

Conclusion

Draft Outline

Call to action

- Over the past six decades, our sustained commitment to the ideas within *On Wedges and Corridors Plan* has created high quality parks and schools, preserved natural resources and farmland, and laid the groundwork for transit-served smart growth. During this time, we have also benefitted from our presence in a highly dynamic region and attracted a highly diverse population from all over the world.
- While this is a laudable achievement, TM 2050 objectively describes how maintaining the status quo through a business-as-usual approach is untenable.
- We now face intense competition at the regional, national and global stage to attract talent, jobs and economic development, with dwindling financial support from state and federal agencies. Our natural environment is degrading due to an over reliance on automobiles, an aging building stock and effects of climate change. Our communities face growing inequities along the lines of race, income and geography.
- TM 2050 proposes an alternative path forward, one that builds on our assets, but more importantly, focuses on remedying our shortcomings and harnessing growth to create economically competitive, environmentally resilient and socially equitable communities.
- While new approaches outlined in this document will require a large and sustained implementation effort, the alternative costs of complacency will simply be too great. Work on implementing the ideas in TM2050 therefore must begin immediately and extend over a period of decades and will require participation from the government and the private sector as well as the general public.

Getting started and measuring progress

- The purpose of a 30-year plan is to be prepared to face multiple, unpredictable futures. TM 2050 is therefore a guidebook, not an exhaustive list of prescriptions.
 - To kickstart the process of implementing the ideas in TM 2050, a standalone “Actions Document” has been created that covers tasks that can be achieved in the short, medium and long term to implement the policies proposed under each chapter of TM 2050.
 - The “Actions Document” will help direct the work program for the planning and parks departments and guide certain other government agencies but should not be considered as an exhaustive list in itself. Instead, it should be updated as new needs arise.
 - Tasks within the “Actions Document” cover the gamut of:
 - Reviews of existing policies, regulations, or programs for potential changes;
 - Additional studies or new master, functional, or facility plans to dive deeper into the topics addressed in the policies, conduct data and other targeted analysis, and identify detailed strategies for decision making and implementation;
 - The development of tools and templates to support master planning, regulatory review and other department processes; and

- Changes to agency responsibilities and governance to impact how decisions are made.
- Along the way, we will also encounter issues that we did not anticipate while writing this plan. To keep us on track and to provide a framework for evaluating new ideas and proposals, we will monitor indicators listed below that are directly related to the Plan’s key objectives. Additional, more detailed metrics will also be tracked by topic areas and are listed within each chapter.
 - Economic Performance and Competitiveness
 - Wage and job growth
 - New Business Formation
 - Economic output per capita
 - Racial Equity and Social Inclusion
 - Proportion of racially integrated neighborhoods and schools
 - Measures of social capital
 - Equitable life outcomes across race, income, age, gender etc.
 - Environmental Sustainability and Resilience.
 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - Vehicle Miles Travelled
 - Water and Air Quality

What is the role of public agencies and the private sector in implementing these ideas?

- The policies and actions proposed within TM 2050 focus on functions central to the planning and parks departments. However, successful implementing of broad policies will also require coordination across government agencies serving Montgomery County and the state of Maryland, as well as non-profits, community members, and regional entities. For example, updating the zoning code will require coordination with Department of Permitting Services while changes to street design standards will be accomplished in partnership with the Department of Transportation and the State Highway Administration. Agencies such as the Arts and Humanities Council will lead the creation of new policy documents like a Cultural Plan while the Department of Recreation will help expand opportunities for physical activity for county residents through the creation of facilities and programs. All such efforts will be informed by input from citizens, property and business owners as well as advocacy groups and nonprofits.
- Montgomery Planning’s development of Thrive Montgomery 2050 coincided with another major planning effort, led by the Montgomery County government—the creation of the county’s Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan is Montgomery County’s strategic plan to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035.
- Montgomery Planning and County government staff coordinated as these two plans were being drafted to ensure that their recommended goals, policies, and actions are complementary and create a comprehensive approach to dealing with climate change in the County.
- As the high-level policy document that guides land use in the County, Thrive Montgomery 2050 focuses on long-range planning and policies that guide where and how anticipated growth will be accommodated, where land will be preserved, and how development and preservation will be managed. These are crucial decisions that

significantly influence greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, carbon sequestration, and adaptation to climate change impacts.

- The Climate Action Plan creates specific actions to be taken immediately and over the near-term to guide County actions for achieving the County’s goal of reducing GHG emissions to zero by 2035 and implementing climate adaptation strategies to respond to increased heat and flooding, high winds, and drought.
- Through the framework for land use created by Thrive Montgomery 2050, Montgomery Planning and Montgomery Parks will implement recommendations in the Climate Action Plan that dovetail with M-NCPPC’s responsibilities and authority to achieve the climate change, equity and economic goals of both plans.

- The private sector will also play an important role in implementing ideas promoted by TM 2050.
 - Future growth will predominantly be accommodated in a compact footprint through private sector residential, commercial and mixed-use development.
 - Private development along corridors will create a finer grained network of streets needed for walkable communities and create centers of activities for existing surrounding communities.
 - New development will create gathering spaces which will complement publicly owned parkland to provide residents with a range of experiences in the public realm.
 - Owners of properties will lead the retrofitting of existing buildings for new uses and enhance the environmental performance of their sites.
 - Private investment in diverse housing types and neighborhood serving retail will fill in missing amenities and lead to more “complete” communities.

