Heirloom communities and Heirloom junctions

The strategic policies of the Accord

- Fortify the commitment to Agricultural, Rural Residential, and Open Space
- Celebrate our heritage
- Protect natural resources and local ecosystems
- Prevent sprawl
- Allow for our rural residential communities to thrive sustainably without density

My sincere thanks to each of you and your staff for the work you do as stewards of our community and for allowing me and my community to be a small part of the new General Plan. It was a great moment of serendipity to stumble upon the effort, carve out time to participate, and a treasured opportunity to bid a fond farewell to 8787.

Respectfully,
Scott Plumer

From: [Romulo Huezo](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Cc: [Romulo Huezo](#)
Subject: Fwd: 2050 Vision
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 6:54:25 AM

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

Attachment available until Dec 10, 2020

Greetings,

I like to ask you to please forward this information to the [Montgomery County Planning Board](#) and for the Vision for 2050. Environmental issues are a priority around the world and some countries are taking leap steps to approach this issue different ways.

My vision is to leave a better world for our children, and we know for a fact that CO2 emissions is a contributing factor to the climate change. In fact, there is a world organization that is addressing this issue with technology and resources, the organization is The World Hydrogen Council, <https://hydrogencouncil.com/en/>, where they have a vision just like the Montgomery County for the year 2050.

Therefore, I like to share with the board the attached presentation(in PDF) so they are aware of the benefits and opportunities that this technology can offer to the Montgomery county, Maryland, and the USA. California is implementing a plan for the year 2050 as well, and they are on their way to achieve it.

Please make sure that the board members receive a copy of this presentation and I available for questions and to present the importance of this technology to the board members and how can they include in their planning the use of clean fuels technologies.

Thank you, and looking forward to hear form you.

Romulo Huezo
+1669-294-1181
romuloh01@gmail.com
rhuezo@gmx.com

Note: the presentation is published as a separate document



December 10, 2020

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

Written Testimony on the Draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board Commissioners,

The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) appreciates the Planning Board's creation of the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan to update Montgomery County's General Plan that seeks to guide future land use and growth for the next 30 years.

MCEDC supports the draft plan's vision to work toward a more competitive, inclusive, and resilient economy in Montgomery County. MCEDC shares in the plan's Economic Health priority to ensure a vibrant, strong and competitive economy by attracting and maintaining major employers, continuing to enhance our Federal campuses, supporting small businesses and innovation, and attracting and retaining a high-quality, diverse workforce.

The draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan acknowledges the foundation of the 1964 Wedges and Corridors Plan and builds on those concepts that helped the County become a top-tier community nationally. Like Wedges and Corridors, the goals and policies described in Thrive 2050 will only help the County succeed if they are implemented. MCEDC recognizes implementation of such a plan is not a simple task. It requires a wide network of partners and long-term thinking. MCEDC is committed to working with the Planning Board in the advancement of the plan so that we can all be collectively synchronized in the development of the best corridors for our Montgomery County attraction, retention, and expansion efforts.

In the Thrive 2050 Resilient Economy section, MCEDC aligns with Goal 3.7 to create a culture of regionalism. We agree that regional initiatives can play a crucial role to ensure that Montgomery County and the region continue to be globally competitive. MCEDC is focusing an increasing amount of its efforts on promoting regionalism within the Greater Washington and Maryland National Capital area. MCEDC is a founding member of the Maryland National Capital Regional Economic Development Alliance (MNCREDA), a partnership of six Maryland counties (Anne Arundel, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's) designed to collectively address regional economic development

challenges and opportunities. In addition, MCEDC is also playing a leadership role with ConnectedDMV, a public-private regional collaboration of executives in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. ConnectedDMV is creating initiatives to support regional economic development initiatives such as: a Regional Economic Development Strategy; a Global Pandemic Prevention & Biodefense Center; a Quantum Innovation Center; and a Regional Cybersecurity Initiative, among others. These efforts can further the plan's Goal 3.7.

Becoming a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, as described in Goal 3.5, has also been an increasingly large focus of MCEDC. Home to nearly 40 federal laboratories—more than any other county in the nation—federal technology transfer presents immense opportunities for entrepreneurship locally. Further collaborations with the County Executive's team regarding a potential university research presence at White Flint, as well as ongoing conversations with the University System of Maryland, the Universities at Shady Grove, and Montgomery College, will support technology and workforce development with our local academic institutions. We continue to seek new methods to leverage our Montgomery County federal and university assets to promote increased local innovation and entrepreneurship.

Goal 3.2, to grow vibrant commercial centers that are attractive to our business recruitment targets, is also a focus of MCEDC. Although we do not directly develop land use policy, MCEDC can serve as a key connection to relay feedback from the business community to entities like the Montgomery Planning Board, the County Executive, and the County Council. Through these continued collaborations, we can grow communities that meet the needs of future business prospects.

Thank you for your consideration of MCEDC's comments. We welcome the opportunity to help promote a more diverse, inclusive, and stronger economy in Montgomery County. We look forward to further discussion and collaboration regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050 and its implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin H. Wu".

Benjamin H. Wu
President and CEO

From: M O <chiapetfarmer@yahoo.com>

Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2020 1:01 AM

To: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>

Cc: Kronenberg, Robert <robert.kronenberg@montgomeryplanning.org>

Subject: Tangible constraints and lack of specifics seen in the material available for Public comment in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan

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

Dear Chairman Anderson,

Myself and hundreds of my nearby neighbors have found the time for public comment in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan to be unduly limiting, onerous and constraining during this time of Pandemic COVID-19. As I was unable to physically be present at the November 19, 2020 Planning Board Meeting for Thrive Montgomery 2050, I did watch all 6+ hours of this recorded public hearing for Thrive Montgomery 2050. I echo the concerns of many of the public testimonies delivered in this hearing that there simply hasn't been enough time for the Public to adequately review such a varied and involved vision for the future of Montgomery County. Many of the presenters and speakers were representing special interest groups in the County and many from East and Down County, notably much more experienced in the "urban" lifestyle highlighted throughout the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. A representation of 85 citizens from the County is not nearly statistically relevant to show a cross-section of civic involvement in the County. I did not hear of this Planning Meeting until after it had occurred and in summary on WTOP on the radio. I understand only the Washington Times, a paper of much lower circulation than the Washington Post, had carried notice of this planned meeting. I went back and tried to find as much information as I could on the earlier, formative community outreach Zoom meetings this Summer on Thrive Montgomery 2050 and found these Zoom calls covering the Elements of Thrive Montgomery 2050 had been viewed at most by 10 to 20 Viewers, with even less actual Zoom call participants. I find this to be a poor representation and miscalculation of vital information the Public should be made well aware of. I feel the Public should be given additional consideration of more time to review the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan and even the opportunity to speak up at another Zoom Public Hearing on Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Specific to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan, I found a lack of specificity or alignment of tangible measures that the Thrive Montgomery 2050 hopes to convey. Highlighting areas of notable departure from a specific vision for Thrive Montgomery 2050, include a lack of a primary emphasis on at least three critical factors in the future of Montgomery County: Climate change, a lack of emphasis for Commercial Tech Sector Development long envisioned in the Up-County, and a lack of consideration for the Economic value to the County reflective of personal "agency" contributions-seen through a lens as a possible quality of life determinant or measurement, a motivating factor in pursuing a life-rewarding career and compensation, and as a factor in civic Environmental innovation, where area HOAs can contribute to address Climate Change.

