



THRIVE

MONTGOMERY 2050

Let's Plan Our Future. Together.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 – Frequently Asked Questions

I. Thrive Montgomery 2050—The Basics

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the update to Montgomery County's General Plan, its long-range policy framework for guiding future land use and growth for the next 30 years. Thrive Montgomery 2050 will help guide future land use planning; countywide policies and future initiatives affecting community quality of life; the provision of infrastructure and community amenities; and private development. Montgomery County's vibrant parks, quality schools, desirable urban, suburban and rural communities and the Agricultural Reserve were shaped by planners and community members decades ago through the 1964 General Plan. 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. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the long-term vision of where we want to go and it drives every decision we make, including what types of investments the county government makes

What is the General Plan? What does a General Plan do and what does it not do?

A General Plan is a policy document that guides, over multiple decades, how a jurisdiction will develop and change over time; maintain its important assets; and respond to future opportunities and challenges. Unlike a sector plan, master plan or functional plan, a General Plan does not provide specific land use guidance to address short-term issues in targeted geographic areas; it does not change zoning; and it addresses multiple topic areas, rather than just one. A General Plan is a long-term vision with broad policies that will guide future, more detailed land use planning, public investments in infrastructure and community amenities, and private development.

Why is the “Wedges and Corridors” General Plan being updated?

Rapid social, environmental, technological, demographic and economic shifts that have occurred and that will continue 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.

What are the overarching priorities that Thrive Montgomery 2050 seeks to achieve?

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 update we plan with the community will guide policy and investment decisions in the decades to come. The guidance contained in Thrive Montgomery 2050, across multiple topics, is intended to accomplish three broad outcomes for the county's future:

- **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.
- **Equity:** We want to create a place where all residents have equal access to affordable housing, healthy foods, employment, transportation, education and more.

- **Environmental Resilience:** We want to preserve our natural and built resources and use the best strategies to fight climate change and mitigate the impact of both planned changes and unexpected events.

What is the long-term vision for Montgomery County?

In 2050, Montgomery County is a web of complete communities connected by vibrant corridors.

- **Complete communities:** Individual and unique centers of neighborhood activity and urban nodes optimize land use with a variety of housing types and price points are located close to transit, workplaces, needed goods and services, public amenities and active park spaces.
- **Vibrant corridors:** comfortable, safe corridors of multimodal transportation and services; and corridors of green parks, stream valleys and trails.

How are the Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations organized?

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations are organized into eight cross-cutting themes, or chapters: Complete Communities; Connectedness; Diverse Economy; Safe and Reliable Travel; Affordability and Attainability; Healthy and Sustainable Environment; Diverse and Adaptable Growth; and Design, Arts and Culture. Each theme includes its own set of issues and challenges that are addressed through the Plan’s vision, goals, policies and actions.

How will Thrive Montgomery 2050 advance racial and social equity for Montgomery County?

Equity, one of the three foundational principles for developing policy guidance, is interwoven throughout Thrive Montgomery 2050. This equity framework improves planning, decision-making, and resource allocation leading to more racially equitable policies and programs. Efforts to achieve racial and social equity include creating more housing attainable for residents at all income levels; ensuring existing and new communities of color receive an equitable share of services and investments; promoting the equitable distribution of prosperity throughout the county; addressing current health disparities and improving health and well-being for everyone; and ensuring all residents have a voice and influence in planning and policy processes. Thrive Montgomery 2050 creates a place where all residents have equitable access to affordable housing, healthy foods, employment, transportation, education and more.

How is Montgomery Planning engaging community members, including people of color, immigrant residents and other traditionally marginalized communities, in the development of Thrive Montgomery 2050?

