

Item 8 - Correspondence

From: [Scott Plumer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Sharma, Atul](#)
Subject: A few quick pick ups and thoughts on theme four
Date: Sunday, January 3, 2021 10:52:38 PM
Attachments: [ATTACHMENT-2-Outline-of-thrive-housing-chapter-12-29-20-REV-from-Atul sp.pdf](#)

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

Happy New Year. I hope you had a wonderful holiday season.

I am putting some text together on the 12/17/20 work session and the material for 1/7/21. It is going to be difficult to keep pace over the coming weeks. As you know, my focus is on the Heirloom area and putting staunch protections in place. Yet I can't shake the sense of responsibility to chip in more broadly where I think I can do so efficiently and effectively.

I ran through the housing chapter and made some notes as attached for your consideration. Hopefully they are useful.

Respectfully,

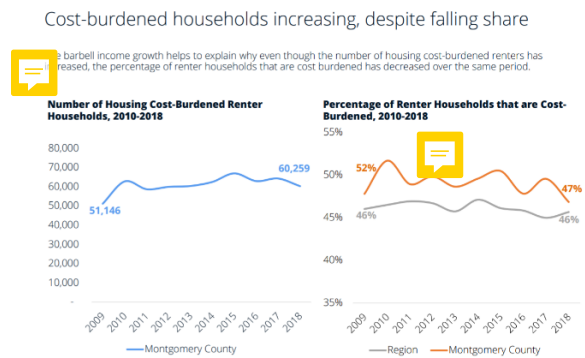
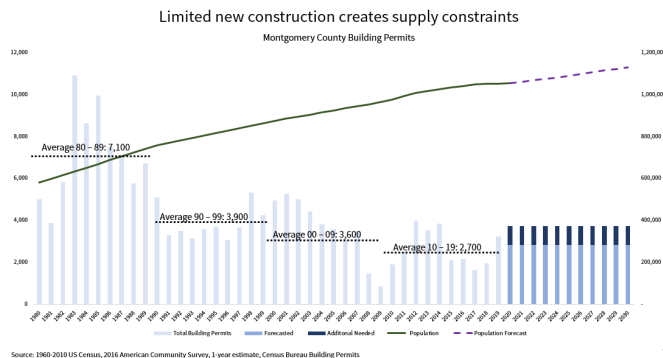
- Scott Plumer
301-367-6632

OUTLINE

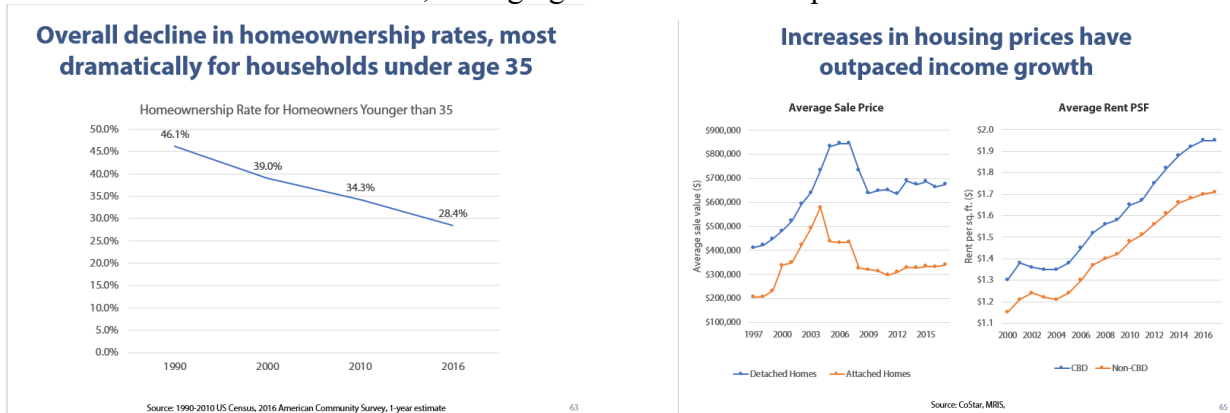
Affordable and attainable housing: more of everything

PART 1: What is the problem / existing conditions that fall short?

- The Washington region, including Montgomery County has experienced slow but steady growth in recent decades, but has not generated enough new housing to meet demand.
 - Our housing does not match the incomes and needs of the workforce.
 - From 1990 to 2018, the average number of dwellings built each year declined.
 - Building permits have lagged well behind necessary levels to maintain supply.



