

PLANNING DEPARTMENT FY27 OPERATING BUDGET DISCUSSION

Description

Seeking approval to prepare the FY27 Planning Department's operating budget at the Base Budget plus New Initiatives level.

Completed: 10-17-2025

MCPB
Item No. 4
10-23-2025

Montgomery County
Planning Board
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Summary:

- The Planning Department is seeking approval to prepare the FY27 Planning Department's operating budget at the Base Budget plus New Initiatives level.
- The Preliminary FY27 Operating Budget request is \$30,917,002 which is an increase of \$3,185,910, or 11.5%, over the FY26 Adjusted Adopted budget.

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

In July 2025, the Planning Director asked the division chiefs to meet with their teams to contemplate staffing needs and potential FY27 work program efforts. In August, the chiefs submitted their work program and budget ideas to the Director's Office for potential inclusion in the Department's FY27 requests. For each submission, the chiefs were asked to describe the proposed effort, identify potential cost breakdowns, explain the different roles of department staff and consultants (if needed), and justify the project based on its connections to department and county priorities, including *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, the Climate Action Plan, the Vision Zero Action Plan, racial equity and social justice, and the Planning Department's Strategic Plan. In September, department leadership met to refine and further flesh out the proposed initiatives as a group. Walking through each division's requests, the team discussed project consolidation, collaboration across divisions, project prioritization, appropriate project sequencing, staff capacity, general timelines including the timing of budget impacts, and other factors influencing project viability. Following that meeting and several additional follow-up discussions, the Director and Deputy Directors narrowed down the list of FY27 budget and work program requests to those presented in this report.

Planning staff worked diligently over the past several months to prepare for the October 23 budget work session with the Planning Board. Department leadership looked at guidance from *Thrive* and the department's strategic plan to determine the future needs to advance strategic and forward-thinking planning and development guidance. Department staff initially identified four new master plans, six one-time initiatives, and 19 full-time positions to meet the critical criteria. Senior leadership, after careful consideration, narrowed the list to two new master plan, two new initiatives, and ten full-time career positions to include in the department's FY27 proposed budget request.

At its September 25 meeting, the Planning Board received a presentation from the Commission's Department of Human Resources and Management (DHRM) on the FY27 budget process including key trends and the budget outlook, strategy, and timeline.

DHRM reported that the Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget estimates that the **assessable base will grow by 4.7%** in FY27. However, even with this growth, preliminary projections provided by DHRM indicated that the Administration Fund will need a tax rate increase in FY27 to meet the known increases. This is before the inclusion of new initiatives/critical needs which will need a tax rate increase as well. The leading drivers for the known increases are the annualization of the FY26 compensation adjustments plus the estimated increases in health benefits and retirement.

The Planning Department's work program has expanded and evolved over the last several years while its position count has largely stayed the same since 2011. With the approval and adoption of *Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Thrive)* in 2022, the department has been focused on implementing the long-range direction and recommendations found in the updated General Plan, seeking the outcomes of economic health, community equity and environmental resilience through the work program. Last year, Montgomery

Planning began to implement the department's five-year strategic plan, Montgomery Planning's 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan, which is the near-term roadmap for how the department will advance the recommendations in *Thrive*. The strategic plan defines the values, priorities, and strategies that will guide the department's organization. This internal plan has external impacts because it includes suggestions for the work program including direction for strengthening internal capacity and identifying activities to advance the recommendations in *Thrive*.

The Planning Department prepared an FY27 budget request that includes new initiatives and critical new positions it believes are essential to planning for the future of Montgomery County, and that reflects the department's new strategic plan.

PRELIMINARY FY27 OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT PRELIMINARY FY27 OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST			
FY26 ADOPTED ADJUSTED BUDGET *		\$ 27,731,092	
FY27 BASE BUDGET CHANGES			
	Salaries and Benefits **	\$721,245	
	Increase for Supplies and Contractual Obligations	101,600	
	Adjustment – Risk Management, Long Term Disability, Unemployment, and Legal Chargeback	4,497	
	Major Known Commitments	717,000	
	Adjustments in Departmental Chargebacks to CIO and Commission Wide IT	(22,645)	
	Subtotal – Base Budget Changes	\$ 1,521,697	+5.5%
ONGOING INITIATIVES – NEW			
FY27 Ongoing New Initiatives		200,000	
	Ongoing Master Plan Support	\$200,000	
FY27 Ongoing New Positions		1,369,213	
	Climate Initiatives Planner IV	\$160,583	
	Regulatory Cultural Resources Supervisor	\$173,877	
	Cybersecurity - IT/Telecom Specialist III	\$137,833	
	Engagement Specialist - Public Affairs and Marketing Specialist III	\$137,833	
	Organizational Development - Administrative Specialist III	\$129,591	
	Master Planning - Cultural Resources Planner I	\$110,268	
	Master Planning and Regulatory Planner II	\$121,781	
	Policy Initiatives - Planner III	\$137,833	
	Urban Design - Planner III	\$137,833	
	Master Planning - Planner II	\$121,781	
	Subtotal – New Ongoing Initiatives	\$ 1,569,213	+5.7%
ONE-TIME WORK PROGRAM INITIATIVES – NET CHANGE			
Less: FY26 One-Time Work Program Initiatives		(180,000)	
FY27 One-Time Work Program Initiatives/New Funding Requests		275,000	
	Climate Resilience Functional Plan	150,000	
	Diversifying the Economy: Assessing the Future Needs for Industrial Land	125,000	
	Subtotal – One-Time Work Program Initiatives	\$ 95,000	+0.3%
NET CHANGE FROM FY26 ADOPTED TO FY27 PROPOSED BUDGET		\$ 3,185,910	+11.5%
FY27 PROPOSED BUDGET		\$ 30,917,002	
TRANSFER INCREASE FROM ADMINISTRATION FUND TO DR-SRA***		\$ 2,000,000	
Notes: * The FY26 Adopted Adjusted Budget does not include \$150,000 in Grants as they are accounted for separately. ** Salary and Benefits total does not include compensation marker or OPEB. They are budgeted in the Administration Fund's non-departmental account. *** Increase transfer from Admin Fund to DR-SRA of \$2,000,000 for base budget increase bringing the total transfer request to \$3.5M.			

Detailed information for each line item is provided in this report.

SECTION 2: FY27 BASE BUDGET CHANGES

The preliminary known increases and decreases in the Planning Department budget for salaries, benefits, retirement, and other post-employment benefits (OPEB) were presented by DHRM at the September 25 meeting.

Information regarding the known operating commitments, mandated, contractual, and inflationary increases, and chargeback adjustments for the operations of the Planning Department are shown below.

Known Operating Commitments	
Salaries and Benefits ¹	\$721,245
Increase for Supplies and Contractual Obligations	\$101,600
Adjustment – Risk Mgmt, Long-Term Disability, Unemployment, Legal Chargeback	\$4,497
Major Known Commitments	\$717,000
Adjustment - Departmental Chargebacks to CIO and CWIT	(\$22,645)
Total of Known Operating Commitments – 5.5% increase over FY26	\$1,521,697

SALARIES AND BENEFITS¹ | +\$721,245

Anticipated personnel cost increases total \$721,245, based on the following changes in:

- Current staffing, annualization of previous year's merit/COLA increases, lapse = +\$265,879
- Retirement = +\$160,459
- Benefits = +\$294,907

INCREASE FOR SUPPLIES AND CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS | +\$101,600

The Planning Department is requesting to increase the contracts and supplies budget by \$101,600 over the FY26 Adopted Budget to keep up with inflation and other cost increases.

ADJUSTMENTS TO CHARGEBACKS | +\$4,497

The following adjustments are proposed based on actual expenses paid on behalf of the Planning Department:

- Risk Management = (\$6,400)
- Unemployment = (\$1,000)
- Long-Term Disability = +\$1,788
- Legal Department Chargebacks = +\$10,109

¹ The salary and benefits number does not include the FY27 compensation marker, OPEB PayGo and OPEB prefunding as these are included in the Administration Fund's non-departmental account.

MAJOR KNOWN COMMITMENTS | +\$717,000

The Planning Department requests an increase of \$717,000 over FY26 for the following major known commitments.

- **MKC #1 – FY26 One-time Major Known Commitment Expenses = (\$150,000)**
This is the offset of one-time major known commitment expenses in the FY26 budget that are not included in the FY27 budget.
- **MKC #2 – GIS Base Map Update – LiDAR = +\$200,000 - (every three years)**
Regular updated planimetric and LiDAR data is part of the County's GIS strategic plan. LiDAR is updated every three years. The Planning Department makes these data available to the development community and other County departments. The data inform many products within the Parks and Planning departments as well. These new high resolution LiDAR data are the key component of the tree canopy datasets used to measure trends in forest cover for various areas. They also inform flooding analyses, and the terrain and building models in the department's new 3D GIS base maps. This upcoming data capture will be the third time the department collected LiDAR in the new higher resolution QL1 standard. This standard has twice the resolution as the department's previous QL2 data, eight data points per square meter instead of four.
- **MKC #3 – Growth and Infrastructure Policy = +\$170,000 (expense every four years)**
One-time consulting funding needed to prepare various aspects of the quadrennial update to the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, including updates to the local area transportation tests. The next update to the Growth and Infrastructure Policy is required by Council Resolution to occur by November 15, 2028, and most staff work will occur in FY28. Consultant contracting, however, will occur in FY27.
- **MKC #4 - Climate Assessment Quantitative Tool Update = +\$20,000 – (mandate to review/update every two years)**
Section 2-81D of County Code requires the Planning Board to submit to the District Council a climate impact assessment for each proposed zoning text amendment (ZTA), master plan, and master plan amendment. It further requires the Board to develop and publish online a climate assessment template to guide the development of climate assessments for ZTAs and master plans and mandates that, at least once every two years, the Planning Board must review and update the template as needed.
- **MKC #5 – Biennial Travel Monitoring Report = +\$120,000 – (every other year)**
The Planning Department produces a biennial Travel Monitoring Report as required by the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, Bicycle Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan. The report gathers extensive amounts of data, including traffic counts, to comprehensively evaluate the state of multimodal travel in the county and monitor implementation of the master plans.

- **MKC #6 – Wheaton Headquarters (WHQ) Operating and Maintenance Costs Increase = +\$151,700 (ongoing)**

This request is to cover the increased costs to maintain and operate the WHQ building.

- **MKC #7 – Community Planning Academy Support Increase = +\$50,000 (ongoing)**

The Community Planning Academy launched this year with an ongoing support budget of \$16,000. This request for an increase of \$50,000 is needed to provide for new module production, content updates, recruitment, and in-person events (such as graduations), as well as the platform costs to host the course with enough licenses to support a countywide audience. The Academy has seen tremendous community interest and this increase is needed to ensure system and program sustainability and that the content stays current following the official launch in December 2025.

The official launch will include an expansion of participants and the increase in annual funding will allow the Department to meet the demand for the Academy and provide support for outreach technical assistance and the production of new modules featuring vital planning topics. Increased funding will support targeted recruitment efforts, including multilingual outreach and community partnerships. Engagement tools such as surveys, feedback loops, and interactive sessions require dedicated resources. A larger budget ensures the platform can accommodate a broader audience and provide a seamless user experience that is free and accessible to all who wish to participate.