With equity among the three outcomes of Thrive Montgomery 2050, as well as a priority for Montgomery Planning and the county, our communications approach has and will continue to consider equity in all outreach and engagement so that all members of our community have opportunities to shape the future of our county. This has and continues to include: meeting community members where they are by attending [festivals and local events throughout the county](#); providing a variety of ways to provide feedback; offering virtual events that vary in time and date to meet the diverse needs of our community; and providing translated materials and interpretation for events. Highlights have included the plan’s kickoff, Thrive Week, in June 2019; [youth engagement and visioning workshops](#); and the [Ask me Anything series](#), hosted by Planning Director Gwen Wright, in English and Spanish. For more information, please review the [Communications Plan for the project \(Appendix II\)](#), the [Engagement Update](#) presented to the Planning Board in February 2020, and [the virtual events](#) Montgomery Planning is hosting in June during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed planning for the future?

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. 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 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on low-income families and residents of color. The neighborhoods at a higher risk for the virus were already vulnerable to economic disruption—with lower incomes, higher rent burdens and higher levels of segregation by race. 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.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 highlights opportunities to reevaluate and rethink the way Montgomery County builds, designs and maintains places in the wake of the pandemic. Policies that create more integrated, connected, mixed-income neighborhoods also can positively impact our residents' health and quality of life, as well as influence our economic health, environment and transportation infrastructure.

How can I get involved?

- [Sign up](#) for the Thrive Montgomery 2050 E-mail List to receive updates about the plan to receive updates about the plan
- [Review the Draft Policies and Actions](#), presented to the Planning Board on June 11, 2020, and send your thoughts to Thrive2050@montgomeryplanning.org
- Participate in the upcoming virtual [Community Chats](#) to discuss the draft policies and actions on specific topics

II. Thrive Montgomery 2050's Eight Themes

Complete Communities

What is a Complete Community?

Complete Communities are places where everyone can live, work, shop, learn 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 reflect the urban, suburban and rural contexts. At its core, a complete community will be racially, ethnically and economically diverse as well as include a mixture of housing types, uses, amenities and services accessible by foot, bike or transit.

Will the idea of a Complete Community apply in the county's urban, suburban and rural areas?

Yes. 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 and environmental resources, and the unique history and buildings 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 near major corridors with bus rapid transit and will support a mix of uses as well as moderate density housing, including duplexes, triplexes and low-rise multi-family buildings. Micro-transit such as e-scooters and bikeshare will support complete communities characterized by a variety of uses, amenities and housing types to meet daily needs in suburban and rural communities.

How will Complete Communities be implemented?

With the overall vision of a complete community established in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, several additional plans and studies will likely be necessary to implement complete communities at a neighborhood scale. This may include a Complete Communities Functional Master Plan, neighborhood-based master, sector and corridor plans, and revisions to the Montgomery County Zoning Code to provide greater flexibility in accommodating a variety of uses and densities within complete communities. Future public facility plans and public investment decisions also will play a role by placing community facilities and amenities in locations closer to where people live and using different types of sites than in the past, such as the reuse of vacant or underutilized office buildings, co-location of public facilities and smaller sites. Thrive Montgomery 2050 also will influence how future private development will be designed to help create complete communities.

How will Thrive Montgomery 2050 improve access to parks, open spaces and trails by 2050 for everyone, not just in single-family neighborhoods? By the year 2050, Montgomery County residents will have the opportunity to lead healthy, active lifestyles in part because they live within a 15-minute walk, transit ride or drive from a park or open space as part of a complete community for their respective urban, suburban or rural context. Access to these parks will be improved by construction of new sidewalks, bike paths and bike lanes, as well as enhancements to transit. Additionally, parks will serve as the focal point of communities. Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends implementing Montgomery Parks' Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan so that new parks and open spaces over the next 30 years are prioritized in higher-density, multi-family housing communities where residents do not have backyards. Thrive Montgomery 2050's policies support communities throughout the county having a park or open space near their homes so that residents do not have to travel far for outdoor physical fitness, social gathering or nature-based experiences.

How does Thrive Montgomery relate to schools? Will this plan influence the actions of the school board?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a comprehensive policy document in its reach, including recommendations that impact schools as well as other community facilities. Through collaboration with multiple county agencies like Montgomery County Public Schools, Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends policies and actions that impact the design, placement or co-location of public facilities like schools. Thrive Montgomery's focus on Complete Communities includes recommendations to enhance the walkability of schools. Additionally, the Plan recommends creating new locations for future schools by using smaller infill sites or adapting former office buildings, given the limited availability of land. General Plan policies and actions related to schools are implemented through schools facility planning and capital budget decision-making by the School Board and County Council.