- Anemic supply is driving the price of housing up for both renters and home buyers.
 - Increasing percentage of households spending at least 30% of income on rent.
 - Housing price increases have outpaced growth in incomes.
 - Homeownership rates are declining, especially for adults under 35.
 - High housing costs make it harder for employers to attract and retain a broadly skilled workforce, damaging our economic competitiveness.



- Social and economic changes have opened a growing gap between 21st century living patterns and the housing stock of earlier generations.
 - The stereotypical family household is steadily declining in numbers.
 - Single person households living alone increased from 7% in 1960 to 25% in 2018.

The percentage of householders living alone have increased from 7% in 1960 to 25% in 2018.

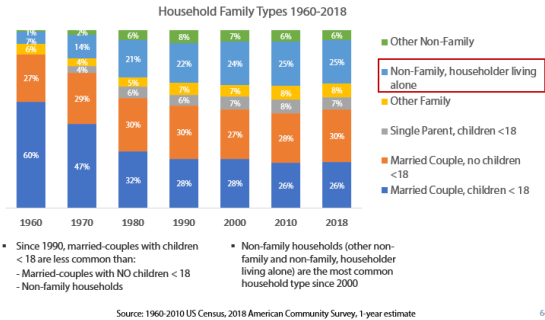
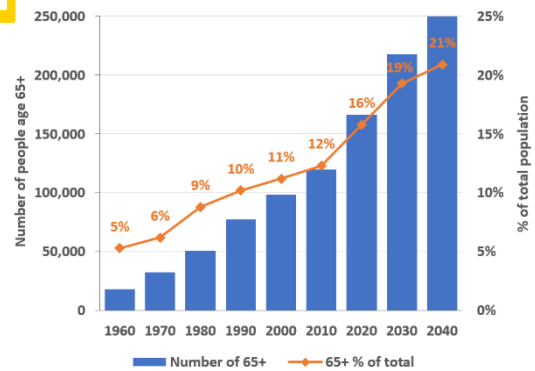
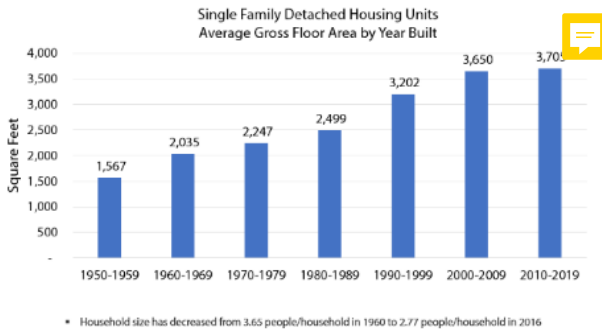


Figure 10. Age 65+ Population, 1960-2040

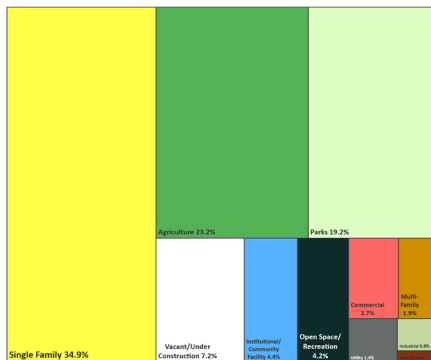
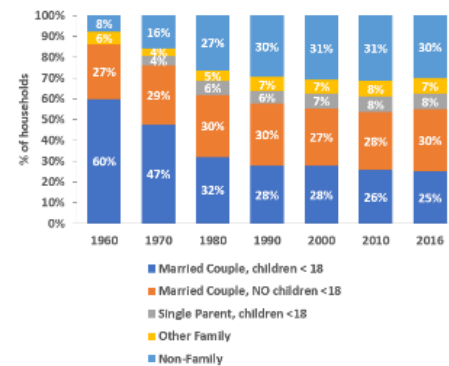


- Options to buy a starter home or downsize are limited.
- Despite shrinking household size, new single-family homes getting larger.
- Partially due to 1/3rd of the county's land area being zoned for single family housing.

