



THRIVE

MONTGOMERY 2050
Let's Plan For Our Future. Together.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED—OCTOBER 2022

 **Montgomery Planning**
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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

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 may 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. However, while the general plan provides guidance to the entire county, that guidance is not binding upon those municipalities that have independent planning, zoning, and subdivision authority¹.

Thrive Montgomery 2050 does not 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.

To that end, *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.

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 and may include recommendations on land use and zoning. The *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*, the *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan*, and the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* are functional plans that do not include land use or zoning recommendations; however, the *Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* does. New and revised functional master plans can help refine and implement *Thrive Montgomery 2050* recommendations that affect countywide systems and/or policies.

¹ This includes the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg, and the municipalities of Barnesville, Brookeville, Laytonsville, Poolesville, and Washington Grove.

/// 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 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 aim to accommodate growth in ways that make room for new residents and improve the quality of life for the people who already live here. The Plan anticipates a county that will become more urban, more diverse, and more interconnected. It guides 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.

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.

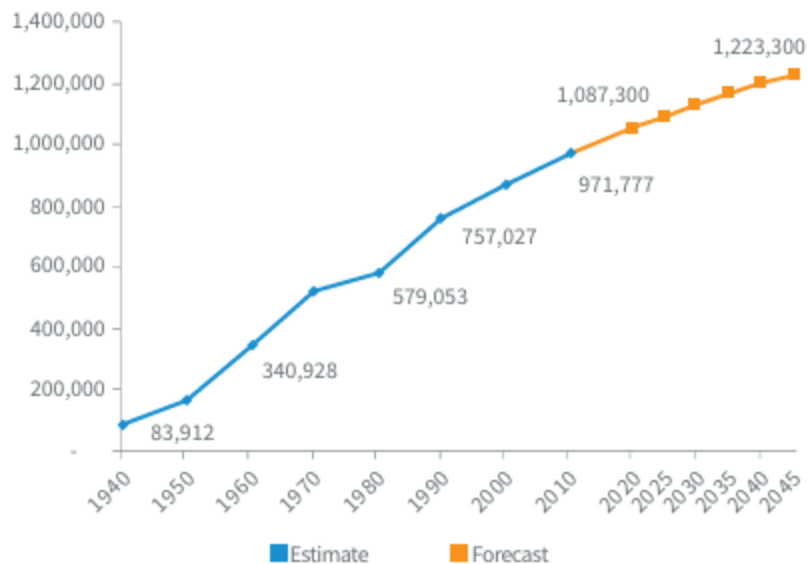


Figure 1: Population Estimates and Forecast, Montgomery County, 1940–2045

/// 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 encouraging interaction and engagement. This framework embraces and builds on the *Wedges and Corridors Plan*, with a greater emphasis on the development of compact, “Complete Communities” and the

role of major corridors as places to grow. It also supports greater conservation and expanded protection of our natural resources and recognizes the importance of integrating arts and culture in our communities.

The ideas and recommendations in this Plan are organized to achieve three overarching objectives: economic competitiveness, racial equity and social justice, and environmental health and resilience.



**Economic
Competitiveness**



**Racial Equity
and Social Justice**



**Environmental Health
and Resilience**

/// How Thrive Montgomery 2050 Was Developed

Organization of the Plan

Related to the three primary objectives of economic competitiveness, racial equity and social justice, and environmental health and resilience, the Plan is organized into nine chapters:

- Economic Competitiveness
- Racial Equity and Social Justice
- Environmental Health and Resilience
- 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
- Housing for All: More of Everything
- Parks and Recreation for an Increasingly Urban and Diverse Community: Active and Social

The first three chapters, following the introduction, each address one of the three overarching objectives of the Plan. As such, they “set the stage” for the policies and practices recommended in the chapters that follow. The ideas in each of the following six chapters are intended to complement each other and outline approaches calibrated for varying scales of planning. The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters move from the countywide scale (Compact Growth) to the community 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 build on the foundation of a compact footprint for growth by incorporating a mix of uses, building types, and lot sizes 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 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 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 Housing for All chapter recommendations are intended to diversify our housing stock across incomes, building types and geography. 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 suggested measures to gauge 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 should be used to assess new proposals as well as to measure the success or failure of the plan’s recommendations over time.

