

## Updated for Worksession 2



Gaithersburg-Germantown  
Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

910 Clopper Road, Suite 205N, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878 (301) 840-1400, Fax (301) 963-3918

### THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

#### A Strategic Framework for the Montgomery County General Plan Update

November 19, 2020

#### PUBLIC HEARING – Planning Board

The Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce fully supports the proposed strategic outcomes for Thrive Montgomery 2050 of Economic Health, Community Equity, and Environmental Resilience. In general, we support the vision of compact development and Complete Communities. We see a great benefit to having a robust, dynamic, work-live-play communities with a balance of jobs, housing, and recreational opportunities.

The 1964 Wedges and Corridors General Plan had a profound effect on the growth of both Gaithersburg and Germantown, as did the creation of the Agricultural Reserve. Those planning decisions created the Upcounty as a great place to live and raise a family. The 1964 General Plan and subsequent area Master Plans envisioned a strong commercial corridor along with a balance of residential and retail land use. While the residential and retail components have come to fruition, the balance of commercial enterprise is still lacking.

Given the new direction of the THRIVE General Plan to focus on urban areas with ready access to transit, the question remains as to how the suburban communities in the upper areas of Montgomery County will “thrive”. In reading through the draft plan, I can see the communities of Silver Spring and Bethesda, and Rockville all represented and can envision how they will evolve into 15-minute living communities. I can even see it in Germantown Town Center and pockets of Gaithersburg. But I do not see the rest of the Upcounty represented. Buried deep in the plan (Goal 1.1 / Policy 1.1.1/ Action 1.1.1.a) there is a reference to retrofitting existing communities into a ***“....broad array of Complete Communities throughout the county within the urban, suburban, and rural context”***. The draft plan does an excellent job of laying out the vision for the urban context, however the vision and details of the plan need to be extended for both suburban and rural communities.

From a transportation perspective, one of the trends cited was that we “need to stop planning for cars and emphasize transit, walking and biking” (p.22). If that was written in the 1964 plan we could have planned the Upcounty differently. But it is 2020 and the Upcounty residential neighborhoods already exist as car-centric communities. I think of my own neighborhood and can’t imagine how much “retrofitting” will need to take place to create the vision of a complete, compact, 15-minute living community.

In terms of transportation, we need an “all of the above approach”. We certainly need to focus on walkability and transit. For instance, the Chamber recently support a road diet on Middlebrook Road to help improve the pedestrian connection between the high school and the town center and I know there is a long list of similar projects that could greatly improve walkability and safety in suburban areas of the

County. And we certainly need increased transit. Again, the Chamber has been one of the few consistent voices for the Corridor Cities Transitway and increased MARC service in Germantown, Boyds, and Gaithersburg. I understand and support the goal of reining in suburban sprawl (or is that reigning – in suburban sprawl 😊) and agree with the vision of the THRIVE plan. However, we cannot meet our current or future transportation needs without increasing road capacity. We need a more comprehensive plan for how the suburban cul-de-sac communities in upper Montgomery County fit into this general plan going forward.

One major solution for the housing / transportation / jobs conundrum that exists County-wide is to bring more jobs to the Upcounty. If we had more jobs in Germantown, we would have much shorter commute times, less traffic congestion, and much less greenhouse gas emissions. I don't necessarily agree with the idea that "Priority should be given to placing jobs, schools, and retail within **walking distance** to homes" (p.35), but increasing jobs in the Upcounty will certainly put jobs closer to a large employment base.

As a point of clarification, the plan calls for concentrating all new growth along existing and planned rail and bus rapid transit corridors. It is important to know whether this means growth **in addition to** the un-built density that already exists in various master plans or would this mean that areas that are not transit oriented could lose density. For instance, Germantown already has significant remaining commercial density. We need that commercial development to meet the goals and vision of the existing Germantown Master Plan. Increased commercial activity in the Upcounty also serves the goal of promoting the equitable distribution of prosperity throughout the County as Germantown continues to be one of the most diverse communities in the nation.

As the draft THRIVE Montgomery 2050 General Plan moves forward, we are asking for more explicit inclusion of the upper Montgomery County communities. The draft plan creates an exciting vision for Montgomery County. We want to see our communities represented in this vision. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to our community.

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I've included some specific examples of how the plan can include references to suburban and rural areas of the county.

Goal 1.1 / Policy 1.1.1/ Action 1.1.1.a – the phrase at the very end of this sentence is the crux of my argument **"....broad array of Complete Communities throughout the county within the urban, suburban, and rural context"**. The draft plan does a great job of laying out the vision for the urban context, the vision needs to be extended for both suburban and rural communities.

Goal 1.1 / Policy 1.1.3 – **Prioritize walking and bicycling as the highest priority mode of transportation... and funding of the CIP**. This policy will automatically pit the needs of urban areas against suburban and rural communities and downplays the very real need for increased road capacity in suburban areas of the County. I understand that may be the exact intention of the policy, but it doesn't meet the transportation needs of a large portion of the county population.

Goal 2.2 **Build civic capacity within communities and make government planning and decision-making processes accessible, transparent, and easy for everyone to participate in and understand**. This is

critical, but has to be done in a way that reaches people who aren't already in the room. An interesting gauge of current reach would be to map out the home addresses of everyone who testifies or submits testimony on the THRIVE draft plan.

Goal 3.2/ Policy 3.2.2 / Action 3.2.2.b: Both Germantown and the I-270 Corridor were envisioned to be supposed to be major employment centers and should continue to be included as such. While it's great to have the Great Seneca Science Corridor included, but that does not capture the biotech expansion along the entire I270 corridor.

Focus on Transit and Walkability (p. 75) – ***We need to reorient the underlying land use pattern into walkable, bikeable Complete Communities and make transit more accessible to a greater number of people by concentrating all future development in transit-oriented places.*** I'm assuming this pertains to residential development versus commercial development. If not, this is a Catch-22, further isolating communities that are already isolated.

Focus on Transit and Walkability (p. 76, first full paragraph) ***The county's major roadways.....*** Great Seneca Highway and Rt. 118 are missing from this list.

Action 4.1.2.b – Note – expanded commuter rail capacity on the MARC Brunswick Line has been a Chamber priority for decades.

Goal 4.7: ....**Most travel to, from and within transportation corridors will occur via walking, bicycling, and transit** – This is an “urban-centric” goal that doesn't meet the reality of our existing communities.

Section 6 – Healthy and Sustainable Environment – Embracing urbanism is a worthy, sustainable goal, but where is the suburban and rural context referred to in Goal 1.1. Having a compact form of development with a variety of non-auto transportation modes does not fit the reality of existing development.

Goal 7.2 – Urban-centric doesn't address the reality of existing neighborhoods. Action 7.2.2.c – How?

## **Thrive Montgomery Testimony**

Chair Casey Anderson

Montgomery County Planning Board

Good evening. My name is Robert Stubblefield and I am an activist and organizer. I am also a lifelong resident of Montgomery County and I write this to express support for the Thrive Montgomery County 2050 plan. However, even though I support the plan, I am cautious. I hope to explain my cautiousness and why this plan must be undertaken using a racial equity lens and all radical ideas must be at the forefront.

My cautiousness comes from a myriad of factors. The first factor is the historical record in the sense that whenever counties and municipalities talk about creating a place that is for all, it typically has meant all except for black people. From Robert Moses' urban renewal programs in New York City, to Los Angeles California, whenever areas talk about making an area thrive, black people are left out. This area is no exception. In recent years, Montgomery County has experienced gentrification at a scale that is pushing black people out. This body has been at the helm of that and while you are not the only player on the board responsible, you as the enforcement arm of the council play a key role in not only the gentrification but also the ignoring and the lack of respect to black historical spaces, such as the African Moses Cemetery, the Farm Road community, Jerusalem road among other in the process. Plus in addition, in 2018 when petitioned to look at development through the lens of racial equity, the board basically said that a racial equity lens wasn't necessary because of the diversity of Montgomery County. The thing is that we cannot confuse diversity with inclusion for Montgomery County is one of the most hyper-segregated places in the country despite all the diversity that is here. Even going through the plan, while there is acknowledgement of the history of African-Americans in this county and the need for racial equity, I do not see a plan or a racial impact analysis study and I feel that the mentioning of the discrimination of black people in housing, land use, transit etc is only lip service at best. So forgive me if I have caution and some healthy skepticism when the agencies that have declared war on black people and non-black people of color offer plans to help us thrive.

Still though, some of the ideas in this general plan are good. The investment of areas that have been underfunded, like East County for over forty years is long overdue. The creation of walkable areas as well as bike transit I feel is pivotal for helping meet environmental goals as



well as the creation of affordable housing. That being said, I feel that this plan needs to have a racial impact analysis of how this will help benefit the communities that for too long have been left on the margins. Those closest to the pain are the ones that need to be in power and those close to the problem are the ones close to the solution. But these plans need to go even farther now and I feel that Montgomery County, being the largest and wealthiest county is in a unique position to be a not just a national model but an international model as well.

When I hear Thrive Montgomery, I see community farms that can turn our food deserts into food oases that in turn create community health. When I hear Thrive Montgomery, I see community solar and wind programs used to help not only combat climate change but to help impacted communities benefit the most from these community energy programs. When I hear Thrive Montgomery, I see both cooperative housing and community land trusts used to not only build communities that can empower and advocate for themselves but as a way for the communities to truly build wealth and take control of their local economy. When I hear Thrive Montgomery, I see the respect, dignity, and memorialization of black cemeteries and black historical spaces. Where the African Moses Cemetery, destroyed today but rebuilt tomorrow, is memorialized and a museum is built to educate Montgomery Countians about the history of black people who build up Bethesda and helped build Washington DC. Where black historical neighborhoods like Lincoln Park, the birthplace of Father Divine, Tobytown, Scotland, Jerusalem Road, Farm Road among others are not only protected but also are given recompense for years of being ignored and any development in these areas must have the consent of those communities without pushing them out. These are some practical things that can and must be done. We have the resources what we need now is the will to put them in place.

In closing, while I am cautious, I do support the Thrive Montgomery Plan but it needs to go further. Thank you.

**From:** [Matteo](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050 Feedback - Soccer  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 2:07:24 AM  
**Attachments:** [MontgomeryCounty\\_SoccerCourt.pdf](#)

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

Hello,

I'd like to urge the county to consider developing more purpose-built facilities for playing soccer on hard courts in urban areas. While soccer is traditionally played on grass, in many urban environments, soccer is played on any flat open surface available, most often on concrete. In fact, globally, a specific form of soccer has even been formalized and called "Futsal" due to the prevalence of playing the game on concrete. Here in Montgomery County, because of the availability of lights and the low barriers to entry (no permitting necessary), soccer is often played on tennis courts throughout the county. I'd propose the county take two routes:

1. Convert underutilized tennis courts into soccer courts
2. Develop shared, multi-purpose facilities that include concrete spaces for soccer

Note: For option 2, it has been suggested by MC Parks Department Officials that that basketball and soccer share facilities. I believe this suggestion is restrictive because it groups together the two most popular sports at the youth level, thus increasing competition for space in two sports traditionally played by low-income communities. Multi-purpose facilities should be equitable and reflect the demand of the community.

Some key benefits of converting underutilized tennis courts into soccer courts may be highlighted below:

- Increased utilization of facilities (often 10 people playing at a time with teams waiting to rotate in)
- Decreased dependency on weather conditions
- Safe, recreational fun that keeps youth active and engaging in positive activities during the day and at night
- Increased opportunities for recreational programming
- More inclusive facilities being built for a changing demographic population

Additional information may be found in the attached presentation.

Thanks,  
- Matteo







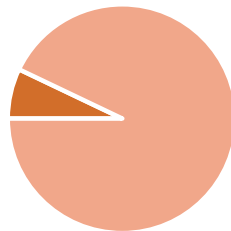


# Demand

The DMV is a hub for soccer talent nationally. Montgomery county has the opportunity to set a national precedent and play a major role in the development of USA soccer.

220+

people signed a [petition](#)  
supporting this idea in less  
than 1 week



7.6%

of the entire US population  
plays soccer at some level [3];  
24.5 million total [1]



3,055,148

players registered with  
US Youth Soccer in 2014 [2]



National rankings for D1 college  
soccer recruits from HS [4]:  
#1 for Boys - 3.7%  
#4 for Girls - 4.3%

Sources (see appendix for more details):

[1] <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/fifa-corruption-scandal/soccer-numbers-look-game-u-s-n365601> (2015)

[1] [https://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/emaga\\_9384\\_10704.pdf](https://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/emaga_9384_10704.pdf)

[2] <http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/media kit/keystatistics/> (2014)

[3] <https://www.census.gov/popclock/> (2015)

[4] [http://www.msusa.org/maryland\\_high\\_school\\_soccer\\_players\\_among\\_most\\_sought\\_after\\_by\\_di\\_schools/](http://www.msusa.org/maryland_high_school_soccer_players_among_most_sought_after_by_di_schools/) (2017)



# Need for space

Although there are plenty of athletic spaces available in Montgomery county, those reserved for soccer do not meet the same standards reserved for other sports.

	<u>Number of facilities available</u>	<u>Permit Required?</u>	<u>Lights?</u>
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	215 basketball court locations *Parks only [1]		
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	302 outdoor tennis court locations +20 indoor courts *Parks and schools [1]		
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	340 locations (includes baseball) +7 turf fields *Parks and schools [2]		
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## Permits prevent impromptu activities

- “Please note that field time at many sites is assigned directly to sports leagues and organizations”
- All high school fields require school permission
- All 7 turf fields require a permit

Sources (see appendix for more details):

[1] Montgomery County Parks [301-495-2580]

[2] CUPF [240-777-2725]



# Benefits

While soccer is traditionally played on grass, advantages of playing on concrete include...

## Practical advantages



Decreased maintenance costs



Lights available at night



Does not require special footwear



Increased utilization of space



Fewer serious injuries\*



Increased programming

## Developmental advantages



Accelerated learning and skilled development



Faster speed of play

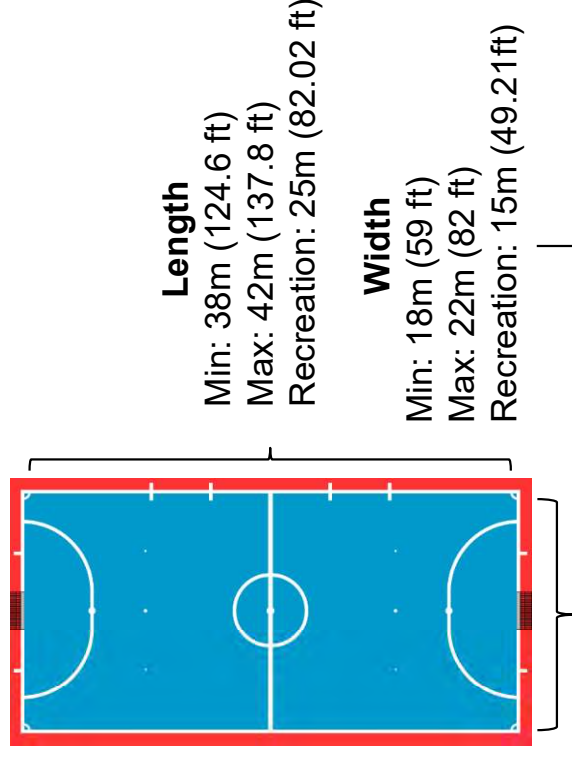
# Concept



The purpose of this request is to create or repurpose an existing free athletic space to allow for people to play soccer all year in a well-lit area.



Futsal Court Dimensions  
(international)



- Run-off enclosed pitches should be minimum 2m x 2m but recommended is 3m x 3m
- Mark the pitch with lines that should be 8cm wide and preferably white or yellow.
- The penalty area for each goal is defined as a quarter circle with a radius of 6m centered on the outside of each goal post.
- Goals should measure 2.0m high by 3.0m wide.

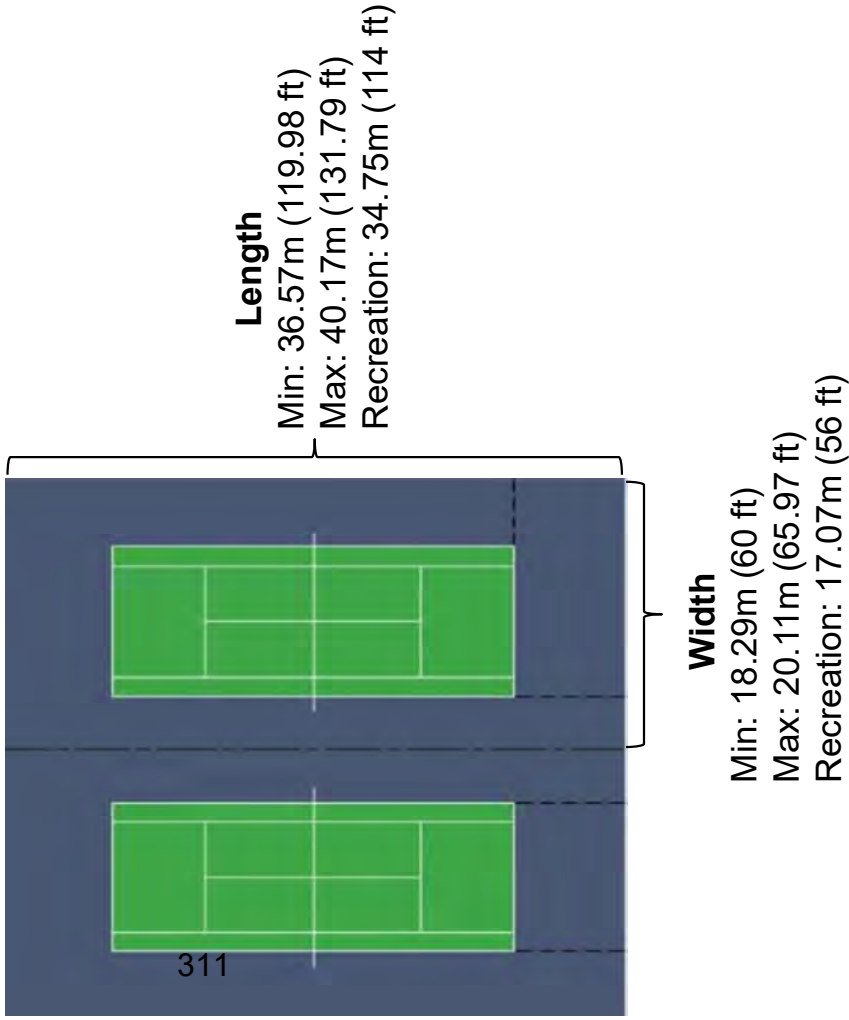
\*Dimensions above adhere to international futsal standards  
\*See appendix for sources



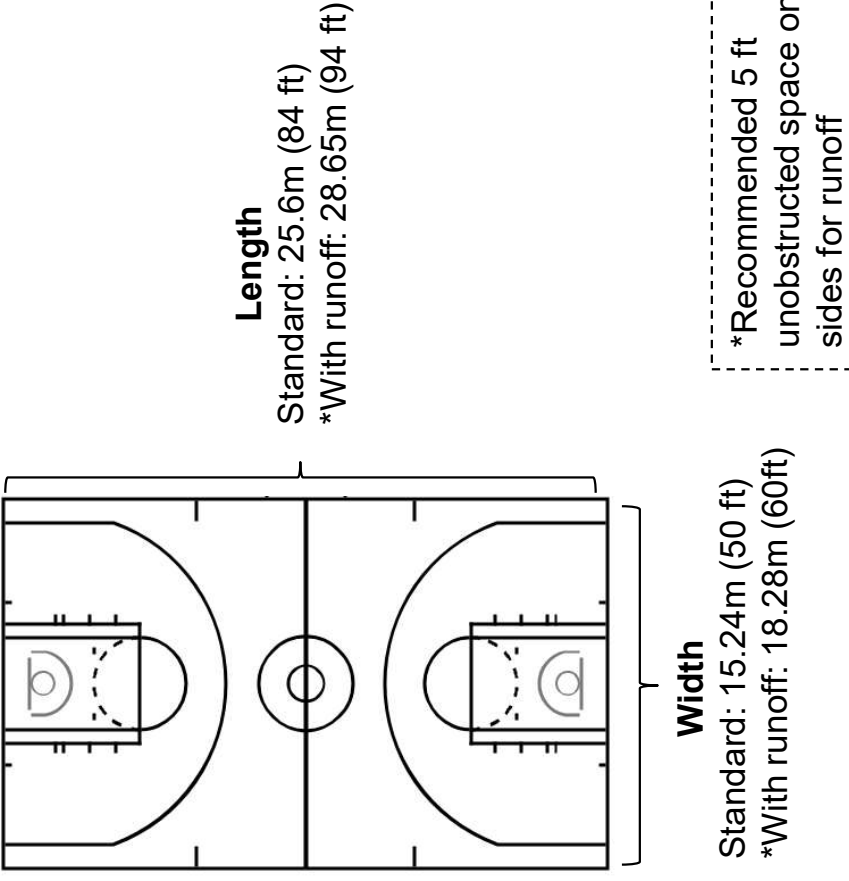
# Dimensions: Tennis/Basketball Courts

Either court has dimensions that would allow it to be repurposed for soccer.

**Tennis Court Dimensions**  
(international) [1]



**Basketball Court Dimensions**  
(high school) [2]



Source (see appendix for more details):

[1] <http://www.iffennis.com/technical/facilities/facilities-guide/site-plan.aspx>

[2] <https://www.sportscourtdimensions.com/basketball/>





# Pricing estimates

**There are two different options that could turn this vision into a reality:**

## Option 1: Build a brand new court

Costs to build brand new court: \$50,000 to \$80,000  
Cost for goals: \$2,500

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Total: \$52,500 - \$82,500

## Option 2: Repurpose an existing space

Cost to resurface existing space: \$4,000 and \$8,000  
Cost for goals: \$2,500

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Total: \$6,500 - \$10,500



# Examples

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## See Appendix

Other municipalities across the US have already started repurposing existing athletic spaces to meet the growing demand for soccer.

1. Legion Park (Owensboro, Kentucky)
2. Lincoln Park (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
3. Dempsey Park at East Price Hill (Cincinnati, Ohio)
4. Petworth Park Recreation Center (Washington D.C.)
5. Parks in Florida, California, Texas, Kansas, New York ...



# Example 1: Legion Park (Owensboro, Kentucky)

Before



After



Sources:

- <https://www.14news.com/story/34505029/city-looks-at-legion-park-for-possible-street-soccer-court-location/>
- <https://wbkr.com/new-owensboro-street-soccer-court-at-legion-park-first-in-kentucky-video/>



# Example 2: Lincoln Park (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

Before



After



315

## Sources:

- <https://www.facebook.com/wisconsinssportsgroup/photos/a.376507002551702/428181400717595/?type=3&theater>
- [http://wisconsinssportsgroup.com/?fbclid=IwAR1mmdlI326uAw7yP45porFubkd5ZKCCcnVZSxmBeQjZALyWj4pYyE\\_2G4](http://wisconsinssportsgroup.com/?fbclid=IwAR1mmdlI326uAw7yP45porFubkd5ZKCCcnVZSxmBeQjZALyWj4pYyE_2G4)





## Example 3: Dempsey Park (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Before



After



316

Sources:

- <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/sports/soccer/fc-cincinnati/2017/05/05/fc-cincinnati-bringing-futsal-court-east-price-hill/101328990/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/TheInclineDistrict/photos/a.559443167516095/1174810982645974/?type=3&theater>
- <https://twitter.com/fccincinnati/status/972275852825251840>

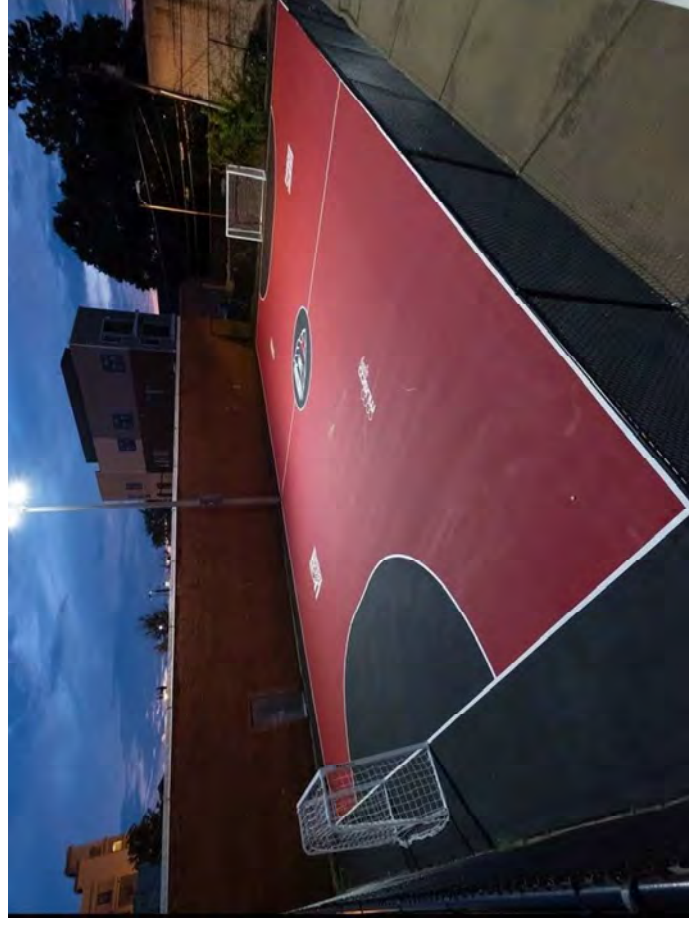


## Example 4: Petworth Park (Washington, DC)

Before



After



317

### Sources:

- <http://www.musco.com/musco-news/press-petworth/>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF\\_8pzv35Ec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF_8pzv35Ec)
- <https://www.petworthnews.org/blog/petworth-park-upgrades-1>



# Sources

## Slide 2: Demand

Figures:

- [1] <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/fifa-corruption-scandal/soccer-numbers-look-game-u-s-n365601> (2015)
- [1] [https://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/emaga\\_9384\\_10704.pdf](https://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/emaga_9384_10704.pdf)
- [2] [http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/media\\_kit/keystatistics/](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/media_kit/keystatistics/) (2014)
- [3] <https://www.census.gov/popclock/> (2015)
- [4] [http://www.msusa.org/maryland\\_high\\_school\\_soccer\\_players\\_among\\_most\\_sought\\_after\\_by\\_di\\_schools/](http://www.msusa.org/maryland_high_school_soccer_players_among_most_sought_after_by_di_schools/) (2017)

## Slide 3: Need for space

- [1] Montgomery County Parks [301-495-2580]
- [2] CUPF [240-777-2725]
  - [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cupf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cupf)
  - [http://www9.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/CUPF/fields/search/listall\\_new.asp](http://www9.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/CUPF/fields/search/listall_new.asp)

318

## Slide 5: Concept

Court Dimensions:

- <http://ace-surfaces.com/futsal-court-flooring/>

## Slide 6: Dimensions: Tennis/Basketball Courts

Court Dimensions (Tennis):

- [1] <http://www.iffennis.com/technical/facilities/facilities-guide/site-plan.aspx>

Court Dimensions (Basketball):

- [2] <https://www.sportscourtdimensions.com/basketball/>





# Sources

## Slide 7: Pricing

Tennis Court construction prices:

- <http://www.qualitycourt.com/index.php/faq>
- <http://www.homeadvisor.com/cost/outdoor-living/build-or-resurface-a-tennis-court/>
- <http://www.improvenet.com/r/costs-and-prices/cost-of-tennis-court>
- <https://www.concretenetwork.com/tennis-court/cost.html>
- <http://www.sportcourt.com/sport-futsal-soccer>

Goal prices:

- <https://www.amazon.com/Kwik-Goal-2P201-Official-Futsal/dp/B00165XP4>

## Slide 9-12: Examples

Legion Park (Owensboro, Kentucky)

- <https://www.14news.com/story/34505029/city-looks-at-legion-park-for-possible-street-soccer-court-location/>
- <https://wbkr.com/new-owensboro-street-soccer-court-at-legion-park-first-in-kentucky-video/>

Lincoln Park (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

- <https://www.facebook.com/wisconsinssportsgroup/photos/a.376507002551702/428181400717595/?type=3&theater>
- [http://wisconsinssportsgroup.com/?fbclid=IwAR1mmdII326uAw7yP45porFubkd5ZKCcCcnVZSxmBeQjZALyWj4pYyE\\_2G4](http://wisconsinssportsgroup.com/?fbclid=IwAR1mmdII326uAw7yP45porFubkd5ZKCcCcnVZSxmBeQjZALyWj4pYyE_2G4)

Dempsey Park (Cincinnati, Ohio)

- <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/sports/soccer/fc-cincinnati/2017/05/05/fc-cincinnati-bringing-futsal-court-east-price-hill/101328990/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/TheInclineDistrict/photos/a.559443167516095/1174810982645974/?type=3&theater>
- <https://twitter.com/fccincinnati/status/972275852825251840>

Petworth Park (Washington, D.C.)

