



# Thrive 2050 Fact Sheet

The organizations listed above have come together as supporters of the Planning Board draft of Thrive 2050 to present this fact sheet for community members to better understand the content of the draft. Please share this information with your friends and neighbors!

## What is Thrive 2050?

Thrive 2050 is Montgomery County's general plan update. It is a high-level, visionary document that provides a blueprint for how and where the county will grow over the next 30+ years. Thrive touches issues of housing, land use, transportation, parks, and more. On its own, it doesn't change any laws or zoning, but Thrive will help the county make decisions in the future about laws and zoning, influence the Planning Department's work program, and be a framework for future master plans.



Image from Montgomery Planning



## Why do we need a new general plan?

The general plan was last comprehensively updated in 1969, and our county has changed and grown a lot since then. The way we've grown has worsened climate change by exacerbating sprawl and entrenching existing racial and economic segregation that was created through redlining, zoning, and restrictive covenants. The county's demographics are also significantly

different than even a few decades ago. Over the next 30 years, our built environment must adapt to an aging population, smaller household sizes, and increased multigenerational living.

Where we live and how we get around is core to everything — it impacts our health; social networks; and access to jobs, food, daycare,

schools, and more. By adjusting how we grow to use land more efficiently and make more neighborhoods affordable to more families, we can improve sustainability, inclusivity, quality of life, and access to opportunity for everyone.



**What is Thrive's vision for the future?**

Thrive envisions a future where community planning and development contribute to a more sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous county.



*Image from Montgomery Planning*

The county will the design of the built environment to strengthen the social and physical health of our residents, supporting active lifestyles and encouraging interaction and engagement. This vision builds on the original 1964 general plan, with a greater emphasis on the development of compact, complete communities and the role of corridors as places to grow, while preserving natural resources and the Agricultural Reserve.

**Major Themes:**

<p>Restore East County and east-west growth corridors for equity, connectivity, and competitiveness</p>	<p>Growth should be compact and provide a mix of uses to support easily walking and biking to everyday needs within a short period of time</p>	<p>Focus growth in centers of activity and along growth corridors where there is existing infrastructure</p>
<p>Add more market-rate and income-restricted housing to make living in the county possible for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds</p>	<p>Create well-designed places that encourage social interaction</p>	<p>Improve access to and creating more parks for an increasingly urban and diverse community</p>



## What does the plan hope to accomplish?

Each chapter in Thrive is looked at through the lenses of economic health, equity, and environmental resilience, since each of these intersect with the plan’s various topic areas. These goals are woven throughout the entire plan.

**Economic Health**

◀ ..... ▶

“We must simultaneously 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 strengthen our ability to compete effectively in the future.”

**Equity**

◀ ..... ▶

“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 the integration of neighborhoods by race and income. 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.”

**Environmental Resilience**

◀ ..... ▶

“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 development patterns essential to meeting our climate objectives.”

## What does Thrive mean for me and my neighborhood?

If Thrive's vision were fully implemented, imagine a world in which you can easily find a home that fits in your budget and meets your households' needs. Your neighborhood reflects Montgomery County's rich diversity and has access to world-class parks, small businesses, shops, and more. Nearby jobs and schools offer pathways to new opportunities. There are multiple safe, convenient, and reliable travel options to get you where you need to go.

Land use changes, infrastructure upgrades, and transit improvements are all long-term goals — which is why Thrive is a vision for the year 2050 — so it's unlikely you'll see major changes in the short-term.



Images from *Congress for New Urbanism* (above) and *DEPICTION, LLC* (below)



## How will this change what can be built in my neighborhood?

Thrive does not change any zoning laws, but it lays the groundwork for future changes that will have their own deliberative legislative process with opportunities for public input and outreach. The plan envisions allowing for more diverse housing types, such as duplexes and triplexes, especially in neighborhoods near high-quality transit stations; encouraging neighborhood retail opportunities; and making streets safer for all modes of transportation.



Image from *Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority*

The Planning Board is separately working on a package of zoning amendments that would implement some aspects of this vision, inspired by a zoning amendment from Councilmember Will Jawando that was introduced in December 2020 and a draft zoning amendment from Councilmember Hans Riemer. These proposals largely deal with duplexes, triplexes, and quads. Those zoning proposals will be considered by the County Council after Thrive 2050 is completed and will be accompanied by additional community outreach.