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, nonprofit 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 be like in 2050 and what will 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 (accessible both in English and 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. The outreach effort was challenging because of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic nine months into the planning process; however, the outreach work responded to this challenge with innovative tools—including successful virtual meetings, social media campaigns, and outdoor pop-up events. More detailed information about this award-winning equitable engagement strategy is included in the Outreach Appendix (published separately).

For a typical master or sector plan, one public hearing is held by the County Council. For plans that encompass a large area or contain recommendations for a large number of properties, the Council will hold two public hearings. For *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, the Council held two public hearings in June 2021.

Recognizing the interest in the Plan and hoping to receive input from as diverse a group of county residents and business owners as possible, the Council created additional opportunities for community members to weigh in. Following completion of the Committee Draft, the Council held two Community Listening Sessions, encouraging participation focused on the overarching goals of the Plan and the updates made by the Committee. In early 2022, at the request of the Council President, the Citizen Advisory Boards of the county’s five Regional Service Centers hosted a discussion of the Draft Plan, providing yet another opportunity to gather diverse thoughts on the updated Plan from residents across the county.

/// Thrive Montgomery 2050 Establishes the Building Blocks for Places that Prosper

How can a land use plan support economic competitiveness? Thrive focuses on three specific areas: quality of place, transportation, and housing.

Great Places Are Magnets for People, Businesses, and Jobs

People are instinctively drawn to vibrant centers of activity that have a sense of place with lots of things to do. They enjoy living and working in places that facilitate social interaction and where walking and biking feels safe and appealing and where travel between their homes and other destinations is accessible and easy—be it by car, bike, or transit. Employers making decisions about where to locate are increasingly responsive to these preferences, giving communities that can satisfy them a crucial competitive edge.

Developing neighborhoods and districts with the features and qualities that support the emergence of more vibrant communities is easier said than done. Even the most progressive policies on land use, transportation, housing, and public amenities are likely to fall short unless they are integrated into a cohesive framework. That's why *Thrive Montgomery 2050* recommends strategies that reinforce each other, using compact form as the foundation, Complete Communities and "15-minute living" as basic orienting objectives, attention to the aesthetic and functional aspects of design, and the importance of increased housing and transportation options as important criteria for implementation. Each of these topics is discussed at length in the policy chapters of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.

In addition, Thrive considers parks to be infrastructure for economic development. World-class places require world-class parks, recreation, and cultural amenities. Look to Central Park in New York, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Millennium Park in Chicago, or Hyde Park in London and the significance of great urban parks becomes clear. In fact, parks and

related amenities are regularly cited as among the most important factors influencing business decisions about where to relocate or expand. Multiple studies have shown that parks increase adjacent property values by 5 to 20 percent, providing incentives for property owners to contribute to the creation of public parks or to build privately owned, publicly accessible spaces for recreation and gathering. Likewise, taxpayer-funded investment in parks and related programming and amenities delivers strong economic returns to the public. These topics are discussed in greater detail in Thrive's Parks and Recreation chapter.



Finally, the forms of growth and the creation of quality places promoted by Thrive are economically sustainable. The intuition that compact development leads to efficient use of infrastructure—and has the potential to reduce both private household and infrastructure costs—has been supported by decades of research. Almost all high-quality studies comparing the infrastructure and service costs of spread-out development to those of compact communities have shown that compact urbanism reduces cost burdens on the public sector. For example, a study comparing infrastructure expenditures of 283 counties over a 10-year period found that counties with compact growth patterns spent less than less densely developed counties (controlling for size and property values) on total direct infrastructure costs and capital facilities, as well as several subcategories of infrastructure and services, including roads, trash collection, police, fire, parks and recreation, education, and libraries⁴. In addition to lowering costs, compact development also tends to increase municipal revenues⁵, strengthening the case for focusing growth in nodes and along corridors.

Walkable, Bikeable, Transit-Connected Places Expand Economic Opportunity

Just about any other form of daily transportation—walking, biking, or riding a bus or train—is potentially less expensive (monetarily) than driving a single-occupancy vehicle, both on a personal basis and in terms of public spending. The two comprehensive reviews of the voluminous literature on the relationship between the built environment and travel behavior conducted in the past decade agree that features of compact development such as household density, job accessibility, and intersection and street network density reduce driving⁶.

