

Thrive Montgomery 2050

Draft County General Plan Calls for Increased Density

Residents Encouraged to Submit Comments to County Council by June 29

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Summarized

Thrive Montgomery 2050 (or “Thrive” for short) is Montgomery County’s general plan update. It is the blueprint for how and where the County will grow over the next 30+ years. On its own, Thrive does not modify any laws, but it sets the policy agendas for the County Council and County Planning Department, and will impact all future Master & Sector Plans.

The second of two County Council Public Hearings is scheduled for June 29 and **residents should voice their opinions on Thrive directly to the County Council**. A recording of the council’s June 17 hearing is available at <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/ondemand/index.html>.

Six Components of This Transformational Plan

There are six, interrelated components of Thrive: Compact Growth Corridor Focused Development; Complete Communities; Design, Arts & Culture; Transportation & Communication Networks; Affordable & Attainable Housing; Parks & Recreation for Urban and Diverse Communities.

In brief, Thrive promotes compact growth, which means increased residential housing in 32 designated “activity centers” and along designated “growth corridors”. The intent is to redevelop these 32 activity centers into “complete communities” that would be walkable, contain varied retail and housing options, public facilities, and open spaces. These 32 activity centers would be connected along corridors with more public transit options.

One of the driving principles of Thrive is the presumption that the County must build 63,000 new housing units by 2040 and that they must be in existing neighborhoods to avoid sprawl, minimize environmental impacts, and support healthy social interaction. If successfully implemented, Thrive will be transformational for Montgomery County including incorporated municipalities such as the Village.

Thrive Calls for Increased Density in Communities Near Transit

Thrive’s call to allow multi-family housing to be built in existing single-family neighborhoods could result in one of the most significant impacts of Thrive in existing residential communities. Thrive proposes to meet the demand for more housing (and more housing types) by adding multi-family housing to existing single-family neighborhoods. This Thrive goal has already spawned two proposals by County Councilmembers Jawando and Riemer for zoning changes that would facilitate the construction of multi-family housing in single-family neighborhoods by right (i.e., by just filing for a permit). It has also led to a County Council request for comprehensive Planning Board recommendations on zoning changes to permit multi-family housing in single-family neighborhoods.

The County Planning Department initially referred to the multi-family housing types that are being considered for single-family neighborhoods (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings) as “Missing Middle Housing” (or MMH for short). But because MMH emphasizes the concept of constructing house-scale buildings that are compatible with existing homes, the County Planning Board has opted to expand beyond those concepts so that different multi-family housing types can be offered at different price points. The term now being used is “Attainable Housing”.

County officials acknowledge that these new housing units will not be “affordable housing”, but instead will sell or rent at prevailing market rates. For our neighboring municipality, the Town of Chevy Chase, the current estimated market rate for a triplex is \$875,000+ and for a duplex \$1,237,000+. Please refer to the Town website to listen to their April 8 Forum for more details. For the past two

months, the County Planning Department has been developing its recommendations on the types of multi-family housing that should be allowed in existing single-family neighborhoods.

The Planning Department Staff presented its Attainable Housing recommendations to the Planning Board during its meeting on June 24. The Planning Staff is proposing that duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes be allowed by right on all R-60 zoned lots and could be built on a single lot or two lots combined. The final [Planning Staff recommendations](#) for updating residential zoning were released June 17. To view a recording of the Planning Staff presentation and the subsequent Public Testimony, visit:

https://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=7&clip_id=2433 (scroll to minute 4:08:57)

The Village has joined a coalition with 25 other communities across the County to communicate questions and concerns about Thrive. The Coalition has issued two statements: one about the proposed policies and another about the process. Residents are invited to [read the latest letter from the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Neighborhood Coalition](#), which will be sent to the County Council on June 28, 2021. Also, residents are urged to [read County Executive Elrich's letter to the County Council](#), dated June 10, 2021, which is a strong statement of fundamental problems with Thrive and recommends that it be rethought.

Please Use Your Voice!

We encourage residents to provide comments on Thrive by June 29, either directly to the County Council (email addresses listed below) or during one of the “Emails with Ellen” sessions being hosted by the Town of Chevy Chase. Also, below is a list of issues and concerns raised by the Coalition for your consideration.

- Focus on job creation and attracting new industries to increase the County's tax base
- Municipalities should continue to maintain regulatory authority over residential buildings
- Major zoning changes should be implemented through a Master or Sector Plan, with meaningful input from local neighborhood residents
- Include information about whether infrastructure (e.g., schools, stormwater management structures, and other public facilities) will be built to address current needs and accommodate expected impacts of increased density, and more about funding mechanisms for this infrastructure
- Address how to limit loss of naturally occurring affordable housing, including the replacement of affordable single-family housing by multi-family housing
- Explain how to implement affordable housing in high land-value areas
- Acknowledge the continued need for cars by County residents and especially the disabled, aging, and young families

Town of Chevy Chase Councilmember Ellen Ericson is hosting *Emails with Ellen* social events where residents of the Town and neighboring municipalities are invited to come together to connect, discuss questions, share opinions, and write emails to the County Council about Thrive. The remaining *Emails with Ellen* will be held on Sunday, June 27 at 3 p.m. Please RSVP to townoffice@townofchevychase.org for a Zoom link.

If you can't make one of the *Emails with Ellen* sessions, email County Councilmembers about Thrive by June 29. At a loss for words, a sample letter follows on the next page.

Andrew Friedson	District 1 - Village's district!	councilmember.friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov
Tom Hucker	Council President	councilmember.hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov
Gabe Albornoz	Council Vice President	councilmember.albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov
Evan Glass	At Large	councilmember.glass@montgomerycountymd.gov
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Hans Riemer	At Large	councilmember.riemer@montgomerycountymd.gov
General Email		county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov

Date

Montgomery County Council

Subject: Please Address Issues raised in Thrive Coalition Letter

Dear County Councilmembers:

The Thrive Coalition, representing more than 25 communities / 40,000 voters, has proposed multiple issues for the Council to consider in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. As a Montgomery County resident and taxpayer, I urge you to fully address all the issues raised. I strongly urge you to consider the confirmed evidence of best practices and an appropriate balance of aspirations and resources, and reject the application of untested planning and land use theories on a large scale, using instead the master plan process.

Signed,

Name, Full Address