

Item 10 - Correspondence

From: [Joan B](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony for Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 2:48:02 PM

[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: Written 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

skipperjoan@hotmail.com

From: [Phyllis Edelman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: 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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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, 14th 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.¹ 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.²

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 cost³; 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”⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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 properties⁷ and with working with faith-based institutions and nonprofits to finance this housing.⁸

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.²

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

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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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

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.

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

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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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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. 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

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
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 3:56:52 PM

[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
T. (301) 760-7180
F. (301) 760-7138
C. (240) 449-6970
E. 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](#)

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

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.² 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.² 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.² 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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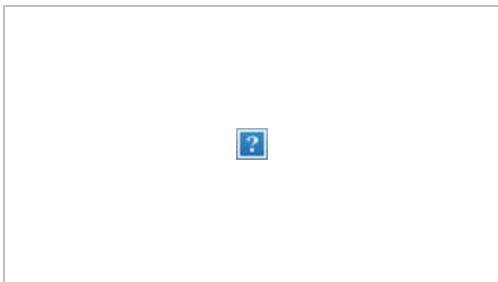
Casey,

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
at Montgomery College (PIC MC)
20271 Goldenrod Lane, Room 101B (*office location*)
20200 Observation Drive, PK 101B (*mailing address*)
Germantown, Maryland 20876
240.567.2007 (*office*)
301.509.7328 (*mobile*)
Martha.schoonmaker@montgomerycollege.edu
montgomerycollege.edu/picmc

[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: [Barry Wides](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#)
Subject: Thrive 2050 Comments -North White Oak Civic Assn
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 5:00:25 PM
Attachments: [North White Oak Civic Association Comments on Thrive 2050 staff draft.docx](#)

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Please include these comments in the public record of testimony on Thrive 2020 from the November hearing.

North White Oak Civic Association

December 10, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Anderson:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Barry Wides

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

From: [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](#)

[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

Written Testimony
from the Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group¹
to the Montgomery County, Maryland Planning Board,
regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050

December 10, 2020

Contact: 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).

* * *

¹ 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.”^{2, 3}

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.⁴ 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,

² 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>

³ 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>

⁴ 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).^{5, 6} 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.⁷
- 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.⁸
- 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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/>

⁷ 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

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

⁹ 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]

¹⁰ 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.

