



# Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan Questions and Answers

## Plan Context and Community Engagement:

### 1 | Why are we doing this plan now?

The Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan is an opportunity to establish a vision and recommendations for communities that are poised to experience change with the Purple Line light rail beginning service in 2027 and plans for Bus Rapid Transit on University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue. The Plan responds to these changes by recommending ways to maintain affordability, add more types of housing, support small businesses, and improve transportation safety.

### 2 | How will the Purple Line affect Eastern Silver Spring?

The Purple Line will bring new travel options that better connect residents to jobs, schools, and services. The Purple Line will bring new opportunities and investment to the area. It's important to protect longtime residents and businesses so they aren't pushed out by the very improvements meant to help them. This plan aims to build on this investment in transit by creating more and preserving existing affordable housing options, supporting locally owned businesses, improving street safety, and investing in parks and public spaces.



Purple Line Construction on Piney Branch Road

### 3 | How has input from the community shaped the Preliminary Recommendations?

Since 2023, over 1,200 people shared what they value, what challenges they face and where they want to see improvements. We heard from people at community meetings, community events, door-knocking, online surveys, and focus groups. To learn more, check out our [community engagement page](#). This helpful input, along with data analysis, best planning practices and county policies, informed the plan's preliminary recommendations. Did we get it right? [Let us know on our survey](#).

### 4 | How does this plan address equity?

All residents deserve safe housing, good schools, access to jobs, reliable transportation and places to enjoy. Today, the Plan Area is recognized for its diversity and is home to many immigrants. Several census tracts within the area have been identified by the [Community Equity Index](#) (CEI) as highly and moderately disproportionately disadvantaged. To make sure the plan responds to what people in this community need, the planning team involved community members from the very beginning (see [Community Engagement](#)). What residents shared about their experiences, concerns and hopes directly influenced the preliminary recommendations. The plan encourages both public and private investment in ways that benefit current residents—by creating safer sidewalks, more places to gather, protecting and expanding affordable housing, and helping locally owned businesses stay and grow. A major goal is making sure people who live here today benefit from future growth. Equity isn't a single section of the plan—it's woven throughout the goals, vision statements, and recommendations to ensure long-term residents share in the benefits of new investment.

## 5 | How does the plan help current residents and make sure they benefit from future development?

The Plan's preliminary recommendations encourage investment from both the private and public sectors to create more opportunities in the Plan area, while providing recommendations that prioritize the community's needs, to ensure that residents today benefit from recent investment and future growth. These recommendations include creating spaces to gather, building safer sidewalks, incentivizing new developments to retain locally-owned businesses, and striving for no net loss of affordable housing.



Long Branch Festival September 2025

## Land Use, Zoning and Housing:

### 1 | What is zoning? What does a zoning change mean for a property?

Zoning establishes local regulations that determine what types of buildings and uses are allowed on each property. A zoning change does not remove existing buildings, alter current uses, or require property owners to redevelop. It simply updates the rules for what could be built in the future, if a property owner chooses to sell or redevelop their property. No physical changes occur unless and until a property owner decides to act. View our [Zoning Preliminary Recommendations Video](#).

### 2 | What specific zoning changes are being proposed?

Key preliminary recommendations include:

- Allowing more types of housing—like duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, or small apartment buildings, on corridor facing blocks along Colesville Road, University Boulevard, and New Hampshire Avenue and near Purple Line stations, by rezoning properties that are within one block of Colesville Road, University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue and a quarter-mile of a Purple Line station to the Commercial Residential Neighborhood (CRN) zone. The CRN zone will limit commercial uses and have an overlay zone that adds extra rules to make sure new buildings fit within the neighborhood.
- More flexibility for places of worship, community institutions and senior housing sites to update buildings, expand services or add housing, by rezoning these properties to mixed-use CRN zone or Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zone.
- Allowing more housing and neighborhood retail near Purple Line stations and most Bus Rapid Transit stations by rezoning properties with larger apartment

buildings and some smaller apartment buildings to mixed use zones (CRN, CRT or Commercial Residential, (CR).

- Keep existing zoning for commercial properties in Long Branch that were rezoned as part of the 2013 Long Branch Sector Plan to continue supporting housing, small businesses and community spaces in Long Branch.

For property-specific draft zoning recommendations, please [visit the interactive map](#) on our website: [montgomeryplanning.org/esscp](http://montgomeryplanning.org/esscp).

### 3 | Why does the Plan recommend allowing more types of housing along major roadways and near Purple Line stations?

- Allowing a wider range of housing types helps ensure housing options that meet different needs for current and future residents.
- It gives families more options. For example, a homeowner could create a home where multiple generations—grandparents, parents, and adult children—live close together, but in separate units.
- It creates more affordable places to live. Many residents told us they're worried about rising housing costs and want ways to stay in the area. Townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes tend to cost less than single family homes in Montgomery County and create more opportunities for homeownership.

