



Thrive Montgomery 2050 – Briefing on Draft Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions

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Introduction:

Montgomery Planning staff presented the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Vision and Goals to the Planning Board on April 16, 2020. The Board asked the staff to be bold and more clearly state the hard choices we will need to make if want to achieve the desired outcomes of a thriving county with strong economy, equitable growth and a healthy and sustainable environment. The Board emphasized the need to shift from a car-oriented suburban development pattern to a more compact, transit-oriented, urban form that will give us a wider choice of travel options, encourage a more active lifestyle for all residents, and be resilient in the face of climate change. Staff also received feedback from community and the inter-agency Technical Advisory Group.

The attached draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions report has two parts:

- Part 1 sets the stage for and provides a conceptual framework to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan's draft recommendations. It starts with explaining what Thrive Montgomery 2050 is all about, provides context and background for where we are today, states why the changes proposed in this Plan are the right approaches for the county in the next 30 years, and delineates an overall vision for the county.
- Part 2 contains detailed information about each of the draft recommendations of the Plan organized in chapters. Each chapter includes a summary of issues and challenges; the Plan's vision for the given topic area and pertinent ideas to the issue; and a draft list of goals, policies and actions. Part 2 also includes a brief outline of the implementation chapter to be included in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Working Draft (September 2020).

Staff is looking for guidance and comments from the Board about both the main ideas and rationale in Part 1 that provide the basis for the detailed set of goals, policies and actions in Part 2 and for the actual goals, policies, and actions. The goals, policies and actions are the first full draft of specific proposals to be included in the Plan. They will evolve over the next couple of months through feedback from the Planning Board, the community, the Technical Advisory Group and other stakeholders.

Next Steps

Montgomery Planning staff will continue collaborating with the community for ideas and suggestions on the next phase of Plan development: revising the vision, goals, policies and actions based on Planning Board and community feedback.

- In September 2020, Montgomery Planning will publish the first full draft of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan, including an implementation chapter, for public review and feedback.
- In November 2020, the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the draft Plan, followed by Planning Board work sessions through February 2021 to review public testimony and finalize the draft Plan.
- In March 2021, the Planning Board will finalize the draft Plan and transmit it to the County Executive and the County Council for their review and approval.

Thrive Montgomery 2050

Draft Vision, Goals, Policies and Actions

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Part 1

Introduction and Argument for Change

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050?

Montgomery County is a great place to live, work and play. But it didn't happen by accident. We planned for that! The great communities, places and spaces of Montgomery County were shaped by planners and community members decades ago through the [1964 General Plan](#). They include our vibrant parks; quality schools; desirable urban, suburban and rural communities; and the Agricultural Reserve.

For Montgomery County to continue to thrive—and become an even better place and community for all—we must make those big decisions again and take bold steps for the future. Rapid social, environmental, technological, demographic and economic shifts over the next few decades necessitate revisions to Montgomery County's guiding framework for growth, called the General Plan.

The General Plan update, Thrive Montgomery 2050, builds upon the foundation set by the 1964 General Plan and all subsequent plans and policies. It will modernize the original plan's [Wedges and Corridors](#) concept (self-contained corridor cities connected by a transportation network) and refine it for the next 30 years to ensure its relevance for tomorrow's challenges. It will need to accommodate new growth in a highly developed county and harness technological innovations for the county to thrive in the future.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 isn't about reinvention. It's about adapting to new realities and shifting the way we think about how the county should grow. Change is inevitable. What is not inevitable is how a community reacts to change. Thrive Montgomery 2050 envisions a county that is more urban, more diverse, more connected. This vision includes a high quality of life for existing residents while also welcoming new residents and new ideas.

Trends and Challenges

Today, Montgomery County faces economic, demographic, climate and technological changes, among other trends, and related challenges that we should prepare to address:

Recent sluggish economic growth requires that the county strengthen its competitive advantages in the global economy. Chief among the challenges facing the county is economic competitiveness. While assets like the federal sector and a strong life sciences industry have helped the county build a solid economic foundation, those dynamics are changing. Federal spending slowed since the 2010 spending sequester. Competition is greater for well-paying jobs nationally and internationally. The county's job growth in the past few years has been sluggish. The overall number of jobs in the county increased since the Great Recession of 2008, and finally returned to the pre-recession peak by 2017. Continuation of this trend threatens greater fiscal burdens that will likely constrain the county's ability to continue to provide its high level of services.

In addition to slow job growth, Montgomery County hasn't escaped the wage stagnation that has affected the national economy. Locally, only two industry groups—education, health and social services; and professional, scientific and management services—experienced growth in wages (2% annually between 1990 and 2016). The county's median household income peaked at \$111,492 (inflation-adjusted 2018 dollars) in 2007 and has not fully recovered from the Great Recession. In

2018, median household income was \$108,188. For an economy to thrive, an adequate supply of attainable housing must be supported by the earning potential of available jobs.

As the county's population grows significantly more diverse, new approaches are needed to meet people's unique needs, ensure equitable economic opportunities, and facilitate broad civic engagement. In 2018, people of color comprised 57% of the total population making Montgomery County more diverse than the nation (39.8%), Maryland (49.8%), and the Washington, D.C. region (55.1%). The proportion of people of color is projected to steadily increase to 73% in 2045.¹

There are significant gaps in the quality of life of various racial and ethnic groups in the county. For example: according to a Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report 2018-8, *Racial Equity in Government Decision-Making: Lessons from the Field*², “despite high rates of high school completion (70%-98%) and employment (73%-78%) among all groups, Blacks and Latinos were more than twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed and have household incomes below the federal poverty level. Blacks and Latinos were also 33%-41% less likely to own their homes and Black and Latino children were 6-7 times more likely to live in poverty.”

The county's overall diversity is not reflected at the neighborhood level. Our neighborhoods are largely separated along income and racial lines ([ATTACHMENT 1](#)), which has far-reaching implications for people of color at the lower-income levels as well as the county as a whole. This geographic separation also keeps people of different ethnic/racial and economic backgrounds from interacting with each other as neighbors on a daily basis outside of work.

Diversity is a great asset that furthers the county's economic competitiveness, attracting businesses and residents that prefer diverse, inclusive communities. While the county contends with constrained fiscal resources, we must provide equitable access to high-quality education, job training and other opportunities and services. These resources will ensure that existing and new immigrants and residents of color are not disproportionately impacted by economic hardships and can participate in, contribute to and benefit fully from future vibrancy in the county's economy.

The county's demographics are changing in other ways as well. For example, the percentage of householders living alone has increased from 7% in 1960 to 25% in 2018 ([ATTACHMENT 2](#)). This trend has huge implications for the kind of housing that is needed in the future as well as services and amenities to support a different mix of household types in the past.

Housing costs and other living expenses have become increasingly unaffordable due to lack of supply growth and flat wages, which poses a threat to economic growth and competitiveness. The Washington, D.C., region is an expensive place to live. Montgomery County's reputation for a high quality of life with great amenities has made it an attractive place to live, but its affordability issues and housing shortages make it a challenging environment for living and doing business, which threatens our economic health.

Housing affordability is one of the biggest issues facing Montgomery County. As previously mentioned, median household income is slowly recovering from the Great Recession of 2008. Annual growth in construction costs increased in the range of 3% to 4% per year during the past five years. Annual building permits issued since 2015 continue to drop below 4,200 permitted units,

¹ 2018 American Community Survey, 1-year estimate; 2017 Age, Sex, and Race Projections, State Data Center, Maryland Department of Planning.

² Racial Equity in Government Decision Making: Lessons from the Field, Office of Legislative Oversight, 2018. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2018%20Reports/OLOReport2018_8.pdf

approaching recession levels. This combination of stagnant income growth, high construction costs, lack of new housing supply, and the high cost of housing has impacted cost burden and homeownership rates.

Cost-burden is rising in Montgomery County, especially along transit corridors. Nearly one in every two Montgomery County renters is cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of income on housing. The net number of cost-burdened households also increased by nearly 10,000 households since 2010.³

Homeownership is important to wealth building and combating housing instability, but many of our residents cannot access these benefits primarily due to the increasing gap between incomes and housing costs. The household income required to afford the median home value in Montgomery County is nearly \$20,000 more than the actual median household income in Montgomery County.⁴ Homeownership rates have declined for all age groups since 1990, except for those over age 65. The decline of homeownership is most dramatic for households under age 35.

Single family housing uses approximately one-third of the county's land area and provides a great quality of life that many of our residents cannot access because housing costs too much. Many of our single-family homes are underutilized (32% of households are "over-housed"⁵) and few homes in transit accessible locations are attainable for middle income residents who want to purchase their first home.

Housing affordability is as much an economic issue as it is a housing issue. A lack of affordable housing for a younger generation of skilled workers can make it harder to attract high-paying jobs to the county.

An aging population, without a commensurate increase in younger workers, means lower average household incomes and changing needs for social services. The county's 65-plus population, including a large generation of baby boomers, is expected to increase from 10% of the total population in 1990 to 21% in 2045. The aging population may put downward pressure on household incomes. Over the next 10 years, the baby boom generation—ages 66 to 84 by 2030—will enter their retirement years, most likely with lower household incomes after leaving the workforce. In 2018, about 18% of the county's households had retirement income averaging \$46,745—one-third of the county's average income of \$147,917. With the movement of the baby boomers out of the workforce, the number of adults age 65 and older as a share of those of working age is expected to increase from 24.2 in 2020 to 31.2 in 2030. According to the International Monetary Fund, "An aging population and slower labor force growth affect economies in many ways—the growth of GDP slows, working-age people pay more to support the elderly, and public budgets strain under the burden of the higher total cost of health and retirement programs for old people."⁶ As this senior dependency ratio rises, additional financial pressure is placed on employed residents to support the dependent older population.

³ *Housing Needs Assessment*, Montgomery Planning, 2020. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/housing/housing-needs-assessment/>

⁴ *Housing Needs Assessment*, Montgomery Planning, 2020. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/housing/housing-needs-assessment/>

⁵ Defined as householders that live free and clear in homes with more than two excess bedrooms. *Meeting the Housing Needs of Older Adults in Montgomery County*, 2018. https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Meeting-the-Housing-Needs-of-Older-Adults-in-Montgomery-County-Final_5-18-18.pdf

⁶ *Cost of Aging*, International Monetary Fund, 2017. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2017/03/lee.htm>

At the same time, the high cost of housing makes it challenging to attract younger workers to replace the baby boomers who are leaving the workforce. Workers and companies with choices to go elsewhere may look to more affordable cities that offer a similar quality of life. We need to maintain strong economic growth with a more productive and well-paid workforce to support an aging population.

A combination of factors including the size of the county and the splintered, car-oriented land use pattern have made social connectedness and cohesion challenging both countywide and within smaller local areas. Montgomery County is large with many different types of communities. People have very different experiences in the county based on where they live and work. The car-oriented land use pattern of the past few decades reinforced the suburban pattern of neighborhoods separated and defined by income, limiting diversity in our interactions. Knowing your neighbors and having a diverse and robust social network with opportunity for interaction contribute to a feeling of welcome, safety and support. Polarization in today's society—characterized by a lack of trust in government, civic institutions, and other social and ethnic groups; and fear of change—can be linked to how we conceive of “us” and build our communities. According to *Design for Health* by the University of Minnesota, “Studies show that different measures of social capital (e.g., increased levels of trust, political participation, knowing one's neighborhoods, participating in a protest, voting in elections, etc.) are supported by different built environments.”⁷

If we continue to build as we have in the past, we will become more separated along socioeconomic lines leading to a lower quality of life for all parts of our society. We need to make our neighborhoods more diverse so there is greater daily interaction among people of all backgrounds, incomes and races/ethnicities. And we need to cultivate a greater understanding of the need for social cohesion as the foundation on which we build respect for diversity.

Trends in public health and well-being indicate a growing need for a healthier lifestyle. Economic factors and the physical environment greatly contribute to length and quality of life. In 2018, 61.3% of adults in Montgomery County were overweight or obese and that figure had increased 7.9 percentage points since 2015. Analysis of data by zip code in Montgomery County shows that five of seven zip codes with incomes in the lowest quartile also have the lowest average life spans. Opportunities to eat well and be active are constrained by the quality of neighborhoods and the availability of services and opportunities. Although low-income residents are more likely to suffer from negative health outcomes for several reasons, all residents can benefit from an active lifestyle to improve their health. Parks and open spaces provide opportunities for active recreation and encourage physical activity. But our increasingly sedentary lifestyle is also caused by using cars for every trip no matter the distance in our suburban neighborhoods. A renewed emphasis on transit and walking and biking in compact communities with more parks and open spaces are needed to encourage a more active lifestyle.

With limited undeveloped land available to accommodate new growth, the county must shift its focus to redevelopment and reuse, which requires a different set of public policies and approaches to implement. Today, approximately 85% of the county's land area is constrained by environmental and human-made factors leaving only about 15% of land available to accommodate future growth ([ATTACHMENT 3](#)). The 85% figure includes a little more than 36% of the land area being used by single family homes (single-family attached and detached, town houses and the roads serving these homes) ([ATTACHMENT 4](#)).

⁷ Design for Health, Building Social Capital with Comprehensive Planning and Ordinances, University of Minnesota, 2008. http://designforhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/BCBS_SocCap_0408.pdf

At the same time, our housing needs continue to grow. Montgomery County currently has 1.05 million residents. The county's population growth rate averaged below 1% this decade and is expected to decline even further over the next 30 years. However, the population is still projected to grow to 1.2 million by 2045, an increase of just under 200,000 people from today. Unless we grow our housing supply to make room for these new residents, our existing communities will become more expensive, less diverse and integrated, and it will be difficult to attract and retain a skilled workforce.

Even if we had more space to expand, continuing the current pattern of development is not desirable as it will lead to more time spent traveling in cars generating more greenhouse gas emissions, increasing our cost of public services, decreasing access to services and social interaction for elderly and the poor, and segregating more neighborhoods.

Climate change threatens all aspects of life. Climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions has emerged as a major issue in the last few decades. It threatens human and environmental health. Impacts of climate change will imperil food systems, property and infrastructure, with ripple effects hampering commerce and imposing extra costs on businesses and residents. Disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations are disproportionately harmed by these impacts. Public health issues are intertwined with the quality of the environment and will be exacerbated by climate change. Higher temperatures have health implications that are already evident in cities. Climate change will affect the occurrence of infectious diseases. And it may impact our housing and infrastructure as well as restrict access to care.⁸

Climate change will require that we make significant investments in upgrading our infrastructure to withstand the threats of extreme weather and other disruptions. These improvements will put extra burden on the county's financial resources. However, proactive climate adaptation and mitigation are necessary to avoid even greater damage and higher costs to repair and restore.

Three Major Outcomes

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 update we plan with the community will guide policy and investment decisions in the decades to come. Three broad outcomes form a [strategic framework](#) for this Plan. These outcomes are also the three main challenges and are impacted by current and future trends, such as demographic shifts, economic forces, technological innovations and climate change. Taken together, these outcomes embody a long-term vision for the county that Thrive Montgomery 2050 will help to achieve. They are intertwined and will affect all aspects of life in the next 30 years and shape our conversations and analysis:

Economic Health: We want to ensure a vibrant, strong and competitive economy by attracting and maintaining major employers, continuing to enhance our federal campuses, supporting small businesses and innovation, and attracting and retaining a high-quality, diverse workforce. A strong economy is essential to provide financial support for rebuilding our infrastructure, providing services needed for an aging and diverse population, and be able to address the issues of inequality and the threats of climate change.

⁸ "Health impacts of climate change," Rudolph, L., Harrison, C., Buckley, L. & North, S. (2018). Climate Change, Health, and Equity: A Guide for Local Health Departments. Oakland, CA and Washington D.C., Public Health Institute and American Public Health Association., 2018 https://www.apha.org/-/media/files/pdf/topics/climate/guide_section4.ashx?la=en&hash=118F4FD2E4719EF51A76C0B0865BAEF57BEB7EDB

Equity: We want to create a place where all residents have equal access to attainable housing, healthy foods, employment, transportation, education and more. racial and ethnic diversity has outpaced the county’s overall population growth since the 1990s, steadily increasing the percentage of people of color in the total population, projected to 73% in 2045. This increasing racial and ethnic diversity is an opportunity to turn this demographic shift into our social and economic strength. It also means that as we become more diverse, we do not become separated into our safe ethnic enclaves and avoid contact with the “others”.

Environmental Resilience: We want to use the best strategies to fight climate change and mitigate the impact of both planned changes and unexpected events and continue to preserve our natural resources. Climate change is major threat to both humans and environmental resources. Impacts of climate change imperil food systems, property and infrastructure, with ripple effects hampering commerce and imposing extra costs on businesses and residents, as well as loss of special and disruption of natural ecosystems. Disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations are disproportionately harmed by these impacts.

A Plan to Thrive - why Thrive Montgomery is the right direction

Thrive Montgomery 2050 believes that the way to address these challenges and to plan for growth is to embrace smart urbanism, encourage social connectedness, provide for great open spaces and active lifestyles, create “Complete Communities” and connect these communities with dynamic corridors that are safe, functional, beautiful and have a mix of uses and housing types.

When the [1964 General Plan](#) was written, much of Montgomery County was undeveloped. It made sense to lay out broad planning principles based on the “Wedges and Corridors” concept of self-contained corridor cities connected by transportation networks to guide the growth of the county over the ensuing 50 years. The county is entering the next phase of its evolution from a bedroom community to a complex jurisdiction with major employment centers, urban hubs, stable single-family neighborhoods, rural landscapes and a diverse population of more than a million people.

Growing over the next 30 years while keeping our focus on the three major outcomes requires us to refine our current planning framework, not abandon it. We must build upon our strengths and experience of creating mixed-use neighborhoods around our Metro stations. We must learn from what has proven to work over time and apply these principles of smart growth--a compact form, a mix and diversity of uses, walkability, and a focus on good design-- to create great places across the county.

Because Montgomery County is mostly built out in terms of available land—and we need to accommodate the projected new population growth—the way we think about growth needs to change. We need to think about growth happening on sites that we never thought of as possible for development. “Parking lots to places” is one important way of thinking about accommodating this growth, but we must also reexamine our other existing developments.

There are a number of critical themes of the change that is needed and recommended in Thrive Montgomery 2050, which are worth highlighting and explaining.

An emphasis on **compact development and urbanism** is essential. First, we don't have the land available for sprawl. Second, more compact development—along with the mix of uses that make Complete Communities—will allow for transit, walking and biking as the primary modes of travel. Third, this will enhance efforts for active lifestyles and social connectedness. Fourth, this form of development—coupled with green roofs and other stormwater management techniques—will help to de-pave the county and provide more environmental resilience.

Corridors are the place for new growth and by concentrating all new growth along existing and planned rail and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors these areas can change from places that separate communities into destinations that connect neighborhoods and destinations and have a mix of housing and commercial building types. This additional density will require change in existing single-family neighborhoods, but will also provide more neighborhood services to those single-family neighborhoods and will provide the density needed to allow for the expansion of transit options. Equally useful as opportunities for connection, it is important for green corridors to be enhanced and expanded to connect the county via trails for transportation in the form of walking and cycling.

Transit, walking and biking are key to achieving the three main outcomes of strong economy, equity and environmental resilience. **We must stop planning for cars.** We need to focus on safely moving people, not automobiles, while prioritizing walking and cycling as both transportation and exercise. It goes hand-in-hand with the idea of Complete Communities and a compact form of development to have more of our destinations nearby and reduce our reliance on automobiles as the main mode of travel. In addition to moving more people with a smaller footprint, transit use also encourages more walking and greater social interaction.

Public transit is also the best way to reduce our per capita and overall Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), which will help **reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.** In Montgomery County in 2015, transportation accounted for 41% of GHG emissions, after residential and commercial buildings combined at 51%.⁹

Montgomery County needs **more housing attainable for residents at all income levels.** This is needed to fulfill not only our goal of economic health, but also our efforts towards community equity. The county will need a multi-prong strategy to increase the supply of all types of housing in order to put downward pressure on housing prices and rents. This will require taking a comprehensive look at impediments to increasing the housing supply, a will to change current policies when necessary, and an acceptance by all that more housing and new residents are a benefit to the county and the region. It will also require reexamining our zoning and other controls to create more mixed income and diverse housing in existing communities, most of them dominated by often expensive single-family housing.

We need to allow **some single-family neighborhoods to evolve into communities with a greater mix of housing types** that provide less expensive options for our growing population and for existing residents—making our communities more equitable for all.

A thriving Montgomery County **is a diverse county.** This means ensuring that existing and new communities of color receive an equitable share of services and investments. The county has one of the largest international populations in the country. The cultural richness this population adds to

⁹ County Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, 2018. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/green/climate/ghg-inventory.html>

the county and the region includes a variety of cuisines, arts, music and performance venues, nightlife, art galleries and museums, cultural institutions and nonprofits, and numerous other entities. These make the county and the region attractive to large employers and industries who want to recruit a younger, professional workforce. Foreign-born residents also have created businesses that contribute to the county's economic base and create jobs for county residents.