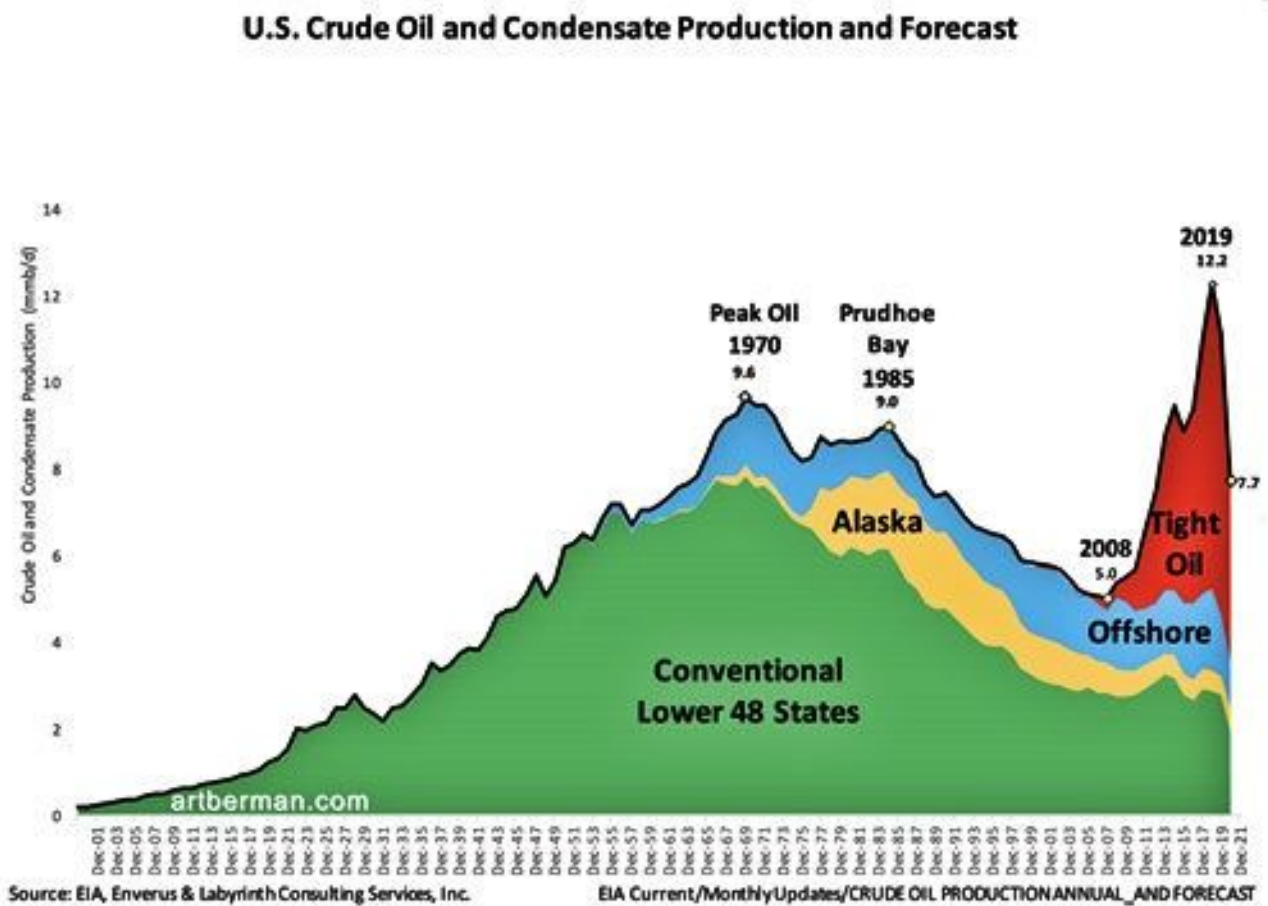
* * *

FIGURES

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

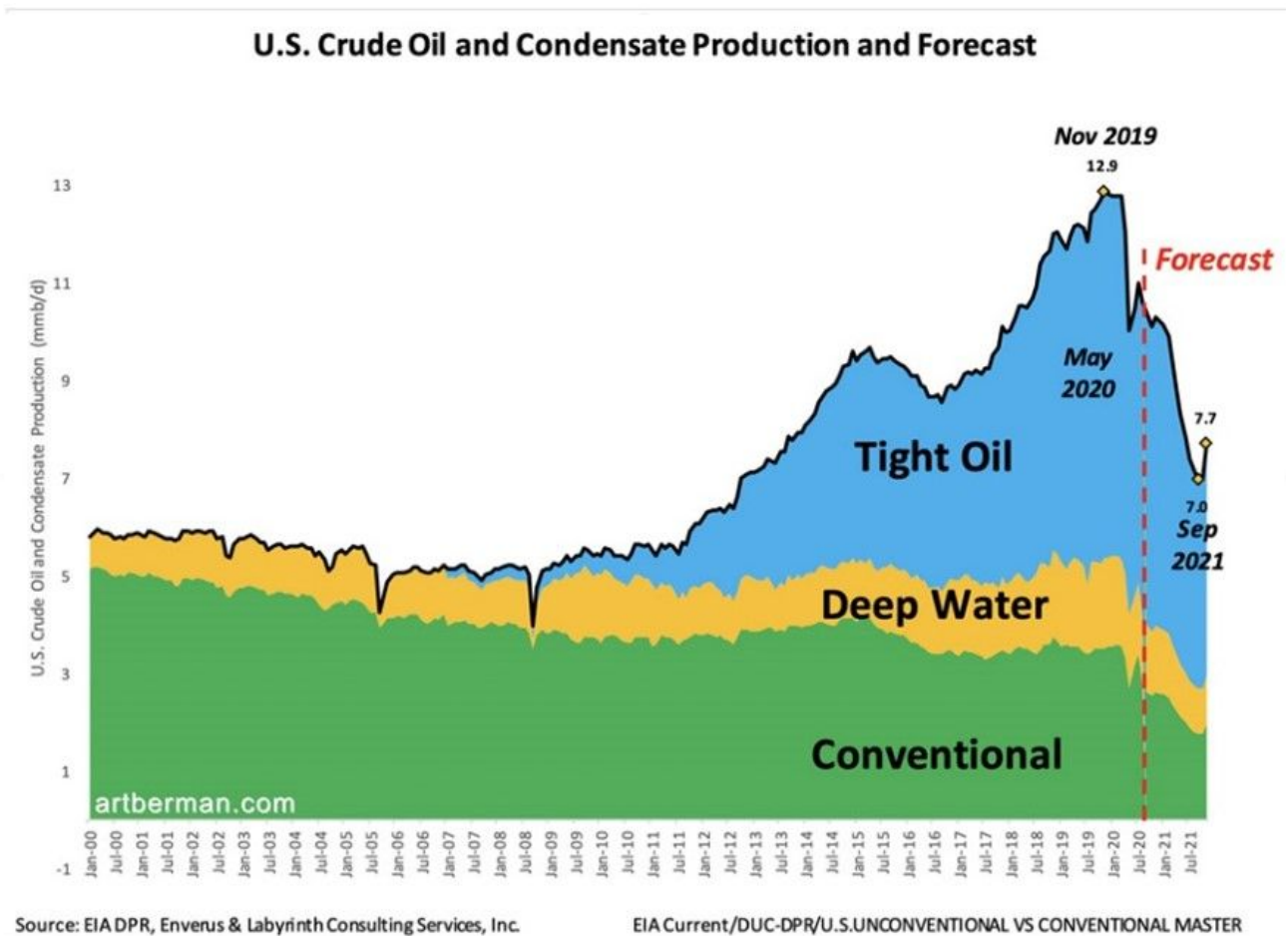
Figure 1 spans the 120 years from 1901 through 2021, and **Figure 2** spans two decades from January 2001 through July 2021. Both show that absent the exploitation of “tight oil” (largely sourced from fracked shale formations), U.S. oil production would have been in steady decline since 1970. The ramp 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.