I will attempt to concisely highlight these three areas of concern. Climate change is the smothering 800 lbs. elephant in the room. Not only does it have the potential to be a perennial "black swan", it also has the potential to spin off other potential "black swan" events, such as devastation to our watershed storm-water management and the encroachment we've seen on the endemic flora and fauna of our varied

environmental landscape. COVID-19 can be seen to be related to a considerable Environmental encroachment and deterioration of undeveloped areas. Besides COVID-19, our area public utilities pay billions of dollars a year in remediation for the effects of storm-water runoff and disastrous storms, including the unpredictable derecho we had a few years back. The billions a year one public utility pays to the U.S. Government under consent decree for unpredictable and unmanageable run-off into the Chesapeake Bay and our waterways will not diminish with the heavy infrastructure upheaval envisioned by the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. Our most cherished waterway, the Chesapeake Bay is at an inflection point in whether it can adequately meet the Water Quality measures mandated by the EPA and if it will continue to be a generational amenity which brings tourism and much needed vacations to the area. All this to say is that I echo a foremost priority of the Environment and Climate Change in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan heard at the Public Hearing on November 19, 2020 from my fellow neighbors such as David Blockstein, Walter Weis, Lauren Brown, Howard Simms, Ken Bower. Harold Phori, Ms. Wilkinson from Friendship Heights and Ms. Denise from the Audobon Society. Climate change, Environmental protection and the risk of further Environmental incursion, fostering further impervious landscapes, should be the primary and main type of topics by which any greater long-term vision of Montgomery County is examined.

A second highlight the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is short on is the emphasis of Up-County Commercial development of the technology sector, long envisioned by many previous administrations. It is vital to the Up-County tax base and the livelihood of our well-educated citizenry to bring technology, including biotech, from Rockville, all the way to Frederick, particularly in the much needed Germantown, MD area. By emphasizing an expansion of the tax base through Commercial enterprise, more and more of Montgomery's publicly-educated finest can take advantage of the quality of life that has sustained this region for decades. Commercial development in the tech sector should be a primary plank in the vision for Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Thirdly, a thorough appreciation of personal "agency" should be a hallmark of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. Personal "agency" at all levels of development is huge motivational and dignified value that both the individual and many cultures esteem throughout our society. Why would you take away this personal "agency" from our beloved senior population which will make up more than 21% of the County population, just to consign them to living cramped with few transportation options, from jammed buses to potentially crowded thoroughfares? Confinement of living spaces for our seniors is like asking them to live in a group home mentality. Such an honored generation should be appreciated for their years of contribution to the Montgomery County tax base and wisdom and knowledge they've conveyed to successive generations. Why would they want to be told that the community they lived in for decades may be re-zoned and they would have to resort to a limited quality of life option? Equally, it's hard to envision a Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan limited to foot traffic, bicycles and buses when the car made the American Dream a reality and a journey of epic personal evolution. From Moses to early America, Life is all about the journey, isn't it? It should also be reflected that little credence is given to the fact that many of the cars Americans come to experience as their sense of freedom will be electric cars, run on 5G technology, which will help to control coordinated traffic patterns, as much as big city buses. Surely one can find many more autonomous things to do in their own self-driving car than a packed self-driving bus. Which is why I feel any successful vision of Thrive Montgomery 2050 should include quality of life measurements and the individual's right to have their own "agency". The Scandinavian countries are known by their perennial ranking as some of the happiest countries in the World and I think we should look at their cherished values of self-reliance and agency as factors for emphasis for quality of life indicators and metrics for any practicalities that are demonstrated by the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. As some of your demographic data that went into the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan show, as a population becomes more educated, they have less and less children, and if Scandinavia is any leading indicator, many people are deciding to live separately, in individual or much smaller family units, **by choice**. In the era of social media and personalized medicine the trend-line is moving towards the individual and not the larger family unit. What demographic groups have built for themselves and their contributions to the County should be dignified, not warehoused. My second point emphasizing a personal "agency" of career vocation and related compensation is another trend-line where the corporation has shifted health benefits and other previous job amenities to the responsibility of the individual job-seeker. The knowledge Economy rewards the individual who has capitalized and crystallized years of education in a life-sustaining career. The current Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan doesn't take in account the increasing emphasis on distance-learning

education nor the further societal changes after COVID-19. Combining the notion of "agency" with Environmental Community stewardship efforts underway by organized communities and the governance of HOAs large and small, I think we're discounting these organic, bottom-up inspired efforts. The "agency" myself and my fellow neighbors find in our Community HOA help us come up with innovative ideas for Community Clean-up Day to thinking how we can plan for Community charging stations for our greenhouse gas-emission free cars.

With even our County Executive Marc Elrich acknowledging an extenuating COVID-19 related recession may shortchange County budgets by up to a billion dollars a year for the next six years, is now really the ideal time to consider a sizeable infrastructure development plan as outlined Thrive Montgomery 2050? I think this is a significant reason the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan should give priority to the three significant practicalities I outlined above and give the public more time to season their opinion and take in account this "New Normal" prior to closing the time for Public comment on this Plan and even consider holding another Public Zoom hearing.

My Best Regards,
M. Allen

From: [Josephine Rios-Davis](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Marc.Elrch@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [Councilmember.Rice@montgomerycountymd.gov](#); [councilmember.riemer](#)
Subject: Written Testimony - THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 FEEDBACK. From - Aspen Hill Civic Association
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 11:56:26 AM

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

Honorable Montgomery County Leadership,

The Aspen Hill community has expressed serious concerns about the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan. Their inquiries and associated uncertainties have been brought to the attention of the Aspen Hill Civic Association.

We will educate our community, follow-up with their priorities, perspectives and desires, and ensure you are fully aware of our community's position regarding the Thrive Montgomery 2050 vision.

Thank you,

Aspen Hill Civic Association

From: Patricia Johnson <pdjohnson01@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2020 12:21 PM
To: Anderson, Casey <Casey.Anderson@mncppc-mc.org>; MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>; Wright, Gwen <gwen.wright@montgomeryplanning.org>
Cc: Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov; councilmember.friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov; Marc.Elrach@montgomerycountymd.gov; Councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov
Subject: Comments on Thrive Montgomery / Public Hearing Nov 19

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

Dear Chair Anderson,

I virtually observed the Planning Board hearing on TM2050 on November 19th. It was alarming that such an important plan would have limited participation by County citizens. We were allowed to testify, voice concerns or praise the program. However, there was no give and take, nor were questions answered. The only interaction was your acknowledgement of citizens for their testimony. The rest of the PB were silent and invisible spectators.

What is being proposed in Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a sea change for a citizen's right to choose to live in the type of area where they want to live. Montgomery County is known for welcoming R60 and R90 zoned neighborhoods, and outstanding schools. These are both endangered within the TM plan of density with the lack of funding for infrastructure for transit and education. A vision as huge and all encompassing as Thrive Montgomery cannot exist without having a sound fiscal system in place to fulfill it.