We need to **champion the importance of place**. As the county moves to more infill growth and as we emphasize Complete Communities, we must remember that planning is about creating and enhancing great places – both in the public realm and in new private development. We must use good design to create communities, buildings and open spaces of lasting beauty that encourage imagination, foster social engagement, build a stronger sense of community, and create economic value.

Montgomery County is part of two larger regions—the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore metro areas—but we are not as physically or institutionally connected within them as we should be. Close to 40% of county residents have jobs in some of the major employment centers nearby in Washington, D.C.; Northern Virginia; and Fort Detrick, Fort Meade, Columbia, Frederick, College Park and Baltimore in Maryland. Issues such as lack of housing supply, affordability, economic competitiveness, transportation and climate change **require regional solutions and strategies**. We share these issues with our neighbors throughout the region so we should address them together.

COVID-19 and the Context for Change

The global coronavirus pandemic has caused a radical shift in the life and work of communities nationwide. While the full impact of this crisis is not yet known, it is certain that it will be a factor in how Montgomery County evolves in the future. COVID-19 will have lasting impacts on how we interact with one another, how we do business and much more. This crisis underscores the importance of an updated General Plan as it highlights how unpredictable the future is. It has forced us to adapt, even if temporarily, to new realities unthinkable a short time ago. For example, before the coronavirus crisis, only about 6% to 7% of the workforce worked remotely full-time. What if in the post-COVID-19 era the share of people working remotely goes up 20% or 30% or more? What kind of impact will it have on traffic congestion? How much will greenhouse gas emissions decline? It may be unthinkable today but COVID-19 has demonstrated that this kind of change is not only possible but quite feasible. Since it is futile to predict the future, we need to be flexible and nimble and be prepared to work with multiple possibilities and try to influence the outcomes in our favor.

The COVID-19 crisis, still unfolding as we write this plan, places new emphasis on two concepts that we have included from the beginning: equity and resilience. Related to equity, the pandemic exacerbates social and economic disparities that existed prior to the crisis. The concept of resilience, while frequently used in the environmental context as a response to climate change, is also about developing policies that help communities withstand economic and social challenges.

Overall Vision for Thrive Montgomery 2050

In 2050, Montgomery County is a vibrant and welcoming place where all people thrive with equitable access to attainable housing, healthy food, opportunities for physical activity, parks and open space, employment, education, services and a variety of travel options. No longer a suburban bedroom community, Montgomery County has diversity in population, in living and working experiences, in modes of travel, and in natural and built resources. People from all over the world choose to live, work, grow and age here.

Specifically, Montgomery County in 2050 is made up of a web of Complete Communities connected by vibrant corridors. Individual and unique centers of neighborhood activity and urban nodes optimize land use with a variety of housing types and price points. Housing is located close to transit, workplaces, needed goods and services, public amenities and active park spaces. These Complete Communities are connected to the rest of the county by two types of corridors: multimodal transportation and services; and green parks, stream valleys and trails.

This pattern of sustainable growth and development creates multiple benefits for Montgomery County and results in a county that is:

- **Urban.** Much of the county has grown in the 21st century with a compact form of development. Some buildings are mid- and high-rise, but there is also a large number of other housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings and courtyard housing. Most people can live without a car and meet daily needs within a short walk, bike ride or transit trip. Residents have easy access to retail, schools, libraries, community centers, parks and trails. Various housing types in each neighborhood offer the convenience of aging in place. Compact form of development has proven to be better for the environment resulting in improved stream water quality. Community members have easy access to healthy, locally grown food.
- **Attainable, affordable and suitable.** Access to affordable housing that aligns with every stage of life is a necessity, not a luxury. Increased housing density leads to social, economic and racial integration of neighborhoods in every part of the county. Households have fewer or no cars and reduce their miles driven, thereby cutting expenses and benefiting the environment. Housing closer to workplaces and safe, affordable transit options save time and money and reduce greenhouse gases.
- **Socially connected.** People feel a sense of shared values and a stake in each other's well-being. Residents feel welcome in public places to meet neighbors or spend time with family and friends. More gathering places and connections to nearby communities reduce social isolation and form stronger communities. Less time commuting and traveling for basic necessities provides more time for connecting with family and community.
- **Active.** County residents enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle. Feeling connected to the outdoors and their neighbors boosts their physical and mental health. Every resident has walkable access to opportunities for social engagement, physical activity and quiet contemplation, whether in parks or other public spaces. The county's built and natural resources are designed to encourage vigorous physical activity. Fewer cars, using clean energy, have resulted in drastically reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Safe.** More options for walking, cycling and transit reduce the need for a car. Pedestrian lives are prioritized over speed. Neighbors know each other and look out for each other. A mix of populations of different ages, household types cultures, and a mix of uses has contributed to reduced crime and an increased sense of security both day and night.
- **Inclusive.** Various housing types at a mix of price points in Complete Communities and along rail and BRT corridors accommodate diverse populations and help achieve diversity and integration on a neighborhood scale. Residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and feel. Planners engage everyone in decision-making about the future of communities.
- **Flexible.** Residents have a variety of choices when selecting their preferred community setting

and housing type. The bulk of new residents live in more dense, urban areas. Concentrating new growth in already developed areas makes the best use of the county's available land and infrastructure, and helps to protect the environment. Flexible regulations and zoning controls result in a vibrant mix of residential and commercial uses.

- **Resilient.** Our community embraces the need for flexibility and adaptability to channel change in ways that strengthen us instead of overwhelming us. Our social and political institutions help build consensus in our decisions. We combat climate change by creating denser developments near transit resulting in reduced vehicle miles travelled; expanded use of transit services; and adoption of innovative and cost-effective environmental policies and technologies. Our actions reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollution. We seize opportunities in technological advancement. Multimodal transportation options lead to a more resilient transportation system by creating redundancies during disruptions.
- **Competitive.** The county retains and attracts large companies, small businesses and high-quality educational institutions. We embrace the cultural, racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity of our community as a competitive advantage, particularly in attracting employers recruiting staff who want to live and work in a diverse community. Montgomery County's forward-looking economy offers a variety of stable and well-paying jobs. All residents have the education and economic opportunities to develop skills and obtain work that sustains them and their families.
- **Inspiring.** Emphasis on design, arts and culture enhance appreciation of the county's diverse residents, workers and visitors. The county is an exciting and fun place that offers multiple choices for leisure and entertainment. Its vibrant arts and entertainment industry is a major contributor to economic development. Our parks, trails and open spaces are focal points for community placemaking and cultural identity and allow for a mix of physical activity and contemplative experiences.

This vision of how we should grow over the next 30 years respects the original "Wedges and Corridors" plan, with a greater emphasis on a compact form of development and the role of corridors as places to grow. It continues to protect and honor the Agricultural Reserve—a nationally recognized planning landmark that provides economic and environmental benefits. It also involves making a series of adjustments and refinements in the way we live, work, relate and play. It will require changes in our laws and regulations that shape our built environment. We will need to make tradeoffs that may not be easy. Realizing our vision will require a sustained commitment over the next decades from residents, community groups, businesses, developers, nonprofits and government. Inaction is not an option. If we're successful, we'll have an equitable community in an economically healthy and environmentally resilient county.

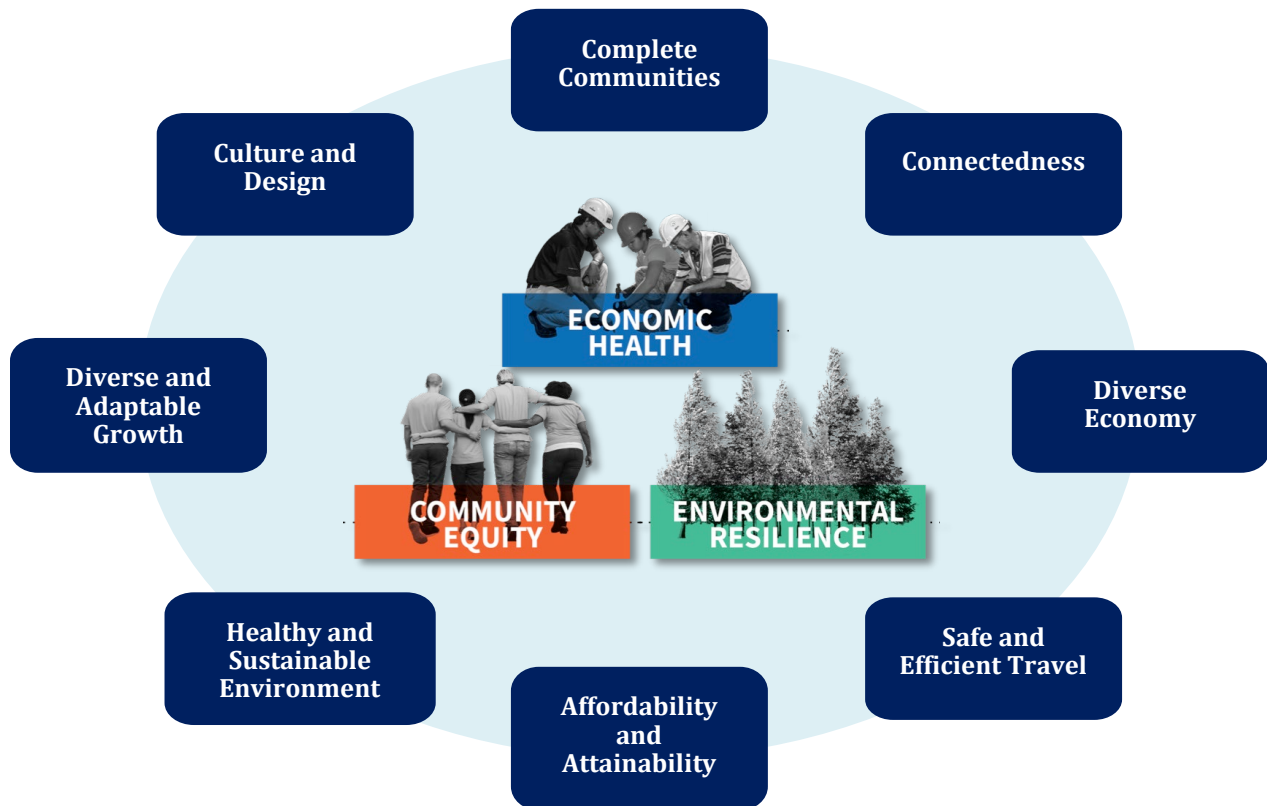
Part 2

Recommendations—Goals, Policies and Actions

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is organized into eight themes that relate to the three primary outcomes for the Plan: Economic Health, Equity and Environmental Resilience. These eight themes are the foundation for Thrive Montgomery 2050's Goals, Policies and Actions that will guide the county over the coming decades:

- Complete Communities
- Connectedness
- Diverse Economy
- Safe and Efficient Travel
- Affordability and Attainability
- Healthy and Sustainable Environment
- Diverse and Adaptable Growth
- Culture and Design

The issues are intertwined, impacting each other in complex ways, so they must be addressed together, not independently. Each relates to the three major outcomes noted above—Economic Health, Equity and Environmental Resilience. Their relationships are illustrated in the following graphic.



1. Complete Communities

Issues and Challenges

The county's current development pattern of separation of land uses grew out of the dominance of the automobile as the primary mode of travel. Starting after World War II, separating residential areas from retail, community services, office districts, and even parks became a popular planning practice in suburban development.

Separation of land uses left us disconnected and dependent on our cars. Our car-oriented culture contributes significantly to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Impervious surfaces of roads and parking lots pollute our streams and increase flood risk. For many in our county, commutes are long and hard due to lack of affordable housing near transit and because jobs are concentrated in certain areas of the county. Our single-family neighborhoods are frequently not walkable, bikeable or accessible, particularly to people with disabilities partly because they don't have connected sidewalks, bike paths and trails, but also because generally there are no corner stores, services or places to walk to nearby.

Decades of planning, zoning and market preferences for suburban living had profound effects. Today there are few remaining vacant or greenfield properties. Approximately 85% of the county's land area is constrained by environmental and other factors leaving only about 15% of land available to accommodate future growth. County zoning and subdivision regulations—as well as restrictive covenants—have created neighborhoods defined by one housing type or another: single-family detached, townhouses, garden apartments, and mid- or high-rise rental apartments. Zoning techniques like minimum lot size requirements in single-family neighborhoods created uniform housing, which resulted in neighborhoods defined primarily by income.

Though Montgomery County is among the most diverse counties nationwide, the overall racial and ethnic diversity of the county is not reflected at the neighborhood level in many parts of the county. Access to better-paying jobs, high-quality housing and education, healthy foods, parks, recreation and open spaces, and high-quality healthcare and other vital services also varies dramatically by geography and demographics.

The lack of housing diversity by unit type and size is also a significant burden for the county's older adults. Most would continue to live in the same neighborhood where they raised their families if there were options to downsize. However, the current pattern of development forces them to continue to stay in larger houses they don't need or move to locations away from their families and social support network.

Vision for Complete Communities

By 2050, Montgomery County is no longer developed around automobile usage. Instead, the county is made up of a series of people-focused complete communities, each designed to reflect their urban, suburban or rural context. While complete communities in urban centers look and feel different from those in suburban neighborhoods or rural villages, each complete community shares defined features that contribute to a high quality of daily life, regardless of location. Complete communities include a built environment with a mixture of uses; diversity of housing for all ages and abilities; and parks, trails and open spaces where people from different backgrounds can gather, be active and live healthy lifestyles. Each complete community allows safe and comfortable walking, rolling and biking access to destinations and integrates nature, arts and culture into its streets,

buildings and infrastructure. Complete communities also provide access to food, healthcare, education and transit. Complete communities are equitable, anchor a strong economy and function sustainably to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Complete communities are loved by all residents and are places where the people of Montgomery County can thrive for generations to come.

Complete Communities Achieve Multiple Goals

The concept of Complete Communities is a critical component of Thrive Montgomery 2050. It permeates all other General Plan themes and sets the foundation for a more sustainable and equitable future. A compact form of development with a variety of uses and housing types affordable to a range of incomes is needed to address increasing inequality in our society. It will also encourage more walking and biking and address climate change at the neighborhood level. (See more on the compact form of development in the Diverse and Adaptable Growth chapter). Creating complete communities with more people near parks, supermarkets, cafes, schools, libraries or other local services and amenities will not only provide more vibrant and lively places, it will also encourage a more active lifestyle, increase social interaction and reduce our carbon footprint.

At its core, a complete community will be ethnically, racially and economically diverse as well as include a mixture of housing types, uses, amenities and services accessible by walking, biking and transit. Complete communities in urban, suburban, and rural areas will have distinguishing characteristics unique to each community and be based on factors such as the size of the community, proximity to transit, parks and public facilities, variation in physical features such as topography and environmental resources and the unique history and building form of each neighborhood.

Complete communities in urban areas will include every element necessary to support daily life within a 15-minute walk, with a mix of uses and high-density commercial and residential development near Metrorail and Purple Line stations. Complete communities in suburban areas will be located around and near MARC and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations and will support a mix of uses as well as moderate density housing, including types such as duplexes, triplexes, and low-rise multifamily buildings. Complete communities in suburban and rural communities will be supported by microtransit and characterized by a variety of uses, amenities and housing types to meet daily needs.

Currently, many places in the county have elements of complete communities. The Town of Kensington, for example, is a good example of a complete community in a suburban area. It has a diversity of housing types ranging from single-family to multifamily and senior housing, a diversity of services and amenities including offices, neighborhood serving retail and services, parks and a train station all within walking distance. Its main challenge, however, is that it is currently divided by major streets which are not walkable and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. And its housing is very expensive. Lyttonsville is another neighborhood with some elements of a complete community, including a shopping center, restaurant, park and elementary school. The town of Damascus, on the other hand, is a good example of a rural community with some of the features of a complete community.

Since most of the county is already built out, creating complete communities means retrofitting our existing neighborhoods to accommodate new uses, housing types, services and amenities, and creating walkable and bikeable connections where none exist today. This will take a long time. And it will require changing some of our long-held practices and values about what is important to us,

including decades of preservation and protection of single-family zones, and what kind of change we would be willing to accept. We should also be open to future opportunities for making our communities complete that are not currently feasible or available. Today's market dynamics, for example, do not support corner stores and coffee shops in smaller, off the main road locations. But as more and more people work remotely, there may be more demand for neighborhood coffee shops and even local work sites (such as shared workspaces in more urban locations) that people can walk or bike to. At the same time, these neighborhood places of gathering could also address the need for interaction and socializing with others.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 1.1: Retrofit existing communities and create new communities where people can meet their daily needs without a car.

Policy 1.1.1: Allow and encourage a variety of uses within communities, with sufficient density to make these uses viable, so that people can experience 15-minute living. Every resident should have the opportunity to live, work, play, exercise, shop, learn and make use of public amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.

Action 1.1.1.a: Initiate a Complete Communities Functional Master Plan to assess neighborhood needs and gaps in the uses/services that would result in a broad array of complete communities throughout the county within the urban, suburban and rural context.

Action 1.1.1.b: Initiate master, sector and corridor plans to analyze and apply complete communities on a neighborhood-scale. Identify strategies to increase overall neighborhood diversity and enhance single use areas through land use, transportation, public space and urban design improvements. Integrate the natural and built systems that are necessary to achieve complete communities.

Action 1.1.1.c: Review and revise the zoning categories and requirements in the Montgomery County Zoning Code as needed to accommodate a variety of uses and densities within complete communities.

Policy 1.1.2: Prioritize walking and bicycling as the highest priority mode of transportation in communities and the most critical infrastructure needs through master plans, future development and county funding of Capital Improvements Program (CIP) infrastructure projects.

Policy 1.1.3: Create diversity in housing types by allowing residential buildings of various densities and types suitable for their urban, suburban and rural context for people at every phase of life.

Action 1.1.3.a: Further the [Missing Middle Housing Study](#) by identifying options and implementation strategies to increase the variety and density of housing types in areas zoned for single-family detached and semi-detached housing, particularly in areas located within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of rail¹⁰ and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

¹⁰ Metrorail, Purple Line, MARC

Policy 1.1.4: Encourage co-location of essential services such as schools, medical clinics, daycare centers, libraries and recreation centers within communities to make access to public services and amenities more convenient and accessible by walking and bicycling from home.

Action 1.1.4.a: Implement innovative school design on more compact parcels of land and in adaptively reused buildings to promote walkable schools.

Goal 1.2: Orient communities around convenient social gathering places accessible to neighborhood residents by walking and biking.

Policy 1.2.1: Locate and design public buildings, including parks, libraries, recreation centers and schools, as places where social gathering is encouraged. Promote walking and biking to gathering places. Assure that the architecture and the site design are civic in nature and promote social gathering.

Action 1.2.1.a: Work with county agencies including Montgomery Parks, Montgomery County Department of General Services (MCDGS), Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to develop best practices manuals that maximize the public benefits of existing and new assets through co-location, redevelopment, consolidation, redistribution, partnerships and a focus on design excellence.

Action 1.2.1.b: Promote design excellence in public buildings through programs like design competitions and priority funding in the CIP budget.

Policy 1.2.2: Preserve and support unique gathering places and sites that enhance neighborhood character and reflect local culture. Acknowledge and physically connect complete communities to their past through preservation and placemaking in historic and cultural sites, especially in locations where the past intersects with the experience of historically marginalized communities.

Goal 1.3: Promote active lifestyles by making parks and open spaces a central element of the community.

Policy 1.3.1: Ensure all people in urban and suburban communities have access to parks or public spaces that provide opportunities for vigorous physical activity, social engagement and quiet contemplation or connections to nature within a comfortable 15-minute walk from their homes.

Action 1.3.1.a: Employ the [Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan](#) to identify opportunities for new parks or open spaces, such as publicly owned land, property acquisition or public-private partnerships to more equitably serve communities with limited access to parks and public spaces.

Goal 1.4: Equitably distribute the benefits of land use planning and public and private investment throughout the county. Ensure that no community is disadvantaged by a disproportionate share of adverse impacts from future land use decisions and investments.

Policy 1.4.1: Eliminate disproportionate adverse impacts affecting communities and avoid creating new adverse impacts from future land use policies and capital investments.

Action 1.4.1.a: Conduct a racial equity and social justice impact analysis when planning, designing and budgeting for new community facilities such as libraries, recreation centers, schools, parks and public infrastructure to determine whether the new amenity will be accessible to nearby residents of all backgrounds and will reduce any existing inequities in access.

Action 1.4.1.b: Advance racial equity and social justice in master plans, studies and projects. Develop metrics to monitor implementation of recommendations that advance racial equity and social justice and measure outcomes.

2. Connectedness

Issues and Challenges

Humans innately desire connection with other people. Social engagement and participation in community and civic life is critical to our well-being. However, land use patterns; lifestyles and work styles; automobile dependence; isolation caused by poverty, age and linguistic differences; and fewer traditional public gathering spaces all limit our ability to connect with each other.