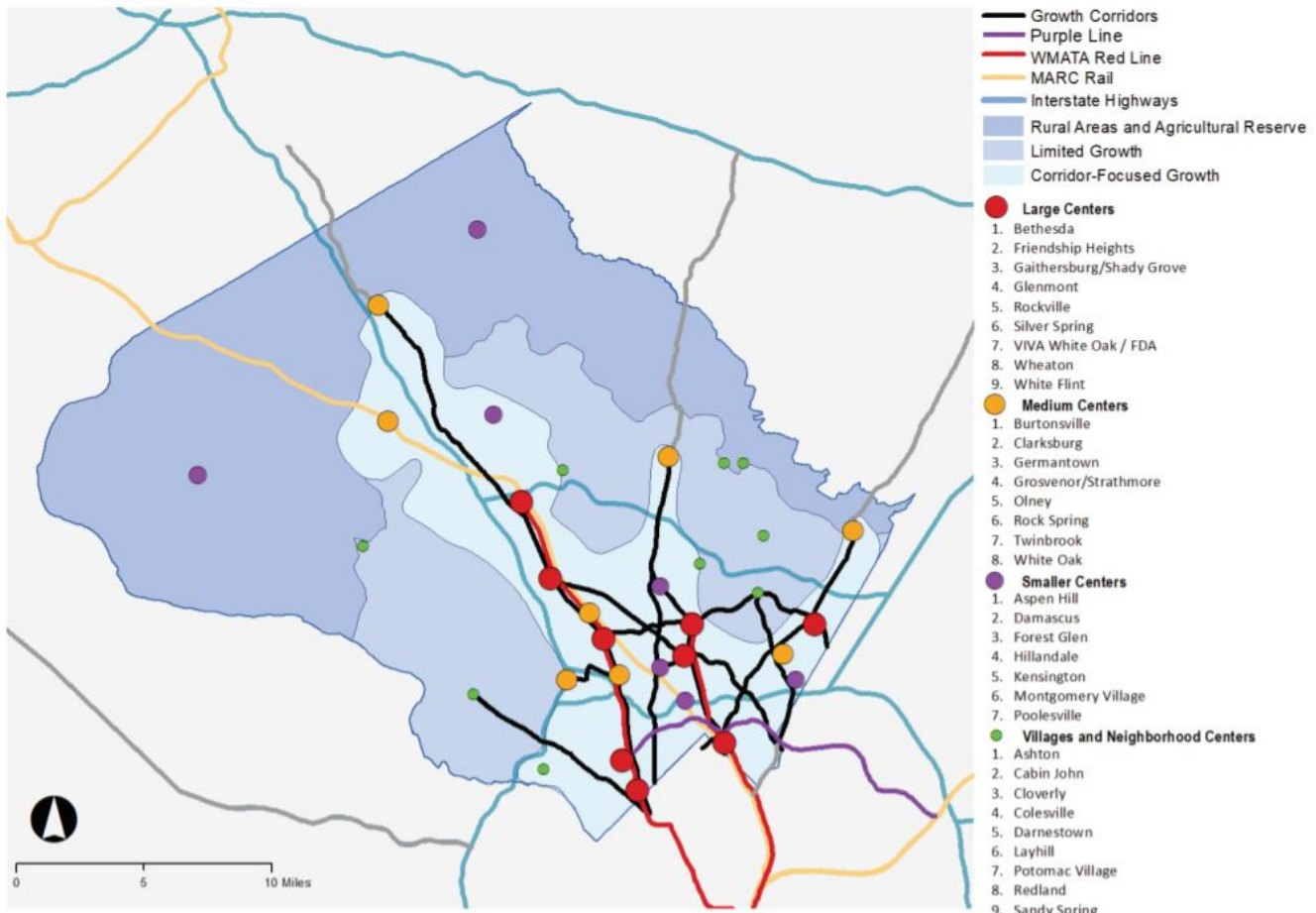
## How will Thrive combat climate change?