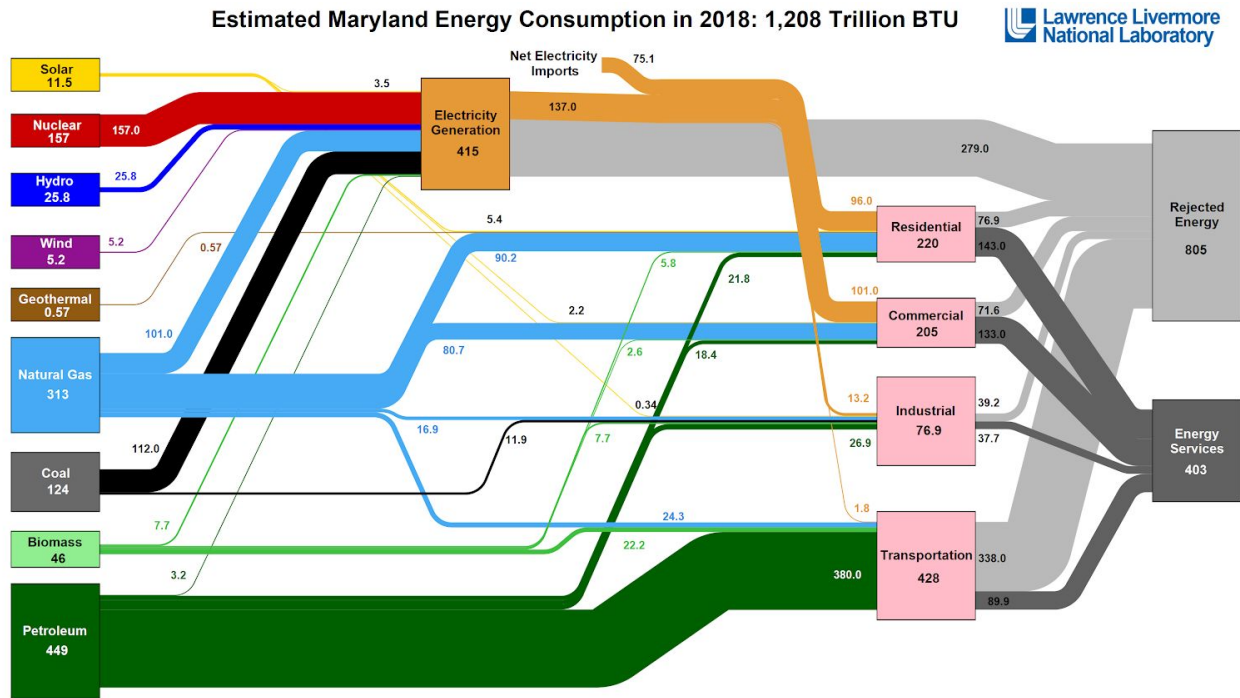
Source: <https://www.energyandourfuture.org/2020/11/02/no-matter-who-wins/>

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

Figure 3. Estimated Maryland Energy Consumption in 2018

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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>

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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

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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

Unwinding the Human Predicament. Stanford Knowledge Integration Laboratory.
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

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

[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](#)

[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

[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.