In addition, better transit connections to job centers make the county a more attractive choice for employers by making it easier for their current and future employees to get to work. With drive times and pass-through

automobile traffic predicted to continue growing, investments in transit can significantly increase our “commute shed” and avoid ever-longer drives to and from work, which makes Montgomery County economically competitive.

A higher priority for investments in transit, walking, rolling, and bicycling infrastructure is critical to building Complete Communities that have the amenities, sense of place, and level of activity that more and more people of all backgrounds and ages seek. Transit improvements exert a kind of gravitational pull on real estate development by creating incentives and opportunities to locate a variety of uses, services, and activities close to station locations—and to each other.

⁴ Carruthers, J. I., & Ulfarsson, G. F. (2003). Urban sprawl and the cost of public services. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 30(4), 503-522.

⁵ Litman, T. (2021). Understanding smart growth savings. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. https://www.vtpi.org/sg_save.pdf

⁶ Ewing, R., & Cervero, R. (2010). Travel and the built environment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 76(3), 265-294; Stevens, M. R. (2017). Does compact development make people drive less?. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 83(1), 7-18.

Housing for the Workforce Needed for a Strong Economy

Increasing the supply of new housing near transit, jobs, and amenities may help improve the quality of life for everyone in the county while helping to attract and retain the broadly skilled workforce that employers need, making the county more economically competitive. The increased demand for walkable neighborhoods with a mix of uses—especially near transit—is well documented. Housing in “Walkable Urban Places (WalkUPs)” command prices 71 percent higher per square foot than other locations in the Washington area, reflecting both the desirability and relative shortage of these kinds of places⁷. By concentrating more housing of different sizes and types near high-quality transit corridors, we can provide housing that will help keep the most productive workers in the county, curb escalating prices in the most desirable locations, and improve accessibility of jobs, transportation, and services while being mindful not to displace current residents.

Conversely, if we don't have enough housing, workers will continue bidding up the cost of existing residences until only the very affluent will be able to afford decent housing in convenient locations. Lower- and middle-income residents will either be priced out entirely or face crowded, substandard housing conditions in remote locations with long and difficult commutes. Without affordable and attainable housing dispersed throughout the county, we will never be able to attract and retain the broadly skilled workforce needed to effectively run businesses, regardless of their scale or economic sector.

The Role of Regionalism in Strengthening and Diversifying Our Job Base

Even as we focus on bolstering our competitive position in sectors such as hospitality and life sciences, we also need to diversify our job base and improve connections to centers of employment and innovation

⁷ DC: The Walk Up Wake-Up Call: The Nation's Capital as a National Model for Walkable Urban Places”, Leinberger, Christopher. The George Washington University School of Business, 2012.

throughout the region. Montgomery County is 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. Montgomery County is an integral part of the larger region and must find ways to work more effectively with other area governments to make us all stronger.



RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE





Housing

Thrive's housing prescriptions to address racial equity and social justice largely center on a strategy to significantly increase housing production, striving to increase housing density along major corridors and in Complete Communities across the county. This includes more housing for every income level, with particular attention to providing more income-restricted housing, housing for very low-income, and permanent supportive housing.

To promote racial equity and economic diversity in housing in every neighborhood, the Plan recommends developing targeted strategies to minimize gentrification and displacement, while promoting integration and avoiding concentrations of poverty. The idea of development without displacement is an exciting one, but these ideas in practice are often acting in direct opposition of each other. Development without deliberate community and neighborhood conservation efforts will almost certainly result in some displacement. So, instead of ignoring this possibility, let's determine where people can go.

Identifying and promoting safeguards against the potential loss of naturally occurring affordable housing continues to be a priority for the county. The county has made recent strides in preserving naturally occurring affordable housing by using a variety of financial and land use tools. For example, the county has increased funding for the Housing

Initiative Fund to help preserve naturally occurring affordable housing. Through recent master plans, the county has also allowed for increased density in exchange for no net loss of affordable housing in the event of redevelopment. Understanding that these naturally occurring affordable housing units are important housing resources to the county, more work is needed to understand the risk factors associated with losing these units, as well as the best strategies to preserve these units. If housing affordability continues to decline, it is quite feasible that Montgomery County could require even more commuters from outside the region to staff its businesses. This dynamic would be in opposition to both the Equity and Sustainability goals of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. (See Appendix B-7: Housing Affordability, 2020.)