Connectedness

Why is connectedness an important theme in Thrive Montgomery 2050?

Being socially connected by engaging and participating in community and civic life imbues a sense of shared interests and values and a stake in each other's wellbeing. The design of our communities—where people, live, work, connect, and play—can greatly influence the degree community cohesion and social interaction take place. The public sector serves to shape the built environment making it easier for people to engage in social activities and to promote social interactions that increase trust, cooperation and belonging. Strengthening relationships that bind our communities together, rooted in the values of dignity, civility, mutual respect and inclusive democracy, brings us closer to achieving social, environmental and racial justice across Montgomery County.

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 support engagement with diverse and marginalized communities as a key component of future planning efforts and government decision-making?

Successful community capacity-building and civic engagement takes place through deliberate, sustained outreach to a diverse body of stakeholders and shared leadership. It is important to build relationships and foster trust with community leaders, recognizing their knowledge of community dynamics will provide inroads to those who are hard-to-reach and perhaps distrustful of the outreach process. Thrive Montgomery 2050 includes policy recommendations to remove barriers to community engagement, making it more convenient and accessible for everyone to participate in planning processes. Implementing these policies will make government planning and decision-making processes accessible, transparent and easy for all members of the community to understand and participate. Such efforts ensure that all residents have a voice and influence in planning and policy processes and in decisions to create an equitable future.

Affordability & Attainability of Housing

How will this plan address housing equity?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 acknowledges and addresses the deep disparities in wealth and homeownership that were shaped by a legacy of discriminatory lending practices, restrictive covenants and single-family zoning and its secondary impacts on neighborhoods still being felt today.

While decades of inequities cannot be remedied through a single document, Thrive Montgomery 2050 begins the process of addressing these inequities to create more equitable, mixed-income neighborhoods. Thrive Montgomery 2050 deploys a context-sensitive approach that understands the neighborhoods of Montgomery County have different housing needs, issues and opportunities instead a blanket one-size-fits-all policy.

Why does Thrive Montgomery 2050 talk about housing affordability and attainability? What is the difference?

Housing policy traditionally has focused solely on affordability, a measure of whether or not households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is shifting this focus to also include attainability. Attainability in housing is the ability of households of various incomes and sizes to obtain housing that is suitable for their needs and affordable to them. It is income, not housing need, that drives access to housing. There is a growing need to make sure the housing built is attainable, appropriate and suitable for the households that live here. Implicit in this idea of attainability is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exists in the local market.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 contains wide-ranging policies to help make housing more attainable, including increasing housing production, preserving existing affordable and attainable housing and increasing tenant protections. Specifically, these policies involve the refinement or creation of new financial, zoning, and or policy tools.

Why does Montgomery County need to build more housing?

We need to grow our housing supply to relieve pressure on the market, stabilize rents and ensure housing is attainable to a broad range of incomes. Declining production and increased development costs have resulted in rising housing costs and an increase in the number of cost-burdened households. Our failure to deliver suitable and attainable housing has created a housing supply mismatch with negative, secondary effects on our neighborhoods, schools, environment, transportation infrastructure and economic health.

Additionally, the county is expected to add over 200,000 residents by 2050. 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.

In 2019, the Montgomery County Council passed a [resolution](#) in support of housing targets over the next ten years. These housing targets state the county's commitment to build an additional 10,000 housing units on the

top of the already forecasted 31,000 units. Thrive Montgomery 2050 provides the opportunity to look for new tools to increase our housing production to meet the needs of current and future residents.

What is Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposing regarding single-family zoning?

