



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Marc Elrich
County Executive

August 13, 2020

Dear President Katz, PHED Committee Chair Riemer, and Councilmembers,

I am writing to ask the Council to postpone for six months consideration of the General Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, because of the ongoing exigencies of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic, as it must be, is the overwhelming, time-absorbing focus of this entire government. As recently as Tuesday, July 28, the Council, in a marathon session, passed important legislation critical to the immediate well-being of our residents with the greatest vulnerabilities. In the meantime, the PHED Committee first postponed and then on Wednesday, July 29, had a rushed review of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

The Executive departments have carefully reviewed the initial draft and identified many issues. Their comments and questions are interspersed throughout the draft, section by section, and deserve careful consideration. Although department representatives participated in the Planning Department's advisory group meetings, many of their questions remain unanswered. In fact, a careful reading of them clearly indicates that more collaboration between the Planning Department and the Executive departments is necessary if we are to have a strong end product.

For the next several months, we all need to concentrate on immediate actions in response to a deadly virus—one that may well change the way we view The General Plan, its recommendations, and its vision for the County's future for the next 30 years. Since there are no statutory timetable requirements for revising the General Plan, slowing the schedule would allow us to spend additional time working on a more collaborative vision that reflects the "new normal" that is all around us and at a time when we are not dealing with a public health and economic crisis, and residents are not worried about keeping safe, and when their children will be able to return to school.

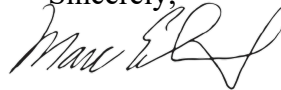
Paramount to this request is the difficulty in getting true public input during the pandemic--for a plan expected to be in place for decades. MNCPPC did a great deal of outreach initially but a full public review of the actual recommendations is needed. Although virtual meetings have allowed some public participation, they are difficult for some, impossible for others, subject to technical difficulties, and no substitute for in-person meetings.

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Please consider a pause – there is no reason to push this plan forward during extraordinary circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Elrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "M" and "E".

Marc Elrich
County Executive

c: Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director
Montgomery County Council
Pam Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst