



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

April 2, 2021

Dear Thrive Montgomery 2050 Neighborhood Coalition:

I write in response to your March 18 letter, in which you requested another public hearing on Thrive Montgomery 2050 followed by additional work sessions on a document that has been in development for nearly three years and under consideration by the Planning Board for the past five months. The Planning Board and County Council have received requests to delay Thrive Montgomery 2050 almost since the project began in 2018. The reasons cited to justify delay have changed over time, but the reasons we do not believe that delay would serve the public interest have remained the same:

- Issues covered in the plan – including the need to strengthen the county’s economic competitiveness, improve racial and social equity, and make growth more environmentally sustainable – were pressing before the pandemic and remain every bit as urgent today. We need to address these problems now, not years from now.
- The long-term effects of COVID-19 will not be known in six months or a year, just as the effects of automation, climate change, and other trends and events will not be entirely clear. The plan takes great care to avoid relying on predictions about the implications of these kinds of phenomena as a basis for its recommendations. In any event, if COVID-19 or any other factor proves fundamentally disruptive to its assumptions then the plan can be changed.
- Any significant delay will squander time and money spent on the outreach and analysis that has been done over the course of nearly 3 years.

I also am compelled to say that I strongly disagree with the suggestion that the process used to develop the Planning Board draft has denied any stakeholder a full and fair opportunity to understand and provide feedback on its content. In addition to **166 meetings** with the community to date – and more planned – our outreach has generated **68,139 web page views, 2,686 on-demand video views, and 85 participants** at the Board’s public hearing. Staff has responded to hundreds of pages of written comments, with all the comments and responses used by the Planning Board in the 10 work sessions we held to consider each section and subject in the document.

While the Planning Board directed staff to rewrite the draft produced prior to the public hearing in order to make the document more succinct, clear, and persuasive, the Planning Board draft incorporates largely the same themes, ideas, and proposals that appeared in the Public Hearing draft. Moreover, the content of each revised section was made available to the public at least two weeks before the relevant work session, and the public was invited to submit additional comments. Indeed, many stakeholders took advantage of the opportunity to provide additional input, and the materials submitted were considered by the Board as we made revisions.

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Of course, the process of developing the plan is not over, nor are the opportunities for public participation and input at an end. After the Planning Board transmits its draft of the plan, the County Council will schedule its own public hearing, giving you another chance to provide your thoughts, followed by work sessions at the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee and then the full Council over the course of the summer.

In closing, I want to emphasize that I remain available to you and any other member of our community who would like to discuss the substance of Thrive Montgomery, and I look forward to working with you as the County Council considers the plan.

Sincerely,



Casey Anderson
Chair

Cc: Gwen Wright, Planning Director
Councilmember Hucker, President, Montgomery County Council
Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, Vice President, Montgomery County Council
Councilmember Andrew Friedson
Councilmember Evan Glass
Councilmember Will Jawando
Councilmember Sidney Katz
Councilmember Nancy Navarro
Councilmember Craig Rice
Councilmember Hans Riemer
County Executive Marc Elrich
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