

## Follow-Up Questions and Comments from Montgomery County Civic Federation Meeting on Thrive 2050 on October 12, 2020

*The following prepared questions had not been answered completely, needed clarification, or—due to time constraints—were not asked. Yellow highlights are from questions asked but needing additional clarification.*

1. Since Chairman Anderson is planning to work on additional edits and changes to the document we ask that you provide the public with 60 days to review the revised Thrive 2050 Plan before the Planning Board's public hearing.

*The Public Hearing Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 will not be revised prior to the public hearing in November, at which time the Board will receive public comments on the current Draft. Requested changes from the Board will be discussed during the Public Hearing Draft work sessions between December 2020 and February 2021. Those changes will be incorporated into the Planning Board Draft Plan, which will be published in March 2021. After the Planning Board Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 is submitted to the County Council in spring 2021, the public will have an opportunity to testify at the County Council's public hearing of the draft Plan.*

2. Where will the money to implement Thrive Montgomery come from? We see in the proposed and recent increases in the recordation tax and proposed split rate property tax for “underutilized” properties described in Thrive (3.2 and 7.3) as an effort to transfer the costs of infrastructure and services from commercial to residential property owners. This follows on the elimination of most impact taxes in the growth policy (SSP). Bottom line - homeowners and renters are hit hard to finance the extensive proposals here. Why such an unbalanced burden? Board Chair says the opposite is true; the burden is really being transferred to developers and commercial interests. Can you elaborate on how that is so?

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 relies on both the private and public sectors to implement its recommendations. Existing public sector funding tools such as the Capital Improvements Program will fund new public facilities and infrastructure designed to implement Thrive Montgomery 2050's policy guidance—please see the Implementation chapter of the current draft Plan for more details. New growth directly provides some improvements (open spaces, affordable housing, and, in some cases, school sites) and generates revenue (impact and property taxes, fees, etc.) for the public sector to fund infrastructure improvements and services.*

*The proposal to “Study potential land value capture strategies including a differential tax or split-rate property tax...” (Action 3.2.1.a), is not an effort to transfer the cost of infrastructure from commercial to residential property owners. As stated in the text of the action, the intent is to “to return publicly-created land value to the public.”*

*Split-rate property taxes—where land is taxed at a higher rate than improvements— have greater effect when they are implemented in conjunction with changes in zoning. They produce the most benefits when applied to: 1) highly desirable and valuable land in downtowns and near Metro stations, which is largely already zoned for commercial uses; and 2) vacant and/or blighted land where redevelopment is needed. The purpose of the tool is to incentivize housing production at*

*higher densities, not to just raise revenue. Depending on how the policy would be designed, it is possible that some people in the county could see their property taxes decrease (e.g. increases in the tax on land portion can be offset by reducing tax on the building portion.)*

*The proposed recommendations related to a split-rate property tax call for study and analysis, which would include public discussion, before any decision is made regarding implementation.*

*For a more detailed description of split-rate tax, please see this article by the D.C. Policy Center at <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/land-value-tax/>.*

3. How does Planning propose to achieve the suggested changes to the tax structure to achieve a split-rate property tax—where land is taxed at a higher rate than improvements in order to capture increased value of land after up zoning? (Ref. Actions 3.2.1.(a) and Policy 7.3.3)  
**Isn't the property tax structure controlled by the state with and would have to be changed statewide?**

*If a split-rate property tax is pursued for Montgomery County, it would likely need a state legislative action. The goal of the proposed policies and actions is to study a split-rate property tax tool as a way to help Montgomery County advance the equitable application of tax policies and help incentivize the types of development needed to support the growth of the county going forward.*

**Board Chair says split-rate property tax won't impact SFH zones. But what happens when SFH zones disappear, and properties along transit corridors, for example, are upzoned to CR or other higher density zones? Will split-rate property tax be implemented? We need more clarification.**

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 does not recommend eliminating single-family housing zones. It recommends allowing more diverse housing types near transit stations that will require some revisions to zoning. The proposed Action 1.1.4.a states, "Further the [Missing Middle Housing Study](#) by identifying options and implementation strategies to increase the variety and density of housing types in areas zoned for single-family detached and semi-detached housing, particularly in areas located within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of rail and bus rapid transit (BRT)".*

*For split-rate property taxes, please see the answer to Question 2 above.*

4. Could you clarify the impact on different parts of the county of various tools described in Thrive 2050, from ZTAs to eliminate some detached single-family home zoning to land value capture taxes on "underutilized" properties?