New single-family homes are getting larger



Current share of married couples with children under 18 decreased to less than half of the 1960 levels
Figure 15. Household Types



1 in 3 owner households are over-housed

80,000 owner households, or 32 percent of owner households, are over-housed (as defined by the housing situations outlined in red, where there are at least 2 more bedrooms than there are people), compared to only 3 percent of renter households by the same measure.

Number of Owner Households by Housing Unit Size and Household Size

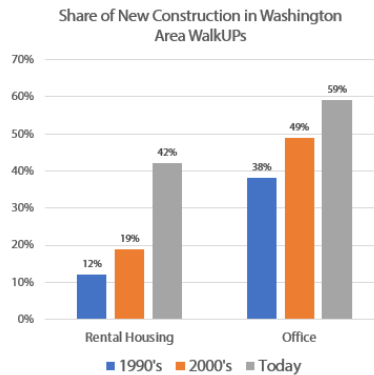
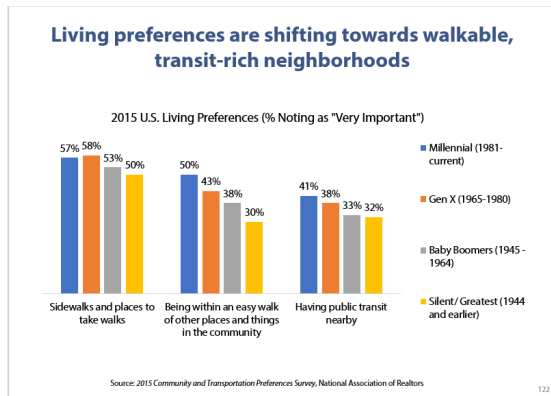
	Number of People in Household				
	1	2	3	4	5+
0-1	5,800	800	400	100	200
2	11,300	9,800	3,000	1,000	1,700
3	16,500	28,000	16,400	12,200	10,100
4	9,200	31,000	17,400	16,900	11,700
5+	3,400	12,800	7,100	11,400	9,900

- The high cost and limited variety of available housing exacerbate inequality.
 - Home prices vary widely in different parts of the county, closely tracking the racial and economic characteristics of neighborhoods.
 - These inequities reinforce the legacy of racism and segregation and continue to influence the geographic distribution of opportunities and resources.

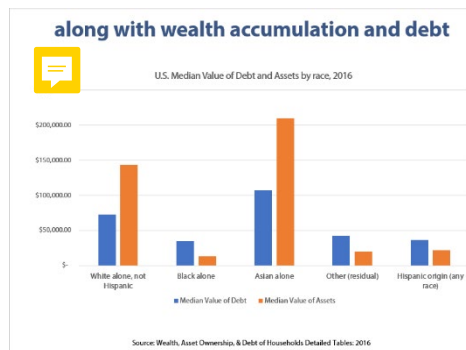
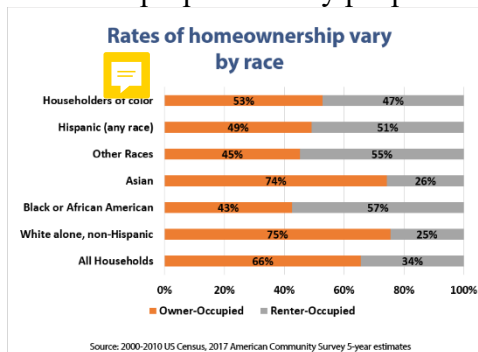
- Plan for a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet diverse needs
 - Facilitate the development of a variety of housing types in every part of the county but especially in areas near transit, employment and educational opportunities.
 - Support creative housing options including single-room occupancy units (SROs); “missing middle” housing types such as tiny houses, cottages, duplexes, multiplexes, and small apartment buildings; shared housing, co-housing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), social housing and cooperative housing to help meet housing needs and diversify housing options.
 - Encourage provision of multi-bedroom units suitable for households with children in multifamily housing.
 - Integrate people with disabilities, people transitioning from homelessness, and older adults into attainable housing with appropriate amenities and services.
- Promote racial and economic diversity and equity in housing in every neighborhood
 - Develop targeted strategies to minimize gentrification and displacement while promoting integration and avoiding the concentration of poverty.
 - Refine regulatory tools and financial incentives with the goal of avoiding a net loss of market-rate and income-restricted affordable housing stock without erecting disincentives to construction of additional units.
 - Calibrate the applicability of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program and other affordable housing programs to provide price-regulated units appropriate for income levels ranging from deeply affordable to workforce.
 - Identify and allocate additional revenue for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) to meet the needs of low-income households.
 - Expand existing programs designed to increase access to homeownership, especially among low-income residents, people of color, and young adults; create new programs and entities such as community land trusts to maintain long term affordable home ownership opportunities.
 - Improve collection of data on neighborhood change to monitor and address involuntary displacement, disinvestment, and related phenomena.

