

# Montgomery Planning's Master Plan Process

Get involved in developing our shared vision for the county's future

### What is a master plan?

A master plan sets a vision for the future of a specific geographic area through recommendations for land uses, zoning, transportation, schools, parks, libraries, fire and police stations, and other activities intended to help implement that vision and enhance quality of life.

Master plans also address housing, historic preservation, pedestrian and trail systems, and environmental issues.

These plans legally amend the General Plan (also known as Thrive Montgomery 2050) and govern how the county approves, prioritizes, and regulates development.

### Why plan at all?

Montgomery County will keep growing and the needs of residents and visitors will keep adjusting in the decades ahead—so it's essential the county keeps pace with an evolving society. Master plans set the stage for the public and private sectors to create a community's desired vision for the next 15–20 years.

Once a plan is approved, it defines how county agencies ensure proposals for development, policymaking, zoning changes, and more adhere to the set vision. The Montgomery County government coordinates broader plan implementation through its agencies and partners, along with community members and developers.

### Why participate?

Master planning is wholly rooted in conversation and collaboration with the community.

Our goal is to create thoughtful, innovative, and equitable plans that shape future developments that reflect the community's vision. We do that by listening to the needs, wants, and realities of residents, businesses, and other neighborhood stakeholders.

Then, we apply research, analysis, and expertise—under the framework of the county's regulations, priorities, and equity lens—to bring together community hopes, practical realities, and planning best practices.

**A good plan keeps all players on the same page—and helps intentionally realize a better future for all.**

# Master Plan Process At-a-glance

## Work Program

Agreed-upon master plans are added to Montgomery Planning's work program following budget negotiations with the County Council each spring.

## Pre-Scope of Work

Every master planning effort begins with several months of detailed data collection, technical analysis, and plan boundary determination. These activities review current conditions and changes over time, allowing planners to understand the evolution of key issues in the area.

## Scope of Work

Planning teams present a scope of work for review and approval by the Planning Board. The scope of work examines the changes since the last master plan, outlines the existing conditions, and explains why a new plan update or amendment is needed. The scope also lays out the key issues or themes for exploration in the new plan.

## Visioning and Analysis

Planners continue identifying issues and begin to identify solutions with the community. Community conversations help develop a vision for the plan, discussing how to improve future community conditions, infrastructure, the built environment, amenities, and more. Planners also review best practices and apply in-house and external expertise to explore possibilities for the community.

## Planning Board Draft

Planners incorporate further community comments into the plan and present a revised draft to the Planning Board. The board approves the new draft and transmits it to the County Council and the County Executive for review.

## Public Hearing Draft Plan

Planners take comments from the Planning Board and official public comments submitted, then present a revised draft at a public hearing, during which anyone may testify. The Planning Board, which has final authority over land use matters, may also hold work sessions to review the testimony and determine whether to make any revisions before publishing the Planning Board Draft Plan.

## Working Draft Plan

Planners draft the working draft plan, which is first reviewed by the community, then present it to the Planning Board.

## Preliminary Recommendations

Planners consult with the community to develop alternative actions and recommendations for the master plan, then present these to the Planning Board.

## County Executive and County Council Review and Public Hearing

The County Executive drafts and sends a fiscal impact analysis with any comments and recommendations regarding the plan to the County Council.

The County Council holds a public hearing on the plan, then committee work sessions as appropriate. The full County Council then discusses the plan and holds work sessions and approves the plan with whatever changes occurred throughout their process.

## Approval and Adoption

Montgomery Planning certifies the plan and submits it to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for final approval. The plan is then added as an amendment to the General Plan and published.

## Master Plan Implementation

While Montgomery Planning provides consultation and research support to the county agencies responsible for making plans come to fruition, we do not implement the plans. Once a plan is adopted, Montgomery County government is responsible for coordinating plan implementation with Montgomery County agencies and partners, along with community members and developers, as appropriate.

*NOTE: Outlined here is a model for the master planning process, which will be adhered to in most cases. However, each community is different, and, from time to time, steps may need to be added, deleted, or modified. The portions of the planning process mandated by law—such as Planning Board hearings, County Executive review periods, and County Council public hearings—are not subject to modification*

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