

M E M O R A N D U M

September 11, 2019

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee
FROM: Pamela Dunn, ~~Senior~~ Legislative Analyst
SUBJECT: Racial Equity and Planning
PURPOSE: Briefing on Planning Department's Equity Agenda

Those expected for this worksession:

Casey Anderson, Chair, Planning Board
Gwen Wright, Director, Planning Department
Mike Riley, Director, Parks Department
Tanya Stern, Deputy Director, Planning Department
Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director, Planning Department
Molline Jackson, Special Assistant to the Planning Director
Robbin Brittingham, Human Resource Manager
Jai Cole, Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division

Staff from the Montgomery County Planning Department will brief the PHED Committee on their efforts to develop an equity agenda for planning.

For the past 18 months, the Planning Department has been developing an Equity Agenda for Planning that reaches across many of its programs and policies. Some initiatives already underway include:

- Enhanced outreach efforts to better engage communities who typically have been under-represented in planning efforts;
- Increased focus on issues significant to a diverse population, such as the development of plans for multiple modes of safe and reliable travel and recent updates to affordable housing policies;

- Expanded efforts by the Historic Preservation team to commemorate, educate and celebrate the history of African American communities and historic sites throughout the County; and
- Active engagement in a wide variety of training activities for the entire Planning staff.

The Parks Department is also engaged in efforts to recognize and address racial equity across its programs and policies. The Parks Department will provide additional information at the briefing on their work to make the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) more equitable in a measurable way.

A memo from the Planning Department is attached.

This packet contains:

Memo from Planning Department on an Equity Agenda for Planning

Circle #

1-4



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

September 10, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: PHED Committee
FROM: Montgomery County Planning Department
SUBJECT: Equity Agenda for Planning

The Montgomery County Planning Department has been working for the past 18 months on developing an Equity Agenda for Planning that specifically tackles the issue of institutional racism. This work recognizes and builds on a long history of land use decisions in Montgomery County that have – in the days of de jure racial discrimination in zoning – created exclusionary neighborhoods and – in more recent years – have attempted to provide a greater number of housing opportunities for a diverse group of residents.

The work of developing an Equity Agenda for Planning is ongoing and will be an effort that will require constant attention to the influence of institutional racism on planning and zoning processes. We acknowledge that we will never be able to say that our work in this area is done. The Planning Department is not reluctant to confront the legacy of racism and its ongoing effects, and we are directly addressing issues of racial equity in all aspects of our work.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Montgomery County, like many late 19th and 20th century suburban communities, was developed in response to people who wanted to escape urban areas that had high populations of people of color. The new suburban neighborhoods were often intended to create enclaves that would be exclusively for white, middle- and upper-class residents. Many of the early subdivisions included covenants that prohibited sales to homebuyers who were Black, Jewish, Catholic and other minority groups.

The Supreme Court ruled against racially restrictive covenants in 1948, but it was only after the Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968 that these types of covenants were outlawed. Some of these covenants remain in the land records for communities in Montgomery County but they are illegal and cannot be enforced.

At the same time, Montgomery County was developing its General Plan – first published in 1964 and then updated with appropriate zoning in 1969. This plan was a landmark in planning history for its emphasis on protection of open space, clustering of new development, and acknowledgment of the need for affordable housing in the suburbs. The specific topic of racial equity was not directly addressed in the original General Plan.

Nonetheless, one of the most significant planning tools that came out of the General Plan was the creation of Montgomery County's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit law in 1973. This law was ground-breaking – only 6 years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act, it contemplated not only the provision of affordable housing in every sizable new development (i.e. over 20 units), but also the creation of mixed income communities, with the goal of stimulating a more equitable approach to private development.

During the same period, however, Montgomery County made a variety of missteps in the name of urban renewal and some historically Black communities were either displaced by light industrial uses and/or further isolated. These missteps created a lack of trust and a serious disconnect between developers, the county, and communities of color that has had lasting implications. Our goal is to make sure that this history is acknowledged and creates a greater sense of empathy and understanding for how we can do better in the future.

