

INTRODUCTION

When Montgomery County adopted its first general plan, known as the “Wedges and Corridors Plan”, in 1964, much of our land was undeveloped. The 1964 plan – as modified by “refinements” adopted in 1969 and 1993 - embraced many of the principles and ideas that are still of value today, such as an emphasis on the preservation of the Agricultural Reserve, development of physically concentrated centers of all sizes, and encouragement of land use patterns that could be effectively served by a multi-modal transportation system. These plans helped to make the County one of the most desirable places to live and work in the United States. Our success has been built on an award-winning park system, high-quality schools, preserving our agricultural and natural resources, fostering the emergence of urban centers and mass transit, and shaping the design of attractive suburban subdivisions.

The Wedges and Corridors Plan was visionary, and its refinements were largely effective in adapting its principles and ideas to the needs of a growing population; however, today we find ourselves facing new challenges and changing circumstances. We have evolved from a bedroom community to a complex jurisdiction with major employment centers and mature residential neighborhoods than in 1964 (family living arrangements have been fairly stable since 1990). As a group, our residents are older, more diverse, and less likely to live in traditional family arrangements. We have a highly educated workforce, proximity to the nation’s capital, and a culture of openness to newcomers, but we also are struggling to attract businesses and house our residents, grappling with a legacy of racial and economic inequality, and facing the effects of climate change.

In addition, we now see that not all of the changes in our approach to planning were beneficial. For example, the 1993 refinement established the residential wedge, identified as an area for “maintaining a low-density residential character” and directed most growth to the “urban ring” and I-270 corridor. However, the removal of the eastern portion of the County as a location suitable for corridor-focused development discouraged public and private investment in this area. The establishment of the residential wedge consigned more than one-third of the County to zoning exclusively for single family homes, leaving many of our neighborhoods reliant on automobiles and disconnected from many amenities and services. These decisions, in conjunction with discriminatory land use and planning-related practices such as redlining and restrictive covenants (both created by the real estate and financial industries and then adopted by government agencies), established inequitable patterns of development that must be recognized and addressed in ways that do not compound the issues caused by displacement and gentrification.

Today the combination of rapid social, environmental, technological, demographic, and economic shifts at the national and global levels along with our new context requires us to take a clear-eyed look at our strengths and weaknesses. We have tremendous assets, but if we hope to continue to thrive, we must be prepared to make difficult decisions and take bold steps to prepare for the future. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the vehicle for assessing the implications of these shifts for land use, transportation and public infrastructure and adapting our approach to planning and growth for the next 30 years.

WHAT IS A GENERAL PLAN?

A general plan is a long-range guide for the development of a community. Every jurisdiction must adopt some form of general or “comprehensive” plan as a legal predicate for the exercise of the government’s land use and zoning powers. The purpose of a 30-year plan is not to predict and respond to a single future, but to provide broad guidance for land use decisions as we face multiple, unpredictable future opportunities and challenges that influence growth and development such as disruptions brought about

Commented [A1]: Is this correct? The residential wedge was 1/3 of the County? (doesn't appear that way on the map). And not all the residential wedge is just zoned for single family

by climate change, pandemics, or terrorist attacks as well as the consequences of innovations such as autonomous vehicles and micro transit.

Commented [A2]: the terms autonomous vehicles and microtransit are barely mentioned elsewhere in the plan

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the county's update to our general plan. It is a framework for future plans and development that defines the basic land use policies and context for all public and private development in the county. It provides direction for decisions about land use, transportation, and related issues under local government influence, but it does not by itself change zoning or other detailed land use regulations (although implementation of its recommendations would require such changes). Its recommendations also touch on the objectives and actions of other public and private entities that are responsible for implementing and providing land use related services and amenities.