- **MKC #8 – Digital Outreach = +\$20,000 (ongoing)**

The Planning Department is requesting to increase the advertising budget by \$20,000 as it expands further into digital advertising and outreach. Digital advertising is a proven, cost-effective way to raise awareness and drive public engagement. The Planning Department has had success with this marketing tactic in the Community Planning Academy, Placemaking events, and *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. Advertising online and through social media apps allows the department to target key audiences with measurable results, to advance equity by reaching broad, diverse audiences, and to deliver messages—in multiple languages—to residents who may not be aware of the department’s work. With the increased need to expand outreach efforts, the department’s current advertising budget is insufficient to meet residents where they are, to ensure more inclusive participation and to help reduce barriers to engagement in planning processes.

- **MKC #9 – Cybersecurity Tool = +\$65,000 (ongoing)**

As part of an upgrade to the department’s cybersecurity, this funding is for Cisco XDR and Cisco Telemetry Broker, security operation center tools (SOC) for threat hunting, incident response, and network behavior analytics to ensure network security throughout all of M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks and Planning locations. (\$130K annually split 50/50 with MC Parks.)

- **MKC #10 – IT Equipment = +\$70,300 (ongoing for six years)**

This funding supports the replacement of servers and other information technology equipment, including Cisco chassis replacements at King Street and Saddlebrook Data Centers, and Wheaton Headquarters PON, OLTs, ONTs, and splitters replacements that have reached the end of their life. This equipment will be financed over 6 years. This funding is for the first year’s payment.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER BASE BUDGET REQUEST | (\$22,645)

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) proposed changes to Montgomery Planning’s base budget as shown in the chart below. These changes will be discussed at the Planning Board meeting on October 23 during the CIO’s budget presentation.

For the CIO and Commission-wide IT initiatives (CWIT) internal service funds (ISF), the Planning Department’s operating budget (Admin Fund) contributes to both their new initiatives and their base budget via a chargeback.

The breakdown is as follows:

Chargebacks to the CIO ISF and CWIT ISF Budget				
	FY26 Budget	FY27 Proposed	\$ Change	% Change
CIO and CW-IT ISF	\$639,109	\$616,464	(\$22,645)	(3.5%)

SECTION 3: FY27 NEW INITIATIVES

The requested new initiatives are in direct support of the department's strategic plan, which builds on guidance from *Thrive* and furthers the department's work on advancing the Equity Agenda for Planning. In addition, the Planning Department is seeking additional staff resources to address a sustained pattern of increased workload.

MASTER PLAN SUPPORT | +\$200,000

The Montgomery County Council's recognition of master planning as a core function of Montgomery Planning was reflected in the establishment of ongoing Master Plan Support funding in the FY26 budget. The department had requested \$300,000; the Council approved \$203,617. This ongoing funding has allowed the Department to take a more flexible, efficient, and equitable approach to planning, supporting critical consultant services for engagement, translation, transportation modeling, and economic analysis at appropriate times in the planning process. For FY27, the Planning Department is requesting an additional \$200,000 in ongoing master plan support funding.

Specifically, for FY27, it is anticipated that this funding will support engagement efforts, translation services, historic analyses, economic analyses, environmental analyses, and transportation analyses for the Georgia Avenue Corridor Plan, Burtonsville Area Minor Master Plan, Kensington Sector Plan, in addition to one new area master plan effort – the Damascus Main Street Sector Plan Amendment.

DAMASCUS MAIN STREET SECTOR PLAN AMENDMENT

Damascus is a strong, historic community with deep agricultural roots and a strong sense of identity, but its last master plan was adopted nearly two decades ago with the approval and adoption of the 2006 Damascus Master Plan. Since then, the region has experienced significant shifts in demographics, infrastructure needs, housing pressures, and environmental priorities. A new master plan is not just timely, it's essential.

Montgomery County's population has grown by over 150,000 since 2006, with new demands for housing, transportation, and services. Damascus remains one of the few rural town centers without a modern plan that reflects current realities and future opportunities. A new plan can explore context-sensitive housing options that maintain rural character while supporting young families, aging residents, and workforce needs. Also, Damascus lacks a cohesive pedestrian and bike network. An updated plan can prioritize safer streets, better transit access, and connections to regional trails, aligning with Vision Zero and climate goals.

Following the successful Fall 2024 [Damascus Placemaking Festival](#), there is urgent interest by the Damascus community to improve Main Street and downtown Damascus. Damascus is due for a refresh, as the current plan approaches 20 years, and has under delivered on its long-term vision. With renewed interest from state and local leaders, there is an opportunity to better align the goals and priorities of the

plan with *Thrive* and the many new laws, plans and policies that have been adopted since the 2006 Damascus Master Plan was approved.

In addition to advancing *Thrive*, the county's Climate Action Plan, and the county's Vision Zero Action Plan, this plan amendment aligns with the following strategies and actions from the Planning Department's Strategic Plan:

Priority 1: Employees

- Action 1.5.3: Celebrate the positive impacts our work has in the community. Continuing the momentum created by the award-winning Damascus Placemaking Festival.

Priority 2: Communities and Partners

- Strategy 2.1: Increase transparency with residents throughout the planning process.
- Action 2.1.6: Leverage and maintain Planning staff relationships built through masterplan efforts.
- Action 2.1.7: Prioritize strategic communications planning for every plan, project, and policy initiative.
- Action 2.1.8: Remove barriers to participation by non-English speakers.
- Action 2.5.2: Strengthen relationships with partner agencies at various levels of the Department.
- Action 2.5.3: Build relationships with nonprofits to better engage them in Planning efforts.
- Action 2.5.5: Increase awareness about how the Department collaborates with partners.

Residents are ready to shape their future. A new planning process would invite broad participation, ensuring the plan reflects local values and aspirations by engaging an energized community resulting from the placemaking initiative. The planning team will also collaborate with MDOT SHA, MCDOT, DGS, MCPS, and Montgomery Parks to prepare a new vision for the Damascus community.

ADDITIONAL PROPOSED STAFFING | +\$1,369,213

From FY11-24, the Planning Department operated with 151 approved career positions. FY11 was a particularly difficult year when the Planning Department's budget was reduced almost 14%, 31 career positions were eliminated, and seven additional positions were defunded. Since that time, the seven unfunded positions have been refunded. Two positions were added in FY25 to help address an overburdened workload and one position was added in FY26 for placemaking. The Planning Department now has 154 career positions, still 28 positions, or 16%, short of the 182 positions it had in FY10.

Through careful personnel management, strategic reallocation of staff, the hiring of unbudgeted seasonal and temporary employees, and leveraging consultant contracts, the Planning Department has successfully managed to carry out its work program. However, over the past several years, new mandates regarding equity, sustainability, climate initiatives, forest conservation, expedited development reviews, and more have placed strains on Planning staff. The department shifted staff internally as much as possible to address these new mandates while waiting for *Thrive* to be approved to understand how it would impact the department work program and what the staffing needs would be to implement the updated General

Plan. Since the adoption of *Thrive* in fall 2022 and in response to limited new resources provided in FY25, the Planning Department has continued to rely on existing staff resources to meet increased workload and other priorities. However, this approach is not sustainable and poses risks for the Department's ability to effectively and efficiently accomplish its work program.

For FY27, the Planning Department is requesting ten new positions that were identified as top priorities during the strategic planning process. These new positions will bring the department's personnel complement to 164, which is still 18 below the FY10 staffing level. Additional information on each requested position is provided in the [Appendix](#).

ONE-TIME INITIATIVES | +\$95,000

For the five years prior to the pandemic (FY16-FY20), the Planning Department's one-time initiatives annual budget averaged \$700,000 per year ranging between \$425,000-\$835,000 (2% to 4% of the total budget). Most of the one-time initiatives funding requests are for consultant studies/services to support new initiatives proposed for the department's work program. In many cases, consultants supplement Planning Department staff resources who produce much of the work for a master plan or planning initiative. Contracts are used for short-term specialized technical assistance for planning initiatives or for bringing on consultants who have a breadth of knowledge regarding emerging subject areas in ever more complex planning areas. In FY26, the Planning Department received \$180,000 in one-time initiative funding.

For FY27, the department is requesting that five new one-time initiatives be added to its work program.

Two projects with one-time funding requirements totaling \$275,000 include:

- A Climate Resilience Functional Plan led by the Environment and Climate Division, \$150,000, and
- A study to assess the county's future needs for industrial land led by the Research and Strategic Projects Division, \$125,000.

Offsetting the amount received in FY26, the requested increase for one-time initiatives is only \$95,000 (\$275,000 minus \$180,000).

This also includes three projects without budgetary implications:

- A Greater North Bethesda implementation study led by the West County Planning Division,
- A Master Plan for Historic Preservation amendment for Locational Atlas resources led by the Historic Preservation (HP) Division, and
- A Master Plan for Historic Preservation amendment for Burial Sites led by the HP Division.

Note that the two HP initiatives can only be pursued if the department receives the requested HP positions.

Detailed information on each requested new initiative is provided in the [Appendix](#).

NEW INITIATIVES SUMMARY

In summary, for FY27, the Planning Department's **new ongoing initiatives** request is **\$200,000 for consultant funding** for master plans plus **\$1,369,213 for ten new positions** for a total of \$1,569,213. The **new one-time work program initiatives** request is **\$275,000**. These new initiatives focus on ways to reimagine and reinvigorate master planning activities, to address an increased workload and staffing deficiencies, and to be aligned with the department's strategic plan.

FY27 Work Program Initiatives			
Ongoing Consulting, Ongoing Positions and Work Years (10 Positions, 10.0 WYs)			\$1,569,213
1. Master Plan Support			\$200,000
2. Climate Initiatives – Planner IV Full-time Position <i>Environmental & Climate Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$160,583
3. Regulatory – Cultural Resources Supervisor Full-time Position <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$173,877
4. Cybersecurity – IT/Telecom Specialist III Full-time Position <i>Information Technology & Innovation Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$137,833
5. Engagement Specialist – Public Affairs and Marketing Spec III Full-time Position <i>Communications & Engagement Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$137,833
6. Organizational Development – Administrative Specialist III Full-time Position <i>Management Services Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$129,591
7. Master Planner – Cultural Resources Planner I Full-time Position <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$110,268
8. Master Planning and Regulatory – Planner II Full-time Position <i>Upcounty Planning Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$121,781
9. Policy Initiatives – Planner III Full-time Position <i>Transportation Planning Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$137,833
10. Urban Design – Planner III Full-time Position <i>Design, Placemaking & Policy Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$137,833
11. Master Planning – Planner II Full-time Position <i>East County Planning Division</i>	1 pos	1.0 WY	\$121,781

One-Time Work Program Initiatives	\$275,000
12. Climate Resilience Functional Plan <i>Environment & Climate Division</i>	\$150,000
13. Diversifying the Economy: Assessing the Future Needs for Industrial Land <i>Research & Strategic Projects Division</i>	\$125,000
14. Greater North Bethesda Implementation Study <i>West County Planning Division</i>	\$0
15. Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Locational Atlas <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	\$0
16. Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Burial Sites <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	\$0

Descriptions, objectives, and measures of success for each new ongoing and one-time work program initiative are provided in the [Appendix](#).

SECTION 4: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW SPECIAL REVENUE ACCOUNT

CHARGEBACK FROM THE ADMIN FUND

Special Revenue Funds account for the proceeds from specific revenue sources restricted for a designated purpose. The Development Review Special Revenue Account was created to collect fees generated from the submission of development applications.

Staff time spent reviewing development applications is charged back from the Administration Fund to the Special Revenue Fund. The revenues generated from development applications can be highly volatile. The Planning Department is still analyzing the special revenue fund projections and will give a presentation to the Planning Board on the Development Review Special Revenue Fund at the next budget work session on November 6.

