

I have heard from residents from all over the county who are uncertain about Thrive Montgomery 2050 and what it means for their neighborhoods. To those who are frustrated and confused, I hear you. I hope that the following information helps to clarify the purpose of Thrive and my perspective on the process.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan is a framework to guide planning for land use, housing, the economy, equity, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, historic resources, urban design, and arts and culture over the next three decades.

Every jurisdiction must adopt some form of a general plan as a legal basis for its land use and zoning powers. Thrive Montgomery is centered around three overarching objectives: (1) economic competitiveness, (2) racial and social equity, (3) and environmental sustainability. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is proposed to be the latest version of our general plan, an update to the County's "Wedges and Corridors" plan originally implemented in 1964 to guide our growth.

Of the six chapters in Thrive, the one that has drawn the most attention is the chapter on housing. I believe that housing is a human right and in the fundamental need for, and value of, mixed-income communities. I also believe that our general plan must be a high-level strategic vision, not an implementation document. That is why from the beginning of this discussion I have urged the County Council to review Thrive before considering any specific legislative implementation tools. It is difficult to implement a vision before we've even agreed on what it is.

Despite some mixed messages delivered to the community, the Thrive document that the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee is reviewing now does not legislate anything. It does not implement anything. Implementation of specific policies will require a bill or a zoning text amendment or a functional plan. The work being done on attainable housing strategies at the Montgomery Planning Board is a separate initiative and not currently before the Council.

I expressed these thoughts and more at a recent PHED Committee work session and was pleased that my colleagues agreed to amend language to reflect that Thrive is a broad vision for how the County should grow rather than a set of specific, pre-determined actions. We also emphasized that the List of Actions proposed by the Planning Board which accompanied the Thrive draft is not being reviewed and/or endorsed at this time.

The PHED Committee expects to conclude its review of Thrive by the end of October. The full Council will then deliberate and take a final vote, potentially before the winter recess that begins in mid-December.