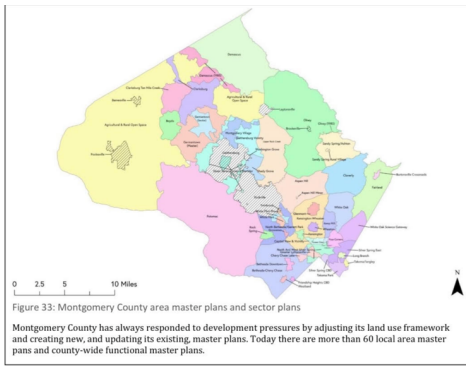
Commented [A3]: the role of municipalities is not mentioned in the plan (but they were in the 1993 version)

Thrive Montgomery 2050 does not completely abandon or reject the Wedges and Corridors concept but instead modernizes it to remain relevant. Area master plans, sector plans, and countywide functional plans will remain valid until modified pursuant to the guidance provided by this plan. Like the previous general plan its broad policy recommendations pave the way for future actions, such as amendments to other plans, policies, and development rules.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 has a 30-year time horizon, but it is designed to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. It is designed to provide long-term guiding principles and objectives that can deal with a constantly changing economic, social, and environmental landscape.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 will inform future master and functional plans. Master plans (or area master plans or sector plans) are long-term planning documents for a specific place or geographic area of the county. All master plans are amendments to the General Plan. They provide detailed land use and zoning recommendations for specific areas of the county. They also address transportation, the natural environment, urban design, historic resources, affordable housing, economic development, public facilities, and implementation techniques. Many of Thrive Montgomery 2050's recommendations cannot be implemented with a one-size-fits-all approach. Area master plans will help refine Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations and implement them at a scale tailored to specific neighborhoods.

Commented [A4]: This and the following paragraph are taken directly from p. 126 of the Sept. 2020 Working Draft. The map is included to show all current master and sector plans.



Functional plans are master plans addressing a system, such as traffic circulation or green infrastructure, or a policy, such as agricultural preservation or housing. A functional master plan amends the General Plan, but does not make land use or zoning recommendations. The Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan, and the Master Plan for Historic Preservation are examples of functional plans. New and revised functional master plans are needed to refine and implement Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations that affect county-wide policies.

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A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Thrive Montgomery 2050 is about addressing historic inequities, embracing new realities, and shifting the way we think about how the county should grow. Montgomery County has many assets and advantages. Our strengths will enable us to continue to thrive, but we must also take a hard look at where we have been, where we are going, and how we want to get there.

Montgomery County is growing more slowly than in past decades, but our population is still projected by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to increase by about 200,000 people over the next 30 years. We have little undeveloped land left to accommodate this growth, even if new construction is compact. With 85 percent of our land already developed or otherwise constrained, accommodating even the modest growth expected over the life of this plan is an ambitious undertaking. The way we think about growth needs to change. We ~~need to~~ should reconsider sites previously considered unsuitable for development, such as parking lots or the air rights over existing buildings, and find ways to use land more efficiently.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 offers a blueprint for new approaches that are needed immediately and will extend over a period of decades. These strategies ~~will aim to~~ accommodate growth in ways that make room for new residents and also improve the quality of life for the people who already live here. The plan anticipates a county that ~~will~~ may become more urban, more diverse, and more interconnected. It ~~seeks to guide~~ us to leverage growth and redevelopment to create places that are more economically competitive, foster a stronger sense of trust and inclusiveness among people from different backgrounds, and improve environmental quality and public health in the process.