Montgomery County’s communities have diverse needs in terms of housing—affordability, the size and type of housing and proximity to transit. The county also has a housing supply gap that will continue into the future. Thrive Montgomery 2050 aims to ensure that exclusively single-family zoning is not a barrier to development in neighborhoods near employment centers and transit. The plan includes policies and actions that support the production of different types of housing near transit, including in existing single-family zones. This is an important step in how the county begins to address past inequities in housing choice, while also creating more options for housing that is affordable and attainable to current and future residents of all income levels. Specifically, Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends modest increases of density in areas currently zoned exclusively for single-family housing near high-capacity transit that would provide more housing types such as duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes for varying household needs and affordability levels.

Diverse Economy

How will this plan address COVID-19 related unemployment?

As a long-range policy plan, the General Plan does not include short-term immediate action steps to directly address the unemployment related to Covid-19. However, one of Thrive Montgomery’s three pillars is economic health—which includes ensuring that the County’s economy is resistant to future economic shocks, whatever the cause. It will do this with policies and other guidance to help Montgomery County’s already robust and diversified employment base become even more diversified. Thrive Montgomery 2050 promotes economic resilience additionally through policies to help residents and workers have the skills, options, mobility, and economic cushion to weather major shocks or transition into new types of employment when disasters strike.

How will this plan address regional competitiveness and ensure that a significant share of new jobs in the area are in Montgomery County?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 promotes regional competitiveness and job growth through several key strategies. It leverages Montgomery Planning as a leading and proactive participant in economic development in collaboration with partner agencies. Thrive Montgomery’s policies promote zoning and land use planning accommodating the type of development that supports the county’s economic development. The plan envisions world-class employment centers that facilitate interaction and innovation, supported by high quality transit and other nonmotorized options that connect people within and outside of the county. Thrive Montgomery’s overarching vision for greater livability, world-class amenities, community connectedness, and openness to new cultures and ideas not only improves quality of life for existing residents, but also makes Montgomery County a top choice for firms and people looking to relocate from all over the world. The Plan also emphasizes creating a culture of regionalism where Montgomery County works with, rather than against, its neighbors, because a stronger and more unified region will bring more prosperity for all. Finally—but most importantly—Thrive Montgomery envisions Montgomery County as a place for opportunity and mobility. By connecting workers without advanced degrees to high-wage industries, integrating and connecting educational institutions to their surroundings, and aggressively expanding the supply of affordable housing, Montgomery County can be a place where prosperity is shared equitably.

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 support the survival and vibrancy of small businesses as our County continues to grow and change?

Montgomery County’s small businesses are a diverse group, both in ownership, business type and business needs. Because of this diversity, Thrive Montgomery’s policy guidance highlights understanding the specific challenges faced by small businesses, particularly businesses owned by people of color, immigrants, veterans, and women, all of whom have different needs in running businesses and interfacing with County agencies. The

plan's guidance promotes strategies and tools that support existing small businesses and those that are starting or expanding. This task is especially important now given the great difficulties faced by small businesses from the Covid-19 pandemic.

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 promote the Agricultural Reserve as an economic asset, while still protecting the agricultural and environmental assets that it offers?

The Agricultural Reserve is both an ecological sanctuary and a center of economic production. Thrive Montgomery 2050 lays the groundwork for enhancing the supply chain that supports the Ag Reserve's economic vibrancy and focusing it locally, so that agricultural producers can easily and inexpensively process and distribute their products, and so residents of the region can enjoy them. This enhanced agricultural ecosystem will connect producers in the reserve to the local food scene and research and development around food production and bioproducts.

Healthy & Sustainable Environment

How will Thrive Montgomery 2050 address climate change?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 recognizes that climate change is one of the major threats to Montgomery County now and into the future. The Plan addresses direct and indirect impacts of climate change by making recommendations to mitigate or limit the extent of the damage by reducing the amount of warming greenhouse gases the county produces. We will achieve this by proactively adapting our systems and infrastructure to reduce the impacts of climate change, such as extreme heat, flooding from more frequent and severe storms, sea level rise and other extreme precipitation. These strategies will help create resilient communities that are more self-sustaining and that can bounce back faster from climate change related disturbances.

