



Thrive Montgomery 2050 Worksession No. 9: Conclusion

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Introduction

The main topic of discussion for today's worksession and approval by the Planning Board is the draft of the Implementation chapter now called "Conclusion" (ATTACHMENT 1). The Planning Board has so far reviewed the Introduction and the six main chapters of the draft Plan. The Conclusion chapter is the last section of the revised draft.

The Conclusion chapter provides guidance on how the Plan's recommendations will be implemented. With a call to action, it stresses the urgency of updating the county's General Plan and implementing the ideas in Thrive Montgomery 2050 because of the significant technological, demographic, economic, social and environment changes the county is facing. It emphasizes the importance of indicators to track our progress and evaluate how new ideas and proposals will help achieve the Plan's key objectives of economic competitiveness, racial and social equity and environmental sustainability. It discusses the roles of public agencies, the private sector and the community in implementing the Plan's ideas. Implementing this plan will cost money, and the chapter provides high level guidance on the types of public and private sector funding sources that will be tapped to support capital investments, as well as the pressing need to identify new funding sources and strategies. And finally, it talks about the policy and regulatory tools available for implementation.

Additionally, the Conclusion chapter discusses the roles of and coordination between Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the county's Climate Action Plan as two major planning tools to help Montgomery County combat climate change.

The Conclusion chapter also describes a standalone "Actions Document" that will cover tasks that can be achieved in the short, medium and long term to implement the policies proposed under each chapter of the Plan. This "Actions Document" will be reviewed by the Board at the March 4th worksession.

Staff will present a summary of major themes of the public hearing testimony related to the Implementation chapter (ATTACHMENT 2).

Major themes of public testimony related to Implementation

The Implementation chapter of the Public Hearing Draft Plan received comments that ranged from requests for more information about tools and strategies to implement the Plan's recommendations to statements that the draft Plan had no chance of being realized due to the enormous costs it would incur if fully implemented.

Following are the major themes that emerged from the written and verbal testimonies related to the Public Hearing Draft Plan's Implementation chapter.

How will the Plan's recommendations be funded?

A large number of commenters were concerned about the county's ability to fund the improvements needed to achieve Complete Communities, affordable housing, infrastructure upgrades to address climate change, high quality transit to reduce reliance on private automobiles, and many other goals of the Plan. Some of them indicated that the county does not have sufficient funds to update its schools, parks, libraries, sidewalks, bike lanes, and recreation centers today, so it would be highly unlikely that the county would be able to build new facilities given the slow job growth and negative revenue projections for many years to come.

For many the fiscal challenge is even greater as the Plan recommends smaller, more decentralized public facilities, such as schools, libraries, and community centers, to encourage 15-minute living in Complete Communities. And all these challenges are further compounded by the economic impacts of the pandemic, which some commenters believe have not been fully addressed by the Plan. Some of the commenters were concerned that trying to achieve the Plan's ambitious goals with reduced revenues in the near to mid-term future would lead to increased taxes.

Role of public and private entities

Many commenters asked for more information about the role of various public and private entities responsible for providing infrastructure and other improvements needed for the Plan's recommendations. And more specifically, how the costs will be shared between public agencies and private entities. Many were concerned that the lack of a clear methodology about cost sharing will lead to the public sector, and therefore the citizens, paying a disproportionate share of the cost of improved infrastructure and facilities. Developers will be allowed to build new projects without the needed facilities while the public sector will be left with the responsibility to build infrastructure improvements needed for new growth.

Some commenters recommended that the M-NCPPC work with the public schools, parks, police, fire and rescue, municipalities, and other state and local agencies to further delineate each agency's role and determine how best to implement the Plan's policies.

Need for metrics to measure implementation of the Plan

Several commenters requested that Thrive Montgomery 2050 include metrics with a timetable to measure the county's progress toward achieving the Plan's goals. The suggested measure ranged from metrics such as income, educational achievements, additional housing units, health indicators, vehicle miles traveled, and increase in tree cover, etc. to a specific timeline for each measure. Some even requested a timeline for the Plan's evaluation (three, five, or ten years) to assess whether the underlying assumptions and policies of the Plan were still valid. And if not, the Plan should be revisited.

Implementation tools

Many commenters asked that Thrive Montgomery 2050 explicitly identify the tools that will be used for its implementation instead of leaving to future master plans and studies to determine the tools and how they will be used to achieve specific recommendations such as Complete Communities. For example, some commenters supported the Plan's recommendation that the zoning changes to allow missing middle housing be carried out through subsequent master plans while others requested that such zoning changes be done through countywide zoning text amendments.

Some commenters stated that the Plan should provide more information about how sites for parks and green space, schools, and other public facilities and services will be identified, and whether the adequate public facilities requirements will play any role in future decisions about provision of these facilities. Some stated that the Plan does not provide clear guidance with specific strategies and tools to strengthen county's economy so the county has the ability to pay for the public improvements needed to achieve the Plan's vision of a resilient, affordable, equitable and sustainable place.

Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1 is the draft of the Conclusion chapter, previously called Implementation chapter in the Public Hearing Draft Plan.

ATTACHMENT 2 is an updated summary table of all testimony received by December 10, 2020 updated to include staff responses to the comments related to the topics being addressed during this worksession. As we proceed through subsequent worksessions, staff will add its responses to the public comments pertaining to the topic area of each worksession.

The transcript of the November 19, 2020 public hearing can be accessed [here](#).

All written testimonies submitted by December 10, 2020 can be accessed here: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#)