How will we pay for all these ideas?

- We are embarking on an ambitious effort in an age of intense competition and disruption in the private sector and shrinking fiscal capacity of government entities at all levels. To successfully implement these bold ideas, we will need to strategically align public and private investments to maximize their long-term benefits to the county.
- Private investment will be the primary instrument for realizing the changes we want to see in our existing and future communities. Amenities such as roads, sidewalks, bike lanes and public gathering spaces will be created through new developments and retrofitting of existing buildings and sites.
- Public investments through the county’s Capital Improvement Program will need to be prioritized to align with TM 2050’s recommendations to create the conditions attractive for private development through the provision of transit, walkable grid of streets, quality urban parks and high-performing and racially integrated schools.
- The combination of such public and private investments, along with policies that promote the creation of mixed, complete communities will entice residents, workers and ultimately employers to locate to the county.

- Over time, an expansion of the county’s tax base will be achieved by first attracting talented workers to live in the county’s high-quality complete communities, which in turn will attract businesses and employers to locate here as well.
- Impact fees paid by private sector development will help fund provision of specific public services, but we will still need to explore new sources of revenue through additional tools such as Tax Increment Financing, Land Value Capture etc. and leverage county assets such as properties and rights-of-ways to deliver development and infrastructure projects through Public-Private-Partnerships.

What are the policy and regulatory tools available for implementation?

- Thrive Montgomery’s policy recommendations will require amendments to other plans, policies, and development rules before they can be implemented. Various tools will be needed to amend existing policies and create new ones related to TM 2050:
 - New Master/Sector plans will be adopted as amendments to the General Plan. These documents will provide detailed recommendations for specific areas of the county and address land use, zoning, transportation, the natural environment, urban design, historic resources, affordable housing, economic development, public facilities, and implementation techniques.
 - New and revised functional master plans will be needed to refine and implement Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations that affect county-wide policies. Functional plans address a system, such as traffic circulation or green infrastructure, or a policy, such as agricultural preservation or housing. A functional master plan amends the General Plan but does not make land use or zoning recommendations.
 - Implementing Thrive Montgomery 2050 policies will require changes to the zoning code which permits certain uses by right and allows others conditionally through special exception. The zoning code and other aspects of land use regulation such as subdivision rules, master plans, and the building code should be amended to facilitate development that is responsive to market preferences, increases predictability and reduces costs while protecting the other important public interests at stake in the way the county is developed. The zoning code also specifies permitted uses, the bulk of buildings, setbacks, required off-street parking, and other prerequisites to obtaining permission to develop. Updates to the code should be proposed as zoning text amendments and adopted by the County Council.
 - In addition to Chapter 59, other chapters in the Montgomery County Code will also need updates. Chapter 50 of the County Code contains the subdivision regulations, which govern the legal division and subsequent transfer of land to ensure new developments are coordinated with other existing and planned developments. Chapter 50 also includes the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance which ensures transportation and public school facilities are planned and in place to serve new development. Thrive Montgomery 2050 includes guidance that applies to a broad range of topics from the size and subdivision of lots for housing to the preferred location of public facilities including county government facilities, park facilities, public schools etc. Subsequent updates to Chapter 50 will

be required to ensure that new approaches for subdivision of land and provision of public facilities are implementable and further the key objectives of TM 2050.

- Sometimes a more detailed level of guidance will be required to implement a specific policy. In these cases, Montgomery Planning will need to work collaboratively with other agencies to develop guidelines and reference manuals that provide further information on the objectives of a policy and more detailed tactical guidelines on the process for implementation. Examples of such documents include the *Fire Department Access Performance-Based Design Guide*, where Montgomery Planning served as project lead in drafting this guide, which was formally issued by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services as a resource to facilitate attractive urban design of communities that are fully accessible by the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services.
- The Parks Department also maintains a complex set of guidelines, policies, and rules that must be reviewed to ensure consistency with and support of the recommendations in this plan. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plan, the Energized Public Spaces (EPS) plan, the Parks Department's capital improvements program (CIP) and other key documents guiding the work of the Parks Department should be updated to reflect the direction provided in this plan and provide more detailed guidance to achieving the relevant goals.

Looking Ahead

Montgomery County in 2020 is a 99th percentile county in terms of household income and educational attainment, with a GDP of almost \$100 billion and one of the most diverse populations in the country. We can draw on tremendous human and physical resources in the Washington region. Our assets would be the envy of almost any community anywhere in the United States, if not the world. The Wedges and Corridors plan did not anticipate every challenge, and its authors had more than a few blind spots in their vision of the future, but many of its central ideas were transformative and continue to be relevant today and in to the future. In undertaking the implementation of ideas in TM 2050, we are not starting from scratch, but building on a strong foundation for success. Our main obstacle, in fact, is not the absence of any essential resource or knowledge but the complacency that comes with the good fortune of living in a place with so many advantages. The test of our performance over the coming decades will be whether we use these advantages to maximum effect toward a sustainable and broadly shared prosperity.