- **Lower transportation greenhouse gas emissions** through neighborhoods designed to make it easier to bike, walk, and use transit, and to take shorter trips when driving
- **Incorporate climate resilience into infrastructure** by calling for improved stormwater management, increased urban tree canopy, habitat restoration, and working hand-in-hand with the [Climate Action Plan](#)
- **More efficient land use** to preserve and increase our remaining forests, greenspaces, and farms

## How will Thrive further racial equity and social justice?

- **More diversity in our neighborhoods** by allowing for a range of housing types to meet a diversity of housing needs and price points, giving people more choices in where to live
- **Designate growth centers and corridors in historically disinvested communities** to bring public infrastructure, like parks and libraries, and private businesses investment
- **Support affordable housing programs** so that families of all incomes can access the county's high quality transit, jobs, and amenities

## Thrive 2050 Growth Map



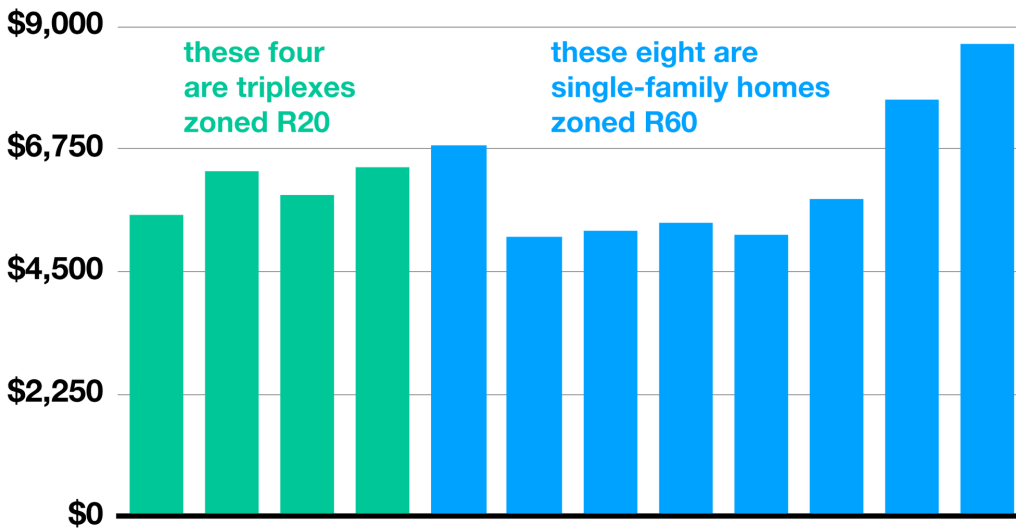
The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Diagram illustrates growth concepts and potential centers of activity, but the diagram should be considered in the context of the Compact Growth and Complete Communities chapters. The centers of activity shown are not exhaustive of all existing or potential centers.

Image from Montgomery Planning

## How would changes to zoning impact my property taxes?

Expanding what property owners can choose to be built on their properties through zoning changes will not directly impact property taxes. Property taxes are determined based on the property's assessed value. Assessed value is based on: 1) current land use and 2) market conditions of properties with similar uses. Zoning changes to make it easier to build multifamily housing, such as duplexes or triplexes, would not trigger higher assessments for existing single family homes because they are still currently single family homes. The tax rate also does not fluctuate based on the potential land use.

On this Silver Spring block are **12 homes of a similar size and age**. Some are **single-family homes** and some are **triplexes**. They have **different zoning but similar property tax bills** because Montgomery County treats them the same—as homes.



@justupthepike | Data from Montgomery County Tax Record, 2021

The price of single-family homes in Montgomery County is rising very quickly due to limited supply and high demand, which can lead to higher assessed values and higher property taxes. By allowing for more housing to be built in these high-demand neighborhoods, we can try to slow the rate of increase.

## Do we have enough infrastructure to accommodate this amount of growth?

As in the past, Montgomery County will use increased tax revenue from new residents and businesses to build the infrastructure that supports our needs. While the county has not always invested in communities equitably, Thrive serves as a guidebook to help the county's elected leaders make decisions that help us to

prioritize limited resources in a way that is sustainable and equitable, but those decisions are ultimately up to elected leaders and to the community to hold them accountable.

Additionally, Montgomery County has an adequate public facilities ordinance, which is

updated every four years, and deals with the adequacy of schools, transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure. This is now called the Growth and Infrastructure Policy. Finally, national research has shown that more compact transit-oriented communities save on infrastructure costs and generate more tax revenue per acre to cover the costs of services.



**What does Thrive say about...?**



*Image from Montgomery Planning*

**Affordable Housing**



“Increase the number of income-restricted affordable housing units, especially for low-income households”

**Agricultural Reserve**



“Preserve and enhance the Agricultural Reserve and manage the areas designated within the footprint for a rural pattern of development for the benefit of the entire county”

**Gentrification**



“Develop targeted strategies to minimize gentrification and displacement while promoting integration and avoiding the concentration of poverty”

**Parks and Green Space**



“Prioritize acquisition of land for parks in urban centers and other intensely developed places along growth corridors and in Complete Communities”

**Stormwater**



“Bring areas built out in an era with little or no environmental regulations up to robust standards for stormwater management and other state-of-the-practice environmental standards that not only meet but exceed our current regulatory requirements.”

