THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050
Let's Plan Our Future. Together.

Issues Explainer

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Montgomery County's Top Issues to Solve for the Future

Tell Montgomery Planning what you think about the issues that will be addressed in the new county General Plan by giving comments at ThriveMontgomery.com

The Montgomery County Planning Department has launched the update of Montgomery County's General Plan, the county's long-term framework for land use and development. This effort, called Thrive Montgomery 2050, will result in new countywide policies to help Montgomery County thrive by addressing the challenges and opportunities in the decades to come. **Learn more at ThriveMontgomery.com**

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is intended to respond to these overriding questions:

- How can we plan for a future Montgomery County, with anticipated growth of more than 200,000 people within the next 25-30 years, so that the county will be a thriving place with a strong economy, fairness and opportunity for a dynamic and very diverse population, and environmental resilience to address the threats of climate change?
- How can we grow in a way that will retain and enhance what we have and cherish today as a community while addressing challenges such as housing affordability, environmental degradation, traffic congestion and social injustice?

The first step toward developing the Thrive Montgomery 2050 update to Montgomery County's General Plan is to identify the issues facing Montgomery County so we can plan for the future. The December 2019 Issues Briefing staff report is a preliminary draft of the major issues to be addressed through the General Plan update. Here we provide a summary of the issues and questions found in the briefing. The full Issues Briefing staff report is available at www.thrivemontgomery.com/issues.

The identified issues all relate to Thrive Montgomery 2050's three primary outcomes of equitable communities, economic health and environmental resilience. In February 2020, a final Issues Report will be released and in Spring 2020 Montgomery Planning staff will propose Goals and Policies - recommendations for tackling these issues in the new General Plan.

Before we take any next steps, let us know if we've hit the mark on the main issues facing the future of Montgomery County. Your ideas and input helped to form the draft Issues Briefing. Now, we need your feedback to ensure we're on the right track. Review the Issues Briefing staff report then tell us: What did we get right? What did we get wrong? What did we miss?

1. Complete Communities

Complete communities are places where everyone can live, work, shop and play. Complete Communities are easier to walk around, offer amenities and gathering spaces, such as parks and libraries, and allow people to meet their daily needs closer to home. Complete communities will look different in different parts of the county and in different urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

- Our county was designed for the car, but now more people want to walk, bike or take transit. How do we make it easier to meet our daily needs without driving?
- The overall racial and ethnic diversity of the county is not reflected in our neighborhoods. How can we create connected neighborhoods that reflect our county's diversity?
- Our housing doesn't accommodate people of all ages, at all stages of life. How do we develop communities that offer different types of housing for all ages?

2. Connectedness

A thriving community is a place where people have a sense of belonging and feel connected to others in their community.

- Planning for our neighborhoods starts with the community. How do we make the process more inclusive?
- Technology can be socially isolating. How do we provide new ways of and places for public gathering?
- People don't have the same access to opportunities. How can we provide all residents equitable access to educational, health and economic opportunities?

3. Diverse Economies

Small, medium and large businesses that rely on a range of skills and education levels make up a diverse economy. Diverse economies with a variety of jobs and industries are more resilient for the future.

- It's tough to compete regionally and nationally when we don't have new jobs coming to the county. How do we attract new jobs for our diverse population?
- Good schools, colleges and higher education institutions can help the local economy in a big way. How can we realize the full benefits of the higher education system we have in and nearby the county?
- Owning a small business can be challenging. What can we do to help small businesses thrive?
- New technologies—like ridesharing and online shopping- have the potential to change the way we live and work. How can we prepare for the economic, social, housing and transportation impacts of new technology?
- Our county will have 200,000 new residents by 2050. How do we make sure we have enough housing and jobs for everyone?

4. Safe and Efficient Travel

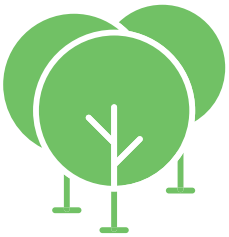
A good transportation system allows people to move from one place to another safely and efficiently. It provides choice to travel by bike, transit, walking, or car.

- Most people drive to work alone, a small percentage of residents take public transit, which makes traffic worse. How can we address traffic congestion and increase use of public transit?
- Transit is usually not accessible to those who need it most. How can transit connect people to jobs and housing more efficiently? How do we prioritize transportation investments for people who need it most?
- Innovations in transportation such as autonomous vehicles, ridesharing and micromobility (like e-scooters and bikeshare) present opportunities and challenges for our transportation system and economy. How do we use these new innovations to help people get around safely, while addressing their challenges?
- Many of our major roads are unsafe and form barriers between communities. How do we transform the major roads into safe, livable, walkable places and gateways into surrounding neighborhoods?

5. Affordability

Affordability means being able to pay for your essential needs such as housing, food, and transportation and support a reasonable quality of life now and in the future.

- The rent is too high. How do we increase wages and the supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of everyone?
- Small businesses are feeling the crunch, too. How can we ensure that the county is an affordable, easy place to do business for entrepreneurs, artists and small business owners?



6. Healthy and Sustainable Environment

Creating a healthy and sustainable environment means supporting our natural ecosystem, animal habitats and human health.

- The health of county residents is affected by where they live and their socioeconomic status. How can we make sure that all residents have the same access to healthcare and opportunities to be active?
- The county faces declining water quality and the loss of trees and forests. How can we grow in a way that protects and improves our natural environment?
- Climate change will have significant impacts on every aspect of our lives and the environment, extreme temperatures and extreme weather events. How do we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change?

7. Diverse and Adaptable Growth

Change and technological innovation are happening at a faster pace than ever before. The county needs to be able to respond and adapt quickly to these changes to be successful.

- The county has evolved from a collection of primarily rural and residential neighborhoods to include a diverse set of employment, shopping and residential centers along a network of major corridors—like Georgia Avenue, Rockville Pike, Colesville Road, and University Boulevard—throughout the county. How do we reimagine these corridors as places for everyone that support residents so they can comfortably and safely work, live, shop and play?
- The Agricultural Reserve preserves farmland, open space and important environmental features by restricting development. How do we protect the Agricultural Reserve and ensure its economic viability in a changing economy and agricultural context?
- Our county will have 200,000 new residents by 2050. How do we determine if our schools, roads and other important infrastructure is adequate to meet the needs of our growing county? How do we balance new growth with our infrastructure needs?

8. Culture and Design

Culture is a combination of history, art, customs, beliefs and aspirations. Design is the way we express our culture through the built environment -- buildings, parks, streets and public spaces.

- The county's population is very diverse, with different histories, traditions, and beliefs. How do we celebrate our different cultures together?
- Technology can be socially isolating. How can we use design to create great places that bring people together?
- The cultural identity of the county is varied and complex. How do we create authentic spaces for art and culture that will attract a younger generation of artists, visitors and residents?

Tell Us What You Think

Comments on the Issues Briefing are welcome throughout the process. We invite the community to provide comments online at ThriveMontgomery.com, send an email to Thrive2050@montgomeryplanning.org, or call 301-495-4556. Following release of the final Issues Report in late February, community members will have further opportunities to participate in the development of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, which will be submitted to the County Council by spring 2021.

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