For example, Rockville, Gaithersburg, and other municipalities have their own zoning authority or power to overrule ZTAs. HOA neighborhoods have covenants which trump any effort to upzone their properties. The bulk of the denser, liberalized zoning and increased taxes will mainly fall on downcounty older unincorporated neighborhoods. Is it equitable to implement upzonings and subsequent "land capture value" split property taxes in one neighborhood, and not in another protected by an HOA?

*The proposed recommendations of Thrive Montgomery 2050 will be further refined through subsequent studies and master plans before they can be implemented using zoning changes, taxes or other tools. The potential zoning changes will vary depending upon the location and the intent of the policy recommendations. For example, the recommendations related to single-family housing (SFH) zoning focus on SFH zones that are located within a half mile of a transit station as one strategy to direct future growth along corridors. At the same time, a contextual approach will be needed along a corridor to identify appropriate zoning designations for down-county urban areas and mid-county suburban areas along the same transit corridor to reflect their varied location and context. Future corridor master plans will provide this more contextual approach.*

*Any changes recommended by Thrive Montgomery 2050 will not apply to municipalities, such as Rockville and Gaithersburg, that have their own planning and zoning authority. Under Section 20-509 of the State Land Use Article, other municipalities may regulate only the construction, repair, or remodeling of single-family residential houses or buildings on land zoned for single-family residential use as it relates to: residential parking; the location of structures, including setback requirements; the dimensions of structures, including height, bulk, massing, and design; and lot coverage, including impervious surfaces. Within the scope of this provision, a municipality may have more restrictive conditions under any of these topics.*

*Homeowners' associations rules and covenants do not trump the county's Zoning Ordinance. If the County Council approves a zoning designation change for an area, that zoning change will apply equally to all properties in that area regardless of whether properties are within an HOA neighborhood. HOAs, however, can make their covenants more restrictive to disallow things that are allowed in the Zoning Ordinance, like Accessory Dwelling Units. See [PHED Committee staff report on Accessory Dwelling Units](#) (circle 16/page 28) for reference.*

*Land value capture (LVC) is a type of public financing mechanism to provide funding for infrastructure improvements to support or kick-start private development in desirable locations or underutilized properties. The public investment is recovered (captured) from the increase in property value generated by new development. LVC can help mitigate the challenges in obtaining public funding, while also providing incentives/benefits to private sector partners. The Plan recommends researching how land value capture funds infrastructure in other counties as well as considering changes to tax policy to use land value capture in Montgomery County. For the split-rate property tax description, please see the answer to Question 2.*

**5. What tools would Thrive Montgomery 2050 give you that you don't already have?**

*Many tools needed for plan implementation are already in place (see the response to the second half of this question below). In addition, the draft Plan recommends exploring new tools such as funding and taxing mechanisms to generate new revenue to support public investments, equitable planning tools and other tools based on recent planning best practices, combined with modifications of existing codes, regulations and other tools.*

**What tools will be used to reach goals and objectives outlined in Thrive 2050?**

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommendations will be implemented through local area master plans; countywide functional plans; changes to parts of the County Code including the Zoning*

*Ordinance, the Subdivision regulations, the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance and the Growth and Infrastructure Policy (previously called Subdivision Staging Policy); the county's Capital Improvement Program (CIP); facility plans; and various local, state and federal funding sources. For a full description of the possible tools for implementation, please see the Implementation Chapter of the [Public Hearing Draft Plan](#).*

Director Gwen Wright stated her preference is to implement Thrive through master and sector plans. She does not believe countywide ZTAs and LMAs are the appropriate tool. What is the view of the Board Chair?