Plan Framework and Overarching Objectives

Thrive Montgomery 2050 aims to create communities that offer equitable access to jobs, more housing, transportation, parks, and public spaces. Just as importantly, it can help guide the design of the built environment to strengthen the social and physical health of our residents, supporting active lifestyles and

Commented [A6]: The 200,000 added population is expected to equal about 64,000 households. There is already zoned capacity for considerable growth that has not yet been utilized. Vacant land is only part of existing capacity. This is also further acknowledged on page 33 - "the downtowns of Silver Spring and Bethesda, the new life sciences hubs anticipated in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and White Oak, and the emerging town centers in Germantown and White Flint have zoning capacity as well as physical space for tens of millions of square feet of development."

encouraging interaction and engagement. ~~It can prioritize the conservation and expanded protection of our natural resources needed for a sustainable future. This framework embraces and builds on the Wedges and Corridors plan, with a greater emphasis!~~ ~~It emphasizes on~~ the development of compact, complete communities, ~~and~~ the role of major corridors as places to grow. ~~The plan is designed to~~ ~~and the importance of space for~~ ~~integrate~~ arts and culture ~~into the fabric of~~ our community ~~and open opportunities for creative expression.~~

The ideas and recommendations in this plan are organized to achieve three overarching objectives: economic competitiveness, racial and social equity, and environmental sustainability.

Economic performance and competitiveness

Opportunities and Challenges

The county has significant concentrations in two private industry sectors: hospitality and life sciences, in addition to a strong Federal presence of offices and laboratories. These elements form a strong foundation to produce higher wage jobs and spur economic growth. Montgomery County is home to companies representing half of the market capitalization of the entire hospitality sector, and the Washington area is consistently ranked as one of the nation's top life science clusters, with I-270 as its epicenter. Local institutions such as the University of Maryland are leading ground-breaking research in emerging fields such as quantum computing.

We are also part of a dynamic regional economy with a rich mix of public institutions and private companies. Many residents of the Washington region travel to, from or through Montgomery County to reach jobs or homes in other jurisdictions within the region. The effects of decisions about housing, environmental stewardship, economic development, and other issues in any DC-area jurisdiction are felt by its neighbors. We enjoy many benefits from cooperation with our neighbors but also compete against them for opportunities, and consensus on how to address regional problems is often elusive. We need to think about Montgomery County as a part of the larger region and find ways to work more effectively with other area governments on policies and projects that will help make us all stronger.

As we work to fortify the county's economic performance, we must ~~simultaneously also~~ bolster our dominance in existing sectors, diversify our job base, improve connections to centers of employment and innovation throughout the region, and provide the kinds of infrastructure, services, and amenities that ~~will can~~ strengthen our ability to compete effectively in the future. Our quality of life depends on the ability to attract and retain employers and the employees they need.

We continue to benefit from our proximity to the nation's capital, which draws highly skilled, educated, and motivated people from all over the world, but we must also recognize that some key measures of Montgomery County's economic performance have been stagnant since the Great Recession of 2008. The total number of jobs in the county grew by five percent from 2004 to 2019, while 20 similarly sized counties across the country grew by an average of 21 percent. In addition, household income growth in the county has lagged the national average (-2 percent vs. 10 percent) and was the slowest in the region during this period. Montgomery County added jobs, albeit slowly, but growth came largely in lower-wage sectors of the economy.

How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses economic health

Thrive Montgomery 2050 ~~can~~ plays an important role in strengthening our economic competitiveness by ~~fostering the creation of~~ ~~ag the kind of~~ places where people with diverse choices want to live and work. Its recommendations

Commented [A7]: No mention of the current role or importance of small businesses for the county economy!

for land use, transportation, parks, and other public and private infrastructure lay the groundwork for economic development initiatives undertaken by other entities. For example, the county's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be aligned with Thrive Montgomery 2050's recommendations to make our neighborhoods more attractive for private development by providing high quality transit, sidewalks and a walkable grid of streets, great urban parks, and high-performing and racially integrated schools. The combination of these kinds of investments is a reliable long-term strategy for attracting workers to well-designed and planned complete communities, which in turn ~~will entice~~can attract businesses and employers to locate here.