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: [Maria Carmona](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050
Date: Thursday, December 10, 2020 11:34:22 PM

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

To the Montgomery Planning Board:

My name is Maria Carmona and I am a 30-year resident of Montgomery Country, a 27-year resident of Silver Spring, and a 20-year resident of Woodside Park.

I support the principles of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan for many reasons. Among the most important is its commitment to creating more affordable housing in close proximity to public transportation and complete communities. I recognize and support that this would help to redress decades of inequity in planning for Montgomery County as well as decades of disregard for the critical importance of planning for an environmentally-friendly future.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 presents a bold vision for the future that I believe *can* be inclusive for everyone.

Thank you,
Maria Carmona
9210 Midwood Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-633-5000

From: [Abel Olivo](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Comments on Thrive 2050
Date: Friday, December 11, 2020 12:24:13 AM

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

Dear Montgomery County Planning Board,

Defensores works to connect Latinos and Spanish-speakers with the watershed through increased knowledge, shared experiences, and opportunities to grow in leadership to develop a network of Latin@s in the green spaces to bring added perspective to existing programs and policies, to help create new engagement opportunities, and to be stewards of our natural world for the benefit of healthier mind, body, and soul. While our work area is the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, we are very active in Montgomery County engaging youth, church groups, and participating in numerous events to engage the residents of Montgomery County. We have also a number of partners that we regularly work with to bring resources and fun activities to the county that include Latino Health Initiative, Maryland Multicultural Youth Center, CHEER, Audubon Naturalist Society, and Montgomery Parks. We surely will echo some of previously received sentiments voiced by our partners. However, we want to emphasize the importance of equitable access to green spaces throughout the county, especially the Latino communities with limited means. That means thinking about policies that are inclusive of larger familiar units and extended families living together, traveling together, and enjoying our public spaces together. That also means more green spaces, not less. We know there is a strong connection to healthy environments and our own personal health, both physical and mental and therefore, it is vitally important to maintain and improve upon what already exists.

Defensores supports:

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

decision, especially of those individuals who have been historically underrepresented in land use and planning decision-making process.

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

Defensores recommends the following:

- **Net Zero forest loss:** Trees provide countless ecological services such as flood prevention, carbon sequestration, air and water purification, and reduction of urban heat island effects. None of these services could ever be replaced by built infrastructure. Despite the well-established benefits of trees and an existing Forest Conservation Law, Montgomery County continues to lose trees and forest cover. Between 2008 and 2016, development in the County cleared 1,383 acres of forests – the 5th highest amount of forest cleared among all counties in Maryland. Updating the Forest Conservation Law, and setting a policy goal in the General Plan to do so, such that the county adopts a net zero forest loss would be an important step towards protecting our natural resources as key climate mitigation prevention measures. Such a step would also follow other counties around the state, such as Howard, Anne Arundel, and Frederick, the latter one passed Maryland’s strongest local “no net loss of forest” law this summer.

- **Net zero buildings:** The plan does an excellent job emphasizing the need to plan for people and not for cars, but lacks strong policy recommendations for buildings, which are the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the county. It is therefore essential that the plan be able to have a stronger building greenhouse gas reduction policy in place to create sustainable, energy efficient buildings that reduce GHG while harmonizing between wildlife, waterways, and people. One approach is to set a policy goal in the General Plan to adopt the 2018 IgCC green construction code.

- **Stronger climate change policies:** We strongly recommend closer agency cross-collaboration and merged policy goals between the new General Plan and Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). The General Plan should contain a clear and strong set of climate policies and actions that are consistent with CARP and will truly help the county meet its climate change goals of reducing our GHG emissions to 80% by 2027 and becoming carbon neutral by 2035.5 The General Plan should also provide guidance on where local renewable energy generation projects should be sited within the county, whether solar, wind, geothermal, or other such projects. These projects should first be sited on already-developed land, rooftops, brownfields, and county properties, prior to moving into undeveloped spaces such as the Agricultural Reserve.