Our sense of connectedness and participation in real-life communities are at all-time lows, as is trust in each other and in government and other institutions. The places where we live, work, connect and play don't always facilitate and encourage social interaction and acceptance of all community members. We are losing our traditional gathering places such as local hardware stores, bookstores, places of worship and other places of social interaction. Even when there are such destinations nearby, they are not easily accessible except by driving. Both the private and the public sectors are moving toward consolidation of private places into larger facilities in fewer locations. This includes retail centers and public facilities like recreation centers, libraries and other amenities. It is done primarily to save costs but at the expense of reduced opportunities for connectedness. This trend reinforces the already dispersed development pattern with significantly greater impact on lower-income populations and the elderly who don't own cars or are unable to drive anymore.

Additionally, it is not convenient or accessible for everyone to participate in planning processes. Historically, inherently complex development processes have favored those with power and influence. The causes of this disparity are many: decision making that focuses on land acquisition cost without weighing the unseen costs to low-income communities, language barriers, lack of time and access to transportation to attend meetings, distrust of government institutions, and lack of provision for residents with disabilities.

Vision for Connectedness

Montgomery County is a place where every resident feels a sense of shared interests and values as well as a sense of belonging. It is a place where people of all backgrounds, cultures, ages, abilities, incomes and interests easily cross paths, exchange ideas and work together to improve their communities. Montgomery County builds on the importance of people, places and communities by strengthening the role of the public sector, in particular through its role in shaping the built environment, in promoting social interactions that increase trust, cooperation and belonging. Our built environment creates an atmosphere of acceptance of all people. Public spaces are community social centers where residents interact, enjoy each other's company, exchange ideas and collaborate to improve the community with a strengthened sense of connectedness and

*social capital.*¹¹ *Our communities are safe and inclusive, empowering all residents to fully participate and benefit from living in Montgomery County.*

Opportunities to unite the community and build social capital expand beyond land and building design. Montgomery County seeks social, environmental and racial justice by strengthening relationships that bind our communities together rooted in the values of dignity, civility, mutual respect and inclusive democracy. Essential technology that connects us, like internet networks, are accessible to all, instead of only the privileged. Community capacity-building and civic engagement takes place through deliberate, sustained outreach to a diverse body of stakeholders and shared leadership. This ensures that all residents have a voice and influence in planning and policy processes and in decisions to create an equitable future.

Social Interaction and Connectedness

The design of our communities can greatly influence whether and to what degree community cohesion and social interaction take place. Creating a higher degree of connectedness and social interaction, however, is both a physical and operational endeavor—we need both the hardware and software to complete this task. We need the built environment to be able to not only accommodate, but also encourage and make it easier for people to meet others and engage in social activities. For that, we need the right mix of housing types, nonresidential uses and places of gathering connected through easy and convenient walkable and bikeable paths and trails. This kind of physical layout is embodied in the Complete Communities idea described in the previous chapter. And as highlighted in that chapter, creating places that encourage social interaction will require retrofitting our existing neighborhoods through a sustained effort over a long time and constant attention to replacing archaic planning and zoning processes with a new and flexible regimen of land use and development decision making.

The second part of this endeavor—entities and processes that will create and support social activities and programs—is also critical to achieving social cohesion and interaction. It will require a cultural mind shift by all parts of the society to accept and support the idea of more diverse and cohesive neighborhoods. And it will require both the public and private sectors to contribute technical, financial and human resources to achieve the Plan’s vision. It will also require strong participation by residents in the community building process. The current land use and development decision making process needs to be improved to make it more accessible and inviting to all residents. Overcoming the barriers to greater participation will require collaborating with neighborhood organizations, cultural groups, religious institutions and other organizations with deep roots in the community.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 2.1: Create strong neighborhoods and communities that foster communication and interaction among residents and create a culture of inclusion.

Policy 2.1.1: Use public space to facilitate active lifestyles, physical connections and interactions among diverse populations. Ensure each neighborhood has public spaces that establish a culture of inclusion and that encourage people to linger.

¹¹ *Social capital refers to the institutions and mechanisms whereby residents relate to and interact with each other to solve problems for the common good, and have a feeling of safety and well-being supported by ample opportunities for social interactions. Social Capital Formation in Rural, Urban and Suburban Communities, University of Kentucky, 2013.*
<https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/159102/2/s474%20Social%20Capital%20Debertin%20complete.pdf>

Action 2.1.1.a: Develop an index and metrics to measure the availability and performance of places that support inclusive social and civic networks. Emphasize the principles of universal design in the criteria for this index.

Action 2.1.1.b: Amend appropriate zones in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance to incentivize and prioritize design features in private development projects that facilitate day-to-day interactions. These features could include wide sidewalks, inviting and well-designed public gathering spaces, outdoor seating and lawn areas, and pathways and trails.

Action 2.1.1.c: Develop incentives to promote designated heritage areas and historic sites and other properties with historical and cultural significance. Connect these sites with bike and pedestrian paths.

Policy 2.1.2: Ensure that every community has a network of inclusive, safe and accessible public parks, trails and other recreational spaces that connect neighborhoods, increase opportunities for social interaction, encourage active lifestyles, and connect residents to nature.

Action 2.1.2.a: Study and identify all publicly owned underutilized spaces (e.g., buildings, rights-of-way, parking lots, garages, etc.) throughout the county that have a high potential for being transformed into parks and public spaces.

Action 2.1.2.b: Study the walking and transit accessibility of the existing network of parks and trails to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to parks and trails for all residents.

Action 2.1.2.c: Update the park classification system in the state-mandated strategic plan for parks, recreation and open spaces to reflect the evolving roles of parks in urban and urbanizing areas as platforms for social gathering, active and healthy living, and connection to nature. Utilize principles of universal design so that a wide range of ages, abilities, and cultures feel welcome and included in parks and public spaces.

Action 2.1.2.d: Create new design typologies for park facilities in urban areas such as community gardens, dog parks, skate parks, playgrounds, community open space, and picnic and grill spaces. Include guidance in the new typologies that the designs should reflect the culture and traditions of the communities where they are located.

Action 2.1.2.e: Create a “Nature Access Action Plan” that enables all residents to live within a 15-minute walk from a park or green space by 2035.

Policy 2.1.3: Design public infrastructure (e.g., streets, pathways and trails) such that social gathering, recreation and active living are major priorities. Use public art, seating, historic preservation and other placemaking techniques to create distinctive community-based places. Make these spaces safe, attractive, informative, convenient and easy to access for all ages and abilities. Promote active lifestyles and social interaction among diverse community members.

Action 2.1.3.a: Create a pedestrian infrastructure improvements priority list in coordination with county and state transportation agencies in order to implement walkability standards in communities underserved by safe, walkable infrastructure. Use the Pedestrian Master Plan and the mapping analysis of community equity emphasis areas to inform this list.

Action 2.1.3.b: Inventory and map opportunities along streets, paths and trails for neighborhood storytelling that celebrates underrepresented communities. Create tools to visualize, showcase and share these stories. Erect interpretive signs and create new heritage walking or bike trails that celebrate local culture and history.

Goal 2.2: Build civic capacity within communities and make government planning and decision-making processes accessible, transparent and easy for everyone to participate in and understand.

Policy 2.2.1: Build relationships and foster trust with community leaders, recognizing their knowledge of community dynamics. Develop protocols in consultation with community leaders for regularly engaging community members, even when master plans or projects are not underway in their neighborhoods. Help to build civic capacity to ensure true neighborhood representation.

Action 2.2.1.a: Launch an educational program, such as the Citizen's Planning Institute that includes basic courses for residents and all stakeholders to increase understanding, accessibility, and participation in planning, regulatory, and zoning processes.

Action 2.2.1.b: Conduct a review of neighborhood-level civic representation organizations with effective power-sharing structures—drawing from national and local examples—to inform the creation of a new neighborhood-scale civic framework in Montgomery County.

Action 2.2.1.c: Develop a placemaking toolkit to continue and enhance community-led initiatives for placemaking, neighborhood identity and social enrichment. Periodically update the toolkit in close consultation with community leaders.

Action 2.2.1.d: Create a civic engagement Code of Conduct in partnership with community leaders and request that all Montgomery Planning staff, residents and partners sign and agree to uphold these standards.

Policy 2.2.2: Remove barriers to community engagement and improve engagement of diverse participants including renters, people with disabilities, people of color, people experiencing language barriers and others who are underrepresented in civic life.

Action 2.2.2.a: Conduct a biennial community outreach and engagement survey about awareness of, participation in and satisfaction with Montgomery Planning's outreach efforts. Set a baseline to track data over time and determine whether strategies to engage communities improved and if so, the extent of improvement.

Action 2.2.2.b: Develop a civic engagement toolkit to guide each Master Plan's Civic Engagement Plan. Include guidance on the development of demographic-based outreach strategies, equitable civic engagement, guidelines for accessibility (including scheduling and location of activities, translation and childcare), and methods for evaluating and adjusting engagement practices.

Action 2.2.2.c: Launch a required cultural competency training program for Montgomery Parks and Planning staff working on functional plans, master plans and special projects to ensure the departments effectively engage residents from diverse communities, especially historically marginalized and immigrant residents.

Policy 2.2.3: Share information and increase transparency with residents, businesses and community organizations.

Action 2.2.3.a: Use technology to gather public comments and feedback during the development of master, functional and park plans, and the review of regulatory cases. Use technology to inform the public about the status of recommendations in approved and adopted plans, and to track the efficacy of implementation.

Action 2.2.3.b: Develop strategies and tools to meet people where they are and to exchange information effectively. Employ tools such as digital technology/media protocols and an assessment of technology penetration within different neighborhoods and communities.

Action 2.2.3.c: Continue branding and marketing campaigns to increase public awareness of the role of Montgomery Planning and Montgomery Parks in the county and the impact on residents' lives.

Goal 2.3: Improve access to neighborhood-based services such as housing, jobs, professional and government services, educational opportunities, and parks and open spaces at the local, countywide and regional level. Focus on county residents with the greatest socioeconomic needs and for those who are geographically isolated from these services.

Policy 2.3.1. Ensure a network of equitably distributed, easily accessible neighborhood-based services, ideally within walking or biking distance of residents' homes to allow for increased social connections.

Action 2.3.1.a: Complete a countywide study mapping the distribution of public and private neighborhood-based services relative to underserved communities. Produce equity-access metrics at the local level to be evaluated and monitored in a timely manner.

Action 2.3.1.b: Evaluate the equitable distribution of public services and new development across the county and make recommendations for retrofitting or investing in underserved communities. Emphasize decentralized, neighborhood-based facilities for services.

Action 2.3.1.c: Survey county residents to identify disparities in access to quality services by area or region. Consider adding questions to surveys conducted by other government agencies such as the biennial Community Livability Survey of residents conducted by the Montgomery County Executive Office.

Goal 2.4: Use technological innovation to increase community connectedness and resilience for all residents.

Policy 2.4.1: Equitably distribute new and existing communication and information technology to better connect areas of the county that have limited access. Technology may include hardware, software and network infrastructure.

Action 2.4.1.a: Inventory the use and availability of existing and emerging technology within disconnected communities to ensure that all residents have equal access to information infrastructure. Use the analysis of community equity emphasis areas to create a map of technology access deserts and a list of priority areas for bridging the digital divide.

Action 2.4.1.b Identify poor coverage area “dead spots” in rural areas that are suitable for network expansion and information technology installation.

Policy 2.4.2: Meet the diverse technology needs of people in typically disconnected groups such as seniors, lower-income households, people with disabilities and people with cultural and/or language barriers.

Action 2.4.2.a: Facilitate digital literacy programs that enable people to find, evaluate, utilize, share and create content using information technologies to increase resident confidence and efficiency of use. Consider employing multigenerational approaches and informal community-based programs such as student community service hours to facilitate improving digital competency.

Policy 2.4.3: Expand communication and information technology infrastructure and equitably implement existing and emerging technologies.

Action 2.4.3.a: Identify locations in the county for free public network access to information technology services, such as public kiosks, Wi-Fi connected street furniture and other future means. Use public-private partnerships to provide network access in privately-owned public spaces and in parks.

Action 2.4.3.b: Review current zoning and land use standards, permitting processes, and development standards to identify barriers and opportunities for locating existing and emerging technology infrastructure.

Action 2.4.3.c: Establish a new program in which the county is a public technology provider to create the network infrastructure needed for all citizens to access affordable and high-quality services.

Action 2.4.3.d: Develop a countywide technology strategy to anticipate and plan for emerging technology transforming the use of public infrastructure, including but not limited to autonomous vehicles, delivery robots and drones, and the supporting technology such as networked urban sensors, wireless mesh networks and energy microgrids. The strategy will emphasize that municipal technology is a public good, does not compromise privacy or security and narrows equity gaps.

Goal 2.5: Assess racial equity and social justice impacts across all Montgomery Parks and Montgomery Planning initiatives.

Policy 2.5.1: Employ strategies to assess racial equity and social justice impacts of master, functional, regulatory and parks plans to inform improvement of planning, decision-making and resource allocation for more racially and socially equitable policies, programs and plans.

Action 2.5.1.a: Develop a model using socioeconomic criteria to identify community equity emphasis areas¹² within the county. Use the results of this model to analyze racial equity

¹² The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) define Equity Emphasis Areas which are small geographic areas as those that have significant concentrations of low-income, minority populations, or

and social justice issues for community and park planning and as a guide for Montgomery Parks to prioritize Capital Improvement Projects.

Action 2.5.1.b: Develop composite displacement risk and opportunity access indices. Use them to assist in making decisions about growth, assess investment strategies to maximize equitable development, and bring racial equity and social justice considerations into the master planning process.

3. Diverse Economy

Issues and Challenges

Montgomery County has a large, robust and competitive economy: well-paying jobs, a highly educated workforce, a world-class life sciences and biotechnology industry, and a number of major federal government agency headquarters plus many satellite agency locations. These qualities helped the county to weather past economic downturns better than other locales around the country. Even with strong fundamentals, however, the county faces many economic challenges and must not rest on its laurels if it wants to remain competitive through the 21st century. Slow job growth, limited new business formation, wage stagnation, rising economic and social inequality, a high cost of living and doing business, and increasing traffic congestion negatively affect economic activity. These issues are barriers for companies trying to innovate and grow within the county, and also deter global businesses from opening offices in the county.

The affordability challenges to businesses cross all sectors and business types. The county's small, local retail and service businesses sustain neighborhoods and enhance resident and worker quality of life. In certain parts of the county redevelopment of commercial centers near larger nonwhite populations are an economic opportunity but could also threaten displacement of small neighborhood businesses. Making sure these businesses can afford to operate and remain in Montgomery County—and that their workers can afford to live here—is necessary to continue the county's economic and social vibrancy.

Vision for a Diverse, Robust, and Equitable Economy

In 2050, Montgomery County's economy is robust, adaptable and resilient. These capabilities are propelled and sustained by a diverse base of industries and workers. This diversity enables the county to absorb and adjust to unpredictable technological, environmental and societal disruptions that inevitably emerge. This diverse economic base includes current strengths, such as biotechnology research and manufacturing, scientific and technical services, public administration, and corporate management, as well as new and emerging industries. Montgomery County is a leader in creating the technologies that drive the U.S. and global economy forward in uncertain times. Entrepreneurship and a diverse economy offer new opportunities for economic prosperity for residents, but workers must also be able to afford to live in the county for this prosperity to be realized.

A strong economic ecosystem requires connections between businesses, workers and related public and private support agencies. These connections are encouraged physically through bustling, walkable and transit-rich central business districts, as well as "virtually" through world-class communications technology infrastructure to link businesses to each other and to the rest of the world and to accommodate different working arrangements. Montgomery County plays a lead

both. <https://www.mwcog.org/transportation/planning-areas/fairness-and-accessibility/environmental-justice/equity-emphasis-areas/>

role in creating and fostering such connections throughout the Baltimore-Washington, D.C., region because a strong and cooperative region is more innovative and grows more efficiently.

A Diverse Economy is a Resilient Economy

A strong economy is essential to achieving the vision of Montgomery County as a thriving, equitable and sustainable place. A more diversified economy is also more resilient and able to withstand economic disruptions and increasing competition. Fostering interaction between established and potential innovators, and collaboration between the private sector, university researchers, and federal resources through easy access between employment centers will be critical. All these factors are appealing to firms and employees looking to start a business, expand, or relocate.

Diversity in size of businesses is also important to economic resilience. The county must continue to support small businesses by ensuring that they can afford to operate and that their workers can afford to live here. Montgomery County should create and implement targeted entrepreneurship and business retention programs to assist with development and permitting, loan applications and other issues and obstacles small businesses face, particularly minority-owned and mom and pop stores.

In the long term, equitable places are more prosperous places. Promoting the equitable distribution of prosperity within Montgomery County is consistent with county values and the recently passed [Racial Equity and Social Justice Act of 2019](#). It sets the stage for including all communities in sharing prosperity and employment growth. Increased levels of income equality and social cohesion are shown to predict longer and more sustainable growth spells for metropolitan regions in the United States.

Innovation and economic prosperity—like traffic and pollution—do not stop at county borders. Strong jurisdictions reinforce each other and create a strong region. While Washington, DC was historically the economic center, today we have a regional economy with multiple centers, including Tysons, Baltimore, Fort Meade, Bethesda, among others. Rather than competing with neighbors for large corporate investments, all jurisdictions in the Washington, D.C. region should make it a more equitable, affordable, livable, innovative and prosperous place by cooperating to solve problems and grow. Montgomery County will be a leader in this effort in the years to come.

While this section contains specific policies related to economic development, the entire Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is an economic development strategy. Achieving the other goals in the Plan will significantly increase the quality of life in the county, which will in turn create economic opportunities for residents and attract new residents and employers. It will also ensure that legacies of inequity are corrected, so that factors like race, ethnicity and geography will no longer impact the economic opportunity of individuals in the county.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 3.1: Sustain a cutting-edge economy supported by private, public and nonprofit employers in multiple industries, local and federal government, and small business entrepreneurship. This diverse economic base helps the county be resilient and respond to changes in business cycles, enhances our competitive attractiveness to new employers, and provides a path for growth for workers of all skill levels.

Policy 3.1.1: Support the efforts of the county's economic development agencies to retain and grow existing businesses and attract new businesses.

Action 3.1.1.a: Conduct space and infrastructure assessments for industries and industry clusters targeted by economic development agencies as part of master plans and ensure that land use planning efforts address deficiencies.

Policy 3.1.2: Improve physical and technological infrastructure to support existing businesses and attract new businesses. Study and keep current on emerging technologies such as networked urban sensors.

Policy 3.1.3. Make housing more affordable so that talented workers in all industries and occupations can afford and choose to live in Montgomery County.

Policy 3.1.4. Emphasize and reinforce a welcoming and inclusive culture and highlight this quality in communications and marketing material so that people and organizations from around the nation and the world find the county a welcoming place to relocate.

Goal 3.2: Grow vibrant employment centers that are attractive as headquarters locations for large, multinational corporations; major regional businesses; federal agencies; and small and locally owned businesses. These centers are accessible by multiple modes of transportation, balance a mix of commercial and residential uses and amenities, have a distinctive look and feel through high-quality design, and include attractive and active parks and open spaces.

Policy 3.2.1: Encourage high densities, a compact form of development, a diverse range of activities and urban amenities in existing and emerging commercial districts located near transit to increase economic competitiveness.

Action 3.2.1.a: Study the potential of progressive property tax structures such as a land value capture to encourage dense development of existing commercial centers and to discourage vacant and underutilized properties.

Action 3.2.1.b: Study the long-term fiscal benefits of compact development to holistically view and evaluate potential up-front costs of densification.

Action 3.2.1.c: Study the potential to establish urban innovation districts. Offer financial and regulatory support to organizations engaged in innovative building, infrastructure, and social initiatives in areas such as sustainable building construction (e.g., net-zero and net-negative buildings), green infrastructure, smart electric grids and state-of-the-art affordable housing.

Policy 3.2.2: Improve transportation connections between existing commercial and employment centers and transit hubs to connect Montgomery County businesses to workers and the rest of the region, nation and world.

Action 3.2.2.a: Establish a one-seat transit service from major employment centers to at least one of the three international airports in the region (Baltimore-Washington International, Dulles International, or Reagan National Airport).

Action 3.2.2.b: Expand non-auto transportation options between and within the county's major employment centers such as Bethesda, the National Institutes of Health/Walter Reed campus, Silver Spring, Rockville and the Great Seneca Science Corridor.

Policy 3.2.3: Preserve and expand minority-owned small businesses, and international¹³ and neighborhood retail. Enhance efforts to understand and address barriers to business ownership and expansion of these types of businesses.

Goal 3.3.: Increase the number of well-paying jobs for all education and skill levels. Encourage the expansion of job training and other professional development opportunities to encourage economic mobility.

Policy 3.3.1: Prioritize job access and job generation in land use planning, including development review processes, master planning and functional plans.

Action 3.3.1.a: Update the master planning process to include the development of employment objectives and assess the employment impacts of plan scenarios.

Action 3.3.1.b: Complete an Employment Growth and Access Functional Plan to determine if and where land use policies limit growth of and access to a variety of job types. Recommend strategies for addressing these limits.