Thrive Montgomery emphasizes that the county should support a diverse array of work environments. Re-energizing the county's commercial centers is a major goal of the plan, but so is the recognition that small offices or storefronts in Complete Communities and even home offices ~~will~~may be common workplaces in the 21st century. Different skill and education levels and linguistic, racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds infuse the local economy with the varied pool of skills, experiences, and perspectives necessary to solve problems and innovate. The Plan's compact land use pattern and walkable communities supported by an efficient transit network ~~will~~should connect the county's diverse population to economic opportunities.

Racial equity and social inclusion

Opportunities and challenges

Diversity and inclusion are essential to our economic success as well as to our ability to produce more equitable outcomes for all our residents, who deserve high quality housing, education, jobs, transportation, and recreational opportunities. The county's population has grown more diverse as a result of a steady influx of foreign-born immigrants. Montgomery County is home to some of the most culturally diverse places in the United States, including Silver Spring, Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Germantown.

But past patterns of discrimination – some intentional, some unintentional – have left many communities geographically, economically, and socially isolated. After the Civil War and the end of slavery, African Americans suffered from pervasive discrimination and exploitation in the provision of economic and educational opportunities, housing, health care, and basic public services. The resulting alienation led to the creation of self-reliant kinship communities in many parts of Montgomery County in the late 19th century. Over time, these communities suffered from lack of public investment in infrastructure such as new roads, sewer and water, schools, health clinics, and other public amenities and services. Some communities were hurt by the urban renewal policies of the 1960s. Others faced pressure to sell their houses or farms to developers for new subdivisions.

Planning decisions and real estate development practices especially aggravated these injustices for most of the 20th century. Redlining and restrictive racial covenants created geographic and economic divisions that have left a legacy of injustice, that not only separated people by neighborhood or community, but also barred Black Americans from building wealth (the type of wealth used to invest in higher education, start businesses, and pass to heirs). The effects of these efforts to separate people by race and class continue to be felt today. More recently, disinvestment from and abandonment of neighborhoods previously considered highly desirable, combined with the suburbanization of poverty, have created new geographic divisions and barriers to equity and inclusion. The updates to the Wedges and Corridor plan's focus on the I-270 corridor

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and related planning decisions exacerbated this problem by discouraging growth in the East County, focusing public and private investment to the west.

Impacts of past practices

Today communities with high concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities also show lagging median household incomes, ~~not because of their race or ethnicity but because,~~ financial precarity due to low wage jobs, high rates of being uninsured, declining business starts and lack of housing are experienced to a greater degree as a result of past and institutionalized discriminatory practices. Not surprising is the resulting gaps in quality-of-life indicators [can be] seen among too many Black, Hispanic, and Asian residents.

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This separation of neighborhoods along lines defined by race and income has important consequences for access to educational opportunities and the life prospects of our county's children. In 2019, three-quarters of Black, Hispanic, and English-learning students in Montgomery County Public Schools – along with more than 80 percent of all low-income students in the system – were enrolled in high-poverty-focus schools. By comparison, more than two-thirds of all white, Asian, and multi-racial students were enrolled in low- poverty schools.

As we seek a future that is more equitable and inclusive, improved access to infrastructure and amenities in racially, socially, and economically isolated areas will not be enough. We also must facilitate work toward the integration of neighborhoods by race and income, across all ages. Increasing the share of racially and economically mixed neighborhoods and schools across all parts of the county is critical to ensure that the inequities of the past will not be perpetuated in the future.

In parallel with steps to reduce inequity in the geographic distribution of resources and opportunities, Montgomery County ~~must should~~ work to build a shared sense of purpose that can help strengthen efforts to promote respect for diversity, demonstrate the value of inclusion, and build a foundation for greater trust. This concept, often described by academics under the umbrella term "social capital," can pay dividends not only in sustaining support for racial and social justice but in bolstering civic capacity more broadly.