The Plan's premise, as it is written, appears to be "that one size fits all" and "if you build it, they will come". This is a flawed theory unless the County has the enormous funds to create and retrofit *Complete Communities/ and 15Minute Living* into existing areas. The actual composition of a plan, as important as this, is in enormous need of editing. It is redundant on almost everyone one of the 167 pages. There are no specifics and the repetitive nature of the document doesn't lend clarity. The Plan is also fatally flawed without a county wide effort to generate new jobs. To pass this plan without an economic or employment blueprint, that is realistic, during this time of severe budgetary deficits, is not in the best interests of its citizens. It is especially difficult to express such interests during this time when there is no opportunity for close interaction. This is extremely worrisome to many Montgomery County citizens who have been silent on the sidelines, only able to watch. I also virtually attended the meeting on Tuesday evening, December 8th when two Council Members of the Town of Chevy Chase asked questions of Chairman Anderson and Director Wright. I applaud Council Members Cornelius and Lane for their efforts. I also thank Chair Anderson and Director Wright for answering questions for two hours. However, again, there were no specifics but at least an acknowledgement that the plan needed to be rewritten and more brief.

A very troubling aspect of this Plan is the reference to racism, restrictive covenants and red-lining. I was appalled to see in big black letters on a white screen during the public hearing on the November 19th, that "*zoning is racist*". Those words are destructive to a community that, for the most part, tries to work together for the common good. Overall, Montgomery County has good spirited people. The language in this Plan does not bring out the best in us. **It is polarizing.** It is reflective of the miasma that is now gripping us at a federal level. The Plan is cavalier in its depiction of restrictions and is an incomplete story. My community has not had restrictive covenants since the 1960's. In fact, it has organically grown diverse over the years. I also find it curious that the Planning Staff refers to racism and zoning at this time, when earlier, they consciously overlooked an African American cemetery buried beneath cement in their haste to give developers one more piece of property to build on.

The goal for Thrive Montgomery is to produce more housing that is affordable and attainable with the idea that the ability to live equitably will attract businesses and will bring jobs to the area. The idea is that Complete Communities with mass transit

and walkability will attract young people who will come and jobs will follow. It doesn't work that way. I have two daughters who grew up here and migrated to Los Angeles and San Francisco respectively because jobs were offered, then they found places to live. The latter part wasn't easy, but the jobs were good, so they stayed.

One more thing about my family's migration, my youngest daughter was the recipient of a \$35000 incubator grant from LA County. Six years later her company employs 80 people, and will do 100 million dollars in on-line sales during a pandemic.

The key to Thrive Montgomery seems to be in "missing middle housing" that will create economic growth (and somehow jobs), fix deficits and equalize inequity. Many listening and unable to speak, think this is a simplistic solution that looks like a Global ZTA that will override a General Plan. We already see a ZTA proposed by Councilmember Jawando, which looks to invade the R60 neighborhoods. We know that the Planning Staff is not an author of this ZTA. Though Chair Anderson stated that "missing middle housing" is just a "small piece of it", that doesn't ring true. Those of us that live in single family homes are afraid that we will wake up one day to find a townhouse development, duplex or triplex springing up next door where a single home has been torn down. The impact to infrastructure is real. The additional density of "missing middle housing" puts a strain on already antiquated electrical grids, sewage and water supplies, garbage collection, storm water management, internet capacities, and roads in need of repair. The skeleton of the county has aging bones that are crumbling. To depend on developers to solve these infrastructure problems in a bad business model. In fact, when you took your program to those parts of the county that were underserved, many asked that the county services mentioned above be improved where they live. Residents weren't asking for new housing, they were asking for improvements where they lived. The other idea in jeopardy is that "missing middle housing" will be affordable. Those units will be built at market prices, especially if they are to be built in areas that are already developed. They will not be "affordable" or equitable. Why not support the protection and preservation of "naturally occurring" existing affordable housing units within and surrounding the County's business districts. Why tear down those affordable buildings to put up dense high-rises that are out of reach financially for most? Your failure to identify and protect those existing areas is inexplicable. The threat is that these policies create a land-grab for developers which will leave the diverse segment of the County behind.

One must also take into account that 21% of the population in MoCo is over 65. Many of us remain at home to "age in place". The anti-car philosophy throughout the plan is ambitious but impractical. *Fifteen Minute Complete Communities* has to be specifically redefined. As Chair Anderson said: "Fifteen minutes can mean many things in Montgomery County." It can mean walking to a neighborhood store, biking 5 miles or driving 15. It can mean "walking to the end of one's driveway." In bad weather (hot, cold, rain, snow) it can mean getting in a car to do simple errands.

When buying a week's groceries it also means driving. As far as *old people* are concerned. We are not about to give up driving and move into a condo even "at 81" as Chair Anderson suggested. You underestimate the 'baby boomers'. We are independent, mobile, like to walk and bike, but depend on a car for vital necessities as well as entertainment. This Plan waves off a significant population in the county. It is not a representative plan.

The Plan also mentions the need for these *Complete Communities* to have "a sense of place", availability of healthy food, good education, mass transit and green spaces. These necessary green spaces are earmarked for exercise, community gatherings as well as contemplative spots, all within *15 minutes* of living. Forgive me, if I distrust this philosophy so easily expounded upon. I have to recall the Planning Board's agreement to the density of Westwood Shopping Center and it's postage stamp sized "*civic green*" that was supposed to supply all those things to the community of 200 multi- bedroom condo units and 75 townhomes on the same section of land. That "civic green" even has a "jewel box" of a commercial structure on it. It is less than a 1/2 acre. It also brings to mind the plans for Kensington Senior Living. A cement building projected at 82 feet high with 112 units and no green space *at all* on the developers plans. If you remember, the jewel in the crown of the Westbard Sector Plan was the naturalization of the Willett Branch to become a "park". Those plans are back burnered until all the development of the area has been done. That green space is accounted for on the Planning Board's paper, but will not be a reality for 40 years, if then. The size of the green space described in that Sector Plan is shrinking as developers expand into its borders.

I am aware that *TM2050* is a longterm vision. This is only a *draft*. It needs clarity, specifics and a tremendous amount of editing. We, who live in areas that will be impacted, request that we have input into this draft as it goes through changes at work sessions at the Council level. How can you include us? Will you include us? The virtual implementation is limited, and we sit as an audience. We need active discussion. This is too important to leave to a one-sided conversation. It is a long-term plan that will evolve over 50 years time according to it's authors. However, damaging short term changes, like ZTAs that affect cherished, historic neighborhoods can be shoe-horned in place using this overriding plan as a blueprint. We have to get this right or it will irreparably hurt Montgomery County. Tell us how to work with you so that you will listen. Please enter my letter into the public record.

Sincerely,
Patricia Depuy Johnson
5301 Oakland Road
Chevy Chase, Md. 20815
#3019225382



Friends of White Oak Board of Directors

December 10, 2020

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board Members:

Friends of White Oak appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Thrive 2020 Public Hearing Draft (10/5/2020).

Friends of White Oak is a board composed of and representing residents and business owners in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan area. As way of background, we'd like to provide information on the demographics of the Master Plan area (data based in 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan):

- population 35,655; 14,195 households
- renters account for 36 percent of households (11 percent higher than countywide)
- 43% of the residential units are multifamily, 57% single family
- median household income \$75,400 which is 22% below the countywide median
- 64% of residents non-white (39% African American (compared to 16 percent countywide), 14% Hispanic, 9% Asian)
- 42% speak a language other than English at home

Friends of White Oak supports the overall objectives of the plan and appreciate the plan's recognition of the historic inequities of public resource allocation in Montgomery County, which has shortchanged our area on many fronts. We agree with the statement that future planning decisions must dictate "[p]olicies that specifically support racial equity and social justice includ[ing]...ensuring existing and new communities of color receive an equitable share of services and investments".