### 4 | The preliminary recommendation suggests increasing density, but what safeguards exist to ensure that existing single-family neighborhoods have adequate public facilities, and limit height and mass of buildings?

The zoning recommendations are focused on providing additional housing options within one block of a main corridor and a quarter-mile of a Purple Line station. The plan includes recommendations that limit non-residential uses and ensure an appropriate transition between existing single-family homes and any new housing through intentional height limitations (50 feet along major roads, 45 feet on neighborhood facing properties), compatibility requirements, and an overlay zone that will include additional design guidance.

As part of the master plan process, Planning staff evaluates how the Plan's recommendations will affect infrastructure and coordinates with relevant county agencies and service providers to determine if additional facilities and infrastructure will be needed to accommodate the growth anticipated in the Plan's vision.

In addition to the process that occurs with the master plan, the Planning Board only approves new development after determining that the surrounding infrastructure, such as sidewalks, roads, and schools, can meet the needs of new residents, visitors, and students. [The Growth and Infrastructure Policy \(GIP\)](#), which establishes a process for analyzing a new development's impact on public infrastructure and sets standards for determining if the infrastructure is adequate to accommodate the proposed development, guides how the Planning Board makes that determination by setting standards for evaluating public infrastructure and the impact an individual development may have on it. It also outlines how a developer can bring infrastructure up to standard so the project can proceed. Montgomery Planning initiates an update to the GIP every four years to ensure that the county is using the best tools available.

## 5 | The preliminary recommendations discuss an overlay zone. What is an overlay zone and when will the details of the overlay zone be available?

Overlay zones add additional requirements on top of existing zoning to ensure new development meets community goals. While the recommended Commercial Residential Neighborhood (CRN) Zone would allow different types of homes – like single-family, duplex, townhouses and small apartment buildings – additional rules are needed to make sure that any future homes fit in existing neighborhood conditions. These added requirements outline what uses are allowed, where buildings sit on a property, and how much of the property can be covered by a building.

The details of the overlay zone will be developed based on feedback received and shared along with the Working Draft, in Fall 2026.

## 6 | Why does the Plan recommend allowing more housing and neighborhood retail near Purple Line stations and most Bus Rapid Transit stations?

- There is not enough housing that people can afford. Housing prices are rising because there aren't enough homes in the county. The recommendations would help create the possibility for more housing – especially in places that make sense, like near transit – so people have more options. For larger properties, we've also proposed recommendations to ensure that deeply affordable units are included in the event of new development.
- We heard that you want more amenities closer to where you live. Mixed-use zoning near Purple Line and most Bus Rapid Transit stations makes it possible to add these neighborhood-serving shops in the right locations.
- We heard that you want better parks, gathering spaces and neighborhood amenities. In mixed-use Commercial Residential Town (CRT) and Commercial Residential (CR) zones, new development over 10,000 square feet or 0.5 FAR (floor area ratio) has to provide public benefits. This can help bring new parks or plazas, neighborhood services, and improvements to the sidewalks to make them wider and safer.



Purple Line Station Piney Branch Road Under Construction



Row of townhouses

## 7 | If zoning changes allow new and different types of buildings in this area, what prevents developers from simply building high-end housing that current residents can't afford?

The preliminary recommendations include zoning updates alongside housing recommendations that are meant to keep homes affordable as the area grows. This includes requiring more Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) in larger developments, deeply affordable housing for current low income residents, preserving existing affordable housing, and preventing displacement.

Developers can still build market rate housing, but these policies make sure affordable housing is included alongside it—not instead of it. The plan also recognizes that adding more homes overall helps reduce pressure on prices. When there aren't enough homes, rents and home prices rise faster and take up more of people's income, especially for lower income households. Increasing the housing supply can help ease that pressure.

## 8 | How does this plan address concerns about displacement and fears that new development will make this area unaffordable?

This plan looks at displacement from several angles. If a property is redeveloped, the plan recommends giving eligible current residents the first opportunity to return once the new housing is built. Property owners should work closely with the County's housing department (the Department of Housing and Community Affairs) and with tenants to reduce disruption, and to make sure residents get the support they need if they have to relocate temporarily.

The plan also includes strategies to make sure that new development adds to the supply of affordable housing. This includes creating deeply affordable homes for households earning less than half of the area median income, supporting the county's Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and nonprofit groups in building more affordable housing, and encouraging affordable housing on public land—especially when paired with community facilities or other public uses. All of these steps are meant to help current residents stay in their community and benefit from new investment, rather than being pushed out by it.