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How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses racial equity and inclusion

In this regard, decisions about land use, transportation, and public infrastructure can play an important role in building a sense of community. Different measures of social capital, including trust in public and private institutions, the planning process, political participation, whether neighbors know each other, and other indicia of connection and cohesion are influenced by qualities of the built environment. The design of our communities can greatly influence levels of community cohesion and social interaction. Creating social capital requires the built environment to encourage and make it easier for people to meet others and engage in activities. For this reason, Thrive Montgomery 2050 emphasizes the roles streets, parks, and public spaces play in creating a physical environment where a sense of community can flourish.

Advancing racial equity through just planning policies and public investments in underserved communities, promoting the racial and economic integration of neighborhoods, and focusing on the potential for the design of communities to help build social trust and inclusion while encouraging civic participation and participation in the planning process are among the most significant elements of Thrive Montgomery 2050. Thrive Montgomery 2050 strives to create racially integrated and just communities. Like economic competitiveness and

environmental sustainability, policies designed to advance racial and social equity are integrated into every part of this Plan.

Commented [A11]: The advancement of racial and social equity is not as fully developed as it could be in later chapters. Attention also needs to be paid to seniors, the disabled, and families.

Environmental resilience

Opportunities and challenges

The Wedges and Corridors Plan laid the groundwork for the adoption of forward-thinking policies that emphasized land preservation for resource conservation and agriculture, protection of our streams, forests, and trees and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. One-third of the county’s land is now protected within the Agricultural Reserve and another 13.8 percent is under the stewardship of the Parks Department. Along with aggressive improved stormwater and forest conservation regulations, these efforts have established an initial -strong framework for the protection of natural resources. However additional work is still needed in these areas, including increased attention to localized flooding and loss of mature tree canopy.

Despite these policies, the county cannot avoid the impact of global climate change. Precipitation in northeastern United States increased by 55 percent between 1958 and 2016. This trend has meant more frequent violent weather events like the flash flooding that occurred in July 2019, when the D.C. region received a month’s worth of rain in a single day, causing streams to rise 10 feet in less than an hour, inundating vehicles, businesses, roads and closing the Metrorail system. The past decade has also been the hottest 10-year period in the region’s recorded history, with rising hospitalizations due to extreme heat impacts. Public health issues are exacerbated by climate change and intertwined with the quality of the built and natural environment. If these and other effects of climate change are not addressed in land use policies, the adverse effects of a changing climate will be felt most acutely by low-income residents and people of color, who are will be likely to suffer a disproportionate share of the damage to real property and personal health due to past and current patterns of discrimination.

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Montgomery County has made progress in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, a key contributor to climate change, but has much farther to go to meet its goal of eliminating these emissions by 2035. It will require significant changes in both the transportation and building sectors of the County. For transportation, the County should contemplate policies to facilitate a transition to zero-emissions vehicles (or other zero-emissions technologies). For buildings (both existing and new construction), the County should consider a combination of energy conservation measures and clean energy generation (such as rooftop solar PV). Together, buildings and transportation are responsible for more than 90 percent of our county’s greenhouse gas emissions, making reduced reliance on driving and more energy-efficient buildings and compact development patterns essential to meeting our climate objectives.

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How Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses environmental resilience

Thrive Montgomery’s focus on a compact form of development with a mix of uses supported by transportation systems that make alternatives to driving practical and attractive are essential pieces of any comprehensive strategy to fight climate change. A stronger focus on walking, biking, and transit infrastructure will be crucial, but the significance of mixed uses and compact development in reducing driving is equally also important. The environmental benefits of dense, walkable neighborhoods dovetail with the increasing preference across age groups to live in walkable places served by a mix of uses and amenities.

Commented [A15]: Evidence?

Of course, not even the most sustainable transportation planning and growth strategies will be able to resolve every environmental challenge facing the county. Thrive Montgomery 2050 builds on the tradition of robust conservation and protection of the natural environment. It prioritizes the expansion of equitable distribution of natural green infrastructure throughout the County. It supports alternative clean energy generation, distributed energy, grid modernization, improved composting and food waste recovery, and advances in other circular economy initiatives. And it proposes a series of strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change and minimize pollution. The plan also anticipates the need for public and private infrastructure to be made more resilient to withstand more severe weather and protect us from the effects of environmental degradation from sources that are beyond our ability to control.

