

October Program: Pedestrian Safety and Transportation

▮ Eli Glazier of the Montgomery County Planning Department will discuss the County's first Pedestrian Master Plan | [P. 3](#)

▮ Jeff Folden of the Maryland State Highway Administration will brief us on "Op Lanes Maryland," the American Legion Bridge/I-495/I-270 traffic relief program | [P. 5](#)

▮ The Purple Line light rail timeline, 1970–2026 | [P. 8](#)

MCCF's Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget | The Civic Federation remains in the black for another year. Remember to pay your dues! | [P. 7](#)

MCCF Resolution | Thrive Montgomery 2050 and Upzoning, approved September 2022 | [P. 10](#)

Setting Guardrails for Thrive Montgomery 2050 | Details of Alissa Luepke Pier's presentation at MCCF's September 20, 2022, general meeting | [P. 12](#)

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of note

Next MCCF Meeting #936

Monday, October 10, 2022, 7:30 p.m.
online via Zoom. Topic: "Pedestrian Safety and Transportation."

▮ [Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

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Meeting Minutes

General Meeting #935

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Membership Application

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Federation Meeting #936

Monday, October 10, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: September General Meeting **P.17**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. October Program: Pedestrian Safety/Transportation/Purple Line **P.3**
7. Committee Reports
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

About MCCF Meetings

All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public. They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the start time is now at 7:30 p.m.

The October 10 meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:30 p.m.:

■ To be part of the video conference, first **visit the Zoom website** to download the program for your phone or computer.

■ Details: Monday, October 10, 2022, 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

■ To **join the Zoom meeting from your browser, use this link.**

■ To participate by phone (audio only), call 301.715.8592. The meeting ID is 854 7052 1058. No password is required.

We hope you will join us! ■

mccf

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.**, is a county-wide nonprofit educational and advocacy organization founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. Monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public (agenda and details at left).

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August. It is emailed to delegates, associate members, news media, and local, state, and federal officials. **Recipients are encouraged to forward the *Civic Federation News* to all association members, friends, and neighbors.** Permission is granted to reproduce any article, provided that proper credit is given to the "*Civic Federation News* of the Montgomery County (Md.) Civic Federation."

Civic Federation News

civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 22

Pedestrian and Transportation Issues: Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan

By Alan Bowser, MCCF President

On October 10, 2022, the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., will receive updates on two of the priority issues facing the County: pedestrian safety and transportation. We are pleased to welcome Eli Glazier of the Montgomery County Planning Department who will discuss the County's first Pedestrian Master Plan and Jeff Folden of the Maryland State Highway Administration who will discuss plans for the American Legion Bridge and expansion of I-270 ([see page 5](#)).

PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

The Montgomery County Planning Department is developing the county's first Pedestrian Master Plan. The plan seeks to make walking and rolling safer, more comfort-

able, more convenient, and more accessible for pedestrians of all ages and abilities in all parts of the County. According to the Planning Department, the plan will complement the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan and plans for other modes of transportation through strategies for making streets safer and more accessible. In addition to prioritizing needed infrastructure, it will recommend new and amended policies and operational practices, design standards, and programming.

The recommendations build on years of analysis and community feedback to establish a path toward making Montgomery County safer, more navigable, and more comfortable for pedestrians of all ages and abilities. The recommendations are organized around six themes: build,

maintain, protect, expand access, monitor, and fund. Notable recommendations are:

- Plan to build more sidewalks faster,
- Eliminate the need to push a button to cross the street,
- Assume county control of state highways in some locations,
- Improve the quality of pedestrian lighting,
- Remove sidewalk obstructions,
- Identify new revenue sources to fund pedestrian improvements.

[The draft recommendations can be viewed online here.](#)

The recommendations are informed by the March 2022 Pedestrian Master Plan Existing Conditions Report, which provided a deep understanding of existing pedes-

Pedestrian Plan, cont.

trian conditions and attitudes in the county and was based on four main data sources:

- A statistically valid pedestrian survey, sent to 60,000 households, that documents pedestrian activity and perceptions for the county as a whole and for different land-use types;

- A student travel tally that describes how public-school students arrive to and depart from school, completed by more than 70,000 students;

- A comfortable pedestrian connectivity analysis that catalogs pedestrian conditions along the entirety of the pedestrian transportation network in Montgomery County; and

- A 2015–2020 pedestrian crash analysis identifying trends in pedestrian crashes.