CHARGEBACKS FROM LEGAL DEPARTMENT, FINANCE DEPARTMENT, AND CORPORATE IT

Although this memo addresses the Planning Department's operating budget (the department's special revenue fund request will be discussed at the November 6 Planning Board meeting), below are changes to the Development Review Special Revenue Account chargebacks that the Legal Department, Finance Department and Corporate IT Department will discuss during their October 23 budget presentations:

Chargebacks to the Development Review Special Revenue Account				
Department	FY26 Budget	FY27 Proposed	\$ Change	% Change
Legal	\$227,272	\$245,453	\$18,181	8.0%
Finance	\$57,750	\$44,414	(\$13,336)	(23.1%)
Corporate IT (CIO)	\$25,347	\$28,270	\$2,923	11.5%
Bank Fees	\$550	\$400	(\$150)	(27.3%)
TOTAL	\$310,919	\$318,537	\$7,618	2.5%

SECTION 5: WORK PROGRAM INITIATIVES OVERVIEW

MASTER PLANS

In terms of master plans, Planning's recommended FY27 work program follows closely with the work program that was approved for FY26. Several of the plans that were approved in previous fiscal years **will begin or carry over into FY27** – these include:

1. Friendship Heights Sector Plan <i>West County Planning Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review Council Review Commission Adoption
2. Germantown Sector Plan Amendment <i>Upcounty Planning Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review Council Review Commission Adoption
3. Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan <i>East County Planning Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review Council Review
4. Georgia Avenue Corridor Plan <i>East County Planning Division</i>	Staff Work
5. Kensington Sector Plan Amendment <i>East County Planning Division</i>	Staff Work
6. Burtonsville Area Minor Master Plan <i>East County Planning Division</i>	Staff Work
7. Climate Resilience Functional Plan <i>Environment & Climate Division</i>	Staff Work
8. Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Locational Atlas <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	Staff Work
9. Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Burial Sites <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	Staff Work

One new area master plan proposed to begin in FY27 is being identified for the first time in this budget discussion. If approved, the Planning Department will work on a total of seven master plans in FY27.

1. Damascus Main Street Sector Plan Amendment <i>Upcounty Planning Division</i>	Staff Work
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Detailed information on the proposed Damascus plan amendment is included in [Section 3](#) and the [Appendix](#).

MAJOR PROJECTS

The Planning Department's recommended FY27 work program **carries forward** four projects that were approved in previous fiscal years and will continue into FY27. These include:

1. Curbside Management <i>Transportation Planning Division</i>	Planning Board Review
2. Retail Market Analysis and Strategy Update <i>Research & Strategic Projects Division</i>	Planning Board Review Council Review
3. Parking Lot Design Study <i>Transportation Planning Division</i>	Planning Board Review Council Review
4. Housing Needs Assessment and Preferences <i>Design, Placemaking & Policy Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review Council Review
5. Clarksburg to Montgomery Village Transportation Study ² <i>Transportation & Policy Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review Council Review
6. Green Streets Guidelines <i>Transportation & Policy Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review

New major projects that are being proposed for the FY27 budget discussion. If approved, the Planning Department will work on 12 major projects in FY27.

1. Climate Assessment Quantitative Tool Update <i>Environment & Climate Division</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review
2. Greater North Bethesda Implementation Study <i>West County Planning</i>	Staff Work Planning Board Review
3. Diversifying the Economy: Assessing the Future Needs for Industrial Land <i>Research & Strategic Projects Division</i>	Staff Work

The following major projects will only be worked on in FY27 if staffing or funding is available.

1. Thrive Montgomery 2025 Plan Implementation Metrics <i>Research & Strategic Projects Division</i>	Staff Work
2. Mapping Segregation Phase 2 <i>Historic Preservation Division</i>	Staff Work

Detailed information on the proposed new major project efforts is included in the [Appendix](#).

² At the time of publication of this report, the funding for the transportation study is pending Council approval. It is anticipated that the Council will add this project to the Planning Department's work program and approve an FY26 special appropriation in the coming weeks.

FY27 PROPOSED WORK PROGRAM INITIATIVE SCHEDULE

Master Plans & Major Projects	2025					2026					2027					2028								
	FY26					FY27					FY28													
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Technical Update																								
Master Plan for Historic Preservation - Timberlawn																								
University Boulevard Corridor Plan																								
Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan																								
Master Plan for Historic Preservation - 18583 Brooke Road																								
Friendship Heights Sector Plan																								
Germantown Sector Plan Amendment																								
Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan																								
Georgia Avenue Corridor Plan																								
Burtonsville Area Minor Master Plan																								
Kensington Sector Plan Amendment																								
Damascus Main Street Sector Plan Amendment																								
Climate Resilience Functional Plan																								
Master Plan for Historic Preservation - Locational Atlas																								
Master Plan for Historic Preservation - Burial Sites																								
Regional Travel Demand Model Update & Validation																								
Coordinated Transportation Data Management Strategy																								
Incentive Zoning Update																								
Burial Sites Context Study																								
Curbside Management																								
Retail Market Analysis and Strategy Update																								
Parking Lot Design Study																								
Housing Needs Assessment and Preferences																								
Locational Atlas Update																								
Clarksburg to Montgomery Village Transportation Study																								
Climate Assessment Quantitative Tool Update																								
Green Streets Guidelines																								
Greater North Bethesda Implementation Study																								
Diversifying the Economy: Assessing Future Needs for Industrial Land																								
Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan Implementation Metrics																								
Mapping Segregation Phase 2																								

Staff

If Staffing Available

Planning Board

P

Planning Board Draft

G

CE Review/Council Noticing Period

H

Council Public Hearing

C

Council Review

B

Commission Adoption, SMA

M

Montgomery County Elections

■ Staff
■ If Staffing Available
■ Planning Board
■ Planning Board Draft
■ CE Review/Council Noticing Period
■ Council Public Hearing
■ Council Review
■ Commission Adoption, SMA
■ Montgomery County Elections

APPENDIX: DESCRIPTIONS FOR PROPOSED NEW WORK PROGRAM INITIATIVES

FY27 ONGOING WORK PROGRAM INITIATIVES

1. MASTER PLAN SUPPORT Director's Office	
Budget Request	\$200,000
Description	The Montgomery County Council's recognition of master planning as a core function of Montgomery Planning was reflected in the establishment of an ongoing Master Plan Support fund in the FY26 budget. This fund has allowed the Department to take a more flexible, efficient, and equitable approach to planning, supporting critical consultant services for engagement, translation, transportation modeling, and economic analysis. However, the expectations for what master plans must deliver have grown significantly. Today's planning efforts are expected to be: • More inclusive: Reaching historically underrepresented communities through culturally responsive engagement. • More data-driven: Incorporating sophisticated modeling and analysis to guide land use, transportation, and housing decisions. • More adaptive: Responding to real-time community feedback and evolving conditions. In addition to the growing expectations of master plan efforts, the cost of services have increased with inflation. Recent individual master plans have ranged in cost from \$150,000 to \$300,000, depending on the scope and context of the plan. The current level of funding for master plan support -- \$203,617 -- is not sufficient to maintain the department's master plan work program. The impact has been to delay current master plan efforts and without this funding Montgomery Planning anticipates additional master plan delays. To meet these expectations, the Department is requesting an additional \$200,000 in FY27, bringing the total ongoing Master Plan Support budget to slightly over \$400,000. <i>Why this increase is essential</i> Engagement costs are rising. Montgomery Planning has embraced an audience-centric model that meets people where they are (and then doesn't leave them there) through translated materials, hybrid meetings, accessible locations, and culturally responsive facilitation. These efforts are vital, but they require sustained investment. <i>Analytical demands are growing</i> Transportation modeling, economic analysis, and demographic studies are no longer optional, they're foundational. As the Department strive for more precise, equitable planning, the cost of these technical services continues to climb.

	<i>Equity requires depth, not just access</i> Advancing the department’s Equity Agenda for Planning means understanding not just who lives in an area, but how they experience it. That takes time, tools, and trust-building, none of which come without cost. What this funding supports: • Interpretation and translation services • Hybrid and in-person engagement logistics • Transportation and land use modeling • Economic and demographic analysis • Environmental analysis • Historic research and analysis • Communications strategy development • Responsive engagement adjustments based on community feedback This increase is not about doing more for the sake of volume; it’s about doing better. It’s about delivering master plans that are inclusive, informed, and impactful. With this additional funding, Montgomery Planning can continue to meet the moment and build a county where every voice shapes the future.
Objectives Achieved	An increase in the ongoing funding for master planning efforts would allow the department to keep master plan efforts on schedule, ensure the completion of necessary technical analyses, and have deeper and more meaningful engagement with residents and audiences.
Project Resources	While exact master plan needs will be determined in FY27, below are some anticipated uses of the master plan support funding: <i>Georgia Avenue Corridor Plan</i> • Outreach and engagement around Planning staff recommendations <i>Kensington Sector Plan Amendment</i> • A historic survey and analyses of historical resources • Parking planning expertise to evaluate the feasibility of parking structure(s) for a “park once community” • Engineering expertise for storm water management issues • Community engagement efforts <i>Burtonsville Area Minor Master Plan</i> • Community outreach and engagement • Employment and economic analysis • Scenario modeling of potential alternative futures for Burtonsville activity centers along US 29 <i>Damascus Main Street Sector Plan Amendment</i> • Strategic engagement support to reach residents and business owners • Graphic renderings and visuals to complement the plan language and recommendations

Measures of Success	The success of this additional funding will be measured by the department's ability to keep master plan schedules on track, meet the analytical needs of the master plan efforts, and maintain effective engagement with master plan stakeholders.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	This request aligns with the following Strategies and Actions from the Department's Strategic Plan: Priority 2: Communities & Partners • Strategy: 2.1: Increase transparency with residents throughout the planning process. • Strategy 2.2: Intentionally engage residents in all planning efforts, with a focus on people who are underrepresented. • Action 2.2.4: Employ and enhance the Equitable Engagement Guide to integrate social equity and cultural diversity through master planning and placemaking practices. • Strategy 2.4: Focus on historically underinvested regions and vulnerable communities. • Strategy 2.6: Foster community capacity to participate in the planning process. Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy: 5.2: Serve as an independent advisor on land use decisions and policies to implement <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i>. • Strategy: 5.4: Advance the recommendations for the county's Climate Action Plan and environmental recommendations in <i>Thrive</i>. • Strategy: 5.5: Advance the housing recommendations in <i>Thrive</i>. • Strategy: 5.6: Advance the recommendation of the county's Vision Zero Action Plan and the transportation recommendations in <i>Thrive</i>. • Strategy 5.7: Advance design excellence and the place-based planning recommendations in <i>Thrive</i>.