Commented [A16]: need specific mention of drinking water resources

Thrive Montgomery 2050 was drafted in coordination with the county's Climate Action Plan (CAP). While Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a high-level land use document that focuses on long- range planning and policies to guide the physical development of the county, the CAP recommends specific actions to be taken in the near-term to achieve the goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 and to mitigate or adapt to the effects of increased heat and flooding, high winds, and drought. Thrive Montgomery 2050 incorporates a wide range of recommendations related to climate change and its connection to land use, transportation, and parks. To effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow the effects of climate change will require "greening" of our electricity grid through a significant increase in clean energy generation in the County, likely employing both large-scale solar PV projects where feasible and smaller distributed solar PV installations. The Planning and Parks Departments also will implement recommendations in the CAP that are within the scope of the M-NCPPC's responsibilities. Together these plans will should create a comprehensive approach to climate change at the local level.

Other important objectives

The plan also addresses other important goals that complement the three overarching objectives discussed above.

Improving public health and encouraging active lifestyles

The length and quality of human life are strongly influenced by both the natural and built environment. In 2018, more than three-fifths of adults in Montgomery County were overweight or obese. Five of the seven zip codes in the county with household incomes in the lowest quartile are also among the zip codes with the lowest average life spans. And even though low-income residents and people of color are more likely to suffer from negative health outcomes for several reasons, all residents can benefit from a more active lifestyle supported by an emphasis on transit, walking, and biking, and easy access to parks and recreational opportunities and nature. The importance of healthy living for seniors and the disabled will also remain a significant area of focus as our ageing population continues to grow. Active lifestyles supported by improved housing choices in compact, complete communities can serve to improve public health for all, while simultaneously reducing the ecological footprint of human activity.

Elevating quality of design and highlighting role of arts and culture

The Wedges and Corridors Plan envisioned a variety of living environments and encouraged "imaginative urban design" to avoid sterile suburban sprawl. Nonetheless, like every plan, that plan was a product of its time. It relied on design approaches that were typical of the 1960s, emphasizing the convenience of driving and rigid separation of land uses.

Good design is not a luxury but a critical economic development tool. Businesses and workers ~~now~~ today prefer walkable, accessible, amenity rich, mixed-use places that facilitate the interaction and exchange of ideas that feed innovation. A ~~greater-large~~ share of residents, across all ages, prefer walkable, transit-rich neighborhoods too. Combined with the lack of undeveloped land far from transit, these forces ~~dictate-suggest~~ a shift toward redevelopment and infill that converts “parking lots to places” near existing or planned transit lines and incorporating walkable form in future projects including those on properties already zoned for development and in the pipeline.

Commented [A17]: This doesn't say "a majority" so I'm assuming greater is relative – that is, more now than earlier.

Our arts and culture sector, taken as a whole, would be the county’s sixth-largest employer. The sector taps into creative, social, and economic networks, and its practitioners have developed tools to share stories, encourage empathy, and empower creative exchange. Supporting a healthy and diverse arts and culture ecosystem ~~will~~ may not only enrich the lives of our residents and bring us closer together but also ~~will~~ help attract talent and spur innovation.

URBANISM AS ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

Thrive Montgomery 2050 applies the principles of urbanism – a term this plan uses as shorthand for a set of ideas about what makes human settlements successful – to guide their future growth. Urbanism draws on the lessons of thousands of years of experimentation and evolution in the design and development of villages, towns, and cities to apply the ideas that have proven to endure as the foundation for adaptable and resilient communities everywhere. An urbanism-focused approach to the development of land and related infrastructure (such as roadways, transit systems, and parks) emphasizes the value of: (1) a compact form of development; (2) diverse uses and building types; and (3) transportation networks that take advantage of and complement these two land use strategies, at all densities and scales.

