

Dear Resident:

By now you may have seen email traffic on your local listserv about Thrive Montgomery 2050. Perhaps some of it is alarming.

I'd like to provide some context and clarification for your consideration. I support moving forward with Thrive because I believe we need to be more creative and think differently about housing.

So, what is Thrive anyway?

Thrive is a guide for our community planning process. It is a policy document that is at the "vision and strategy" level.

You're already living with the policy vision embodied in Thrive. That's because what Thrive does is update a 1950s "general plan" with the modern planning principles that we have been using for years now.

If you like the changes in development that we are making on Rockville Pike -- you can see them in action at Pike & Rose -- then you're valuing the kinds of ideas that Thrive articulates.

So while broadly Thrive is already in use, there are a few important shifts that Thrive also calls for. They don't happen directly as a result of Thrive, but Planners and the Council will have guidance to consider them in the future.

First, to address our housing shortage, Thrive envisions a way to manage growth in the future that can reduce impacts on existing communities and the environment, by locating future growth in the County where our infrastructure can best support it -- along our major transportation corridors.

Think for example of roads like Georgia Avenue, Rockville Pike, or New Hampshire Avenue. Thrive envisions these as places where new housing should be more dense, not unlike what you see on upper Connecticut Avenue in DC.

Thrive also recommends a variety of novel approaches to promote housing affordability, to support young workers, empty nesters, or special needs such as people experiencing homelessness.

Yes, Thrive recommends consideration of allowing housing types such as duplexes in more locations. It does not however say where or how or when. That is all to be discussed in the future through our normal processes.

Second, Thrive calls for development in the East County. This reverses a decision made by the Council years ago to oppose growth in the East County, a decision that has produced harmful results.

Finally, Thrive affirms and reiterates long-standing commitments in the County such as:

- reserving one-third of our rural land for rural and agricultural uses through low-density zoning;
- keeping residential areas residential, with limited change or growth.

Thrive has also encountered some fierce opposition, including from County Executive Elrich. Some are saying that Thrive will result in major changes in neighborhoods, even though Thrive does not change any zoning at all, anywhere.

Passing Thrive will not enable you, your neighbor, or a developer to do anything different than today. Thrive is about our guiding goals.

The Council will certainly consider changes to zoning and master plans in the future. And there will be public hearings and robust debate about those changes. There is one out there now, "missing middle," that is generating a great deal of controversy.

In any event, the Council is only preparing to vote on Thrive, a guiding vision.

If you'd like to learn more about Thrive, here are some good resources.

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/blog-design/tag/thrive-explained/>

Public outreach for Thrive has been significant. The Planning Department spent about two years conducting public meetings, engaging residents, and generating feedback on the plan. The County Council held a public hearing and the Committee held multiple televised worksessions.

While our public engagement has been robust, we are nevertheless offering an additional "listening session" on November 30th. You can [sign up for the waitlist to testify now](#); the Council will hopefully be able to offer everyone who signs up a speaking slot, but if not there will be selection by zip code to ensure geographic representation.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Hans Riemer