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF\\_8pzv35Ec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF_8pzv35Ec)
- <https://www.petworthnews.org/blog/petworth-soccer-futsal>
- <http://www.musco.com/musco-news/press-petworth/>



**From:** [Ginny Bunke](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [cloverly+verizon.net@ccsend.com](mailto:cloverly+verizon.net@ccsend.com)  
**Subject:** Opposed to Thrive Montgomery 2050; Response to Public Hearing Draft, November 19, 2020 Item #7  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 9:26:50 AM  
**Attachments:** [Thrive2050.pdf](#)

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

Good Morning,

Attached is a letter stating my opposition.

Thank you for your attention.

Virginia Bunke

Chairperson Casey Anderson  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor  
Wheaton, MD 20902

December 10, 2020

**Subject: Opposed to Thrive Montgomery 2050; Response to Public Hearing Draft, November 19, 2020 Item #7**

I am opposed to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft because it will fundamentally change the county from diverse neighborhoods to majority urban areas. This transformation is not welcomed by me and residents who expect choice in where and how to live.

The planning board has not properly informed all county residents of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan (Plan). Residents have the right to know about this unbalanced plan that will affect their lives and their children's lives going forward.

I only learned about the Plan through the Cloverly Civic Association. Please slow down and take the time to inform and listen to the residents of Montgomery County.

The Plan assumes that residents want urbanization. If residents desire urbanization they can choose to live in downtown Silver Spring, Gaithersburg, Rockville, Bethesda. These areas have worked hard to have nice neighborhoods with services, employment, and transportation within walking distance.

There are many residents (now and in the future) that will desire a bit more space and having an option to choose a single-family home should be provided, not discouraged. Please do not discriminate against residents who choose to live in single family homes and choose to own automobiles.

Montgomery County is one of the most diverse areas in the United States of America now. Just pick up any county high school yearbook and leaf through it and you will see the extraordinary diversity of ethnicities, races and global representation.

The Cloverly neighborhood is very diverse now with families of all ethnicities, all races and all religions. All of us like our neighborhood and do not want it destroyed by the Thrive Montgomery 2050 unbalanced plan.

Thank you for your attention.

Signed: *Virginia Bunke*

Address: 2525 Link Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

**From:** [Thomas, Patricia](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery Plan  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 9:46:21 AM  
**Attachments:** [Thrive Montgomery Plan.pdf](#)

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

Please see the attached letter in opposition to the Thrive Montgomery Plan and include it in the record. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**Patricia A. Thomas**  
**15510 Holly Grove Road**  
**Silver Spring, Maryland 20905**

December 10, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I write in opposition to the proposed thrive Montgomery Plan; the entire county does not and should not become an entire metropolis. Farmland, watershed and forested areas must be protected; the plan should provide for all land uses in the county.

While the plan as written addresses affordable housing, the needs and desires of residents in terms of providing options other than "city living" are largely ignored.

The thrive Montgomery plan does not take into consideration residents who rely on automobiles for transport to their jobs. While improved commuter transportation is of value, commuter options are not a one size fits all alternative. For example, I often work late hours at my job in Washington, D.C.; I am not comfortable using mass transit late at night and prefer to use my own automobile. The plan reduces parking options and limits the use of automobiles for residents who rely on them for a variety of activity.

I urge the Planning Board to respect community master plans and consider the needs and desires of residents as opposed to developers and businesses. You indicated earlier in October that the plan is not ready and that changes needed to be made. There is no evidence that this plan would result in more affordable housing.

The thrive Montgomery plan as written now is bad for Montgomery County. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Thomas  
15510 Holly Grove Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20905

**From:** [Mark Quinn](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Trina Leonard](#)  
**Subject:** Heritage Walk HOA : Concerns about Montgomery County Thrive 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 10:04:26 AM

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

Hello Chairman Anderson and the Planning Board and Staff,

Trina Leonard and I are writing as the President and Vice President of the Heritage Walk Home Corporation (Windermere) HOA, a 202 home community association at the corner of Tuckerman Lane and Old Georgetown Road in North Bethesda, MD.

We are submitting a comment in respect of the Montgomery County Thrive 2050 initiative. We support a thoughtful approach to the issues outlined in the plan, but we represent a single family HOA community where people have invested themselves and their money in the belief that the commitment to that style of housing for our neighborhood was clear and absolute. Thus, we expect that any County honor that commitment to us and respect the community's status and authority as an HOA.

**About Heritage Walk Home Corporation (Windermere) HOA**

The Windermere HOA community is located between Tuckerman Lane, Old Georgetown Road and I-270 in North Bethesda. Our community is comprised of **202 homeowners**, some of whom have lived in the community since its inception in the early 1970s and some of whom have purchased their homes recently. These 202 homes represent ~\$225 million in property value, ~\$2 million per year in property tax revenue and ~300 registered voters.

Can you please confirm receipt of this comment and that it will be submitted into the official record of comments?

Thank you and kind regards,

Heritage Walk Home Corporation (Windermere) HOA

**Mark Quinn**

President, Heritage Walk Home Corporation (Windermere) HOA  
301.346.8500  
[quinnmark@gmail.com](mailto:quinnmark@gmail.com)

**Trina Leonard**

Vice President, Heritage Walk Home Corporation (Windermere) HOA  
[marykatrinal@gmail.com](mailto:marykatrinal@gmail.com)

**From:** [Nathalie Peter](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** TPMEC Written Comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 10:19:34 AM  
**Attachments:** [1220TPMECThrive2050Comments.docx](#)

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

Chairman Anderson -  
Attached please find the Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee Written Comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan. Thank you very much for your consideration.  
Nathalie Peter  
TPMEC

**Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee**  
**Written Comments on the**  
**THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee (TPMEC) is an all-volunteer grassroots organization of nearly 200 community members working to address the climate emergency at all levels of government. We offer the following thoughts and recommendations.

Our chief recommendation is that future efforts in the Thrive 2050 planning process be closely coordinated with the pending draft Montgomery County Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). In order to fully address the climate emergency that the Montgomery County Council recognized in December 2017 with Resolution 18-974, the Thrive Plan needs to incorporate the climate targets and goals of the CARP into its vision, high level goals and proposed actions. This integration will likely cut across the various sections of the Thrive Plan and will not fit only under the “Healthy and Sustainable Environment” section of the document.

To this end, we strongly recommend that Montgomery Planning extend the current December 10, 2020 comment period deadline for a reasonable period of time after the draft CARP becomes available for public comment so that both plans can be considered.

We recommend that Montgomery Planning and the County schedule a joint public meeting in January 2021 to discuss the relationship between the two documents and changes in either or both of the documents to bring them into alignment.

TPMEC is excited by the prospect of Montgomery Planning setting a vision of climate positive planning. To meet the County’s goals to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035 will require a positive transformation in the County’s economy and way of life that achieves the goals of Thrive Montgomery. With a visionary approach, Montgomery County has the opportunity to become a world model demonstrating constructive approaches to climate action.

More specifically, TPMEC recommends the following:

- Promote climate friendly policies, goals and actions that serve Montgomery County’s diverse communities in an equitable and socially just manner.
- Adopt a county net POSITIVE forest policy goal that includes actions to protect and increase both native forest cover and overall tree canopy. By increasing forest cover, Montgomery County can improve air quality, sequester carbon, protect biodiversity, reduce the urban heat island effect and improve the physical and mental health of county residents.
- TPMEC supports Montgomery Planning’s commitment to compact urban development. Adopt a strong goal to reduce the additional impacts of compact urban development, e.g., stormwater management.
- Plan for higher and more variable water tables that reflect increased precipitation (with more and more intense storms) and drought conditions and the increased use of infiltration best management practices.

- Adopt a stronger building GHG reduction policy goal. Buildings are the top sources of emissions in the county. Efficiency is the cheapest way to reduce GHGs while saving money for building owners and occupants by reducing energy costs. In the case of new buildings, TPMEC recommends instituting high standards for insulation and the use of electric and renewable resources for heating, cooking, and hot water. Where feasible, we recommend new buildings and buildings undergoing major renovations install renewable energy generation equipment, e.g., solar and wind.
- Provide guidance on siting renewable energy projects, prioritizing placement on developed land, rooftops, parking lots, brownfields, and appropriate county properties (including public schools) rather than undeveloped spaces such as the Agricultural Reserve and green spaces.
- Promote adaptable infrastructure that mitigates the negative impacts of climate change. For example, using green infrastructure – landscaping, bioswales, rain gardens and other nature-based solutions – will accomplish multiple social and environmental goals better than engineered approaches to manage stormwater.
- Plan for and support alternative modes of transportation that significantly reduce and ultimately eliminate transportation related emissions. Plan for and support an increase in zero emission vehicles and the phase-out of non-electric vehicles, e.g., building sufficient infrastructure such as charging stations.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Nathalie Peter

TPMEC

December 10, 2020



**Thrive Montgomery Plan**

Linda Mullings [lindamullings@yahoo.com](mailto:lindamullings@yahoo.com)

To MCP-Chair

Thu 12/10

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

We have been a resident of Cloverly for over 35 years. We built our home on 2 acres and raised our family in this area. We are very much opposed to changing the zoning in our area from single family homes.

Attached is our letter of opposition  
to this plan.

Linda and Gary Mullings

Sent from my iPhone

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

**Subject: Opposed to Thrive Montgomery 2050; Response to Public Hearing  
Draft, November 19, 2020 Item #7**

I am opposed to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft for the following reasons:

- Changing the plan for development into an urban county does not recognize the single-family land uses, small business and commercial land use, the agricultural land uses, and the open space spaces land uses. The plan needs to provide for all land uses in Montgomery County.
- Rezoning the single-family zones in the entire county to allow market-rate townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and apartment buildings by right throughout the single-family neighborhoods does not give residents the diversity to live in neighborhoods of their choice. When purchasing a home residents consider many factors including schools, commuting distance to employment, nearness to shopping, living close to friends and family, and many other issues. They also may be for complete communities and 15-minute living, but with a large number of options, this needs to be left as the choice of the resident. The Planning Board has no proof that allowing other land uses would result in more affordable housing in the County.
- The Thrive Montgomery Plan recommending reduced usage of automobiles does not recognize the transportation needs and importance of the automobile. We do need to provide for better commuter transportation, but people still need to use cars for shopping, visiting friends, attending evening and weekend activities, and activities in nearby communities not served by public transportation. Many residents, especially low-income residents, have jobs that require them to work in the evenings and night, at locations not served by public transportation. Also they have service jobs that require them to travel to different locations during the day, or need tools and materials that need to be taken to the worksite. The plan disadvantages them by limiting their use of cars and access to parking.
- The plan does not provide that the infrastructure enhancements are completed before the plan is enacted. Public transportation, adequate public facilities, and schools need to be in place before the plan is enacted. The Council recently approved legislation that allows new development to proceed without needed infrastructure improvements. We need this infrastructure to be completed first!

The Thrive Plan as written is too long and has many redundant statements. There are pages of proposals for affordable housing that need to be condensed. As Chairman Anderson said in the October 1 Board Meeting the plan is not ready. I would like to see the changes he proposes. As the plan is now I am opposed to the thrive Montgomery Plan. Thank you.

Signed:

*Kinda Mullins*

Address:

*710 Bryants Nursery Rd.  
Silver Spring, MD 20905*

**From:** [ebarallon@juno.com](mailto:ebarallon@juno.com)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Moco Thrive Plan 2020  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 11:10:26 AM

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

Dear sir,

I am a resident of Germantown, I settled in the USA in the late 1990's. We had our home built at 19235 Wheatfield dr and raised our family. Every cent we earned went into our property. We paid the high property taxes dutifully every year. It has been really hard for us, but we are so proud and will have a home for our grown children and their children to belong. This is all we have, we are not rich to be able get up and move somewhere else. We have no other family in the States, but we thought through hard work we can achieve our little dream home. So on these grounds I want it submitted that I do not agree to the plans for apartments and high speed traffic in our surrounding neighborhood and preserved woodlands. We have precious little left of Seneca park, we should be protecting it, not endangering it.

Elisabeth Barallon,  
19235 Wheatfield dr,  
Germantown, Md 20876

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**From:** [Francis Koh](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#); [Thrive2050](#); [13014951320@myfax.com](mailto:13014951320@myfax.com)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050 Comments Submission  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 11:40:15 AM  
**Attachments:** [Comments to Park and Planning Thrive 2050.pdf](#)

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

Hi Mr. Chair,

Please find the attached letter in response to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 comments open call for comments. The letter repeats the comments in this email as follows:

My family owns the approximately 5.6 acres tract of land across from the WSSC on River Road, in Potomac, Maryland, having the tax id address of 12219 River Road, Potomac, MD 20854. This property lies directly across from the WSSC, which is considered a major water filtration and processing plant that has large dump trucks and tractor trailer size vehicles coming and going at all hours of the night and day, carrying waste sediments. Additionally, one can frequently hear loud piercing air discharge noises from the holding tanks that each look like nuclear reactor chambers from the street. The WSSC site is a major industrial operation to say the least in terms of sheer scale and scope.

In almost every community, properties that have been across the street from a major water filtration plant, such as the one on River Road, have been designated either commercial, institutional, or multi-unit dwellings, serving as a transitional buffer to the surrounding residential communities. Example, the Washington Aqueduct plant has Sibley Hospital across from it. However, oddly, P-270 is still designated as RE-2.

We believe the long-term plan should designate the P-270 as suitable for commercial, institutional use, light industrial, multi-unit living, senior/residential care facility, assisted living center, schools, day care facilities, or other similar uses. The aforementioned uses will not only function as a transitional buffer, but also fill a valuable need as this region is lacking in such commercial or multi-unit facilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Many thanks.

Francis

Francis H. Koh  
Attorney At Law  
Koh Law Firm, LLC.  
4800 Hampden Lane, Suite 200  
Bethesda, MD 20814

[www.kohlawfirm.com](http://www.kohlawfirm.com)

tel. 301-881-3600  
fax 1-888-252-6616

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December 10, 2020

Casey Anderson  
Planning Board Chair  
MNCPPC

**BY E-MAIL**  
**Mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org**  
**CONFIRMED BY MAIL**

RE: Thrive Montgomery 2050 - Long-term Growth Plan Through 2050  
(River Road P-270 Property Across from the WSSC)

Dear Mr. Anderson,

My family owns the approximately 5.6 acres tract of land across from the WSSC on River Road, in Potomac, Maryland, having the tax id address of 12219 River Road, Potomac, MD 20854. This property lies directly across from the WSSC, which is considered a major water filtration and processing plant that has large dump trucks and tractor trailer size vehicles coming and going at all hours of the night and day, carrying waste sediments. Additionally, one can frequently hear loud piercing air discharge noises from the holding tanks that each look like nuclear reactor chambers from the street. The WSSC site is a major industrial operation to say the least in terms of sheer scale and scope.

In almost every community, properties that have been across the street from a major water filtration plant, such as the one on River Road, have been designated either commercial, institutional, or multi-unit dwellings, serving as a transitional buffer to the surrounding residential communities. Example, the Washington Aqueduct plant has Sibley Hospital across from it. However, oddly, P-270 is still designated as RE-2.

We believe the long-term plan should designate the P-270 as suitable for commercial, institutional use, light industrial, multi-unit living, senior/residential care facility, assisted living center, schools, day care facilities, or other similar uses. The aforementioned uses will not only function as a transitional buffer, but also fill a valuable need as this region is lacking in such commercial or multi-unit facilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Many thanks.

Very Truly Yours,  
Koh Law Firm

/S/ /Francis Koh/

Francis Koh  
Attorney At Law

FK/



**From:** [Galen Tromble](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Montgomery County/Thrive 2050 Plan - public comment  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 1:07:54 PM

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

Planning Director,

Thank you and your staff for all the work on Thrive 2050 so far. This effort needs to continue to be visionary, open, and highly adaptive, because the pace of change in the world is accelerating, particularly the impacts of global warming, which are having far reaching impacts on climate patterns, our lands, waters, ecosystems and food supply. These will increase in the decades ahead, even as a top priority must be to stop further global warming as soon as possible.

To that point, it is unfortunate that your public comment period ends before the release of the draft County Climate Action Plan, and I request that you continue to accept comments on Thrive 2050 for at least 10 days after the CAP is made public.

I applaud inclusion in your plan measures to improve and secure Montgomery County's ability to produce food, through strong protection for the Ag Reserve and support of Urban Farming. I also applaud the intention to stop planning around automobiles. We need an even stronger commitment to maintain our remaining ecosystem services of forests, streams and wetlands, and to stop the expansion of impervious surface, even reversing it in an intentional way.

I fully support the comments submitted by Rachel Toker, which I include here:

1. Existing forests and forest patches should not only be protected and conserved, but they should be expanded. Laws and policies should be crafted to create new areas for expansion of existing forests, new forest patches, and replacement of hardscaping and turf cover with native habitat.
2. New and existing native habitat should be promoted on private property as well as public areas, not only adjacent to streams but in broad corridors across the county - including down-county. A green infrastructure plan for the County should be a stated priority that will facilitate increasing native habitat well beyond special protection areas and areas designated as pristine habitat. While compact development can be environmentally friendly, it is not always -- smart growth and compact development must be balanced with ecologically functioning space within compact/dense development as well as around it. The plan needs more balance in this respect.
3. Building social connections within neighborhoods is an extremely important goal, but doing so does not require carving up more potential open space with roads in order to achieve it. New walking paths can be constructed in environmentally sensitive ways to facilitate movement and social gathering across suburban neighborhoods without creating new fragmentation and expansion of impervious surfaces to accommodate more vehicular traffic.
4. While green roofs and green walls are excellent examples of sustainable features in green buildings, the plan should emphasize the importance of prioritizing native habitat as land cover wherever possible and shifting built FAR into taller buildings with smaller footprints (in order to allow for vegetation at grade and out of the public right of way). Increasing setbacks (front, back and sideyard) in order to make space for native habitat should be a priority, along with green-area-ratio requirements across land use categories.
5. The plan should expressly recognize that tree canopy and cover over the built environment do not approximate forests or native plant communities at all. Biodiversity,



food webs, as well as nutrient cycling and soil regeneration require that we make space for broad corridors of functioning ecosystems -- across residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and parklands.

6. Finally, it should be a County priority to ensure that greenways, protected areas, and conservation easements are healthy ecological systems and not overrun by invasive species that can destroy ecosystem function or unnecessarily fragmented..

The Thrive Plan should emphasize the fundamental importance of: using nature-based solutions to climate change and future flooding; restoring native habitat across the down-county areas; and complementing all existing built land uses with increased conservation and ecological restoration at the site, block, and neighborhood levels.

I look forward to a future Montgomery County that is a better place to live in all respects, supporting human needs within a thriving, functioning ecosystem.

Sincerely,  
Galen Tromble  
Silver Spring, MD

**From:** [Fatma Onmus](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [senecaparkhoa@gmail.com](mailto:senecaparkhoa@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery plan- resident opinion  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 1:26:14 PM

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

To whom it may concern,

My house is part of Great Seneca Park community. Our community does not only house people but also we live in peace with the park surrounding our community along with its residents. Residents enjoy the oasis of Great Seneca while watching and interacting with nature. We saved deer fawns, enjoy eagles overhead, foxes, frogs .... whatever the nature bless us with. It is a great community to raise our children and for our elders.

Please consider other alternatives and not disturb the balance of this great community. I very much appreciate that Thrive Montgomery finds other alternatives and avoid changing what this community provides to us. It is not only our community. We should save every piece of echo system to save our planet.

I am devastated to think that our housing community is part of such a plan. I am against such project being executed in our neighborhood or similar ones.

Regards,

Fatma Onmus  
19248 Wheatfield terrace Gaithersburg MD 20879

**From:** [LWV of Montgomery County, MD](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** LWVMC Testimony for Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 1:37:09 PM  
**Attachments:** [LWVMontgomeryCounty\\_rgb\\_EMAIL.png](#)  
[2020-12-09 Testimony to Planning Board re ThriveMontgomery2050.pdf](#)

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



To The Montgomery County Planning Board & Chair Casey Anderson,  
Please find attached our testimony on the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.  
We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Silversmith & Joan Siegel, Action Co-Chairs

--

**League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD**

15800 Crabbs Branch Way, Suite 300

Rockville, MD 20855

Tel: 301-984-9585

[lwvmc@erols.com](mailto:lwvmc@erols.com)

[lwvmocomd.org](http://lwvmocomd.org)

[vote411.org](http://vote411.org)



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**Testimony**  
**Thrive Montgomery 2050**  
**December 9, 2020**

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) applauds and supports much of the General Plan that is outlined in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 document.

Reviewing each proposal through the lens of economic health, community equity, and environmental resilience is essential to growing a healthy Montgomery County, and these elements of the Thrive plan clearly align with League positions.

The county must make changes in housing, transportation, development patterns, preservation of open spaces, and our environment in order for the county and its economy to thrive. LWVMC will focus on five Thrive topics in this testimony: transportation, land use, housing, the environment, and agriculture. However, first we wish to emphasize the following two factors regarding clarity and evaluation:

- (1) The title of section 5 must include the word “Housing.” The title “Affordability and Attainability” is not sufficient for statements about housing.**
- (2) It would be helpful to explain the evaluation process, albeit briefly, in the main document as well as having an extensive explanation in a separate document. The public needs to know how the county is tracking progress toward its goals and what the timetable is for evaluation.**

**Transportation:**

Prioritizing transit will have a major effect on equity, the environment, population growth, health, and our economy. The county is making strides, but **LWVMC encourages a more coordinated effort across all transit modes to produce a greater impact.** Retrofitting an existing environment is difficult and working with our diverse population poses many challenges, but transit will be key to resolving many issues in the coming years.

- Our streets and highways currently lack good design, appropriate speed limits, and pedestrian and bike accommodation; there is clear need for improvement. The county must update old methods of measuring vehicle speed and congestion, create new criteria for sidewalks and bike paths, prioritize capital improvement projects for building of infrastructure, and improve cooperation with state entities.

### **Land Use:**

The key themes of this document -- such as urbanism, active lifestyles, social connection, housing, transforming major roads into boulevards, regional solutions to problems, diversity as our strength, etc. -- could have come directly from League positions!

- LWVMC recognizes that many of these topics are controversial and agreement is not always possible, for example, whether there should be solar power in the agricultural reserve; where businesses should be located; how we should expand public services and where; how county policies will affect schools, jobs, and community services; and how much we should invest in climate change and the environment. The county should incorporate changes into the General Plan that promote a vision or an aspiration for where the county wants to go.
- Proposals that come before the county should meet the high standards that the General Plan sets. Enforcing these standards will not be easy. Aspirations in words have to be turned into concrete plans.

### **Housing:**

Montgomery County continues to need more housing, especially low-income and “missing middle” housing designed for low- and middle-income households. (“Missing middle” includes garden apartments, plexes of various types, and other low-rise, smaller, more affordable units.)

