



## Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Board Draft Approval

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Completed: 04/01/2021

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### Staff Recommendation

Review and approve the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Board Draft Plan to be transmitted to the County Council and the County Executive.

### Background

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is an update to the county's General Plan. It is a long-range policy framework that defines how Montgomery County should grow and respond to opportunities and challenges while maintaining its strengths. Thrive Montgomery 2050 sets a vision for the county and encompasses broad, county-wide policy recommendations for land use, housing, the economy, equity, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, historic resources, urban design, and the arts and culture. These recommendations will guide future master plans, county and state capital improvement processes, and other public and private initiatives that influence land use and planning in the county.

Staff initiated an update to the county's General Plan in July 2018, after the County Council approved the Planning Department's FY19 Work Program, which included a major effort to update the county's General Plan. Staff started to prepare groundwork for the General Plan Update by looking at best examples of general plans in other jurisdictions and establishing baseline existing conditions by conducting research and studies such as *Montgomery County Trends, A Look at People, Housing and Jobs Since 1990, January 2019*, among others. The Department also hired a consultant to help create a conceptual framework for the General Plan Update, which resulted in *A Strategic Framework for the Montgomery County General Plan Update*, in June 2019. Thrive Montgomery 2050 was officially launched in the last week of June 2019 with a weeklong series of events to introduce the public to the General Plan Update initiative and begin the robust public outreach process.

Over the course of following year, the core project team and eight working groups comprising some 60 Montgomery Planning staff worked with a technical advisory group of staff from county, state and regional entities, and used an extensive outreach and engagement program to gather input from residents throughout the county, homeowner and civic associations, municipalities, diverse organizations and community advocates. This outreach effort continued throughout various stages of the plan development process and will continue even during the County Council deliberations. Staff produced various analyses and reports for Planning Board's review including an Issues Report on February 20, 2020; Draft Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions on June 11, 2020; a Working Draft Plan on October 1, 2020, and a Public Hearing Draft Plan on November 12, 2020.

On November 19, 2020, the Planning Board held a virtual public hearing on the Public Hearing Draft Plan with virtual public testimony and live-streaming due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 85 speakers testified, and the record was kept open till December 10, 2020.

The Planning Board held 10 worksessions between December 17, 2020 and March 4, 2021. Each worksession was devoted to a particular topic or chapter of the draft Plan where staff presented a summary of public testimony, any additional analyses and supporting material, if needed, and revisions to each chapter as instructed by the Planning Board. The result of these worksessions is the Planning Board Draft Plan for the Board's review and approval today.

The Planning Board Draft Plan encompasses an Introduction, six main policy chapters, a Conclusion, two appendices, and a list of sources for the data and graphics included in the Plan. Two other supporting documents are published as separate documents as they are not part of the Plan document: 1) *Engagement and Outreach* describes the community involvement strategies and tools used to gather feedback from the public; and 2) *Recommended Actions and List of References* includes recommended actions to implement Thrive Montgomery's goals and policies over the next 30 years, and a list of plans and studies conducted by Montgomery Planning as well as outside research material used during the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan development process.

### **Next Steps**

After the Planning Board's approval, staff will transmit the Planning Board Draft Plan to the County Council and the County Executive. The Regional District Act requires the County Executive to transmit within 60 days a fiscal impact analysis and other comments and recommendations to the County Council.

After receiving the County Executive's comments, the County Council will hold a public hearing to receive public testimony. After the hearing record is closed, the Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee will hold public worksessions to review testimony and make recommendations on the Planning Board Draft Plan to the full Council. The full Council will then hold worksessions, make any changes to the draft Plan, and adopt a resolution approving the Planning Board Draft Plan, as revised. After County Council approval, Thrive Montgomery 2050 will be adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission as the new General Plan for Montgomery County.

## **Attachments**

ATTACHMENT 1: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Board Draft Plan

ATTACHMENT 2: Recommended Actions and List of References