2. CLIMATE INITIATIVES PLANNER IV

Environment & Climate Division

Budget Request	\$160,583 (Grade 30, 1.0 WY) (mid-point + 10% plus benefits – based on specialized expertise required for this position and department hiring trends at this level)
Description	Climate change is an existential threat to the planet but efforts to address and adapt must occur at all community levels, including the local level. As the department tasked with planning the future growth and development of the county, it is imperative that Montgomery Planning employ an expert on the planning industry's response to climate change to ensure staff are incorporating the best viable solutions in the department's plans and policy recommendations. This climate specialist position would ensure climate-related initiatives and recommendations are integrated throughout the department's work program, including the development of climate policies and master plans. It would also be responsible for conducting the climate assessments as required under Section 2-81D of County Code for all zoning text amendments and master plans. As an expert in the field of climate change and how planning efforts can respond to it, this position would also lead the Planning Department's climate change resiliency and vulnerability efforts in support of <i>Thrive</i> and the county's Climate Action Plan. The position would serve as a liaison to other county agencies and their related efforts and be an integral part of the Department's Environment and Climate Division, which has a high level of workload. Specific work products and responsibilities would include: • Conducting the climate assessments as required under Section 2-81D of county Code for all zoning text amendments and master plans. • Leading the creation and execution of the Department's climate tools such as heat mapping and tree inventories. • Preparing a Climate Resilience Functional Master Plan. • Conducting an Area Climate Change Vulnerability Study. • Coordinating with county agencies on Climate Action Plan efforts. • Managing the update to the Climate Assessment Quantitative Tool.
Objectives Achieved	This position will lead the department's climate initiatives, including the development of climate policies and studies, implementing the department's climate assessment responsibilities under county code to ensure they are completed in a consistent and thorough manner, and ensuring climate recommendations are integrated throughout each master plan and through the development review process. Climate change affects everyone, but disproportionately affects people of color, vulnerable populations, and low-income households. This position will have a focus on delivering climate policies and programs that achieve equitable outcomes.
Measures of Success	• Climate discussions consistently integrated throughout master planning efforts and the review of development applications, with community resilience as a central focus of the department's planning efforts. • This position request is in alignment with the Planning Department's strategic plan, specifically, the strategy, "Serve as independent advisor on land use decisions and policies to implement <i>Thrive</i>." One of the main outcomes of <i>Thrive</i> is environmental

	resilience. Dedicating one position to lead the department's coordination on climate initiatives and policy efforts will advancing the department's work to reach the climate goals of the county.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 1: Employees • Strategy 1.3: Create and promote pathways for professional growth Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Strategy 2.5: Strengthen collaboration with partner agencies Priority 4: Innovation • Strategy 4.3: Share and exchange information and best practices within the agency, regionally, and nationally Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy 5.2: Serve as an independent advisor on land use decisions and policies to implement <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> • Action 5.2.10: Prepare a comprehensive resilience functional master plan • Strategy 5.4: Advance the recommendations of the county's Climate Action Plan and environmental recommendations in <i>Thrive</i> • Action 5.4.1: Fund a new FTE focused on climate initiatives • Action 5.4.5: Develop environmental design guidelines to incorporate nature-based design solutions that will mitigate climate impacts, increase climate-resiliency and adaptation, and support biodiversity • Action 5.4.8: Incorporate sustainable development standards into planning efforts • Action 5.4.9: Study the impacts of climate change on farming and the environmental resources in the Ag Reserve; develop recommendations and identify best practices to address these impacts

3. REGULATORY CULTURAL RESOURCES SUPERVISOR

Historic Preservation Division

Budget Request	\$173,877 (Grade 32, 1.0 WY) (mid-point + 10% plus benefits – based on specialized expertise required for this position and department hiring trends at this level)
Description	Montgomery Planning is requesting funding for a new Cultural Resources Supervisor position to lead and manage the growing responsibilities of the Historic Preservation (HP) Division. This role is essential to ensuring strategic oversight, operational efficiency, and equitable delivery of preservation services across Montgomery County. The HP Division is currently staffed with one Chief, six Cultural Resources Planners, one Planning Technician, and one Administrative Specialist. The Chief is solely responsible for the supervision of eight staff and the management and coordination of all regulatory and master planning responsibilities for the Department. The Division lacks a dedicated supervisory role to: • Provide strategic leadership and ensure alignment with countywide planning goals. • Manage and prioritize the work of the Historic Preservation Commission, a Montgomery County BCC with sole regulatory authority over the Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) process. • Modernize and manage the Historic Preservation Tax Credit program, delivering millions of dollars in tax credits to owners of county-designated historic properties. • Assist the Division Chief with implementing and delegating new projects and work program items for the Division and Planning Department. • Assist the Division Chief with coordination and communication across regulatory and master planning activities, and across county government agencies including DPS, DHCA, MCDOT, and DGS. The Cultural Resources Supervisor would: • Lead the HP Division’s regulatory efforts, focusing on the support of all Historic Preservation Commission activities and initiatives • Oversee staff performance and development, creating a sustainable structure for mentorship and succession planning • Ensure regulatory compliance and policy implementation, strengthening the county’s ability to protect its cultural assets • Coordinate cross-divisional collaboration, embedding preservation insights into long-range planning and development review A Cultural Resources Supervisor will provide the leadership structure necessary to scale operations, deliver on equity goals, and ensure that Montgomery County’s preservation program is responsive to the needs of historic property owners and the HPC.
Objectives Achieved	1. Expand regulatory projects capacity • Update and modernize ordinances, regulations, and guidelines to better meet community needs and historic preservation priorities

	• Deliver relevant and new content regarding historic property rehabilitation and available financial incentives to property owners through expanded staff capacity 2. Improve implementation and compliance • More dedicated time to coordinating regulatory compliance with property owners and DPS/DHCA • Ensure regulatory compliance and strengthen protections for historic and cultural assets. 3. Enhance public engagement and trust • Increase capacity to engage with residents, property owners, and community groups.
Measures of Success	• Faster response times: Staff approvable HAWPs and tax credits can be reviewed more quickly with a dedicated Supervisor not balancing regulatory with master planning and other initiatives • Reduced workload strain: Improved workload balance across HP staff, reducing burnout and turnover. • Stronger interdepartmental and intergovernmental collaboration: More seamless integration of preservation insights into planning and development review. Better representation of historic preservation issues with DPS, DHCA, MCDOT, and DGS leadership. • Enhanced and expanded community response: Able to create and implement new Design Guidelines, white papers, digital materials, educational workshops, and other tools to assist property owners with the regulatory review process. • Process modernization and effective engagement: Able to complete updates to existing ordinances and regulations to streamline development review activities for the HPC and general public.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 1: Employees • Strategy 1.3: Create and promote pathways for professional growth Priority 3: Efficiency • Strategy 3.3: Work with the development community, government agency partners, and other stakeholders to implement clear, efficient and consistent process for planning • Action 3.3.6: Identify updates to the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Preservation Tax Credit program to incentivize and facilitate adaptive reuse and/or repurposing of existing buildings Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy 5.2: Serve as an independent advisor on land use decisions and policies to implement <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i>

4. CYBERSECURITY – IT/TELECOM SPECIALIST III

Information Technology & Innovation Division

Budget Request	\$137,833 (Grade 28, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Montgomery Planning requests funding for a Cybersecurity Specialist III position to safeguard the department’s growing digital infrastructure and ensure secure, equitable access to planning services for all residents. At its core, the measure of cybersecurity success lies in the organization’s ability to protect assets, maintain operational continuity, and nurture user trust, all while adapting to new threats and business models. It is Montgomery Planning Department’s best interest to invest in a cybersecurity team to leverage cybersecurity tools and resources to safeguard the integrity, availability, and reliability of the systems and data that underpin every interaction. As the department’s reliance on digital infrastructure grows, so does the urgency to strengthen its cybersecurity posture. This investment is not just technical, it’s foundational to achieving the goals outlined in <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i>, the Climate Action Plan, Vision Zero, and the County Technology Strategic Plan. <i>Why this role is critical</i> Montgomery Planning’s websites and portals are essential tools for public engagement, transparency, and service delivery. They host: • Sector and master plans • Housing data and policy updates • Planning Board schedules and public hearings • Development application forms and fee schedules • GIS maps, ePlans, and interactive tools • Virtual town halls, surveys, and equity-focused planning resources As digital engagement expands, so do the risks. A Cybersecurity Specialist III would: • Monitor and respond to threats across planning systems and platforms • Ensure compliance with county and state cybersecurity frameworks • Protect sensitive data from breaches, manipulation, or unauthorized access • Safeguard public trust in digital engagement tools, especially for marginalized communities • Support secure inter-agency communication during emergencies or traffic incidents This position is not a luxury, it’s a necessity. It ensures that Montgomery Planning can continue to deliver secure, inclusive, and resilient services in an increasingly digital and data-driven environment. Given the growing complexity and frequency of cybersecurity threats, it is essential that we establish a dedicated cybersecurity position within the ITI division, not CAS. The nature of our operations, systems, and data flows are distinct from enterprise-wide concerns and require specialized, embedded oversight.

	<i>Unique threat landscape in ITI</i> ITI manages a suite of systems and platforms that are tailored to our department’s mission-critical functions. These include: • Custom-built planning and permitting applications • GIS platforms and spatial data services • Public engagement tools and portals • Legacy systems with specialized integrations • Sensitive datasets tied to land use, development, and infrastructure These systems are not only unique, they are also high-value targets. Recently we have experienced: • Phishing attempts targeting planning staff credentials • Bot-driven scraping of public-facing datasets • Unauthorized API access attempts on mapping platforms • Malware probes on legacy systems with limited vendor support • Denial-of-service attempts during public comment periods These are not generic threats, they are tailored to the systems and workflows we manage. A centralized cybersecurity role in CAS would not have the operational proximity or domain-specific insight to respond effectively or proactively.
Objectives Achieved	The community and county rely upon robust access to Montgomery Planning websites and portals for communications on Planning initiatives and updates, sector and master plans, housing data and policy updates, Planning Board meeting schedules and agendas, public hearings, the Development Applications Guide and application forms and fee schedules, GIS maps, ePlans, and more. Strengthening Montgomery County’s cybersecurity posture directly supports the goals and metrics outlined in several strategic plans, including <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i>, the Climate Action Plan, and the Vision Zero Action Plan. Specifically, <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> emphasizes modernizing infrastructure and services to support a vibrant economy. Cybersecurity ensures the reliability and safety of digital systems that underpin housing, transit, and economic development initiatives. Secure digital access is essential for equitable service delivery, especially in underserved communities. Cybersecurity helps protect sensitive data and ensures trust in online services. <i>Thrive</i> relies on data to guide land use and development. Cybersecurity safeguards the integrity of planning data and systems. The Climate Action Plan includes strategies like Building Energy Performance Standards and electric vehicle infrastructure. These rely on secure digital systems to monitor and manage energy use. Cybersecurity protects critical infrastructure (e.g., water, energy, transportation) from cyber threats that could disrupt climate resilience efforts. Secure systems ensure safe and trustworthy communication with residents about climate initiatives and emergency alerts. Vision Zero relies on crash data, predictive analytics, and smart traffic systems. Cybersecurity ensures this data is accurate and protected from tampering. As the county deploys smart signals, bike lane sensors, and pedestrian safety tech, cybersecurity is essential to prevent system failures or malicious interference. Cybersecurity supports secure communication between agencies during

	traffic incidents and public safety emergencies. The County Technology Strategic Plan calls for upgrading legacy systems to reduce vulnerabilities and improve efficiency and to provide all residents safe, equitable access to secure platforms. Cybersecurity frameworks support transparency, accountability, and alignment with county-wide strategic goals. Montgomery Planning is committed to engaging diverse communities through digital platforms—such as virtual town halls, online surveys, and interactive maps. Cybersecurity ensures these tools are secure from breaches, protecting user data and participation, especially in marginalized communities who may rely more heavily on mobile or public internet access. Cybersecurity helps to prevent unauthorized access or manipulation of data in tools including the Community Equity Index, Equity Focus Areas, and historical segregation maps which inform planning decisions. Strong cybersecurity also prevents disruptions or misinformation in public engagement and reinforces confidence in Montgomery Planning Department’s commitment to fair and inclusive planning.
Measures of Success	• System outages or data breaches that could delay development reviews, permit processing, or public engagement are prevented. • Costly recovery efforts, legal issues, and reputational damage are avoided, freeing up resources for planning priorities.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 4: Innovation • Strategy 4.1: Advance use of cutting-edge technology to push and stay ahead of the industry • Action 4.1.1: Enhance cyber security posture and improve cyber resilience • Action 4.1.2: Invest in technologies that improve efficiency and resilience, and allow the Department to employ cutting-edge approaches to our work

5. ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST – PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND MARKETING SPEC III

Communications & Engagement Division

Budget Request	\$137,833 (Grade 28, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Montgomery Planning is requesting funding for a new Engagement Specialist position to support the department's expanding public engagement efforts and ensure equitable, consistent, and impactful community involvement across all planning initiatives. This role is essential to: • Coordinate engagement activities across planning teams to ensure alignment with the department's Equitable Engagement Guide and strategic goals. • Support and sustain the Community Planning Academy (CPA), a flagship initiative designed to educate and empower residents to participate meaningfully in the planning process. • Develop communications content that raises awareness of engagement opportunities and highlights community voices and planning outcomes. • Strengthen inclusive outreach by identifying and removing barriers to participation, especially for historically underrepresented communities. Why this role is critical: <i>Growing Demand for Engagement</i> As planning projects increasingly emphasize community-driven outcomes, the volume and complexity of engagement activities have grown. A dedicated specialist ensures these efforts are well-coordinated, culturally responsive, and accessible. <i>Equity in Action</i> Understanding the planning process is a key barrier to participation. The Engagement Specialist will help bridge that gap by managing the CPA and developing tools that foster transparency and trust. <i>Strategic Communications</i> This role will create targeted messaging and outreach strategies that reflect the diversity of Montgomery County's communities and ensure residents are informed and invited to participate. <i>Sustaining the Community Planning Academy</i> The Community Planning Academy cannot be maintained or expanded without dedicated staff. This position ensures continuity, quality, and growth of the program.
Objectives Achieved	A position to assist with community engagement and the Community Planning Academy. Understanding the planning process is essential to removing the barriers that prevent residents from participating in the planning process. In addition to maintaining the Community Planning Academy, which fosters understanding of the planning and development review process, this position would coordinate the engagement happening across the department and develop communications to raise awareness about the department's engagement efforts.

Measures of Success	Once hired, it will be part of this position's work program to track key performance data on department communications and coordinate with planning teams to determine whether engagement efforts are successful.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Action 2.1.2: Dedicate a point person within each applicable division to focus on community building and resident engagement • Action 2.1.3: Collect baseline data through a survey on perception of county residents about planning, development and engagement preferences. • Action 2.1.6: Leverage and maintain Planning staff relationships built through master plan efforts • Action 2.1.7: Prioritize strategic communications planning for each plan, project and policy initiative • Action 2.1.8: Remove barriers to participation by non-English speakers • Action 2.2.1: Support and strengthen resident participation in planning efforts • Action 2.2.4: Employ and enhance the Equitable Engagement Guide to integrate social equity and cultural diversity through master planning and placemaking practices • Action 2.6.1: Develop and launch customer relationship management tool to document staff relationships with community-based organizations • Action 2.6.2: Crowdsource ideas/conduct competitions for community members to submit ideas • Action 2.6.4: Launch and sustain the Planning Academy Priority 4: Innovation • Action 4.1.5: Develop internal communications and training protocols for dissemination of new technology and tools • Action 4.2.1: Improve communications across the Department to promote innovation topic areas that different Divisions are focused on Priority 5: Leadership • Action 5.8.1: Launch education campaign to raise awareness for the Department's role and branding • Action 5.8.3: Strengthen relationships with the media, bloggers, and influencers focused on the work of the Department

6. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST III

Management Services Division

Budget Request	\$129,591 (Grade 26, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Through employee engagement conducted in preparing the Department's Strategic Plan, staff identified five categories as the top priorities to move the department forward. "Employees" was the first category on the list. The feedback from the strategic plan committee and the staff regarding "Employees" include things that impact all the other categories. The priorities and strategies for the Employees category include: • Foster a sense of belonging and joy in the workplace. • Increase staff capacity through training. • Create and promote pathways for professional growth and career advancement. • Build a diverse workforce at all levels of the Department. • Promote pride in public service. Four work areas have been targeted to fulfill the priorities and strategies of the Employees category: 1) Training 2) Mentoring 3) Succession Planning 4) Employee Resource Groups In 2023-2024, the Planning Department held a Leadership Institute for current and rising leaders. Participants also identified mentoring, succession planning, and employee resource groups as priorities. They researched how to successfully implement such programs and recommended dedicating a staff person to coordinate them. Additionally, over the past 10 years or so, the department has rolled out successful pilot programs in each of these areas, but without a dedicated staff to focus on them, they have not realized their full and lasting potential. This Organizational Development Specialist position would build on the successful groundwork that has been laid and will grow the programs to benefit the department through continuous development, improved efficiency, better communication, enhanced collaboration, improved employee morale and organizational culture, and better adaption to change. <i>Training</i> As the department's work program expands with limited resources, it is critical to cross train staff increase work capacity. In 2023, the Commission launched a robust learning management system that, in addition to allowing staff to register and track trainings attended, it can be used to create curriculums and individual development plans (IDPs) and assign training to guide staff in their professional growth. In addition, it will allow the department to evaluate the return on investment regarding which trainings to offer to be more strategic, cost effective and to meet staff needs. This robust new system requires a dedicated staff to effectively maximize the functionality of the system and to use it as designed. Currently, the department is only using the system to register and track training attendance as current staff do not have the capacity to expand the training program.

Mentoring

The data from various studies prove that mentoring programs benefit the employee and employer and has a positive impact on employee morale. Mentoring can create a culture of learning and growth, which can improve retention, foster inclusion, develop leadership, and lead to increased productivity, improved performance, higher job satisfaction, and the creation of a stronger workplace culture. Using the information from the pilot program and research gathered by the Leadership Institute, this Organizational Development Specialist would develop an ongoing mentoring program to foster a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Succession Planning

Succession Planning is critical for 1) the department as employees nearing retirement and 2) for employees looking for a clear career path. Currently, twenty to twenty-five percent of the Planning Department's staff are eligible for retirement. Succession planning helps ensure a smooth transition from one leader to the next, so that qualified leaders are ready to take over when current leaders leave, thereby minimizing disruptions and risks. For employees looking for a clear career path, as mentioned above in the Training section, cross training/succession planning is critical not only to increase work capacity but also to reduce the risk of key person dependency, which occurs when one staff member is solely responsible for an essential skill. Succession planning can help the department to anticipate future needs by identifying the most qualified rising leaders and preparing them for future roles. This Organizational Development Specialist would create Succession Planning programs both for employees nearing retirement and for employees looking for a clear career path which would meet the strategic plan criteria to create and promote pathways for professional growth and career advancement.

Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resources Groups (ERGs) are voluntary groups of employees who share a common interest, background, or characteristic and are led by employees. ERGs can help create a more inclusive and diverse workplace and can benefit both employees and the department.

- Research from the Center for Talent Innovation shows that employees who are part of ERGs are 50% more likely to be engaged and 80% more likely to stay with their organizations.
- A report by Glassdoor found that 67% of job seekers consider workplace an important factor in their decision to apply for a job. Companies with strong ERGs are often viewed more favorably in this regard.
- Data from the SHRM Foundation highlights that companies with ERGs experience improved community relations and employee connections, to a stronger organizational culture.

ERGs contribute to higher engagement, retention, diversity, innovation, and overall company performance. They are essential for creating a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment. This Organizational Development Specialist would work with employees to develop and maintain effective ERGs.

Objectives Achieved	This Organizational Development Specialist will create, develop, and implement the four work areas that have been targeted to fulfill the priorities and strategies of the “Employees” category of the Strategic Plan. These priorities and strategies were brought forth by the Planning Department staff during the creation of the strategic plan. These priorities and strategies are key components to the success of the department.
Measures of Success	This Organizational Development Specialist will play a crucial role in enhancing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Planning Department by improving processes, managing change, developing leaders, and fostering a positive organizational culture. This position will help ensure that the department can achieve its goals and adapt effectively to evolving challenges and opportunities. The success of the programs will be measured via employee satisfaction surveys, measuring retention rates, increased diversity in higher level positions, measuring mentoring goals achievement, measuring increased ERG participation and activities, tracking promotion of mentees and ERG members, and evaluating how often the succession plans are utilized during actual transitions. This position is in alignment with the department’s strategic plan, specifically, the strategy, “increase staff capacity through training.” The need for this position was identified consistently throughout the strategic planning process with staff. As stated in the strategic plan, “increasing our impact starts with investing in the development and advancement of our current and future teams.” The department must intentionally and thoughtfully create a welcoming environment for staff to learn, grow, and develop their talents. The department recognizes that a healthy and inclusive workplace environment will attract and retain a more diverse workforce.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 1: Employees • Strategy 1.1: Foster a sense of belonging and joy in the workplace • Action 1.1.1: Create employee resource groups to provide similarly situated employees with a natural support structure • Action 1.1.2: Organize team, division, and department teambuilding activities • Action 1.1.3: Recognize and celebrate individual and team accomplishments • Strategy: 1.2 Increase staff capacity through training • Action 1.2.1: Hire one FTE HR professional to manage training and learning • Action 1.2.2: Complete a comprehensive audit and assessment of all ongoing training • Action 1.2.3: Revamp core competency video series • Action 1.2.4: Develop annual calendar of trainings that includes internal and external trainings and conferences • Strategy 1.3: Create and promote pathways for professional growth, career advancement, and succession planning • Action 1.3.1: Stay connected to former interns and employees to support recruitment efforts as a source of referrals and returning employees • Action 1.3.3: Identify pathways for career advancement • Action 1.3.4: Transfer institutional knowledge by documenting key processes and creating redundancies through job sharing • Action 1.3.5: Revamp and launch mentoring program that engages staff at all levels • Action 1.3.6: Create a staff exchange program to cross train staff in different planning functions

7. MASTER PLANNING – CULTURAL RESOURCES PLANNER I

Historic Preservation Division

Budget Request	\$110,268 (Grade 20, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Montgomery Planning is requesting funding for a new Cultural Resource Planner position to expand the capacity of the Historic Preservation (HP) Division and meet growing public demand for inclusive, timely, and equitable preservation services. <i>Current staffing limitations</i> The HP Division is currently staffed with only two Cultural Resource Planners who serve as historians supporting three area master plan teams in addition to sole responsibility for the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites. At this staffing level: • Properties have remained on the Locational Atlas for over 50 years without a final determination on historic designation. • Public requests for designation to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation (MPHP) often face multi-year delays due to limited staff capacity. • Staff are unable to conduct new research or prepare standalone MPHP amendments in a timely manner while simultaneously supporting area master plans. <i>Growing demand for inclusive preservation</i> Recent community requests have focused on recognizing sites tied to: • Women's history • African American heritage • Midcentury modern architecture However, the current team lacks the capacity to proactively address additional underrepresented narratives, including: • LGBTQ+ history • Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage • Hispanic heritage • Other culturally significant sites currently absent from the MPHP <i>Purpose and impact of the new position</i> This new Cultural Resource Planner would: • Accelerate public designation requests, reducing wait times and improving responsiveness to community interest. • Advance equity in preservation by researching and preparing MPHP amendments that reflect the full diversity of Montgomery County's history. • Support area master plans with timely and thorough historic resource analysis. • Complete and expand special projects including the Mapping Segregation Project Phase 2 and other initiatives. • Ensure compliance with preservation policies and strengthen the county's ability to protect its cultural assets.