## Small Businesses:

### 1 | How does this plan help and protect small businesses?

This plan focuses on helping existing small businesses stay in the community and supporting new locally owned businesses, while still allowing new development to move forward. It encourages developers to keep local businesses during redevelopment by offering comparable leases, relocation assistance when needed, and space for new local businesses. It also strengthens the Long Branch Business League so it can better support and advocate for business owners, explores creating a commercial land trust to help maintain affordable commercial spaces, and promotes local

and international businesses through a program that highlights the area's unique shops and restaurants.

### 2 | How does this Plan relate to the recent Main Street designation for Long Branch?

Long Branch was recently designated as a Maryland Main Street Community, which will bring new resources to support local economic growth, business development, and community identity. The plan builds on this achievement by further strengthening the Long Branch Business League and providing more support for locally owned businesses.



## Pedestrian Safety:

### 1 | What steps are being taken to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety?

The preliminary recommendations [include several steps](#) to make walking and biking safer near the Purple Line and along major roads. These include adding more visible crosswalks, building new sidewalks and widening existing ones, shortening crossing distances, stopping traffic on wide roads at crossings so people can cross more safely, adding protected pedestrian crossings, and improving lighting so people can see and be seen.



*Pedestrian on University Boulevard*

## Environment:

### 1 | Will allowing more types of housing increase stormwater runoff or flooding in my neighborhood?

The Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan area was largely developed before modern stormwater management practices existed. As a result, many of the impervious surfaces—streets, roofs, driveways, and parking lots—were not designed to hold or slow down rainwater, allowing stormwater to flow quickly off these properties. With climate change bringing more intense and frequent storms, this runoff problem is becoming more severe.

Creating opportunities for redevelopment brings with it opportunities to add housing while also improving stormwater management, as required by county code. While runoff changes will differ from site to site, any redevelopment will improve stormwater management by adding new controls or upgrading older systems to meet today's standards.

Duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses and small apartment buildings that are similar or slightly larger in size and design to single-family homes but contain

multiple units, and do not inherently produce more runoff. What matters most is the amount of impervious surface and effectiveness of the stormwater controls on the property. County code requires an erosion and sediment control plan and a stormwater review when more than 5,000 square feet of land will be disturbed, ensuring that site-specific runoff impacts are addressed.

The preliminary recommendations also encourage using nature-based solutions when properties are developed or redeveloped. These include planting native trees and vegetation, adding bioretention areas and gardens, creating vegetated open spaces, and using permeable pavement or green roofs to help manage stormwater on-site.

In addition, the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection's RainScapes program offers rebates to property owners who install stormwater friendly features such as rain gardens, water harvesting systems, green roofs, permeable pavement, or by removing unnecessary pavement. More information is available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/property-care/rainscapes/index.html>.

*Montgomery Parks conducting stream restoration work in Long Branch*



# What's Next and Other Planning Efforts:

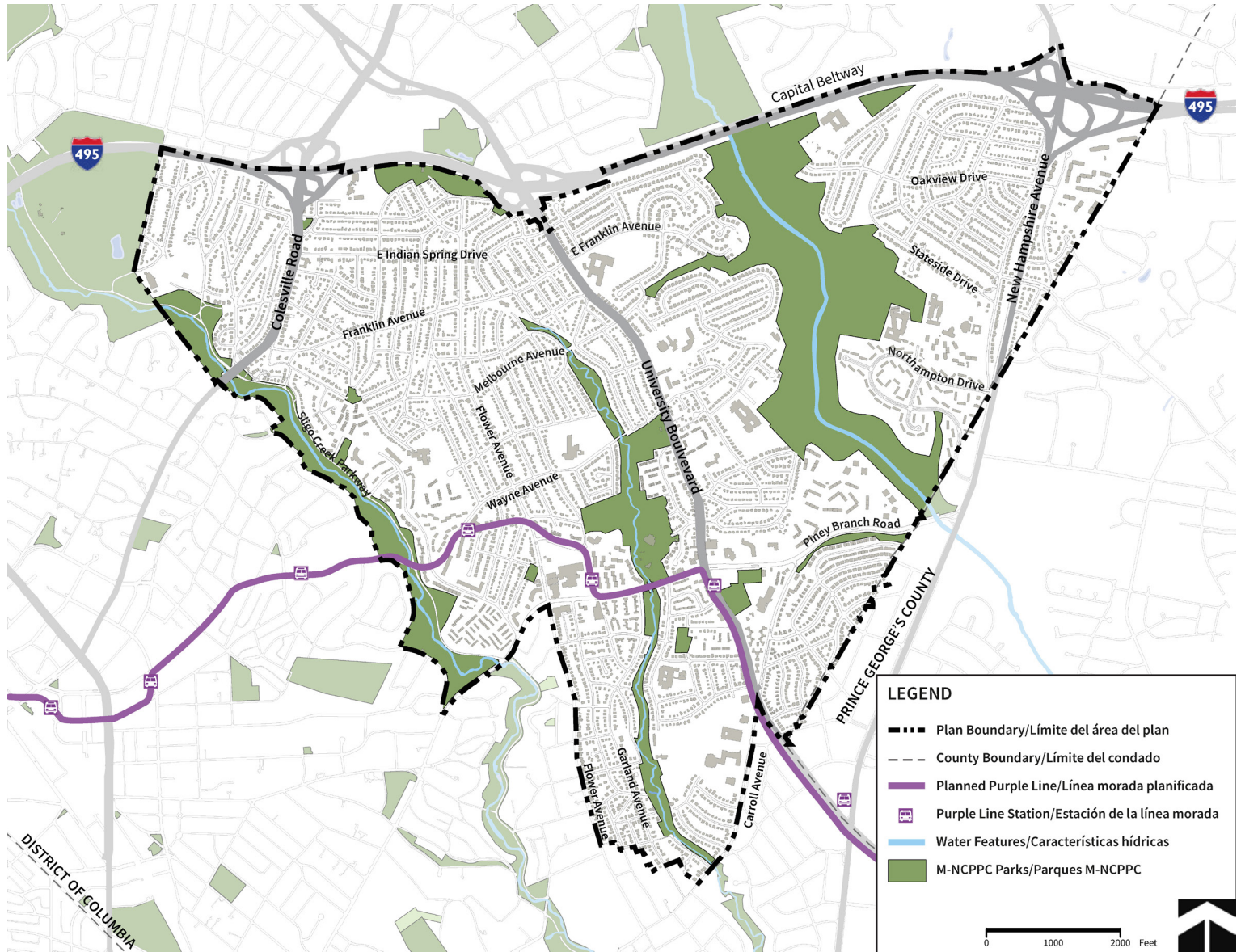
## 1 | What are the next steps for the plan and how can I share my feedback?