ABOUT THE PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

The Pedestrian Master Plan identifies best practices, analyzes information from people who walk and roll, and examines ways of improving the pedestrian experience using several analytical tools, including a pedestrian comfort analysis and a crash analysis. The resulting Pedestrian Master Plan will provide County leaders and agencies, such as Montgomery County Department of Transportation and the Department of Permitting Services, recommendations and guidance related to:

- Prioritization of pedestrian pathways and safe crossings;

- Pedestrian-supportive policies and operational practices; and

- A pedestrian design toolkit of treatments and operational approaches to traffic calming, signal timing, accessibility features, and more.

Recommendations will support making Montgomery County universally accessible to pedestrians of all ages and abilities with particular attention paid to those pedestrians using mobility devices like wheelchairs or canes. The Pedestrian Master Plan will complement the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050 (currently under County Council review, see page X), and other Vision Zero-related efforts to make streets safer and more accessible, including the 2019 Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan and the 2019 Aspen Hill Vision Zero Study. ■

'Op Lanes Maryland,' the American Legion Bridge I-495/I-270 Traffic Relief Program

By Jerry Garson, MCCF Transportation Committee Chair

The Civic Federation has given priority attention to the important transportation issues facing the County, most notably, the delayed construction of the Purple Line (see [page 8](#)), the development of a County-wide bus rapid transit system, the Corridor Cities Transitway, the replacement of the American Legion Bridge, and the plans to expand I-495 and I-270. Our speaker, Jeff Folden, the Project Director for the Op Lanes Maryland's American Legion Bridge I-495/I-270 Traffic Relief program, will brief Federation delegates on recent developments.

In August 2022, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was approved by the Federal Government. It also reflects successful

efforts to avoid all residential and business displacements with the Preferred Alternative. On Plummers Island—a research site for the Washington Biologists Field Club—the Preferred Alternative would reduce impacts by 90% to about 0.2 of an acre, by strategically locating piers for the new American Legion Bridge.

According to FEIS, “the Preferred Alternative would replace the more than 60-year-old American Legion Bridge, address existing traffic and long-term traffic growth, reduce congestion, enhance trip reliability, support regional transit improvements, and foster new opportunities for transit and increased carpool/vanpool/ridesharing that would help reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles in the National Capital Region.”

Regarding traffic benefits, the

FEIS traffic analysis concludes: “The Preferred Alternative is projected to provide meaningful operational benefits to the system even though it includes no action or no improvements for a large portion of the study area to avoid and minimize environmental and property impacts. This alternative would significantly increase throughput across the American Legion Bridge and on the southern section of I-270 while reducing congestion. It would also increase speeds, improve reliability, and reduce travel times and delays along the majority of I-495, I-270, and the surrounding roadway network compared to the No Build Alternative.”

Along with other new or upgraded pedestrian and bicycle improvements within the area of Phase 1 South, the

Op Lanes Maryland, cont.

Preferred Alternative would include a new shared-use path on the American Legion Bridge across the Potomac River along the east side. A direct connection of the shared-use path from the bridge to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath has been incorporated into the alternative [FEIS, page 3-29 (link at end)].

On I-495, the Preferred Alternative would include two new High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) managed lanes in each direction from south of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Fairfax County, Virginia, to west of MD 187 (Old Georgetown Road) in Montgomery County, Maryland. On I-270, the Preferred Alternative would convert the existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction to a HOT managed lane and add one new HOT managed

lane in each direction on I-270 from I-495 to north of I-370, and on the I-270 east and west spurs. No action or no improvements would be included at this time on I-495 east of the I-270 east spur to MD 5.

FEIS calculations comparing the Preferred Alternative to No Build indicated the former would:

- Reduce system-wide delay for the entire study area by 13% during the AM peak period and by 38% during the PM peak period compared to 2045 No Build conditions [FEIS, page 4-10].

- Improve travel speeds and provide the option for a free flow trip in the HOT managed lanes with an average speed of 60 mph [FEIS, Table 4-6, page 4-12].