	This position is essential to modernizing Montgomery County’s preservation program, honoring the stories of all communities, and ensuring that the county’s built environment reflects the richness of its shared history.
Objectives Achieved	Currently, the HP Division is staffed with two Cultural Resource Planners dedicated as historians to support three area teams for new master plan initiatives. At this level of staffing, properties have remained on the Locational Atlas for 50 years without a final determination on historic designation. Additionally, staff are not able to support members of the public who wish to list their properties to the MPHP in a timely manner as they do not have the capacity to undertake new research and prepare these standalone master plan amendments while concurrently assisting the area teams. New requests from the public for designation typically must wait several years before the HP staff are able to fit these requests into the work program. Recent requests have focused on listing sites related to women’s history, African American history, and midcentury modern architecture. Staff would also then be available to work on new MPHP amendments focusing on LGBTQ+ history, Asian American/Pacific Islander history, Hispanic Heritage, and other listings for cultural heritage that are currently absent from the MPHP. With an additional planner, it would be the goal for the Division to have new equity portions of master planning chapters and other new histories produced entirely in-house instead of relying on any additional consultant funds. This would allow the master planning teams to use funds saved on public outreach or other plan-specific budget items.
Measures of Success	The Locational Atlas resurvey and Mapping Segregation will be entirely completed within three to four years. Additionally, the HP Division will be fully staffed and will be able to research and write new histories focused on racial equity and diversity for all area master plans, in addition to new and inclusive stand-alone MPHP amendments.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 1: Employees • Strategy 1.3: Create and promote pathways for professional growth, career advancement, and succession planning Priority 2: Communities & Partners • Strategy 2.4: Focus on historically underinvested regions and vulnerable communities • Action 2.4.6: Complete Mapping Segregation Phase 2 Priority 3: Efficiency

8. MASTER PLANNING AND REGULATORY – PLANNER II

Upcounty Planning Division

Budget Request	\$121,781 (Grade 24, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Upcounty is requesting a new Planner II position to help lead anticipated master planning efforts on the horizon, to help better implement master plans after approval and adoption, and to help review the anticipated influx of regulatory applications from Germantown and Clarksburg. To better support master planning efforts and implementation while processing the anticipated surge in development applications from Germantown and Clarksburg over the next 5–10 years, the division urgently needs additional staff capacity to: • Lead and support new master planning efforts • Implement adopted plans more effectively • Keep pace with regulatory review demands This Planner II position will serve as a “second chair” on master plans—an essential role that allows newer staff to build experience while relieving pressure on senior planners: • Prevents burnout among experienced staff by distributing workload more sustainably • Builds a pipeline of planning leadership by allowing junior staff to grow into lead roles • Improves plan quality and continuity by ensuring consistent staffing from visioning through implementation The Department does an excellent job at producing plans, but limited resources and increasing master plan demands make it difficult to sustain current efforts while also focusing on plan implementation efforts. Implementation often takes a backseat to as staff turns its attention to the next plans in the department’s work program. Implementation of complex master plans requires sustained and deliberate effort if the plans are to come to fruition and deliver on the vision and expectations that were cultivated through the master plan process by the public and decision makers. With the anticipated influx of development plans in Germantown and Clarksburg over the next five to 10 years, the Upcounty Planning division will need additional staff to process the anticipated applications and keep up with the current trend of regulatory applications. This is a critical investment in the future of Upcounty. With this Planner II position, Montgomery Planning will be better equipped to manage growth, implement community visions, and deliver on the promise of inclusive and responsive planning.
Objectives Achieved	To allow staff to be more responsive, more accessible, and more embedded within the communities they serve. Staff will be more efficient at conducting master plans in a timely manner, while allowing more public participation and engagement throughout the master planning, implementation, and regulatory processes. Additional staff will allow us to better deliver on the vision of community plans, rather than solely relying on market conditions and other forces and trends to determine a plan's outcome and allow the Department to continue to address equity and diversity of staff.

Measures of Success	• Stronger presence in Upcounty communities, with staff more embedded and responsive to local needs • Improved public trust and satisfaction, reflected in feedback and participation metrics • More equitable outcomes in plan implementation, especially in historically underserved areas • Reduced turnaround time for master plan deliverables and regulatory reviews • Increased public engagement in Upcounty master plans (e.g., number of participants, feedback submissions, outreach events) • Higher percentage of master plan recommendations implemented within 2-3 years of adoption • Improved regulatory throughput: ability to process more applications without delays, especially in Germantown and Clarksburg • Shortened wait time for community-requested planning initiatives or amendments
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Action 2.1.6: Leverage and maintain Planning staff relationships built through master plan efforts • Action 2.2.1: Support and strengthen resident participation in planning efforts • Action 2.2.5: Advance and fund the Department's Placemaking Strategic Plan • Action 2.6.3: Identify neighborhood liaisons within each planning division to serve as a point of contact with local civic associations and other neighborhood organizations Priority 3: Efficiency • Action 3.3.7: Update and enforce the Lead Agency MOU to facilitate review of development applications • Action 3.3.8: Enforce the Planning Process MOU with MCPS to ensure early coordination on each agency's planning efforts

9. POLICY INITIATIVES – PLANNER III

Transportation Planning Division

Budget Request	\$137,833 (Grade 28, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Transportation policy, legislation, and countywide functional master planning are essential components of the Department’s work program, helping to frame and advance implementation of the <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> goals. This initiative would hire a Transportation Policy Planner to support key county initiatives, including the Vision Zero Action Plan, <i>Pedestrian Master Plan</i> implementation, as well as an increased focus on corridor planning and resilience in transportation systems. Increased county efforts to implement Bus Rapid Transit on US 29, New Hampshire Avenue, MD 355, and North Bethesda and anticipated efforts on Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Randolph Road require additional coordination and review that this position would also support.
Objectives Achieved	Transportation policy, legislation, and countywide functional master planning are essential components of the department’s work program, helping to frame and advance implementation of the <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> goals. This initiative would hire a Transportation Policy Planner to support key county initiatives, including the Vision Zero Action Plan, <i>Pedestrian Master Plan</i> implementation, as well as an increased focus on corridor planning and resilience in transportation systems. Increased county efforts to implement Bus Rapid Transit on US 29, New Hampshire Avenue, MD 355, and North Bethesda and anticipated efforts on Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Randolph Road require additional coordination and review that this position would also support. The Transportation Planner III position will directly support key county initiatives, including the Vision Zero Action Plan, <i>Pedestrian Master Plan</i> implementation, and an increased focus on corridor planning and resilience in transportation systems in support of <i>Thrive’s</i> objectives of racial equity and social justice, environmental resilience, and economic competitiveness. The position will also support implementation of the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan and the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit, and the quadrennial update of the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, essential to ensuring that development advances consistent with <i>Thrive’s</i> vision for the county. The Transportation Planner III position will help achieve equity goals by supporting the evaluation, development, and implementation of plans, policies, and legislation in support of equitable transportation outcomes.
Measures of Success	Funding this position will provide assurance that the department will be able to advance more of the <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> Recommended Actions and the Strategic Plan Priorities, Strategies, and Actions.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 1: Employees - Action: 1.3.3 Identify pathways for career advancement Priority 2: Communities and Partners - Action 2.3.2: Finalize an approach to corridor planning that identifies the role of a corridor, the relationships between neighborhoods along or adjacent to it, appropriate engagement tools, zoning considerations, etc.

	• Action 2.5.2: Strengthen relationships with partner agencies at various levels of the Department Priority 3: Efficiency • Action 3.3.1: Update Green Streets Guidelines to advance corridor planning and climate action goals • Action 3.3.4: Study and recommend mandatory referral updates to state code to require public facilities to conform to the county's master and functional plans Priority 4: Innovation • Action 4.3.2: Actively participate in MWCOG efforts, workgroups, and committees Priority 5: Leadership • Action 5.2.10: Prepare a comprehensive resilience functional master plan • Action 5.3.2: Review county code to identify updates needed to better achieve <i>Thrive</i> and other county goals • Action 5.3.6: Adjust parking standards (minimums or set maximums) to free up space for other design elements • Action 5.4.10: Develop countywide streetscape standards to preserve and plant large canopy shade trees to mitigate heat island effects within public rights-of-way • Action 5.6.1: Review and update the Complete Streets Design Guide for consistency with <i>Thrive</i> concepts • Action 5.6.3: Study and reconsider transportation policies based on the impacts of remote work • Action 5.6.4: Identify updates to the Subdivision Code to support street grids, safety goals, and other transportation policy goals • Action 5.6.5: Revise County Code and policies to use vehicle miles traveled as the measure of transportation impact • Action 5.6.6: Create and maintain a consolidated transportation functional plan that combines and reconciles the <i>Master Plan of Highways and Transitways</i>, the <i>Bicycle Master Plan</i>, the <i>Pedestrian Master Plan</i>, and Complete Streets Design Guide standards • Action 5.6.7: Update the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways to remove master-planned but unbuilt highways and road widenings that are not consistent with <i>Thrive</i> • Action 5.6.9: Assess transit station areas and ways to ensure there is sufficient ridership to support desired transit service • Action 5.7.6: Create guidelines and standards to encourage placemaking within public rights-of-way • Action 5.8.2: Build relationships and provide expertise to Maryland General Assembly elected officials and staff
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10. URBAN DESIGN – PLANNER III

Design, Placemaking, & Policy Division

Budget Request	\$137,833 (Grade 28, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Montgomery Planning is requesting funding for a new Urban Design Planner III position to meet the rising demand for design excellence in planning and development. This position is not just a staffing need; it's a strategic investment in the future of Montgomery County. As Montgomery County continues to grow and evolve, the community expects more than just functional development; they expect places that are beautiful, inclusive, and connected. The department's planning work must reflect this shift. The upcoming master plans, corridor studies, and development reviews require a dedicated urban designer to: • Shape the public realm with design that promotes walkability, safety, and community identity • Translate complex planning ideas into clear, compelling graphics that engage residents and decision-makers • Ensure equity through design, creating spaces that serve all communities with dignity and intention • Support climate resilience through landscape strategies, green infrastructure, and sustainable design principles This position directly supports the goals of <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i>, the Climate Action Plan, and Vision Zero by integrating design thinking into land use, mobility, and environmental planning. An Urban Design Planner III will: • Elevate the quality of master plans and development reviews • Produce graphic materials for master plans and other projects that illustrate boundary maps, existing conditions, specialty maps, sketches, diagrams, potential massings, and various design recommendations • Coordinate the production of 3D renderings to better visualize density, massing, height and scale of urban spaces • Prepare design alternatives to facilitate discussions with applicants and their consultants • Strengthen coordination between planners, architects, and engineers • Enhance public engagement through visual storytelling and design clarity • Assist in the preparation of form-based code and development standards to be applied through master plans to the county's growth corridors • Ensure that growth is not only smart and sustainable—but also inspiring and inclusive • Host design charrettes for the area teams and leadership to engage in the master plan process and collectively brainstorm on emerging ideas and preliminary recommendations • Assist with community engagement activities and outreach materials, such as, maps and urban design precedent boards • Produce urban design guidelines as companion documents to master plans that focus on specific districts or priority sites • Contribute written urban design sections to master plans that elaborate on the urban design vision and recommendations for the master plan area as well as buildings, open spaces, and connectors