Policy 3.3.2: Reinforce county policies and investments that improve long-term and equitable employment outcomes in coordination with public schools, workforce development, Montgomery College and other agencies.

Action 3.3.2.a: Conduct an Economic Equity Study to determine baseline levels of and barriers to employment equity for people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, people for whom English is not a primary language, and LGBTQ people. Set measurable targets and timelines to increase inclusion and equity.

Action 3.3.2.b: Develop an inclusive employment and innovation strategy that identifies occupations in competitive and emerging industries that do not require a bachelor's degree such as pharmaceutical manufacturing technicians or biotechnology laboratory technicians. Align training, mentorship and real estate considerations to expand these opportunities in the county.

Goal 3.4: Preserve land for Production, Distribution, and Repair (PDR) activities that provide well-paying jobs to those without advanced degrees, provide essential goods and services, and propel economic competitiveness for the county.

Policy 3.4.1: Determine whether existing regulations and policies support current and emerging Montgomery County PDR businesses that fit criteria listed in this goal, and design new regulations where necessary.

Action 3.4.1.a: Create a countywide freight plan in partnership with MCDOT to ensure the efficient movement of goods over road, rail, and water while eliminating environmental and equity impacts associated with freight logistics.

Action 3.4.1.b: Develop an urban logistics strategy to ensure that the increasing volume of e-commerce-related deliveries are accommodated without disrupting quality of life.

¹³ International retail refers to stores and restaurants that provide traditional products and services from countries outside of the United States, often catering to immigrant communities.

Action 3.4.1.c: Conduct a refined study of types and locations of space needed by PDR businesses to help the county make informed decisions about redevelopment and ensure adequate industrial land for the modern economy.

Goal 3.5: Lead nationally in innovation and entrepreneurship, building on existing assets and enhancing job and business growth for industries in which Montgomery County has a competitive advantage

Policy 3.5.1: Strengthen the county's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Action 3.5.1.a: Conduct a Regional Innovation Capacity and Connectivity study to identify innovation assets in the region such as federal, private, and university research labs; assess the type and quantity of innovations they produce; assess their physical proximity and accessibility to one another; and compare these factors to peer regions.

Policy 3.5.2: Strengthen partnerships between existing federal agencies with a Montgomery County presence and county businesses to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and growth.

Action 3.5.2.a: Advocate for the restructuring of federal technology transfer policies to better facilitate new entrepreneurial spinoffs from federal labs in the county.

Action 3.5.2.b: Develop and promote a guide on federal procurement processes and support opportunities for Montgomery County businesses.

Policy 3.5.3: Build connections between the private sector, the community, and higher education and research organizations, including the University of Maryland's flagship campus in Prince George's County, to enhance the innovation economy.

Action 3.5.3.a: Consider establishing or recruiting a major non-federal research institute or branch campus to expand research, innovation and entrepreneurship capacity in the county.

Action 3.5.3.b: Encourage and facilitate the physical integration of higher education campuses such as Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove into their urban surroundings.

Goal 3.6: Identify and remove regulatory and other barriers to encourage real estate development and business establishment and expansion.

Policy 3.6.1: Continue to improve interagency collaboration to streamline review of development projects.

Policy 3.6.2: Encourage infill development by making the development processes accessible to smaller or newer developers that want to take advantage of a diverse range of development opportunities such as Missing Middle Housing development.

Policy 3.6.3: Continue to use innovative technology to improve the development process internally and for the public, including routinely evaluating existing development review software and updating to suit requirements and processes.

Goal 3.7: Play a prominent role in creating a culture of regionalism and in making the Baltimore-Washington region a global leader in economic innovation and sustainable development practices.

Policy 3.7.1: Work with municipalities across the region to promote regional cooperation in economic development.

Action 3.7.1.a: Develop a Regional Growth and Convergence Plan to chart a path and set targets for cooperative growth of the combined Baltimore-Washington region.

Action 3.7.1.b: Study development regulations of neighboring municipalities to identify opportunities to increase consistency, predictability and costs across Washington, D.C., and its core suburbs to promote fair competition for business.

Action 3.7.1.c: Add rail and/or BRT connections to key regional business hubs outside of Montgomery County including Tysons and Arlington in Virginia, and Frederick, Columbia and Downtown Baltimore in Maryland.

Policy 3.7.2: Consider regional impacts of major land use decisions and infrastructure investments.

4. Safe and Efficient Travel

Issues and Challenges

The main structure of Montgomery County's and the region's transportation network was created in the early 20th century primarily for automobile travel with all major roads leading to Washington, D.C., as the main employment center. Over time, the county and the region created many employment centers served mainly by car and a land use pattern defined by sprawl. Each subsequent residential subdivision, office park, shopping center, public service and amenity was designed to connect with the nearest major road with little or no consideration given to transit, walking or biking. Today, traffic congestion in the Washington metro area is one of the worst in the country. In addition to the economic drag and lost personal time, transportation has a huge environmental impact in the form of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In 2015, 41% of the county's GHG emissions were generated by transportation.¹⁴

Although the county has made significant investments in its transit network, the basic underlying land-use pattern of low-density sprawl continues to pose challenges for the creation of a fast and reliable transit system that will meet the needs of a growing population in the next 30 years and beyond. Low-income communities, people with disabilities, young adults and others who can't afford to own cars must rely on public transit for reliable access to regular and late-night jobs, education, health care, food, and entertainment options within the county and the region. They are disproportionately affected by the current transportation network. Places that have good access to transit or are located near employment centers are generally too expensive for low-income families, forcing them to live farther from job centers and other destinations, limiting their access to job opportunities and better resources. While owning and operating a vehicle is expensive, transit can also be expensive and, for many, difficult to access.

¹⁴ County Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, 2018. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/green/climate/ghg-inventory.html>

Additionally, many of our major roads and neighborhood streets are unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities, therefore discouraging walking and cycling as transportation and exercise. Major roadways, especially in down-county areas, have become barriers dividing adjacent neighborhoods. Low-income people living along these corridors rely heavily on transit access and are disproportionately impacted by these unsafe conditions.

Vision for Safe and Efficient Travel

In 2050, Montgomery County's high-quality transportation system plays a critical role in supporting the county's economic health, environmental resilience and equity. County residents shifted from heavy reliance on private vehicles to public transit, the backbone of the county's transportation network. This safe, reliable and efficient transit network is composed of Metrorail, Purple Line, commuter rail, bus rapid transit (BRT) and regional and local buses, and a robust network of sidewalks, bikeways and trails. A large majority of people use the system to connect to their destinations within the county and the region. Technologies such as micromobility, autonomous vehicles and ridesharing offer new options for transportation. Some of this technology increases transit ridership by making it easier for people to connect to rail or BRT. Major roadways are transformed into safe and attractive boulevards with reduced speeds, trees and dedicated lanes for transit. Walkable and bikeable paths and crosswalks are safe enough to allow children to walk and bike to nearby schools. In Central Business Districts (CBDs) and town centers, a dense mix of land uses and high-quality walkways and bikeways make walking, bicycling, rolling and micromobility the preferred modes of travel. All greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are eliminated from the transportation system thanks to the significant reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and the conversion of all motorized vehicles to renewable energy.

Focus on Transit and Walkability

To achieve our GHG emissions reduction, economic competitiveness and equity goals, we need to shift our transportation focus from automobiles to public transit, walking, biking and micromobility. We simply cannot solve traffic congestion, be equitable, address climate change and support a strong economy by building more roads. And we are not yet benefiting fully from the promise of technological advances such as telework, drone deliveries and autonomous vehicles that could revolutionize how we travel and transport goods and services. Until all our energy is generated from renewable sources so that we are truly net-zero energy consumers, public transit is the best way to reduce our transportation related GHG emissions.

To make transit the preferred mode of travel will require making it competitive and even superior to car travel. This will require a cultural shift. For example, Metrorail can be too expensive for low-income residents or not close to their homes, so they use buses instead. But bus service can be slow, less frequent, and not considered high quality (bus stops are exposed to the elements), so more affluent residents who can afford to drive may choose to not take buses. Therefore, Montgomery County should continue to enhance the desirability and ridership experience of bus travel.

We also need to reorient the underlying land use pattern into walkable, bikeable complete communities and make transit more accessible to a greater number of people by concentrating all future development in transit-oriented places. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, working with Montgomery County and other jurisdictions across the DC region, set a target of putting at least 75% of new housing in mixed-use centers near high-capacity transit (rail and BRT). We must also make sure that our employment centers that are currently not accessible by transit have transit access. New micromobility solutions such as e-scooters and rideshare

bicycles will provide new capabilities to solve the first-mile/last-mile¹⁵ problem to bring reliable daily access to high speed transit.

The county's major roadways (or corridors--University Boulevard, Randolph Road, Georgia Avenue, MD 355, New Hampshire Avenue, Veirs Mill Road, Route 29, Corridor Cities Transitway and the North Bethesda Transitway) with existing and planned rail and BRT have great potential to become more transit-oriented places with safe multimodal travel options. They can accommodate a larger portion of the future growth through infill and redevelopment to create vibrant mixed-use nodes around transit stations and bus stops. Some of these corridors provide the critical east-west connections in the county. Since it is not desirable to expand existing roads or create major new roads, implementing new transit or improving transit capacity and the performance of the existing east-west corridors will be essential to address the east-west travel issue. These existing corridors include the new Purple Line or the planned BRT along Randolph Road.

Transportation is as much a regional issue as it is a local one. The regional network is composed of various pieces under the control of various jurisdictions but acts as one system and impacts the ability of all residents and workers to travel throughout the region. Montgomery County will need to increase coordination with our regional partners to improve accessibility to employment, education and other opportunities. We should also be cognizant of challenges and opportunities that may arise from improvements in the regional travel network. We need to consider how to adapt and keep pace with them to make sure that Montgomery County residents and workers benefit from them. Some of the far-reaching and visionary ideas for regional connection, if realized, may have significant consequences for Montgomery County. For example, the proposed high-speed superconducting magnetic levitation (maglev) system between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, and a proposed 35-mile underground tunnel/loop to move electric vehicles between Washington and Baltimore in 15 minutes are in very early conceptual planning and regulatory review stages. And there have been discussions among the supporters of regional connectivity about a Purple Line extension to create suburb-to-suburb connection between Tysons in Fairfax County, Va., and Largo in Prince George's County.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 4.1: Get people out of their cars. Transform Montgomery County into a community of walkable, people-centric places where public transit, walking and bicycling are the preferred travel mode for daily trips and the need for personal vehicles is substantially reduced.

Policy 4.1.1: Change the primary function of streets from moving automobiles to moving people and creating great places that are accessible and safe for all roadway users, environmentally sustainable and economically competitive. All rules and regulations regarding how we approve growth should support this approach.

Action 4.1.1.a: Prepare a Transportation Master Plan that enables safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for people of all ages and mobility abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

¹⁵ Traveling by public transit, typically done by rail or bus, starts and ends with walking, biking or getting a ride to the transit station. Lack of easy options to cover this first and last part of the overall trip can discourage people from taking transit. In transportation terms this is referred to as the first-mile/last-mile problem.

Action 4.1.1.b: Implement safe, connected, low-stress bicycle and pedestrian networks in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors and community equity emphasis areas over projects that increase traffic capacity.

Policy 4.1.2: Plan and implement a high-quality transit network that seamlessly connects the county's activity centers and regional destinations. Make transit the fastest and most reliable way to get between downtowns, town centers and rail and BRT corridors.

Action 4.1.2.a: Implement the network of BRT corridors identified in the 2013 [Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan](#).

Action 4.1.2.b: Update the [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways](#) to reexamine whether to create additional rail and BRT corridors and to upgrade all master-planned BRT corridors to run in the median by repurposing existing travel lanes.

Action 4.1.2.c: Extend rail and/or BRT directly to Tysons and Arlington in Virginia; and Frederick, Columbia and Downtown Baltimore in Maryland.

Action 4.1.2.d: Develop a strategy to expand commuter rail capacity on the MARC Brunswick Line to provide additional station locations in Montgomery County and provide bidirectional all-day service, seven days a week.

Action 4.1.2.e: Develop short-term and long-term transit plans to restructure local and regional bus service to integrate with existing and planned rail and BRT.

Action 4.1.2.f: Ensure safe and comfortable access to transit stations.

Policy 4.1.3: Reduce single-occupancy auto use and incentivize non-auto travel modes by locating most new growth near rail and BRT.

Policy 4.1.4: Strengthen access from low-density areas to rail and BRT stations, commercial areas and other services by providing flexible transportation services, including microtransit and micromobility.

Goal 4.2: Redesign street systems in downtowns and town centers to be active, people-centric places. Most travel to, from and within these areas will occur via walking, bicycling and transit.

Policy 4.2.1: Expand the street grid in downtowns, town centers, rail and BRT corridors and suburban communities to create shorter blocks, improve access and transportation system redundancy and slow the speed of traffic. Use new development projects and roadway modifications to provide new street connections.

Policy 4.2.2: Redesign downtowns and town centers so that walking and bicycling are the preferred modes of transportation by breaking up large blocks, adding more frequent safe crossings, creating space for wide sidewalks, bikeways, trees and adequate lighting and providing accessibility to the transportation system.

Action 4.2.2.a: Limit the number of through-lanes in downtowns and town centers to a maximum of four general purpose lanes and repurpose space for transit lanes, wider sidewalks, bikeways, trees and stormwater management.

Action 4.2.2.b: Reallocate some street space dedicated to motor vehicle travel to other uses such as walking, bicycling and transit; environmental features such as stormwater management and street trees; and placemaking opportunities to align with the economic, environmental and equity values in this plan.

Action 4.2.2.c: Develop curbside management strategies and regulations to provide reliable access to homes, jobs, retail opportunities and public facilities and amenities. This should include a logistics plan to facilitate increasing volumes of e-commerce-related deliveries.

Goal 4.3: Have fewer parking spaces and manage the spaces that remain effectively.

Policy 4.3.1: Reduce public and private space dedicated to motor vehicle storage.

Action 4.3.1.a: Repurpose on-street parking and public parking facilities to other uses such as space for walking, bicycling and transit, stormwater management and street trees.

Action 4.3.1.b: Eliminate parking requirements for new development projects in downtowns, town centers and rail and BRT corridors to encourage travel by walking, bicycling and transit.

Policy 4.3.2: Manage parking effectively.

Action 4.3.2.a: Update public parking rates to increase to market rates.

Goal 4.4: Eliminate all transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries. Provide a transportation system that is safe for everyone.

Policy 4.4.1: Prioritize eliminating transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries in public and private planning and development initiatives and programs, including master plans, capital projects and development projects. Area master plans and transportation capital projects must include safety analyses to inform plan recommendations and project design.

Action 4.4.1.a: Create guidelines for developing a safety component for master plans focused on eliminating transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries. Create metrics and other components for a safety analysis for proposed transportation capital projects and capital budgeting decision-making.

Action 4.4.1.b: Require the design of public and private development transportation projects to focus on the transportation and personal safety needs of the most vulnerable users of the transportation system. All projects should strive to eliminate the risk factors associated with transportation-related severe injuries and fatalities.

Action 4.4.1.c: Reduce conflict points and increase road safety by managing access location and spacing systematically on all county roads. Develop an Access Management Plan to enhance the Complete Streets Design Guide.

Policy 4.4.2: Prioritize changes to the transportation system at locations with a history of high rates of crashes and address safety issues in areas with little or no crash history. Base priorities on an analysis of locations where future crashes are likely to occur.

Policy 4.4.3: Assess and harness technology to improve transportation safety, such as innovative roadway designs, safety enforcement, autonomous vehicles, and new vehicle technology.

Goal 4.5: Eradicate greenhouse gas emissions and dangerous pollutants from the transportation system.

Policy 4.5.1: Incentivize the use of modes other than single-occupant vehicles by providing high-quality transit, walking and bicycling networks.

Policy 4.5.2: Use pricing mechanisms to deter the use of single-occupant vehicles and encourage more walking, bicycling and transit use.

Action 4.5.2.a: Conduct a study to determine how to apply congestion pricing in Montgomery County, including how to foster equity and distribute the revenue to promote walking, bicycling and transit.

Policy 4.5.3: Facilitate the mass adoption of zero emission vehicles.

Action 4.5.3.a: Develop an implementation plan for transitioning to zero emission fueling in residential and commercial development and public facilities and spaces.

Action 4.5.3.b: Update all county fleets and contracted fleet providers to zero emission vehicles.

Action 4.5.3.c: Develop county incentives to accelerate conversion of privately-owned fleets to sustainable, zero emission vehicles.

Goal 4.6: Create an equitable transportation system that provides affordable and accessible travel options to jobs, education and services.

Policy 4.6.1: Prioritize projects that provide safe, comfortable, reliable and affordable transit for disadvantaged and physically challenged residents.

Action 4.6.1.a: Prepare an Aging Readiness Master Plan to support safe transportation options for the county's aging population. The plan should address transportation topics such as transit use, curbside management, and street infrastructure.

Action 4.6.1.b: Incorporate universal design principles into the county code, regulations, policies and guidelines to improve access for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Action 4.6.1.c: Conduct a study to determine the travel needs of vulnerable users of the transportation system and create strategies to improve access. Examine the impacts faced by underserved populations. Evaluate vulnerable transit users' access to employment centers, food centers, age-restricted housing, health centers and other services.

Action 4.6.1.d: Develop an approach to prioritize transportation projects to improve walking, bicycling and transit in community equity emphasis areas.

Action 4.6.1.e: Provide low-cost transportation for low-income populations through transit fare and toll policies.

Goal 4.7: Convert auto-centric transportation corridors into safe, people-centric multimodal streets with rail and BRT. Most travel to, from and within transportation corridors will occur via walking, bicycling and transit.

Policy 4.7.1: Prioritize implementing safe and connected low-stress bicycle and pedestrian networks in rail and BRT corridors over projects that increase traffic capacity.

Policy 4.7.2: Build out a BRT network with exclusive transit lanes preferably located in the median to ensure travel time reliability.

Action 4.7.2.a: Limit the number of through-lanes on rail and BRT corridors to four general purpose lanes and repurpose excess lanes to implement transitways. Reallocate excess space to other uses, such as for walking, bicycling and transit; stormwater management; and street trees.

Policy 4.7.3: Plan and implement a grid of streets and alleys to reduce roadway speeds, provide frequent safe crossings and eliminate driveways along rail and BRT corridors.

Goal 4.8: Create a seamlessly integrated regional transportation system by coordinating transportation planning within the region and between neighboring jurisdictions.

Policy 4.8.1: Coordinate transportation policy with jurisdictions throughout the region (including the county's 21 municipalities) to improve economic vitality, environmental sustainability and equity.

Action 4.8.1.a: Work with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and other jurisdictions to create a regional active transportation plan and prioritize walking, cycling and transit in interjurisdictional infrastructure projects.

Action 4.8.1.b: Assemble a regional coalition of jurisdictions and other stakeholders to guide transportation technological change related to connected and autonomous vehicles in a way that preserves our values and that addresses the needs of disadvantaged populations.

Action 4.8.1.c: Coordinate policies to discourage the use of single-occupant vehicles to improve air quality regionwide and explore ways to raise revenue and better coordinate transportation policy and projects in Maryland counties surrounding Washington, D.C. For example, consider forming a subregional transportation or transit authority such as the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.

Goal 4.9: Increase resilience of the transportation system to withstand future climate conditions and natural or human-made disasters.

Policy 4.9.1: Create and enhance redundancy in the transportation system to ensure the continued flow of people, goods and services in the region in the event that segments of the system become constrained or unusable for extended periods of time.

Policy 4.9.2: Promote the integration of climate-adaptive, resilient design into transportation projects.

Action 4.9.2.a: Design streetscapes to mitigate disruption from climate change, manage stormwater effectively and provide tree canopy for shade and habitat.

Action 4.9.2.b: Develop, prioritize and implement flood mitigation measures for existing flood-prone transportation facilities based on vulnerability assessments and consideration of extreme precipitation events and sea level rise.

Policy 4.9.3: Ensure that government can provide quick responses to events such as terrorism, environmental disasters and public health crises that create major impacts to the transportation system.

5. Affordability and Attainability

Issues and Challenges

It costs too much to live and build housing in Montgomery County. Reflecting both high demand and the county's reputation for a high quality of life, housing prices in Montgomery County are among the highest in the Washington metropolitan area.

Our failure to deliver appropriate and attainable housing has created a housing supply mismatch with negative, secondary effects on our neighborhoods, schools, environment, transportation infrastructure and economic health. Deep disparities in wealth and homeownership in the county were shaped by a legacy of discriminatory lending practices, restrictive covenants and single-family zoning. The implications and secondary effects of this history are still being felt to this day.

The county's housing attainability gap for both renters and owners is increasing, especially for low- and moderate-income households. Between 2014 and 2018, the supply gap (the number of units affordable to households at a certain income segment) worsened for renter households earning up to 65% of the area median income (AMI)—receding by almost 5,000 units in five years. Only one unit for every two households at 50% of AMI, and one unit out of every four for households earning 30% of AMI are available for low-income households in Montgomery County.