- Even if our population only grows at a rate of one percent, the county will need to house a minimum of 200,000 more people by 2045, and the demographics of households have changed as well as the numbers, necessitating changes in the units to serve them.
- For example, we need to accommodate much larger numbers of single-person households as well as greater numbers of very large households. We have a decreasing share of middle-income residents, at least in part because we do not have sufficient appropriate housing to accommodate them.

Corridors are a great location for some of this much-needed housing, which could be safer as well, because communities of these units would offer residents access onto major arteries; this is safer than small single-family units with driveways feeding onto them. We also need to preserve existing affordable housing or replace it without a net loss and preferably with a net gain. Draft Thrive 2050 offers dozens of options for achieving these goals, some new and some building on existing tools, and we hope many of them will be implemented.

**Environment:**

The League agrees with the County that climate change is the most important environmental factor facing us between now and 2050 and that 100% clean energy is a correlating goal that should help decrease the level of greenhouse gases.

We also appreciate recognition of the need to change from “wedges and corridors” to a complete community concept that includes compact development, and we should focus on other factors as well -- such as encouraging healthier living (with reduced reliance on cars), protecting wildlife, limiting light pollution, encouraging local food production via the agricultural reserve, and better managing forest conservation.

**Agriculture:**

We strongly support continued preservation of the agricultural reserve. In addition to its importance for local food production, the reserve provides diverse jobs, water quality protection, and other environmental benefits that must be conserved.

From: Co-presidents Diane Hibino and Kathy McGuire

**From:** [Bernadine Karns](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Calverton Testimony Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 1:46:46 PM  
**Attachments:** [Calverton Testimony Page 1 Thrive Montgomery 2050.pdf](#)  
[Calverton Testimony Page 2 Thrive Montgomery 2050.pdf](#)

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

Good afternoon Chairman Anderson,

I have attached two PDF's that contain testimony (comments) for Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Thank you,

Bernadine (Bernie) Karns, Acting President Calverton

*"When you are accustomed to privilege,  
Equality feels like oppression."  
-Mimi Fox Melton, CEO of Code2040,  
A nonprofit group working to improve  
Representation of Black and Latino In tech.*

# ***Calverton Citizens Association***

***P. O. Box 21***

**Beltsville, Maryland 20704-0021**

December 10, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Chairman  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
2425 Reddie Drive, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Wheaton, MD 20902

RE: Thrive Montgomery 2050

Dear Chairman Anderson,

Montgomery County has an extremely ambitious plan over the next 30 years. What will it take to get there?  
Where should we focus?

"Thrive Montgomery 2050 aims to ensure a vibrant economy, equity for all residents and a healthy environment through 2050 and beyond." I want to focus on economic equity for all residents.

When you talk about the County and what really attracts people and businesses it is "a vibrant economy where everyone can be successful, have more opportunities and enjoy a high quality of life in a beautiful and resilient environment." This vibrant economic should be equitably dispersed throughout the communities of Montgomery County. Dispersing the housing, the jobs and other opportunities throughout the county will ensure that there is socioeconomic diversity equity in every part of the county and not just in certain communities. You can see that the County has not done a good job of dispersing economic equity throughout the County and has not given every part of the County equitable economic opportunities for all residents and families, parents, and children. There has been an inequitable packing and overcrowding of housing in certain areas of the County with no thought to the inequitable impact on schools, businesses, and the economy in these areas of the County. There has been an increase of residents who need more help and need more resources and services in certain parts of the County where resources are lacking in these communities. These communities need to "receive an equitable share of services and investments like high-quality education, job training, and other opportunities to address inequality and racial segregation" so that these areas have equitable economic opportunities for everyone who lives in the community. It is easy to see this by just by looking at high school populations in different parts of the County. The inequitable socioeconomic problems in Montgomery County are shown in the number of FARMS (Free and Reduced Meals) at schools in the County. Let me give you a few examples.

	Paint Branch	Blake	Northwood	Kennedy	Springbrook	Churchill	Poolesville	Walter Johnson	Bethesda Chevy Chase	Sherwood
FARMS (Free & Reduced Meals)	32.9	34.5	47.6	47.6	48.5	≤5.0	6.6	7.7	10.6	13.8

Thrive Montgomery 2050 needs to strive to ensure that the economy and economic opportunities are equitably dispersed throughout Montgomery County. Dispersed equitably so that all types of people with different socio-economic factors are living and thriving in all communities in different parts of the county. Montgomery County needs to plan for communities to be diverse not only racially but also economically diverse to give everyone an



equitable boost to strive and thrive do their best by having all the equitable opportunities no matter where they live in the County. The County needs to spread the wealth in every community and in every corner of Montgomery County. Every community needs all types socioeconomic residents living and thriving in that community. To advance and prosper in 2050 as a caring, wonderful Montgomery County, all people need to learn to live, talk to, and help one another so that everyone will be a vital and contributing member of the community and of Montgomery County.

Please look at how to develop each part of Montgomery County into communities that are socioeconomically equitable to all citizens and families who live in the communities where there is diversity of people. Enough of certain communities saying that their community does not want certain housing; therefore, certain socioeconomic people. It has been proven that all people from varied and different socioeconomic perspectives thrive together in a community. Again, spread the wealth throughout Montgomery County to ensure that all residents have diverse socioeconomically populations, opportunities, and communities throughout the County to make Thrive Montgomery 2050 a successful plan.

In closing I would like to leave you with a quote that we all need to adhere by:

*"When you are accustomed to privilege, Equality feels like oppression."*

-Mimi Fox Melton, CEO of Code2040, A nonprofit group working to improve Representation of Black and Latino In Tech.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernadine (Bernie) Karns". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Bernadine (Bernie) Karns, Acting President  
3005 Gazebo Court  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-1867  
jeff.karns@verizon.net

**From:** [Michele Albornoz](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [cloverly@verizon.net](mailto:cloverly@verizon.net)  
**Subject:** Opposition to Thrive Montgomery 2050-11/19/2020 item #7  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 2:02:41 PM

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

Please acknowledge receipt of my timely submission to the board regarding the Thrive Montgomery as part of the public record.

Regard,  
Michele Albornoz

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

**Subject: Opposed to Thrive Montgomery 2050; Response to Public Hearing  
Draft, November 19, 2020 Item #7**

I am opposed to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft for the following reasons:

- Changing the plan for development into an urban county does not recognize the single-family land uses, small business and commercial land use, the agricultural land uses, and the open space spaces land uses. The plan needs to provide for all land uses in Montgomery County.
- Rezoning the single-family zones in the entire county to allow market-rate townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and apartment buildings by right throughout the single-family neighborhoods does not give residents the diversity to live in neighborhoods of their choice. When purchasing a home residents consider many factors including schools, commuting distance to employment, nearness to shopping, living close to friends and family, and many other issues. They also may be for complete communities and 15-minute living, but with a large number of options, this needs to be left as the choice of the resident. The Planning Board has no proof that allowing other land uses would result in more affordable housing in the County.
- The Thrive Montgomery Plan recommending reduced usage of automobiles does not recognize the transportation needs and importance of the automobile. We do need to provide for better commuter transportation, but people still need to use cars for shopping, visiting friends, attending evening and weekend activities, and activities in nearby communities not served by public transportation. Many residents, especially low-income residents, have jobs that require them to work in the evenings and night, at locations not served by public transportation. Also they have service jobs that require them to travel to different locations during the day, or need tools and materials that need to be taken to the worksite. The plan disadvantages them by limiting their use of cars and access to parking.
- The plan does not provide that the infrastructure enhancements are completed before the plan is enacted. Public transportation, adequate public facilities, and schools need to be in place before the plan is enacted. The Council recently approved legislation that allows new development to proceed without needed infrastructure improvements. We need this infrastructure to be completed first!

The Thrive Plan as written is too long and has many redundant statements. There are pages of proposals for affordable housing that need to be condensed. As Chairman Anderson said in the October 1 Board Meeting the plan is not ready. I would like to see the changes he proposes. As the plan is now I am opposed to the thrive Montgomery Plan. Thank you.

Signed: Nichole L. Alloway

Address: 712 Snider Lane  
Silver Spring, MD 20905

**From:** [Quentin Remein](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing November 19, 2020 Item #7  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 2:26:07 PM  
**Attachments:** [Thrive Montgomery Public Hearing Draft Nov 19 2020 Item7 .pdf](#)

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

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

Please include the attached letter in the public record 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

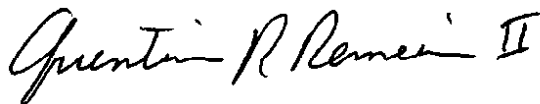
Chair Casey Anderson  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor  
Wheaton, MD 20902

**Subject: Opposed to Thrive Montgomery 2050; Response to Public Hearing  
Draft, November 19, 2020 Item #7**

I am opposed to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft for the following reasons:

- Changing the plan for development into an urban county does not recognize the single-family land uses, small business and commercial land use, the agricultural land uses, and the open space spaces land uses. The plan needs to provide for all land uses in Montgomery County.
- Rezoning the single-family zones in the entire county to allow market-rate townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and apartment buildings by right throughout the single-family neighborhoods does not give residents the diversity to live in neighborhoods of their choice. When purchasing a home residents consider many factors including schools, commuting distance to employment, nearness to shopping, living close to friends and family, and many other issues. They also may be for complete communities and 15-minute living, but with a large number of options, this needs to be left as the choice of the resident. The Planning Board has no proof that allowing other land uses would result in more affordable housing in the County.
- The Thrive Montgomery Plan recommending reduced usage of automobiles does not recognize the transportation needs and importance of the automobile. We do need to provide for better commuter transportation, but people still need to use cars for shopping, visiting friends, attending evening and weekend activities, and activities in nearby communities not served by public transportation. Many residents, especially low-income residents, have jobs that require them to work in the evenings and night, at locations not served by public transportation. Also they have service jobs that require them to travel to different locations during the day, or need tools and materials that need to be taken to the worksite. The plan disadvantages them by limiting their use of cars and access to parking.
- The plan does not provide that the infrastructure enhancements are completed before the plan is enacted. Public transportation, adequate public facilities, and schools need to be in place before the plan is enacted. The Council recently approved legislation that allows new development to proceed without needed infrastructure improvements. We need this infrastructure to be completed first!

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

**From:** [Laura Mol](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment re THRIVE 2050 Public Hearing Draft  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 2:33:44 PM  
**Attachments:** [Mol re THRIVE 2050 Pub Hear Draft--2020-12-10.pdf](#)

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Regards,

Laura Mol | landline (301) 681-9686  
1013 Robin Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

10 December 2020

Montgomery County Planning Board  
c/o Chair Casey Anderson via pdf to <MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org>

Thank you, Planning Board and staff, for the careful outreach and various opportunities for citizens to contribute testimony and comments during the Thrive process and now on the Public Hearing Draft Plan for **Thrive 2050**. I offer two points:

- 1) Let **Thrive 2050** be informed by the work of the County's concurrently developing climate action plan.

It's only a matter of days now until the climate draft will become public: Ms Google tells me that next week, December 15<sup>th</sup>, is the first public event, a *Roundtable on the Draft Climate Action Plan with County Executive Elrich*. Why ever would the major effort and enduring significance of a 21st-century general plan not take into account the analysis and recommendations of a contemporaneous, similarly broadly inclusive effort on the climate catastrophe in progress?

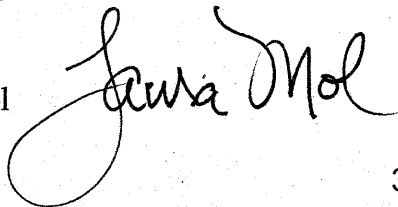
- 2) Adopt clear guidelines: no net loss, no net gain

The **Thrive 2050** draft uses the instantly comprehensible notion of "15-minute living" to express its vision, e.g., "The idea of Complete Communities with 15-minute living is the land use answer to many of the issues..." (PH Draft p. 33). **Thrive 2050** needs a similar shorthand to communicate the County's vision and need in its other contexts: just as the County needs "complete communities" and a new urbanism, so Montgomery County requires a living earth—complete communities of air and water and soil, flora and fauna. This can be addressed with clarity and resolve in 2020—acknowledging that we are at a pivot point now. The shorthand for this determination could be "net gain, net loss," applied to metrics for conserving and growing a living earth in our County, for example:

- No net loss—of forest cover, of Agricultural Reserve acreage
- Net gain only—in non-impermeable cover; in stormwater-treated acres (following our County's own determination of recovery, not limited to state mandates); in preservation of soil quality.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing work.  
Sincerely yours,

Laura Mol





**From:** [Aspen Hill Advocates](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 2:39:40 PM

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

To: Casey Anderson and the Planning Board  
Date: December 10, 2020  
From: Aspen Hill Advocates  
Subject: Testimony for Thrive Montgomery 2050

To comment on the Public Hearing Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050, the Planning Board announced that written testimony is to be submitted through December 10, 2020. The Aspen Hill Advocates ask the Planning Board for a delay until all stakeholders can be brought to the table - business, civic, and residents.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a complicated 166-page plan. Residents need more time to digest and evaluate it. Because of a number of events - preoccupation with Covid, working on one of the most contentious elections of recent times, and preparing for and celebrating the holidays - Aspen Hill has not had time to participate. We just recently became aware of the proposal and have deep reservations about its vision.

The new Thrive Montgomery Plan is a stark departure from the Wedges and Corridor Plan, that so many residents of Montgomery County bought into since 1960. Even recent homebuyers bought into this existing General Plan of the county. For many of us, the Thrive Montgomery Plan is a dilution of our quality of life. It will lead to overcrowding of schools, losing green space - our yards - to densely packed buildings, losing parking, driving on narrow, crowded roads, lowering property values - forever changing the character of our communities.

Creating housing for 200,000 new residents by 2045 or 2050 adds tremendous pressure for development. 200,000 is a huge number. Development will not be evenly spaced across the county. The Plan states that development is to be concentrated densely in certain transit-oriented Corridors and Complete Communities. Increased density will radiate out from these Corridors and Complete Communities into surrounding neighborhoods, in the form of "Middle Housing". The result is that certain neighborhoods will bear the brunt of Thrive Montgomery.

The Plan states that dense Corridors will be designed along the Metro, Purple Line, and BRT routes. The Plan states that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes in Montgomery County are planned to include: Georgia Ave, Veirs Mill Road, Randolph Road, MD 355, New Hampshire Ave, University Boulevard, Route 29, Corridor Cities Transitway, North Bethesda Transitway.

The plan states that to create Complete Communities and development along transit-oriented Corridors, it will require zoning changes. The plan also states it will require zoning changes in single family neighborhoods that will allow for "Middle Housing" - which is a variety of housing types that range from low to medium densities such as duplexes; triplexes; quadplexes, live-work units; and clustered housing such as townhouses, courtyard dwellings



and smaller apartment buildings. It will require zoning changes in single family neighborhoods that will allow for housing options such as Single Room Occupancy units (SROs), shared housing, cohousing, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and cooperative housing.

What this Plan proposes to do - establish BRT routes, rezone for dense development along transit-oriented Corridors, rezone for Complete Communities, and rezone for "Middle Housing" - will completely change the character and desirability of existing single family neighborhoods.

If approved, Thrive Montgomery will be the new General Plan. It will provide the framework for all functional master plans and area and sector master plans. It provides the vision. Area master plans will be forced to comply with the vision. Since it is such a change from the previous General Plan, it will radically change Montgomery County.

We ask the Planning Board to delay until we have more time to evaluate Thrive Montgomery 2050 and until all stakeholders can be brought to the table.

Aspen Hill Advocates  
Jane Salzano, President  
Joan Beerweiler, Communications Coordinator  
email: [advocates4ah@gmail.com](mailto:advocates4ah@gmail.com)

**From:** [Phyllis Edelman](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [GwenWright@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:GwenWright@montgomeryplanning.org)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050 Comments  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 3:09:51 PM  
**Attachments:** [2020-12-10 Thrive Montgomery 2050 comments.docx](#)

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

Dear Casey,

Attached are my last minute comments regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Hope you enjoy the holidays as much as any of us can enjoy them this year.

Best wishes,  
Phyllis Edelman

Sent from my iPad

5810 Ogden Court  
Bethesda, MD 20816  
December 10, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson

Chair

Montgomery County Planning Board

[2425 Reedie Drive, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor](#)

[Wheaton, MD 20902](#)

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

**“Show Me the Money!”**

I understand and appreciate all the work that went into the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan thus far, but as I read the plan, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, one thought rose above all: SHOW ME THE MONEY.

How will the county pay for all of the elements of this plan and in particular the Complete Communities when estimates of lost revenue for the county have grown increasing larger as this year has progressed? In September, the loss was estimated at \$1 billion over the next six years.<sup>1</sup> It's now December and no doubt that loss has grown. And according to Thrive Montgomery 2050, the “highest priority actions for this vision” need to be completed within five years of its passage.<sup>2</sup>

County Executive Marc Elrich has also said there is no clear picture of the county's losses and revenues, a situation that may continue through 2021. And yet, the Planning Board and Department are moving forward on a plan for Montgomery County for the next 30 years that a) will clearly cost the county a lot of money to implement without even having an estimate of the cost<sup>3</sup>; and b) is

based on an economic and planning landscape that was developed pre-pandemic, which could be significantly different in some ways post-pandemic.

### **Hold the Plan for 6-9 Months**

Consequently, this plan should be put on hold for a minimum of six to nine months while a better idea of the county's financial picture emerges. With the retail and commercial losses this county has suffered, it may take years to get back to pre-pandemic economic levels. True, once the vaccines are distributed, maybe the county will bounce back faster than expected. In that case a hold for six to nine months won't significantly affect the goals of this plan. Ultimately, the county wants a plan that could be fully realized – even if that realization changes somewhat mid-stream to conform with the resources and needs of the county. Following a plan that can only be partially completed could be disappointing and detrimental to the economic health and quality of life to our county as a whole.

### **Set Priorities**

Realistically I know the Planning Board will not put this plan on hold, but I do not believe, as other residents have testified, that the Planning Board should move full steam ahead with this plan either. The county needs to be pragmatic and set priorities within the plan. In my estimation, those priorities should be public transit and building more MPDUs and affordable housing.

### **Public Transit**

In a previous draft of the plan, the largest number of comments were on public transit and “retrofitting existing communities”<sup>4</sup> should be the first priority of improving public transit. In the nearly 30 years I've lived in Montgomery County (the length of this plan), public transit has declined, not improved. WMATA bus routes have been cut and headway between buses has increased. In light of the pandemic, Metro is expecting severe cuts next year as the funding runs out. With ridership down and uncertainty as to when or if service will go back to pre-pandemic levels and with the unlikelihood of a large bailout from the federal government, who knows when this significant part of our regional public transit service will be up to full capacity?

And then there's the Purple Line and the question as to whether it will be completed in the next decade given the current cost overruns. Those of us who have lived through the planning history of the Purple Line know how long and expensive an endeavor this has been. BRT planning may be less expensive and hopefully, less controversial than the Purple Line, but given the limited resources our county has now and probably in the near future – with little hope of getting

significant funding from the state or federal government for these projects, county plans for building complete communities or missing middle housing may be stymied. All current and proposed public transit should be running – or close to completion – before shovels hit the ground for housing proposed in this plan.

### **Missing Middle Housing: Why do homeowners have to pay the price?**

It has been well documented, both in this report and elsewhere, that there is a dearth of moderately-priced and affordable housing units in the county. It is quite understandable why we need this housing for both our current and future workforce and that this should be a priority. It's unclear, however, why single-family homeowners need to pay the price for this missing middle housing.

Montgomery County is a mature community, as mentioned several times in Thrive Montgomery 2050 and it is clearly a desirable place to live for families who want a single-family home. Home prices are high because of this desirability and market demand. Even in this pandemic, and even though homes in this county are very expensive, they don't stay on the market very long. Buying a home for many of us is part of the American Dream and clearly, planners and members of the County Council don't feel that those who have attained this dream have the right to hold onto it under certain circumstances. I worry that developers looking to make an easy dollar will target and pressure homeowners who live within a half mile or mile of public transit to sell their homes, maybe offering them a slightly higher price than they could expect to get from another purchaser. Will these displaced homeowners be able to afford another house in their neighborhood? While the developer may build a duplex or triplex on a single family lot, what guarantees will there be that these homes will sell for less than the single-family homes in that neighborhood, making it affordable for middle and lower income families?

Montgomery County's single-family home neighborhoods are, along with the Agricultural Reserve, part of our county's jewels. Rather than nibbling away at single-family home neighborhoods, missing middle housing should first be considered on public properties, on underutilized parking lots in commercial areas or current office parks, which may end up being abandoned properties after the pandemic with so many people working from home. It would more logical to test the waters with developers and buyers in infill areas than in the single-family home neighborhoods.

### **Complete Communities – A realistic ideal?**

The ideal of a "Complete Community" – a place where people of all ethnic, racial, religious, socioeconomic backgrounds and ages can live, work and relax within a



15-minute walk, bike or public transit ride – is worth supporting, but I am skeptical that it is realistic. Other than the characteristics I’ve just listed, the Planning Department has not completely defined these communities in other terms. For example:

- How many acres does a complete community cover?
- What is the difference between an urban, suburban and rural complete community?
- What is the estimated population for each of the types of complete communities listed above?
- Will green space be set aside based on a defined number of square feet per person?
- Are there Complete Communities in other parts of the country, with similar characteristics to Montgomery County, that you can show us so that we can better visualize what one would look like?

Clearly the Planning Department has ideas as to where Complete Communities could be built in the county, as illustrated on pages 39-41 of the report: Colesville Road and New Hampshire Avenue; Connecticut Avenue at Perry Avenue and University Blvd; Georgia Avenue by Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park. Are there others on the drawing board?

But rather than call them Complete Communities, why not call them “villages”? There are certain economies of scale that are not considered and consequently may result in “incomplete” communities. For example:

- While schools are planned within these complete communities, how do these smaller schools dovetail with plans the Board of Education has for building new schools? Will these smaller schools help ensure achievement parity between Black and Latinx students and white and Asian students?
- Houses of worship generally draw from a wide area. While these communities may have a religious institution or two included, it is hard to imagine that every religious group, reflecting all the beliefs of residents, will be represented.
- Doctors may have offices in some of these communities and there may be an urgent care facility, but clearly there will not be a hospital in each community.

### **Overreaching Outcomes are Commendable**

Although I have been critical of many specific objectives of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, I support the broad goals and overreaching outcomes put forth – economic health, equity and environmental resilience. Unfortunately, I

fail to see how the current plan will significantly improve any of these outcomes. In addition, I think depending on new Complete Communities to reach these goals should not be the highest priority. Instead, given that Montgomery County is a mature county, the planners should look at ways in which we can first make our current communities “complete communities.”

## **Economic Health**

The County’s economic health is based on attracting more jobs – a concern of the County Council and the business community – and their input isn’t as obvious as it should be in this plan. The plan indicates that from 2004-2015 the number of jobs in the County only grew by five percent, significantly lower than 20 similarly-sized counties across the country, where growth was 21 percent.<sup>5</sup> Why? What is it that these counties do to spur that growth? And if Montgomery County isn’t doing what these counties are doing, why not? If we can, let’s implement the programs and actions that will spur this economic growth.

## **Equity**

Equity – in housing, transportation, education, access to public spaces both built and green – is a very important issue for our County, but in many specific areas, it’s unclear how this plan provides that for all residents of our Montgomery County community.

**In housing:** Clearly, building new housing to accommodate the increase in the number of residents with incomes less than \$50,000 is necessary, but retaining current housing at affordable levels is also important.<sup>6</sup> Many of the policies and actions on pages 86-95 provide a blueprint for how the county can provide more affordable housing. I applaud the policies for using office parks, shopping centers and other underutilized properties as sites for building these properties<sup>7</sup> and with working with faith-based institutions and nonprofits to finance this housing.<sup>8</sup>

**In transportation:** Transportation equity is also important so that everyone can safely and in a timely fashion get to their jobs. Full funding of public transportation, including that which currently exists (Metro and WMATA buses) and that which is in progress (the Purple Line) and planned for the county’s future (BRT) is very important. In fact, efficient and low cost public transit is one of the most important services this county could provide to foster equity. Ride-On bus service should also be improved to help residents go that “last mile.” While walking and bicycling are good options, they are not options for all everyone.

**In education:** How will this plan work with the Board of Education in promoting educational equity? Economic equity, the key to housing and job equity, begins with educational equity. If small schools – whether in Complete Communities or within the current cluster system – would improve educational achievement for underserved Black and Latinx communities – then this is an avenue worth exploring and implementing. If educators have other and better ideas to help children in these groups attain achievement parity with white and Asian students, then let's promote those.

**In access to public spaces:** It has been acknowledged that there are many areas in our county where the lack of sidewalks and busy streets make public spaces, built and green, inaccessible to residents. While building Complete Communities will ostensibly solve that issue for residents of those areas, what about those populations in our county who do not live in these Complete Communities? They, too, should be able to access a safe, public space to meet with friends and enjoy the fresh air in a green, natural environment. If we want to promote equity in all areas, we cannot leave behind any community within our County.

### **Environmental Resilience**

It is a life necessity that Montgomery County works towards ameliorating climate change and does its part to eliminate greenhouse gases and other pollutants from our environment. Reliance on walking, bicycling and a robust public transit system would help as would banning individual motor vehicles as in Complete Communities. The former is probably doable with full funding of public transit as discussed above. The latter is not likely to happen. Even in New York City with a complex and redundant public transit system, people own cars. Ending America's love affair with the automobile is not likely to happen in one generation. Living with one car instead of two or three in some households, may be an easier adjustment or refinement in the way we live.<sup>9</sup>

Building green roofs on commercial and multi-family residential buildings, requiring solar power on most homes, both old and new builds, and encouraging working from home where applicable, would also help in expanding the county's environmental resilience. Tax incentives could help foster these programs.