We'd like to highlight a couple of specific areas where we feel the recommendations are particularly actionable in support of the objectives of the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan:

-Develop guidance to conduct a racial equity and social justice impact analysis when planning, designing, and budgeting for new community facilities such as libraries, recreation centers,

schools, parks, and public infrastructure to determine whether the new amenity will be accessible to nearby residents of all backgrounds and will reduce any existing inequities in access.

-Ensure that every community has a network of inclusive, safe, and accessible public parks, trails, and other recreational spaces that connect neighborhoods, increase opportunities for social interaction, encourage active lifestyles, and connect residents to nature by “study[ing] the walking and transit accessibility of the existing network of parks and trails, nature centers, and cultural sites to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to parks and trails for all residents.”

Given proximity of the Paint Branch and Northwest Branch to the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, we wholeheartedly support the recommendation for the county to develop an interconnected web of transportation and green corridors focused on pedestrians and bicyclists. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Planning Board, County Council, and County Executive to identify transportation and green corridors in White Oak and develop an action plan to link stream valleys, natural lands, parks, open spaces with trails for walking and biking and to link Paint Branch and Northwest Branch (Action 7.2.2.a and 7.7.7b)).

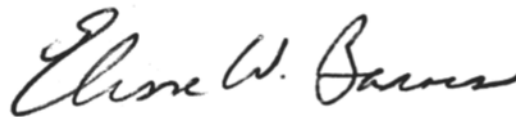
In conclusion, Planning Staff has correctly acknowledged that the current general plan and principally the 1993 amendment, led to the current and longstanding dearth of meaningful development, amenities and progress in the White Oak Master Plan area and other east-county communities. While we applaud the core objectives under the draft plan, the plan should outline the prioritized implementation of these objectives in areas of the county in most need (east-county).

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to further discussions with the Planning Board on these, and other, recommendations in the report.

Sincerely,



David M. Feehan
FOWO Co-chair



Elisse W. Barnes, JD, PhD
FOWO Co-chair

Friends of White Oak Board of Directors
Office of the County Executive 101 Monroe Street Rockville Maryland 20850

From: [Donna R. Savage](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050 written comments
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 4:21:31 PM

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

To Mr. Anderson & the Board:

(Sorry for last-minute comments.) I hope that there will be a special committee and timeline established to review the goals and implementation of Thrive Montgomery 2050 in light of the pandemic and its aftermath. As we are seeing now, our community life -- and all that entails -- has changed radically and continues to evolve as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In my opinion, our life in Montgomery County will never be quite the same, which changes have both positive and negative aspects. We need to ensure that this incredibly powerful Plan for our County's future remains as relevant as possible after these pandemic-induced changes take hold.

Specifically, 2-year and 4-year (or 1-year and 3-year) evaluations of the Plan should be scheduled after its adoption, with focus on the changes that occur after the final adoption. A committee of 5 individuals, from diverse stakeholder sectors, should be tasked with this specific focus and should be established soon after the Plan's adoption. This committee should be as transparent as possible, should hold hearings to get resident & business input, and should be given the mandate (and power) to provide the publicly recommended tweaks to planners, the Planning Board, and the Council.

Thank you for hearing my comments. Be well, and best wishes for the upcoming holidays.

-- Donna

Donna R. Savage
10804 McComas Ct.
Kensington, MD 20895
301-942-2447
intfingers@aol.com

"Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it." - Chinese proverb

North White Oak Civic Association

December 10, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson
Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I am submitting this letter on behalf of the North White Oak Civic Association in response to the Thrive 2050 staff draft.

Our association appreciates the staff report's recognition of the historic inequities of public resource allocation in Montgomery County, which has short-changed our eastern Montgomery County community many fronts over the years.

One of the areas where our community has been shortchanged pertains to transportation. Since the 1981 White Oak Master Plan, there had been recommendations for separated lanes on US 29 for bus transit. While we pleased to see the launch of the Flash bus, we look forward to the County addressing ways the US 29 can be reconfigured to allow the Flash bus by-pass rush hour congestion.

The other area where our community has been shortchanged pertains to the limited accessibility of the forested areas of the nearby Paint Branch and Northwest Branch Parks. While there have been many recommendations in Master Plans over the years for improved trails and connectors to our nearby parks, very few have ever been

implemented.¹ However, have watched major trail improvements be made throughout parts of the county that are west and northwest of White Oak.²

To this point, we are supportive of the report's recommendation that every community has a network of inclusive, safe, and accessible public parks, trails, and other recreational spaces that connect neighborhoods, increase opportunities for social interaction, encourage active lifestyles. We support the recommendation that the walking and transit accessibility of the existing network of parks and trails, nature centers, and cultural sites be studied to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to parks and trails for all residents.

We wholeheartedly support the recommendation for the county to develop an interconnected web of transportation and green corridors focused on pedestrians and bicyclists. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Planning Board, County Council, and County Executive to identify transportation and green corridors in White Oak and develop an action plan to link stream valleys, natural lands, parks, open spaces with trails for walking and biking and to link Paint Branch and Northwest Branch as described in footnote 1.

The other area of the report we'd like to comment on pertains to the recommendation that the Planning Board explore changes to the zoning code to support the creation of single room occupancy (SRO) or personal living quarters (PLQ) by-right in all residential zones. Our association has provided input to the county as to how best to regulate and oversee unlicensed single-family rentals, which these SROs and PLQs would be. The county typically does not license these rentals and has nowhere near the resources today to inspect these properties for which an owner does apply for a license. Major increases in county resources and strengthening of the county's rental housing code would be needed to ensure the health and safety of residents of these units.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to further discussions with the Planning Board on these, and other, recommendations in the report.

¹ (1) Provide a Class I bikeway along the ICC right of way (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (2) Class I bikeway through the Naval Surface Warfare Center between Powder Mill and New Hampshire (1981 White Oak Master Plan). (3) Extend Paint Branch trail from Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park to Old Columbia Pike. This path connection would greatly benefit the regional hiking and bikeway network because it allows passage underneath US 29, which otherwise forms a barrier to recreational bicycle and pedestrian travel. The best location for this path appears to be on the east side of the stream (Fairland Master Plan area), with a new bridge crossing at the existing southern end of the Paint Branch trail. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (4) Extend Paint Branch trail north of Fairland Road to the ICC right of way. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (5) Improve the Northwest Branch trail from Randolph Road to US 29 on the west side of the stream (located in the Kemp Mill-Four Corners Planning Area) by providing boardwalk from the Randolph Road underpass to Old Randolph Road. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (6) Provid[e] a paved trail from Old Randolph Road south to Kemp Mill Road on the west side of the stream. (1997 White Oak Master Plan). (7) Improve the existing unpaved trail from Kemp Mill Road to US 29. (1997 White Oak Master Plan).