Household growth in the county has been concentrated in the lowest and highest end of the income distribution. About half of all new households since 2010 earn less than \$50,000 annually. While in 2018, households earning less than \$50,000 comprised just less than a third of total households, this group has been growing the most rapidly over the past decade. These trends could be due to various factors, including existing households increasing their income or lower income households moving to the county. Whatever the cause, these trends imply that there is demand for housing across the income spectrum and a growing need for affordably priced housing.

We expect this bifurcated income growth to continue. By 2040, Montgomery County expects to add more than 60,000 new households, both working and non-working, including seniors and persons with disabilities.

Based on the wages of new jobs and incomes of non-workers, the greatest share of new households are expected to have incomes under \$50,000 a year (27% of forecasted new households), and over \$125,000 a year (24% of new forecasted households), with a growing need to provide multifamily owner and renter housing options.

New multifamily housing needed to accommodate new households during the 2020 to 2040 period is estimated at 55% rental and 28% owner. These multifamily types include

condominiums, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes.

Given the average annual production of around 2,500 new units from 2015-2019, the county is producing less housing than what the employment-driven housing demand forecasts. A significant increase in housing production would be needed to meet current and future demand.

Aside from housing, unaffordable land, buildings, labor, taxes, insurance and regulatory fees in the country also affect small businesses, tech and other entrepreneurs, arts and cultural institutions, and nonprofits. The ripple effect of these issues impacts transportation, economic development, equity and the environment. Addressing affordability will help us achieve our goal of making the county a thriving place for all.

Vision for Affordability and Attainability

In 2050, all Montgomery County residents have a right to affordable and attainable housing. Housing is not only a right, but a value added to the community and a means to meet our economic development, environmental resilience and equity goals. The county's housing supply is affordable as well as attainable, meaning the market creates units that respond to the broader housing demands of the community. .

Housing policies, regulations and practices address the deep disparities that exist in wealth and homeownership shaped by a legacy of institutional racism, and discriminatory laws, policies, and lending practices in housing.

A key factor in Montgomery County's ability to thrive is ensuring the availability of housing that meets the needs of the people who live here. In 2050, our housing supply grew to relieve pressure on the market, stabilize rents, and ensure housing is attainable for a broad range of incomes. This involved a comprehensive look at impediments to building housing, a will to change current policies when necessary, and an understanding that new housing and new residents are a benefit to Montgomery County.

Wide-ranging housing policies and actions that address supply, type, size, development costs, affordability, preservation, tenant protections, homelessness, and housing for older adults and people with disabilities are deployed to meet the varied housing needs of a diverse and growing population.

Build More Housing, of More Types, in More Ways

Montgomery County needs to build more housing. Declining production and increased development costs have resulted in rising housing costs and an increase in the number of cost-burdened households. Without an appropriate range of housing types at attainable price points, the county will be unable to attract and retain the employment base necessary to support our economic wellbeing.

Future housing growth is needed in transit accessible locations including current and planned rail and BRT corridors. These transit corridors are lined by zones of predominantly single-family detached units. Gentle density increases would allow the introduction of more housing types near transit to serve a mix of incomes.

Communities hostile to new development have become highly adept at using the public process to fight and block building. Addressing this barrier to new development involves building capacity and understanding of the value of housing and new residents to our communities.

Building more housing also involves strengthening and refining current housing policies and programs that help build income-restricted affordable housing. Montgomery County's pioneering inclusionary program, the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Ordinance, should be continually strengthened to meet the affordable needs of moderate-income households, but it is not the only option. Tools like the county's housing trust fund, the Housing Initiative Fund, tax abatement policies like Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS), and state resources like the Low-Income Housing Tax should be leveraged and expanded when possible to help fill our growing need.

Solving the county's housing crisis will require a shared vision and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions to find regional solutions.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 5.1: Provide and produce housing units that meet the diverse household sizes and needs of all Montgomery County residents in terms of type, size, accessibility, affordability and location.

Policy 5.1.1: Encourage the production of a broad variety of housing types to achieve attainable price ranges.

Action 5.1.1.a: Expand housing options in detached residential areas near high-capacity transit by modifying the zoning code to allow duplexes,¹⁶ triplexes,¹⁷ and quadruplexes,¹⁸ residential types by-right and with smaller lot areas.

Action 5.1.1.b: Look at market-oriented mechanisms to help set inclusionary zoning requirements, automatic Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS)¹⁹ or tax abatement requirements to incentivize affordable housing production in housing projects.

Policy 5.1.2: Develop new housing, especially affordable housing, on surplus, vacant and underutilized public and private lands in the county.

Action 5.1.2.a: Create and analyze an inventory of available surplus, vacant and underutilized private and public lands for public and private partners to acquire for housing, with special attention to assembling land.

Action 5.1.2.b: Establish tax abatements and other financial incentives to encourage conversion of high-vacancy office sites into residential uses through adaptive reuse or redevelopment of the site.

Policy 5.1.3: Continue exploring and prioritizing co-location of housing and other uses between public agencies, especially during the master planning and public lands disposition processes.

¹⁶ A duplex house plan has two dwelling units attached to each other, either next to each other as townhouses or above each other like apartments.

¹⁷ A triplex is a dwelling structure composed of three units.

¹⁸ A quadruplex is a dwelling structure split into four units.

¹⁹ The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) allows local governments, when authorized by state law to negotiate agreements with rental property owners to lower the cost of county real property and special area taxes. In return, a rental property owner commits to provide affordable housing to low-income residents. <https://www3.montgomerycountymd.gov/311/Solutions.aspx?SolutionId=1-5JQAZZ>

Action 5.1.3.a: Establish a more streamlined process for affordable housing projects, including revisions to the Local Map Amendment,²⁰ Floating Zone,²¹ Conditional Use and Mandatory Referral²² processes.

Action 5.1.3.b: Study the possibility of implementing a progressive tax structure that rewards investment in vacant and underutilized sites and shifts the tax burden to sites that remain vacant and underutilized, through tools such as land value taxation.²³

Policy 5.1.4: Build capacity for affordable housing development production with faith-based institutions, employers, the private sector and nonprofits through education and technical support on the development review process.

Action 5.1.4.a: Create an affordable housing ombudsman to manage projects with an emphasis on coordination across agencies.

Policy 5.1.5: Reduce development costs by pursuing and encouraging new and innovative housing construction types to help reduce construction costs, including modular²⁴ prefabricated housing²⁵, and mass timber²⁶.

Action 5.1.5.a: Consider using financial tools and zoning incentives to encourage alternative construction types.

Policy 5.1.6: Support the production of innovative and creative housing options including single-room occupancy units (SROs),²⁷ duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, multiplexes, shared housing,²⁸ co-housing,²⁹ accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and cooperative housing³⁰ to help meet housing needs and diversify housing options.

Action 5.1.6.a: Review regulations and policies, including impact taxes and zoning, to remove barriers and encourage the production of creative housing options, including multi-generational housing, single room occupancy, shared housing, cooperative housing and co-housing.

²⁰ A Local Map Amendment is a rezoning requested for a particular parcel of land by the property owner or a contract purchaser.

²¹ A flexible zone that is to be used for a designated purpose, but whose location is to be determined in the future as part of a Local Map Amendment.

²² Mandatory Referrals are plans submitted by government agencies for a variety of development activities including road improvements, public school projects, and any other government-owned property development.

²³ A land value tax (LTV) is a method of assessing property taxes that only considers the value of the land itself and related improvements, and not the structures built on the land.

²⁴ Modular is a construction method that involves constructing sections away from the building site, then delivering them to the intended site to be assembled.

²⁵ Prefabricated homes are dwelling types of prefabricated building, which are manufactured off-site in advance, usually in standard sections that can be easily shipped and assembled.

²⁶ Mass timber is a term used to describe a number of large engineered wood products that typically involve the lamination and compression of multiple layers to create solid panels of wood. Mass timber construction uses solid wood panels to frame a building's walls, floors and roofs.

²⁷ Single room occupancy (more commonly abbreviated to SRO) is a form of housing that is typically aimed at residents with low or minimal incomes who rent small, furnished single rooms.

²⁸ Shared housing is defined as two or more people who live in one permanent rental housing unit, sharing costs associated with maintaining housing such as rent and utilities.

²⁹ Co-housing is semi-communal housing consisting of a cluster of private homes and a shared community space (as for cooking or laundry facilities).

³⁰ Cooperative housing is a different type of homeownership, with cooperative housing you own a part of a corporation that owns the building.

Action 5.1.6.b: Consider fee waivers, financial assistance, and other incentives to increase ADU production.³¹

Action 5.1.6.c: Explore the possibility of county-offered low-cost financing or financial assistance to homeowners who are willing to enter their ADU into a deed restriction that restricts the rent.

Action 5.1.6.d: Explore ways to work adaptability into building design to ensure buildings can respond to changing demographics and generational need over the lifetime of a building.

Policy 5.1.7: Provide family-sized housing units in new multifamily housing developments.

Action 5.1.7.a: Develop incentives and tools to encourage the development of housing units that meet the needs of families, including larger size three-bedroom (or more) units.

Policy 5.1.8: Build or retrofit housing that meets the needs of older adults to enable them to age in place, downsize, choose rental or ownership, or find housing with the appropriate level of services.

Policy 5.1.9: Expand current state and county programs and identify new tools to increase access to homeownership in order to support and improve paths to homeownership, especially among low-income residents, people of color and younger households.

Action 5.1.9.a: Expand state and county down payment assistance programs, like the SmartBuy program.

Action 5.1.9.b: Expand support for county and nonprofit organizations like the [Housing Opportunities Commission's Mortgage Purchase Program](#) that provide education, financial counseling on homeownership especially for low- and moderate-income households, and households of color.

Action 5.1.9.c: Create employer-supported homebuyer and renter counseling programs and assess the feasibility of developing programs for employer contributions to closing cost and down payment assistance programs for their employees.

Action 5.1.9.d: Consider exempting first-time homebuyers from county-imposed fees and taxes like the recordation tax.

Policy 5.1.10: Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to expand housing resources and tools; share data, resources, and best practices; and identify and consider regional solutions to housing challenges.

Action 5.1.10.a: Develop and update shared housing goals for both Montgomery County and the region through collaboration with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Action 5.1.10.b: Study strategies to best align with neighboring jurisdictions' housing policies and practices to reduce housing instability and eliminate homelessness.

³¹ An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a residential unit that is either in or added to an existing one-family dwelling, or in a separate accessory structure on the same lot as an existing one-family dwelling and used as a complete, independent living facility with provisions for cooking, eating, sanitation and sleeping.

Action 5.1.10.c: Create a Housing Functional Master Plan to provide measurable housing goals and strategies for different market segments in Montgomery County as well as an analysis of affordability gaps and impediments to the housing supply.

Policy 5.1.11: Encourage affordable, sustainable, green development and environmental sensitivity in housing, neighborhood design, and redevelopment.

Goal 5.2: Ensure that the majority of new housing is located near rail and BRT stations, employment centers and within complete communities that provide needed services and amenities for residents.

Policy 5.2.1: Pursue financial and zoning opportunities to increase residential density, especially for older adults and people with disabilities, near high-capacity transit that will result in increased walkability and access to amenities.

Action 5.2.1.a: Provide appropriate financial incentives, such as tax abatements, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) and Tax Increment Financing (TIFs)³² to increase housing production in targeted locations near high-capacity transit.

Action 5.2.1.b: Provide incentives to encourage county employers and property owners to develop mixed-income housing at employment centers by redeveloping surface parking lots and underutilized property.

Policy 5.2.2: Ensure all established residential communities have access to affordable, high-quality transit.

Goal 5.3: Continue to promote the policy of mixed-income housing³³ development through the implementation of county policies, programs, regulations and other tools and incentives.

Policy 5.3.1: Combat the concentration of poverty and segregation with financial and zoning incentives that help spur targeted housing investments to increase demographic and income diversity across the county.

Action 5.3.1.a: Implement lower Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU)³⁴ requirements for new residential development in low-income areas to increase economic diversification and reduce the barrier to development.

Policy 5.3.2: Fully integrate affordable housing into our communities and ensure it is indistinguishable from market-rate housing, including quality of design, sustainability features and community amenities.

Policy 5.3.3: Encourage the development of affordable housing by strengthening the capacity of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program and other affordable housing programs.

³² Tax increment financing, or TIF, subsidizes companies by refunding or diverting a portion of their taxes to help finance development in an area or (less frequently) on a project site.

³³ Mixed-income housing development is generally defined as housing units affordable to a broad range of income levels.

³⁴ A Moderately Priced Dwelling unit, or MPDU is Montgomery County's inclusionary zoning program that requires 12.5%-15% of new units in a development to be affordable to households earning 65 % of area median income (AMI) for garden-style apartments and 70 % for high-rise apartments.

Action 5.3.3.a: Consider implementing income averaging³⁵ to reach broad levels of affordability.

Action 5.3.3.b: Create a centralized MPDU application system for rental units, including establishing a waiting list.

Action 5.3.3.c: Ensure that the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) has the ability and flexibility to terminate and modify covenants due to unaffordability.

Action 5.3.3.d: Explore the county's and the state's ability to make homeowner's association (HOA) and condo fees more reasonable for residents of affordable units.

Action 5.3.3.e: Work with Prince George's County and the State of Maryland to attain a 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)³⁶ set-aside for Montgomery and Prince George's County.

Action 5.3.3.f: Expand local housing voucher³⁷ programs with dedicated funding to meet the needs of lower-income households.

Policy 5.3.4: Explore public-private partnerships to build 100% affordable housing projects in areas where the project is consistent with the idea of increasing income diversification.

Policy 5.3.5: Continue to grow and identify new sources of revenue for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF).³⁸

Action 5.3.4.a: Explore changes to the recordation tax to generate additional funding for the HIF.

Goal 5.4: Eliminate homelessness through strategies that provide safe, stable and affordable housing opportunities for homeless youth, singles and families.

Policy 5.4.1: Enhance implementation of the county's Housing First Initiative³⁹, which places people experiencing homelessness into housing as rapidly as possible and provides wraparound services²⁸ to help them maintain their housing.

Action 5.4.1.a: Increase access to housing options for tenants who face challenges in obtaining housing, including expanding resources for the Risk Mitigation Fund.⁴⁰

³⁵ Income averaging allows property owners to elect to serve households with varied incomes, so long as the average income/rent level in the project remains at or under a set AMI (Area Median Income) limit.

³⁶ The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit provides a tax incentive to construct or rehabilitate affordable rental housing for low-income households.

³⁷ The Housing Choice Voucher Program, formerly known as "Section 8," provides assistance for very low-income households (single or family), the elderly and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market.

³⁸ The Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) is a locally funded housing trust fund that receives revenue from a variety of sources including loan repayments and property tax revenue. Administered by Montgomery County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the fund provides loans to the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), nonprofit developers, experienced rental property owners and for-profit developers to build new housing units, renovate deteriorated multi-family housing developments, preserve existing affordable housing and provide housing for people with disabilities.

³⁹ The Housing First Initiative offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based supports people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness

⁴⁰ Risk mitigation funds provide financial assurances to landlords to address specific concerns and risks such as damage to property, nonpayment of rent or eviction costs.

Policy 5.4.2: Increase the number of permanent supportive housing units to address the unmet need in the county.

Action 5.4.2.a: Explore changes to the zoning code to support the creation of permanent supportive housing units like Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) or Personal Living Quarter (PLQ) units by-right in all residential and mixed-use zones.

Policy 5.4.3: Continue to focus on reducing the time families and individuals spend in temporary shelters.

Policy 5.4.4: Use the master plan process to collaborate with the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate the housing needs of individuals and families on the homelessness spectrum, including identifying potential locations for supportive housing.

Policy 5.4.5: Eliminate racial disparities across the homelessness spectrum.

Goal 5.5: Minimize displacement of people, especially among low-income residents, people of color, people with disabilities and older adults.

Policy 5.5.1: Preserve market-rate and income-restricted affordable housing stock, striving for no net loss³⁰ of affordable housing in the event of redevelopment. Develop targeted, balanced, priority-based strategies that minimize displacement, increase our housing supply and reinvestment, and help the creation of mixed-income communities.

Action 5.5.1.a: Create a “No Net Loss” of Affordable Housing Floating Zone in targeted areas, like the Purple Line corridor.

Policy 5.5.2: Monitor and work with owners of affordable housing to develop preservation plans for properties to ensure long-term affordability.

Action 5.5.2.a: Consider implementing Housing Affordability Strategy⁴¹ plans for small areas with expiring subsidies or existing market-rate affordable housing that allow for the enhancement and preservation of long-term housing affordability through the provision of additional density and zoning changes.

Policy 5.5.3: Consider and support enhancement of the Right of First Refusal⁴² and other efforts to aid the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and other county and nonprofit partners in the purchase of affordable rental buildings that are at risk of being sold to keep the units affordable.

Policy 5.5.4: Continue to use the Housing Initiative Fund acquisition and rehabilitation loans and the Right of First Refusal contracts to acquire and preserve or create extended affordability in housing developments.

Action 5.5.4.a: Create financial and technical assistance and zoning incentives to preserve market-rate affordable rental and common ownership condominium properties.

⁴¹ See an example in South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy, City of Alexandria, 2018. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/planning/info/default.aspx?id=100785>

⁴² The Right of First Refusal requires that the County and/or HOC have the right to match any signed bona fide third-party sales contract for an existing rental building in the county.

Action 5.5.4.b: Create a preservation fund in targeted areas to help nonprofits purchase market rate affordable properties.

Policy 5.5.5: Encourage the replacement of larger family sized units in redevelopment, relocation and right to return processes.

Action 5.5.5.a: In the case of redevelopment, create strategies to retain naturally occurring affordable housing and existing housing types that are typically not constructed in the marketplace including 3+ bedroom units for families.

Policy 5.5.6: Protect tenants' rights, improve living conditions in rental housing, and ensure renters' contributions to the community are emphasized and valued.

Action 5.5.6.a: Promote financial and technical assistance and counseling to renter households that may be at risk of eviction.

Action 5.5.6.b: Collect and report data on evictions and use of emergency financial assistance to find opportunities to enhance existing assistance.

Policy 5.5.7: Support various programs (nonprofit, private, county-sponsored and philanthropic) that aid residents in the upkeep and repair of their homes and properties.

Action 5.5.7.a: Continue and strengthen the county's vigorous Housing Code Enforcement program to maintain in good condition the county's aging but vital rental housing stock.

Policy 5.5.8: Continue to strengthen the rights of tenants in properties with multiple code-enforcement violations that require more frequent inspections ("troubled properties") through education to ensure timely maintenance and safe living conditions.

Policy 5.5.9: Integrate people with disabilities and older adults into communities with affordable and accessible housing that offer services and amenities. Continue and enhance coordination between county and other agencies and nonprofits that provide housing with wraparound services.

Policy 5.5.10: Identify and implement programs to meet any shortfall of housing for people with disabilities. As funds are available, increase rental subsidies and opportunities to the most at-risk populations. Obtain and leverage federal and state funds when possible.

Action 5.5.10.a: Develop zoning and financial incentives to designate and build housing for people with disabilities.

Action 5.5.10.b: Through the regulatory process, incorporate accessible design features such as no-step entrances, wider doors, barrier-free entrances, and other improvements to help people age in place, assist persons living with a disability and accommodate populations with mobility limitations.

Policy 5.5.11: Monitor indicators of neighborhood change and establish programs to minimize the concentration of poverty or the involuntary displacement of vulnerable populations.

Action 5.5.11.a: Create an interactive monitoring database that maps indicators of neighborhood change including gentrification and displacement, and concentration of poverty and segregation.

Policy 5.5.12: Use the County's Growth Policy [Subdivision Staging Policy] to monitor the secondary effects of targeted growth policies, including loss of market-rate affordable housing and displacement.

Goal 5.6: Expand housing access through elimination of fair housing barriers and enforcement of fair housing laws to protect residents from discrimination.

Policy 5.6.1 Provide education, outreach and services for residents regarding their rights as tenants and home buyers under the Fair Housing Law and additional protections offered through the state and county.

Policy 5.6.2: Provide education and training to landlords, property managers, real estate agents, lending institutions and others on their obligations under the Fair Housing Law and additional protections offered through the state and county.

Policy 5.6.3: Conduct fair housing testing to ensure access to housing choice for protected classes and compliance by public and private sector housing providers.

Policy 5.6.4: Commit to the principles of Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing⁴³ by pursuing meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity.

Action 5.6.4.a: Develop a Regional Fair Housing Plan with other jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

6. Healthy and Sustainable Environment

Issues and Challenges

Climate change is the most serious environmental and public health issue to confront our society. The negative impacts of climate change are diverse and far-reaching: heat waves, increased storm frequency and intensity, flooding, stormwater runoff and stream erosion, urban heat island effects, droughts, loss of species and habitat and many others. Economic impacts include increased energy costs, infrastructure failure and damage, impacts to outdoor labor, recreation, tourism, food production and financial loss of ecosystem services. These impacts are only projected to increase. Disadvantaged communities bear a disproportionate share of these negative consequences.