*The Planning Board members will have the opportunity to express their preferences and modify the draft Plan as they see appropriate during the work sessions following the public hearing on the draft Plan on November 19, 2020.*

Since it is the Department's intent to upzone some or all single family zoning, what is your plan to notify property owners that you propose to rezone their property?

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 does not propose to upzone all single-family zoning. As a General Plan providing high-level policy guidance, it also does not change any zoning. The draft Plan recommends reexamining single-family zoning within a half-mile of transit stations to allow more housing options as a way to accommodate and direct future growth along corridors. If the County Council approves the recommendations of Thrive Montgomery 2050 to allow diverse housing types near transit stations, subsequent local area master plan amendments for transit station areas and future corridor plans will be undertaken to study and define the exact nature and type of zoning map changes needed to implement the Thrive Montgomery's recommended policies. Any zoning changes would take place through a zoning map amendment (Sectional Map Amendment) or a zoning text amendment (ZTA).*

*Regarding public notification of zoning changes, in addition to the community outreach for any local master plan amendment, all property owners affected by recommended zoning changes in that plan will be notified at the time of a Sectional Map Amendment. ZTAs, which are introduced by the County Council, follow the public noticing requirements for a public hearing by the Planning Board and a public hearing by County Council.*

Also related to notification, we have received complaints that notices were not sent by the Planning Department to Civic Associations when public projects are proposed in their neighborhoods even though they are correctly on the mailing list. Do you plan to review and revise your notification policies and ensure that everyone in the Department is using the same policy? When you change policies, what steps are you taking to inform the community of your changes?

*The Planning Department maintains a list of all homeowner and civic associations in the county and uses it to notify homeowner and civic associations of any zoning changes or other projects that are reviewed by the Planning Board as required by law or Planning Board procedures. However, it is the responsibility of homeowner and civic associations to keep the contact list up to date by notifying the Planning Department of any changes in their office holder contacts.*

*In addition to any notification required by law, the Planning Department uses a variety of communications tools to publicize its projects and initiatives, including press releases, electronic*

*and traditional mailings to civic and homeowner associations, notices in the Board's weekly agendas, the Department's web site, social media and print advertising.*

6. How and under what authority is the Planning Department envisioning adding community schools to compact communities?

*Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has the authority for adding any new school facilities. The role of Thrive Montgomery 2050, as a high-level planning policy guidance document, is to influence MCPS' facility planning and decision-making in identifying and designing sites for future schools. The concept of Complete Communities is a change from our current car-oriented model of fewer and bigger facilities to a neighborhood-based model where schools and other public facilities (recreation centers, libraries, parks, health centers, etc.) are accessible to more people by walking and cycling. Acquiring land and buildings these facilities within future Complete Communities will go through the same facility planning process that is in place now (or as modified to suit future needs).*

How does Planning propose finding more land for schools particularly in downcounty areas that are targeted for infill?

*Montgomery Planning has focused on planning for infill development, including public facility sites, in multiple master plans in recent years. Local area master plans identify potential sites for future schools, which are then acquired through dedication by private developers during the redevelopment process or purchase by MCPS if there is no redevelopment happening. Thrive Montgomery 2050 also supports providing new school sites by other mechanisms such as public/private partnerships, reuse of closed school sites, and acquisition through purchase or reuse of vacant office buildings.*

Does Planning envision the disappearance of the cluster school system and magnet or immersion programs in order to increase walkability?