- Provide benefits to the existing lanes by improving average speeds in the general-purpose lanes. Detailed corridor travel speed results

by peak hour and direction for the general-purpose lanes and the managed lanes are provided in Table 4-7 [FEIS, page 4-13].

Beyond the travel benefits, the FEIS claims the Preferred Alternative will create new opportunities for regional transit bus service through a reliable trip in the HOT-managed lanes and would support carpooling by allowing HOV3+ vehicles and transit vehicles to travel in the HOT managed lanes toll-free.

Other multimodal benefits identified in the FEIS include commitments to increase the number of bus bays at WMATA Shady Grove Metro-rail Station and parking capacity at Westfield Montgomery Mall Transit Center. As part of the previously approved Phase Public-Private Partnership (P3) Agreement, the Phase Developer and MDOT SHA agreed to

Op Lanes Maryland, cont.

additional transit commitments when a Section P3 Agreement is approved by the Maryland Board of Public Works and financial close is achieved. These include an estimated \$300 million for transit services in Montgomery County over the operating term of Phase 1 South. After achieving financial close of the Section P3 Agreement for Phase 1 South, MDOT would fund not less than \$60 million from the Development Rights Fee, provided by the developer, for design and permitting of high priority transit investments in Montgomery County, and would deliver the Metropolitan Grove Bus O&M Facility, including the necessary bus fleet.

The full 481-page *I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study Final Environmental Impact Statement* is available [here](#). ■

MoCo Civic Federation Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget

At right is the Montgomery County Civic Federation Inc., budget for the Fiscal Year 2022 starting on July 1, 2022, and ending on June 30, 2023. This will be approved at the October 10, 2022, meeting.

REVENUES

Membership Dues	2,300.00
Total Revenues	2,300.00

EXPENSES

Member Communications	
Post Office Box and Postage	130.00
Website	600.00
Civic and Social Betterment Federation Meetings	50.00
Awards Dinner	160.00
Organizational Support	
Officers Supplies and Support Committees	300.00
	100.00
Memberships	300.00
Insurance	650.00
Miscellaneous	10.00
Total Expenses	2,300.00

Net Income (excess expenditures) for the period 0.00

Purple Line Light Rail Line Timeline: A Year-by-Year Listing of Project Highlights

By Jerry Garson, MCCF Transportation Chair

The Purple Line is a 16.2-mile light rail line that will extend from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County. Here is the project's timeline:

1970

Bethesda Master Plan proposal. Proposed use of the Georgetown Branch of the CSX railroad tracks for transit.

1987

CSX expressed a desire to abandon the Georgetown Branch rail line. Maryland leaders immediately started planning to repurpose it for transit and a hiking trail.

1988

Montgomery County purchased Georgetown Branch railroad tracks right-of-way.

2002–2008

The Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Authority studied a range of alignments and transit modes.

2008

The Completed Draft Environmental Study was issued.

2009

Light rail was selected as the mode of transit alignment identified.

2009–2014

Conceptual and preliminary engineering phase of project.

2013

The Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Authority selected P3 for project delivery.

2014

Federal Transit Administration issued the Record of Decision.

2014

The Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Administration issued Request for Proposals.

2016

PLPT selected as Concessionaire.

2016

Construction started

Purple Line Timeline, cont.

The contract was won by the Purple Line Transit Partners, led by construction giant Fluor Corporation, and Meridiam, Star America, CAF and Alternate Concepts. MTA officials forecasted that service would begin by late 2022.

As the Purple Line project was getting off the ground in 2016, a lawsuit was brought forward by opponents of the project. In the ruling of the lawsuit, announced in August 2016, U.S. District Court judge Richard Leon ordered a new forecast on the light rail's ridership to account for the decreasing ridership on Metro trains. After Leon ordered this new report, the Maryland Department of Transportation appealed the decision, which halted all construction. Eleven months later, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Circuit Court



of Appeals allowed for construction to continue, and the project broke ground in August 2017.

In May 2020, the partnership of construction firms wrote a letter saying they would stop work on the Purple Line because MTA would not pay added construction costs. After failed negotiations and lawsuits, the construction firms quit construction and walked off the job in September 2020.

A new general contractor was selected in November 2021 and a new contract was signed in April 2022. This new agreement added \$3.7 billion to the total cost of building, running, and maintaining the Purple

Line for 30 years, bringing it to \$9.3 billion. Construction costs alone rose \$1.46 billion, bringing the total to \$3.4 billion.