Public health issues are exacerbated by climate change and they are intertwined with the quality of the physical environment. Higher temperatures have health implications already evident in cities. Climate change will affect the occurrence of infectious diseases and may impact our housing and

⁴³ The principles of Affirmatively Further Fair Housing refer to the legal requirement (implemented in 2015) that federal agencies and federal grantees further the purposes of the Fair Housing Act. Under the rule, any jurisdiction that receives money from HUD must analyze its housing occupancy by race, disability, familial status, economic status, English proficiency, and other categories. It must then analyze factors which contribute to any prohibitive barriers in housing and formulate a plan to remedy the impediments. It was suspended under Ben Carson in 2018.

infrastructure as well as restrict access to healthcare.⁴⁴

Opportunities to eat well and be active are impacted by the quality of neighborhoods and the availability of services and opportunities. The inequitable distribution and accessibility of job opportunities, public transportation, parks and recreation facilities and healthy food choices lead to inequitable health outcomes. Sedentary lifestyles contribute to obesity and related health issues. Except for much of our parks system, Montgomery County is not designed to encourage and promote physical activity or active personal transit (walking and cycling to destinations). County roads and sidewalks are not safe or comfortable for people exercising, running errands or commuting on foot or bicycles. Our built environment makes it difficult to incorporate movement into our everyday lives.

Montgomery County is a leader in protecting and enhancing the natural environment through a broad range of planning initiatives, policies and regulations to protect sensitive environmental resources. But many indicators such as stream water quality, forest loss, loss of plant and animal species, and increased imperviousness are worsening. As the population expands and the region continues to develop, pressures on our natural systems increase.

Vision for Healthy and Sustainable Environment

In 2050, Montgomery County has a culture of sustainability embraced by residents, workers, businesses and government agencies. Living in complete communities, residents work, play and obtain most of their basic needs close to their homes. Biking, walking and public transit are the major modes of travel in urban areas and are common elsewhere. Reliance on cars is significantly reduced. Virtually all vehicles owned and operated in the county are zero emission vehicles. Using a compact form for all new growth, infill and redevelopment have resulted in complete communities and reduced the amount of impervious surface. Tree canopy and green areas exist in places where none did before, providing cleaner air and water and supporting and encouraging outdoor physical activity, thereby improving health for all residents. Climate change is factored into all land use and planning initiatives resulting in highly resilient and adaptive natural and built environments. The county pursues best practices and innovative technologies to absorb more greenhouse gases than it generates. Most buildings are net-zero energy buildings. All energy used in the county is 100% clean energy. Reuse, recycling and composting of food and yard waste results in very little municipal solid waste generation.

Montgomery County provides thriving, livable and healthy habitats for both humans and wildlife. Green resources and the many benefits they provide are distributed equitably throughout the county. Creative programs and public investments ensure that communities that once experienced deficits of these resources are just as cool, green and healthful as the rest of the county. Residents benefit from improved health outcomes no matter where they live. The county's parks and open spaces provide or enable essential environmental benefits including tree canopy and shade; carbon dioxide pollution reduction; and clean water, air and wildlife habitat. Comprehensive watershed management and park stewardship efforts safeguard the health of our natural areas and improve water quality.

Urbanism as the Key to True Sustainability

Montgomery County has been a pioneer in protecting and preserving its natural environment. One of its significant achievements--the Agricultural Reserve--more than one-third of the county's land

⁴⁴ "Health impacts of climate change" - https://www.apha.org/-/media/files/pdf/topics/climate/guide_section4.ashx?la=en&hash=118F4FD2E4719EF51A76C0B0865BAEF57BEB7EDB

area (35.1%). It is also the origin of many of the streams which have the best water quality of any in the county. Another 13.8% of the county is designated parkland (some of it in the Agricultural Reserve). Together, these two land uses and numerous regulatory mechanisms and policy initiatives have put the county in the forefront of environmental protection in the country. In 2017, Montgomery County was the first suburban jurisdiction to pass a resolution declaring a Climate Emergency and committing the county to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2035.

The county was also a leader in adopting smart growth principles in its planning and land use policies, which have helped reduce and contain the negative environmental impacts of new development. It started concentrating new development around Metrorail stations through the implementation of Central Business District zones in the early 1970s and later through mixed-use centers in the 1990s.

We must continue to address the threat of climate change and adjust the county's planning framework to help achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2035.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is proposing to embrace "urbanism" and a compact form of development to reduce its carbon footprint. (See more on compact development in the Diverse and Adaptable Growth chapter). A compact form of development implies having multiple options for transportation such as walking and biking, without relying on a car. This will also promote more active lifestyles as it allows us to provide more land for parks, trails and other recreation spaces. It will also help us achieve complete communities that emphasize a mix of uses, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and 15-minute living.

It is possible to accomplish all these goals – they are not mutually exclusive. For example, a compact form of development can reduce stormwater runoff and heat island effects using green roofs, other green cover, and building design and orientation to reduce urban temperatures. And of course, we must continue to protect forests, wetlands, meadows, and streams as they are the principal components of our natural areas and act as the lungs, backbone, and circulatory systems of our natural environment. Street trees, recreational parks and other green spaces provide similar benefits in the built environment. Both ecosystems provide clean air, water, habitat, recreation, and other needs that are vital for human, animal, plant, and economic health.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 6.1: Use a compact form of development to create and support a variety of urban, suburban and rural places that benefit human health through active lifestyles, reduction in carbon footprint, mitigation of climate change and protection of natural resources.

Policy 6.1.1: Accommodate future growth through a compact form of infill and redevelopment to create long-term sustainability for both human and environmental health.

Action 6.1.1.a: Develop compact development strategies suitable for different parts of the county to reduce building footprints as much as possible and create walkable, bikeable neighborhoods. Use smart growth principles and best practices to increase the supply of open spaces for active recreation.

Action 6.1.1.b: Develop urban environmental guidelines to incorporate green features and amenities in urban areas that will address climate change, provide cleaner air, water and shading and cooling features, and improve human health.

Policy 6.1.2: Plan in three dimensions. Creatively integrate and use different building levels, from below ground to rooftops, to provide sustainability benefits in densely developed areas within the limited space available. Examples include use of underground spaces for stormwater, utilities, and tree beds; use of terraces, building step-backs, and rooftops for gathering spaces and vegetation; and use of building faces and rooftops for solar energy generation.

Policy 6.1.3: Support the concepts of compact form of development and complete communities to avoid sprawl. Limit expansion of new roads and of the sewer and water system to direct new development to areas served by existing infrastructure.

Goal 6.2: Mitigate, reduce and adapt to climate change through land use and infrastructure that is more resilient to climate change and moves the county to a climate-positive⁴⁵ future.

Policy 6.2.1: Use compact, dense, urban development to help reduce, mitigate and adapt to climate change. Use building and site design and other development features to address the effects of extreme temperatures, increased and more frequent flooding and extreme weather events.

Action 6.2.1.a Develop guidelines and standards for climate-sensitive design principles and materials for new public and private development projects. Ensure these standards include strategies to maximize greenhouse gas reductions in the built environment.

Policy 6.2.2: Meet the county's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals and maintain the GHG reductions over the long-term through innovative land use, green approaches, and design standards and practices. Incorporate recommendations from the county's Climate Action Plan⁴⁶ to reduce GHG emissions in planning and development initiatives, regulatory controls, and strategies. Collaborate with regional partners to seek and implement climate change solutions.

Action 6.2.2.a: Develop incentives such as a carbon tax or fee to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Action 6.2.2.b: Increase the number of required electric vehicle charging stations for all new development.

Action 6.2.2.c: Create or choose a tool to apply during the planning process to evaluate land use options to meet our GHG reduction goals.

Policy 6.2.3: Upgrade the county's water supply and distribution systems to withstand the effects of climate change and continue to meet the county's current and long-term needs for safe and adequate drinking water supply.

Policy 6.2.4: Enhance the county's climate resilience by planning and designing new utility infrastructure, including electrical, water and sewer, stormwater and communications, and other infrastructure improvements that incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to ensure service continuity during major hazard events.

⁴⁵ Climate positive means going beyond achieving net-zero emissions and removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

⁴⁶ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/green/climate/climate-action-planning.html>

Action 6.2.4.a Create performance standards for utility infrastructure to mitigate and adapt to climate change and track the effectiveness of climate adaptation strategies for infrastructure.

Policy 6.2.5: Reduce the county's energy demand and generate all energy needs by clean, efficient and renewable methods that are more climate resilient, less centralized in generation and distribution, and increasingly able to use more local sources of power.

Action 6.2.5.a: Identify and evaluate opportunities for siting alternative energy production and storage systems.

Action 6.2.5.b: Identify innovative ways to incorporate energy production into new building design.

Policy 6.2.6: Retrofit existing development and neighborhoods to reduce heat island effects by better shading and cooling.

Policy 6.2.7: Expand the capacity of the Agricultural Reserve to provide essential contributions to the county's efforts to reduce, mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Action 6.2.7.a: Create mechanisms to encourage and support sustainable agricultural practices that enhance soil and environmental benefits, provide greater resilience to climate change disruptions and promote healthier farming communities.

Policy 6.2.8: Identify, mitigate or eliminate existing environmental injustices within affected communities by funding and conducting public environmental mitigation and enhancement projects and creating incentives for private entity mitigation and cleanup.

Policy 6.2.9: Strive to eliminate municipal solid waste through reduced waste generation, resource reuse, recycling and composting.

Goal 6.3: Improve health and well-being for all Montgomery County residents and address the health disparities that currently exist.

Policy 6.3.1: Incorporate a "Health in all Policies"⁴⁷ approach into policies, programs and practices affecting all aspects of the built environment. Develop cross-agency collaborations to promote health equity for all residents.

Action 6.3.1.a: Develop Health Impact Assessment tools to be used at all levels of decision making specific to each agency and to inform cross-agency collaboration. Predict and advance the health and well-being of our residents using technological innovations for data gathering.

Policy 6.3.2: Create convenient and safe opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages, cultures, abilities and income levels. Include walking, biking, informal movement, activity and recreation opportunities within communities. Ensure safe, convenient connections to parks and open spaces.

⁴⁷ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/healthymontgomery/programs/health-policies.html>

Action 6.3.2.a: Expand Montgomery Planning's [Recreation Guidelines](#) and requirements to include design guidelines for informal activity opportunities and needs.

Action 6.3.2.b: Identify communities with chronic health conditions and prioritize them for retrofitting to improve deficiencies in access to physical activity opportunities.

Policy 6.3.3: Ensure that all residents breathe clean air and are not exposed to an unhealthy environment.

Action 6.3.3.a: Reduce vehicle miles traveled and the use of single-occupancy cars⁴⁸.

Action 6.3.3.b: Develop land use guidelines to reduce exposure to air pollution from traffic and other emissions sources.

Action 6.3.3.c: Encourage owners and managers of existing buildings to retrofit indoor air handling systems in residences and schools to increase indoor air quality.

Policy 6.3.4: Consider the health threats of climate change when creating and implementing climate adaptation strategies. Partner with health-focused organizations on climate adaptation projects. Analyze health outcomes data, particularly for marginalized communities and other residents with greater health challenges, as part of developing mitigation and adaptation projects to reduce exacerbated impacts of climate change on vulnerable residents' health.

Policy 6.3.5: Promote active and healthy lifestyles and active transportation, including walking and biking for all segments of the population in all parts of the county, by maintaining and improving built and natural environments. This includes ensuring that all county residents in urban and suburban communities have access to a park or open space within walking distance from their homes. Enhance and protect our park system of natural and built elements to promote and increase opportunities for healthy active lifestyles and physical fitness. Foster human-to-human and human-to-nature connections.

Policy 6.3.6: Use master plans and the regulatory review process to protect communities from excessive noise, especially in places where it is not possible to mitigate all noise impacts.

Policy 6.3.7: Achieve nighttime light levels near natural areas that protect wildlife and enhance our ability to enjoy the night sky.

Action 6.3.7.a: Review County lighting standards for potential revision to address energy efficiency, fixture design, and other considerations that avoid light spillover into adjacent areas.

Action 6.3.7.b: Study Dark Skies Initiative⁴⁹ and similar approaches to limit light pollution.

Goal 6.4: Provide all residents with safe, convenient access to affordable, healthy foods.

Policy 6.4.1: Provide safe, convenient opportunities to obtain affordable fresh fruits and vegetables in all neighborhoods.

⁴⁸ See also Goal 4.5 and related policies in the Safe and Efficient Travel

⁴⁹ <https://mcdonaldobservatory.org/darkskies>

Action 6.4.1.a: Evaluate existing public and private open space and facilities and identify opportunities for the inclusion of community gardens and the development of urban farms.

Policy 6.4.2: Avoid concentrations of sources of unhealthy food, particularly in communities with chronic health conditions.

Policy 6.4.3: Study and evaluate options for creating a comprehensive food system including appropriate locations for food crop growth, storage, processing and distribution.

**Goal 6.5: Preserve, restore, enhance, expand and sustainably manage natural and other green areas to support human, animal and plant life.
Provide appropriate and accessible outdoor recreation opportunities for all.**

Policy 6.5.1: Minimize imperviousness by limiting and removing existing impervious surfaces while respecting goals, needs, and conditions in different parts of the county.

Action 6.5.1.a: Research and create guidance for innovative development, retrofit and construction designs and techniques that minimize imperviousness.

Policy 6.5.2: Protect, enhance and increase the coverage, connectivity and health of natural habitats such as forests, non-forest tree canopy, wetlands and meadows through land acquisition, easements, habitat restoration and ecosystem management.

Action 6.5.2.a: Conduct a study to determine and establish appropriate forest and non-forest canopy goals to protect natural and human health.

Action 6.5.2.b: Conduct a study of the Special Protection Area (SPA) program law, regulations and implementation and determine what changes are needed to achieve the original SPA program goals and objectives.

Action 6.5.2.c: Study the County Forest Conservation Law and regulations intended to preserve specimen and champion trees. Identify improvements to the law and regulation's effectiveness and efficiency.

Action 6.5.2.d: Develop a long-range forest quality management plan to address fragmentation, deer pressure, invasive threats and the forest's capacity to withstand and mitigate climate impacts.

Policy 6.5.3: Design and construct transportation and other infrastructure improvements using environmentally sensitive methods.

Policy 6.5.4: Preserve and enhance privately owned forest land through incentives and other approaches such as easements, forest mitigation bank programs or transfer of development rights.

Policy 6.5.5: Reduce and manage invasive and other problem species to levels that pose no significant threats to green areas.

Policy 6.5.6: Improve water quality and stream conditions in existing and new development through green enhancements and retrofits such as green streets, increasing tree canopy and green stormwater management.

Action 6.5.6.a: Develop incentives for developers to restore existing streams and daylight piped streams during the redevelopment process.

7. Diverse and Adaptable Growth

Issues and Challenges

The [1964 General Plan](#) laid out the broad planning principles based on the “Wedges and Corridors” concept. These principles generally worked, and the county grew in an orderly fashion into an economic engine for the state and a desirable home to more than a million people. However, the county’s current land use and development patterns need to be reimagined to deal with the current and emerging issues of technological innovation, traffic congestion, economic and equity issues, and the threats of climate change.

Continuing the current land use pattern supported mainly by driving is not sustainable. As outlined in the previous chapters, this pattern of development has negative implications for the county’s economy, housing affordability, traffic congestion and environmental sustainability and resilience. And it will continue the current pattern of inequality and separation of its neighborhoods by income and race.

On the positive side, the Agricultural Reserve has significant value as a tool to preserve farmland and rural open space as well as to provide numerous environmental benefits (e.g., protecting downstream water quality) and opportunities for local food production and carbon sequestration. But there are competing demands for land and other purposes, such as solar energy production, which put pressure on the Agricultural Reserve. It faces local and global challenges including a loss of contiguous farmland, lack of funding to purchase preservation easements, extreme weather events associated with climate change, technological advancements and global trade disputes.

Vision for Diverse and Adaptable Growth

In 2050, Montgomery County’s growth is focused on infill development and redevelopment in areas of the county supported by rail and BRT that lead to improved human and environmental health and healthy, active lifestyles. Focusing new growth and redevelopment along transit corridors transforms auto-centric roads into people-centric places. Reduction of automobiles fosters stewardship of treasured resources, including the Agricultural Reserve, parkland and environmentally sensitive areas. Residents have access to healthy, local food provided through agriculture integrated into urban and suburban neighborhoods and increased local food production in the Agricultural Reserve. Growth and development are served by adequate, timely and equitable public facilities and infrastructure. The regulatory mechanisms to support this development are nimble and focused on design excellence and achieve measurable, equitable outcomes.

Diverse and Compact Growth

Thrive Montgomery 2050 envisions a shift from the conventional suburban model of car-oriented greenfield development to walkable urbanism based on a compact form of infill development and redevelopment resulting in Complete Communities as described in the first chapter.

A compact form of development uses the idea of a village or a town center with places of commerce and gathering in the center of a walkable residential community. Compact form of building

essentially means using a smaller footprint of buildings placed close together. When designed appropriately, compact development provides a number of advantages over suburban sprawl including efficient land use, more natural areas for recreation and preservation, reduced automobile travel and increased walking and biking and reduced expense for building and maintaining infrastructure. “When a variety of uses are close together, people are more likely to walk, public places are livelier, and a civic identity develops more readily than in a conventionally planned development.”⁵⁰

The principles of urbanism and compact development can be applied in urban, suburban and rural areas to address the variation in context, scale, intensity and the desired community character. According to a ULI paper, compact development “does not imply high-rise or even uniformly high density, but rather higher average “blended” densities. Compact development also features a mix of land uses, development of strong population and employment centers, interconnection of streets, and the design of structures and spaces at a human scale.”⁵¹

A large part of the future growth in the county must be transit-oriented with both jobs and housing located within walking distance of the existing and planned rail and BRT stations. Montgomery County should focus future growth not around these transit stations but also on the connective tissue between them—the network major corridors (MD 355, Georgia Avenue, Route 29, Veirs Mill Road, University Boulevard, New Hampshire Avenue, Corridor Cities Transitway, and North Bethesda Transitway). As Montgomery County transitions from greenfield development to infill and redevelopment to accommodate future growth in a changing social and natural environment, these corridors provide an opportunity to help the county grow and improve economic health, equity and environmental resilience.

Managing Growth as a Mature, Built-Out County

Since the future is unpredictable, we must be flexible and nimble in our plans and implementation tools so we can change quickly and adapt to new conditions and still be able to keep our focus on achieving the desired outcomes no matter what challenges and disruptions we will face. Today, technological innovations such as wayfinding apps can give us real time information expanding our ability to manage traffic in a whole different way. Increases in the number of people working remotely, as well as demand for office space, and could change the traffic conditions significantly. We must manage growth and development as a mature, built out county by maximizing use of constrained land, and explore new mechanisms to evaluate and deliver public facilities and infrastructure improvements.

The Role of Agriculture in Neighborhoods and the Agricultural Reserve

While the establishment of the Agricultural Reserve successfully preserved farmland and rural open space in the county, the nationally recognized planning initiative, needs to evolve to address the changing circumstances over the next 30 years. We will continue to retain the Agricultural Reserve and celebrate its value in sustaining farmland and rural open space and providing opportunities for local food production and carbon sequestration.

We will also expand access to healthy food and agricultural employment through the diversification of the agricultural sector, including urban and suburban farming.

⁵⁰ <https://coastalsmartgrowth.noaa.gov/elements/design.html>

⁵¹ <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/growingcoolerCH1.pdf>

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 7.1: Focus growth on infill development and redevelopment concentrated around rail and BRT.

Policy 7.1.1: Direct Montgomery County's future growth—to include a mixture of uses and a diversity of housing types—to areas supported by rail and BRT.

Action 7.1.1.a: Initiate an update to [the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways](#) to identify typologies for transit station nodes in rail and BRT corridors.

Action 7.1.1.b: Initiate master, sector and corridor plans to analyze land use and zoning in areas accessible to rail and BRT to identify opportunities for infill development, redevelopment and adaptive reuse.

Action 7.1.1.c: Study opportunities to leverage federal, state and local tax incentives, publicly owned land, and land investment opportunities to achieve a diverse mixture of housing options and activities in areas supported by transit.

Policy 7.1.2: Prioritize the development of the highest density around rail and BRT.

Policy 7.1.3: Encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties, particularly near rail and BRT, by updating zoning and developing a suite of financial tools needed to catalyze redevelopment.

Policy 7.1.4: Create new and enhance existing parks near rail and BRT to provide an equitable distribution of active, social and contemplative park experiences.

Goal 7.2: Transform land uses surrounding rail and BRT corridors to accommodate future population growth and varied lifestyle preferences in attractive, walkable and mixed-use communities.

Policy 7.2.1: Incentivize development and public realm improvements along rail and BRT corridors.

Action 7.2.1.a: Initiate master, sector and corridor plans to transform rail and BRT corridors and station areas and identify opportunities to incentivize development and improvements.

Action 7.2.1.b: Conduct an evaluation of the Commercial / Residential and Employment Zones Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines for development projects, including the required public benefits, and public benefit categories and criteria so as to provide incentives for increased density around rail and BRT corridors.