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 only focuses on guidance for the location and design of school sites. Decisions on the organization of educational programs such as cluster school system and magnet and immersion programs are outside of Thrive Montgomery's purview. Nevertheless, the ideas of walkability, and cluster school system and magnet or immersion programs can co-exist and support each other.*

7. Thrive 2050 treats older residents - a growing demographic - inconsistently. On one side, increasing the number of walkable communities will serve able bodied seniors well but without ensuring the availability of full services – like medical care and transit – may diminish their quality of life. On the other side, for most seniors aging in place on fixed incomes, increased property taxes will force them out of their homes and probably out of the county. How can you improve the recommendations for equity for all seniors? **Planning says millennials and senior populations have similar goals. Unaddressed is the challenge of aging in place on a fixed income when property values and taxes constantly increase every year.**

*Some of these challenges are directly related to the existing development pattern of our neighborhoods, currently dominated by uniform housing of similar size and type spread out over*



larger areas. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is proposing to address these challenges through several recommendations.

*It proposes to increase the diversity of housing types in single-family neighborhoods to give older adults more options to downsize and move to a smaller unit in the same neighborhood. This can reduce their housing costs while staying in the same neighborhood so they don't lose their social network. Some homeowners can create an accessory dwelling unit in their homes, which can provide an extra source of income to help address the high cost of living in the Washington DC region.*

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 is recommending Complete Communities where essential services, including health care and access to public transit, should be available nearby for those who cannot or do not want to drive.*

8. What is the first priority of Thrive 2050? Housing or transit? **Attainable housing or affordable housing?**

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 does not designate any one issue as the highest priority.*

*The [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Issues Report](#), published in February 2020, recognized that the County's major issues that should be addressed by the General Plan Update cannot be put into separate boxes; they are intertwined and must be addressed in a comprehensive fashion. For example, we must address our housing affordability problem as it threatens our economy, reinforces increasing inequality and segregation, and makes it harder to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions as people look for cheaper housing farther out but have to travel longer distances to jobs. We cannot solve our affordable housing problem without increasing the supply of attainable housing (market-affordable housing of various types, sizes and price points). Lack of sufficient attainable housing puts upward pressure on the prices and rents for all housing types, which negatively impacts the ability of government and non-profits to create affordable housing through limited public subsidies and funding sources.*

9. Could you define attainable housing and talk about how the market can be regulated to achieve attainable housing in a market economy?

*Attainability in housing is the ability of households of various incomes and sizes to obtain housing suitable for their needs and affordable to them. Implicit in attainability is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exists in the local market.*

*There is a growing need to make sure the market-rate housing is attainable, appropriate and suitable for the households that live here. It implies that a wide range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) must be available in the local market.*

*Housing policy traditionally has focused solely on affordability, a measure of whether households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. The term affordability is often associated with some form of public subsidies. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is shifting this focus to also include attainability. Having a regulatory framework that increases the supply of market-rate housing*

*units to bring it more in line with demand will put downward pressure on home prices and rents and help make housing attainable to a broad range of incomes and household types.*

10. What metrics will you use, at what intervals, to determine a) that you are on the right path to the goals and b) that you have succeeded in actualizing the narrative of the document? (The narrative is a really utopian vision that doesn't seem to take into account human nature and failings.)

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 recommends developing baseline performance measures within two years of Plan adoption. Based on the final Plan's goals, the baseline performance measures will include tangible metrics for which data is available to track over time. The metrics will track progress in achieving the three key outcomes in the Plan: Community Equity, Economic Health and Environmental Resilience. The Plan recommends an evaluation every five to ten years to track the Plan's progress in achieving its goals.*

11. Can you explain the anticipated population and acreage of a compact community along a corridor? What are the services, transportation, and other public facilities that would need to be contained in the community in order for it to be considered complete?

*The detailed elements of Complete Communities such as acreage, population, and the mix of uses and housing types will vary depending upon their location, transit accessibility, natural and built form and other characteristics. The exact size, form and other details of Complete Communities will be determined by subsequent studies or master plans after the approval of Thrive Montgomery 2050.*

*The draft Plan states, "Complete Communities in urban areas will include every element necessary to support daily life within a 15-minute walk, with a mix of uses and high-density commercial and residential development near Metrorail and Purple Line stations. Complete Communities in suburban areas will be located around and near MARC and bus rapid transit (BRT) stations and will support a mix of uses as well as moderate density housing, including types such as duplexes, triplexes, and low-rise multi-family buildings. Complete Communities in suburban and rural communities will be supported by microtransit and characterized by a variety of uses, amenities, and housing types to meet daily needs." (p.52)*

## **II. From the Chat**

1. Equity and resilience cannot be achieved by the tired old trope of "smart growth" or compact development. As remnant natural areas are relentlessly sacrificed for yet more cookie cutter mixed use developments, community rates of asthma, heart attacks / strokes and heat illness increase worsening health inequities and lessening resilience.

*The current state of inequity and racial segregation is directly related to our land use pattern and past development practices. Natural areas are at a much higher risk of destruction from the sprawl and car-oriented development patterns of the past 50 years than the smart growth principles of compact development and urbanism that stress transit, walkability, more active lifestyle, and preservation and reduced consumption of limited natural resources. For example, the mixed-use Pike and Rose development is far more sustainable over what was there before (see before and after pictures in the presentation of October 12, 2020).*

2. We learned many years ago from the Go Montgomery County Council that growth does not pay for itself. There is always subsidy, how much depends on impact fees collected and we see less commitment with collection of impact fees today that we have in years past

*We disagree with the notion that growth does not pay for itself. Growth is the currency that pays for the infrastructure and public and private services and amenities that support Montgomery County's quality of life. The opposite of growth is decline and stagnation, which is not an alternative. In addition to impact taxes paid at the time of new development, these projects generate property taxes over future years, which in turn generates additional revenue to support public services and infrastructure improvements.*

3. Another concern with this development model is accessibility. Taking Pike & Rose as an example, you cannot access the "street side" businesses from the handicapped parking area, nor can you drop someone off near those businesses. Rockville Town Square has similar issues.

*Montgomery County is always learning from these experiences and incorporating latest best practices in its planning regulations and design guidelines. Initiatives like Vision Zero are intended to enhance safe access to homes, businesses, parks and trails for all road users, irrespective of ability, mobility or age. Many recommendations under the Vision Zero umbrella, such as protected intersections and buffered bike lanes are intended to increase protection for users in wheelchairs, pushing strollers or those requiring more time to cross streets. Thrive Montgomery 2050 emphasizes easy and convenient access for all users through recommendations such as "Action 4.6.1.b: Incorporate universal design principles into the county code, regulations, policies, and guidelines to improve access for seniors and persons with disabilities."*

4. If you are proposing upzoning of some single family properties, are they not subject to split rate property tax for underutilized potential?

*Upzoning of single-family properties will not automatically subject them to split-rate property taxes. Both recommendations, if pursued, will require separate studies and implementation actions. Please see the split-rate property tax discussion in Question 2.*

5. How does (this plan) shift the burden (from residents to developers), if the developers are constantly being forgiven their impact taxes?

*Private developers share the responsibility of investing in public schools and roads by paying impact taxes for both. Impact taxes are paid on the vast majority of development.*

*Traditionally, updates to the Growth and Infrastructure Policy (previously called Subdivision Staging Policy) have been conducted concurrently with reviews of development impact taxes. The County Council may waive impact taxes to achieve other important priorities, like increased affordable housing, family-sized units, or building in an economically distressed area like an Opportunity Zone.*

*In the current update to the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, developers will be required to make Utilization Premium Payments -- on top of impact taxes -- if they are building in an area served by*



*overcrowded schools. Likewise, developers are responsible for mitigating their transportation impacts whenever a project fails our multimodal local area transportation review tests. The developer must make the necessary transportation infrastructure improvements or pay a commensurate mitigation fee.*

6. We have seen a shift in County Council support on CIP to promote areas in the down county in order to facilitate growth, so you simply cannot say there is no cost to the County as a whole.