	• Participate in presentations to a variety of audiences including Planning Board, County Council and community groups, and answer follow up questions on urban design content • Advocate for design excellence on all development applications in accordance with approved master plans, design guidelines and professional best practices • Manage the urban design review component on numerous development applications throughout Montgomery County and coordinates on comments to align with other reviewing agencies <i>Community expectations are rising:</i> Residents want to see themselves reflected in the built environment. They want neighborhoods that feel intentional, safe, and welcoming. This position helps Montgomery Planning deliver on that promise—by embedding design excellence into every phase of planning. <i>This is the moment to invest in design leadership:</i> The Urban Design Planner III will help Montgomery County grow with purpose, beauty, and equity, ensuring county communities thrive for generations to come. To advance Montgomery Planning’s mission of creating resilient, inclusive, and vibrant communities, it is essential to add a dedicated Urban Design Planner III to the department. Urban designers bring a unique set of visual communication and design skills that provide a holistic understanding of architectural insights, landscape design, active mobility infrastructure, and environmental stewardship practices. An urban designer is able to develop a vision that brings ideas from these diverse disciplines together to complement long-range planning and development review in an easy-to-understand set of graphics. Adding an urban designer to the department will ensure that growth is not only smart and sustainable—but also beautiful, equitable, and deeply connected to the people who live here.
Objectives Achieved	Adequate staffing for the Design Team will ensure that the masterplans and design guidelines put together by the department adequately address community concerns related to the character and compatibility of future development. Adequate staffing for the Design team will ensure that all master plans and design guidelines are visually compelling and easy to understand for community members and developers alike. New development will be built to a higher quality of design, enhancing the setting and value of existing neighborhoods. The Design Team directly contributes to all master plans, studies and design guidelines that seek to implement <i>Thrive</i>, the Climate Action Plan, and Vision Zero. This position will directly work on several such plans and efforts. This position will enable the Design Team to ensure that all county residents benefit equitably from good design and that design elevates the quality of life of all residents, especially those living in underserved areas of county.
Measures of Success	• Master plans, studies and design guidelines delivered in a timely manner. • Renderings of concepts and recommendations prepared throughout project efforts. • Development of form-based zones and development standards that can be utilized by future master plans.

	• Increased predictability in the review of development applications by following standard processes with clear expectations that streamline development and reduce uncertainty. • Renewed trust and strong partnerships with development review stakeholders by using a creative, solution-based approach, including sketching alternatives and sharing precedents to build consensus early in the process. • High employee retention rate and lack of burn-out among urban designers in the department.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Action 2.3: Prioritize corridor-focused planning efforts • Action 2.3.1: Develop and promote internal and external messaging about prioritizing corridor planning efforts • Action 2.3.2: Finalize an approach to corridor planning that identifies the role of a corridor, the relationships between neighborhoods along or adjacent to it, appropriate engagement tools, zoning considerations, etc. • Action 2.3.3: Develop form-based zones for corridor planning • Action 2.3.4: Identify next corridors to be master-planned and create plan teams accordingly Priority 3: Efficiency • Action 3.1: Adapt Department structure and Strategic Plan as needed to ensure performance and efficiency • Action 3.1.1: Assess current structure's ability to address strategic priorities • Action 3.1.2: Pursue structural changes to increase flexibility, responsiveness, productivity, and efficiency, and best address priorities and achieve the Department's mission Priority 4: Innovation • Strategy 4.2: Support opportunities for staff to propose, pilot, and evaluate creative solutions to address critical issues • Action 4.2.3: Designate portion of job function to spend time on innovation • Strategy 4.3: Share and exchange information and best practices within the agency, regionally, and nationally • Action 4.3.4: Host lectures, workshops, and design/development competitions on relevant planning topics Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy 5.3: Pursue transformative change through legislation • Strategy 5.7: Advance design excellence and the place-based planning recommendations in <i>Thrive</i> • Action 5.7.2: Provide internal and external education on design excellence • Action 5.7.3: Establish design excellence criteria for new Montgomery County Public School facilities • Action 5.7.4: Create guidelines for cost-effective design strategies for projects with high levels of affordable housing

11. MASTER PLANNING – PLANNER II

East County Planning Division

Budget Request	\$121,781 (Grade 24, 1.0 WY) (mid-point plus benefits)
Description	Montgomery Planning is requesting funding for a new Community Engagement Planner position to support four major master plan efforts in East County scheduled for FY 2026. This position is essential to ensuring more robust, inclusive, and effective resident participation in the planning process - especially in communities that have historically been underrepresented. This position is not just about outreach; it's about impact. It ensures that East County residents are not only heard, but actively shaping the future of their communities. With this investment, Montgomery Planning can deliver on its promise of equitable, community-driven planning. Further, this Planner II position will serve as a “second chair” on master plans—an essential role that allows newer staff to build experience while relieving pressure on senior planners: • Prevents burnout among experienced staff by distributing workload more sustainably • Builds a pipeline of planning leadership by allowing junior staff to grow into lead roles • Improves plan quality and continuity by ensuring consistent staffing from visioning through implementation
Objectives Achieved	• More comprehensive engagement across all four East County master plans, with tailored outreach strategies that reflect the diversity of each community. • Improved equity outcomes by embedding inclusive engagement practices that align with Montgomery Planning’s Equity Agenda and the Equitable Engagement Guide. • Stronger public trust and transparency through consistent, accessible communication and opportunities for meaningful input. • Better alignment between community vision and plan outcomes, ensuring that master plans reflect lived experiences and local priorities.
Measures of Success	• Increased number and diversity of residents participating in master plan engagement activities. • Higher satisfaction and trust in the planning process, measured through post-engagement surveys and feedback. • More equitable representation in plan recommendations and implementation strategies. • Timely delivery of engagement milestones across all four master plans.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Action 2.1.6: Leverage and maintain Planning staff relationships built through master plan efforts • Action 2.2.1: Support and strengthen resident participation in planning efforts • Action 2.6.3: Identify neighborhood liaisons within each planning division to serve as a point of contact with local civic associations and other neighborhood organizations

FY27 ONE-TIME WORK PROGRAM INITIATIVES

12. CLIMATE AND RESILIENCE PLAN	
Environment & Climate Division	
Budget Request	\$150,000 – One-time
Description	The Climate and Resilience Master Plan will identify infrastructure and climate related weaknesses in the County and develop specific strategies for adaptation and resilience to climate impacts including extreme heat, flooding, and other extreme weather events. This plan will focus on improving infrastructure and community resilience both during extreme weather events and throughout everyday life with a focus on equity. Extreme heat is the number one climate related death in Maryland. As of July 29, 2025, 13 people in Maryland have died of heat related illnesses this summer. This plan should be included in the FY27 budget because the time is now to address the resilience of Montgomery County. Other executive agencies, such as DEP, are examining climate issues like flooding. The Planning Department is uniquely positioned to not only examine the issues but also provide mitigation solutions that can be implemented through development while balancing the other needs of the county, such as housing.
Objectives Achieved	Protection of health, well-being, and property. This Master Plan would be in alignment with the environmental recommendations of <i>Thrive</i>, the entire focus of the Climate Action Plan, and provide co-benefits of meeting Vision Zero goals. Underrepresented communities have historically less climate resilience due to less resources, past zoning and land use decisions, and infrastructure allocation. This Master Plan will study these issues and provide a roadmap for rectifying these inequities through future mitigation and investments.
Project Resources	The Staff would perform the majority of the work, including leading and drafting the plan, collaborating with stakeholders, identifying existing and future climate issues, and recommending detailed proposed mitigation. Consultants would help measure items such as air quality, where Staff do not have the equipment, and provide technical expertise for modeling the existing conditions and how the proposed solutions would mitigate the existing and future conditions. If the plan were to not have the modeling analysis and data needed to provide the impact specific to Montgomery County, the plan would be too broad and not as effective.
Measures of Success	One measure of success is the collaboration internally among Divisions and externally with other agencies to develop a cohesive approach to improving the County's climate resiliency. Another measure of success is increasing public awareness of climate issues and their personal investment through participation in the plan. Future measures of success would be decreased health impacts and mortality from climate issues, providing greater risk management for the County, and the development of reliable and equitably distributed infrastructure during extreme weather events.
Strategic Plan	Priority 2: Communities and Partners Strategy 2.4: Focus on historically underinvested regions and vulnerable communities

Priority(ies) and Action(s)	• Action 2.4.2: Conduct study to identify boundaries, players and issues in East County • Action 2.4.4: Study the disproportionate distribution of land uses from a racial equity and social justice perspective • Action 2.4.8: Integrate CEI throughout the Department's planning efforts • Strategy 2.5: Strengthen collaboration with partner agencies • Action 2.5.2: Strengthen relationships with partner agencies at various levels of the Department • Action 2.5.3: Build relationships with nonprofits to better engage them in Planning efforts • Action 2.5.6: Engage agencies that have been less active in the planning and development review process Priority 4: Innovation • Strategy 4.2: Support opportunities for staff to propose, pilot, and evaluate creative solutions to address critical issues • Action 4.2.1: Improve communications across the Department to promote innovation topic areas that different Divisions are focused on • Strategy 4.3: Share and exchange information and best practices within the agency, regionally, and nationally • Action 4.3.5: Identify opportunities to increase collaboration and knowledge sharing with regional peers Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy 5.2: Serve as an independent advisor on land use decisions and policies to implement <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> • Action 5.2.10: Prepare a comprehensive resilience functional master plan • Strategy 5.4: Advance the recommendations of the county's Climate Action Plan and environmental recommendations in <i>Thrive</i> • Action 5.4.5: Develop environmental design guidelines to incorporate nature-based design solutions that will mitigate climate impacts, increase climate-resiliency and adaptation and support biodiversity • Action 5.4.6: Identify strategies for incorporating more clean/renewable energy generation in different parts of the county, with a focus on developed areas • Action 5.4.8: Incorporate sustainable development standards into planning efforts • Action 5.4.9: Study the impacts of climate change on farming and the environmental resources in the Ag Reserve; develop recommendations and identify best practices to address these impacts • Action 5.4.10: Develop countywide streetscape standards to preserve and plant large canopy shade trees to mitigate heat island effects within public rights-of-way • Strategy 5.6: Advance the recommendations of the county's Vision Zero Action Plan and the transportation recommendations in <i>Thrive</i> • Action 5.6.8: Develop comprehensive transportation development review procedures that provide guidelines for street layout, site access/frontage improvements and offsite improvements
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13. DIVERSIFYING THE ECONOMY: ASSESSING FUTURE NEEDS FOR INDUSTRIAL LAND

Research & Strategic Projects Division

Budget Request	\$125,000 – One-time
Description	While the industrial sector accounts for only about 10% of the county’s total private sector employment (almost 33,500 jobs), it is an important sector in contributing to the diversification of the economy. The industrial sector pays wages that are slightly above the average private sector wage (\$83,500/year for industrial jobs compared to \$82,500/year for all of the private sector) in the county for jobs that often do not require bachelor’s degrees. Within the industrial sector, Montgomery County also has two highly competitive advanced manufacturing sectors—Satellite and Communications Technologies and Biotechnology—that employ over 4,000 people and pay an average annual wage of over \$123,000. Manufacturing is also closely linked to research and development (R&D) in these fields, and some firms conduct both types of activities in the same building. Evidence from various sources including the real estate industry, local developers, and the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation suggests that demand is strong for large flexible industrial space (often called “flex” space) that can accommodate flexible arrangements of manufacturing and R&D under the same roof. However, the ability of the county’s industrial and flex space to accommodate these trends remains unclear. An initial assessment published in the Montgomery Quarterly Economic Indicators report for the first quarter of 2025 suggests that the county’s aging industrial building inventory will be difficult to retrofit for contemporary advanced manufacturing and research and development (R&D) activities, and that the county has few sites with both the zoning and size for new construction of these kinds of spaces. The condition and size of the county’s existing industrial and flex space inventory is also in question as the last countywide industrial land study was done in 2013. This study showed that traditional industrial space and the occupancy of this space had been declining for several years, often to be replaced by other land uses, while the inventory of newer and more adaptable flex space was increasing. Anecdotal analysis from master plans also suggests that flex space in the county has also become important for non-industrial uses like party and entertainment venues and sports training facilities. There is also interest in the potential for a local food production facility, which would support the agricultural sector, but requires industrial-zoned land. This study will look broadly at all areas of manufacturing that could enhance the county’s economy. <i>Study Questions</i> The Planning Department proposes a study to answer four questions related to industrial space in the county 1. How much industrial and flex space does the county have in various size and age categories?