Undoubtedly, many residents who currently occupy a community where they have historical, cultural, spiritual, and other ties (kinship) will want to remain in their home community. However, there will be some residents who may like to move to a more affluent area. Traditionally, planning documents are written to support Housing Choice as a strategic goal for future outcomes. When we juxtapose this idea with regional housing markets, it would seem that in order to balance the integration of low-income neighborhoods, some accommodation for rebalancing should be made to ensure that economic benefits begin to reach historically disadvantaged populations. As such, integration should be a two-way process, by which there should be a parallel strategy of making accommodations for low-income housing in areas that are already wealthy, thus providing new residents who want the choice of living somewhere else to achieve immediate access to communities that have proximity to jobs, good education, etc. If we are going to promote development in the growth areas with new market-rate housing, there should also be a provision of new low-income housing in high-income areas to allow for housing choice in different markets.

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood with numerous houses, trees, and a golf course in the background. A large, semi-transparent teal graphic, consisting of several overlapping triangular and quadrilateral shapes, is overlaid on the left side of the image. The text 'COMPACT GROWTH' is written in large, bold, white capital letters, and 'CORRIDOR-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT' is written in smaller, white capital letters on a teal rectangular background below it.

COMPACT GROWTH

CORRIDOR-FOCUSED
DEVELOPMENT

/// What Policies Will Solve the Problem? Refining—and Recommitting to a Compact Footprint

Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes redoubling and refining efforts to concentrate context-sensitive growth in centers of activity. Centers of activity range from large downtowns, to medium-sized town centers, to rural villages and neighborhoods. The Plan also makes a new commitment to promoting growth along major transportation corridors to maximize the efficient use of land and create Complete Communities. These corridors create a web, connecting residents to existing and future centers of activity and Complete Communities. These corridors also either have robust transit service in place or planned or are located close to existing concentrations of jobs, services, and infrastructure in ways that lend themselves to supporting more intensive development to produce the kinds of Complete Communities described later in this Plan.