2020

The light rail vehicles designed to run on the Purple Line are being built by CAF at their Elmira, New York, facility. Each train is 140 feet long, consists of 5 modules, and can carry up to 431 passengers (seated plus standing). CAF began testing the cars in 2020. Fabrication of all 130 modular car shells at the CAF facility in Spain was completed in June 2021; 22 of the 26 trains have been assembled as of June 2022.

2026

Purple Line Service to begin in the Fall of 2026. This is only 56 years after the project was proposed in 1970. ■

Resolution of the MoCo Civic Federation on Thrive Montgomery 2050 and Upzoning

Whereas, the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. (hereinafter the Federation), has taken serious interest in the development and drafting of the proposed 30-year General Plan authored by the Montgomery County Planning Board, known as Thrive Montgomery 2050; and

Whereas, the Federation has taken note of the many community-based efforts around the County to inform County residents of the goals of the proposed General Plan, and the various problematic issues associated with it; and

Whereas, the Federation strongly believes in the value and necessity of general planning which has the support of the broad community and which has allowed for broad-based community input; and

Whereas, the Federation has regularly expressed concern about the Montgomery County Council's decision-making timetable for finalization of the draft Plan, as it has stated its goal to complete its deliberations on the draft Plan and to hold a final vote on the draft Plan by the end of October 2022; and

Whereas, the Federation delegates believe that there has been grossly inadequate public outreach and community engagement related to the draft Plan, resulting in a lack of community ownership in the draft Plan and its proposed objectives and manner of implementation; and

Whereas, the Federation delegates have identified serious shortcomings in the draft Plan under consideration by the Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Develop-

ment Committee, specifically related to the issues of affordable housing, gentrification, environmental sustainability, economic development and racial justice and social equity; and

Whereas, the Federation strongly believes that both the draft Plan and the community engagement process are deeply flawed and require serious revision;

Therefore Be It Resolved, the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.,

Calls upon the current Montgomery County Council to disapprove the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan and to carry these deliberations over to the new County Council to be seated in December 2022; and

Thrive Resolution, cont.

Calls upon the new Montgomery County Council to draft and include new standalone chapters in the draft document pertaining to the environment, economic development, housing—especially affordable housing—and racial equity and social justice issues; and

Calls upon the new Montgomery County Council to reaffirm a commitment to adequate public consultations about the draft Plan, specifically requesting that the new County Council hold separate public hearings on all new chapters added to the draft Plan, as well as a final public hearing on any revised draft document, developed by Council staff; and

Calls upon the new Montgomery County Council to reaffirm a commitment to the master-planning

process for the implementation of any zoning changes suggested by the draft plan; and

Calls upon the new Montgomery County Council and Planning Board to clarify the definition of “limited growth” areas in the new growth map (page 20) and identify the changes in zoning (and master planning) that will result from redefining these formerly suburban and residential areas as “limited growth” areas; and

Remains opposed to universal upzoning of all single-family and duplex by-right by zoning text amendments; and

Calls upon the new County Council to include adequate safeguards for this proposed policy to protect against unintended consequences, including: (1) considering an owner-occupancy requirement for new multiplex housing; (2) ensur-

ing adequate public facilities before new development is approved; and (3) the provision of specific metrics, measures, and methods for success and methods to test effectiveness of the Plan, and

Urges the Montgomery County Council to extend the period for outreach to Montgomery County residents by its consultants regarding racial equity and social justice issues, taking note of the fact that the current study’s organizers have expressed their view that an adequate study in Montgomery County would take at least a year, and not the several weeks as has been requested by the Council; and

Calls upon its members associations and individuals to convey these important messages to their members and neighbors.

—Approved this 12th Day of September 2022 ■

Setting Guardrails for Thrive Montgomery 2050

Alissa Luepke Pier's Presentation to MCCF at its September 20, 2022, General Meeting

By Elizabeth Joyce, MCCF Second Vice President

Award-winning architect and certified planner Alissa Luepke Pier presented a thoughtful critique of the current version of Thrive Montgomery 2050 (a few days before the three new proposed chapters were unveiled on September 22). Based on her twelve years as vice president of the Minneapolis Planning Commission (where a Thrive-like general plan was adopted in 2018), *she warned about weaknesses that should be addressed before it is passed:*

1. Separation of Thrive from the implementation strategies in the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative. While Thrive is a general plan, it is a “red flag” and

a potential for “bait and switch,” in that it includes almost no details about how it will be implemented. Omitting these details is clearly an attempt to avoid upsetting people by making public the steps the Planning Board hopes to enact into law after Thrive is approved.