My thanks for keeping the comments for this plan open until today and giving me the opportunity for expressing my opinions. I look forward to seeing a revised plan based on the comments and testimony I and others have given.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Edelman

[predelman@gmail.com](mailto:predelman@gmail.com)

## **Footnotes**

[1](#)“County could lose \$1B in revenues over the next six years, Covid-19 has had a ‘significant’ impact on Montgomery’s budget, analyst says,” by Briana Adhikusuma, Bethesda Magazine, 2020-9-15, 10:14.

[2](#)Thrive Montgomery 2050, September, 2020, p. 132.

[3](#)Ibid., p.130.

[4](#)Ibid., p. 54

[5](#)Ibid., p. 21

[6](#)Ibid., p. 91

[7](#)Ibid., p. 86

[8](#)Ibid., p. 88

[9](#)Ibid., See p. 48.

**From:** [Patterino, Dom \[MB\]](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Objection to Desired Growth and Investment Area near Seneca Park North development  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 3:15:31 PM

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

To Casey Anderson, Chair:

I would like to voice my objection to the Desired Growth and Investment area shown in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 resolution, particularly the area in and around the Seneca Park North community. My wife and I have spent over 20 years in our home in this community, and have a significant investment in our home upgrades, which we hope to parlay into a top-dollar sale price when it comes time to sell.

This profit from our home sale will help fund our retirement.

I'm sure I speak for many homeowners in this community when I say, the expansion and development of Rt 355 in this area has potential to ruin our home values, and in turn crush our hopes of a secure and comfortable retirement.

Please do not expand/develop Rt 355 into our neighborhood.

It will also contribute to the destruction of small businesses along that area of 355, which are already hurt by the pandemic.

Thank you,

Dominic and Bonnie Patterino  
19236 Wheatfield Dr  
Germantown, MD 20876

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*Only the individual sender is responsible for the content of this message, and the message does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Education Association or NEA Member Benefits.*

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**From:** [Asma M.](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Karen@vanguardmgt.com](mailto:Karen@vanguardmgt.com); [Board@senecaparkhoa.com](mailto:Board@senecaparkhoa.com)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 3:20:28 PM

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

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I am a resident of Seneca park and a member of the Seneca Park Homeowners Association. I recently reviewed the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Resolution and have a few concerns to bring to your attention.

I have previously served as Chair of the Planning Commission for the Town of Elkton in Elkton, MD prior to moving to Montgomery County. I have a Masters in Public Administration focusing in Geographic Informations Systems and Transportation in Urban Areas

I fully understand the need for the County to address diverse density growth with multiple housing opportunities. However, I do not believe the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan fully tackles the problem of equitable, affordable housing, economic growth and affordable public transit access in my community. Located just off 355/Frederick Road, Seneca Park is an established single and multi-family housing community. This community has existed for over 30 years with access to 355 and public parks. The County's plan encroaches on existing homeowner property and the county community's access to public parks and lands. Additionally, growth along this neighborhood would greatly tax the existing 355 corridor. I am fully against road expansion. I worked on the Governor's 2050 Transportation Plan and with my experience and education in Transportation, I know any road expansion is detrimental to the neighborhood and community at large. Additionally, Level of Service (LOS) deteriorates with each additional lane.

Additionally, allowing the Plan to override covenants to allow to downstream zoning changes without majority approval by contingent property owners is unethical and irresponsible.

New housing IS needed in the County. MORE AFFORDABLE housing is needed even more. This plan does not accommodate that 2nd goal. As a new homeowner in the County, I was dismayed by the lack of homeownership opportunities for our lower income residents.

Simply creating multi-unit housing does not solve that problem. What we need is access to existing affordable housing, opportunities for homeownership for multi- income levels and a greater accessible multi-modal transit system.

This plan does not achieve the goals that the County Community actually needs. I strongly recommend that the county take the needs of the residents to heart rather than the needs of the board or the County Commissioners.

Please feel free to reach out to me if I can provide additional comments. I am a proud resident of the County and will do what it takes to make its residents' voice heard.

Thank you,  
Asma

**From:** [Lloyd Guerci](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft Plan  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 3:55:23 PM  
**Attachments:** [L Guerci Comments on Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan 12.10.20.pdf](#)

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

Attached please find my comments.

Thank you for considering these comments

*Lloyd Guerci*

## COMMENTS ON THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 PLAN

By Lloyd Guerci

December 8, 2020

To: The Planning Board

I have lived in Montgomery County, south of Bethesda, for over 25 years.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Public Hearing Draft Plan, October 2020), which contains text and maps for a comprehensive amendment to The General Plan, would have huge consequences. These consequences include employment, or unemployment, largely to residents who would work in the private sector, as county government employment cannot grow by large numbers due in part to principles of good government and revenue constraints.

If this draft plan were simply aspirational, were writing on a blank slate for a largely undeveloped area and there were unlimited resources to implement it, I would have far fewer comments. But it is not. It is necessary to deal with realities and to consider economics.

### Background: Montgomery County's history of poor job creation

Montgomery County's government has done an extraordinarily poor job in fostering job creation for a quite a while. In the DMV, Virginia has done far better than Maryland and, as of early in 2020 before the pandemic, Prince Georges County lead Montgomery in jobs creation.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/prince-georges-has-overtaken-montgomery-as-top-job-creator-in-maryland-suburbs/2020/01/19/218c3646-38b6-11ea-bf30-ad313e4ec754\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/prince-georges-has-overtaken-montgomery-as-top-job-creator-in-maryland-suburbs/2020/01/19/218c3646-38b6-11ea-bf30-ad313e4ec754_story.html). The significant problem of the County's economic performance has been going on for a while and is noticed by businesses. *See*, The Coming Storm How Years of Economic Under Performance are Catching Up with Montgomery County, submitted by Sage Policy Group to Empower Montgomery (April 2018). In fact, this poor performance is acknowledged in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan, p. 22.

This very poor performance must be considered as prologue when considering the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan.

### The 15-minute Complete Community is not adequately described and fleshed out across the County

The concept of Complete Communities is a critical component of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. p. 51 et seq. As envisioned, by 2050, Montgomery County is made up of a series of people-focused Complete Communities. This is inordinately vague, unjustified and orders of magnitude more than a tall order; it is in many respects a huge restructuring that is infeasible and economically wholly unrealistic.

First, to put matters in context, I will note, with emphasis added, some passages from the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan. A goal of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is to create Complete Communities that are diverse and can provide most essential services within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, or drive. The Plan calls it 15-minute living. p. 33

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan calls for a broader range of housing types—particularly multi-family buildings with smaller units, shared walls, and proximity to a variety of destinations by bike or on foot. p. 42

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan says that since most of the county is already built out, creating Complete Communities means retrofitting our existing neighborhoods to accommodate new uses, housing types, services and amenities, and creating walkable and bikeable connections where none exist today. p. 54

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan proposes Policy 1.1.1: Allow and encourage a variety of uses within communities, with sufficient density to make these uses viable, so that people can experience 15-minute living. Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make use of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. p. 54.

With this background, let's start with the fact that the description of Complete Communities is in part unacceptable vague, which viewed another way, amounts to a lack of reasonable transparency on what is proposed.

How far apart would these so-called Complete Communities be?

While the 15-minute living concept at one point seems to include driving, it seems that the better reading is a 15-minute walk or bike ride. What does that mean as a practical matter as to the physical location and extent, generally, of Complete Communities?

People from their 20s to 50s may walk at about 3.2 miles per hour. People in their 80s may walk a bit over 2 miles an hour. Source: Healthline. So, what is a 15-minute walk? One half to 0.8 miles? The plan must speak to this in distances that people commonly and readily understand.

But the terms bike and walkable/by foot are used in the disjunctive in the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. What is a 15-minute bike ride? Many beginning road cyclists ride at average speeds between 10 and 14 mph on the road. Some other type of endurance athlete may pedal at 15-18 mph or even higher. See, <https://www.roadbikerider.com/whats-the-average-speed-of-a-beginner-cyclist/>. Viewed another way, in general, the average bike riding speed of commuters is 11-18 mph (18-29 km/h). See, <https://bikecommuterhero.com/whats-the-average-cycling-speed-of-a-bike-commuter/>. While I am open to a different number, a speed of 14 mph (the average between 10 and 18) can be used. At 14 mph, a bicycle goes 3.5 miles in 15 minutes. Obviously, there is a huge difference in distances involved between walking (0.5 to 0.8 miles) and biking (average of 3.5 miles).

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan needs to be clear, open and transparent. In terms of distances, what is the meaning of the 15-minute walk or bike ride?

As importantly, using distances, a document needs to explain the Complete Community layout in general in the County (for discussion purposes, not a proposal), with ranges of distances between Complete Communities.

So that people can understand what is proposed in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan, which the plan evades, examples are critically needed in a document. I suggest addressing at least a couple of in each Council District, beyond urbanized areas such Bethesda and Silver Spring. Assume that Kensington (report p. 27) would be transformed to a Complete Community. Where along Connecticut Avenue, to the north and south, would the next Complete Community be located? Also, in other areas, where would Complete Communities be located on or near River Road, between the Westbard commercial area (approximately River Road and Ridgefield Road) and Potomac commercial area (River Road and Falls Road), a distance of about 7 miles?

Without a range of examples, the Plan is unduly vague and evades a common understanding.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan fails to show that Complete Communities are likely to be viable and workable across the County

Once the proposal on Complete Communities is described with realism with respect to actual areas across the county, that residents can understand, a next issue that the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan or an accompanying document needs to address is whether the Complete Community concept is likely to be viable and workable across Montgomery County, excluding of course areas such as regional parks and the agricultural reserve. This is important because the Complete Community concept might be a good idea in some areas but a non-starter in others and if that is the case, major changes are needed to the Plan.

It appears that the foundational concepts do not apply across the county or at least have not been shown to do to. Fifteen -minute cities currently have some popularity among city planners.

<https://citymonitor.ai/environment/what-is-a-15-minute-city>  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-15/mayors-tout-the-15-minute-city-as-covid-recovery>  
[https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-build-back-better-with-a-15-minute-city?language=en\\_US](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-build-back-better-with-a-15-minute-city?language=en_US)

Apparently, the concept originated in Paris, where it makes some sense: people already live-in multi-story apartment buildings in neighborhoods with streets that can't handle all the auto traffic, and there are no supermarkets but instead people walks daily to the boulangerie on their block for their daily fresh baguette.

But trying to create this across all of Montgomery County has not been shown to and does not appear to make sense and is impractical. There is an instructive example near the end of the *Bloomberg* article (cited above), which describes an attempt to create a 15-minute-city type environment in a part of Tysons Corner. " Instead of a 15-minute city, the neighborhood became another "island of walkability," and for the most part, residents still followed the traditional urban pattern of living in one place and commuting into a central city every day for work." And



Tysons Corner has many multi-family buildings, which do not exist across most of Montgomery County. The attempt to apply Complete Communities to less urban areas has not been demonstrated to be viable or desired (as to “desired,” recall, this is a democracy).

To provide a fair and balanced view, the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan or an accompanying document needs to document and discuss where Complete Communities have been built and exist successfully, and where have they run into trouble.

The Planning Board needs to engage economics and business experts to address the financial viability of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

In view of the significance of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan, its likely impact on our residents and the fact that its application across the county is not a matter of demonstrated widespread applicability, the Planning Board should hire economic and business experts to provide assessments and advice.

I am reminded of an action I took decades ago as director of the Superfund enforcement division at EPA headquarters. EPA’s regional offices were required to obtain headquarters concurrence on remedies over a specified cost. Environmentally, the problem at hand was hazardous substances disposed of in a mine. Our regional people had a lot of experience and capability with a variety of sites, but a mine was relatively novel. I did not concur on the proposal and asked that a mining engineer be consulted. This was met with unhappiness. Later, I asked the regional director how it went. He said the mining engineer had some good recommendations and said thanks.

Similarly, the Planning Board should hire independent, experienced experts (and not simply someone who might be expected to endorse the draft) to assess the economics and whether businesses, a/k/a employers, in substantial numbers are likely to exist in Complete Communities as hoped for in the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan.

Several things should be kept in mind. There should be time to get expert views. First, the missing middle concept is presented in the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. *See e.g., p. 38.* The missing middle is now before the County Council as ZTA 20-07, introduced by Councilmember Jawando. It would allow owners of R-60 zoned property located within a specified distance of a Metrorail station to build duplexes, townhouses and multi-family structures within the current R-60 lot coverage. The Planning Board should not forward its report to the Council until it has the benefit of the Council’s resolution of this proposed ZTA.

Second, many plans do not work. One example is councilmember Riemer’s Nighttime Economy initiative several years ago, which has been viewed as a failure.

<http://eastmoco.blogspot.com/2015/09/fact-checking-moco-councilmans.html>;  
<http://www.rockvillenights.com/2018/03/what-bangkok-and-montgomery-county.html>;  
<http://robertdyer.blogspot.com/2019/08/bethesda-nightlife-has-gone-to-dogs.html>. In fact, apart from our County, generally approximately 50 to more than 70 percent of change and strategic initiatives fail. <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/162707/change-initiatives-fail-don.aspx>;

<https://visionplatforminc.com/why-do-so-many-business-initiatives-fail-2/>. This alone instructs caution and in-depth evaluations by business experts.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan fails to justify a core premise that there will be sufficient employment in Complete Communities to make them viable.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan proposes Policy 1.1.1: Allow and encourage a variety of uses within communities, with sufficient density to make these uses viable, so that people can experience 15-minute living. Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn, and make use of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. p 54. (emphasis added).

It is a truism that a business does not have to locate in Montgomery County unless it has a specific necessity to have a physical presence here. Businesses have spoken; they have not been locating here. See discussion above and in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan, p. 22.

The notion that there will be sufficient business employment in Montgomery County communities to satisfy draft Policy 1.1.1. is inconsistent with economic history is wishful thinking. Neither the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan nor any accompanying document provides a sound justification for assuming such a miraculous turnaround in job creation in our County, or that employers would adapt to Complete Communities.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan fails to justify an economic assumption that Complete Communities will have viable commercial elements.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan recognizes that digital commerce is making it difficult for many local and independent retailers to survive. p. 32. Of course, retail's problems are broader than local independents, as major chains such as Lord & Taylor and Modell's have gone bankrupt and closed. While brick and mortar retail was stressed before the COVID -19 pandemic, it has faced a partial death knell from the pandemic. The very large number of vacant storefronts in Friendship Heights and Bethesda bears witness to the troubling problem. Experts do not see brick and mortar retail returning to near where it was. Yet, the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan repeatedly refers to retail in Complete Communities. This is unjustified, unless qualified in the plan or an accompanying document.

There are other concerns. If one assumes that the Complete Communities will have a grocery store, which a reader can't tell from the draft, that may be mistaken. Small grocery stores have closed. E.g., Friendship Heights Giant; a Bethesda downtown Safeway.

In the absence of estimates of ranges of costs and where funding will come from, there cannot be a justified conclusion that Complete Communities will come into existence.

I support brainstorming and aspirational goals. But concepts do not come into fruition unless there is money to pay for them. Some of the costs to develop Complete Communities would be

paid from taxes. It is reasonable for the public to expect that costs and revenue sources including the amount of taxes would be laid out in some document associated with the plan. But they are not (taxable matters and tax policies are referred to in the draft plan). It is evident that implementation of Complete Communities would be enormously expensive. Without a demonstration otherwise, in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan or an accompanying document, the reasonable conclusion is that, economically, it is infeasible.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan does not assure that the needs of seniors will be met.

Montgomery County has a growing older population. Many, like me, for balance or otherwise (in my case, a back operation) should not and do not ride bicycles. It is unreasonable to expect that we will push grocery carts home in the heat of July (last July had over 20 days with temperatures above 90 degrees) and then return the cart and then return home. What many people in their 80s will need is more handicapped parking. That should be required. That is far from the end of it, however. Assuming that you convince the county to reduce the number of parking spaces, then as parking spaces become unavailable, people will park in handicapped spots, even if it is illegal for them to do so. Calling the police is no solution, as what is needed is a parking space, not a police car maybe showing up a half hour later at best.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan's assumption of good public transit is unrealistic.

In the 25 years that I have lived in the county, mass transit has not improved. It is true that the Purple line will be a plus and there may be some Bus Rapid Transit, but the percentage of the County's population actually served by them will not be large. (I have never complained about the Purple Line but am dubious about the ridership estimates, particularly with the vacant office space and precipitous decline of retail in Bethesda.)

Every four years, the county politicians campaign, yes, they are for public transportation. But when it comes to funding it, that's an entirely different story. In view of this long history, it is not realistic for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan to assume very significant increases in mass transit.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan fails to assure that the needs of lower income workers will be met.

There are many lower income workers who commute from up-county to down-county and to Washington, DC. As an example, in the context of the numbers of coronavirus virus vaccine doses to be provided, D.C. Mayor Bowser made efforts to obtain more doses for city health-care workers, arguing that the Trump administration's planned rollout of doses for a first cohort of high-priority recipients is unfairly based on where people live instead of where they work. About 75 percent of the city's health-care workers live in Maryland or Virginia. See Washington

Post December 3, 2020. Similarly, one of my dentist's assistants commutes from Germantown to DC. Many health care workers are not highly paid.

The anti-car, anti-parking approach of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan does not serve these lower income workers at all. The county public transit system does not serve them and it cannot be assumed that they will find work in Complete Communities.

The notion of local schools that children can walk to in Complete Communities is both wholly unrealistic and potentially socially problematic

Excluding areas that have been newly built out, and at least in the down county, in general and far more often than not since I have lived here, school construction has involved demolishing school buildings and building new school buildings on existing school properties (e.g., Somerset school), building a school on a property that MCPS had used (e.g., Silver Creek Middle School in Kensington) or additions to existing schools (e.g., Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School). Land is too expensive and land condemnations too disfavored to acquire new land for schools. In light of this, the implicit notion of building new local schools that children can walk to in Complete Communities, is unjustified and wholly unrealistic, at least in built-up down county areas.

Beyond that there are issues with local schools, including diversity. MCPS was working on a boundary study, but that seems to be delayed due to the pandemic.

As to parking, the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan should have provisions that the County Not provide or parking or subsidized parking to County and M-NCPPC employees

In the federal government, enlightened agencies, such as ones I worked for did not provide parking or subsidize parking. Instead, they provided a transit benefit for Metro, MARC (Maryland Area Regional Commuter) and VRE.

It is about time that County and M-NCPPC employees be treated the same way. It would be nothing short of hypocrisy for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan to advocate limited parking spaces and reduced vehicle travel and at the same time fail to call for a prompt end to free and subsidized parking for County and M-NCPPC employees.

In general, as to parking, reductions in spaces do not simply and solely reduce the number of cars; it results in part in people parking in other places, sometimes to the considerable inconvenience of others and sometimes illegally.

It is necessary to resolve or call for the resolution of problems of parks construction and the zoning as relates to open space that are critical to Complete Communities as envisioned in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan.

As M-NCPPC knows, (and is probably not happy about but does not have the funds to fix) many of the sector plans have called for parks that haven't been build and do not have a reasonable prospect of being built any time soon. These include Springfield Park under the 1982 Westbard Sector Plan (not built) and parks under the Bethesda Downtown Plan (in discussions before and by the Council in the spring of 2017, there were estimates that in the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan area, parks would cost 110 million dollars, and estimates that park impact payments of \$10/sq foot to buy FAR could generate \$ 40 million dollars. There is a huge shortfall with no reasonable expectation of Bethesda parks being close to fully funded, and even if my recollection on the specific dollars is off a bit, my point is correct). The semi-promise of parks has considerable shortcomings. In view of this problem, it is unreasonable to assume that Complete Communities will have necessary parks. So, they won't be complete.

As to zoning, if the Complete Communities are to be successful, they must have real public space and real open space. The Planning Board should recommend changes to the Zoning Ordinance on what counts as public use space and open space. As an example, consider the Collections at Friendship Heights (Site Plans 82001021H and 82001013F and prior approvals). This commercial development is a demonstration of such a deplorable application of the Ordinance that it demonstrates that the Ordinance must be corrected. The owner counted sidewalks, which its shoppers needed etc., as such space. As the public sees it, the net result approximates a concrete and stone jungle. Grass is needed, instead.

Respectfully submitted,

*Lloyd Guerci*

Lloyd Guerci  
Hunt Avenue

**From:** [oyedeleg@gmail.com](mailto:oyedeleg@gmail.com)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 3:56:52 PM

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

Dear Chair Anderson,

My name is George Oyedele – a resident of Seneca Park in Gaithersburg. I am one of the residents that would be impacted by Thrive Montgomery 2050 project. I am writing to express and register my **NON-SUPPORT** for the project due economic and environmental impact to my neighborhood. I strongly believe the project if approved would adversely affect our property values and potentially diminish the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Please advise on when the next public hearing is and how we can participate in the hearing so as to ensure that our voices are heard. Thank you!

Regards,  
George Oyedele  
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F. (301) 760-7138  
C. (240) 449-6970  
E. [oyedeleg@gmail.com](mailto:oyedeleg@gmail.com)



**From:** [harold pfohl](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#)  
**Cc:** [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050 critique - a legacy project.  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 4:43:32 PM  
**Attachments:** [LEGACY LETTER - THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050.docx](#)

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Chair Anderson and Commissioners:

Attached is a letter providing what is intended as a constructive critique of Thrive Montgomery 2050. The notes derive from life experiences and study which developed an intense appreciation of risk and feasibility in the real estate world:

- 30 years in commercial real estate markets creating transactions and development projects
- Led Booz Allen joint venture reviewing the failed HUD New Communities program (13 new towns in the late 60s, study in 1976)
- Thousands of hours studying feasibility and strategy for a 6,000 acre new town outside of Philadelphia
- MBA with focus on strategic planning and finance
- project engineering

I appreciate your time and attention to my notes and hope for the evolution of a plan that not only has high goals but that is sufficiently cognizant of practical and financial considerations that it can be achieved.

Best wishes on this foundational effort,

Harold Pfohl  
Bethesda

4932 Sentinel Dr.,#306  
Bethesda, MD 20816

December 10, 2020

Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery Co. Planning Board

Commissioners:

Ms. Natali Fani-Gonzalez

Mr. Gerald Cichy

Ms. Tina Patterson

Mr. Partap Verma

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050, a Constructive Critique on a Legacy Project

Dear Chair Anderson and Commissioners:

Very little that the County does will have as much impact over the next 30 years as the new general plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050. It is a legacy project for the County planners, Planning Commissioners,, and the County Council. The Planning Department has put in a prodigious amount of work preparing the draft plan which has high and admirable ideals. Kudos to them for their effort. The scope of it is truly vast.

It is of interest to study the plan in depth for the strengths and weaknesses of the County in the context of the threats and opportunities presented to it in the environment in which it will govern. This brief paper is an effort to engage in such a critique.

A few key facts at the outset:

- 65% of commutes are via personal automobile
- Single-family housing consumes 182 mi.<sup>2</sup> of the county.
- From 2005 – 2018 the number of private business establishments grew by 1.6% – total, not per year (OLO report)

The foundation of the plan is the concept of Complete Communities which encourage walking, biking, and transit. Concepts contained in the plan are deemed to be essential to addressing historical racial and ethnic inequities, to catalyze a robust economy, and to address climate change.

The cornerstones of any plan are time, capital, people, and material resources. 30 years is quite a long time, and the County has highly talented people, but material resources (in this case raw land and underutilized property) are quite limited, and capital/revenue is a major problem. Below are some questions relating to the general plan with that come to mind?

No consideration is given to cost. Obviously costs for individual projects have no place in a 30 year general plan. Nonetheless the difficulties and magnitude of costs can be apprehended for the overarching goals. Not to do so invites launching forth on

unachievable paths. An appreciation of the probable magnitude of costs for proceeding in a given direction is necessary to set priorities.

The plan envisions a 15 minute access to services and shopping by walking or bicycling. It envisions services and shopping central to that 15 minute radius throughout the County. To implement Complete Communities existing neighborhoods must be retrofitted to provide the small commercial centers envisioned.

- Rural –
  - There will only be a handful of people within that 15 minute radius who would utilize the commercial area. How can this be achieved given the lack of residential density in a rural area?
- Suburban –
  - Wouldn't there be extraordinary difficulty in acquisition and aggregation of single-family lots to create a small commercial center?
  - Wouldn't the cost be prohibitive?
  - Would condemnation of private residences be required in order to aggregate the necessary land? Would the County then transfer that to a private developer?
  - What would be the political cost of that?
  - The anger of the neighborhood?
  - How do you acquire sufficient land for trails, and parks without acquisition of residences?
- Urban – corridors – this makes sense regarding high density housing and close access to transportation. Strip malls and shopping centers can be converted over time to such usage with minimal investment by the County.
  - The Complete Communities concept envisions bike paths trails and parks associated with such development as well. How would the land be obtained?
  - Strip malls and shopping centers are often abutted by single family housing. Is it affordable to acquire a sufficient amount of single-family housing, presumably by condemnation, to provide the desired trails, parkland and bike paths?

Public transit along with walking and bicycling is at the heart of the revolution proposed for the County's infrastructure. Very recently the County was giving serious consideration to reduction in bus service due to cost. The current County operating budget for public transportation is \$154 million. A 60-year-old person walks on the average about 2.9 mph which is roughly 7 city blocks in 15 minutes. Implementation of Complete Communities at the scale envisioned would require a bus stop with frequent services within seven blocks of every resident in the County, and there are 182 mi.<sup>2</sup> of single-family homes residents.

- Would not multiples of \$154 million current operating budget be required to provide such service?
- The acquisition of a very large fleet of buses and minibuses?
- Is this feasible?

Usage of the automobile is to be diminished as much as possible. 65% of County residents commute driving alone. Henceforth there is to be no enhancement of County infrastructure whether it be roadways or parking to accommodate automobiles. Walking, bicycling and the use of public transit is the desired end.

With a very moderate cost to the county budget the County can proceed with:

- Reduction in parking.
- Adaptive reuse of parking facilities.
- Increase of parking cost to the user, street closures.
- Eliminating new street construction.

If factors inhibiting the automobile at low cost of the County are employed then how costly will it be to increase public transportation to the level necessary to compensate for the loss of use of the private automobile? See the note above on the cost of greatly enhancing public transit.