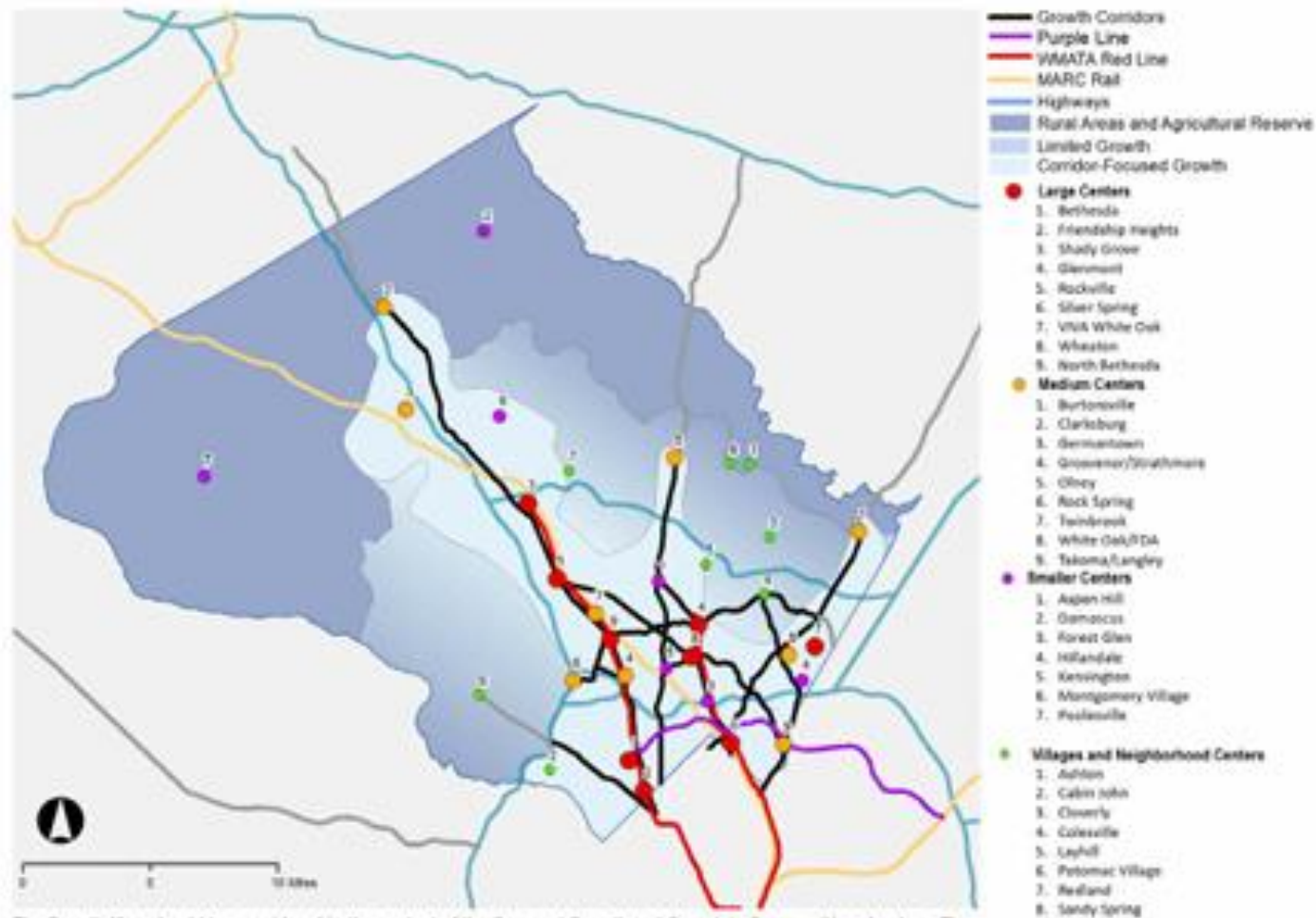
The intensity of development along these corridors should be aligned with the urban, suburban, and rural context of the surrounding area and calibrated to account for existing or planned transit and other transportation infrastructure. Detailed analysis of each area will come through future planning efforts that include extensive public engagement. Some corridors, such as Rockville Pike, even now connect several centers of activity, making these corridors appropriate for more intensive development. Other corridors will have less intensive development due to their context and level of transit service.

Outside of these corridors, limited, organic growth should be allowed to meet localized needs for services and provide a balanced, diverse, and appropriate range of housing choices; increase racial and socioeconomic integration; and achieve more Complete Communities in all parts of the county. This limited development must be managed in ways that help to form more Complete Communities without expanding established development footprints or encouraging significant intensification of

land uses outside of Complete Communities. Preservation of land for recreation, agriculture and environmental management must be ensured for the benefit of the entire county.

The concept of corridor-focused growth is a fundamental organizing element for *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, as it recognizes not only that intensively developed centers of activity and preservation of land both play a vital role in our quality of life but that neither pattern can exist without the other. By describing the types of places where context-sensitive growth should be encouraged, this chapter aims to establish the foundation for Complete Communities, which depend on a compact footprint to give them the coherence, focus, and mix of activities necessary to succeed. The scale of development, building types, and diversity of uses envisioned within this footprint are discussed in greater detail in the Complete Communities chapter. In turn, the design elements that complement and reinforce Complete Communities are discussed in the Design, Arts, and Culture chapter.





The Growth Map 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. Some of the centers listed on the growth map are not subject to Montgomery County zoning authority.

Figure 34. Proposed Growth Map—Corridor-Focused Growth

The Growth Map reflects current land use and is representative of the location and types of growth expected through 2050; however, the corridors and centers shown on the map or fitting the descriptions provided below may evolve over time through future approved and adopted master plans and functional master plans.

The Corridor-Focused Growth area (lightest blue) should have the largest share of new growth. It encompasses the most developed part of the county with highest-density population and employment centers, and the infrastructure to support existing and new development.

The Limited Growth area (medium blue) contains the mainly suburban residential communities where limited, organic growth is envisioned to meet localized needs for services, provide a diverse range of housing choices, and increase racial and socioeconomic integration to achieve Complete Communities.