- **Metrics and Implementation:** We recommend that the plan incorporates clear and more specific metric requirements to ensure that the policies and actions stated in the plan are enforced.

In general, a priority planning element for Defensores centers around access to green space with an increased percentage of overall green space being made available within a three-quarters of a mile of all residents. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our priorities for consideration.

Sincerely,

Abel Olivo

Executive Director

Defensores de la Cuenca

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From: [Bill Gibson](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Opposing Thrive Montgomery Master Plan
Date: Friday, December 11, 2020 12:29:57 AM
Attachments: [Opposed to Thrive Montgomery Master Plan.doc](#)

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

Please see the attached PDF letter which contains general and personal concerns about the new Master Plan.

Thank you,
Bill Gibson

Chair Casey Anderson
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedy 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.

As you can see the above is a form letter which expresses a lot of people's general views, I would like to add my own personal thoughts..

The things outlined in the Master Plan 2050 may be some people's vision of a Utopia, but it is certainly not everyone's . I personally would not live in such a confining environment. Urbanism is not at all appealing to someone such as myself. I need space for things such as a garden and a green house, and workshop for my hobbies, and garage space for my collector Automobiles and Motorcycles. My girlfriend and several other of my friends need acreage to graze their horses. The money that we spend keeps the local Southern States Store and the many Hardware Stores and the Landscaping Services and various other supply type stores in Montgomery County in business. Our preservation of R-2 Residential and Agricultural zoned land ensures that there are trees and grasses which help the environment, and provide natural areas for the rain water to soak into the earth, preserving the aquifer, and slowing the run off of water so that it doesn't erode or contaminate the stream beds, which in turn affect the Rocky Gorge Reservoir, and the Paint Branch Watershed.

This plan is veiled as using less automobiles, as if that will offset the environmental impact. That is a ridiculous claim. The manufactured materials and the covering of the land with buildings which will not only create reflected heat by collecting and holding heat from the sun, (try walking on pavement in the summer, barefooted) but the buildings will be using more electricity and generating heat, whether it be from the heating systems in the winter or from the energy used by the air conditioning systems in the summer.. Just look at any daily weather report and you will see that Downtown DC. or downtown Silver Spring is generally 6 to 10 degrees warmer than the suburbs. You
Signed: William Gibson

From: [Diane Cameron](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Margaret Schoap](#); [Caroline Taylor](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Tom Hucker](#); [Nancy Navarro](#); [councilmember.riemer](#); [Sidney Katz](#); [Craig Rice](#); [Andrew Friedson](#); [Gabe Albornoz](#); [Evan Glass](#); [Ward, Tiffany](#); [Wellington, Meredith](#); [Iseli, Claire](#); [MenareFoundation@aol.com](#); [Pamela Lindstrom](#); [Ginny Barnes](#); [Abel Olivo](#); [Defensores de la Cuenca](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [Jane Lyons](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Eliza Cava](#); [Denisse Guitarra](#); [jeffrey.weisner@gmail.com](#); [Rick Sullivan](#); [Walter Weiss](#); [mtidwell@chesapeakeclimate.org](#); [Philip Bogdonoff](#); [David Blockstein](#); [Susanne Lee](#); [Susanne Lowen](#); [Susan Eisendrath](#); [Libertelli, Joe](#); [Joseph Heather Bruskin](#); [Wurglitz, Al](#); [Anne James](#); [John Parrish](#); [rg steinman](#); [Sylvia Tognetti](#); [Shruti Bhatnagar](#); [Pablo Blank](#); [Scott Fosler](#); [Galen Tromble](#); [Alan Bowser](#); [Caren Madsen](#); [Lauren Greenberger](#); [Tina Slater](#); [Kit Gage](#); [Ken Bawer](#); [Deby Sarabia](#)
Subject: Re: Request adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in Thrive 2050 - now at this stage of Planning Board review & revision.
Date: Friday, December 11, 2020 8:59:28 AM
Attachments: [Letter to Chair Anderson 12-10-2020 requesting extension of Thrive deadlines to enable greater & more diverse public input.pdf](#)

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Dear Chair Anderson,

Re-sending our letter requesting adequate time and resources for robust public review and participation in Thrive 2050, with the inclusion of Conservation Montgomery as a co-signatory.