If the County proceeds to implement the low cost inhibitors to private automobile usage as cited above without implementing the costly public transportation as a substitute

- How will that affect business generation?
- Business patronage?
- Isn't transportation key to economic development?
  - If cars are inhibited but transit cannot be improved sufficiently to compensate for auto motive convenience in proximity, frequency and cost, how will this affect economic development?
  - Getting employees to and from the job?
  - Servicing customers? Receiving inventory?
  - Receiving parts?
  - How will it affect relocation of business to Montgomery County from outside the County?
- What effect will this have on matters pertaining to diversity and inclusion?
- Will this have an exclusionary effect on access to urban core areas and hence reduction in participation in the job market?
- In participation in the culture of the core?

Affordable housing is badly needed. Again, we have 182 mi.<sup>2</sup> of suburban sprawl. Ownership is totally fragmented. Assemblage of lots for any multifamily dwelling unit of substantial size will be most difficult. Wherever a neighborhood is undergoing transition this is usually done by a custom builder engaging the redevelopment of one lot at a time, perhaps with other projects scattered in the region.

- The builder will have paid a market rate for the lot to be redeveloped. How do you avoid the builder charging market rate for the housing to be put in place?
- With such small projects and so many builders engaged in such work how can you possibly impose any requirement for MPDUs?

- Hence how does the concept of missing middle housing address the issue of affordability?

Businesses seek diversity but also seek skill sets. The skill sets that are in short supply throughout the metropolitan region and in many places elsewhere in the country are those which the trades provide. High schools used to provide as an option courses in select trades. The general plan mentions this but does not place an emphasis on it. Why?

- The pay for mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers, electricians, etc. is excellent – shouldn't this be a strong element in the plan?
- Many tradesmen often form their own small businesses. Why not strongly encourage this also as a source of jobs?

There is much emphasis on safe travel and the efficiency of it with heavy emphasis on walking and bicycling.

- Examining a cross-section of Montgomery County citizenry what proportion could reasonably cope with walking and bicycling to work?
- How well does this work in inclement weather whether it be excessive heat or considerable cold, snow, rain?
- Is any consideration given to walking/biking in hilly areas? We have much of that.

Transit hubs. It is proposed that parking should be greatly diminished in the future and that people should get out of their cars to walk and bicycle and use public transit.

- Wouldn't it make sense to provide parking to numerous hubs across the region served by bus rapid transit? Thereby diminishing the usage of the automobile over the course of the next 30 years?

If schools are to be decentralized to be within 15 minutes' walk or bike ride of a residence, how can sufficient land possibly be acquired in this built out County?

Given the above material concerns and the inability to forecast the future in our current chaotic world, I would urge the Planning Commission to 1) address the practicality of the plan as it now stands, and 2) to delay the approval of it for a year until the chaos is sorted out.

Thank you for your time and attention to the above considerations.

My friends and I all hope for the evolution of an optimal plan for our County and wish you and the planning staff the best in your efforts.

Sincerely,

Harold Pfohl  
Bethesda

c. Montgomery County Executive  
Montgomery County Council

**From:** [Schoonmaker, Martha A](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Sears, David M](#); [Rai, Sanjay K](#); [Madden, Susan C](#); [Long, Kevin L](#)  
**Subject:** THRIVE Montgomery Feedback document  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 4:56:08 PM  
**Attachments:** [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Feedback.MC GT campus.pdf](#)

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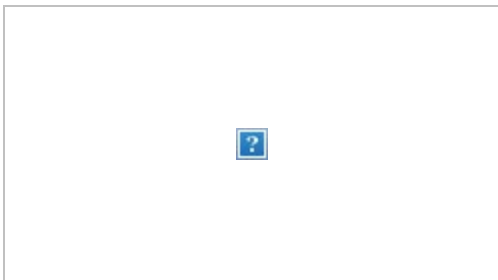
Casey,

Please find the feedback document on THRIVE 2050 from Margaret Latimer and me. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this feedback. Please let us know if we can answer any questions.

Thank you,  
Martha

**Martha A. Schoonmaker, CEcD**  
**Executive Director**  
**Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science & Technology**  
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[Click here to see what PIC MC is all about:](#)





TO: Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: Margaret Latimer, Vice President and Provost, Germantown Campus  
Martha Schoonmaker, Executive Director, Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology at Montgomery College

RE: THRIVE Montgomery 2050 Feedback

DATE: December 10, 2020

We applaud the creation of and commend the work done to develop *Thrive Montgomery 2050* to guide development of Montgomery County for the next 30 years. The core themes are laudable and the multiple benefits cited will truly have a positive impact on every resident.

To ensure that the Upcounty region also thrives, we are sharing a perspective from Montgomery College's Germantown campus/the Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology (PIC MC). Germantown has many of the features of a complete community as defined in the report. It is *ethnically, racially and economically diverse as well (and it) include(s) a mixture of housing types, uses, amenities and services accessible by walking, biking*, less so by transit. It is home to PIC MC, the only education, business, and entrepreneurship hub in Montgomery County, where industry partners can co-locate and actively interact with faculty and students, connecting educational and economic success. The campus is the only community college in the nation that hosts a hospital (Holy Cross Germantown Hospital), another attribute of the near complete community.

This is not the result of serendipitous growth, but of planning by and with the County. In 2001, the County identified the Germantown Campus as a location for a science and technology park. Time Magazine had tagged the I-270 corridor DNA Alley. In 2002, the County invested \$6.1 million in the College, enabling MC to acquire land that would allow the development of a life sciences park and a biotech program, co-located, to create the well-trained workforce needed by the burgeoning industry sector. The community has grown, the College and campus have grown, but job growth – jobs to which people could walk, bike or have a short commute – which would allow PIC MC and the Upcounty region to thrive, has lagged.

We respectfully offer the following for your consideration:

- **Highlight the opportunities and need for business growth and development north of the Shady Grove Metro – bringing jobs to where people live.** Without alternatives in place, “We Must Stop Planning for Cars,” disadvantages the Upcounty and other regions which were developed when a different culture and philosophy of growth was at work. Specifically, the County has invested in the PIC MC project which supports education and economic development, and with limited access via public transportation for those in the community or County, at large.

- **Include planning for public transportation along I-270 to access Germantown efficiently.** A major theme of the report is housing and living within 15 minutes of walking, biking, or public transit - “live, work, play.” Although the future is difficult to predict, especially as we look beyond a pandemic, it seems likely that for many dual or multiple-income households, someone may be able to walk while someone else commutes. Expanding public transportation to Germantown makes the nearly *complete community* much more attractive to business that want to locate in the County in a less congestion area.
- **Address the very competitive environment and suggest ways that the County can be competitive.** The report states that, “Rather than competing with neighbors for large corporate investments, all jurisdictions in the Washington, D.C. region should make it a more equitable, affordable, livable, innovative and prosperous place by cooperating to solve problems and grow.” There is a reality right now that shows the County being challenged by our competing neighbors. *Thrive Montgomery 2050* is an ideal way to respond to this challenge.
- **Attracting companies, their jobs, and capital investments to the Upcounty will greatly increase the tax base and ensure that the entire County thrives.** The stated goal of the plan aligns with the goals of PIC MC: Goal 3.2: Grow vibrant employment centers that are attractive as headquarters locations for large, multinational corporations; major regional businesses; federal agencies; and small and locally owned businesses. These centers are accessible by multiple modes of transportation, balance a mix of commercial and residential uses and amenities, have a distinctive look and feel through high-quality design, and include attractive and active parks and open spaces.

As we plan for 2050, we now face the realities of the post-pandemic economy. As the County pivots to address these important new priorities, leveraging the good work already done will provide a strong bridge to the future.

**From:** [Ecosystems Study Group](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Written Testimony from the Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group on Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 5:15:29 PM  
**Attachments:** [Written Testimony from Ecosystems Study Group to Thrive Montgomery - 2020-12-10.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chair Casey Anderson,

Please accept the attached written testimony from the Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group (ESG) to the Montgomery County Planning Board regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050. Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this extremely important plan. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have about or to meet with us to discuss any of the information we've provided. We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,  
Philip Bogdonoff, Wilfred Candler, Sam Hopkins, Jim Laurenson, Lee McNair, Louise Mitchell, Nanci Wilkinson, and other members of ESG  
[EcosystemsStudyGroup@gmail.com](mailto:EcosystemsStudyGroup@gmail.com)

**Written Testimony**  
**from the Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group<sup>1</sup>**  
**to the Montgomery County, Maryland Planning Board,**  
**regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050**

December 10, 2020

Contact: [EcosystemsStudyGroup@gmail.com](mailto:EcosystemsStudyGroup@gmail.com)

**Executive Summary**

- The earth's supply of nonrenewable natural energy sources and other materials we depend on will begin declining over the next decade, possibly much sooner. With little chance of renewable energy becoming sufficiently available to meet the energy demand of our current lifestyles, our "business-as-usual" will be impacted;
- Greenhouse gas emissions and subsequent threats to human existence continue to increase. Without sufficient supply from renewable sources, we will need to substantially reduce our use of energy and our use of other nonrenewable materials. This will likely cause a decline in our economy;
- We have an opportunity to be proactive, and we can use our county's highly influential and prominent position to be a model to others;
- Therefore, we recommend that the planning board review and incorporate the systems modeling, projections, and recommendations from the experts referenced in this testimony, and implement the following:
  1. **Include two additional planning scenarios in the Thrive Plan**, in addition to the existing plan based on assumptions of "business-as-usual." These scenarios are:
    - a. A "steady state economy" scenario that assumes no economic growth and no increase in tax revenue; and
    - b. A "declining economy" scenario that models at least a 6-8% decline per year in resources and tax revenue;
  2. **Include a more explicit accounting for the effects of climate change** (e.g., temperature extremes, droughts/flooding, climate refugees).

\* \* \*

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<sup>1</sup> The contributors to this document—Philip Bogdonoff, Wilfred Candler, Sam Hopkins, Jim Laurenson, Lee McNair, Louise Mitchell, and Nanci Wilkinson—are grateful for comments, assistance, and endorsements from Dr. Nate Hagens (Executive Director, Energy and Our Future; Co-Director, Systemic Economic Response Initiative; Adjunct Professor, University of Minnesota; <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nate-hagens-004810b>), Dr. Charles Hall (Professor Emeritus, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry; <https://www.esf.edu/EFB/hall/>), Dr. Brian Czech (President, Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy; Visiting Professor, Virginia Tech; <https://steadystate.org/brian-czech/>); and numerous other unnamed individuals.

## Introduction

This written testimony is being submitted on behalf of the Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group (ESG), a collective of approximately 25 scientists, sociologists, engineers, activists, and other concerned citizens, primarily residing in Montgomery County, who initially came together several years ago when the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) gave its most dire warning yet, that the world faces an existential threat to civilization as we know it unless we implement “rapid, far reaching, and unprecedented change in all aspects of society.”<sup>2, 3</sup>

We recognize the huge effort that has gone into creating a plan for Montgomery County for the Year 2050. We acknowledge your recognition of the importance of addressing climate change in the plan. And, we applaud your statement of purpose in the plan, which states that Thrive Montgomery 2050 isn't about reinvention. **It's about adapting to new realities, addressing historic inequities, and shifting the way we think about how the county should grow.** We highlight this statement since it very much resonates with our group's perspective.

## The Problem

After researching the work of numerous experts, as listed in the attached bibliography and other resources, we have become aware of several other realities in addition to climate change that we think are important for the planning board to account for in our county's 30-year plan.<sup>4</sup> These realities include the following:

- Our society has been operating under the assumption that we have an almost endless supply of fossil fuel and other natural resources on the planet for our use. Thrive Montgomery 2050 appears to have been developed under this assumption as well.
- The supply of oil is finite and both the USA and the world have increasingly used up the highest quality and cheapest reservoirs. The USA has produced (and consumed) more oil than any country on Earth but our remaining oil is mostly in shale formations, which is the 'source rock' - there is no oil remaining after that. We technically have plenty of oil left, but what's left is more costly, environmentally damaging and, because it is in shales,

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<sup>2</sup> IPCC. (2018, Oct. 8). *Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by governments*. [Statement by IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee during release of IPCC, 2018). <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>; Watts, Jonathan. (2018, Oct. 8). *We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-land-mark-un-report>

<sup>3</sup> Deutsche Welle (DW). (2020, July 12). *Climate Change Performance Index: How far have we come?* DW.com. [U.S. ranks last on a list of 60 countries.] <https://www.dw.com/en/climate-change-performance-index-how-far-have-we-come/a-55846406>

<sup>4</sup> For a more thorough understanding of the predicament humanity faces, see the following topics in the “Other Recommended Resources” below: Limits to Growth and the Big Picture, The Energy Picture, Regional Food Self-Sufficiency, Climate Refugees.

it has an extremely rapid decline rate (see **Figures 1** and **2** below).<sup>5, 6</sup> For instance, the underlying annual decline rate in the five major oil producing regions (Texas, North Dakota, Gulf of Mexico, New Mexico, and Oklahoma) is approximately **42% per year**. These five regions account for 80% of U.S. production. Yet renewables show no sign of being able to fill this gap (see **Figure 3**). This significantly relevant constraint for our future is hidden (and exacerbated) by the pandemic because demand has also fallen. We are increasingly facing a situation where the market price for oil is much lower than the cost to extract it, further exacerbating future supply.

- Fossil fuel is literally what fuels our economy. Therefore, as the supply diminishes, our economy will be impacted significantly. These impacts on the economy will compound the current effects from the COVID-19 pandemic and this will impose significantly greater hardship on our communities.<sup>7</sup>
- In addition to the depleting supply of fossil fuel, we are also rapidly depleting the earth's supply of other nonrenewable natural resources including metals and nonmetallic minerals. We have designed our lives to depend on these resources, which we use at almost every point in our industrialized lives.<sup>8</sup>
- These realities of depleting resources are in addition to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions we are producing and their subsequent threats to human existence due to climate change.<sup>9</sup> As a result, we must make substantial reductions in our demand for energy and in our demand for our broader use of nonrenewable natural resources, and make adjustments in our lifestyles for the likely concomitant decline in our economy.<sup>10</sup>

## Steps Toward a Solution

As a result of these and other realities, we propose that the planning board review and incorporate the systems modeling, projections, and recommendations from the experts we have

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<sup>5</sup> Hagens, Nate. (2020, Nov. 9). *Americans and their leaders face ten daunting challenges in the next 4 years, says Dr. Nate Hagens*. Citizen Action Monitor.

<sup>6</sup> Weyler, Rex. (2020, March 22). *The decline of oil has already begun*. Greenpeace International. <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/29458/peak-oil-decline-coronavirus-economy/>

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. (accessed 2020, Nov 30). *Estimated U.S. Energy Consumption in 2019: 100.2 Quads*. flowcharts.llnl.gov. [https://flowcharts.llnl.gov/content/assets/images/energy/us/Energy\\_US\\_2019.png](https://flowcharts.llnl.gov/content/assets/images/energy/us/Energy_US_2019.png)

<sup>8</sup> Heinberg, Richard. (2007). *Peak Everything: Waking Up to the Century of Declines*. Indiebound. <https://richardheinberg.com/bookshelf/peak-everything>

<sup>9</sup> Waldron, Lucas and Lustgarten, Abrahm. (2020, Nov. 10). *Climate Change Will Make Parts of the U.S. Uninhabitable. Americans Are Still Moving There*. ProPublica <https://www.propublica.org/article/climate-change-will-make-parts-of-the-u-s-uninhabitable-americans-are-still-moving-there> [see embedded clip: *How the Climate Crisis Will Force A Massive American Migration*. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWu\\_-duWSh8&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWu_-duWSh8&feature=youtu.be) ]

<sup>10</sup> Whyte, Caroline. (2020, November 12). *Aggregate green growth is a mirage: we need to take a more scientific approach to societal wellbeing*. Resilience. <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-11-12/aggregate-green-growth-is-a-mirage-we-need-to-take-a-more-scientific-approach-to-societal-wellbeing/>

been studying and then revise the plan over the next year, by adding at least two more scenarios to the plan:

1. One in which our current economy and lifestyle remains level at what it is currently - a “steady state economy” scenario, and
2. Another scenario in which our economy declines (at say, 6-8% per year) and our lifestyles and policy options become increasingly constrained.

Further, we recommend that you include a more explicit accounting for the effects of climate change (e.g., temperature extremes, droughts/flooding, climate refugees) and better coordinate with the managers of the county’s Climate Action Plan (CAP), since it will be important for these two county documents to be consistent with one another in their plans and recommendations.

## Conclusion

Many communities around the world are suffering from extreme financial strain and resource scarcity due to the impacts of our lifestyle choices here in the U.S. Most of us in Montgomery County, however, are not currently experiencing these consequences of our lifestyle choices, which blinds us to the above realities. We are facing some tough decisions about how to allocate our remaining resources wisely as we transition to a much lower level of living. We can further awaken to these realities, make the changes that are needed, and use our highly influential and prominent positions to be a model to others.

We encourage the planning board to also confront these realities and update the plan so that it engages our residents and communities into taking action and becoming as prepared as we can be for the possibility, perhaps likelihood, of these outcomes. Instead of one business-as-usual plan, we believe it would be prudent for the planning team to include a series of scenarios and action plans for an increasingly uncertain future.

\* \* \*

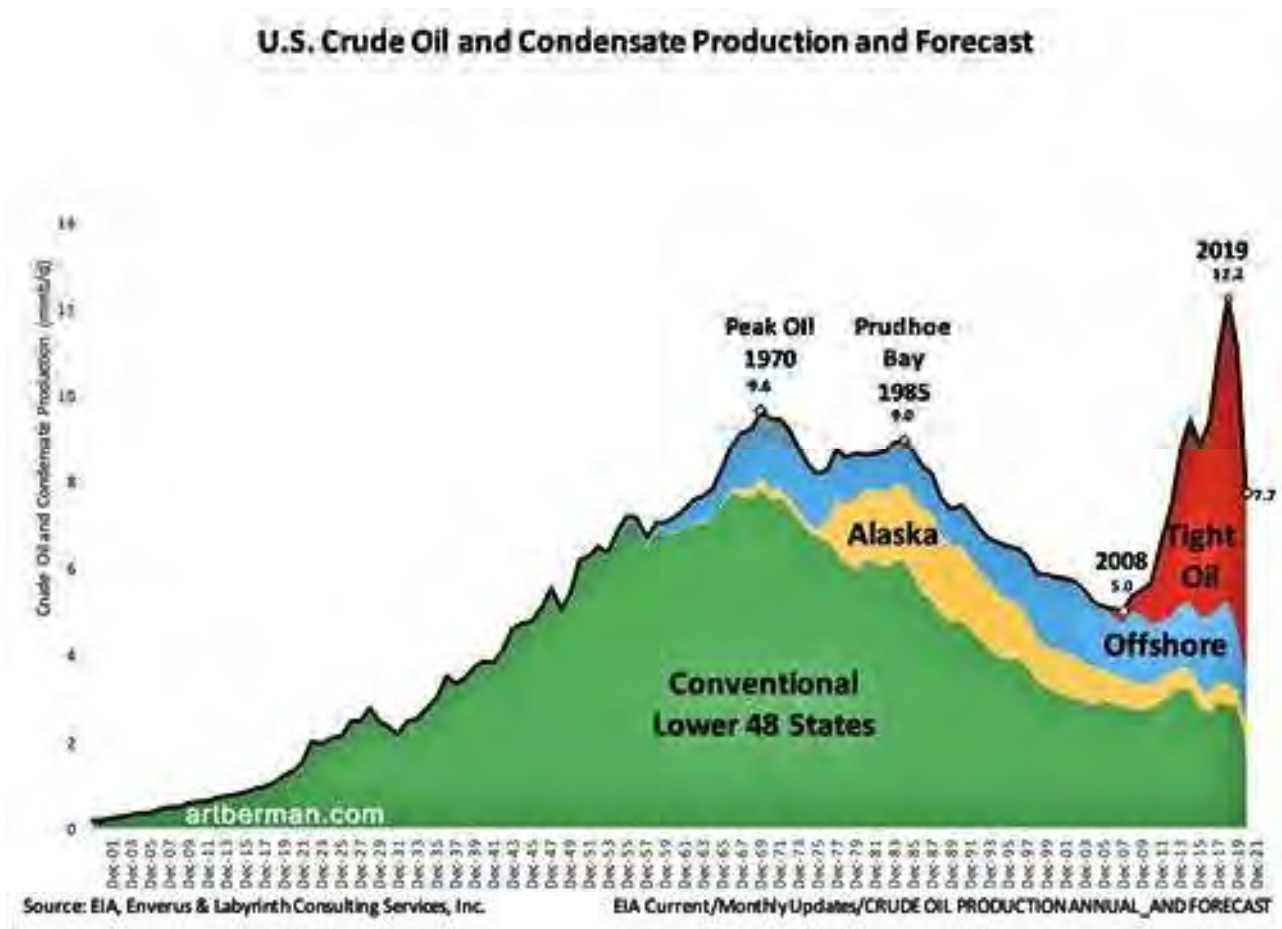
## FIGURES

**Figures 1 and 2** are both of “U.S. Crude Oil and Condensate Production and Forecast.”

**Figure 1** spans the 120 years from 1901 through 2021, and **Figure 2** spans two decades from January 2001 through July 2021. Both show that absent the exploitation of “tight oil” (largely sourced from fracked shale formations), U.S. oil production would have been in steady decline since 1970. The ramp up in production of tight oil beginning in 2008 gave the U.S. a reprieve and enabled us to reduce the amount of imported oil (although we never came anywhere close to becoming energy independent, despite some misleading headlines to the contrary). That reprieve will soon come to an end, exacerbated in part by the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, which has affected investment in the fracked oil plays. Even before COVID-19, those plays were already becoming uneconomic to produce.

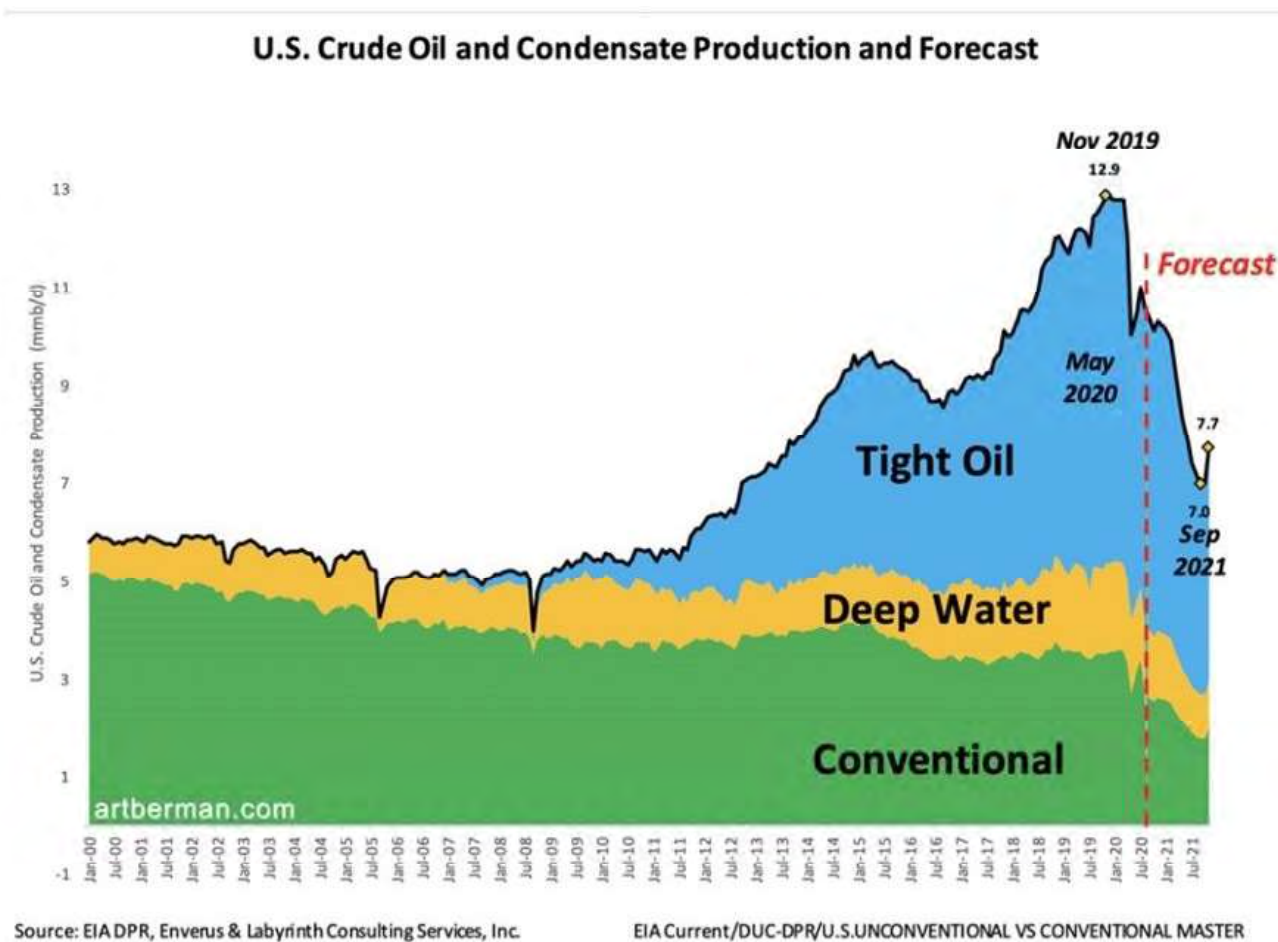


**Figure 3**, “Estimated Maryland Energy Consumption in 2018,” shows 1) how heavily dependent Maryland’s economy is on fossil fuels and 2) despite many decades of construction of renewable energy infrastructure, relatively little energy is contributed by solar and wind. Thus, the gap between where we are and where we would like to be is quite large. This gap is not realistically going to be closed before the effect of the decline in oil, and the required material resources to create the new infrastructure, comes into play.