This approach calls for focusing growth in a limited number of locations rather than dispersing it, avoiding “sprawl.” It means encouraging in appropriate areas the agglomeration of different uses such as retail, housing, and office space as well as diversity within each type of use. For example, a variety of housing sizes and types near employment and retail can helps to ensure that people of diverse income levels can live and work in proximity to each other. This over time can produces more racially and socioeconomically integrated neighborhoods and schools, providing and more equitable access to economic opportunities, public services, and amenities. It also emphasizes the importance of walking, biking and transit and reduces reliance on cars.

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Of course, other factors – particularly quality and thoughtfulness in the design of buildings, streets, neighborhoods, ~~and~~ public spaces, and the incorporation of nature into urban areas – are also essential. Combined with the fundamentals of urbanism, design excellence and biophilic design can help create a sense of place, facilitate social interaction, ~~and~~ encourage active lifestyles, and contribute to environmental resiliency. Compact development can also provides other advantages including efficient use of scarce land, more natural areas for recreation and preservation, and reduced expense for building and maintaining infrastructure.

These principles of urbanism are equally relevant to rural, suburban, and urban areas. In fact, the preservation of land for agriculture in a place like Montgomery County depends on concentrating development in urban centers instead of permitting sprawl, and even suburban and rural areas benefit from a mix of uses and housing types – at appropriately calibrated intensity and scale – to serve their needs.

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With attention to both the functional and aesthetic aspects of design, urbanism is not only consistent with a commitment to maintaining the best of what has made Montgomery County attractive in the past but

is **necessary-helpful** to preserve and build on these qualities while **correcting-addressing the challenges of** auto-centric planning and its effects on the environment, racial equity, and social cohesion.

HOW THRIVE MONTGOMEY 2050 WAS DEVELOPED

Organization of the Plan

Related to the three primary objectives of economic competitiveness, racial and social equity, and environmental sustainability, **the plan is organized into six chapters:**

- Compact Growth: corridor-focused development
- Complete Communities: mix of uses and form
- Design, Arts, and Culture: investing and building community
- Transportation and Communication Networks: connecting people, places, and ideas
- **Affordable and Attainable Housing: more of everything**
- Parks and Recreation for an Increasingly Urban and Diverse Community: active and social

The ideas in each chapter are intended to complement each other and outline approaches calibrated for varying scales of planning. The first three chapters move from the countywide scale (Compact Growth) to the district and neighborhood scale (Complete Communities) and finally to the details of individual blocks and buildings (Design, Arts, and Culture). The chapter on Compact Growth describes a countywide approach that aims to concentrate development along corridors to maximize the efficiency of infrastructure, preserve land, and focus investment. The Complete Communities chapter covers strategies for **individual neighborhoods and districts** that **can** build on the foundation of a compact footprint for growth by incorporating a mix of uses, building types, and lot sizes **likely to** create livable places that are accessible and inviting to people with a variety of income levels, household sizes, and lifestyles. The Design, Arts and Culture chapter discusses the finer-grained analysis of **current** design concepts applicable to blocks and individual development sites, the architecture of public and private buildings, the landscape of plazas and public spaces, and elements of street design.

These concepts are reinforced and supported by the remaining three chapters, which address specific topics related to development and public infrastructure. The **Affordable and Attainable Housing chapter** recommendations are intended to diversify our housing stock across incomes, building types and geography. The Transportation and Communication Networks chapter outlines the multi-modal and digital infrastructure required to support compact growth and the creation of walkable, well-designed complete communities as well as the communication networks in the county. The Parks and Recreation chapter describes the role of public and privately-owned parks and gathering spaces in encouraging social interaction, promoting a healthy lifestyle through physical activity, and mitigating the effects of climate change through environmental stewardship. Each chapter explains how its recommendations serve the broader objectives of Thrive Montgomery 2050 and provides **categories metrics** to measure progress in implementing the chapter's ideas. No plan that is designed to provide guidance over a period of decades can anticipate every difficult problem, attractive opportunity, or useful idea that may emerge, so these **metrics-categories** should be used to assess new proposals as well as to measure the success or failure of the plan's recommendations over time.