Key recommendations to limit greenhouse gas emissions include accommodating most of our new growth and limiting sprawl through compact, denser development in our urban areas and along transportation. In addition, recommendations to improve public transit, bike lanes and walking paths and to establish complete communities with basic retail and services throughout the county will allow people to get where they need to go without driving a car.

How will the Plan ensure that growth and development is balanced with the need to protect environmental resources?

Thrive Montgomery 2050's focus on accommodating growth through infill redevelopment and creating denser, more compact urban areas will help preserve large natural areas that remain critical to providing clean air and water and habitats for plants and animals and to fighting climate change. In urban areas, the Thrive Montgomery 2050 recognizes the benefits of integrating natural features into the design of our urban areas to make them healthy, attractive and livable places. The Plan recommends, for example, integrating trees along roads and within public spaces to provide shade and reduce stormwater runoff, and using rooftop spaces for trees and other vegetation, stormwater management facilities and gathering spaces. Thrive Montgomery 2050 also promotes transforming streets designed primarily for cars to places designed for people, including reducing impervious pavement to create more amenity spaces.

Continued management of our county's park system contribute significantly to providing areas for exercise and preserving natural areas. Additionally, Thrive Montgomery 2050 continues to preserve and support the Agricultural Reserve which contributes to the county's future resilience by providing a local food supply, protecting our future water supply, and providing a home for diverse wildlife and recreation.

How will Thrive Montgomery 2050 help all residents of Montgomery County live healthier lives?

Promoting human health is a complex undertaking, involving environmental, economic and social factors. A growing body of data also continues to underscore the extent to which historically disadvantaged communities

and people of color disproportionately suffer poorer health outcomes than the population at large. Thrive Montgomery 2050 encourages more active, healthy lifestyles for all by creating complete communities throughout the county where residents can exercise in a park or along a park trail near their homes and walk, bike or take transit to work, shops, schools and other community destinations. The Plan also recommends designing or retrofitting communities to make it easier and more attractive to spend time outdoors exercising, socializing with family, friends and neighbors, and connecting with nature. Other recommendations focus on making healthier food and better nutrition accessible to all people, through policies and actions to increase access to locally grown fresh food and places to buy fresh food. Thrive Montgomery 2050 policies to create better social connectedness, improve economic opportunities and house vulnerable people also support healthy living. When taken altogether, these recommendations will help provide a healthier physical environment and promote better physical and mental health.

Safe & Efficient Transportation

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 address equity in the transportation system?

Thrive Montgomery 2050's focus on equity as a framework for its guidance is also critical in planning for the county's transportation needs. The Safe and Efficient Transportation chapter proposes the following goal: "Create an equitable transportation system that provides affordable and accessible travel options to jobs, education and services." Through this goal, the county will prioritize transportation projects that provide safe, comfortable, reliable and affordable transit for disadvantaged and mobility-challenged residents. Incorporating this goal into Thrive Montgomery 2050 also provides the basis for projects that would provide low-cost transportation for low-income populations. through transit fare and toll policies.

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 address traffic in the area? Does planning for people, rather than cars, mean more traffic or less?

Planning for people means designing roadways, sidewalks and other transportation infrastructure to make them safer for everyone, whether they are walking, biking, taking transit or driving. The county currently has many auto-oriented roads that were designed primarily to move cars quickly. This focus has led to roadways that are unsafe and discourage people from walking, biking or taking transit unless they have no other choice. Thrive Montgomery 2050 re-envision these major roadways as corridors that support rapid, reliable transit, offer comfortable, safe walking spaces and feature attractive architecture and streetscapes. Providing residents and workers with multiple high-quality travel choices that better connect them to services and jobs will reduce dependence on cars and help create a safe, equitable and environmentally sustainable transportation system.

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 affect those who do not rely on a car? Will it be easier to travel around the county without a car?

The Plan envisions a future where public transit, walking and bicycling are the preferred travel mode for daily trips and the need for personal vehicles is substantially reduced. Its goals and policies would be the foundation for roadway projects and transit operational changes that would create a high-quality transit network that seamlessly connects the county's activity centers and regional destinations, making transit the fastest and most reliable way to get between downtowns, town centers and rail and bus rapid transit corridors.