Thanks,

Diane Cameron, Director, TAME Coalition

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

On 12/10/2020 5:47 PM, Diane Cameron wrote:

Dear Chair Anderson,

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

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

In summary, we request that you provide adequate time and resources for further public review and participation in discussions, and further planning staff work, on the draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, for three reasons: (1) to provide

greater diversity and equity, and full participation by all affected communities, in the process for the General Plan Update; (2) the General Plan must contain comprehensive recommendations to address Climate Change that are consistent and in harmony with the CARP; and (3) the public must be able to review and provide comment on the revised draft plan for Thrive Montgomery 2050, before it's submitted to the Council.

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

Diane Cameron

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

--

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

tamecoalition@gmail.com
tamecoalition.org



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From: [Suzanne Ludlow](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Thrive Montgomery Comments
Date: Friday, December 11, 2020 5:10:21 PM
Attachments: [2900_001.pdf](#)

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

Attached please find comments from the City of Takoma Park.

Best,

Suzanne Ludlow

--

Suzanne Ludlow, AICP CPM
City Manager
City of Takoma Park
7500 Maple Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
SuzanneL@takomaparkmd.gov
Phone: 301-891-7229
Fax: 301-270-8794
(she/her/hers)

City of Takoma Park, Maryland

Office of the City Manager

Tel: (301) 891-7230

Fax: (301) 270-8794

email: SuzanneL@takomaparkmd.gov



7500 Maple Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
www.takomaparkmd.gov

Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

December 10, 2020

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

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

On behalf of the City of Takoma Park, I write to support the proposed Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. Takoma Park shares the goals and vision of Thrive Montgomery 2050, which shifts away from "car-oriented greenfield development to transit-oriented infill development and redevelopment that is compact, mixed use and walkable." Thrive Montgomery aligns with the City's priorities, particularly regarding climate and racial equity initiatives.

In Resolution 2019-15, Declaring a Climate Change Emergency, the City of Takoma Park calls on the county, state and federal governments "to take more aggressive action on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resiliency to move rapidly toward net zero GHG emissions, and the City will continue to advocate at all levels of government for adoption of policies to achieve these goals."

Takoma Park provides a disproportionate share of the County's affordable housing. The City wants to ensure that all aspects of the plan are implemented equitably throughout the County as this will lead all municipalities to success. The City recognizes the importance of creating more affordable and 'missing middle' housing as an important and necessary step to achieve housing goals and Complete Communities with greater density near transit. We know that zoning and other regulatory changes will be needed to accomplish this. The County's Growth and Infrastructure Policy must be shaped to support and further the goals of Thrive Montgomery. We support the development of metrics to measure housing growth and equity.

The City appreciates the emphasis on transit and transportation alternatives, including bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and the transformation of major roadways into safe and attractive multi-modal boulevards, a goal the City identified in the Corridor Concept Plan for New Hampshire Avenue in 2008. We continue to advocate for Bus Rapid Transit on New Hampshire Avenue as an essential element of that transformation, as well as additional investment in all transit. We want to move away from continuing to plan for and fund more auto-oriented efforts. We also appreciate the incorporation of the goals of Vision Zero in the Plan. The Plan will benefit from more details and strategies regarding the way that transportation projects will be funded.

The Plan highlights the need to coordinate with the State Highway Administration to achieve the shift from car-centric development patterns to improved multi-modal and transit options, and will benefit from the addition of more specific strategies to achieve this objective. The Plan also highlights the importance of coordination with surrounding jurisdictions to ensure project continuity, essential for municipalities like Takoma Park, which borders several jurisdictions. The success of the Plan will depend on reaching beyond the County boundaries.

In such an ambitious vision, we recognize the need for additional study and the development of metrics for many aspects of the plan, including the issues of park quality along with those for proximity, distance, and race equity. We encourage the County to commit to regular, perhaps annual, evaluations of progress.

The Thrive Montgomery Plan is compatible with the work of the City of Takoma Park. We add our voices to support for the Plan and the commitment to create the future we need.