These are the plan's preliminary recommendations, which reflect over two years of community input, research, and guidance from county policies and planning best practices. This step in the process is a chance for residents, community members, and the Planning Board to review the ideas and tell us what needs to be changed or improved before we write the full Working Draft of the plan, which is expected in Fall 2026. You can share your feedback by taking [our online survey](#), attending upcoming events, or reaching out to the planning team at [easternsilverspring@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:easternsilverspring@montgomeryplanning.org).

## 2 | Once the plan is adopted, what happens next?

The plan is expected to be adopted in Fall 2027, after the County Council reviews and approves it. Once it's adopted, the plan becomes a guide for how the area can grow and change over time. Nothing will happen right away – changes only occur if a property owner chooses to build something new or if the County funds public projects through the Capital Improvement Program. As development and investment move forward, the plan will guide what can be built, what community amenities should be included, and how parks, streets and public spaces can be improved.

Plan Area



### 3 | How does this plan relate to Thrive Montgomery 2050?

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the county’s long-term vision for how Montgomery County grows and changes in the next 30 years. This Plan builds on Thrive’s policies – like focusing growth along major roads and near transit and building more housing – with specific recommendations for how to achieve those goals within Eastern Silver Spring, in ways that make sense for this area and what we heard through our [engagement with the community](#).

### 4 | How is this different from the University Boulevard Corridor (UBC) plan?

The [Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan](#) (ESSCP) and the [University Boulevard Corridor](#) (UBC) Plan are two distinct planning efforts, each with its own geographic area, objectives, and timeline. The UBC Plan has been approved by the Montgomery County Council and adopted by the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission. The ESSCP team has shared the preliminary recommendations, and there are still ample opportunities to comment and provide feedback.

While some themes, such as pedestrian safety, access to transit, and zoning to allow for more housing options, may overlap, the plans cover different geographic areas and follow separate public processes.

The Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan focuses on communities inside the Capital Beltway, east of Sligo Creek Parkway to the Prince George’s County Border.

### 5 | How does this plan relate to the Eastern Silver Spring Placemaking project?

During the Scope of Work phase of the Communities Plan, staff found that temporary placemaking could help test ideas for future recommendations. Placemaking means improving shared spaces so they feel welcoming and useful to the people who spend time there.

This area is a strong fit for temporary placemaking that connects communities to local amenities and to one another, while celebrating its cultural diversity. Based on community input and in partnership with the Parks Department, staff identified five locations that would benefit from these improvements. These “gathering spots” will receive temporary features that encourage social and physical connection—such as seating, interactive signs, plantings, public art, and spaces for residents to learn and engage with their community.

These installations will test ideas before they become long-term recommendations and create new opportunities for residents to share feedback and learn about local history. The five gathering spots will be installed in Spring 2026 and will stay in place for three to six months.

To follow updates on this initiative, please visit our [website](#).

Long Branch Festival 2024





**Montgomery Planning**

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