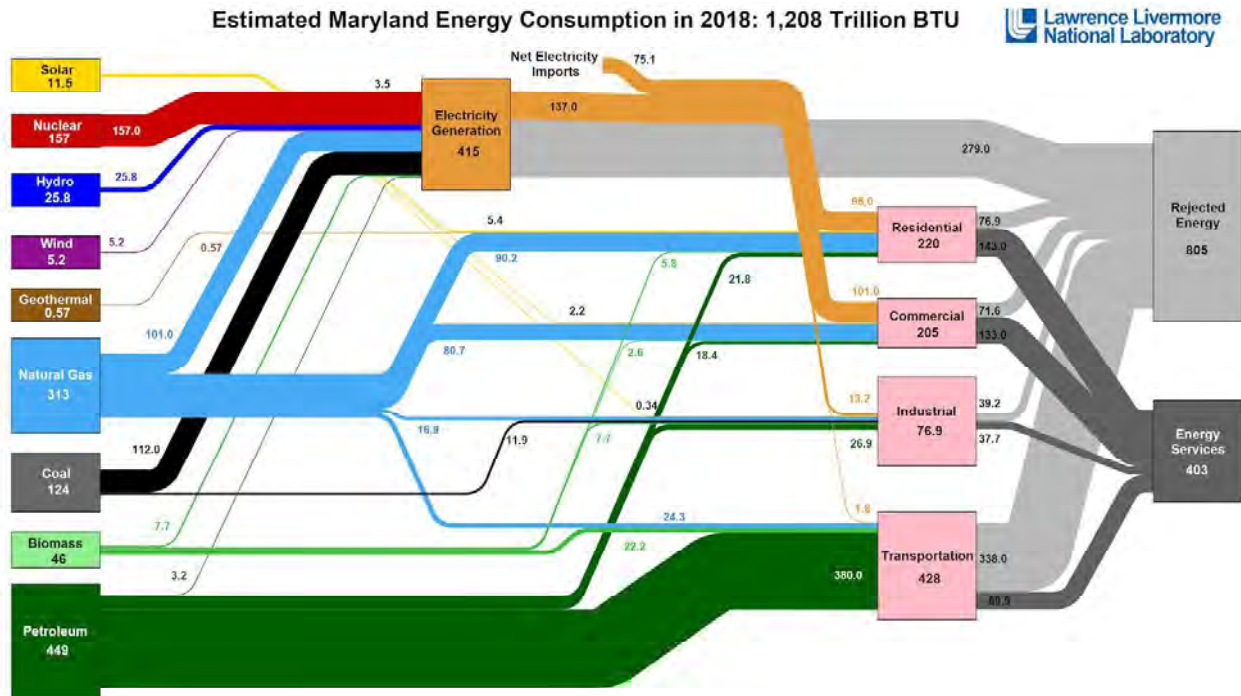
Source: <https://www.energyandourfuture.org/2020/11/02/no-matter-who-wins/>

**Figure 1.** U.S. Crude Oil and Condensate Production and Forecast - Crude Oil Production Annual and Forecast (1901 - 2021)



Source: <https://www.energyandourfuture.org/2020/11/02/no-matter-who-wins/>

**Figure 2. U.S. Crude Oil and Condensate Production and Forecast - U.S. Unconventional vs. Conventional (2001 - 2021)**



Source:

[https://flowcharts.llnl.gov/content/assets/images/charts/Energy/Energy\\_2018\\_United-States\\_MD.png](https://flowcharts.llnl.gov/content/assets/images/charts/Energy/Energy_2018_United-States_MD.png)

**Figure 3. Estimated Maryland Energy Consumption in 2018**

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Hall, C., & Klitgaard, K. (2006). The need for a new, biophysical-based paradigm in economics for the second half of the age of oil. *International Journal of Transdisciplinary Research*, 1(1), 4-22.  
[https://faculty.washington.edu/gmobus/Energy/Hall\\_IJTR\\_Article\\_Vol1\\_No1\(2\).pdf](https://faculty.washington.edu/gmobus/Energy/Hall_IJTR_Article_Vol1_No1(2).pdf)

Kalmus, Peter. (2017). *Being the change: Live well and spark a climate revolution*. New Society Publishers.  
<https://smile.amazon.com/Being-Change-Spark-Climate-Revolution/dp/0865718539/>

Odum, H. T., & Odum, E. C. (2008). *A prosperous way down: principles and policies*. University Press of Colorado. <https://upcolorado.com/university-press-of-colorado/item/1845-a-prosperous-way-down>

## **RESTORING ECOSYSTEMS & REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE TO COOL THE PLANET**

Biodiversity for a Livable Climate. *Compendium of Scientific and Practical Findings Supporting Eco-Restoration to Address Global Warming*, Vol. 2., No. 1. (2018, July). Biodiversity for a Livable Climate (<https://bio4climate.org/>). See p. 400, Appendix A: Scenario 300.  
<https://bio4climate.org/wp-content/uploads/Compendium-Release-Vol-2-No-1-r.2.1.pdf>

Biodiversity for a Livable Climate. *Scenario 300 Conference: Making Climate Cool* (2017, April 30). Biodiversity for a Livable Climate. <https://bio4climate.org/scenario-300/>. [re how to return Earth's atmosphere to 300 ppm CO2]

Jehne, Walter. (2019, July). *Interview: Supporting the Soil Sponge*. [Interviewed by Tracy Frisch]. EcoFarming Daily.  
<https://www.ecofarmingdaily.com/supporting-the-soil-carbon-sponge/>

Jehne, Walter. (2019, August 30). *Cooling the Climate Mess: Soil, Water, and the Power of Nature*. YouTube. [1h46]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFViQIZF88c>

Jehne, Walter. (2017 September). *Restoring water cycles to naturally cool climate*. Soil Carbon Coalition. [2h15m]  
<https://soilcarboncoalition.org/walter-jehne-water/>

Laurie, Jim. (2017, April 30). *Back to 300: Nature Wants To Be Wet and Cool*. YouTube. [32m34s] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N44wdxFwsc8> [presentation at Biodiversity for a Livable Climate's conference, "Scenario 300, Making Climate Cool! How We Can Bring Atmospheric Carbon Down from 400 ppm to 300 ppm in the nick of time!" April 30, 2017, Washington, DC.]

## OTHER RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### **ORGANIZATIONS & BLOGS**

Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy (CASSE)  
<https://steadystate.org/>

Collapse of Industrial Civilization  
<https://collapseofindustrialcivilization.com/>

Four Urgent Global Crises  
<https://www.porchlightbooks.com/blog/changethis/2020/four-urgent-global-crises>

Institute for the Study of Energy and Our Future  
<https://www.energyandourfuture.org/>

Our Finite World - Gail Tverberg  
<https://ourfiniteworld.com/>

Peak Prosperity - Crash Course - by Chris Martenson and Adam Taggart  
<https://www.peakprosperity.com/crashcourse/>

Peak Prosperity - What Should I Do?  
<https://www.peakprosperity.com/video/crash-course-chapter-26-what-should-i-do/>

Post Carbon Institute  
<https://www.postcarbon.org/>

Post Carbon Institute's Home Study Course on Community Resilience  
<https://www.postcarbon.org/program/resilience/>

Resilience Hubs - Urban Sustainability Directors Network  
<https://www.usdn.org/resilience-hubs.html>

### **ECONOMIC STIMULUS**

Maxton, G., & Randers, J. (2016). *Reinventing prosperity: managing economic growth to reduce unemployment, inequality and climate change*. Greystone books.

Systemic Economic Response Initiative by the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere (MAHB) at Stanford University

<https://mahb.stanford.edu/library-item/systemic-economic-response-initiative/>

## **LOCAL FOOD SELF-RELIANCE**

Chesapeake Foodshed Network

<http://www.chesapeakefoodshed.net/>

Future Harvest - Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture (CASA)

<https://www.futureharvestcasa.org/>

Montgomery County Food Council

<https://mocofoodcouncil.org/>

## **IPCC & CLIMATE-RELATED RESOURCES**

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2020). Worlds Apart: A Story of Three Possible Warmer Worlds. Infographic.

[https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2020/10/IPCC\\_SR15\\_Worlds\\_Apart.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2020/10/IPCC_SR15_Worlds_Apart.pdf)

Zhai, P., Pörtner, H. O., Roberts, D., Skea, J., Shukla, P. R., Pirani, A., ... & Connors, S. (2018). Global Warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty (p. 32). V. Masson-Delmotte (Ed.). Geneva, Switzerland: World Meteorological Organization.

[https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15\\_Full\\_Report\\_Low\\_Res.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15_Full_Report_Low_Res.pdf)

Climate 21 Project, <https://climate21.org/>. The Climate 21 Project taps the expertise of more than 150 experts with high-level government experience, including nine former cabinet appointees, to deliver actionable advice for a rapid-start, whole-of-government climate response coordinated by the White House and accountable to the President.

'Collapse of Civilisation is the Most Likely Outcome': Top Climate Scientists.

<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-06-08/collapse-of-civilisation-is-the-most-likely-outcome-top-climate-scientists/>

The great unravelling: 'I never thought I'd live to see the horror of planetary collapse' | Climate change | The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/15/the-great-unravelling-i-never-thought-id-live-to-see-the-horror-of-planetary-collapse>

Beautiful Yet Unnerving Photos of the Arctic Getting Greener, 2020-11-30 Wired.

<https://www.wired.com/story/beautiful-yet-unnerving-photos-of-the-arctic-getting-greener/>

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

*Tour of the Human Predicament and What To Do About It.* Stanford Knowledge Integration Laboratory.  
[http://www.skil.org/position\\_papers\\_folder/TourlectureSKILconcepts.html](http://www.skil.org/position_papers_folder/TourlectureSKILconcepts.html)

*Unwinding the Human Predicament.* Stanford Knowledge Integration Laboratory.  
[http://www.skil.org/position\\_papers\\_folder/PlanForUnwindingThePredicament.html](http://www.skil.org/position_papers_folder/PlanForUnwindingThePredicament.html)

UnDenial, <https://un-denial.com/about/>. A blog about human overshoot, attempting to integrate evolution, behavior, thermodynamics, ecology, history, and economics into an understanding of what is going on and what might be ahead.

# # #

**From:** [vickie baldwin](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Seneca Park HOA and its part in Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 7:05:00 PM

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

Dear Chairman Anderson:

I am a resident of the above community and was shocked at the plans the county has come up with regarding Seneca Park and the surrounding areas concerning the county's addressing of urbanization, fair housing and transportation. I completely support fair housing and better, environmentally responsible transportation options. However, I believe that this effort was misplaced at this particular time when so many of us are preoccupied with Covid-19, job loss, food insecurity and even the transition of administrations. Therefore, I would appreciate an extension or postponement of any further action on this initiative until such time in the future when those of us primarily affected by any actions outlined in the 2050 plan have received more specific information with regard to Seneca Park's role in the process described in the recent meeting of November 19. This would include potential loss of housing in the community, explanation of why this particular site was chosen for inclusion in the 2050 plan and most importantly, a clear explanation of the plan to include parkland and remove mature trees - which are needed now more than ever for carbon sequestration - in this plan. It seems counter-intuitive that with all the emphasis on climate change and the degradation of the environment, we would be looking at potentially damaging actions on the part of the county. Our job, as stewards of this planet, is to find ways for reparations in housing, employment and health care without damaging further our fragile environment. I am not sure the County and its citizens located closer to Washington are viewing this issue in the same manner we are here in Seneca Park.

I look forward to the opportunity for future discussions with a county body specifically targeting our specific concerns and would be happy to help facilitate such a discussion along with other interested and concerned community members.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns.

Best regards,

Vickie Baldwin  
vbaldwin20@yahoo.com  
240-3617003

**From:** [pattymcgrath08@aol.com](mailto:pattymcgrath08@aol.com)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [display3@gmail.com](mailto:display3@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Thrive 2050 Comments  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 8:59:29 PM

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

Dear Chair Casey Anderson,

I want to support the inputs sent to you from the Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group (ESG) of which I am a member. I am also involved with the current Montgomery County issue regarding industrial sized Solar Installations in the Agricultural Reserve. As a strong proponent of clean energy, it is ironic that I am in the position of supporting Montgomery County farmers as they object to this commercial invasion of farmland and the economic devastation as the price of farmland becomes out of reach for the 40% of farmers who lease their land.

Our long term goals must have enough built in intelligence to avoid making mistakes in our quest to get clean energy. Project Drawdown clearly shows how Regenerative Agriculture is the only natural activity that can pull polluting carbon from our air to help avoid the worst consequences of climate change. And many of our farmers are not yet farming in this way - using old techniques that result in soil erosion and the death of soil organisms, which are so necessary to carbon sequestration. If not on farms, then where to put solar panels? What will it take for us to incentivize the solar panel coverage of our vast parking lots? Surveys glibly state that the cost can be 2x or 3x greater than installing on flat farm land. Well, let's figure out how to make that less onerous! Because they all will need to be covered sooner or later.

And our Governor has proposed a luxury lane toll road expansion of the 495 beltway and route 270, which would be an environmental disaster both in its construction and in its use. It's high time to look at a monorail from Frederick to Tysons Corner - clean electric, reusing existing stations of the railroad for parking upcounty, and running along the right of way of 270 without any additional footprint of asphalt! Transportation is the single highest contributor to GHG emissions. Well, we need to have alternatives. A monorail is a sensible and forward looking innovation. I highly recommend this short video from the High Road Foundation.  
<https://www.thehighroadfoundation.org/video-presentations>

I appreciate the chance to comment on this huge effort and anticipate participating as the different stages progress. I wish you the best in your efforts to evaluate and assimilate all your diverse inputs.

Best wishes,

Patty McGrath

202-250-0429 cell, text, voicemail  
301-299-6350 home  
571-243-1856 cell

Mask person to Mask person contagion = 1.5% I'm wearing mine with pride.



**From:** [H. Simmens](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on Thrive 2050 from the Climate Mobilization Moco chapter  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 9:25:20 PM  
**Attachments:** [Thrive TCM Comments TRACK EDITS ACCEPTED 10Dec2020.docx](#)

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

**I submit these comments on behalf of The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County chapter. We are the group that got the county council to unanimously adopt the first US declaration of a climate emergency in 2017 as well as the most ambitious greenhouse gas emission targets set by any government in the country.**

We appreciate that climate is integrated into this document in quite a few places - 53 to be exact. Given Montgomery Planning's indifferent track record on climate - as we have documented in the past in our testimony on the bicycle master plan and open space master plans - that is progress.

However it's apparent from what is said and more importantly what is not said that you still have not recognized that the climate crisis is more than a significant inconvenience. Nor have you recognized the potential role that the county can play as a world leader and model for emergency climate action,

Climate impacts – direct and indirect - are an existential threat to most all life on the planet and are likely to become unstoppable unless emergency action is taken this decade.

To have a plan with a thirty-year time horizon that does not recognize that the climate crisis may result in the literal collapse of civilization in this period unless emergency scale and speed action is taken is a shortsighted and even dangerous omission. (See <http://iflas.blogspot.com/2020/12/international-scholars-warning-on.html>)

Sir David King, the climate advisor to four British prime ministers has said:

*'What we do in the next ten years will determine the future of humanity for the next ten thousand years.'* And he said that two years ago. Has Montgomery Planning done all it can to meet this challenge?

For example, in the Trends and Challenges section, you identify 12 trends. Guess where climate change ranks - yes number 12. And climate change doesn't just 'threaten all aspects of life' as you write. **It is already impacting all aspects of life.**

Your only mention that the county even declared the first climate emergency in the US is buried in the middle of a paragraph in the middle of a section on page 97. And you inexplicably chose to exclude the requirement in the 2017 climate emergency resolution to 'initiate large scale efforts to remove carbon dioxide', which is essential to restoring a safe climate.

Astonishingly, you also chose to exclude acknowledgement of the County's primary goal of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2027 – only 7 years away - a goal requiring an unprecedented transformation of the county's economy and way of life. Not even once is the goal - perhaps the most important goal that county government has ever established - stated in the document!

The magnitude of the challenge is illustrated by the reality that meeting this goal will require the county to reduce emissions some **eight** times faster than it has done in the period from 2005 to 2018.

(Does Thrive meet that goal? It is impossible to know given the generality of your policies, the absence of any numerical targets and your choice not to conduct any kind of impact analysis of the document.)

You chose to mention instead the more distant and much less challenging - albeit still essential - goal of the complete elimination of GHG's by 2035. These omissions hardly enhance our trust in your commitment to vigorous climate action.

We implore you to rectify these and the many other climate related deficiencies by doing the following:

- Establish a Thrive climate workgroup by December 1st (we would substitute *as soon as possible* given that the December 1 date has come and gone) made up of county, Montgomery Planning board and staff, and public members to:
- Review this document and the County's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP) when it is released in early December to align each document with the other and with the goals of the county Emergency Climate Mobilization Resolution
- Develop scenarios describing alternative futures informed by climate and other possible discontinuities to further public and policymaker understanding of what might be in store for all of us during the horizon of this plan.

- Prepare an analysis of the impact of each of these scenarios and/or policy pathways on the county's climate GHG emission reduction targets.
- Convene a joint public meeting/public hearing with the county after the CARP is released that focuses on the inter-relationships between these two efforts.
- Add to your 2021 work plan a detailed analysis of the opportunities for Montgomery planning and the county as a whole to advance climate mitigation, carbon dioxide removal and adaptation in the coming year.
- Postpone the deadline for comments on this document until at least ten days after the CARP is released. Given the central importance of climate to the county's future, how can one comment thoughtfully on this document without being informed by the county's draft climate strategy? (We now understand that you have agreed to accept comments after the December 10 deadline but we have not seen any details of this decision.)

Your initial reaction may be that these actions however desirable are not possible within a short time frame. Please remember that we are in a declared emergency and act accordingly.

**(End of oral testimony as modified)**

Beyond the immediate concerns that could be addressed by the establishment of a Thrive Climate joint work group we submit the following comments:

We do not believe that this document meets its stated goal of providing a 'guidebook' to the future - even after two years of intensive staff and public attention.

1. Thrive 2050 demonstrates a remarkable complacency about future possibilities – both positive and negative. There are no alternative scenarios described for the future development and well-being of the county. The 'modified business as usual' outlook - as we characterize this plan- does not address the high likelihood of black swan (rare, severe and predictable in hindsight) economic, social or ecological events, or accelerated technological progress among other possibilities. It is not enough simply to note that disruptions are possible and to list several. A guidebook to the next 30 years must describe in some detail these alternative futures and how Thrive 2050 can best respond to those possibilities. For example:

How does the possibility that reinforcing advancements in food, information, energy, transport, and material systems may accelerate by 10 times or more this very decade leading to unparalleled prosperity as well as major disruptions in the five systems mentioned (as forecast by Tony Seba for example, see <https://www.rethinkx.com/humanity>) inform Thrive?

Or the Rewiring America plan that models a wartime climate mobilization similar to what TCM advocates that can both fully decarbonize and grow the economy? <https://www.rethinkx.com/humanity>

Or the scholarship such as the paper entitled *A Green New Deal without growth* by Mastini, Kallis and Hickel that argues that we need what I call

‘*Smart Degrowth*’ or a reduction in material throughput rather than Smart Growth?

Why does the likelihood of orders of magnitude greater internal and foreign migration to the county due to massive climate disruption go unanalyzed or even acknowledged? A county such as Montgomery with high levels of public services, a high quality of life, access to employment and relative insulation from known climate stressors such as wildfire, unbearable heat, sea level rise and flooding will face severe pressure to accommodate massive numbers of people. (The words *migrant* or *migration* do not even appear once in the document!) See

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>

Since major national crises generally lead to the expansion of the federal government, why is the plan silent on the possibility, even likelihood of a major expansion of Federal employment in the county as a result of the increasing efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate breakdown?

As part of that trend, why does Thrive ignore the opportunities for taking advantage of the increased need for federal climate research and action by urging the creation of a National Institute of Climate or a National Climate University in the county?

2. “The county’s population of 1,050,688 residents in 2019, is projected to more than 1.2 million people by 2045.”



Projected by whom and on what basis? What are the assumptions that guide this projection? These fundamental questions are not at all addressed. Is 200,000 the desired Thrive county population? Will this level of growth occur with or without Thrive? Shouldn't a plan for the next 30 years set out the consequences for the county and region of differing population (and employment, income and other relevant) projections and their relationship to alternative scenarios?

3. Thrive contains few if any numerical targets or indicators - even as orders of magnitude - to measure progress. Targets and indicators would help the public and decision makers better understand the implications of this document. Indicators and targets should be developed as part of Thrive and not years after this document is approved as you propose to do.
4. Nor does Thrive always distinguish which policies and actions are designed for implementation in the short, medium or long term even as you describe these three time horizons in the implementation section.
5. To create a policy plan for the physical development of the county without maps to translate the policy intent into geographic guidance undercuts both the utility and public understanding of the policies. The few maps that the plan does contain do little to illustrate the spatial consequences of the policies and the rhetoric contained within the document.
6. Thrive is organized in a way that is both redundant and siloed at the same time. For example, rather than have the three separate outcomes of economic health, equity and environmental resilience with brief descriptions

of each that are inconsistent in format, incomplete and overlapping, why not have one vision that incorporates these themes in a way that captures both the connections between the three while capturing the public imagination? Please bring some clarity and uniformity to the document while cutting out the many overlaps and redundancies.

7. The plan has few descriptions or examples of how these policies apply to real places in the county. Having sidebars describing and illustrating how concepts as Complete Communities, the 15-minute community, and others apply in specific locations (as you do to some degree with Kensington) would help make the plan more accessible and understandable.
8. The plan should take advantage of hyperlinks to provide additional background and source information.
9. Much more can be done to develop a 'silo to systems' framework for understanding and advancing the resilience of our intimately connected social and ecological systems.
10. Clearly delineate what distinguishes this document from the previous general plan and current planning practices to justify the considerable time and resources spent on the preparation of this document. Thrive seems more to ratify policy changes that have occurred in recent years than it does to stake out new ground.
11. Terminology is often redundant and confusing. For example, the use of such terms as town center, central business district, commercial center and

complete communities is not standardized and, in the absence of mapping or graphic representation, often serves more to obscure than to illuminate.

12. Sharpen your policies so they can actually inform decision-making.

Currently, many are so vague as to be useless. For example, there is little in the document to guide the major policy dispute currently being debated by the county council and the public on whether solar arrays should be allowed in the Agricultural Reserve. How can that be? (Putting aside that Montgomery Planning is already on record as supporting solar arrays in the Agricultural Reserve!). Another example is whether new communities within corridors are given priority compared to the growth of existing communities.

13. Instead of framing the document as focused on how the county should grow as in the statement: “It’s about adapting to new realities, addressing historic inequities, *and shifting the way we think about how the county should grow*”, we suggest the statement read as follows: ‘It’s about adapting to new realities, addressing historic inequities, and focusing on enhancing the wellbeing of all county inhabitants and the health and viability of the county’s natural resources and ecosystems’. Growth should be a means and not an end.

14. Please prepare a Thrive video that can be used to explain, educate and inspire county residents.

15. Thrive largely ignores the planetary ecological emergency. Populations of marine life insects, birds and many other species are dramatically declining as planetary boundaries are being exceeded. Much of this is due to over

consumption of natural resources, products, and services. As one of the most affluent areas in the wealthiest country on the planet, the county has a responsibility to do all it can to reduce demand for energy and materials use. This document needs to address whether and how its policies will limit resource use consistent with both local, regional and planetary resources and ecological constraints. See

<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html>

16. It does not appear that Thrive addresses the need to ensure that all structures ensure adequate indoor air handling and air quality, as well as surface materials and other characteristics of buildings to minimize the risk of airborne disease.
17. Little is said and no policies are included that focus on making the physical character of the county more habitable for children, nor are there policies that support a substantive role for children in community planning processes. See <https://thecityateyelevel.com/stories/child-friendly-cities-from-an-urban-planners-perspective/v>
18. Built areas below ground level - either private or public - are given no attention. Yet these existing or planned spaces will likely to be impacted by climate change in many ways, including through flooding and by their potential for providing temporary shelter needed in severe weather.
19. Please use the 2018 county GHG inventory, not the 2015 GHG inventory

20. There needs to be recognition of the opportunities for much greater cooperative action in transportation, housing, workplaces and in the civic sector. Enhancing well-being, reducing emissions and materials use, and fostering community will result from forward looking county policy that supports the sharing economy. Supporting co-living, co-working, co-housing, resource sharing libraries and food and meal sharing are a few examples of the possibilities of a sharing community.

**Comments on specific sections:**

Page 9. *“The purpose of a 30-year plan is not to predict and plan for a single future but to be prepared to face multiple, unpredictable futures while keeping an eye on where we want to be in 30 years. We must consider how climate change, pandemics, or terrorist attacks as well as the implications of autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, and economic change will influence our ability to grow and thrive in the future.”*

We agree with this statement. However we see almost nothing in the document that considers ‘how climate change..... will influence our ability to grow and thrive in the future.

Page 13. *Trends and Challenges*

This is a critical part of the plan, as it sets the stage for the policies to come. Yet the section is poorly organized. Some of the twelve issues and challenges described include brief policy recommendations. Others are silent on policy

recommendations. Recommendations 4,5, 6 and 8 for example have no policy responses. Others have policy responses ranging from a sentence to a paragraph. And the titles for recommendations 9 and 10 are policy recommendations rather than statements of trends and challenges, unlike the other ten trends.

The intent of this section is therefore obscured. Please rewrite the Trends and Challenges section so that it is consistent in format. Currently it's a mishmash.

Page 13. *The amount of unconstrained land available for growth is very limited.*

*Today, approximately 85% of the county's land area is constrained by environmental and human- made factors leaving only about 15% of land available to accommodate growth.*

It is very misleading to say that land available for growth is very limited. 15%, or 47,800 acres, of land area is greater than the entire land area of Washington DC!

The plan itself acknowledges that land availability is not a key constraint.