Sincerely,



Suzanne R. Ludlow
City Manager

cc: Takoma Park City Council

From: [Afzal, Khalid](#)
To: [Jeanne Braha](#); [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#); [Stern, Tanya](#); [McCarthy, Caroline](#)
Subject: RE: Rock Creek Conservancy comments on Thrive 2050
Date: Friday, December 11, 2020 8:16:53 PM
Attachments: [image015.png](#)
[2020 RCC Thrive 2050 comments.pdf](#)
[image016.png](#)
[image017.png](#)
[image018.png](#)
[image019.png](#)
[image020.png](#)
[image021.png](#)

Hi Jeanne,
Confirming receipt of the comments and forwarding them to the Chair's office for distribution to the Planning Board.

Thanks for your interest and participation in Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Regards,
Khalid



Khalid Afzal

Special Projects Manager-General Plan Update
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reddie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902
khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org
301-495-4650



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



WE'VE MOVED!

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

From: Jeanne Braha <jbaha@rockcreekconservancy.org>
Sent: Friday, December 11, 2020 6:42 PM
To: Afzal, Khalid <khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org>
Subject: Rock Creek Conservancy comments on Thrive 2050

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

Khalid,

Thanks for your significant work shepherding the Thrive 2050 plan to this point. I attach here

comments on the plan on behalf of Rock Creek Conservancy. Could you please confirm receipt?

Have a wonderful weekend and end of year.

Best,
Jeanne

--

Jeanne Braha

Executive Director

Rock Creek Conservancy

7200 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 500, Bethesda, MD 20814

jbraha@rockcreekconservancy.org

301-579-3105



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Casey Anderson
Chair, Planning Board
Members of the Planning Board

8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Anderson and Members of the Planning Board,

On behalf of Rock Creek Conservancy, I submit these comments on the County's General Plan, Thrive2050, which is currently under development. Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2005 to protect and restore Rock Creek and its waterways, parks, and lands. Rock Creek is the second largest watershed in Montgomery County, spanning over 168 miles of waterways from its northernmost tributaries near Laytonsville to its outlet into the Potomac River across from Roosevelt Island in the District of Columbia. The watershed includes Matthew Henson State Park, Rock Creek Regional Park, Rock Creek Stream Valley Parks, Rockville's Civic Center Park, and over 40 local parks. Rock Creek runs through some of the most densely commercial areas in Montgomery County. The Conservancy has mobilized thousands of volunteers to protect Rock Creek's watershed and its 20 major tributaries. Our projects have included tree planting, storm drain marking, invasive plant removal, rain garden installations, and trash cleanups. We regularly advocate for environmentally sound laws, regulations, policies, and programs with elected and appointed County officials. And we work to support inclusion and environmental stewardship in diverse communities.

Our comments are based on reviewing the Planning staff's issues paper; the strategic framework, which has three identified outcomes; the plan's vision and goals (contained in the Plan's attachment 1); the executive summary and discussion of eight major issues (contained in the Plan's attachment 2) and the Department's Implementation Plan. We have also participated in several of the Planning Department's outreach meetings.

Overall, Thrive 2050 appropriately includes a significant focus on the environment—in the strategic framework, in the goals and vision, and as one of eight major issues. Recognition of environmental importance is also contained throughout many of the other major issues and sub-issues. We commend planners for this focus as it recognizes that the economic and personal health and well-being of County residents is closely tied to the natural environment. For the past several months, we've seen a resurgence of interest in shared outdoor public areas and green spaces. But it has also highlighted that not all communities have equal opportunities for access.

We recognize that Thrive 2050 is meant to be a high-level and broad guiding document. But we have one significant overriding concern. Although Montgomery County has long been a leader in adopting laws, policies, and regulations that support a healthy environment, too often these are observed in the breach. Competing pressures and a short term focus that is often at odds with longer term objectives enter into decisions made subsequent to long range plans that result in outcomes different than planners intended. We believe a strategic planning process that looks far into the future must recognize and take account of these facts. Without some mechanism for transparency and accountability for county officials as individual master plans are developed, individual zoning