Policy 7.2.2: Develop the county as an interconnected web of transportation and green corridors focused on pedestrians and bicyclists.

Action 7.2.2.a: Identify transportation and green corridors across the county and develop a framework for enhancing their quality, connectivity and potential to support neighborhood centers for the communities they connect.

Action 7.2.2.b: Develop an action plan to link stream valleys, natural lands, parks, open spaces and tree-lined boulevards to create natural corridors throughout the county to provide trails for walking and biking and to link habitats.

Action 7.2.2.c: Develop an action plan to convert auto-dominated corridors and underutilized utility rights-of-way into high-performance, sustainable environments that link transit-oriented communities and allow appropriate connections into less dense adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy 7.2.3: Advance compact, mixed-use development surrounding rail and BRT stations in land use and zoning policies and regulations.

Policy 7.2.4: Retrofit single-use areas to accommodate higher densities and a mixture of uses within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of rail and BRT stations.

Goal 7.3: Manage future growth and development as a mature, built-out county by maximizing use of constrained land and identifying innovative solutions to deliver public facilities and infrastructure.

Policy 7.3.1: Create flexible and adaptable land use policies, programs and regulations that allow for unanticipated changes in land use and development as technology, economy, climate change and other factors create the need for quickly updating the county's regulatory mechanisms.

Action 7.3.1.a: Use public space and redevelopment opportunities to build resilience and respond and adapt to climate change.

Action 7.3.1.b: Identify opportunities for adaptive reuse in suburban communities for stormwater management and flood control.

Policy 7.3.2: Develop new methods of funding public infrastructure by capturing increases in land value due to growth, development and increased density. Recover and reinvest this value in public infrastructure.

Action 7.3.2.a: Identify successful case studies to learn how other communities across the United States are using land value capture to fund investment in public infrastructure.

Policy 7.3.3: Leverage existing publicly owned land to provide public facilities and services and encourage co-location of essential services such as schools, medical clinics, daycare centers, libraries, parks and recreation centers.

Policy 7.3.4: Expand the use of public-private partnerships to achieve co-location of essential services with private redevelopment.

Goal 7.4: Strengthen Montgomery County's agricultural character to ensure the prosperity of the Agricultural Reserve into the future. Balance advancements in industry practices to enhance the Agricultural Reserve. Sustain farmland, rural open space and rural environmental resources to support the well-being of the entire county.

Policy 7.4.1: Eliminate barriers and broaden access to healthy food, agritourism and agricultural employment through the support and diversification of the agricultural sector including urban

and suburban farming. Identify opportunities for adaptive reuse of underutilized urban and suburban land for farming.

Action 7.4.1.a: Develop a food security plan with the Montgomery County Food Council and county agencies to include urban, suburban and rural farming that expands access to local foods.

Action 7.4.1.b: Update the Montgomery County Zoning Code to identify urban and suburban farming as permitted uses.

Action 7.4.1.c: Examine the Urban Agricultural Property Tax Credit to identify opportunities to enhance and expand the tax credit to support urban and suburban farming.

Action 7.4.1.d: Revise the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines to identify urban and suburban farming as a public benefit.

Policy 7.4.2: Maintain and enhance the Agricultural Reserve as a national model for supporting and protecting agriculture and rural open space that provides vital economic, environmental and health benefits in a major metropolitan area. Study, promote and monitor the economic, environmental and health benefits of the Agricultural Reserve.

Action 7.4.2.a: Conduct a study of the economic impacts of the county's agricultural industry. Identify future trends and opportunities to remain competitive in food production and distribution.

Action 7.4.2.b: Develop a strategic plan that builds upon the Agricultural Reserve to engage culinary entrepreneurs, leading food research organizations and high-tech rural and urban farmers in food-based innovation and self-reliance in food production.

Policy 7.4.3: Support and enhance policies that provide opportunities for new farmers who want to own and operate their own farms in the county.

Action 7.4.3.a: Connect students with growers and producers in the Agricultural Reserve and with relevant federal and state agencies to help develop a talent pipeline for sustainable agriculture and the biosciences industry.

Policy 7.4.4: Increase public awareness of the agricultural, environmental and economic benefits of the Agricultural Reserve and better connect communities throughout the county to this vital resource through public education and outreach, school programs, and fostering agritourism and ecotourism.

Policy 7.4.5: Provide residential communities in the Agricultural Reserve with adequate infrastructure and services in a way that preserves the agricultural heritage and the unique character of this resource and supports the needs of evolving agricultural practices.

Action 7.4.5.a: Identify opportunities for co-location of public services in a compact form to connect rural communities with improved access to resources that support health, safety and well-being.

Policy 7.4.6: Maintain agriculture as the primary land use in the Agricultural Reserve through policies, regulations, easements and incentives. Promote farming, support farmland and open

space conservation, protect environmentally sensitive areas, respond to climate change and ensure that rural complete communities are compatible with the intent of the Reserve.

Policy 7.4.7: Balance support for an evolving agricultural industry with the conservation of farmland, rural open space and environmental resources in the Agricultural Reserve.

Action 7.4.7.a: Develop recommendations to enhance economic viability and environmental resilience to reflect the evolution in agriculture.

Action 7.4.7.b: Analyze the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, including industrially zoned land, to support an evolving agricultural industry. Identify recommendations for flexibility in accommodating industries and services that support agriculture including food processing, distribution, sale, consumption and waste management.

Action 7.4.7.c: Look at and enhance the Transfer of Development Rights and the Building Lot Termination programs to ensure that they continue to fulfill their desired goal of preserving contiguous farmland as well as maintaining the economic viability of farming.

Policy 7.4.8: Establish food production and distribution infrastructure to enable county growers to process their products locally and to reach residents through culinary, grocery and wholesale outlets. This system will increase the competitiveness of farmers and reduce reliance on imported agricultural products and associated carbon emissions.

8. Design, Arts and Culture

Issues and Challenges

Montgomery County is home to one of the most diverse populations in the nation. The county's diversity, however, is not fully represented in its arts and cultural institutions. This deficiency excludes those who have been historically underrepresented based on race and ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status and religion.

The 1964 Plan envisioned a variety of living environments and encouraged "imaginative urban design" to avoid sterile suburban sprawl. As we try to retrofit our existing neighborhoods to be complete communities, good urban design will help resolve conflicts and concerns about the changes in our built environment. These design changes include introducing new housing types in our single-family neighborhoods and creating a more resilient infrastructure in the face of climate change. Major corridors within the county have become auto-dominated traffic arteries, devoid of a sense of place, mostly as a result of poor design decisions regarding land use and urban design. As the county strives to create more places with an emphasis on walkability and opportunities for social interaction, the design of every part of our built environment—buildings, streets, parks and open spaces, public facilities and infrastructure—will need careful attention.

Vision for Design, Arts and Culture

In 2050, Montgomery County is home to diverse cultures and is a leader in new ideas and emerging trends in culture, arts and entertainment. A comprehensive urban design vision strengthens and creates a collection of great towns, cities and rural villages, each with neighborhoods built around a walkable center.

Montgomery County's buildings, public spaces, streets and infrastructure are designed to meet the needs of a changing population and combat climate change. Beautiful buildings frame walkable streets and welcoming public spaces that engage residents in activities that build relationships. All buildings and infrastructure contribute positively to the environment and improve the physical and mental health of users by encouraging an active lifestyle and exposure to nature at various scales. Streets are designed as a part of the public space network, offering a reliable and delightful journey that encourages people to walk, bike or take transit. Public buildings and major infrastructure projects are conceived by world-class designers who work directly with residents to integrate art, showcase local cultures and set a high bar for innovative design.

All residents have a say in how their neighborhoods look and everyone benefits equally from good design. Opportunities to experience art and culture as a part of daily life are equitably distributed. The county celebrates its heritage while welcoming newcomers.

Urban design and planning policies protect vulnerable communities against gentrification and displacement, and the planning process engages all residents in decision making about the future of their communities. Architecture is a problem-solving tool to encourage innovation, increase affordability and provide access to well-designed buildings for everyone.

A strong emphasis on design, arts and culture in Montgomery County makes our communities welcoming, inspiring, connected and fun. Residents, visitors and workers are attracted to the area and support economic development.

Good Design, Art & Culture Build Resilient Places

Montgomery County is one of the most livable places in the country with a high per capita income. It has a wealth of cultural, economic and natural resources. However, these assets that make Montgomery County a great place to live are not equitably accessible to all its residents. In addition, we are facing increased competition regionally to attract jobs and are projected to add 200,000 residents over the next thirty years. All this is set to unfold in a period likely to be marked by increased disruption caused by climate change, technological advancement and a higher frequency of unforeseen events such as the current pandemic.

The way we design our communities will have a great impact on how they fare in this uncertain future. Good design is not a luxury. It must be considered as a critical tool to create resilient places that can adapt to change, be attractive to workers and businesses and house residents in diverse neighborhoods with welcoming public spaces that build social trust.

Design is not just about architecture. It affects all aspects of the built environment—overall land use pattern, infrastructure, public facilities, buildings, open spaces and physical accessibility. We need good design to reflect the cultural diversity of the county in its built environment, provide communal beauty in the public realm and create great places that address the varied needs of a diverse population and bring people together.

As the county strives to emphasize walking, biking and accessibility for people with disabilities and opportunities for social interaction, the design of every part of our built environment—buildings, streets, parks and open spaces, public facilities and infrastructure—will need careful attention. Redevelopment will put pressure on the county's historic resources and require a greater emphasis on preserving them for future generations.

Montgomery County is also home to cultures and people of various ethnicities, races and

backgrounds. We must use our diversity to attract talent, spur innovation through exchange of ideas and create a robust creative economy. Not only do arts and cultural organizations enrich the lives of county residents, they can also become significant contributors to the county's economy. As parts of the county become denser, we must use good design and the arts to create distinct identities for these places that reflect their culture and history. Supporting locally based artists, and offering a variety of music and other entertainment venues will attract patrons and visitors of all ages.

Goals, Policies and Actions

Goal 8.1: Use design to shape Montgomery County as a collection of world class towns, cities and rural villages, with neighborhoods that celebrate their history, geography and culture.

Policy 8.1.1: Use form-based codes, design guidelines and other innovative regulatory tools to ensure future developments across the county respond to their context through massing, architecture, public spaces, landscape and street design.

Action 8.1.1.a: Create a county-wide urban design vision to guide future growth and provide design guidance based on a rural-to-urban transect.

Action 8.1.1.b: Use design competitions for major new civic facilities such as schools, libraries, post offices and fire stations to create the highest-quality public structures that are a source of civic pride. Retrofit existing civic buildings with a goal of design excellence and less dependence on cars.

Goal 8.2: Create and preserve great places with attractive streets and public spaces, inspired urban design and high-quality architecture that delivers lasting beauty.

Policy 8.2.1: Ensure high-quality design for all public and private architecture, infrastructure and open space projects through the use of design guidelines, design advisory panels, design competitions and other tools. Make design excellence a priority, even when cost saving measures are considered.

Policy 8.2.2: Create county-wide or area-specific design guidelines that facilitate the construction of well-designed, accessible, cost-efficient housing at various price points.

Action 8.2.2.a: Create design guidelines focused on projects that deliver high levels of affordable housing. Guidelines should illustrate how great architecture can be achieved at an affordable price point through simple design and new construction technologies that reduce costs.

Policy 8.2.3: Use a variety of existing and new parks and trails to support communities with compact development and sustainable design.

Action 8.2.3.a: Within complete communities, assure that there is a strategic real estate development framework that relates new development to nearby parks and trails.

Action 8.2.3.b: Create design guidelines for high-density sustainable development near parks and trails.

Action 8.2.3.c: Implement the [Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan](#)'s analysis tool and implementation framework. Promote an integrated system of parks and public spaces where every resident is within walking distance of an appropriate space for community gathering, physical activity and events.

Policy 8.2.4: Through the regulatory process, incorporate accessible design features such as a no-step entrance, wider doors and barrier-free entrances. These and other improvements in housing will help people age in place, assist those living with a temporary or permanent disability and accommodate populations with mobility limitations.

Policy 8.2.5: Use placemaking activities to engage residents in higher levels of social interaction in public spaces. Create public spaces that are welcoming and encourage all residents to gather and interact in ways that builds a sense of community.

Action 8.2.5.a: Develop placemaking plans that define and highlight distinctive identities for all neighborhoods based on local history and culture. Establish and fund a program that invites communities to submit applications to implement their placemaking ideas within their neighborhoods.

Action 8.2.5.b: Integrate on-the-ground placemaking activities as a part of community engagement for master plans intended to transform infill and redevelopment sites. Include placemaking recommendations in new sector plans, functional plans and studies when appropriate.

Policy 8.2.6: Maximize use of county and state-owned rights-of-way to create more opportunities for active transportation and public use spaces.

Action 8.2.6.a: Encourage walking and bicycling through smaller blocks, narrower streets, buffered bike lanes and sidewalks, the lowest possible auto speeds, and no new surface parking.

Action 8.2.6.b: Adopt a Vision Zero approach with regard to public service vehicles (e.g., purchasing smaller fire engines) so that street safety improvements, quality urban design and public safety are not compromised.

Action 8.2.6.c: Adopt the 8-80 Principle as official county policy. This policy promotes the idea that if all buildings, streets and public spaces are safe and easily accessible for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then they will function well for all people.

Action 8.2.6.d: Create a "Ciclovia" or "open streets" program for the county that facilitates temporary and long-term closures of streets for community events, recreation and play.

Action 8.2.6.e: Create a Parklet program for the county that facilitates the creation of small-scale public spaces to support retail businesses and provide gathering places within rights-of-way.

Goal 8.3: Use design as a tool to avoid and mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

Policy 8.3.1: Maximize the environmental benefits of transit-oriented development by increasing density and removing regulatory barriers such as parking requirements within one-half mile of Metro and Purple Line stations.

Policy 8.3.2: Retrofit the design of single-use commercial developments and car-oriented residential communities to reduce their energy consumption. Promote walking and biking to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and minimize disruptions caused by a changing climate.

Action 8.3.2.a: Develop a sprawl repair manual for the county that highlights strategies to retrofit the design and mix of uses for single-use commercial areas and car-oriented residential communities. Apply the strategies outlined in the manual on a neighborhood scale. Use the manual as a guide to prioritize capital improvement projects and to implement new and existing master plans and studies.

Policy 8.3.3: Make high-impact sustainability features such as net-zero buildings and district-level energy generation a top priority for the design of structures, blocks and neighborhoods across the county.

Action 8.3.3.a: Create design guidelines, regulations and incentives that help achieve the goal of having all new and retrofitted buildings and projects in the county be net-zero by 2035.

Action 8.3.3.b: Create a funding stream that provides incentives for upgrading existing buildings to minimize their energy consumption.

Action 8.3.3.c: Create an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment and analyze trends from 1990 to 2020. Establish policies to regain and exceed 1990 tree canopy levels. Ensure a countywide net-zero loss of tree canopy through a robust street tree planting program in coordination with bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Goal 8.4: Make buildings in the county more resilient to disruption through flexible design and high adaptive reuse potential.

Policy 8.4.1: Prioritize the reuse of existing structures where possible through incentives to maintain building diversity, preserve naturally occurring affordable space and retain embodied energy of structures.

Action 8.4.1.a: Partner with DPS and other county agencies to update the County Code to fast track and create incentives for projects that adaptively reuse at least 50% of an existing structure or preserve at least 50% of all existing building materials on site.

Action 8.4.1.b: Update and strengthen the Historic Preservation Ordinance to prioritize adaptively reusing or repurposing existing buildings. Require mitigation and other offsets to benefit arts and cultural uses in the community when demolition is required.

Action 8.4.1.c: Create a program that periodically catalogs building types in the county with a high risk of obsolescence such as suburban office buildings and shopping malls. Promote their conversion and adaptive reuse through design guidelines and ideas competitions.

Action 8.4.1.d: Conduct a study exploring future uses for parking and automobile related transportation infrastructure in the context of impending automation and shared mobility trends.

Policy 8.4.2: Design all buildings and parking structures to be adaptable to changing demographics, technologies, generational and program needs over time. Prioritize resilient design for all buildings and promote ideas through design guidelines that enable buildings and communities to function well during periods of disruption. For example, encourage residential building types in the county to incorporate semi-public spaces such porches, stoops and balconies that can function well during periods requiring social distancing.

Policy 8.4.3: Encourage trade organizations, colleges and high schools to teach building trades and connect them with local businesses that repair structures and reuse building materials.

Goal 8.5: Montgomery County is nationally recognized as a home to people of diverse cultures and a leader in new ideas and emerging trends in arts and entertainment.

Policy 8.5.1: Celebrate the county's arts, cultural institutions, and sports and entertainment related businesses as a part of the county's identity and economy.

Action 8.5.1.a: Create a Cultural Plan that leverages the county's diversity and promotes the arts to attract talent and spur economic development.

Policy 8.5.2 Partner with private property owners, nonprofit groups, and county agencies to maximize the economic potential of parks and public spaces through programming, activation, placemaking events and updates to operating procedures.

Policy 8.5.3: Create affordable space for artists and cultural uses by including them in public facilities such as schools, libraries, and community centers, and through other types of public/private partnerships.

Action 8.5.3.a: Update the county's zoning ordinance to further incentivize the provision of affordable space for arts and cultural uses and eliminate regulatory barriers to live-work, home studios, galleries, and other small-scale artmaking activities and creative businesses.

Policy 8.5.4: Ensure that the county's design, heritage, arts and institutions are inclusive and representative of its cultural diversity. Engage underrepresented groups, including youth, in planning for and making public art.

Action 8.5.4.a: Partner with the Arts and Humanities Council and Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) to create incentives for the creation of small-scale museums and cultural centers throughout the county. Make them low-cost and accessible ways to highlight local history and culture.

Action 8.5.4.b: Partner with the Arts and Humanities Council, schools, nonprofits and other community groups to create youth art installations in parks, open spaces and public buildings. Develop programs that foster love of art and creativity among the county's future residents.

Policy 8.5.5: Provide every resident in the county opportunities to experience art and culture daily by making public art an integral part of the public realm and physical infrastructure. Integrate art and interactive design into parks, public spaces and civic facilities like libraries, post offices and schools. Use art and design to reflect the history and unique

characteristics of the place, stimulate the mind and encourage physical activity. Add public art to bridges, noise barriers, bike racks, streetscape elements, etc.

Action 8.5.5.a: Partner with the Arts and Humanities Council to reinstate the “Art in Architecture” program. Allocate 0.5% of construction costs in all public buildings for public art projects.

Action 8.5.5.b: Partner with the Arts and Humanities Council to create and fund programs that provide grants and opportunities for local artists and residents to share their works in public spaces and along streets.

Action 8.5.5.c: Amend the zoning ordinance to make public art a prerequisite of receiving incentive density within the Commercial/Residential and Employment Zones.

Action 8.5.5.d: Host competitions for the design of countywide streetscape elements.

Goal 8.6: Ensure all communities benefit equitably from good design, regardless of their location or demographics.

Policy 8.6.1: Develop and implement tools and strategies to ensure that the quality of design of public and private buildings, streets and public spaces in all parts of the county are equitable and respond to the needs of local residents.

Action 8.6.1.a: Create a design literacy campaign for the county, with a focus on educating residents regarding the positive impacts of equitable and innovative design.

Action 8.6.1.b: Partner with Montgomery County Public Schools to introduce all students to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 vision as a part of the standard educational curriculum.

Action 8.6.1.c: Establish a neighborhood design center within the Planning Department that equitably supports citizens through community-engaged design and planning services for projects identified by neighborhood residents.

Implementation Chapter

Moving from Vision and Goals to Implementation

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan will be implemented through subsequent plans and initiatives of:

- Montgomery Planning;
- Montgomery Parks;
- Montgomery County departments and agencies;
- Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation;
- State of Maryland agencies;
- the private sector and nonprofit organizations; and
- regional entities such as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and neighboring jurisdictions.

Most of the Plan's recommendations will need further study before becoming actionable items. For example, the Plan recommends that the county's rail and BRT corridors accommodate a greater share of future growth than they have in the past. Further analysis of this recommendation through future plans and studies will determine the specific characteristics of each corridor needed to support the additional growth: the capacity; the type, size and scale of development and the related zoning changes; the type of amenities needed to support this additional growth; and cost estimates for public infrastructure (schools, parks and open spaces, utilities, transit, sidewalks and bike paths, etc.). Accomplishing the goal of corridors accommodating a greater share of future growth may be done by amending individual local master plans or through a single countywide functional master plan in one step, or in another manner.