The document often makes the questionable statement that *“Thrive will not change zoning.” However, she noted, it will clearly have impacts that will profoundly change zoning*, as Councilmember Sidney Katz has often pointed out in Council meetings. Thrive is obviously written to pave the way for unstated policies, she said. *And if safeguards against the unintended negative consequences of these policies are not spelled out in the general plan,*

a jurisdiction is under no obligation to introduce them after the plan is passed. In Minneapolis, advocates of safeguards were told that because the general plan did not include measures to protect the intended beneficiaries, the city would not enact them.

2. Mistaken Assumptions on the Environment. Thrive makes the simplistic assumption that sprawl is bad, and density and “infill” development are good. Thrive mistakenly assumes that new construction is automatically “green.” The most “sustainable” building, said Ms. Pier, is one that already exists, and preservation and renovation of existing housing is “green” in itself. Less environmen-

Thrive Guardrails, cont.

tally damaging measures like better insulation are not a key feature of Thrive, with its emphasis on dense urban development. Assuming that tearing down small homes on single-family lots to build three new triplex units is environmentally friendly are inaccurate, especially if “green construction” methods (also conspicuously absent from “Thrive”) are not required” and cheap building materials are used.

The writers of the document are missing the point, she said. New construction negatively affects affordability and insurance costs, particularly for families struggling to get by. There is nothing in the document that suggests that less disruptive measures, such as insulation and solar energy that help the environment, are also an affordabil-

ity tool and a stabilizing measure that helps prevent displacement. There is also not enough about controlling the footprint of buildings to ensure adequate greenspace for people to recreate, have gardens, and appropriately manage stormwater. “There are things you will deny people forevermore if you don’t allocate space for them.” Density is a tool, not a goal, she said, and simply packing more people into existing space will not solve these fundamental problems and can seriously degrade the environment, as noted in the newly drafted proposed racial



ALISSA
LUEPKE PIER

equity chapter for Thrive (page 52).

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection agrees with Ms. Pier that the fundamental environmental assumptions of Thrive are wrong. In a September 22 letter to the Council on Thrive, DEP Intergovernmental Affairs Division Chief Steve Shofar stated:

*The fundamental premise of Thrive 2050 is that we can improve the environment and address the impact of climate change while continuing to grow through compact growth and compact communities. **This premise is not accurate.** Even “smart growth” is highly likely to result in increased negative environmental impacts despite our well-intended efforts to mitigate these impacts. Smart growth*

Thrive Guardrails, cont.

*ultimately designates many areas as ecological dead zones and often completely ignores the necessity to have sustainable green infrastructure, including tree canopy, in these areas. The focus seems to be more on ensuring that we grow where we have the transportation infrastructure. Most of our data shows that, despite our progressive approach to land use planning in the county, we continue to have declining water quality, loss of tree canopy, and loss of biodiversity. **Continuing to grow without making changes to land use policy that will better protect the environment will only make things worse.***

Note: On February 8, 2022, a court ordered Minneapolis to **halt the implantation of its 2040 plan amid concerns about its environ-**

mental impact. Montgomery County could find itself in the same position if Thrive is passed as is.

3. Fuzzy and Imprecise Goals.

■ “What do planners mean by ‘more of everything?’” she asked. How do they plan to establish “15-minute living” throughout our huge county? This is not going to happen in a 504-square-mile county with so many different areas.

■ What will they do with the people living in these areas as they transform the county on so vast a scale?

■ How to prevent displacement and also lift people out of poverty? What are the actual goals (such as a 10% decrease in the number of rent- or mortgage-stressed families in a specific time period) and what are the benchmarks to achieve these goals? Who will be held personally

accountable for meeting these goals?

■ How many units of which types do they propose? More units are not okay if families have to move from a single-family home to a high-rise condo with one bedroom.

■ Once you densify housing, who is controlling the commercial market, and how will the county ensure needed amenities for these families?