decisions are

made, and resources are allocated, the plan's impact is minimal. Therefore, we strongly encourage a mechanism be created to identify when subsequent plans and other land use decisions deviate from the vision, goals, and objectives articulated in Thrive 2050. Such a mechanism can be part of implementation plans but cannot be limited to actions of the Planning Department. Achieving Thrive 2050 goals is a shared responsibility. At the very least, better transparency of the exemptions and exceptions will hold elected and appointed officials and other decision makers accountable. We recognize that some of the actions highlighted in the plan are already taking place. In several of these areas, however, ultimate standards have not been set although they could be. For example, tree planting efforts are underway yet the standard of no net loss of forests is not established in the plan. And, although efforts are being made on impervious surface reductions under the County's stormwater management permit, the plan does not establish a 10 percent goal of untreated impervious surface throughout the County. Ten percent is the amount beyond which it has been demonstrated that water quality suffers. As the Planning Department continues to develop more specific recommendations, we encourage them to establish quantitative standards. We do applaud the recognition of climate as a forcing factor on many of the issues noted above and challenge Montgomery County to continue to find ways to protect its climate resilience and prepare all residents to adapt.

As part of the planning and plan approval process, we would also encourage the Planning Department to develop a detailed roadmap for operationalizing its vision and goals as land use decisions are made and conservation and restoration programs are proposed and considered. The plan should be presented and approved by the Council and made part of all relevant County agency operations. We appreciate that the Planning Department has created an implementation plan but it lacks the necessary connections between goals and achieving objectives by the County as a whole.

Finally, we note and commend for your consideration a recent analysis conducted by the Department of Environmental Protection to evaluate programs for environmental justice considerations. In it, they overlay the Department's programs for stream restoration and for stormwater management with a demographic index. Such an assessment can ensure that all geographic areas in the county receive the support needed for environmental sustainability. Such an assessment would be appropriate for major issues in Thrive 2050.

Our detailed comments follow.

Impervious Surface:

From Vision and Goals (Appendix 2)

Resilient. Montgomery County models resilience in its environmental, infrastructure, economic and social systems. We lead the national fight against climate change through the expansion of our natural areas, parks and transit services and investment in green policies and technologies. Our actions and efficient use of land reduce greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and water pollution. Our parks provide and enable essential environmental benefits including tree canopy and shade and further contribute to reducing carbon dioxide and other pollution in our water, air and wildlife habitats.

From the Implementation Plan

Action 6.5.1.a: Research and create guidance for innovative development, retrofit and construction designs, and techniques that minimize imperviousness.

Accepted research has shown that water quality is adversely affected when untreated impervious surfaces represent 10 percent or more of a land area. And Montgomery County is required to manage stormwater runoff by reducing its impervious surface. Neither Thrive2050 nor the implementation plan set a standard for a maximum amount of impervious surfaces in the County.

Forest Canopy

From the Implementation Plan

Action 6.5.2 concerning studying forest canopy does not set a goal of no net loss of tree canopy for the short term. Although the term shows up in medium term implementation plans, setting the goal now should precede studies and goal setting planned for the short term

We understand that the “reforest Montgomery” initiative is already underway. However, neither the baseline nor the initiative establishes a no net loss goal for the County. No net loss of tree canopy has already been adopted by several Maryland counties. Including the measure as the Plan is adopted will send clear guidance to officials and developers as subsequent land use decisions are made and programs are funded.

Agricultural Reserve

From Vision and Goals (Appendix 2)

Residents have access to healthy local food provided through agriculture integrated into urban and suburban neighborhoods and increased local food production in the Agricultural Reserve

Without specific recommendations in the Implementation Plan that protect the agricultural reserve, development and other pressures will put the area at risk despite Thrive2050 goals of protection.

Stream Restoration

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

Stream restoration is a key part of stormwater management and an important tool for the County in meeting its mandated stormwater requirements. However, without appropriate attention also paid to the upstream conditions by which runoff is generated, restoration in and of itself will not be effective. The Department of Environmental Protection has developed suitability maps that make this connection; memorializing this commitment in the Implementation Plan would provide a continuous commitment to this approach, which also protects County investments.

We commend the County for developing an innovative and ambitious vision for the future of Montgomery County. Establishing metrics and milestones by which the Plan’s success will be measured and assigning shared

responsibility for doing so will increase the chances that success will be achieved. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My staff and I will be happy to work with you as the Plan moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeanne Braha". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeanne" and last name "Braha" clearly distinguishable.

Jeanne Braha
Executive Director
Rock Creek Conservancy

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](#)

[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

M: 301.922.6710
ecomorris86@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/ecomorris86

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