Rural Areas and the Agricultural Reserve* (in dark blue) will continue to be dedicated primarily to agriculture, rural open space, and environmental preservation. It can absorb some growth as agriculture evolves and existing residential communities' needs change over time.

The Growth Map identifies several existing and potential centers of activity at a variety of scales, including Large, Medium, and Small as well as Villages and Neighborhood Centers. The centers identified are not exhaustive of all existing or potential centers, but rather are included to demonstrate that centers of activity, where existing and future compact growth should be concentrated, occur within the county's urban, suburban, and rural areas. While future growth should occur in these centers, the amount of growth and intensity of development should be commensurate with the center's location and context.

Large Centers are envisioned as the highest intensity areas generally characterized by significant residential and/or commercial density, either existing or planned, and are typically close to high-quality transit. They include the county's Central Business Districts, existing and future employment centers, the municipalities of Gaithersburg and Rockville, and most of the Metrorail stations which provide an opportunity for significant redevelopment.

Medium Centers would be less intense and cover a smaller geography than Large Centers. The Medium Centers could include significant clusters of existing or planned residential density, as well as clusters of commercial density, including large shopping centers and office campuses. Medium Centers are likely to be close to transit.

Smaller Centers are generally characterized by low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods, with clusters of commercial activity, including shopping centers and neighborhood-serving retail.

Villages and Neighborhood Centers are the lowest intensity centers containing a small number of neighborhood-serving uses and located in rural areas and low-density residential neighborhoods.

* The Rural Areas and Agricultural Reserve are areas of the county substantially zoned for rural or agricultural land use under the Rural, Rural Cluster, Rural Neighborhood Cluster, or Agricultural Reserve zone.

More specifically, the following policies and practices should be adopted in order to maximize the efficiency of land use and public investment, and establish the building blocks for development of vibrant centers of activity while preserving land for recreation, resource conservation, and agriculture:

Concentrate growth in centers of activity and along corridors through compact, infill development and redevelopment to maximize efficient use of land.

- Focus future land use and public infrastructure planning in activity centers and on growth corridors to direct development in ways that facilitate the emergence of Complete Communities. Evaluate appropriate land uses, transportation facilities, and community design that will encourage and enable full use of centers of activity and creation of Complete Communities. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Amend land use, design, and zoning regulations, including the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, to support corridor-focused compact development. Appropriate densities will vary but should be sufficient to support, at a minimum, the efficient provision of transit service along these corridors. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Improve the environmental sustainability of growth by encouraging infill and redevelopment to curb sprawl and 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. (En)

The three symbols (Ec, En, Eq) indicate a strong link between each policy recommendation and the three overarching objectives of the Plan:

Ec = Economic Competitiveness

En = Environmental Health and Resilience

Eq = Racial Equity and Social Justice

Promote and prioritize public investment in infrastructure in activity centers and along growth corridors and leverage it to attract future private investment in a compact form.

- Consider new methods of financing public infrastructure, such as value capture, tax increment financing, and other mechanisms to facilitate investment and provision of appropriate infrastructure in areas identified as appropriate for more intensive development. (Ec)
- Establish high-quality transit infrastructure along growth corridors through capital investment and ensure reliable, frequent service through operational investment. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Leverage federal, state, and local incentive programs, publicly owned land and land investment opportunities for infill development and redevelopment in activity centers and along corridors. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Develop a policy framework to ensure that businesses owned or operated by Black, Indigenous or people of color are accessing opportunities in new development and in redevelopment. (Ec, Eq)

Limit growth beyond corridors to compact, infill development and redevelopment in Complete Communities to prevent sprawl. Apply principles of urbanism at an appropriate scale along a rural-to-urban transect as outlined in the Complete Communities chapter.

- Sustainably manage land outside growth corridors and Complete Communities to increase biodiversity, improve the health of natural habitats, preserve privately owned forests, protect watersheds and aquifers, and improve water quality while providing expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation, including vigorous physical activity. (En, Eq)
- Support alternative clean energy generation, distributed energy, battery storage and grid modernization; and better facilitate composting/food waste recovery and other circular economy initiatives. (En, Eq)

Beyond Transit-Oriented Development: Complete Communities and 15-Minute Living

Thrive Montgomery 2050 recognizes the benefits of transit-oriented development, which often uses mixed use zoning as a complement to high-quality transit service, but it updates and recalibrates ideas about the role of mixed uses by adding Complete Communities and “15-minute living” as organizing principles for thinking about planning of neighborhoods and districts.