² See Montgomery County Parks Department trail directory:
<https://www.montgomeryparks.org/activities/park-trails/>

Sincerely,

Barry Wides

Barry Wides
President, North White Oak Civic Association
11803 Ithica Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20904

From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [councilmember.riemer](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [Evan Glass](#); [Ward, Tiffany](#); [Wellington, Meredith](#); [Iseli, Claire](#); [MenareFoundation@aol.com](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Abel Olivo](#); [Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [jeffrey.weisner@gmail.com](#); [Rick Sullivan](#); [Walter Weiss](#); [mtidwell@chesapeakeclimate.org](#); [Philip Bogdonoff](#); [David Blockstein](#); [Susanne Lee](#); [Susanne Lowen](#); [Susan Eisendrath](#); [Libertelli, Joe](#); [Joseph Heather Bruskin](#); [Wurglitz, Al](#); [Anne James](#); [John Parrish](#); [rq steinman](#); [Sylvia Tognetti](#); [Shruti Bhatnagar](#); [Pablo Blank](#); [Scott Fosler](#); [Galen Tromble](#); [Alan Bowser](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Lauren Greenberger](#); [Tina Slater](#); [Kit Gage](#); [Ken Bawer](#); [Deby Sarabia](#)
Subject: Request adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in Thrive 2050 - now at this stage of Planning Board review & revision.
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 5:47:44 PM
Attachments: [Letter to Chair Anderson 12-10-2020 requesting extension of Thrive deadlines to enable greater & more diverse public input.pdf](#)
[The Climate Mobilization & Co-Signatures letter to Chair Anderson on thrive comment delay Dec. 4 2020.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chair Anderson,

Attached is a letter to you from TAME Coalition and Montgomery Countryside Alliance, echoing a prior sign-on letter to you of November 19, requesting greater public input at this stage of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Today's letter renews this request, based on the need for greater inclusion of, and equity of opportunities to participate, for frontline communities who have not participated to date in Thrive, and adds the imperative, in support of the December 4, 2020 letter to you from The Climate Mobilization - Montgomery County and their associates (also attached), that the Planning Board enable full public participation and integration of Thrive with the County's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP).

In summary, we request that you provide adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in discussions, and further planning staff work, on the draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, for three reasons: (1) to provide greater diversity and equity, and full participation by all affected communities, in the process for the General Plan Update; (2) the General Plan must contain comprehensive recommendations to address Climate Change that are consistent and in harmony with the CARP; and (3) the public must be able to review and provide comment on the revised draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, before it's submitted to the Council.

As our letter notes, it's essential that there be robust public comment on the Thrive recommendations, and so far, that has not happened. Thank you for your consideration.

Diane Cameron

(co-signers Margaret Schoap, TAME Coalition, and Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance)

--

Diane Cameron, Director
301-933-1210
Margaret Schoap, Organizer
240-581-0518

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org

TAME

Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended

To: Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson and Commissioners
Cc: Council President Tom Hucker and Councilmembers
Date: December 10, 2020
Re: Need for Greater Public Input to Thrive Montgomery 2050 & CARP Coordination
From: Diane Cameron and Margaret Schoap, TAME Coalition (Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended); Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance

On November 19, 2020, six organizations along with Pamela Lindstrom, submitted a letter requesting greater public input to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 process, in order to enable broader and deeper public conversations, from a more-diverse set of communities, on the direction of our County's land use policy over the next 50 years.

Today, we repeat our call for greater effort to gather public input to the Thrive draft plan, focused on the need for greater diversity and equity in the process for the General Plan Update, and for full participation by all affected communities. We also are in support of The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County, and six other climate and food policy organizations' December 3 request for an extension, of the Thrive Montgomery comment period, set to close today. This deadline is four days before the release of the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), thus making it impossible for public comment to be informed by the draft CARP.

We emphasize the need for this extension, and join in the following request from The Climate Mobilization and its partner groups that:

"the December 10th, 2020 deadline for comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft be extended by at least ten days after the draft CARP is released by the county in the first half of this month...We also ask that the county and Montgomery Planning hold a joint public meeting in January to discuss and take questions from the public on the critical connections between these two documents and how their recommendations can best be advanced."

Environmental Resilience is one of Thrive Montgomery 2050's three primary goals, yet the Thrive Montgomery Public Hearing Draft makes few recommendations as to how the county can reach the Council-set goals for greenhouse gases, water quality protection, and natural resources. All of that information will come from CARP.

In conclusion, we request that you provide adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in discussions, and further planning staff work, on the draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, for three reasons: (1) to provide greater diversity and equity, and full participation by all affected communities, in the process for the General Plan Update; (2) the General Plan must contain comprehensive recommendations to address Climate Change that are consistent and in harmony with the CARP; and (3) the public must be able to review and provide comment on the revised draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, before it's submitted to the Council.

It is essential that there be robust public comment on the recommendations, and so far, that has not happened. Thank you for your consideration.

December 4, 2020

Thrive Montgomery 2050/CARP Coordination

Thrive Montgomery 2050, Montgomery Planning's plan for the next 30 years, and the county's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP) that lays out the strategy for meeting the goals set forth in the Emergency Climate Mobilization Resolution adopted on December 5th, 2017 must be consistent with and reinforce each other.

Yet the December 10th deadline for public comment on Thrive will be just before or after the CARP is released thus making it impossible for public comment on Thrive to be informed by the draft CARP.

We, the undersigned groups, therefore ask that the December 10th, 2020 deadline for comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft be extended by at least ten days after the draft CARP is released by the county in the first half of this month.

We also ask that the county and Montgomery Planning hold a joint public meeting in January to discuss and take questions from the public on the critical connections between these two documents and how their recommendations can best be advanced.

Signatures:

The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County
350MoCo

Walter Weiss, Mont Co Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

The Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

Montgomery County Food Council

Montgomery County Planning Board
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/>

Ref: countywide transit corridors plan 2013-12.pdf

Joseph Gothard
19050 Wheatfield Drive
Germantown, MD 20876
Gothard1@verizon.net
Date: 12-10-2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Montgomery County Chair:

RE: Montgomery County outlines long-term growth plan through 2050

This is to respectfully request that the Montgomery County Planning Board identify the laws applicable to implement the Montgomery County Plans. Our concerns are summarized below.

1. Potential impact to property value
2. Height of buildings near existing residential areas (houses)
3. Potential impact to transportation
4. Environment
5. Noise control

Montgomery County shall not proceed with any on-site activities until they address and resolve the concerns above. These concerns shall be resolved in good faith to ensure that we and our community can live in harmony.

Detailed plans shall provide the objective evidence of how each concern was resolved. The updated plans and testimonies shall attest the same outcome. It would be unacceptable to hear testimony that it will resolved, and produce final drawings that are different from testimonies.

Respectfully.

Joseph & Kristina Gothard

Cc: khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org

Cc: attorney



THRIVE 2050

Public Hearing November 19, 2020

Written Testimony Presented by: Charisse Callender-Scott

Greetings Planning Board,

It is both an honor and a pleasure to be an active voice in the review of the Thrive 2050 General Plan. As a resident, Realtor, Education and Housing Advocate, active in Local, County, and State Legislative Action, the lens for which I view this plan is one steeped not only in reimagining the space, but the rules, that govern how we reimagine our county space.

It is imperative, that in the forward thinking of this plan, that there be room in it for change, that will not alter the course of its intent, but rather allow room for reconfiguration of its mapping. While the current numbers suggest smaller family sizes, and an increase in independent living, thus a shift in the development strategy of a majority of space in the county, consider how the current pandemic, will likely produce an increase in population as people are spending time at home with more opportunities to produce, and where vertical living has been an attractive model for builders in the last 10-15 years, a more horizontal approach is becoming more desirable, but less accessible to those who want fewer stairs, and desire to have more horizontal space to spread out and enjoy. In my profession, I have witnessed buyers going outside of the county in search of “new and affordable (\$500K)” single family detached homes with private yard space to enjoy their families and a lifestyle that does not throw them into a crowded community. There is also the need to be vigilant about urbanizing areas where the population has been or continues to be reliant on vehicles to commute to and from, without careful consideration of parking lots, or garages to effectively accommodate the vehicles, and avoid an overflow of parking, or crowded streets within the communities created.