	2. What are trends characterizing the last ten years of industrial and flex real estate in Montgomery County? 3. What types of industrial uses are in demand, and can the county's industrial and flex real estate accommodate this demand? 4. If there are current or projected shortfalls in some types of industrial and flex real estate, what land use or zoning measures may help meet demand?
Objectives Achieved	The study will help enhance the County's economic competitiveness by identifying land use needs to support a potential growth sector and aligns with the economic development strategic plan. As it becomes more imperative that Montgomery County diversify its economy, this study is important in assessing whether the county has enough zoned land to support new economic opportunities. Further, as the county aspires to provide living wage jobs for people at all education levels, industrial sector jobs provide opportunities for people with less education.
Project Resources	Staff will provide oversight of the consultant work, access to department data (such as the parcel file), and help coordinate stakeholder interviews. A consultant will do all of the data analysis, research, interviews, mapping, etc. The consultant will provide industry expertise on industrial real estate and economic development that staff lack in-house.
Measures of Success	Success will be a study that provides information on land use requirements for new economic development opportunities and supports policy recommendations to make this land available.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners Priority 4: Innovation Priority 5: Leadership • Action 5.2.3: Update studies on demographic, economic, housing, and real estate trends • Action 5.3.2: Review county code to identify updates needed to better achieve <i>Thrive</i> and other county goals" because of the county's urgent need for economic growth and diversification.

14. MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION: LOCATIONAL ATLAS SITES AND DISTRICTS

Historic Preservation Division

Budget Request	No funding is requested for this work, but this plan is contingent on full funding of the Cultural Resources Planner I position.
Description	This countywide Master Plan for Historic Preservation (MPHP) amendment would build off the initial Locational Atlas update review that is currently underway for FY26/27. This MPHP amendment would evaluate all individual properties and selected districts currently on the Locational Atlas and bring those that are found to meet the designation criteria forward for listing to the MPHP. This work item would be proposed to start in late FY27 and would be completed in FY30 with a total of 30 working months. There are 129 individual property owners (for individual sites) and hundreds more (including the Districts) whose properties have been languishing on the Locational Atlas for nearly 50 years. The Locational Atlas was adopted in 1976 and it was intended to be a temporary hold on demolition until the properties could be evaluated for designation to the MPHP. These owners deserve closure after so many decades as to the final determination on their properties. These owners, many of whom have been excellent stewards of their properties, have been unable to access historic preservation tax credits as Locational Atlas properties do not qualify. Designation would assist these owners with their stewardship responsibilities while relieving others of the regulatory burden of HP review with no tangible benefit.
Objectives Achieved	A key goal of the MPHP is to evaluate all properties on the Locational Atlas for designation or removal. The majority of properties still on the Locational Atlas are located in the Agricultural Reserve. Many of these properties are associated with the county's history of enslavement and the establishment of free black communities. Listing these properties to the MPHP would promote their stewardship and would allow us to promote and publicize these histories as part of the public outreach and writing histories for the Plan. Completing the review of the remaining Locational Atlas individual properties and districts will bring certainty to these property owners as to the final determination on their properties. Many of these properties are associated with African American history and agricultural history. Completing this research will allow for new MPHP amendments that will highlight these histories and allow for funding via tax credits and other programs for these property owners to assist in the preservation of their historic resources. It will also relieve the burden of regulatory review for property owners and the staff for all the properties that will be removed from the Locational Atlas at the conclusion of the project.
Project Resources	The project will utilize internal staff resources and will seek outside funding through grants as available.
Measures of Success	Locational Atlas sites and districts will all be surveyed and evaluated by the HPC, Planning Board, and County Council for inclusion in the MPHP. Then the Locational Atlas will only exist as a truly temporary listing for properties recommended for listing by the Planning Board as they await final consideration by the County Council as part of future master plan amendments.

Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Strategy 2.2: Intentionally engage residents in all planning efforts, with a focus on people who are underrepresented • Strategy 2.4: Focus on historically underinvested regions and vulnerable communities Priority 5: Leadership • Action 5.2.8: Resurvey sites and districts identified on the Locational Atlas and prepare updates to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation
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15. MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION: BURIAL SITES

Historic Preservation Division

Budget Request	No funding requested.
Description	This countywide amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation (MPHP) will build on the Burial Sites Context Survey that will wrap up in January 2026. Staff will build on the information from the context survey and the Planning Board's Burial Sites Inventory to complete the first MPHP update that will focus exclusively on burial sites. The Plan Amendment would also include a comprehensive history of burial sites and their context within Montgomery County, new information regarding policies and best practices for Burial Sites preservation, guidance for regulatory review of existing designated cemeteries as well as for newly proposed designations, guidance for historic preservation tax credit applicability, and other items that may be identified as part of the public outreach process. This work item would be proposed to start in FY27 and would be completed in FY29 with a total of 30 working months.
Objectives Achieved	A new MPHP amendment focusing on burial sites would promote the goals of the county's Burial Sites Inventory and the MPHP by raising awareness of sites associated with underrepresented histories and communities. Burial sites and cemeteries are of considerable interest to the public in Montgomery County. There are strong advocacy networks that support cemetery preservation that include the department's regular preservation partners, but also faith groups, genealogical societies, descendent communities, and interested property owners. In addition to listing burial sites to the Planning Board's Inventory, staff are regularly asked to help protect sites that are not listed, and to help promote awareness of and resources for the preservation of cemeteries and burial sites. Designation of the most important burial sites in the County would promote awareness, preservation, and help to tell histories (of the enslaved, Native Americans, and other underrepresented groups) that are not included in current MPHP listings. African American and Native American burial sites and cemeteries are not well documented in the current MPHP. A stand-alone amendment would offer protection for these sites under Chapter 24A of the County Code. It would also enable these sites to take advantage of the historic preservation tax credit which would promote greater preservation and stewardship by private property owners.
Project Resources	This work will be done entirely in-house with HP Division staff with support from the Communications & Engagement Division on graphics layout and design and GIS as needed for mapping.
Measures of Success	The County Council approval and adoption of the Plan Amendment would be the measure of success.
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Strategy 2.2: Intentionally engage residents in all planning efforts, with a focus on people who are underrepresented • Strategy 2.4: Focus on historically underinvested regions and vulnerable communities

	Priority 4: Innovation • Strategy 4.2: Support opportunities for staff to propose, pilot and evaluate creative solutions to address critical issues Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy 5.8: Communicate the Department's unique role and impact throughout the county and region
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16. GREATER NORTH BETHESDA IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

West County Planning Division

Budget Request	No funding requested.
Description	Montgomery Planning proposes a cross-divisional study to assess whether the implementation tools from the 2010 White Flint Sector Plan and 2018 White Flint 2 Sector Plan continue to support the vision of those plans. Building on the findings of the latest North Bethesda Biennial Monitoring Report and the Advancing the Pike District initiative, the study will explore potential alternative approaches to better align with current conditions and community priorities. Led collaboratively by the West County Planning Division, the Research and Strategic Projects Division, and the Transportation Planning Division, the effort will include engagement with relevant government agencies and stakeholder groups to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive evaluation.
Objectives Achieved	• Evaluate effectiveness of existing tools from the 2010 White Flint Sector Plan and 2018 White Flint 2 Sector Plan in meeting long-term planning goals. • Identify gaps and misalignments between current implementation strategies and evolving community needs, market conditions, and development patterns. • Synthesize insights from recent efforts, including the North Bethesda Biennial Monitoring Report and Advancing the Pike District initiative, to inform future planning. • Facilitate interdepartmental collaboration across the West County Planning, Research and Strategic Projects, and Transportation Planning Divisions. • Engage key stakeholders and agencies to ensure inclusive input and alignment with broader county priorities. • Outline potential alternative approaches to improve implementation outcomes and better support the sector plan visions moving forward.
Measures of Success	• Completion of a comprehensive evaluation report that clearly assesses the effectiveness of current implementation tools and identifies areas for improvement. • Development of actionable recommendations for alternative or updated implementation strategies aligned with the sector plan visions. • Engagement of key stakeholders, including government agencies, community groups, and property owners, with documented feedback and participation. • Cross-divisional collaboration resulting in integrated insights from planning, research, and transportation perspectives. • Improved alignment between planning tools and current development trends, as evidenced by stakeholder support and feasibility assessments. • Presentation of findings to the Planning Board and County Council, with positive reception and potential incorporation into future planning efforts
Strategic Plan Priority(ies) and Action(s)	Priority 2: Communities and Partners • Strategy 2.5: Strengthen collaboration with partner agencies • Action 2.5.2: Strengthen relationships with partner agencies at various levels of the Department • Action 2.5.3: Build relationships with nonprofits to better engage them in Planning efforts

	Priority 3: Efficiency • Strategy 3.3: Work with the development community, government agency partners, and other stakeholders to implement clear, efficient, and consistent processes for planning • Action 3.3.3: Complete comprehensive studies of redevelopment tools and infrastructure funding strategies to incentivize infill development and achieve density goals • Action 3.3.5: Identify zoning modifications and incentives to facilitate the conversion of planned and existing office and retail sites to residential uses Priority 4: Innovation • Strategy 4.2: Support opportunities for staff to propose, pilot, and evaluate creative solutions to address critical issues • Action 4.2.1: Improve communications across the Department to promote innovation topic areas that different Divisions are focused on • Action 4.2.2 Create opportunities for staff to propose study and project ideas • Strategy 4.3: Share and exchange information and best practices within the agency, regionally, and nationally Priority 5: Leadership • Strategy 5.2: Serve as an independent advisor on land use decisions and policies to implement <i>Thrive Montgomery 2050</i> • Action 5.2.3: Update studies on demographic, economic, housing, and real estate trends • Action 5.2.4: Identify strategies to increase the economic competitiveness of the county's downtowns • Action 5.2.6: Identify strategies to plan for complete communities in different land use contexts • Strategy 5.6: Advance the recommendations of the county's Vision Zero Action Plan and the transportation recommendations in <i>Thrive</i> • Action 5.6.3: Study and reconsider transportation policies based on the impacts of remote work • Action 5.6.9: Assess transit station areas and ways to ensure there is sufficient ridership to support desired transit service
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