**Single-Family Zoning**



“The preservation and protection of neighborhoods dedicated exclusively to detached single-family houses has left residents disconnected from retail and other services, encouraged the construction of stand-alone public facilities, and perpetuated the inefficient use of land.”

**Planning for Cars**



“The point of this plan’s emphasis on supporting alternatives to automobile travel is not to eliminate driving, but to make short trips around town by bicycle or bus safe and appealing.”

## How was the plan developed?

The Montgomery County Planning Department and Planning Board created the draft of Thrive 2050. The process began in 2019. Rather than holding several large community charrettes, staff members opted to meet people where they were, such as by doing on-the-street outreach at community festivals and events, and presenting at meetings of community organizations. This helped the Planning staff receive more diverse feedback.

Much of the outreach happened prior to the March 2020 pandemic, although outreach continued virtually. Most of the comments were related to public transit, affordable housing, parks, and walkability, and the outreach informed the overall direction and specifics of the plan's various drafts. Learn more in Thrive's [Outreach Appendix](#).

- 1.1+ million reached through digital ads + 1.4+ million views on outdoors/transit ads
- 1,500+ survey respondents
- 32 presentations to community groups
- 18 one-on-one conversations + 6 meetings
- 16 community events
- 5 youth engagement workshops

The Planning Board held a public hearing on the Planning Department staff's draft, where there were over 80 speakers. Over 60 of those speakers were supportive of the staff's initial draft. The staff's draft was then reviewed by the Planning Board through a series of ten public work sessions, spanning December 2020 through March 2021. The Planning Board's draft of the plan was approved in April 2021. Throughout this process, Planning Department staff have continued to meet with community members and organizations.

## What is the process for approving the plan?

The County Council reviews and approves the Planning Board's draft of Thrive 2050 in a legislative process the same as a bill, master plan, or zoning amendment. The Council held two public hearings in June 2021 with over 90 speakers. The plan is currently being reviewed by the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) committee. The work sessions began in July 2021 and continue into October 2021. The full County Council will review the PHED committee's draft and vote on the final version of the plan.



## Where can I learn more?

We encourage you to [read the plan](#) for yourself! You can also learn more on the Planning Board's [website](#) and [blog](#).

If you have any questions, you can reach out to the County Council (find out who they are [here](#)) or the Planning Department (Khalid Afzal at [khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org)).

## In our own words

For more information, check out these organizations' testimony on Thrive 2050.

- [Audubon Naturalist Society](#) (learn more about ANS's work on Thrive [here](#))
- [Coalition for Smarter Growth](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland](#)
- [League of Women Voters of Montgomery County](#)
- [Montgomery Housing Alliance](#)

## What could be improved?

You'll notice that we all support Thrive, but think that it can be further refined and be even bolder on certain issues! Below are a few select areas where certain organizations think the plan can be strengthened.

- **Subsidized, income-restricted housing:** The plan talks about the need to invest in affordable housing, but Montgomery Housing Alliance feels that Thrive can take an even stronger position on housing issues to ensure that neighborhoods are affordable to households of all incomes. Coalition for Smarter Growth builds off this point by saying Thrive should explicitly state that housing investment should be targeted in higher income areas to further racial and economic diversity.
- **Renter protections:** Thrive can be even stronger on widening what affordability means to also include renters, a major and growing population in our county. Organizations like Jews United for Justice would like to see the plan include metrics for eviction rates and the percentage of housing cost burdened households as a measure of success in affordability, as well as add in previously included language on renters' rights.
- **Name all our activity centers:** Thrive's growth map identifies the transit and job centers where we should focus growth and investment to create more complete communities. Coalition for Smarter Growth has asked that Takoma Park, Long Branch, Takoma-Langley Crossroads, Lyttonsville, and Chevy Chase Lake also be listed as activity centers.
- **Climate resilience:** Montgomery County is at high-risk for flooding and heat events due to climate change. Groups like Audubon Naturalist Society would like to see solutions like stormwater management, forest protections, and urban tree canopies strengthened in the plan.