Montgomery County is no longer a majority white county. Over the past 25 years, the county has become far more diverse. People of color comprised 55.5% of the county's population in 2016. Between 1990 and 2016, the Hispanic population increased 258 percent to 19.1 percent of the population, the Asian population increased 153 percent to 14.8 percent of the population, and the Black population grew by 108 percent to 17.8 of the population.

THE FUTURE

Equitable planning is not just about doing better because it is the right thing to do in a diverse county. Land use planning has had a long history in the United States of using regulatory power to create segregated communities, displace residents of color from established neighborhoods and prevent those residents from getting access to high quality community amenities. These systemic practices, including many that are now outlawed, created long-term negative impacts that are still affecting Montgomery County today. Addressing and eliminating systemic disparities is imperative not only for moral reasons but also for the future economic and social health of our community over the coming decades.

The Planning Department's focus and approach on equity also is influenced by efforts to advance equity in land use policy and practice within the planning profession nationwide. The American Planning Association (APA), the professional organization for planning practitioners, includes in its adopted **Ethical Principles in Planning** this statement that is to guide the work of all planners: "The planning process must continuously pursue and faithfully serve the public interest." The *Ethical Principles in Planning* also directs planners to "strive to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons." More recently, APA adopted its **Planning for Equity Policy Guide** in spring 2019. This Policy Guide notes that "[t]o serve the public interest, all planners must ensure that proposed policies and regulations will serve and benefit all residents of a community in ways that reduce or eliminate inequity." The Planning for Equity Policy Guide provides guidance to planners about applying an equity lens to their work through an "Equity in All Policies" approach.

The Montgomery County government, through the County Council resolution to develop a Racial Equity Framework for the county government, recent community conversations about equity and other efforts, is laying the groundwork for new systems in the county to advance racial equity. The Montgomery County Planning Department and the Planning Board, with our role leading land use planning and development decisions for the county, also recognize that we must advance community equity as a foundation of both our planning work and our department operations. We are now applying an equity lens to our planning efforts to help create a more equitable future for the county.

CURRENT EQUITY EFFORTS

The realization of the true value of diversity to the county makes equity one of the three pillars/significant outcomes for the current update to the General Plan – Thrive Montgomery 2050. Specifically, this need to plan equitably for a diverse population is manifested in several aspects of our work.

First, we are working to better engage diverse communities who typically had been under-represented in planning efforts. Some of our outreach initiatives have included:

- Materials and presentations in Spanish and English
- Targeted outreach to churches and other community organizations
- Information that easily accessible to commuters on Metrorail, bus shelters and buses
- Distribution of information at schools
- Unique tools such as visual recording artists

We are focusing on issues that are particularly significant to our diverse populations:

- Vision Zero Studies – Veirs Mill Plan and Aspen Hill Vision Zero Study
- Provision of multiple modes of safe travel – Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan
- Provision of additional transit options – Purple Line, BRT
- Affordable housing issues – Rental Housing Study, update to MPDU laws, Preservation of Affordable Housing Study, Accessory Dwelling Unit reform
- Upcoming study on Preserving Community Value of Ethnically Diverse Retail Centers
- Participation with the Purple Line Corridor Coalition (PLCC)

Finally, through our Historic Preservation Section, we have done significant work to recognize, educate and celebrate the history of African American communities and historic sites throughout the county.

In addition to an intentional focus on more equitable planning, we are actively engaging in a wide variety of training activities for staff at all levels of the organization. This has included:

- Presentations and professional speakers focused on racial equity, social justice, diversity and inclusion.
- Leadership Montgomery's Racial Equity Workshop.
- Road Trip to Baltimore, which focused on a racial equity lens applied to our work program.
- Mandatory professional trainings/workshops that foster a more inclusive and diverse work environment.

We are looking for more ways to strengthen partnerships, one of the most important being with our Parks Department. The Parks Department will provide additional information at the briefing on their work to make the CIP more equitable in a measurable way. We are also work together on placemaking activities in under-represented parts of the county.

In addition, we will continue to build bridges with the County Executive's Office (OLO and the Regional Service Directors specifically), MCDOT, SHA, MCPS, the City of Baltimore (Stephanie Smith), and Fairfax County (Karla Bruce).