Equity Agenda for Planning

Land Use and Racial Equity
Introduction

• We are developing an **Equity Agenda for Planning** that specifically tackles the issue of institutional racism.

• We recognize and **build on a long history of land use decisions** in Montgomery County that have historically created exclusionary neighborhoods and – in more recent years – have attempted to provide a greater number of housing opportunities for a diverse group of residents.

• 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 are committed to confronting the legacy of racism and its ongoing effects and **addressing issues of racial equity** in all aspects of our work.
Diversity in Montgomery County Today

- Montgomery County is no longer a majority white county.
- **People of color** comprised *55.5% of the county’s population* in 2016.
- Between 1990 and 2016:
  - Hispanic population increased 258% to 19.1% of county’s population
  - Asian population increased 153% to 14.8 percent of county’s population,
  - Black population grew by 108% to 17.8% of county’s population
Diversity in Montgomery County Today

Map 6. Predominant Racial or Ethnic Group, 1990 by Census Tract
Montgomery County, Maryland

Map 7. Predominant Racial or Ethnic Group, 2016 by Census Tract
Montgomery County, Maryland

Diversity in Montgomery County Today
Background and 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 (i.e. white flight).
- New suburban neighborhoods were often intended to create enclaves that would be exclusively developed 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.
Background and History

Latter Half of 20th Century:

- **1960s: General Plan**—landmark in planning history: emphasis on open space, clustering, & need for affordable housing in the suburbs
- Racial equity was not directly addressed in the original General Plan for the county
Increase Affordable Housing → MPDU Law
Protect Farmland → TDRs
Provide Timely Infrastructure → APFO
Background and History

Latter Half of 20th Century:

• Creation of Montgomery County’s Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit law (1973) aimed to:
  • provide affordable housing in every sizable new development
  • create mixed income communities

• Urban renewal – some historically Black communities displaced by light industrial uses and/or further isolated

• Result – lack of trust and disconnect between developers, county, communities of color
New Direction for Planning

Long history of land use planning in US using regulatory power for:

• Racial segregation
• Displacement of residents of color from established neighborhoods
• No or limited access by residents of color to high quality community amenities

❖ More recently: multiple efforts within planning profession nationwide to advance equity in planning
❖ Montgomery Planning’s focus & approach on racial equity influenced by these efforts
❖ Aligns with County efforts to advance racial equity in government decision-making
New Direction for Planning

AGENDA ITEM #1D
April 24, 2018

Resolution No.:
Introduced: April 17, 2018
Adopted:

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsor: Council Vice President Nsarno and Councilmember Elrich
Cosponsors: Councilmembers Floere, Leventhal, Katz, Berliner, Council President Riemer,
Hucker, and Rice

SUBJECT: Resolution to Develop an Equity Policy Framework in County Government

Background

1. Montgomery County is a community with a strong economy and public services that embraces its residents and the future. Our strong public services include award-winning public schools, community college, and park systems, vibrant performing and fine arts, and essential safety net programs in housing, public health, and other social services.

2. Montgomery County is a diverse and welcoming community. No one race or origin is a majority of Montgomery County’s population. Almost one-third of the population is foreign-born. Our diversity is our strength and is key to our continued success as a community.

3. While we embrace our diversity, disparities exist by ethnicity, income, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, and other factors that can impede our future prosperity. These disparities in education, employment, health, and housing result from institutional and individual biases that undermine opportunities for vital members of our community.

4. Furthermore, the aforementioned disparities can be exacerbated by racial and linguistic diversity that intersect with and compound the effects of additional disparities and inequities based on racial background and limited English language proficiency.

5. Eliminating disparities by promoting equity - the fair treatment of individuals and diverse groups - is an economic imperative. The Urban Institute’s Racial Inequities in Montgomery County, 2011-15 report shows that a more equitable Montgomery County would increase the number of immigrants, Latinos, African Americans, and Asians with some college education, and would also increase employment and homeownership rates among people of color. A more equitable Montgomery County would enhance opportunities for all residents, thereby improving the economy.

Racial Equity in Government Decision-Making: Lessons from the Field

Elsie Bonner-Tompkins
Victoria H. Hall

Montgomery County Government
Community Conversation on Racial Equity & Social Justice hosted by Council President Navarro and County Executive Elrich

Join Us
Wednesday, March 13 at 7:30 P.M.
Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Plaza, Silver Spring, MD

Why does racial equity matter?
Are you impacted by racial inequality?
What changes do you want to see to promote racial equity & social justice?

Questions? Contact Soma Healy@montgomerycountymd.gov or call 240-777-7832
Equity in Planning—

Major focus in planning profession nationally

**APA Statement of Ethical Principles in Planning (1992):**

“The planning process must continuously pursue and faithfully serve the public interest.”

…“strive to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons.”
• Adopted by American Planning Association in spring 2019

• Guidance for planners serving urban, suburban & rural communities across US

“[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.”
Equity In All Policies approach → Applying holistic “equity lens” to planning practices → Address existing inequities & prevent creation of new inequities

Cross-Cutting Equity Issues:
- Gentrification
- Environmental Justice
- Community Engagement & Empowerment

Equity In All Policies in Practice:
- Climate Change & Resilience
- Education
- Energy & Resource Consumption
- Health Equity
- Heritage Preservation
- Housing
- Mobility & Transportation
- Public Spaces & Places

Provides policy guidance on:
National planning focus on equity—Professional education & training

2019 APA National Planning Conference:

- Planning for Inclusiveness & Social Justice track (30 sessions)
- 70 sessions on topics related to equity (multiple tracks)
Montgomery Planning—Current Equity Efforts

Equity—
one of 3 pillars
for General Plan
Update

General Plan Update Strategic Framework
Montgomery Planning—Current Equity Efforts

• Engaging diverse communities typically under-represented in planning efforts.

• Outreach initiatives:
  ▪ Materials/presentations in Spanish & English
  ▪ Targeted outreach to churches & other community organizations
  ▪ Information easily accessible to commuters on Metrorail, bus shelters & buses
  ▪ Distribution of information at schools
  ▪ Unique tools such as visual recording artists
Montgomery Planning—Current Equity Efforts

- **Provision of multiple modes of safe travel** – **Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan**
- **Provision of additional transit options** – **Purple Line, BRT**
- **Affordable housing initiatives** – **2017 Rental Housing Study, new Preservation of Affordable Housing Study, update to MPDU laws, Accessory Dwelling Unit reform**
- **Upcoming study** – **Preserving Community Value of Ethnically Diverse Retail Centers**
- Support to the Purple Line Corridor Coalition (PLCC)
- Through our Historic Preservation Section, significant work to recognize, educate and celebrate the history of African American communities and historic sites throughout the county.
Diversity Focus – Internal as well as External

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 (2019), 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.
- Participants in GARE monthly meetings, training, and online resources.
Racial Equity in Parks
Role of Parks in combating racial inequity

Studies have shown that living close to quality parks:

- leads to increased physical activity and positive health impacts
- Strengthens emotional bonds to nearby communities
- Encourages community engagement
- Increases economic opportunity
- Lowers crime rates
Role of Parks in combating racial inequity

- There have been important correlations found nationwide between the quality and access to urban parks and the income and racial diversity of the surrounding community.
- For that reason, many major urban park systems have developed equity plans.
We created an Equity GIS analytical tool that includes:

- Percent Area Median Household Income
- Predominant Race and Ethnicity
Other Factors We Consider:

- Equity Amenities
- Programming
- Public Transportation
- Park Condition
- Countywide vs. Community Use
Parks are Hyperlocal!
Parks are Hyperlocal!