How will Thrive Montgomery 2050 advance pedestrian safety and help reach Vision Zero goals?

One of the goals of Thrive Montgomery 2050 is to help Montgomery County achieve Vision Zero by eliminating all transportation-related fatalities and severe injuries and provide a transportation system that is safe for everyone. Moving forward, all sector plans, policies, studies and capital projects will need to address this goal. For example, one of Thrive Montgomery's action items is to identify transportation safety improvements for locations with high rates of crashes and for locations with little or no crash history but similar to places with a history of crashes.

How does this Plan help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

One of Thrive Montgomery’s goals is to “eradicate greenhouse gas emissions and dangerous pollutants from the transportation system.” The Plan recommends disincentivizing automobile travel through congestion pricing and reducing parking requirements for new development; incentivizing non-auto driving travel by providing high-quality networks for walking, bicycling and transit; and facilitating the mass adoption of electric vehicles.

Diverse and Adaptable Growth

What is a corridor and why does Thrive Montgomery 2050 focus on corridors?

Montgomery County’s development patterns are a result of decades of planning and policies, beginning with the 1964 General Plan – *On Wedges and Corridors*. The 1964 plan envisioned one corridor in Montgomery County: Interstate 270. In subsequent decades, a network of major corridors has evolved due to continued suburban development as well as planning initiatives and infrastructure investment – including the 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* and the Purple Line. These major corridors, including Rockville Pike, Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, Veirs Mill Road and others, are wide, fast roadways constructed to connect suburban and rural areas to the urban centers.

Each of these corridors has a unique character and context where residents live, work, shop, learn, play and move. However, many of these corridors have been neglected in past decades, as we have focused redevelopment and revitalization on neighborhoods – rather than the connective tissue between neighborhoods. This established network of corridors, which include existing and planned rail and bus rapid transit, provide an opportunity to improve economic health, community equity and environmental resilience over the next 30 years.

Where and how does Thrive Montgomery 2050 envision Montgomery County growing in the future?

Future growth in Montgomery County will be primarily focused on a compact form of infill development, redevelopment and adaptive reuse near existing and planned rail and bus rapid transit, with both jobs and housing located within walking distance of the Metrorail, Purple Line, bus rapid transit, Corridor Cities Transitway and North Bethesda Transitway. Future growth will be focused not just in transit-oriented neighborhoods, but also on the connective tissue between neighborhoods – the established network of major corridors planned for bus rapid transit (Rockville Pike, Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, Veirs Mill Road and others).

How does this Plan strengthen the Agricultural Reserve?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 seeks to reaffirm the importance of retaining the Agricultural Reserve and celebrate its value as a tool to sustain farmland and rural open space as well as an opportunity to support an evolving agricultural industry. In addition to providing an area of contiguous farmland to support the agricultural industry, the Agricultural Reserve also provides numerous environmental benefits as well as opportunities for local food production and carbon sequestration.

Design, Arts and Culture

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 influence future land use planning to help Montgomery County’s culture and design reflect its diverse population?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 emphasizes the importance of having planning processes that are inclusive and give every resident an equal voice. How neighborhoods look and feel should be directly informed by the culture and lived experiences of the county’s residents. Community members having participatory power in the planning process automatically sets the stage for creating communities that celebrate the county’s diversity.

This inclusive thinking needs to translate to the physical design of our communities as well. Thrive Montgomery 2050 promotes using architecture, public art and infrastructure as a canvas to express local cultures. A train station can also be an art gallery and manhole cover can tell us something about the history of a place. The Plan's guidance also recommends incentivizing creative expression throughout the county and engaging residents in the creation of art, especially the children and youth.

How do we preserve Montgomery County's history while creating opportunities to grow?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 does not see preservation and growth as mutually exclusive goals. The Plan highlights the need to balance accommodating future growth with preservation of historically significant pieces of the county's culture. Montgomery County has a history of doing this successfully; policies like the Agricultural Reserve have successfully protected large parts of the county from losing their rural character and agrarian roots.