PART 3: The rationale for how these policies and actions will further the key objectives of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

- First, increasing the supply of new housing near transit, jobs and amenities will improve the quality of life for everyone, while helping to attract and retain a broadly skilled workforce that employers need, making the county more economically competitive.
 - Concentrating more housing of different sizes and types near high-quality transit corridors will curb escalating prices and improve access to jobs and services.
 - There is increased demand and limited supply for walkable neighborhoods in the county and the region, even in non-transit serviced locations.

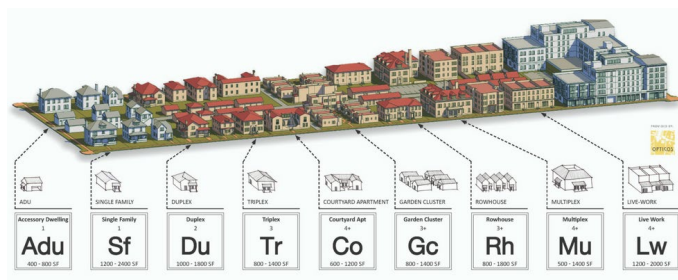
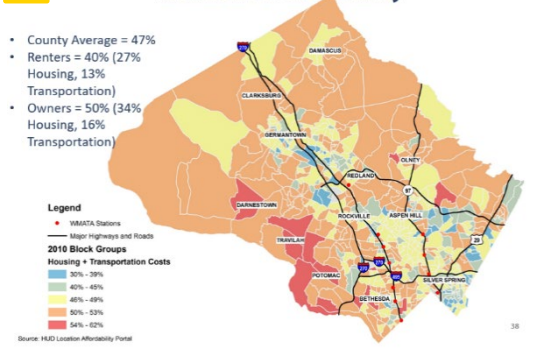


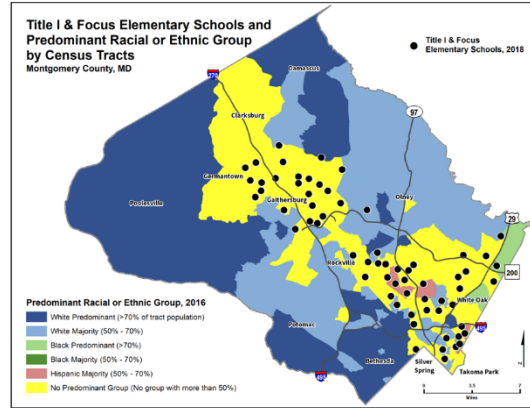
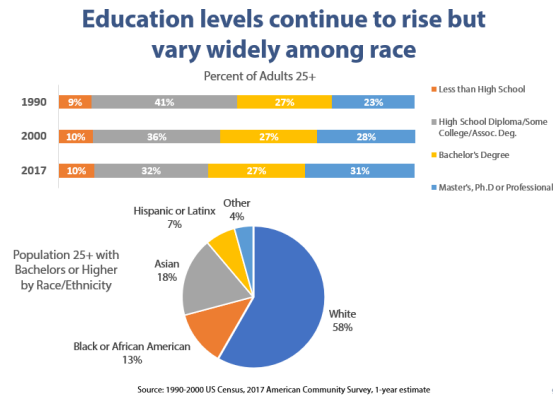
- Second, a wider variety of housing and a focus on affordability and attainability will diversify the mix of incomes in neighborhoods across the county and improve access to services, amenities and infrastructure for low- and moderate-income residents, who are disproportionately people of color.



- Adding more "Missing Middle" housing types will provide more choice, enhance intergenerational interaction, promote aging in place and build social capital.
- Preservation of natural-occurring and regulated existing affordable units will minimize gentrification and displacement.
- Building new affordable housing in existing amenity rich neighborhoods will expand access to quality education and create more integrated schools.
- Mixed income housing in communities lagging investments will help mitigate the concentration of poverty and enhance access to amenities and recreational opportunities for current residents.