Complete Communities are places that include the range of land uses, infrastructure, services, and amenities that allow them to meet a wide range of needs for a variety of people. They include housing suitable for different household types, income levels, and preferences, helping to support racial and socioeconomic integration. The specific mix of uses, amenities, parks, public facilities, and building types in Complete Communities vary depending on factors such as the size and location of the neighborhood or community, proximity to transit, variation in physical features such as topography and environmental resources, and other factors unique to the history and context of each place.

The related concept of 15-minute living has emerged as a way of reimagining existing communities to maximize their attractiveness and efficiency by mixing housing, offices, and retail uses so services, infrastructure, facilities, and amenities to serve the daily needs of people who live or work there are within walking distance. While a literal or rigid application of 15-minute living may not be practical outside of the corridor-focused growth areas and centers, the concept is a useful way to generate concrete recommendations to make communities more complete and help them succeed.

Different Ingredients for Different Communities

The combination of strategies that can help create a more complete community in any particular place depends heavily on context. The scale (village vs. town center vs. downtown), location (inside vs. outside the

growth footprint) within one of the state’s four growth tiers⁹ and type (e.g., office park vs. central business district vs. residential neighborhood vs. suburban shopping center) all influence which elements should be incorporated and how they should be tailored. Despite the varying needs and conditions of different parts of the county, however, the concept of encouraging more diversity of use and form is relevant in almost every location. For example:

- Existing suburban office parks in locations such as Rock Spring or Clarksburg’s COMSAT site have large existing buildings that can accommodate employment but lack the integration of uses, services, and amenities necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive office market. Complete Communities strategies can help reposition these employment centers through infill and redevelopment to incorporate a variety of housing, restaurants, retail, public facilities, and parks and public spaces along with better transit service, making them more attractive to both residents and employers.
- Likewise, for places the county hopes to see emerge as important centers for office employment, such as White Flint, White Oak, or Germantown, the integration of additional housing options can help to encourage activity beyond regular business hours, creating the sense of energy and activity during the evening and on weekends.

Centers of activity in suburban and rural areas, which range from large retail shopping centers such as Aspen Hill, to clusters of commercial and neighborhood-serving retail uses like the shopping areas in Potomac Village or Four Corners, offer convenience retail for surrounding subdivisions but often lack safe pedestrian accommodations, good transit connections, or high-quality parks and public spaces. In some places, new

⁹ As defined by The Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012, Senate Bill 236.



TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

CONNECTING PEOPLE,
PLACES, AND IDEAS

of our presence in one of the most dynamic regions in the country, if not the world. In addition to the existing Metrorail and MARC services to the District of Columbia, master plans call for new transitway connections to Prince George’s County (the Purple Line and University Boulevard BRT) and the District of Columbia (the New Hampshire Avenue BRT). However, there is a growing need to provide transitway connections to Howard and Frederick counties, and to Northern Virginia as well.