Preserving our past also means we must continue to focus our growth in already developed places, especially ones served by transit. Making better transit, walkable and bikeable connections to existing historical and cultural assets also is recommended in Thrive Montgomery 2050. Thrive Montgomery's focus on culture as an important aspect of design, placemaking and historic preservation is reflected in recommendations related to considering the cultural significance of buildings and spaces for different communities as a way to celebrate history and culture equitably across the county.

How we create more activated parks and vibrant places that improve the quality of life?

As we focus future growth in the county in already developed areas, we need to build new urban parks and public spaces in these high-density communities where a lot of people will live and work. Every resident should be able to walk to a park or open space within 15 minutes. We also need to make stronger connections to existing parks, especially through walking, biking and transit. Currently, some of our largest parks and natural areas are the hardest to reach unless you drive.

We need to boost programming and provide amenities in parks and public spaces that give people more reasons to spend time outdoors. If you take your child to a park but there is nothing for you to do there, you are likely to quickly return home. On the other hand, a well-designed park with the right amenities can enable you to spend an entire day in nature without much planning or effort. The value of access to nature and outdoor space has been greatly highlighted during this current pandemic. The county has a great network of open spaces. We must add to it and enhance to maximize its public benefit for all residents.

How does Thrive Montgomery 2050 approach using design for resilience—making us better at bouncing back from disruptions like the current pandemic?

Thrive Montgomery's recommendation to create Complete Communities where most of your daily needs are within a 15-minute walk automatically helps to create a strong neighborhood culture, which serves us well during times of uncertainty and disruption. The Plan also includes several policies in several chapters to ensure we design buildings, streets and public spaces in a way that they can take on multiple roles and functions with the passage of time. An office building should house workers efficiently, but it also should be easily convertible into a residential building or a small school if the demand for office space goes away. Similarly, streets should move cars effectively, but also be able to expand their sidewalks and bike lanes as demand for physical distanced recreation surges.

A lot of future disruptions will likely be generated due to a changing climate. We must use design as a tool to mitigate those effects. Buildings should be reused where possible and new buildings built to high green standards. Policies throughout Thrive Montgomery 2050 support these efforts, as well as using transportation infrastructure and neighborhood design to reduce greenhouse gas emission and car dependence. Through design, we can retrofit these communities to get people out of cars and instead walk, bike and take transit. That

will go a long way in reducing the county's carbon footprint and making Montgomery County more resilient towards future disruptions.

III. Implementation of Thrive Montgomery 2050

How will Thrive Montgomery 2050 be implemented?

Thrive Montgomery 2050's the county's updated General Plan, is a high-level policy document that is not self-implementing. The General Plan does not automatically change any zoning or other regulations. Implementation of its policies and actions will rely on several tools over the coming decades. Thrive Montgomery will influence Montgomery Planning work program for new master, sector and functional plans and detailed studies over the coming years; shape the design and regulatory review of private development; and guide the Planning Board's decision-making. However, Thrive Montgomery's reach and impact extends beyond land use planning. Thrive Montgomery's guidance also is intended to influence infrastructure, facility, real estate and other planning by multiple county and regional agencies such as the Montgomery County Parks Department, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Montgomery County Public Schools, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and others. Thrive Montgomery 2050 also will be implemented through zoning changes identified by future plans and studies and other changes to county regulations and ordinances. Another important tool for implementation is the Capital Improvements Process that funds new county facilities and infrastructure.

How much will Thrive Montgomery 2050 cost to implement it?

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. 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.

How will you monitor the effectiveness of Thrive Montgomery over the next 30 years?

Over summer 2020, Montgomery Planning will draft an Implementation chapter for Thrive Montgomery 2050 that will discuss the various tools noted above for implementing the Plan as well as identify strategies to monitor implementation. This will include identifying agencies responsible for implementing actions; prioritizing implementation in terms of short-term, medium-term and long-term actions; and developing metrics for tracking the effectiveness of the Plan's implementation.