*The major planning and land use challenge today is not the amount of available development capacity based on the technical details of zoning and other controls — there is enough theoretical capacity to accommodate the projected growth.... (page 32)*

Page 19. *Neighborhood demographics do not reflect the county's overall diversity. Our neighborhoods are largely separated along income and racial lines,*

*which has far-reaching implications for people of color at lower-income levels and the county as a whole.*

Yet maps 6 and 7 appear to show a noticeable increase from 1990 to 2016 in the size of areas where there is no predominant racial or economic group, just the opposite of the statement above. Which is it – are neighborhoods becoming more or less separated on income and racial lines?

*Page 21. The median home value in Montgomery County is nearly \$20,000 more than the actual median household income.*

This is difficult to believe. Typically home values are 4-5 times household income. (county 2018 median home value is \$489,000 with median income of \$108,000)

*Page 23. We need to look for regional solutions.*

Is this truly unique to this time or could this have have been written in exactly the same language at any time in the past 50 or more years? Perhaps describing the difficulties in achieving regional solutions and what Thrive is recommending to overcome these difficulties would be in order.

What is also not recognized in the document is the need for state and national solutions to many of the issues and challenges we face. Affordable housing, transportation, air quality, the climate crisis and more cannot be adequately

addressed without significant financial and regulatory support from higher levels of government.

Page 24. *'Climate Change threatens all aspects of life.'* That is true. Yet one of the aspects you chose to ignore is its impact on mental health. Eco anxiety is exploding everywhere and will increasingly affect the well-being of most of us. A survey done in 2018 found that some 51% of Americans feel helpless about climate change, a number guaranteed to increase dramatically in coming years.

In addition, it is inexplicable that Thrive does not acknowledge much less describe as was mentioned above the immense challenge of eliminating 80% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2027. This will require the transformation of our food, transportation, housing and other systems in record time. Please acknowledge this as the number one challenge.

While it may or may not be *'futile to predict the future'* it is not futile to develop scenarios anticipating alternative futures to better prepare for their emergence as was highlighted in bullet 1 on page 6.

Page 33. *The goal is to create Complete Communities that are diverse and can provide most essential services within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, or drive. The Plan calls it 15-minute living.*

Defining 15-minute complete communities as including a 15-minute drive dilutes the whole concept.



*The idea of Complete Communities with 15-minute living is the land use answer to many of the issues we are facing today including the racial and economic segregation of our communities, housing affordability, and increased greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle miles traveled.*

This is a remarkably sweeping assertion, yet one looks in vain for evidence or argument to support this statement.

How many of the one million plus residents now experience 15-minute living, how many residents does Thrive aim to have 15-minute living, and what will it take to make it happen? Absent some even order of magnitude estimates, the 15-minute concept is little more than a planning slogan.

Page 36. The three outcome statements are a mixture of expected outcomes and background information. Given their importance we suggest the statements be rewritten as follows:

**Equity:** *'All residents have equal access to attainable housing, healthy foods, employment, transportation, education, safe, healthy and complete communities and more.'*

**Economic Health:** *Our well-being depends upon a having a diverse, resilient and competitive economy supported by a healthy mix of large and small employers and growing federal campuses, whose talents attract entrepreneurial enterprises, all with a diverse and skilled workforce.*

**Environmental Resilience:** Montgomery County will reduce its GHG emissions by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035 while supporting the removal of large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The county will make its natural and infrastructure systems as resilient as possible by climate proofing homes, businesses, and all public and private natural and constructed systems and property. The county will support a wide variety of peer, professional and community support and connectedness services to minimize the physical, social, economic and psychological harms resulting from increasingly severe direct and indirect climate impacts.

Page 42. Eradicate greenhouse gas emissions

There is much more that can be done to eradicate GHG emissions beyond addressing housing types and locations, as necessary as that is.

P 45. Regional solutions.

A significant omission (in addition to the lack of specifics) is the need to discuss Montgomery County's responsibility as part of a planet whose boundaries are alarmingly at risk of collapse as discussed earlier.

Montgomery must commit to ensuring that its use of land, materials and energy is commensurate with a need to conserve these resources to minimize the catastrophic risks of planetary collapse.

Page 46. Urban Single-family housing is not even mentioned. Is the goal to eliminate all single-family housing in urban parts of the county?

Page 47. *The county successfully meets the challenges of and seizes opportunities related to technological advances and cultural and economic shifts.*

This sentence is vague and cries out for specifics.

The relationship between the three key outcomes of equity, economic health and environmental resilience and the eight chapters that follow these titles is unclear.

Page 61. 2.2 Add Incorporate charrettes and Citizen Assemblies into design and planning processes

Page 63. 2.4 Health impacts of technology should be included in any discussion of technology.

Page 68. 3.2 These commercial centers are not mentioned in the discussion of complete communities. Are they separate from Complete Communities, included within their boundaries, overlapping or what? Much more attention and clarity are required regarding the location and special characteristics of expected future employment.

Page 69. 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).*

This recommendation flies in the face of the county's commitment to eliminating 80% of GHG's by 2027. We need to be thinking about phasing out airports over the next 30 years, not increasing access to them.

Page 70. 3.4.1.b Include electric and conventional cargo bicycles as an integral part of any freight mobility plan

Page 96. Building on comments above, there is no mention of the psychological and mental health impacts of climate change. Increasing numbers of people of all ages are experiencing a kind of eco-anxiety as they internalize the reality that climate devastation becomes increasingly more likely and more frequent with each passing day. A 2019 poll shows that some 2/3 of Americans already experience some degree of eco anxiety.

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2020/02/climate-change>

To prepare a 190 page document without reflecting upon what a plan ironically titled Thrive can do to ameliorate this condition is astonishing, particularly when the document does emphasize the importance of connections between people and communities. There is no such thing as thriving in a world devastated by the kinds of climate shocks mentioned in the first paragraph of the section. When you speak of climate change and health, you must include mental health.

Page 121. 8.3.3 Biophilic design, net zero or positive GHG emission buildings, and district energy generation are excellent policies. In 8.3.3 a. Add "most all

buildings and projects should be net-zero by 2027, consistent with the county goal of an 80% reduction in GHG emissions by that year.”

### **Closing Remarks**

When I was head of smart growth and planning for the state of New Jersey in the 1900's, I organized field trips to Montgomery County, as the county was the national model of progressive planning with the Agricultural reserve, inclusive affordable housing, and compact development. By enhancing the Thrive effort through adopting these and other recommendations and **acting on them with urgency** you can again become the leader – this time for **climate positive planning**.

County residents in the future will ask us whether we did enough right now to restore a safe climate. It's in the spirit of being able to answer yes to that question that these remarks are made.

Please treat the climate as the emergency that it is in everything you do. A livable environment and many lives may depend upon that occurring.

Thank you.

Herb Simmens

Silver Spring

hsimmens@gmail.com

**From:** [Josh Silverstein](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050 comments  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 9:54:04 PM

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

Hello Chair Anderson,

I am submitting the below as written testimony because I was unable to finish within the allotted time during the public hearing.

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My name is Josh Silverstein and I am currently the President of the Randolph Civic Association or the RCA. The RCA represents over 1340 households in the North Bethesda triangular area bounded roughly by Randolph Road, Nicholson Lane/CSX tracks, and Rock Creek. The RCA has remained an engaged stakeholder and collaborator with the Montgomery County Planning throughout the development of the White Flint Sector Plans 1 and 2. The RCA communicates regularly with our residents through our Echo print newsletter - delivered free of charge to all of our residents since 1956. In addition, the RCA holds monthly meetings. Through these efforts, community events, and word-of-mouth, our community is kept well-informed and interested.

The RCA held a Meeting-in-a-Box in January 2020 and then submitted online comments to the County. The RCA's comments focused primarily on the following:

- 1) East-west equity and connections within the County
- 2) Green space preservation and connection;
- 3) Reduction of barriers to starting and expanding businesses;
- 4) An expansion of mixed-use development, along with a comprehensive focus on public transportation, walkability, and bike paths.

The RCA is pleased to see many of those same issues addressed conceptually and practically in the Planning Department's Public Hearing Draft for Thrive Montgomery 2050. The RCA agrees with the overarching desired outcomes related to economic health, equity, and environmental resilience. We are also in agreement with the main principles of Complete Communities, Connectedness, Resiliency, Safe and Efficient Travel, Affordability and Attainability, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, Diverse and Adaptable Growth, and an emphasis on Design, Arts, and Culture.

We would like to highlight a few areas for further emphasis, clarification or consideration in the subsequent General Plan under Thrive Montgomery 2050.

### **Complete Communities**

We are excited to see the concept of Complete Communities with 15-minute living in the Public Hearing Draft, including its emphasis on walking and biking for communities in areas like the Randolph Civic Association's. A consideration mentioned throughout the Public Hearing Draft, but not reemphasized in the Complete Communities Section is the importance of accessibility for those unable to walk or bike.

### **Connectedness**

The RCA also agrees with the concept of Connectedness, and supports the Planning Department's objectives to increase accessibility, transparency, and plain language efforts so the public can better participate in and understand the planning process. Additionally, we support the expansion of communications IT infrastructure, such as free public network access in critically underserved parts of the County.

### **Resiliency; Safe and Efficient Travel**

We agree that the County will require a diverse base of industries and workers, with connections between employment centers and transit hubs, as well as well-paying jobs not requiring an advanced degree. We also support the goal of making public transit, walking, and cycling the preferred travel mode, including increasing rail capacity and stations along the MARC Brunswick line.

Please clarify how the General Plan's Action 4.3.2.a regarding market-based parking rates can be reconciled with the equity provisions of the Public Hearing Draft.

### **Affordability and Attainability; Diverse and Adaptable Growth**

The RCA agrees opportunities for new housing should be increased, with special consideration to adapting or redeveloping underutilized office parks, shopping centers, or other properties. Many such commercial uses near our community would benefit, as their zoning has thus far posed a barrier to redevelopment.

We support the affordable housing policies contained in the Public Hearing Draft. Although we understand the General Plan is not intended to contain a funding element, we encourage the requisite public/private dialog between the Planning Department, communities and developers so that the costs of these initiatives are not unfairly borne by the general taxpayer.

We are also in favor of supporting and sustaining existing farmland whenever possible in

the County. Recent COVID-19 pandemic experience has shown that the industrial supply chain may not always cover periods of high demand. Therefore, local foods and produce are not only healthy and flavorful, but also essential in times of peak demand.

### **Healthy and Sustainable Environment**

As a neighbor to Rock Creek, the RCA appreciates both the emphasis on green space, as well as ensuring that all communities (rural, suburban, and urban) have access to that green space in parks, parklets, and other open areas easily accessible to all.

### **Design, Arts, and Culture**

The RCA supports the concept of the County as a welcome home to diverse cultures, and as a leader in new ideas and emerging trends in arts, entertainment and all cultural expressions. We have very much enjoyed the new mural at Dewey Park, the existing murals at Pike & Rose, and vigorously support increased accessibility to the arts.

The Public Hearing Draft could perhaps provide more of a vision for how the many aspects of entertainment fit into the Complete Community concept, beyond merely food and beverage establishments. For example, opportunities for movie or community-based theatre and arts programs, music venues, or other social gathering places should be emphasized.

### **Implementation**

We understand that the Thrive Montgomery 2050 process is in its early stages. We are excited that the Planning Department has engaged with so many different segments of our community. As we continue our journey to an eventual final General Plan under Thrive Montgomery 2050, we encourage direct dialog and collaboration with civic associations like the RCA. This will be especially important as Master and Sector Plans are updated, so that comprehensive communication with affected communities is maintained throughout the process.

### **Conclusion**

The RCA again thanks the Planning Department for a thoughtful Public Hearing Draft. We look forward to seeing the next steps in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 process and working with the Planning Department to ensure the success of our County. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Josh Silverstein  
President  
Randolph Civic Association



**From:** [Edmund Morris](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive 2050 Comments  
**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2020 12:39:48 PM  
**Attachments:** [Testimony Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan Update, Dec 2020.gdoc](#)

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

Please add the attached to the record of testimony and comments on the general plan update.

--

**Edmund Morris**  
Advocate for Human Centric Design  
*Putting perspective into practice*

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## In brief

As a product, and longtime resident, of the County I have had the last 30 years to observe and study the systems that govern it - and the impact it has on the people who live here. Allow me to paint a picture of what comes to mind when I think of "thriving" Montgomery County in 2050:

A county whose urban areas have a mix of Viennese equity and Parisian charm, Singaporean dynamism and green space integrated into the built environment, and a transit network that copies the best of Japan's innovations. A county whose suburbs are no longer fortresses against the other, but vibrant walkable townships connected to each other and brought to life by bus and rail; whose extensive agricultural reserve is both a source of pride (economic opportunity) and joy (recreational access). A county whose diversity is reflected in *all* of its communities, not cordoned off in new-growth areas like geologic striations or fire-zone forests. This county, whose streets are not just ways to get around but places of commerce and recreation, is full of people who are healthy, safe, and invested - because their county invests in them and their ability to thrive.

The team charged with this document has done an excellent job engaging with the community, as much of what I've heard around the county is reflected in what is shown in the draft plan so far. I'll reinforce a few ideas, draw some overlooked connections, and then let you get back to your day.

I'll take a moment before diving into specific areas to make a suggestion: just as the County recently started having to perform racial equity impact reviews for proposed legislation, it should be the general practice to consider the **public health, public safety, and environmental impact implications** of decisions surrounding the *built and institutional environment*. It is simply good policy to consider the secondary effects of any change. I mention this because much of my commentary will have to do with secondary effects, and considerations of how the mutually reinforcing dimensions outlined in the draft plan relate to the unlisted fourth outcome: satisfaction with where one lives.

## Addenda to the Major Outcomes

A few context notes. Obviously, some of this is outside the scope of the general plan, but it's all relevant to building a better future.

**Economic Health:** the age of having enough major employers to spread around is ending; consolidation in the most durable industries is eroding the ability of smaller players to expand. Focus less on attracting whales and more on nourishing minnows and trout. Being a diverse, vibrant place where people want to live will take care of enticing the big companies. Everyone else actually needs the investment.

**Equity:** get baselines so we can measure how much we've improved, and gauge the difference between perceived disparities and structural ones. Remember there is a critical difference between "equal" (nominally the same) and "equitable" (proportionate). Remember there may be differences in the way a need must be satisfied, based on those being served. Use qualitative parameters and feedback, not just quantitative service metrics, in evaluation.

**Environmental resilience:** we need to *increase* our natural resources. It is not enough to preserve them. This means making natural resources part of everyday life and part of every development project.

## Comments per focus area

### Complete Communities (support as is)

Think of complete communities as investments in public health and public safety - communities that have access to quality services, recreation, diverse modes of transportation and economic opportunities, and can support people across income levels promote healthier, safer, and more trusting people. It's the *communal* experience that creates community, after all, not just the colocation.

I want to explicitly highlight enthusiastic support for a transit-first planning ethos, and the abandonment of car-centric design. Likewise for the recognition that diversity in housing types is essential, and should not be limited to new development but ought to focus on making existing communities more adaptable.

### Connectedness (support with expansion)

Montgomery County has the dubious honor of being both a magnet for migration - both from abroad, and across the country - and the kind of place where one grows up and tends to come back to. This makes for an extraordinary opportunity to create processes that deliberately engage diverse cultural groups with each other to form something unique to the area that makes it a home no matter where they move next. It helps, of course, that better acquainted neighbors are also less likely to get into fights, damage each other's property, suspect each other's friends, or feel distressed or isolated in ways that lead to poor health and safety outcomes. But the real benefit is that people that enjoy where they are, do more where they are when the opportunities arise. This generates social and economic dynamism, but only when the friction is discussion rather than diatribe.

- One key element that needs to be highlighted over and over again is the need to **ensure network connectivity as an infrastructure priority**. Digital communications are great,

but if there is not widespread access, it becomes a driver of inequity. Information access is the most critical element of our modern society, and is becoming more so. Ensuring every resident can actually access the internet regardless of where they are in the county should be a consideration. This not only smooths individual interactions with government and services, but improves economic competitiveness, educational flexibility, and general quality of life (which, in turn, is attractive to people with options and expands options for those with few).

## **Diverse, Adaptable Growth and Resilient Economy (support as is)**

I cannot separate these two elements as cleanly as the draft plan does, because they are intrinsically intertwined in a way many of the other elements are not (quite). The popular notion that growth drives economic success misses the fact that growth is also a product of the success, and that courting businesses is less important than creating spaces in which people with options *want* to live - and in which everyone who lives feels like they have *opportunity*. Thus investing in artisanship, freelancers, pop-up retail, mobile service (including food trucks and the like) and building institutional architecture that allows for diversity of uses (and information architecture that allows for diversity of income).

To connect this more clearly to policy directions:

- If there are restrictions on home-business activities, there must be a clear and compelling safety risk to justify them
- the report's focus on diversity and connectedness in this area is precisely the lens that should be applied to all policies and practices. The county would be wise to leverage the diversity of experience and background in its population to be as dynamic and engaging as possible
- The emphasis on essential services, and non-college accessible opportunities reminds me of another point that is perhaps missed: consideration for *where* such PDR (and agricultural/artisanal endeavors) should be placed. We should ensure that the only restrictions are those absolutely necessary to protect the health and safety of the people and environment; proximity breeds convenience, community, and commerce - isolation is perilous except when necessary.

## **Safe and Efficient Travel (support with enthusiasm, and expansions)**

How one gets around is often one of the most influential elements of how places develop. It is impossible to overstate the importance of people being able to travel by transit, cycle, or foot - individual and public health benefits abound, certainly, as do economic activity and social

integration - and so it is imperative that the County focus on creating as equitably accessible and effectively navigable spaces as possible. I'd like to add, however, that one of the missed opportunities is to build transit-first, or to build transit in concert.

On which, a couple thoughts

- Focus on transit-first development
- Have a broad, long-term plan for where transit needs to go (this is part of the coordination with MWCOG and WMATA)
- Coordinate with Frederick County - they are the destination for a lot of our I-270 congestion, as well as the place to where many of those who grew up in MoCo but can no longer afford it have moved.
- Include individual transit projects (e.g.: bus stops and shelters; contributions towards rail stations/access) as part of the requirements for proposed developments - these projects can be planned and priced by the County to fit its overall system, and developers can contribute to the cost or construction as makes sense.

## **Design, Art, and Culture (support with enthusiasm)**

As with green space, recreation, and commerce, art and culture (i.e.: performances) should be interwoven into everything. Consider it as a lens for development approval: is the development within range of a venue? Does it have opportunities for local artists to put their stamp on it? Does it leave room for purely aesthetic and recreational engagement?

Also, it is important to query the neighborhoods themselves to see what amenities and opportunities they feel are lacking, but to keep in mind a geographic distribution of diverse options.

## **Affordability and Attainability (support as is)**

This area will be as much about policy as planning, so I'll curb the lecture on the broken ways we calculate affordability. Simply put: we need better protections for renters, less of an obsession with home-ownership, more housing stock diversity, better rates of unit growth, and a policy of reviewing (perhaps every 5 years) the practices governing these things to keep pace with changes on the ground. Feeding back into the "connectedness" dimension, there need to be channels for people to express concerns, make observations, comment on changes, etc; that are utilized by a representative slice of the affected populations.

- Caveat: I would argue that the County should discourage amenities built with the intent to exclude (e.g.: a development whose ground-level park space is behind locked gates or high fences), and consider ways in which to maximize public access to open spaces, pedestrian through-ways, and other amenities that have historically been kept from being equitably accessible.

## Healthy and Sustainable Environment (support with expansion)

I'd like to issue a challenge to the County - do not settle for being simply sustainable; strive to be regenerative and exemplary. Biophilic design, urban agriculture, underground and over-street spaces, low-maintenance streetscapes (e.g.: stop planting annuals for decoration), and scaffolded opportunities for community agri- and horticulture should be built into every conceivable space that is built from here on out. By 2050, we want a County that is literally green and vibrant, teeming with people and naturally-enhanced environments. Parks should not be a destination, but a part of the daily experience.

- re - somatic and mental health: wherever possible, include one-stop-shop facilities for health services, that are embedded in areas accessible to (or containing) recreation and green spaces.
- explore all viable options for distributed power generation, storage, and transmission
- please see earlier comments on urban/residential community agriculture; street-side commerce (e.g.: expand farmer's markets); scaffolding for facilitating transport to/from the agricultural reserve for those who do not have cars
- Remember biodiversity isn't limited to forests/virgin spaces/etc. Build it in to the planning process, or at least incentivize biodiverse plantings

## Last thoughts

Lest it be lost, the document to-date is extraordinarily thorough in its attempt to capture the current crises and impending challenges in environment, equity, and viability. While policy is often drafted with quantitative metrics in mind, the qualitative concerns outlined both in the draft plan and highlighted in many of the public comments (and, perhaps, echoed here) are how the public will measure the success of the plan. So when discussing it please be mindful of the need to give room to the aesthetic, experiential, and aspirational. As with the segment on implementation, be clear about the limitations of agency and external obligations, but continue to be bold in pursuing the necessary powers and permissions. There is great promise in what has been outlined, and great opportunity if it is successful.

Sincere regards, and hoping for your (and thus *our*) success in implementing such an ambitious undertaking.

Edmund Morris (he/him)  
Rockville

## Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan

### Comments offered by the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)

December 2, 2020

The comprehensive vision for the future of Montgomery County as outlined in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Report is inspiring. It is clear that extensive community outreach and much work went into developing this vision, and as residents of this county, we are most appreciative. We offer the following comments to augment the visioning process.

We, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC), strongly support the concept of “Complete Communities,” with basic needs and amenities available to local residents within a 15-minute walk or bike trip. We agree that new development should be infill, compact, and focused along transit corridors, and that residents of our county should be able to walk, bike, or use public transit, rather than cars, for mobility. We also endorse the strategic framework chosen to frame the overall vision: Economic Health, Equity, and Environmental Resilience.

There is, however, one major gap in the report: resource and waste management are barely mentioned or discussed. The first use of the word ‘waste’ appears on p. 97 in the context of a visionary statement: “*Reuse, recycling, and composting of food and yard waste results in very little municipal solid waste generation.*” While we strongly agree with this visionary statement, the report should specifically address how to achieve “very little municipal solid waste generation.” This General Plan, like previous ones, reaches well beyond land use and lays out a broader vision for life in Montgomery County, including aspects like public art and cultural amenities. Yet, rethinking how businesses, institutions, and households use resources and manage wastes is necessary to achieve the goals outlined in the Thrive report. However, this topic is largely ignored in the Plan, with no details for how the County could realize the vision of economic health, equity, and environmental resilience. Unless the topic is explicitly considered within the context of all other changes envisioned, optimal resource use and safe, efficient management of wastes will not be achieved.

We propose that this Plan incorporate revised statements on the County’s approach to waste management. The report should explicitly recommend:

- All plans adopt zero-waste strategies at local community and countywide levels, including decentralized infrastructure and institutions for residents to reduce waste, reuse, repair, and recycle/compost - without reliance on a private vehicle. To maximize waste reduction opportunities in multi-family and commercial buildings, new commercial construction permit standards should require space for source separation, storage, and pickup of recyclables, reusables (e.g., textiles), and other items requiring source separation and safe handling (such as fluorescents, electronics, and batteries). A system with

distributed access points can increase overall access, utilization, and equity in the system.

- Our County aim to contain wastes produced here within the boundaries of our own county, to the greatest extent possible. As a matter of equity, we should not burden poor communities locally or abroad, nor can we use the atmosphere, waterways, or soils for waste management unless strictly and transparently regulated, with careful assessment of public health and local ecologic impacts. Furthermore, local materials management solutions, such as new reuse, repair, and recycling businesses, make Montgomery County more resilient when faced with changes to global waste and recycling markets. Policies that preserve land for production, distribution, and repair services can help the County increase its economic resilience while also reducing waste generation and striving for "zero waste."
- Reduction of materials use, whether through a shift away from disposability to durability, or simply buying less and buying better designed and less resource intensive goods, should be the primary strategy to minimize waste. Reuse, repurposing, and recycling should be auxiliary strategies. Building-site waste management plans can incentivize material preservation and reuse during site planning and construction and county policies and plans can also be developed to encourage waste reduction during deconstruction or demolition, with additional incentives for deconstruction over demolition. Other incentives include promoting refillable water bottle stations at all public venues and county facilities. Reducing materials use will advance efforts to address climate change, as well.
- Change zoning ordinances to advance agricultural and food waste composting and closed loop materials management. Systemic waste reduction, rather than disposal, should inform any proposed zoning changes that impact materials management.

As communities grow more compact, it is possible to generate less waste, as homes will become smaller and residents are less inclined to collect "stuff." Other lifestyle changes, including more social connections, might also contribute positively to waste reduction. However, how generated wastes are collected and processed in dense multi-family residential settings or mixed-use neighborhoods – that are largely car-free – must be considered during planning.

Various new strategies to manage resources and waste will likely emerge as these Complete Communities evolve, but proactive consideration helps. Below are a few concepts to incorporate in planning and design (some were briefly mentioned in the report, but emphasis in the context of waste management would be helpful):

- Neighborhood lending libraries for tools and other shared items.
- Small businesses and training hubs devoted to fixing items for reuse, to reduce discards.



- Urban and suburban organic waste collection systems that feed into rural composting facilities, which return nutrients to the soils, support a vibrant agricultural community, and local food systems as part of a circular economy
- Neighborhood gardens, food forests, and other green infrastructure, that use locally produced compost from neighborhood organic wastes.
- Collaborate with schools to educate young people on the full life cycle of products, with emphasis on “cradle-to-cradle” innovations; enhance education on ecologic cycles, food systems, and the impacts of various kinds of waste on the environment.
- Deconstruction training and employment centers.

With specific regard to the “Health in All Policies” section of the report (Goals 6.3 and 6.4), there is a well-placed emphasis on the benefits of increased physical activity, access to healthy foods, and greenery. However, there is no mention of one intervention that would provide major public health benefits while also reducing municipal wastes and greenhouse gases: elimination of sodas and sweetened drinks in plastic bottles or other single-use containers. Reducing fast food consumption would also benefit public health and waste management. Promoting easy access to healthy, local, and sustainably produced and packaged foods could be incorporated into community planning.