Combined H+T costs exceed 45% of income in much of the County





- Third, a broader range of housing types – particularly the inclusion of multifamily buildings – will reinforce the benefits of Complete Communities
 - Flexible residential zoning will allow more people to live closer to work, increase walkability, and limit the development footprint on the environment.
 - Smaller residences, more infill and repurposing, and adding housing near transit and jobs will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental health.

PART 4: How will we know we are making progress?

In assessing proposals related to the supply of housing and  measuring the success or failure of the approaches recommended in this plan, relevant measures may include:

- Number of residential units issued building permits, overall and by area of county
- Number of affordable units by type, overall and by area of county
- Rates of home ownership by race, income and area
- Number and Proportion of cost-burdened households
- Number of homeless residents
- Rent and mortgage payments as a fraction of the cost of living
- Combined housing and transportation costs
- Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing preserved, overall and by area of county
- Number of low-income households lots in a census tract over a period of time (displacement)
- Proportion of small homes and units in multifamily buildings
- Greenhouse gas emissions from residential buildings and transportation per capita
- Proportion of housing units proximate to transit routes and job centers
- Range of home prices
- Racial and income diversity within neighborhoods

From: [Pamela Lindstrom](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Natali Fani-Gonzalez](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Riemer, Hans](#)
Subject: comments on the General Plan Outline
Date: Monday, January 4, 2021 11:46:03 AM
Attachments: [Organization and Layout of the PB "Draft Plan.docx](#)

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

My chief comment is that the General Plan is in dire need of a Vision. This makes the case for a Vision. I will send particular moments on the Themes directly.

Thanks for all the hard work
Pamela Lindstrom
Gaithersburg

**Comments on the staff response to the PB discussion of
the Planning Board Draft General Plan.**

This is analysis of the staff's October effort, but it is also a plea for a Vision and that it be a positive, inspiring Vision!

The Planning Board, especially Casey asked for a compelling Vision as the introduction to the new General Plan, something that would make it exemplary both for future MC officials and for other jurisdictions. Not a catalog of problems for the future planners to solve, but *arguments* that inspire them to solve the problems. Natali asked for a positive vision, not a catalog of problems as the staff's draft was.

It's hard to call this outline visionary or compelling or positive. It went from excessive partial Vision statements, to no Vision at all. The first section, "Why we need a new comprehensive plan", no one would call visionary or compelling or positive. It is indeed just a catalog of problems. It is useful as an exercise of putting all the area master plans together and assessing what they add up to; how they address current problems. The outline is more useful for guiding current planners than for inspiring future planners and others to carry it out. It's certainly not exemplary, inspiring future government officials, business people and the populace to do the hard work of carrying it out. Nor is it a model for other jurisdictions' plans.

Section 1: "WHY the new GP is needed". It catalogs problems and needs including running out of available land, competition from others for economic development, technology changes, demographic changes, etc. All true but *nothing positive or visionary*.

This section begins the GP's still disjointed discussion of global climate policy. But why does the climate strategy need flexibility and lack of clear regulations? I would think the opposite; it needs to be part of a clear Vision, with specifics including both the land use aspects of climate protection and the transport and clean energy strategies in the Climate Policy Plan??.

Casey has said repeatedly he believes that the General Plan can portray a confident Vision without worrying about flexibility, need to worry about changing tastes, or the effects of unpredicted events like the COVID pandemic. The Vision, furthermore, is an urban Vision, the trend back to suburbia is temporary. As is well stated in an article in Bethesda Beat magazine, about the Lakeforest Mall property but applicable generally "In fact, the city has a once-in-a-lifetime chance to reshape Lakeforest in accordance with its overall vision through the formation of a new innovation district that connects the city's leading anchor firms and institutions with supporting and spin-off companies, business incubators, mixed-use housing, office, and retail, and high-quality amenities and transport. Although COVID-19 might have slowed these trends

temporarily, profound economic, demographic and cultural shifts in recent years have fundamentally altered the place preferences of the residents and businesses within our region.”