■ How to prevent developers from absorbing the benefits of “smart growth” changes, such as a decrease in parking minimums? When they stopped requiring parking at some units in Minneapolis, the developers simply pocketed the \$25,000 per unit that was saved by this “reform.” Simply getting rid of parking does not meet people’s needs!

■ How to ensure the jobs and economic development that give people a real choice about where and how to

Thrive Guardrails, cont.

live?

■ How will they meet the needs of working class and tradespeople as they cater to the younger professionals that many of these measures are geared to attract?

■ How will they ensure a basic level of dignity for all residents?

■ How to address the needs of seniors and people with disabilities, especially since 30–40% of Montgomery County residents are likely to be 55 or older in the next 30 years?

It is not responsible to suggest that these answers must come later because Thrive is a “vision” and a “philosophy” that will be worked out over 30 years, she said. As noted above, if such answers are absent from the general plan, there is no guarantee they will be dealt with in future zoning changes.

Her wide-ranging discussion of Thrive and answers to participant questions addressed a number of flaws. Most important, though, are safeguards she suggested to prevent Thrive from serving its purpose and improving life for all residents. **Safeguards she believes should be included before Thrive passes** include the following:

■ Clear statements of benchmarks and means to evaluate progress.

■ Clear guidelines on the use of empirical data for all planning. For example, there are no studies supporting Thrive’s view that “density equals affordability.” This kind of foundational assumption must be backed up by data.

■ How to plan for individual areas (one-size-fits all will not work).

■ Changes to address the vast impact of the pandemic on living and work.

■ How to encourage the commercial elements needed for successful new communities.

■ How to encourage affordable housing in a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural communities.

■ Definitions of pivotal terms such as “affordable,” “attainable,” and “equity.”

■ How to prevent potential negative impacts of upzoning (such as absentee investors buying up swaths of homes and leaving them vacant, in anticipation of future higher profits).

■ How to set up “expiration dates” for policies that are not working.

■ How to hold individuals accountable for the policies they are pushing to enact.

■ How to control who gets the benefits of density (commercial interests or residents).

Having analyzed more than

Thrive Guardrails, cont.

5,000 plans in her 12 years on the Minneapolis Planning Commission, Pier brings a unique and highly informed perspective to our County's proposed general plan. Although no one "prepped" her on how to focus her talk, she zeroed in on the plan's many flaws that could intensify rather than solve our County's problems.

A resolution recently passed by the Civic Federation asserts that the Council must not pass Thrive before correcting its numerous, serious weaknesses. Pier's generous sharing of her expertise—and her strong social conscience—validate the Civic Federation's request that the Council reject the current draft, hold hearings on the new (September 22) proposed chapters, and meaningfully engage the public in developing an effective, responsive general plan. ■

Alissa Pier's Words on the Need for Safeguards

"In an effort to alleviate the affordable housing crisis, the city [Minneapolis] is offering my community smaller, crappier housing for no less money, with the added insult to injury of making it harder for them to buy a house and build generational wealth within their own community.

"The consequences of a policy like this on a community like mine are far too harmful to be glossed over in the name of innovation. Let me be clear: Adoption of this policy without adequate safeguards will cause great harm to low-income families and communities of color, and there is no way to undo the damage once this Pandora's box is opened."

—Alissa Luepke Pier

Montgomery County's proposals are eerily similar to those passed in Minneapolis:

- Aimed to increase homeownership and equity
- By-right building of triplexes throughout the County
- Smaller but more expensive (per square foot) units
- Little community input
- One-size-fits-all (not targeted) zoning
- No benchmarks or contingency plan to assess effectiveness

"What a great waste of time and money, and energy it would be to enact a policy that might very well set your city back farther than it started from," she said. Montgomery County still has a chance to avoid Minneapolis' mistakes.

Minutes of September 12, 2022, MCCF General Virtual Online Meeting #935

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

[Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom. A total of 59 persons attended on the Zoom platform.]

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. Meeting was recorded.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Approval of June General Meeting Minutes: Moved, seconded and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report (Jerry Garson): Dues are due for the year starting July 1. Since July 1, we had

annual receipts of \$385 and total expenses of \$199, for a net balance of \$186. Current bank balance is \$8,740.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Peggy Dennis said on Tues. Oct. 11, “Kojo in Your Community” will be holding a public meeting at the Silver Spring Civic Center. There will be a panel discussion on Montgomery County housing issues. People do need to register but it’s free and they can raise issues and suggest solutions.