Commented [A20]: There should be dedicated chapters on the natural environment and the economy.

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Commented [A22]: how are neighborhoods and districts being defined?

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A plan based on community input

This Plan is the result of community feedback and collaboration over more than two years of extensive outreach by Montgomery Planning. Planners reached out to a wide spectrum of stakeholders including students; homeowners and civic associations; non-profit advocacy groups and community-based organizations; and representatives of large and small businesses. The outreach effort was designed to emphasize engagement with residents who will live longest with the recommendations made in this plan – Millennials and Gen Xers and high school and college students— as well as members of racial and ethnic groups who historically have been left out of land use and planning processes.

Thrive Montgomery 2050’s community engagement activities were implemented through four phases beginning in summer 2019. Each of these phases—Excite, Educate, Engage, and Endorse—included specific objectives and communication and engagement strategies.

Equitable Communications and Community Outreach

For historically underrepresented audiences – such as Latinos, African Americans, foreign born residents, renters, and small business owners-- outreach focused on connecting with community influencers who have established trust within their communities. This included co-hosting listening sessions and events, providing content for events and communications, and engaging their organizations with educational tools.

From June 2019 through April 2021, Montgomery Planning organized multiple in-person and virtual engagement activities to imagine what life in Montgomery County ~~will~~ may be like in 2050 and what ~~will~~ might be needed to ensure that we thrive in the decades to come. Planners participated in more than 180 meetings with community members and organizations; created and distributed a “Meeting-in-a-Box” for residents and organizations to host their own discussions about Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the county’s future; created an online quiz soliciting feedback on values and priorities for the plan; built a dedicated website, thrivemontgomery2050.com (and MontgomeryProspera.com in Spanish), with a wealth of materials in multiple languages and distributed tens of thousands of postcards and e-newsletters to reach community members across the county. ~~Montgomery Planning estimates that these efforts resulted in interactions with approximately 12,000 people.~~

Thrive Montgomery 2050 looked at the largest minority languages where limited English proficiency was greater than 10% and created materials and advertising in multiple languages.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Engagement by the Numbers

- Over 180 meetings with community
- 1,635 people completed online Thrive Montgomery 2050 Quiz
- 1,300 Meeting-in-a-Box postcards sent to HOAs + Community Associations
- 91,000 postcards to equity emphasis areas
- ThriveMontgomery.com – 102,641 web views
- E-letter signup – 1,384, with open rate of 40% (double industry average)
- Estimated participation – approximately 12,000

Top five topics that received the most comments:

1. Public transit
2. Affordable housing
3. Parks

Commented [A24]: This entire section is problematic. Clearly, the correspondence Council members have received from citizens across the county shows dissatisfaction with the outreach and engagement effort. Complaints have been expressed by minority groups, seniors, and the disabled. It is laudable that there was outreach to the young but there is a well of experience among other groups that was not tapped. As well, much of the “outreach,” like sending postcards, was one-way and neither required nor elicited interaction with members of the public. This plan reflects those failures to engage completely.

Commented [A25]: postcards sent out do not equal active engagement

Commented [A26]: which industry?

Commented [A27]: We do not believe this number is adequately supported by the data provided. There is no analysis of repeat interactions with the same individuals at meeting/web views/community meetings or of how many postcards of any sort elicited responses.

Commented [A28]: It’s unclear how comments were generated or counted - from written testimony, oral testimony, meetings, or informal gatherings like pint with a planner?

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4. Walkability

5. Education/Schools