The “Three Overarching Objectives” section is likewise mostly a catalog of problems, some overlapping the WHY... discussion, some different. This is useful but still negative and not compelling or visionary. The Themes, goals, policies etc. are supposed to carry out the Overarching Objectives, but the discussion in the Outline does not do this consistently. For instance, under Economic Competitiveness the items of potential good news about the County’s assets, are not followed up in the Themes.

I don’t understand why the County’s General Plan should be so weak and tentative and leave it to others to set out the County’s assets and what are clearly ways to build on them in the Vision.

Section 2. “The 2050 Themes”. Instead of launching into separate discussions of each of six themes, the GP should set out a Vision, one that sums up the aspirations, achieves the Three Overarching Objectives, etc. The Vision should be based on aspirations and actions that are within the County’s power to achieve. It should envision all the Vision’s components equally – correcting the current imbalance – the outline addresses housing much more than businesses and jobs. That being said, I still propose the Vision based on affordable housing. Subsidizing and promoting housing is within the planners’ and County’s power to promote, and social housing connects via positive feedback loops to economic and job growth.

A Vision for Wedges and Corridors that Guides Montgomery County Toward an Equitable and Sustainable Future

The Themes (formerly Elements) and the Three Overarching Objectives must be combined to add up to a complete and balanced Vision.

Much of the General Plan Vision can be addressed in *Complete Communities* properly defined. They become a Vision that will inspire County officials and the populace to implement it. It is a Vision in which all share in the good quality of life now enjoyed by those with high income with good jobs in good neighborhoods. People residing and working and traveling and living in Complete Communities will naturally comply with many of the Elements and meet the Goals. Government actions and programs can strengthen the effect. In this Vision, private expenditures decline and public expenditures increase.

- *Complete Communities (CCs)*: The term should apply to urban mixed use communities:
 - of sufficient density and population to support at least local-serving retail businesses, some public facilities and services,
 - with the highest possible production of and amount of social housing affordable to people with income below the median,
 - on a transit corridor with a minimum level of service,
 - with good facilities for walking and cycling.

CCs should be the location of most growth. Social housing can make this happen. Social housing projects are not public housing but are mostly private enterprise with a boost from some public financing, or some occupancy guaranteed by public housing agencies. Our ambitious affordable housing providers will seize on the new and enlarged sources of funds for social housing.¹ The public cannot participate in all housing development but it can participate in more than it currently does. Thus the Vision is taking advantage of every opportunity and producing Complete Communities (CCs) with a maximum component of social housing. The majority of the new social housing still will be higher priced for higher income people; the social housing increases the market for living in and thus for developing the housing.

CCs include jobs. Retail and service jobs and building management jobs accrue automatically with the housing and residents. People holding these low paid jobs will be able to live in the social housing.

Primary employers from national companies to government agencies to small creative start-ups should find the CCs appealing places to locate. Their workforce will similarly range from rich business owners to clerks and cleaners. All will have the opportunity to live within the CC. They will shop in the local stores. They will ride the public transport. The result will be a larger demand for (and thus greater supply of) convenience retail and public transport. Employers will have a nearby workforce unstressed by long uncertain commutes. Even the low paid workers will suffer less financial stress from unaffordable housing. Such a Community should encourage *economic and residential development*.

Taxes can be imposed to finance the housing subsidies and infrastructure needed to make the CC functional and pleasant.

The residents of the CCs, the employees of jobs, the transit passengers, and the people on the streets will be *economically, racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse*. Rich to poor will encounter each other in the halls and common spaces of their residential and office buildings. Prosperous people will grow familiar with both the rich cultures and the problems of the poor. "Mainstream" White people will enjoy the more interesting cuisines of India and both Georgias. Mixed income social housing raises the quality of housing for the poor without any cost to those paying market prices.

Income is correlated with race. By mixing income levels social housing also mixes races. The mixed income social housing brings more residents with higher incomes to CCs in the East County. *Greater income diversity raises Equity and Connectedness*.

• *Health and education parameters* are also correlated with income, Both are better in the higher income West than in the East. Social housing introduces high income people to the East and low income people to the West. Just the change in land use improves education and health outcomes for Blacks and all low income racial and ethnic groups.

The great promise of social housing is that all across the County, the poor will become less poor.

¹ Document the new, enlarged and not fully used sources of social housing funds. Both public and private funds.

The people walking and cycling on the Complete Streets are also *improving their health* naturally, at no personal or societal cost. The health benefits are equitably spread among rich and poor, black, brown and white. Health benefits can be further spread by adding public health clinics to the CCs.