■ Alan Bowser noted there will be a link in the *Civic Federation News* for how people and associations can register and join the County Thanksgiving Day parade.

■ Alan announced a letter was sent today by County Executive Marc

Elrich calling on the Council to “disapprove” the draft General Plan due to shortcomings in the Racial Equity and Social Justice study.

PROGRAM: THRIVE LAND USE ISSUES

Speaker Alissa Pier spoke to us last year about Minneapolis’ experience with similar upzoning efforts. We recorded that and it was very popular on the website. We asked her to review the current Thrive draft and give her comments on it in terms of their experience.

She noted that the Thrive Plan didn’t have any direct link to the Affordable Housing Plan which is odd if that is what is expected to be implemented. Are the details being left out to keep down concerns since

September Minutes, cont.

vague goals can allow a wide range of decisions? But that vagueness would also preclude them from claiming that various issues are already resolved.

There is discussion in Thrive 2050 of environmental issues, but the emphasis was on new building, ignoring the fact that what's already built is already a sunk cost. One point that is often overlooked in discussing environmental sustainability is that it helps affordability by reducing energy costs for homeowners and reducing their out-of-pocket expenses. There wasn't much discussion about restricting building size to help with stormwater, urban agriculture, and the general value of green spaces in dense urban spaces.

The goal of 15-minute communities is a nice thought, but not

likely achievable, not least because dense areas are already built up and, elsewhere, you would increase rural sprawl. In terms of proposed housing types, there wasn't much consideration about how substituting much smaller units for existing family-sized homes would work. How do families fit in them? How do you ensure they go to those who really need lower-cost housing as opposed to going to the first person who grabs them?

The financial incentives always go to developers, rather than directly to those who need them to afford rents and down payments and without ensuring savings actually are passed on. There is also no clear analysis of our basic goal—reducing poverty—in terms of how we measure it and how do we accomplish it. The goals section at the end of each chapter specify data points, but they

are open-ended and don't specify changes that are being expected (or whether public wants them). The emphasis on transit is to eliminate cars, but most people will still want one; wealthy people can keep theirs but not lower-income folks who may need them more. A lot more detailed thinking is needed.

The same is true with the Missing Middle concept; it doesn't really get to the nitty-gritty questions or look at things like why is there so much "over-housing" on the high end, while not addressing the actual size needed at the low end. In the same way, there is a goal of allowing aging in place but nothing about how to support that other than more density. For mobility, the emphasis is on walking/ bicycling but that doesn't work for all.

After her initial presentation,

September Minutes, cont.

there was an open discussion with Ms. Pier addressing the questions raised by the audience. These included issues such as what safeguards needed to be included in the documents now, such as limiting “by-right” provisions, and how to deal with a document that was primarily lofty goals with very few stated specifics. There is value in having them spell out what they envision, such as what affordable/ attainable housing would actually entail. Others noted that Thrive 2050 made no effort to account for the changes that have been seen since the pandemic, since many of them are likely to be permanent to at least some degree. This could include the need to reuse existing business space in urban areas, a greater desire to live in less-dense areas if commuting isn’t tak-

ing place, which can well affect every aspect of the plan.

Ms. Pier also discussed the effect of universal upzoning in Minneapolis that resulted in a large number of sales to out-of-state investors, and overall price increases, while only resulting in about 100 multiplex units being built. In terms of trying to accomplish the goals, she noted the need to hold those in charge accountable. They need to commit in writing to real goals, how to measure if they are met, and be judged thereon; i.e., X% less homeless, X% rise in income levels. We need to think about all the needs that must be met. Empty shopping malls could make great senior communities, village centers, etc. We need to look at both moms/kids and single homeless guys; no one size fits all.

A delegate asked what safeguards should we look for. Ms. Pier

noted that if density is good, then we at least need to know where and how and who will be benefited by it and how do we ensure that the community gets the benefit, not the developer. The County could help finance lower-income ownership in ways that commercial lenders won’t. It also needs to look at ways to keep down speculation from pushing up property taxes for those already there, perhaps by setting higher rates on newer buyers than existing home.