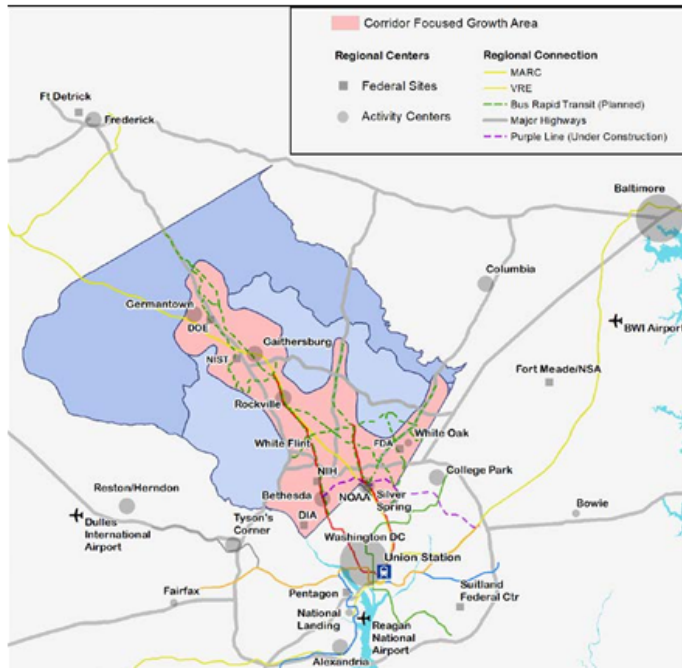


Figure 45: Regional Connections to Activity Centers

Even for travel within Montgomery County, our legacy road network has serious shortcomings. Our central business districts and major suburban corridors generally lack the grid of streets that create the building blocks of a thriving community, with frequent intersections and narrower vehicle lanes to facilitate slower speeds and safer crossings to make walking,

rolling and bicycling more practical and attractive, and to provide access points and routing options for automobiles. More and more residents and workers prefer transit and other alternatives to driving alone—and a significant number do not have access to a car—but most jobs in the county are not located near high-quality transit, and many of our neighborhoods lack even sidewalks. Combined with the absence of efficient east-west connections, especially for transit riders, this pattern limits access to jobs and opportunity, particularly for low-income residents who are more likely to depend on transit, and makes our transportation system less adaptable and resilient.



Figure 46: Higher Connectivity in a Traditional Grid of Streets (Downtown Bethesda, Left), Compared to a Conventional Cul-de-Sac Pattern of Streets (Olney, Right)

The failure to provide robust alternatives to driving and the inability to provide additional space for roads—in combination with low rates of housing construction—leaves more commuters stuck in traffic and pushes jobs as well as people to other jurisdictions. The result is that the county loses residents, jobs, and tax revenue while simultaneously increasing traffic congestion as more people drive through the county on the way to jobs and homes in other places. Meanwhile, the importance of virtual connections, including the deployment of high-speed wireless networks and fiber optic cable, continues to grow.

A photograph of a residential street with houses and trees, overlaid with a teal graphic element. The text "HOUSING FOR ALL" is in white, and "MORE OF EVERYTHING" is in white on a teal background.

HOUSING FOR ALL

MORE OF EVERYTHING

Encourage the production of more housing to better match supply with demand.

- Expand opportunities to increase residential density, especially along major corridors and in locations where additional housing can assist in the development of Complete Communities. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Increase the number of income-restricted affordable housing units, especially for low-income households, with particular attention to high-income areas to ensure that people who work in retail, service and other low-wage-earning employment sectors have the option not to commute. (Eq)
- As part of the commitment to the Housing First approach, develop strategies to build deeply affordable housing and provide permanent supportive housing in support of unsheltered populations and those who may be aging out of youth programs. (Eq)
- Support building code amendments that reduce costs by accommodating innovative construction methods and materials including modular prefabricated housing and mass timber. (Ec, En)
- Continue to prioritize use of public land for colocation of housing and other uses, particularly where government agencies design new facilities or dispose of real property. Consideration of increased opportunities for housing low and very low-income households should be included in the analysis of how best to leverage county assets. (En, Eq)
- Increase regulatory flexibility to incentivize residential infill, redevelopment, and repositioning of office parks, shopping malls, and other underutilized properties. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Provide financial and other incentives to boost housing production for market-rate and affordable housing, especially near transit and in Complete Communities. (Ec, En, Eq)

Plan for a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet diverse needs.

- Facilitate the development of a variety of housing types in every part of the county but especially in areas near transit, employment, and educational opportunities. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Support creative housing options including personal living quarters and/or micro units; “Missing Middle” housing types such as tiny houses, cottages, duplexes, multi-plexes, and small apartment buildings; shared housing, cooperative housing, co-housing, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), to help meet housing needs and diversify housing options throughout the county. (Ec, En, Eq)
- Consider features of other housing models such as social housing that, in addition to providing long-term affordability for low- and moderate-income households, emphasizes architectural quality, environmental performance, and social stability. (En, Eq)
- Encourage provision of multi-bedroom units suitable for households with children in multi-family housing. (En, Eq)
- Integrate people with disabilities, people transitioning from homelessness, and older adults into housing with appropriate affordability, amenities and services sized and designed to accommodate their households. (Eq)