- Adopt an honor system for collecting transit fares, that views *safe and efficient public transport* as a social service like public housing and public safety. Keep the fares low and allow people to enter without barriers. This system has several benefits: entry is speeded up especially when combined with offering long term transit passes. The system is more convenient so ridership increases though total revenue may decline. Most people will pay anyway. Some especially poor people will ride without paying; this is considered a benefit: reliable travel to work, job interviews, etc. without driving. Car travel is reduced into CCs, therewith the need for road and parking capacity.

- CCs with their short distances and potential to increase travel by sustainable modes are our best strategy for *slowing global warming*. People living and working in urban transit served CCs naturally drive less; tactics to restrict driving and reduce parking capacity are justified as good alternatives are provided. Thus our Vision for CCs pictures slow complete streets lined with trees, shrubbery and flowers in season, benches and tables, wide sidewalks, colorful bike lanes and crosswalks, people of all ages and abilities sitting and walking and cycling. Traffic lights allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely and confidently. Street front businesses add customers; customers have more options for drinking, eating and socializing.

Residents in multilevel multifamily buildings naturally use less fuel than do those in larger single family houses. Fuel efficiency improvements are more cost effective to provide and increasing fuel efficiency standards more justified as the cost is spread further and cost for individuals is lower.

The second major component of the General Plan's Climate Protection Vision is *opportunities to generate green energy*. The approach for the Five Regions is described below.

- A Vision of Complete Communities extends to *better air and water quality*. We envision more compact urban development, and land use in which less land is rendered impervious; some pavement is actually broken up and covered once again with tree canopy and vegetation. Thus stormwater runoff is reduced naturally at low cost in the process of land development and street improvement. The effect can be magnified by government regulations and expenditures on small parks and plazas, landscaping, planting and care for trees, street furniture, and decorative pavement and bike lanes and crosswalks.

Government agencies can justify higher taxes and expenditures and stiffer regulations because more people and more diverse people benefit.

The Themes

Particular comments on the Themes will be sent separately. My overall impression is that they are phrased negatively, more a catalog of problems and shortcomings than goals and intentions

for the future. The Themes should be phrased positively, in terms that are concrete, not just “blatant assertions” but implementable. They should inspire future planners to carry them out in future master plans. They should convince not just planners but employers, the workforce, the populace, elected officials, advocates for assorted causes including builders and developers to work together to carry out the General Plan’s Vision.

From: [Pamela Lindstrom](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Anderson, Casey](#); [Natali Fani-Gonzalez](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Verma, Partap](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Afzal, Khalid](#); [Riemer, Hans](#)
Subject: Re: comments on the General Plan Outline
Date: Monday, January 4, 2021 4:57:01 PM
Attachments: [Transport investments in Arlington.docx](#)

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Attached is an article from the Washington Post that tells how Arlington's and Alexandria's investments in transit and other sustainable transport projects were "key drivers" in Amazon's decision to build in Arlington. Public and private sector parties are sharing the cost. These Projects will make National Harbor especially attractive to potential businesses, residents and developers, and are worth the price.

On Mon, Jan 4, 2021 at 11:45 AM Pamela Lindstrom <pamela.lindstrom@gmail.com> wrote:
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Thanks for all the hard work
Pamela Lindstrom
Gaithersburg

W. Post

1 Jan 2021

Coming in the next decade: National Landing adds buses, trains, sidewalks, streets

By

Patricia Sullivan

Jan. 1, 2021 at 5:19 p.m. EST

[Add to list](#)

National Landing, the renamed neighborhood of Crystal City-Pentagon City-Potomac Yards in Arlington and Alexandria, will become the country's most connected urban center sometime in the next decade, its business boosters say.

Eight major transportation projects are underway in the area, with the aim of turning what is often seen as a busy pass-through into a truly urban neighborhood where residents, office workers and visitors have easy access to local and regional amenities as well as long-distance travel.

