



September 10, 2024

## Letter to the Montgomery County Council

### Re: Growth and Infrastructure Policy

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) that is revised every four years. **It is important to align this policy with *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, which the LWVMC supports, and to give guidance for the infrastructure of new projects.** The LWVMC believes that ensuring citizens have access to current infrastructure as well as planning for future growth in Montgomery County affects the county's overall quality of life.

**The LWVMC agrees that the county should support mass transit, walking and biking, which are emphasized in the *Thrive 2050 General Plan*.** This translates into providing less new parking while encouraging the use of already existing facilities that are more accessible. The LWVMC questions whether the county's old policy supports its stated goals in the new general plan. Simplifying the adequacy test for transit, walking and cycling is more equitable and logical. Does the proposed new GIP encourage development where development is sought and will it funnel fees into the places near that development that need them?

**The LWVMC agrees that housing options should be attainable, accessible and affordable for ALL income levels in our county, and the GIP includes support for housing that is close to transit, walking, and biking in line with *Thrive 2050*.** Planning and organizing growth along transportation corridors reduces traffic and has a positive impact on climate. The GIP encourages the creation of smaller and more affordable multifamily homes through a 50% impact-tax discount for developers and through zoning text amendments that will allow areas currently zoned for single family homes to incorporate multifamily complexes. Implementing an impact-tax discount will help offset the cost of smaller homes since this cost is normally passed on to the consumer. That said, will the savings that the developers realize through this discount truly be passed down to our middle- and lower-income residents? And how will that be monitored? In what ways will the more densely populated priority housing districts affect general quality of life? Finally, will pattern books be available to provide guidance to developers before they submit their plans for approval?

**How we provide and pay for education is a question that should concern all county residents, whether or not they have children in the public schools.** The League has long recognized that overcrowding affects both class size and our ability to attract and keep the best teachers thereby maintaining the quality of the education we provide, and we have supported plans that work to ensure that facility expansion can keep up with enrollment increases. **We have been a strong advocate of the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, especially its emphasis on expanding Pre-K programs and community schools, both of which contribute to the success of children who would otherwise be at risk of falling behind and dropping out, and both require space to accomplish their goals.** Because school border adjustment is



one means of relieving overcrowding, we agree that considering adjacent schools in your calculations is reasonable.

**Montgomery County's commitment to environmental sustainability, including the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035, is exciting.** The GIP and an update of zoning rules are opportunities to advance the environmental goals of *Thrive 2050* and the *Montgomery County Climate Action Plan*. Nearly 30% of the county's GHG emissions reductions must come from switching to electric vehicles (see *Climate Action Plan*, pg. 80). How can revisions to the *Local Area Transportation Review (LATR)* adequacy tests for motor vehicles address the need for additional electric charging infrastructure? Electrifying transportation and buildings to meet the county's climate goals may put a strain on electrical infrastructure. How could this or future GIPs consider grid strain as part of the effort to ensure infrastructure can support proposed development? The LWVMC supports a balanced system of transportation, including changes that will incentivize non-motorized transportation, particularly walking and biking. Do the changes to the non-motor vehicle LATR adequacy tests take into consideration the *County Climate Action Plan's* estimated need for a 15% reduction in private vehicle trips to meet the county's GHG reduction goals? Once again, the proposals within each development plan must advance the county's goals, including those in the *County Climate Action Plan*.

**The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County believes that this is an important plan both to ensure access to our current infrastructure and to plan for future development in ways where we can see beneficial growth. All these plans and ideas will work if there is enforcement, and we encourage the county to enforce these beneficial rules stringently.**

Susan Albertine, President