As it pertains to Live Work Space, and the ability to create functional community synergy in areas where it is less urban, it is equally important to ensure the connectivity of those neighborhoods as well, where there are safe walking and biking paths, that will allow residents to commute without a vehicle to the grocer, coffee shops or local restaurants within the community. In doing this, it will encourage a boost in small business development within those communities, created by the residents of those communities. The ability to safely walk to recreational spaces, and schools is also one that is key in the redevelopment of areas that do not fall into the Urban plan.

Equally important will be the allowance or variance of zoning to permit mixed and/or altered use of property, and land where compact development could be ideal, but current restrictions will not allow it, and thus will not attract developers to purchase, or attempt to purchase and develop those areas,

thereby leaving them stale and dormant, with no growth or new life for future residents to enjoy, or to be attracted to. Second to that point are the policies, that could be written and enforced to encourage the balance of cap rate on commercial property, that continues to price out any reasonable business owner in these dormant areas, where there is no visible proof of ability to thrive, if you are not a big box business. In order for small business to Thrive, and boost the economic development of our County's communities, it is pertinent that some reigns be put on commercial property management to allow or incentivize creative use of their spaces, and help bolster community engagement.

Housing, is also key, where solutions to economic deficiency exist. This means you must know that these deficiencies don't only fall in the FARMS communities, where the primary focus tends to be food insecurity, but also where insecurity of housing, jobs, childcare, and healthcare for families exist. Some of whom culturally will not find it acceptable to utilize public, private or government assistance to get a hand up to see a better future, but would prefer to work three jobs, to work their way up from a hole, that may never fill, and on the other side, those families who do accept the assistance, many are discriminated against despite the laws that are supposed to protect them from the harmful and degrading actions that counter the intention of them having access to the assistance. In order to combat this behavior, another approach to the MPDU model should be considered, so that families with Housing Choice Vouchers, are not excluded from the opportunity to obtain fair and equal consideration to quality, single family, affordable housing options.

I support the strategies, and the efforts being put forth in this plan, and would like very much to continue to be a voice for the citizens of today, and tomorrow, by listening, reviewing and being an active voice to help cultivate the plan and ensure the needs of all citizens in our county are met through this work.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony before the planning board today. I wish you all the best and look forward to a positive work session following the public hearing. Below, I have listed the majority of my affiliations, not to boast, but to offer perspective to my full lens from which this testimony was brought to life.

Best Regards,

Charisse Callender-Scott, Montgomery County Resident

Area Vice President NEC-Sherwood – Montgomery County Council of PTA's

MCCPT Representative on Montgomery County's Early Childhood Coordinating Council

Vice Chair Prince George County Association of Realtors, Legislative Committee

Board Member, Maryland Realtors Committee on Housing Affordability & Equal Opportunity

Marketing Sub-Committee Chair, for East Montgomery County Parent & Youth Engagement Committee

Member of (STAT) Schools Technical Advisory Team

Mother to Four Recipients of Thrive 2050's Future Impact

Licensed Realtor, Managing Partner of My Family Owned Brokerage

Small Business Owner, Co-Founder of ComunIBuild, LLC, & ComunIBuild Foundation & My Kids Ride, Inc.

From: [Dave Helms](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Thrive2050](#)
Cc: [David Helms](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); HHSmail@montgomerycountymd.gov; travis.gayles@montgomerycountymd.gov
Subject: Today's Testimony at the PB Hearing for the Montgomery County "Thrive" General Plan 2050
Date: Thursday, November 19, 2020 7:56:05 AM
Attachments: [MoCoThrive2050 - Helms Input 19NOV2020.pptx](#)

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

Dear PB Members:

The attached is my testimony for today's PB hearing for the Montgomery County General Plan 2050.

V/R,

Dave Helms
409 Lanark Way
Silver Spring, 20901
301-466-5561

Testimony statement:

- - **Plan is not explicitly people-centered**
 - **Issue: Without focusing on our residents' health and wellbeing as a central outcome, future investment may be ill-focused or in conflict. Lack of focus may make capital investments more difficult to attract sustained political and public support.**
 - **Recommendations:**
 - **Use Richmond, California, General Plan as a benchmark to include a public health and wellbeing theme to plan**
 - **Public health and wellbeing theme should incorporate**

Healthy Montgomery priority areas:

- **Obesity**
- **Behavioral health**
- **Diabetes**
- **Cardiovascular disease**
- **Cancer**
- **Maternal & infant health**

- **Public health and wellbeing theme should include policy establishing partnerships such as Healthy Montgomery Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI) as a cross-cutting strategy to address complex challenges**

Theme actions must address demographic and economic health outcomes inequities across the county in concern with other themes

- **Plan does not highlight value realized from plan actions**

- **Issue: Without providing impact statements and vignettes for selected themes, policies, and actions, public support of plan may be diminished**

- **Recommendations:**

- **Value of Clean Water:** Over billion dollars on damages and new pipeline construction stemming from poor water quality of the Flint River. ([link](#))
- **Value of Clean Air:** The WHO estimates that ambient air pollution is the greatest environmental risk to health – causing more than 3 million premature deaths worldwide every year. Besides such a high death toll, air pollution affects human health, especially through respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. ([link](#))
- **Value of Parks:** American Heart Association states we need at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week; fitness center cost of \$696 per year; parks are free. ([link](#))
- **Value of Car-Free Living:** In 2019, vehicle ownership is 17% (\$10,742/yr) of all household expenditures, second only to housing expenses (Bureau of Labor Statistics ([link](#)))
- **Value of Reduced Road Miles:** “Every new lane-mile of road costs approximately \$24,000 per year to preserve in a state of good repair. By expanding roads, we are borrowing against the future.” “[Repair Priorities 2019](#)” Transportation for America
- **Value of Human Life:** Willingness to Pay Approach is based on how much money people are willing to pay for a small reduction in the probability of dying. EPA values a single human life at \$10 million ([Bloomberg](#))
-

**2050: 1,200,000 residents x \$10,000,000 per life =
\$12,000,000,000,000 (12 trillion dollars)**

- **The General Plan is a portfolio human capital management plan**
- **The GP must therefore be people-centered**
- **The GP must tell the story of investments how our built environment provide substantial Return On Investment (ROI) to enhancing the wellbeing of our residents**

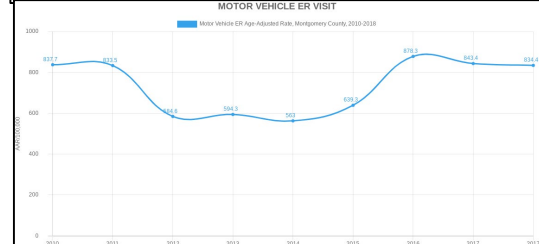
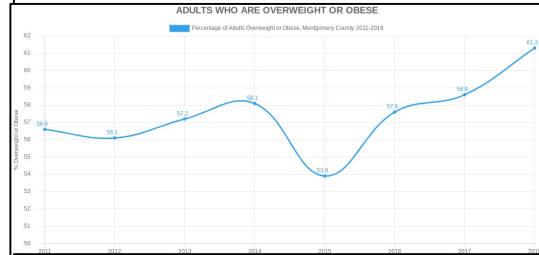
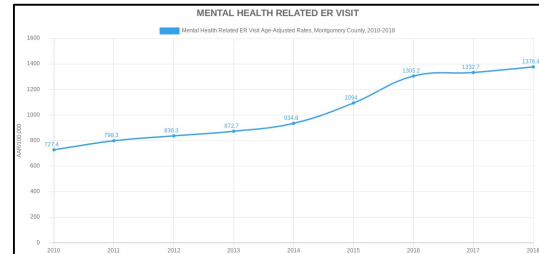
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@davidhelms570