*Revenues generated by new development can be spent to improve infrastructure and services elsewhere in the county. Therefore, the benefits of growth are not limited to only where the development takes place. Similarly, the negative impacts of decline and disinvestment also impact all residents in the County as it hinders the county's ability to provide better services. The county's planning framework directs growth to areas where denser development is most appropriate due to the infrastructure already in place to support new growth.*

If we abandon projects in the Mid County and Up County areas to promote higher density growth in the down county then there is a shift and a disproportionate cost to residents depending on where they live. When I say abandon projects I am speaking of CIP projects to support the growth proposed.

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 is the first General Plan for the county that establishes equity as a core value and outcome of the Plan. It includes recommendations to make sure that all parts of the county receive an equitable share of public support and investment. This focus on the equitable provision of public facilities and services in the draft Plan is intended to influence future CIP facility and infrastructure planning and siting.*

*Additionally, Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes to place most of our future growth in places that will be more suitable to accommodate and support growth. It proposes that all future growth be transit accessible to reduce traffic congestion and help achieve our greenhouse gas reduction and other goals. It is also proposing that existing centers of activity (in Mid-county and Upcounty areas) that currently do not have adequate transit should have reliable and convenient transit.*

7. Tree protection laws don't apply to developers in any significant way. Home redeveloped one block from me, cut five trees on the property and installed a 100-foot long driveway on a 6 percent grade right to the street. Driveway is a completely unimpeded flow to street, 300-yards from Rock Creek.

*Thrive Montgomery 2050, as a high-level policy document, has numerous goals and policies designed to protect and enhance our natural resources, including protecting and expanding the tree canopy. This policy guidance will support the county's use of existing regulations and laws to protect forest and specimen trees.*

8. My fear is the green we get in these high density communities is artificial like we are seeing in Bethesda today. Except it will be all over the county which will encourage heat islands but more.

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes a more compact development pattern with variation in densities appropriate to the location and context with additional guidance to make future development more sustainable. For example, Action 6.2.1.a. states, "Develop guidelines and standards for climate-sensitive design principles and materials for new public and private*

*development projects. Ensure these standards include strategies to maximize greenhouse gas reductions in the built environment, including approaches for generating clean renewable energy and reducing heat island effect.” And “Action 8.3.3.c: Create an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment and analyze trends from 1990 to 2020. Establish policies to regain and exceed 1990 tree canopy levels. Ensure a county-wide net-zero loss of tree canopy through a robust street tree-planting program in coordination with bicycle and pedestrian facilities.”*

9. Is getting more use out of athletic fields code for using more synthetic turf? Climate change should have already placed a moratorium on the use of ST - it off-gasses methane and ethylene over the entire life of the pitch.

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 has numerous broad goals and policies designed to protect and enhance our natural resources, but as a high-level policy plan does not speak to this specific issue.*

10. The draft plan mentions the “natural environment” in 9 different locations, using terms such as “protecting and preserving its natural environment” or “fighting to protect the natural environment”. Protecting and preserving our natural environment should not include “stream restorations” (with some exceptions such as “daylighting” piped streams and concrete culvert removal) which convert sections of natural stream valleys into artificial, engineered stormwater conveyances. There are upland (out of stream valley) alternatives that would protect our natural areas and streams by controlling stormwater within previously disturbed areas.

*The approach to stream restoration has changed dramatically from past practices that replaced natural stream channels with engineered channels or storm drainage systems. Today, stream restoration is performed on severely damaged streams and begins with controlling stormflows using upland stormwater treatment. Stream restoration then uses techniques like reconnecting the stream channel to the floodplain, recreating stream habitat structure, and replanting with native vegetation to restore the stream to a very natural condition. This is the kind of stream restoration recommended in Thrive Montgomery 2050.*

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 also supports the use of best practices in stream valley preservation. The Plan’s call for a compact form of development combined with reduced imperviousness and the latest stormwater management practices will also help reduce the unimpeded flow of rainwater into streams, reducing the need for stream restoration techniques and keeping the streams in as natural a state as possible.*

11. Since our current infrastructure (water, power, SWM, roads / bridges, street trees, schools) is woefully inadequate for the current population, and climate change will create new order of magnitude stressors for infrastructure, how will you realistically support these denser communities?