Finally, as we transition to a clean energy economy as envisioned in this report and in Montgomery County’s overall plans, new questions emerge with respect to potential new forms of waste:

- How will solar panels be recycled at the end of their 25-30 year life span?
- How will batteries from electric cars, electric bikes, and other technologies be recycled?
- Will more land be available within the county for resource management facilities as certain types of businesses become obsolete (e.g. vast car lots for new and used car sales)?

We encourage planners and policy makers to consider resource and waste management at every step of the process when envisioning future communities. Although typically approached as an environmental issue, resource recovery and waste management can produce an array of job opportunities, enhance the county’s economic well-being, and create a more equitable environment in which all can thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments.

**From:** [lifeonearth@verizon.net](mailto:lifeonearth@verizon.net)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony on the Public Hearing Draft General Plan update - Thrive 2050  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 9, 2020 1:13:15 PM  
**Attachments:** [General Plan Update.doc](#)

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

Attached is the testimony of John Parrish on the Public Hearing Draft of the General Plan Update - Thrive 2050

Submitted December 9, 2020

December 9, 2020

RE: Testimony on the Public Hearing Draft of the General Plan Update – Thrive Montgomery 2050

Submitted by John Parrish, 9009 Fairview Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20910

**The General Plan Needs to be Eco-centric, not Anthropocentric for the Natural Environment and the Human Community to Truly Thrive.**

The previous update of the General Plan (1993) gave a much greater emphasis on preserving and restoring the natural environment. The General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County approved in December 1993 was an outgrowth of the Maryland Planning Act of 1992 which stressed natural resource protection. **We should be increasing our protection of the natural environment and devoting far more attention to these values in the current General Plan update.**

**The General plan should continue to be built on the seven visions of the State Planning Act.** The first five visions are especially critical to retain: 1) Development is to be concentrated in suitable areas; 2) Sensitive areas are to be protected; 3) In rural areas growth is to be directed to existing population centers and resource areas are to be protected; 4) Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is to be considered a universal ethic; 5) Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption is to be practiced.

**All of the goals, objectives and strategies outlined in the Environment section (pgs. 66-73) of the 1993 General Plan should be retained and strengthened in the Thrive update.**

The Thrive draft plan departs greatly from natural resource protection. Instead, the Thrive focus has become strongly anthropocentric in a time where an eco-centric approach is the most urgent need if our civilization is to survive through the end of this century.

On February 3, 2020 M-NCPPC staff presented a draft outline of the Thrive plan to the County Council's PHED Committee. In regard to a sustainable environment, staff did a very good job beginning to capture the many issues and challenges that should be a primary focus of the General Plan update. Sadly, since that time, much of the language pertaining to the natural environment has been significantly diluted or deleted. It appears that the Thrive Plan has been directed away from an environmental focus by those in authority who consider protection of the natural environment to be an impediment to economic growth.

The following text is comprised of language that M-NCPPC staff composed for the Thrive plan earlier this year. The bolded portions are especially important to retain as part of the Thrive plan because they begin to capture the issues and challenges we face now and into the future. This language needs to be reintroduced in the Healthy and Sustainable Environment section of the Thrive plan on pages 94-98.

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## **Healthy and Sustainable Environment**

***A healthy and sustainable environment is a network of natural and built habitats that supports healthy and diverse human, animal, and plant communities, clean air and water, and continues to provide these benefits as the earth and climate change. The built environment influences human health by influencing behaviors, physical activity, social connections and access to resources and the quality of the environment.***

The last several decades have seen great changes in the county with respect to all aspects of the environment and our knowledge and understanding of it, including its vital importance to human society, health, the economy, and our ability to protect and enhance it. These changes include new sources of environmental data and the ability to track trends, new scientific understanding, new global and regional climatic trends, new technologies and strategies for improving the environment, and new regulatory frameworks.

## **Environmental Concerns**

**Montgomery County has always been in the forefront of protecting and enhancing the natural environment through a broad range of planning initiatives and policies. However, despite the county's rigorous regulatory framework to protect sensitive environmental resources, many indicators such as water quality of the streams, forest lost, and increased imperviousness point to a downward trend. All the County's water bodies fail to meet one or more of the State's water quality standards for their designated uses, and many are under review for additional water quality impairments. Since the start of the State's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program implementing water quality standards, the number of water bodies that require TMDLs has been steadily increasing. The downward trend in water quality and increases in listed impairments are due to several factors such as decreases in forested and other natural lands, increases in development footprint and impervious cover, and climate change trends towards more frequent, intense, and erosive storms and associated runoff.**

**Although there are a variety of factors that affect stream condition in the County, the loss of natural areas and the degree of imperviousness is one of the more significant ones. Higher impervious cover leads to higher amounts of stormwater runoff and urban pollutants that tend to erode and degrade stream channels and habitat and the biologic communities they support, leading to degraded stream condition scores and narrative rankings. The down-county areas with higher levels of impervious cover and disturbed and compacted soils, older and less effective stormwater management, and fewer natural areas and undisturbed soils that can filter and infiltrate rainfall to groundwater effectively, consistently show lower quality streams over the years. The Agricultural Reserve and other up-county areas have much lower imperviousness, uncompacted soils, and greater natural and other undisturbed vegetated areas, and generally have higher quality streams.**

## **Climate change**

In addition to chronic sustainability issues, climate change caused by Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHG) has emerged as a major issue in the last few decades. Climate change has huge impacts including sea level rise, extreme temperatures, and extreme weather events. Our infrastructure is not designed to withstand the shocks of extreme weather conditions and will require greater resiliency in dealing with growing environmental threats. Impacts will be direct and indirect; for example, the Blue Plains Treatment Plant that treats much of the sewage from the county is in a flood zone threatened by sea level rise.

Climate change will further exacerbate health related issues. Increased temperatures and precipitation extremes have health implications that we are already seeing. Extreme weather events may impact our housing and infrastructure, as well as restrict access to care and community health facilities.

**Although the trend for up-county area streams continues to be dominated by streams in good condition, over the years there has been a significant loss of streams in excellent condition. This may be partially due to the more intense and erosive storms related to climate change.**

**Meeting the challenges of climate change and reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions will require a renewed commitment to conserving and protecting natural areas and other green open space, and limiting development footprint and impervious cover as key strategies to protect water quality and handle increasing stormwater.**

## **Water and sewer**

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) provides water and sewer service within the Washington Suburban Sanitary District, which includes most of Montgomery and Prince George's

Counties except for most of the City of Rockville and the Town of Poolesville.

**Most of Montgomery County's water comes from the Potomac River, the rest from the Patuxent River. The main question for the water supply system is whether it has the capacity to adequately handle the needs of an additional 200,000 people in the next 30 years while facing the potential impacts of climate change as droughts become more frequent.**

### **The Agricultural Reserve**

**The Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan (1980) established the Agricultural Reserve through the mechanism of Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs). It was a pioneering and bold initiative that made the county a leader in preserving land for farming and open space. Subsequent controls and policies such as Building Lot Termination and associated preservation easements further strengthened the preservation goals against development pressures. The Agricultural Reserve covers about 114,000 acres or about 35 percent of the County. Second to parkland, the Ag Reserve contains most of the forested land in the County-38,000 acres or about 40 percent of all forest in the County.**

**According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 558 farms occupying 65,537 acres of land. Although big farms (50 acres or more) are decreasing, the number of farms between 10 and 49 acres is increasing, as are farms less than 10 acres. Traditional agricultural activities, including grain farms and livestock operations, have been sustained, while tabletop food production as well as the horticulture and equestrian industries have increased. In addition, interest in agricultural and cultural education and tourism experiences is on the rise.**

**Many of the County's streams begin in the Agricultural Reserve and other up-county areas. Protecting downstream water quality and stream condition depends on protecting the upstream portions. Without the existing protection afforded by the up-county areas, particularly the Agricultural Reserve, the stream condition of many of the down-county streams would be even more impaired. The benefits of the Agricultural Reserve to the environment in general, and to stream condition in the rest of the County in particular, are inestimable and cannot be overemphasized.**

**The Ag Reserve is protecting agricultural land, rural open space, and providing important environmental and economic benefits, but at the same time there are competing demands for land for other purposes such as solar energy production and this is putting pressure on the Ag Reserve. New strategies are needed to ensure the Ag Reserve remains protected and economically viable for the next 30 years.**

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The Healthy and Sustainable Environment section needs to strongly emphasize forest preservation, water quality, preservation of the Agricultural Zone, and sustaining native biodiversity.

### **Forest Preservation**

Montgomery County has the lowest percentage of its land area (<28%) in forest cover of all Maryland counties. According to federal studies, *"Acre for acre, forests are the most beneficial land use in terms of water quality. Acting as a living filter, forests capture rainfall, regulate stormwater and streamflow, filter nutrients and sediment, and stabilize soils."* The excerpt above is from a report titled "Conserving the Forests of the Chesapeake: The Status, Trends, and Importance of Forests for the Bay's Sustainable Future" – USDA-Forest Service, Northeastern Area, NA-TP-03-96. How can we expect to have healthy streams and a sustainable natural environment when existing laws, master plans and environmental guidelines do not go far enough to afford protection of forests? The Thrive plan needs to incorporate and strengthen language from the 1993 General Plan (Objective 8, pg. 72) calling for increasing and conserving the County's forests. The Plan should call for improvements to laws, master plans, and environmental guidelines to overcome any shortcomings of the 1993 plan.

### **Water Quality**

Streams and lakes throughout the county continue to degrade due to poor planning. Why has it become the annual norm for Lakes Frank and Needwood to be considered unsafe for water contact due to the microcystin toxin each summer and fall? This degradation shows us that development carried out under master planned guidance led to this condition by allowing over-development in the upper Rock Creek watershed. The Patuxent drinking water reservoirs Rocky Gorge and Triadelphia Lake have also begun to experience harmful levels of microcystin during the summer and fall. The flash drought of late summer-early fall 2019 brought this problem to the forefront. All of this is due to over-development in the Patuxent watershed allowed by, and despite, existing zoning and planning that is supposed to be protective of water quality.

High levels of impervious surfaces continue to be the leading cause of stream degradation. More strict limits on impervious cover are needed throughout the County but especially in the Special Protection Areas. Removal of impervious cover in urban areas is highly needed. Infiltration via bioswales and rain gardens should be mandated for all existing and planned parking lots.

The Thrive plan needs to recognize the short comings of the previous General Plan and address the short comings by calling for stronger protections for streams and water quality if we and our streams are to really thrive.

### **Agricultural Zone**

The Agricultural Zone continues to be threatened by large lot developments, industrial solar and by the applications of toxic pesticides and herbicides to grow crops. The Thrive plan needs to encourage sustainable organic-based agriculture and promote better policies to prohibit land uses that undermine agriculture and public health. Industrial solar should not be permitted and harmful crop herbicides and pesticides should be banned.

### **Biodiversity**

We are now living amid a sixth great extinction event where species are rapidly disappearing from our planet due to massive human caused habitat destruction. The Thrive plan needs to incorporate language calling for preservation and enhancement of native biodiversity, specifically the ecological systems that support our native plant and animal communities. Objective 6 (pg. 71) of the 1993 General Plan should be retained and strengthened in the updated plan.

### **Climate Change and a paradigm shift**

It is good that the Thrive plan acknowledges climate change as a significant threat to our human and natural communities. However, it does not offer a plan that has the ability to withstand the disruptions forecast by a consensus of the scientific community to occur within the 2050 timeframe. The Plan needs to shift to a radically different paradigm where humans are encouraged to live more simply, and with, a deeper respect to our limited precious natural resources. To love, honor, and respect Mother Earth is what the Thrive plan must expound upon. Living out the American Dream as framed by the Thrive Draft will only exacerbate climate disruption at the expense of the quality of life for all species. The Thrive plan should emphasize the need for we humans to drastically simplify our lives by reducing consumption, buying reused products, and recycling our wastes in a more ecologically sensitive way. The Plan should encourage citizens to reduce our individual carbon footprints by driving and flying less, and replacing lawns with gardens so that we mow less.

### **Noise**

The Thrive plan should encourage ways to sharply reduce noise pollution. One good way is to ban or more strongly regulate noise emissions from leaf blowers and lawn mowing equipment. A strengthened noise ordinance that calls for a sharp reduction in decibel levels is needed for peace of mind and body.

### **Transportation**

The Plan calls for examining the potential removal of highways from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. The Mid-County Highway extension known as M-83 should be highlighted as an example of why we need to revise the master plan. This highway is a relict of poor planning that would devastate streams, forests, biodiversity and communities. Likewise, the Montrose Parkway East extension from Rockville Pike to Veirs Mill Road should be abandoned and the road right-of-way designated as a greenway park.

### **Community Gardens**

The community garden program in Montgomery County is highly popular. The waiting list to obtain a garden plot is very long. Some folks wait years to obtain a plot. Thrive should promote the creation of more community gardens to accommodate the high demand and promote a healthier lifestyle. Expansion of the community garden program will also give people living in apartments and town homes an opportunity to grow fresh food.

### **Conclusion**

The development of the Thrive plan is occurring during the ongoing Covid crisis and the climate crisis. More time should be taken to develop the plan before it is approved by the Planning Board. This will afford staff the opportunity to reorient and restore the General Plan toward stronger protections of the natural environment and to adapt the Plan to guide us through a climate crisis and pandemics that will only become more severe in the coming years. **The Covid crisis and the climate crisis must be viewed as an opportunity to envision our world in a much better way.** The Thrive plan has the potential to do this but thus far falls short of providing the strong environmental basis to truly thrive. Anthropocentrism is why we are facing a Covid crisis, a climate crisis, and far too many environmental threats. Eco-centrism is the only way forward if we expect to live in a world where all life thrives.

**From:** [rg steinman](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive written Testimony, from Roberta (rg) Steinman  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 9, 2020 10:34:33 AM  
**Attachments:** [rg's Thrive Montgomery 2050, comments, Dec2020.doc](#)

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

Dear Chair and Commissioners and Thrive staff,  
Attached please find my written testimony that addresses my concerns about the Thrive 2050 plan.  
Thank you for considering my perspective.  
~ rg Steinman  
Silver Spring, MD  
20910



**For the natural environment and the human community to truly thrive, the Thrive Montgomery 2050 update of the 1993 General Plan needs an Ecosystem foundation, not an anthropocentric focus.**

The 1993 General Plan update represented a shift in focus toward the environment. The environmental goal was to a) manage impacts of human activity on the environment, b) conserve natural resources to **maintain a stable and healthy eco-system**, and c) protect public health and safety. (1993 General Plan, p. 66) To accomplish this overall environmental goal, and to comply with key visions of The State Planning Act of 1992, the 1993 General Plan emphasized the following objectives:

- Environmental stewardship,
- Preserve and protect sensitive areas,
- Protect and improve water quality,
- Preserve and enhance a diversity of plant and animal species,
- Increase and conserve the County's forests and trees,
- Energy conservation

The visions of the State Planning Act of 1992 are more relevant than ever, and Thrive 2050 needs to build on the environmental focus laid out in the State Planning Act's key visions: 1) Development is to be concentrated in suitable areas; 2) Sensitive areas are to be protected; 3) In rural areas growth is to be directed to existing population centers and resource areas are to be protected; 4) Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is to be considered a universal ethic; 5) Conservation of resources. **Thrive 2050** needs an eco-centric focus, emphasizing **Environmental Sustainability** and improvements in the **Quality of Life**.

**Critical Importance of Functioning Ecosystems**

Healthy forests, clean water, and bountiful biodiversity are key to a functioning ecosystem. When an ecosystem is torn apart, extinctions occur and biodiversity is lost. The Passenger Pigeon's extinction shows the **cascade of consequences**.

The passenger pigeon was once the most abundant bird in the world, and flocks over a billion strong darkened the skies over North America for days on end. But in under 100 years, European settlers hunted the passenger pigeon to extinction (the last one died in captivity in 1914). Without the passenger pigeon to consume the bounty of acorns and chestnuts produced by eastern forests, small rodent populations exploded, which in turn increased the population of ticks carrying Lyme disease. Who could have predicted the extinction of the passenger pigeon could worsen Lyme disease in the century that followed? Although we cannot always predict with certainty the specific consequences when we destroy pieces of the natural world, we know they exist and are often significant and profound. (Saving Life on Earth: A Plan to Halt the Global Extinction Crisis, Center for Biological Diversity • January 2020)

Many of the places, plants, and animals that we grew up have greatly diminished or entirely disappeared. From the blinking lights of fireflies at night to the dawn chorus of migratory birds; from the evening chirping of frogs to the colorful red Eft stage of the Eastern Newt; from the coveys of Bobwhite in the thickets, to the flute-like sound of the Eastern Meadowlark. And the lone survivor of a once-more pristine Maryland, the Maryland Darter, Maryland's only endemic vertebrate that is found nowhere else. Each species lost or in grave decline tells the story of a place that has been irrevocably harmed.

We humans have been flourishing at the expense of the degradation of Earth's ecological systems. Biodiversity loss is happening at unprecedented rates. And now we are in an extinction crisis – one that is entirely of our own making. This loss of biodiversity is a fundamental risk to the healthy and stable ecosystems that sustain all aspects of our lives – food production, fresh clean water, climate regulation, moderation of floods and droughts, recreational benefits, aesthetic and spiritual enrichment.

Maintaining these ecosystem services and sustaining a healthy Earth depends on us valuing, conserving, restoring and wisely using biodiversity – that is, all the variety of life that can be found on Earth (plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms) as well as the communities that they form and the habitats in which they live.

Urbanism, technology and industry may have distanced us superficially from nature, but it has not changed our reliance on the natural world. What we use and consume on a daily basis remains the product of multitudes of interactions within nature, and many of those interactions are imperiled.

### **Thrive 2050 must rest on an Ecosystem foundation that calls for Environmental Sustainability and improvements in the Quality of Life for All**

I agree with **Thrive 2050**: “**The way we think about growth needs to change.**” Growth must support both the quality of life for people and for the larger community, which includes the variety of life and the natural areas that they inhabit alongside the humans.

The *Thrive Montgomery 2050 Issues Briefing to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee, February 3, 2020* contained a substantial and meaningful environmental section. Staff raised critical concerns about the environment, climate change, water and sewer and the Agricultural Reserve. The current version of Thrive, by contrast, lacks such substantive ecosystem-oriented content and is missing significant and fundamental points critical to a **Healthy and Sustainable Environment**. The current Thrive 2050 plan needs to re-incorporate the following excellent language, which captures the issues and challenges we are facing now and into the future.

#### **Language to Address Environmental Concerns in the Thrive 2050 Plan**

(from the January 2020 Thrive Montgomery 2050 referenced above. My bolds.)

##### **Environmental Concerns:**

"...despite the county's rigorous regulatory framework to protect sensitive environmental resources, many indicators such as water quality of the streams, forest lost, and increased imperviousness point to a downward trend. All the County's water bodies fail to meet one or more of the State's water quality standards for their designated uses, and many are under review for additional water quality impairments. Since the start of the State's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program implementing water quality standards, the number of water bodies that require TMDLs has been steadily increasing. **The downward trend in water quality and increases in listed impairments are due to several factors such as decreases in forested and other natural lands, increases in development footprint and impervious cover, and climate change trends towards more frequent, intense, and erosive storms and associated runoff.**"

"Although there are a variety of factors that affect stream condition in the County, **the loss of natural areas and the degree of imperviousness is one of the more significant ones.** Higher impervious cover leads to higher amounts of stormwater runoff and urban pollutants that tend to erode and degrade stream channels and habitat and the biologic communities they support, leading to degraded stream condition scores and narrative rankings."

**Climate Change:**

"Although the trend for up-county area streams continues to be dominated by streams in good condition, over the years there has been a significant loss of streams in excellent condition. This may be partially due to the more intense and erosive storms related to climate change."

"Meeting the challenges of climate change and reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions will require a **renewed commitment to conserving and protecting natural areas and other green open space, and limiting development footprint and impervious cover as key strategies to protect water quality and handle increasing stormwater.**"

**Water and Sewer:**

"Most of Montgomery County's water comes from the Potomac River, the rest from the Patuxent River. The main question for the water supply system is whether it has the capacity to adequately handle the needs of an additional 200,000 people in the next 30 years while facing the potential impacts of climate change as droughts become more frequent."

**The Agricultural Reserve:**

"Many of the County's streams begin in the Agricultural Reserve and other up-county areas. **Protecting downstream water quality and stream condition depends on protecting the upstream portions.** Without the existing protection afforded by the up-county areas, particularly the Agricultural Reserve, the stream condition of many of the down-county streams would be even more impaired. **The benefits of the Agricultural Reserve to the environment in general, and to stream condition in the rest of the County in particular, are inestimable and cannot be overemphasized.**"

"The Ag Reserve is protecting agricultural land, rural open space, and providing important environmental and economic benefits, but at the same time there are competing demands for land for other purposes such as solar energy production and this is putting pressure on the Ag Reserve. New strategies are needed to **ensure the Ag Reserve remains protected and economically viable for the next 30 years.**"

**I urge you to take the following specific actions, all of which would reinforce a healthy and sustainable Ecosystem approach:**

- **Maintain the Green Wedges.** "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." (The 1993 General Plan Refinement, p.9). The Wedge preserves open space, farmland, and lower density residential uses. The new Thrive proposal shreds the Wedges, eviscerating their ecological value. The Wedges and Corridors concept needs to be retained.

- **Create safe passages for Wildlife:** The need for safe passage for wildlife between protected areas is critical to their migration and to ensuring the healthy genetic diversity of animal and plant populations to withstand the challenges of habitat fragmentation and climate change.
- **Prohibit use of plastic synthetic turf.** The plastic turf contains toxic chemicals that pose a hazard to public health and the environment.
- **Stop planning for cars and emphasize transit, walking and biking.** Agreed! And in support of this, update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways **to remove** master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings, **especially the M-83 highway.**
- **Preserve the Agricultural Reserve.** It is important that agricultural use be viewed as a valued and permanent land use. Agricultural land preservation in the Agricultural Wedge is not a holding use for future development. Reject proposed ZTA 20-01. Rather, locate commercial solar developments in the already-built urban and suburban areas, not in forests and farms in our Ag Reserve. The following words from Royce Hanson on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ag Reserve best convey the importance of the Ag Reserve:

“These incremental incursions seem insignificant when proposed, but if brought to fruition and accumulated over time they do great harm by fragmenting the landscape, thus impairing retention of the critical mass of farmland, which is what makes the Reserve work as a working rather than a passive landscape. As these invasive uses accumulate, they change the character of the Reserve... The current proposal for solar farms is of particular concern, both for its potential for great damage to farming and the character of the Reserve, as well as for some unfortunate technical and legal problems it presents.”

“The survival and integrity of the Reserve rests on broader understanding by the public and policy makers that it is a vital part of the county’s economy, the regional environment, and its recreational and cultural ecosystem.”

“There is, however, a deeper, moral reason for sustaining it so that it will still be here in 2080 and 2180. An urban, knowledge-based civilization has many advantages but one of its disadvantages is loss of connection with mother earth. The Reserve is an immediate reminder that there is a season for planting and one for growing and one for harvest and one for letting the earth rest before the cycle of life begins anew. For all of us it is a public trust to pass to future generations better than we received it.”

“This little patch of dirt is not magnificent in the great scheme of things. But, alone in this metropolis, in the midst of constant change and development, it is an intentional garden, guarded by law, rooted in history, a private place that serves a public purpose. In this urban and global age such a garden is more important than ever. It is a physical symbol and moral recognition of humanity’s inseparable connection with the earth, which is so easily diminished as we move from farm to industry to the virtual world of artificial intelligence.”

- **Implement County-wide impervious reduction and address run-off at its upstream sources.** To protect water quality and stream ecosystems, we must follow the science regarding impervious cover. Science tells us that as we add pavement to a watershed, stream conditions decline. Stream degradation is due to the run-off of sediment, nutrients, and chemicals from housing and commercial developments, as well as to the thermal impacts, and increased volume and velocity of storm run-off. The science of watershed protection shows us that 5% is the upper threshold for stream degradation. According to recent studies, impervious cover levels as low as 5% are correlated with significant degradation in water quality. Based on an extensive study of streams in Maryland, “it is now known that

substantial degradation and loss of biodiversity begins at much lower levels of impervious cover between 0.5% and 2%.” (King, Baker, Kazyak, Weller, 2011, p.1666, *How Novel is too Novel? Stream Community Thresholds at Exceptionally Low Levels of Catchment Urbanization*. ‘Ecological

Applications’ Vol. 21. Cited in Appendix A, Bibliography, p. A-7, Ten Mile Creek Watershed Environmental Analysis For the Clarksburg Master Plan Limited Amendment.) The more sensitive fish and macroinvertebrates suffer declines at impervious levels much less than 5%.

- **Preserve and restore forests.** We are losing our high-quality interior forests in Montgomery County due to a number of factors, including fragmentation. We must take care of, and strive to restore, and over the longer horizon re-grow more interior forest, to begin to replace the interior forest we’ve lost and destroyed over the decades. Strengthen the longstanding MNCPPC-Montgomery Parks policy of protecting at least 2/3 of our regional parks, as Conservation land (per the Ten-Year PROS plan). This would go a long way toward retaining and fully protecting all of our remaining interior forest.

If Montgomery County’s vision is to become a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment, then **quality of life and environmental sustainability must be the measures used** in land use planning, development review processes, master planning. Quantitative growth in population, housing, jobs, and businesses are not indicators of success.

Bring back the good, strong environmental language from both the 1993 General Plan and the earlier, February 3, 2020 Thrive 2050 plan.

*Future generations are unlikely to condone our lack of prudent concern for the integrity of the natural world that supports all life. ~ Rachel Carson*

*Our heedless and destructive acts enter into the vast cycles of the earth and in time return to bring hazard to ourselves. ~ Rachel Carson*