Key Feedback for the MoCo General Plan 2050

★ Plan is not explicitly people-centered

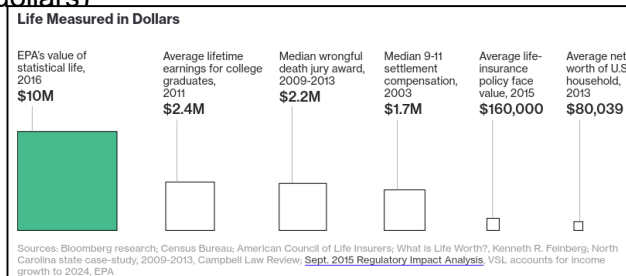
- **Issue:** Without focusing on our residents' health and wellbeing as a central outcome, future investment may be ill-focused or in conflict. Lack of focus may make capital investments more difficult to attract sustained political and public support.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Use Richmond, California, General Plan as a benchmark to include a public health and wellbeing theme to plan
 - Public health and wellbeing theme should incorporate Healthy Montgomery priority areas:
 - Obesity
 - Behavioral health
 - Diabetes
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Cancer
 - Maternal & infant health
 - Public health and wellbeing theme should include policy establishing partnerships such as Healthy Montgomery Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI) as a cross-cutting strategy to address complex challenges
 - Theme actions must address demographic and economic health outcomes inequities across the county in concern with other themes



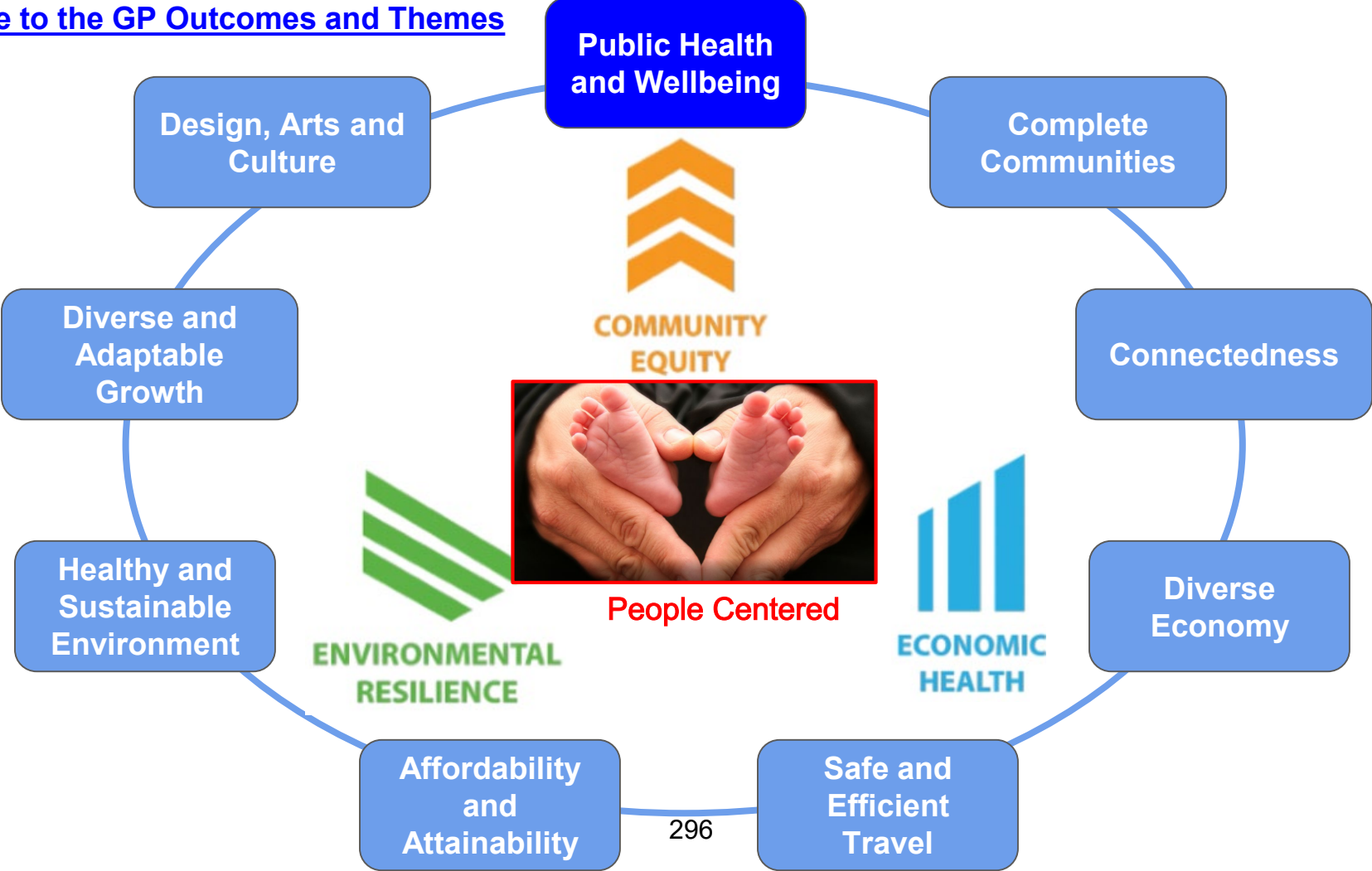
Key Feedback for the MoCo General Plan

★ Plan does not highlight value realized from plan actions

- **Issue:** Without providing impact statements and vignettes for selected themes, policies, and actions, public support of plan may be diminished
- **Recommendations:**
 - **Value of Clean Water:** Over billion dollars on damages and new pipeline construction stemming from poor water quality of the Flint River. ([link](#))
 - **Value of Clean Air:** The WHO estimates that ambient air pollution is the greatest environmental risk to health – causing more than 3 million premature deaths worldwide every year. Besides such a high death toll, air pollution affects human health, especially through respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. ([link](#))
 - **Value of Parks:** American Heart Association states we need at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week; fitness center cost of \$696 per year; parks are free. ([link](#))
 - **Value of Car-Free Living:** In 2019, vehicle ownership is 17% (\$10,742/yr) of all household expenditures, second only to housing expenses (Bureau of Labor Statistics ([link](#)))
 - **Value of Reduced Road Miles:** “Every new lane-mile of road costs approximately \$24,000 per year to preserve in a state of good repair. By expanding roads, we are borrowing against the future.” [“Repair Priorities 2019”](#) Transportation for America
 - **Value of Human Life:** Willingness to Pay Approach is based on how much money people are willing to pay for a small reduction in the probability of dying. EPA values a single human life at \$10 million ([Bloomberg](#))
 - 2050: 1,200,000 residents x \$10,000,000 per life = \$12,000,000,000,000 (12 trillion dollars)
 - The General Plan is a portfolio human capital management plan
 - The GP must therefore be people-centered
 - The GP must tell the story of investments how our built environment provide substantial Return On Investment (ROI) to enhancing the wellbeing of our residents