The Implementation Chapter of the Plan will lay out the broad outline of how Thrive Montgomery 2050 will be implemented over the next 30 years. It could:

- 1) Include guidance for using tools to implement the Plan's policies and actions, such as:
 - Subsequent plans and studies to define the detailed actions for implementation;
 - Changes to zoning regulations
 - Changes to other regulations and policies
 - Development review guidance
 - Other agency programs/services
- 2) Identify agencies responsible for implementing actions
- 3) Prioritize implementation in terms of short-term, medium-term and long-term actions
- 4) Include metrics for tracking implementation of the Plan

Since Thrive Montgomery will be a long-term plan with high level goals and general policy guidance, unlike typical master or sector plans, it will not have a fiscal impact analysis to estimate the cost of implementing the recommendations of the Plan. This is due to two reasons:

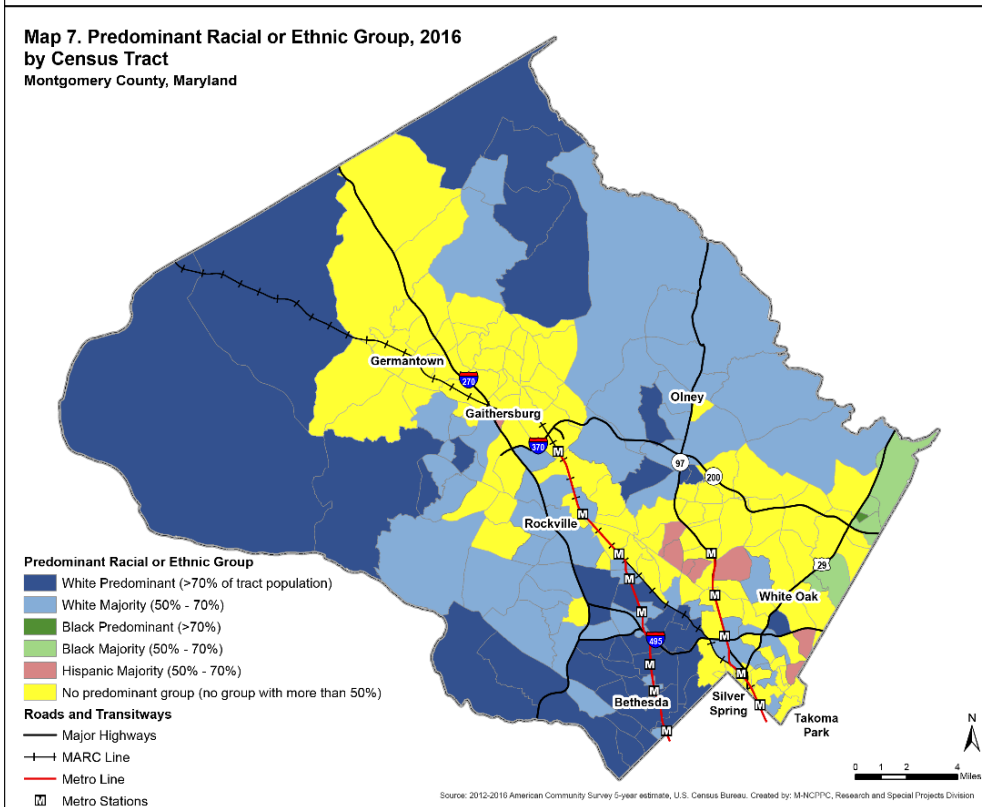
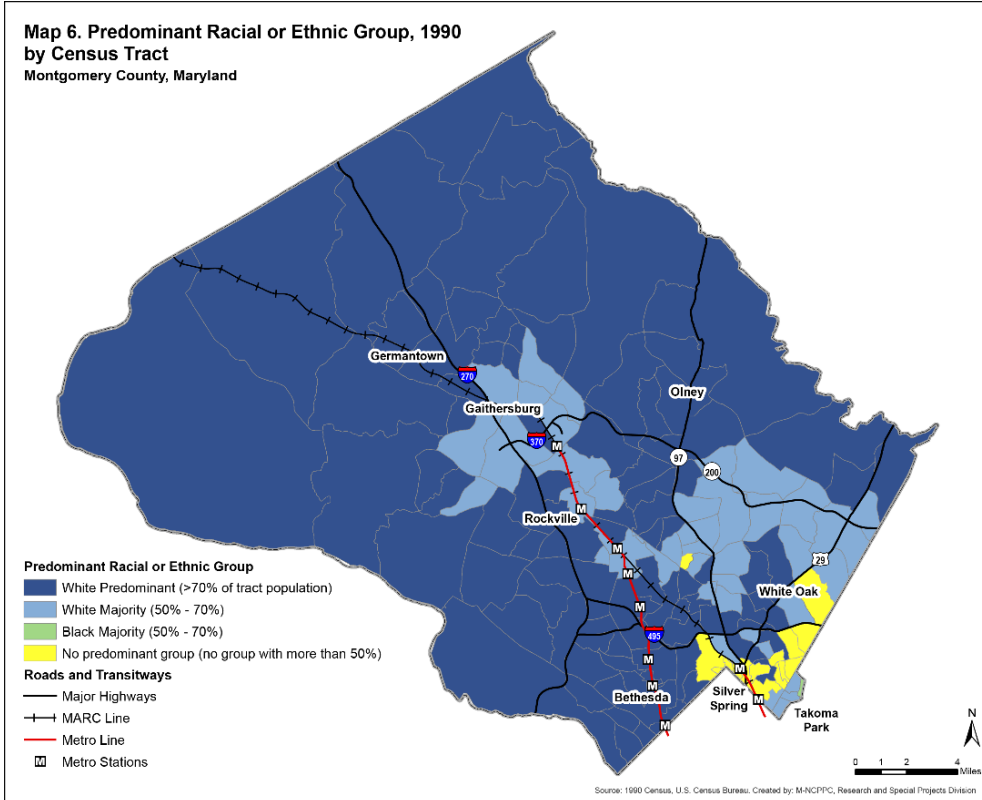
- 1) The main purpose of the General Plan is to guide future land use, facility and infrastructure planning and public investments as well as private development. They will be the mechanisms to achieve the Plan's vision, goals, policies and actions. Subsequent, more detailed plans and studies and the capital budgeting process will identify specific public infrastructure improvements and cost estimates of those projects. For example, the General Plan will not specify how many bridges will need to be rebuilt to address higher flooding due to climate change. Or how many properties will need to be acquired to provide new schools, libraries, parks and other facilities. All that will be

determined by future schools, transportation, parks, library and other infrastructure plans.

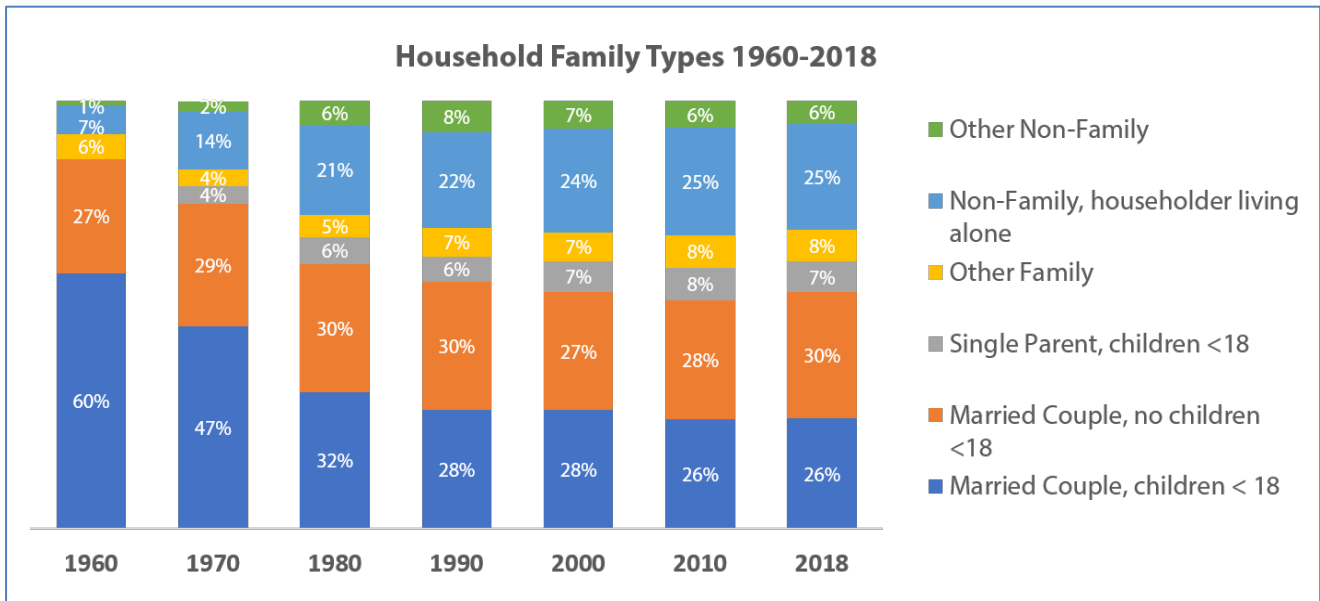
- 2) Many of the implementation actions will not be evident to us today. The actions included in this General Plan are only a starting point. Additional implementation actions will be created by others in the coming decades as new solutions and resources become available and new challenges and opportunities arise. For example, the 1969 plan did not recommend an exact mechanism to protect farming in the county. Its recommendation to protect agricultural lands⁵² led to the creation, over ten years later, of the Agricultural Reserve and the related Transferable Development Rights Program (TDR) in 1980.

⁵² Objective N. Ensure that agriculture in the region becomes or continues as a viable land use. Guidelines: 1. Protect agricultural lands to preserve their value as farmland as long as the pressures of urbanization permit. 2. Promote the development of profitable agricultural endeavors. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1969UpdatedGeneralPlanocr.pdf>

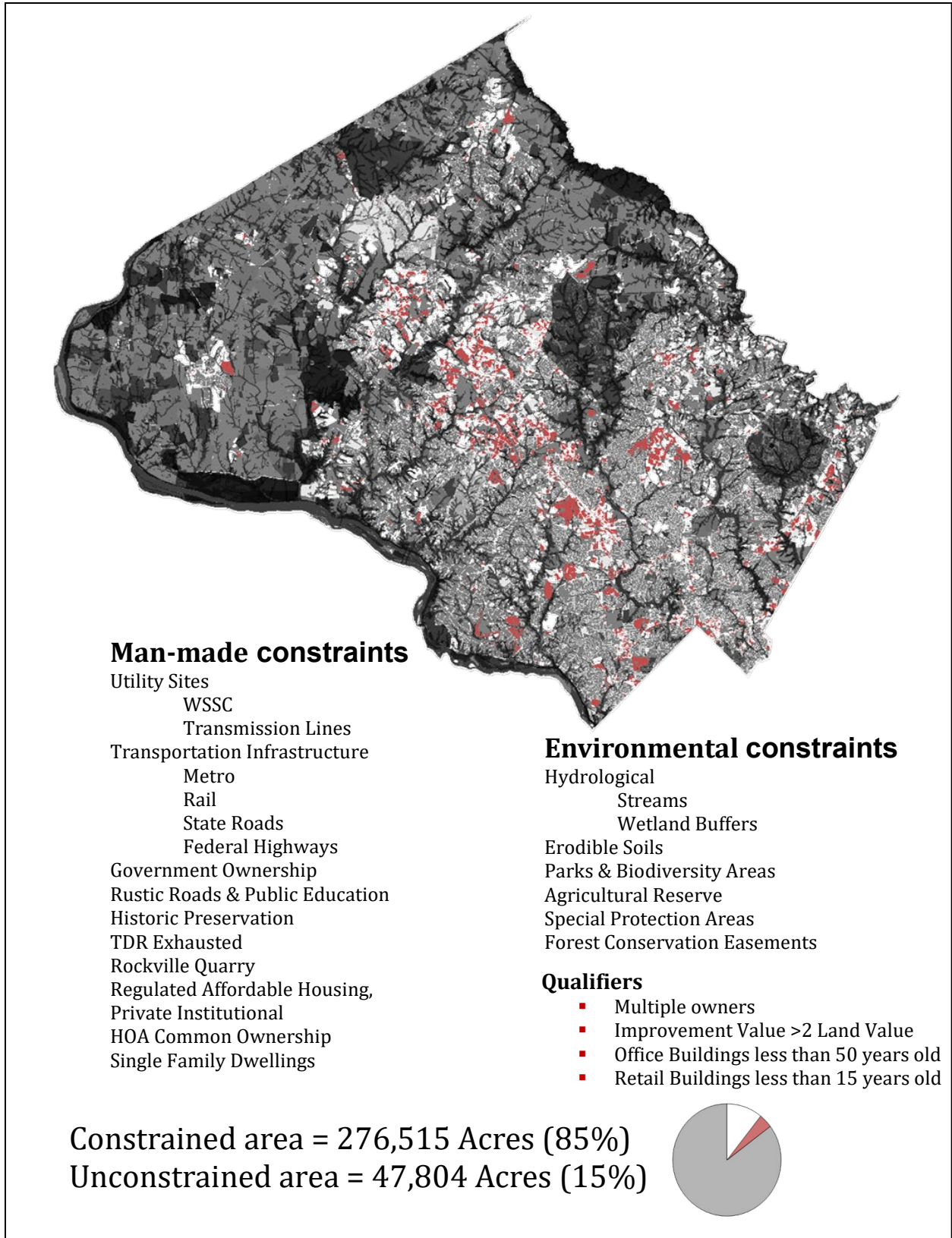
ATTACHMENT 1: Predominant Race or Ethnic Group, 1990-2016



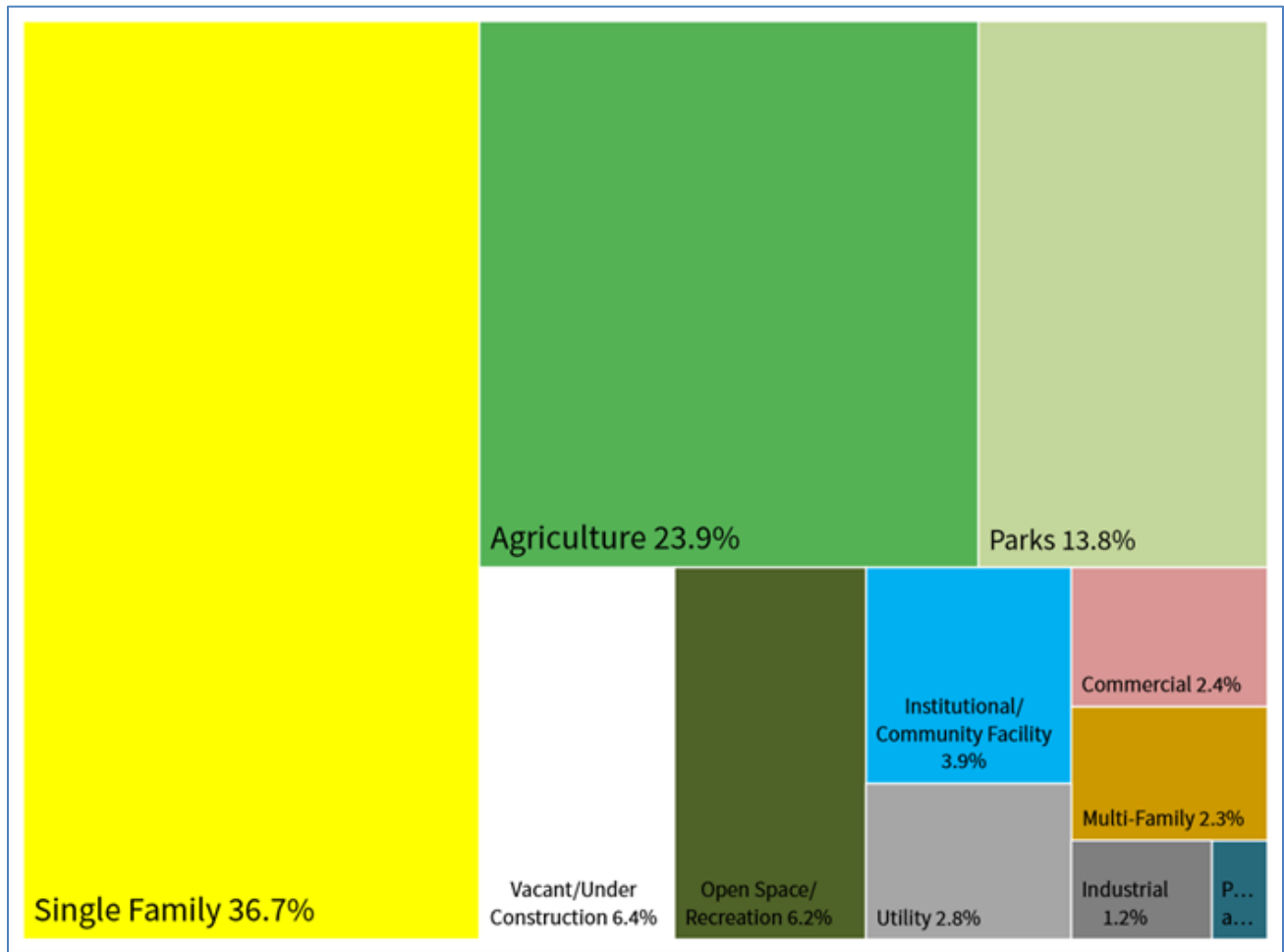
ATTACHMENT 2: Household Family Types 1960-2018



ATTACHMENT 3: The County is Mostly Built-Out



ATTACHMENT 4: Land Use Distribution





COMMISSION ON AGING

May 22, 2020

Gwen Wright, Director
Montgomery County Planning Department
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Wright:

We would again like to thank Khalid Afzal for attending the Commission on Aging's February 27 meeting where he discussed the Thrive Montgomery 2050 initiative. We very much appreciate him taking the time to meet with us and providing an interesting and thorough presentation. His discussion answered many of our questions.

We applaud you and your staff's efforts on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 "Issues Report;" it is a well written, and obviously well-researched document. We thank you for noting the expected increase in the age 65-plus population by the year 2030 to 19 percent of the population.

Perhaps more importantly for the purposes of your long-term plan, however, is that by the year 2040 over 26 percent of Montgomery County's population will be over the age of 60. That represents a 54 percent increase in that population between 2020 and 2040. By the year 2050, according to the Congressional Budget Office, health care expenses paid by the Federal government will almost double as a percentage of the Gross National Product. Social Security expenses will go up 28 percent, assuming that the current promised benefits are paid out.

We raise these issues because, while working with the older population is implicit in your report, we think you should consider developing and stating more explicitly your plans for working with this population. For instance, it is going to be very important to ensure that older adults, especially in our diverse County, have affordable housing available to them in communities where they can easily access health care and senior programs, and where they are socially connected. A strong long-range goal for this population should be to keep them healthy as long as possible to maximize their level of contentment and connectedness, and to minimize their health care costs. You may want to stipulate in your report the importance of planning for an adequate standard of living in retirement and addressing health care and social needs, and explicitly propose some ideas of how that could be done.

One other issue that you should consider is the fact that the Social Security Trustees are predicting that the Social Security Trust Fund will have a shortfall by the year 2035. Regardless of what remedies are taken to shore up the Fund, it is going to have a major impact on our economy. We hope that you will keep that in mind as your plans continue to evolve.

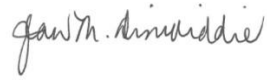
Department of Health and Human Services

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436

www.montgomerycountymd.gov

Thank you for allowing us to comment. We would be delighted to work with you on this project and hope that you will include the Commission during your planning process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jauhar Aminuddin".

Commission on Aging, Chair

cc: Khalid Afzal

Dear Montgomery Planning and the Planning Board,

First, let me commend you on the 3 (soon to be 4) Ask Me Anything's you have been hosting with Gwen Wright. They are thoughtful, and Gwen is a wonderful representative for your department- delivering clear, concise, attentive and realistic on point messaging. Thrive 2050 is an exciting wave for the future.

I had a few ideas and questions regarding the Thrive 2050 plan, and I am unclear is there is still time to incorporate new ideas before the June 11th presentation?

Environmental Control

Is it possible to require all new building to meet minimum Leed Standards for energy and environmentally sustainable practices? In my dream for the county, all new buildings would include these standards as a baseline. Green and solar roofs, efficient use of water and energy, retrofitting or reuse of materials where possible, extensive plantings, etc. What are the challenges in creating a program like? Is this something the Montgomery County Planning Board along with our Council and Executive might be able to implement?

Affordable Housing

What are the barriers for new housing built in the county to be required to include a certain percentage of units (if for example a high-rise) that meet certain low-income requirements? Boston has had great success in these types of public/private partnerships to be able to meet and maintain affordable housing in their city. It might be something we could add to the Thrive 2050 plan.

Infill Issues

We are talking about infill projects, which is wonderful, but if a school is created using an existing building for example, what outdoor space would the children be able to enjoy? How would sporting teams and other extracurricular activities many of enjoyed as children be accommodated for?

If one is creating spaces out of impervious parking lots for example, and a new parking structure is built to accommodate those cars in others ways- ie the garage at pike and rose, these parking structures should be greenified in the South Korean manner by building terraced green spaces and walls along the up down axis of the building. Even better would be to force all parking underground....

Amenities

One amenity that I never hear about in this plan is dog parks. In a county as dog friendly as ours, yet also with strict leash laws, there is a surprising dearth of dog parks. Dog Parks are proven community builders.

Thank you so much for your hard work on this exciting plan, and I look forward to following it as we move through the various phases as a county.

In Kind Regards,
Christina