In regards to policies that have actually encouraged affordable housing, she noted that it was not so much setting broad goals, but actually concentrating on detailed planning and holding people accountable to doing what they promise. First home buyer programs when paired with mentor partnerships,

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etc., have been useful. Ms. Pier noted the same point with respect to other aspects like the environmental proposals: make them nail down measurable goals and accountable ways to determine if those goals have been met and not just rest on vague generalities.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

Alan Bowser noted that CE Elrich's letter proposed that the Council should not approve Thrive 2050 in current form so as to allow more outreach, noting that the Council will be hearing from the RESJ consultant group that had already made clear they needed a substantially longer period of time to do a good job. A draft Resolution has been prepared making a similar request to the Council. It needs five

member associations to propose it. There was discussion of the draft and an agreement that it should use the same language as the CE about "disapproving" the current language and several other minor tweaks made. The persons listed below agreed to propose the resolution on behalf of their associations. The final resolution language is included in the newsletter ([see page 10](#)).

Jerry Garson – Regency Estates

Jeff Griffith – Parkwood

Paul Jarosinski - Cherrywood

Elizabeth Joyce – Second Saratoga Village Neighbors

Jacque Bokow – Northwood-Four Corners CA

Allen Meyers – Maplewood Citizens

Ira Ungar – Kemp Mill CA

Karen Cordry – Kensington Heights

Alan Bowser – Park Hills

With those supporting persons, the motion was moved, seconded, and question called by voice vote. There was one no vote recorded from Chris Reynolds on behalf of Seven Oaks and an abstention from Teresa Sparklin – Kenwood Condo. There were about 35 persons on when the vote was taken. The resolution will go to Council and to other possible supporters.

Diane Cameron noted there was also a sign-on letter making some added points about why Thrive should be paused and reworked at <https://tinyurl.com/PauseThriveSignOn>.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Legislation

Suggested a few areas we would continue to push including Office of the People's Counsel. Peggy Dennis

September Minutes, cont.

noted we should be proactive to push our delegation as to what *we* want to see them pursue and meet with them prior to their planning meeting this fall. Liz Joyce noted better ethical controls over M-NCPPC should be set since there no current oversight requirements for them. Al Carr might be good source to help proceed on these issues.

It was also announced that we need to elect new officers and have chairs for committees. There is a real need for more people to step up and take on leadership roles.

Adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 10:09 p.m. ■

Minutes of the September Executive Committee Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Attendance: Alan Bowser, Jerry Garson, Karen Cordry, Liz Joyce, Jacquie Bokow.

OCTOBER 10 GENERAL MEETING

We will hold the meeting then even though it's Columbus Day. We will swap the neighborhood best practices session for a discussion of Pedestrian Safety and Transportation since the County has put out its Pedestrian Master Plan Draft. (See [pages 3–9.](#))

HOUSING ISSUES

Alan will follow up with WAMU tomorrow to discuss who will be the speaker at the Kojo Nnamdi program

on Montgomery County housing issues.

BUDGET

Jerry will provide the proposed budget for the October newsletter so it can be voted on at the General Meeting. (See [page 7.](#))

MEMBERSHIP

Liz and Alan will send out an email to all groups that had paid over the last several years and remind them that it is the current time to pay their dues. They will also work on getting names of delegates added to the mailing list.

MCCF ELECTIONS

Efforts to continue to identify candidates.

Sept. ExCom Minutes, cont.

SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING DEBRIEF

Liz Joyce reported that Alissa Pier's presentation at the last meeting was very instructive and accurately honed in on all of the possible problems that can develop if precautions aren't taken. Ms. Pier noted that there is no evidence that what the Council is proposing has worked anywhere and has often backfired. The current plan isn't dealing with guardrails and the Council doesn't seem to be willing to work on that, instead barreling ahead.

Liz will do a summary of the presentation that can go to the Council and in the newsletter. (See story on page 12.) She also noted that the Council's recent review of the new chapters only mentioned comments from groups (both strong Thrive

Montgomery 2050 supporters), even though there had been no particular notice about the draft new chapters or that it was time to comment on them.

COMMITTEE FOR MONTGOMERY

Members agreed to pay the Committee for Montgomery dues for 2022–2023.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m. ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation

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