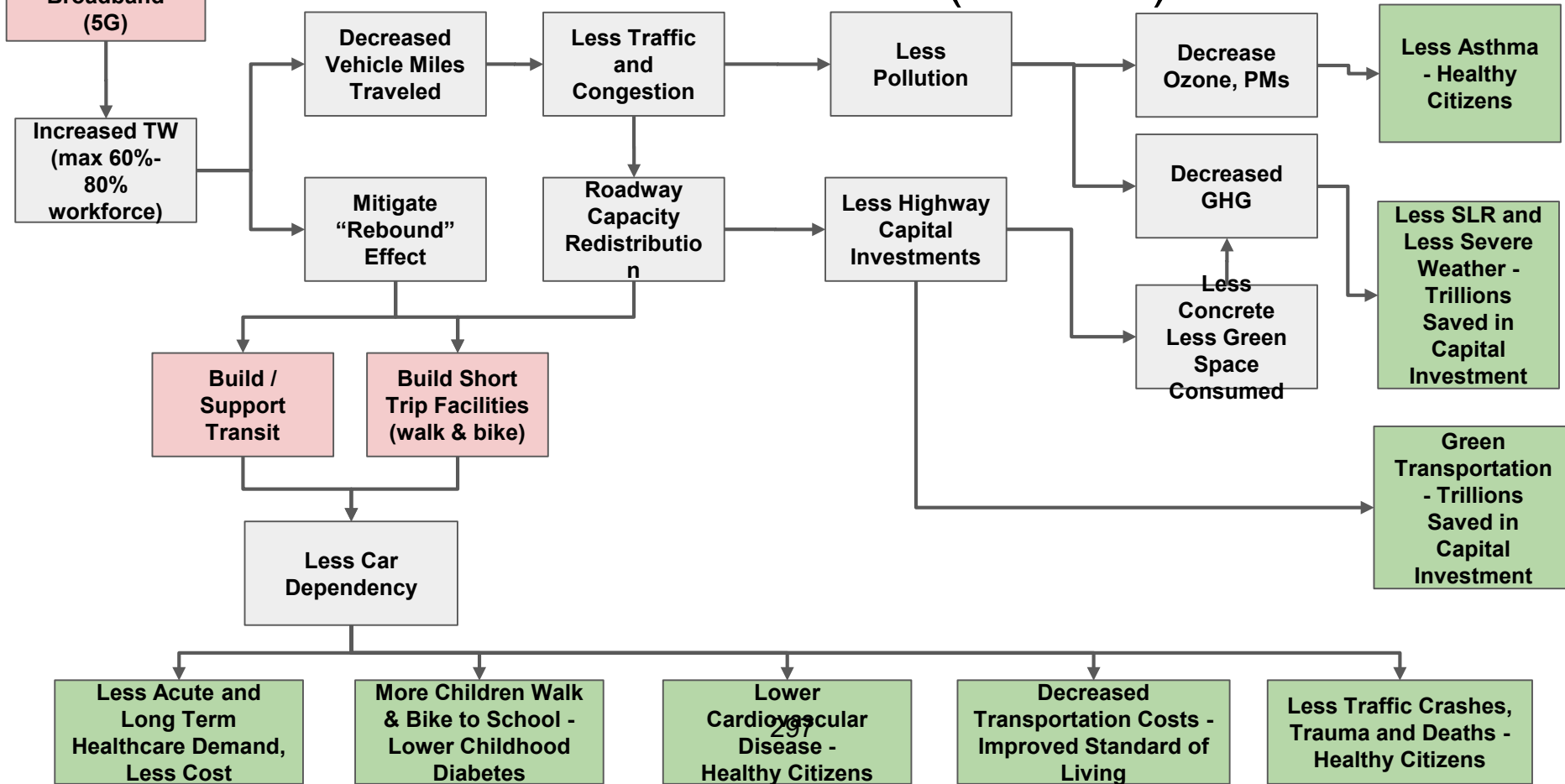


Update to the GP Outcomes and Themes



Communications and Active Transportation

Return on Investment (notional)



Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050 - Planning Draft

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Commissioners,

The Maryland Building Industry Association is submitting these comments for the Planning Board public hearing on November 19, 2020. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our feedback and look forward to working with the Planning staff as the draft moves forward. First, we applaud the efforts to examine our current planning principles and to focus on our evolving County and we encourage MNCPPC to continue its work on this plan. It is important for the County to continue to advance its planning vision, especially in these uncertain times. Prior master plans in Montgomery County have served us well but no planning vision can be static. Second, we believe the plan does a great job of identifying and documenting trends, issues and challenges and suggesting various actions for the future. As the Building Industry Association, we are particularly pleased to see yet another acknowledgment that the County is not producing enough housing and that we need solutions to achieve the social, economic and fiscal objectives necessary for a healthy County in the future.

The goals, policies and actions set out in the plan, beginning at page 54 are useful to guide us in the future. The implementation chapter, beginning at page 127, is particularly helpful. Too often, we see broad vision documents produced with a lot of effort, but then find a lack of direction for implementation of those objectives. We encourage aggressive, short term implementation recommendations for solutions to the County's Housing Affordability crisis. Here again, as the Building Industry Association, we are particularly supportive of the recommendation to break down regulatory and other barriers. The industry certainly is part of the solution to achieving the goals set forth in the Plan, but we cannot do it without the support of government.

The one question we raise, is the statement at page 38 referring to concentrating "all new growth" along transit corridors. This seems to be a bit of an overstatement given the diversity of housing and employment choices affected by societies since the beginning of time. While there have been ebbs and flows with respect to interest levels in urban, suburban and rural locations, each has its followers, and all are necessary. Just a few years ago the talk was that the "suburbs are dead" as millennials moved into the city. We then saw, even before COVID, that many of those same individuals began moving out

of the city when they started having families. That trend has intensified significantly in the new COVID environment and the apparent success forced experiment in which we have been involved regarding remote working. This probably means this trend will continue and will support economically, environmentally and socially acceptable lifestyles not connected to transit. We ask that the plan reflect this potential as well. Montgomery County is continually evolving with an Urban down-county that is redeveloping with mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, sustainable communities. The general plan should acknowledge that redevelopment in urban areas may require different considerations with respect to environmental guidelines and requirements due to existing development conditions.

Another matter we would like to address is the counties current standards regarding Stream Valley Buffers and the unintended consequences of requiring them on sites that have been previously developed within urban areas. An amendment to the general plan sets the vision for numerous other planning documents and policies, and provides the opportunity to revise or improve upon the existing policies in response to the changes that have evolved over the past several decades. Stream Buffers in Urban Areas Stream buffers contained in the County's Environmental Guidelines were written for a different era when most development occurred on greenfield site that were either wooded or in agriculture. At this time, less was known about pollutant loading rates for Nitrogen and Phosphorous based on different land uses so a surrogate (conservative set aside) was used in the place of actual data or science.

We encourage MNCPPC Staff to consider the County's growth envelope as it relates to its jurisdictional neighbors that have not placed the same development boundary limits and therefore are less constrained when it comes to growth. Consider the balance between preservation goals and population growth needs so the County can create housing for its future residents, while maintaining its economic strength, and enhancing and preserving its agricultural resources.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to offer our comments and feedback. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at gbenton@marylandbuilders.org or (202)-815-4239.

Respectfully,

Griffin Benton
Vice President of Government Affairs, MBIA