*Montgomery County uses some of the best practices among similarly sized jurisdictions in the country to provide essential public services and infrastructure to support its residents’ high quality of life. The Growth and Infrastructure Policy (previously called Subdivision Staging Policy), e.g. is the main mechanism to ensure that critical infrastructure, including schools and transportation facilities, are adequate to support current populations and approved projects that will bring new residents to the county. There will likely be other tools in the future to help us provide and maintain adequate infrastructure and public services.*

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 recognizes that providing adequate infrastructure is always a challenge, which will get more difficult with the additional threats of climate change. The draft Plan strongly recommends adopting a compact form of development because providing adequate infrastructure for compact development is more efficient (serves more people with lower per capita costs) than for suburban sprawl. Thrive Montgomery 2050 addresses the challenges of adapting to climate change through recommendations such as Policy 6.2.4: “Plan and design new utility infrastructure, including electrical, water and sewer, stormwater, communications, and other infrastructure improvements that incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to ensure service continuity during major hazard events.”*

12. Will "complete communities" include urban agriculture, net zero stormwater standards, water supply, distributed power systems, composting, and other sustainable practices? It is a fallacy to call high density green and sustainable when it must be supported by long-distance hauling bringing resources in and carrying waste out. Manhattan could not exist without landfills in New Jersey and a forested water supply.

*Complete Communities are meant to be as sustainable as possible. Thrive Montgomery 2050 includes multiple policies that support urban agriculture and a variety of sustainable green infrastructure and other practices. They are meant to encourage generating green energy, reducing waste, and creating sustainable infrastructure as well as providing essential services closer to the users. For example, Policy 6.2.5 recommends reducing “the county’s energy demand and generate all energy needs by clean, efficient, and renewable methods that are more climate resilient, less centralized in generation and distribution, and increasingly able to use more local sources of power.” Action 7.5.1.b recommends updating “the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance to identify urban and suburban farming as permitted uses.”*

13. One aim is to change the current pattern of development to prevent undesirable effects on the natural environment. The county zoning now allows replacing individual houses of modest size with mansions and concrete driveways, which drastically reduce the amount of permeable, natural land and frequently create stormwater runoff for neighboring properties. When and what kind of modification of zoning will change this?

*Thrive Montgomery 2050 will not change zoning, but its recommendations are intended to influence future changes in zoning and other regulations that will prevent environmentally damaging practices and lead to more sustainable developments. The exact kind and timing of these changes will be dependent on future plans, studies or other actions that will take place over the coming years after the Plan is approved.*

14. The aim of eradicating greenhouse gas emissions is unrealistic as long as the state permits the main provider of electricity in the county to use primarily non-renewable sources for power generation.

*The county is developing a [Climate Action and Resilience Plan](#) and intends to finalize it by early 2021. The Climate Action and Resilience Plan will create a path forward to achieve zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2035 using multiple new and existing public and private tools and strategies to fight climate change. Using all electricity generated by renewable sources is a big part of the that Plan. The Thrive Montgomery 2050 and Climate Action Plan teams have*

*collaborated across these projects to ensure their respective recommendations support the County's goal to eliminate GHG emissions.*

15. The county should stop equating proximity to MARC with proximity to Metro stations as an advantage for nearby development unless the level of service on MARC is much increased.

*Montgomery Planning agrees that the current MARC service is not adequate to meet the needs of residents in the same way as Metro service. Therefore, Thrive Montgomery 2050 proposes to enhance this service: "Action 4.1.2.b: Develop a strategy to expand commuter rail capacity on the MARC Brunswick Line to provide additional station locations in Montgomery County and provide bidirectional all-day service, seven days a week."*