The projects will expand heavy rail services such as Amtrak and the Virginia Railway Express; add four new miles of protected bike lanes; turn a busy elevated highway into an urban boulevard that emphasizes safety and walkability; add additional Metro entrances; extend dedicated bus lanes; widen sidewalks and create new trailheads; and construct a pedestrian bridge over the George Washington Memorial Parkway between Crystal City and Reagan National Airport. *(Note all are transit, cycle, etc.)*

"The collective impact of the projects are truly transformative," said Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, president and executive director of the National Landing Business Improvement District, which published a report touting \$4 billion in both public and private investments in National Landing. "This is a story of innovation, equity, sustainability and competitive advantage." *(See next page for who is paying for what. Businesses are paying for some.)*

The projects are in the planning, design or construction stages, even as the [coronavirus](#) pandemic continues to wreak havoc on travel patterns and the lives of restaurant, office and hospitality workers. They came together because of the arrival of Amazon's second headquarters in Arlington, which was announced two years ago. Many of the projects had been in the discussion or planning stages earlier than that, but the Amazon decision accelerated the plans. (Amazon founder and chief executive Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post.)

"Access to good-quality, multimodal transit options was one of the key drivers in Amazon's decision to locate in Arlington," Brian Huseman, the retail behemoth's vice president of public policy, said in a statement. "The additional investments in transportation infrastructure from the County and the Commonwealth will make this one of the most connected and innovative jurisdictions — benefitting the community at large."

JBG Smith, the developer of Amazon's building projects in the neighborhood and the majority property owner in Crystal City, announced last month that it has finished construction on a 14-story tower at 1770 Crystal Dr. that is leased to Amazon.

Amazon now leases more than 850,000 square feet of space in National Landing, the Arlington Economic Development agency said.

More than 26,000 people already live in the National Landing area, with more housing in the pipeline. Office space takes up 12 million square feet. There are more than 450 retail stores and restaurants and 5,500 hotel rooms. And it's likely to get even busier.

Amazon has [hired more than 1,000 employees](#) of the 25,000 it expects to eventually work at its new headquarters. Its [twin 22-story buildings](#), the first of two sites underway in Arlington, are rising from what used to be empty warehouses along South Eads Street. JBG Smith announced on Dec. 21 that it bought the former Americana Hotel directly across the street, which it plans to replace with a 500,000-square-foot multifamily development.

The county and neighboring Alexandria, [expecting significant economic benefits](#) from Amazon's arrival, have welcomed the company, even to the extent of [sharing what questions elected officials planned to ask](#) at public hearings.

Financing The transportation projects will be financed by \$270 million of state and federal money, as well as tax increment financing in which future local development will pay the costs for construction. In selling the Amazon project to the community, local governments have emphasized these long-term capital investments will benefit all users, not just Amazon and related businesses.

Labor organizations and groups that advocate for low-income workers have resisted Amazon's expansion in Arlington, protesting pay and working conditions in its warehouses elsewhere in the nation and [accusing Amazon](#) of tolerating labor abuses, which the company denies.

National Airport lies just one-third of a mile from Crystal Drive, the main retail street of Crystal City. Construction of a pedestrian bridge over the GW Parkway will make this urban neighborhood walkable to or from the airport, the only place in the United States where this is possible, Gabriel said. The airport is working on a \$1 billion project to modernize and improve access and connections.

The neighborhood is already well connected. It has three Metrorail stations, five Arlington Transit bus routes, nine WMATA bus routes, three commuter bus routes, two trailheads, a bus rapid-transit route that connects to Alexandria and spots of active sidewalks. Only one-third of National Landing residents drive alone to work, an Arlington County survey says, as compared with 76 percent of commuters nationally.

Still, streets in the area were often jammed for commuters before the pandemic reduced traffic volumes.

Redevelopment on this scale is a complex prospect, with agencies from the county to the Virginia Department of Transportation to the National Park Service having a say in how highways are reconfigured and whether a bridge should be built.

Business groups want a "through-running" commuter train system, where VRE riders from Spotsylvania can have a [one-seat trip through Maryland Area Regional Commuter Train Service and Amtrak](#) up and down the East Coast. The first step is the addition of a new Long Bridge over the Potomac to add rail lines, a project now in the design stage.

Gabriel said her BID's effort is to "excite" employers, government agencies and local residents about what's coming.

"We're already pushing against the grain by investing in transportation in a time of waning ridership," she said. "But transportation investments of this scale are what really builds resilience and economic recovery."
(Note that the investments are all in transit, not roads.)

[Virginia to build Long Bridge and acquire CSX right of way](#)