

Parkwood Residents Association Fall Meeting

Monday October 17, 2022- via ZOOM

Link for ZOOM recording

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/SPKc5IQZ39kEsxUTPSm2LNUHvbBRSVOKLuR_s4Al24DigYwsJDzXuuoUk1V75-K6.nQlyhImMG4nzxyk Passcode: ySF8=!N0 (last character is a Zero)

Meeting Topic: THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

Meeting called to order by President Kira Lueders who welcomed all attendees. Kira announced that the entire agenda would be focused on Thrive 2050 and asked Vice-President Jeff Griffith to lead the meeting.

Fundamental question- how can the County create more affordable housing in a way that has the support of its citizens?

Jeff reviewed the Thrive document and reminded the attendees that Thrive is a general plan- a long-range guide for the development of a Montgomery County which is intended to provide guidance for future housing, transportation, and land use, especially as it relates to our environment. It includes chapters on Parks and Recreation; on Design, Arts, and Culture; and on our Communication Networks.

The focus of this meeting is on the most controversial issues: housing and transportation with emphasis on compact communities and plans, or lack of plans, for implementation.

Thrive does not change zoning or other land use regulations but notes that implementation will require such changes.

Stated goals of Thrive:

- Improve County's economy – job growth and wage income has been stagnant for several years; near the bottom among other jurisdictions in the DMV region.
- Address past racial inequities and social injustices – we are still a highly segregated County.
- Build environmental resilience – with special emphasis on storm water management and tree canopy.

HOW

- Housing
 - o More and more affordable
 - o Too expensive for everyone, especially those with lower incomes, but also seniors who want to stay here, and young families just getting started
 - o A national problem – not unique to Montgomery County

- o Population will grow by 200,000 in next 20-25 years
- o Will need thousands of more housing units than we have now and are being planned
- o Will need multiplex units – duplexes, triplexes, quads – possibly even in communities currently zoned for single family homes, like Parkwood
- o WILL REQUIRE CHANGES ON THE ZONING LAWS
- Transportation
 - o Emphasis away from cars
 - o Early version said “no new roads” until reality set in
 - o Focus on transit, walking, biking, things like Uber and Lyft
- Compact Communities: complete, compact communities with mixed residential and commercial uses, allowing residents access to basic, day-to-day services within a 15-minute walk, bike, or roll
 - o Walk to Strosniders along safer and well-designed sidewalks except when you needed to pick up a 20-lb bag of bird seed or drive a child to their soccer game
 - o Later versions have acknowledged that implementation would vary greatly among communities

IMPACT (Thrive assumptions)

- Economy. Businesses and jobs will come if we build enough affordable housing in compact communities that have equitable access to all the amenities of a well-designed urban center
- Racial inequities: One way in which they will be addressed will be by building affordable housing in all sections of the county, thereby providing everyone with equal access to all country’s resources and amenities
- Environmental resilience. Compact communities will need fewer resources to build and be more energy efficient

IMPLEMENTATION

- Will require amendments to our zoning laws (ZTAs)

ISSUES

- Is Thrive a set of recommendations or of directives?
- Relation to the Master Planning Process?
- Adaptable to local circumstances?
- Community engagement in the process?

POSITIVES

- Raises important issues about housing, about equity, about the environment, and the design of our communities that we need to address

Three speakers from nearby communities with conditions similar to Parkwood shared their views and concerns, as well as positive elements they saw in Thrive.

Questions were taken at the end, as time allowed.

First Speaker: Ellen Cornelius Ericson **(her comments begin at about 8 minutes into the recording)**

Formerly on the Chevy Chase Town Council, currently chair of the Town's Long Range Planning Committee

- The Goal of Thrive is visionary. What will Montgomery County look like in 2050?
- Changing zoning is local and national issue. Change is happening.
- Could we plan for complete communities- residential and business all within 15 minutes of walk from anywhere in the community?
- She feels that the plan has shortcomings in public outreach.
- Consultant hired by the Council to review outreach to minority communities found Lack of demographic information, racial representation, lack of clarity, transparency and engagement.
- Consultant made recommendations to County Council- five specific were included in current draft.
- Findings- People don't want to be displaced- Transit focused only on public transit- consider cultural differences of communities

Power Point Presentation (at 16:30 minutes) regarding impact of Thrive, [on PRA website here](#).

Second speaker: Karen Cordry **(her comments begin at 25 minutes into the recording)**

Secretary and Member of the Executive Board, Montgomery County Civic Federation; and President of the Kensington Heights Civic Association

- Karen began with an overview of her community and the many similarities with Parkwood and other nearby communities. These were planned and built as naturally occurring affordable housing (aka NOAH) in the 1950's and 1960's and have mostly remained as such until very recently.
- She is concerned that the plan takes an approach like- Field of Dreams- plan it and it will happen. She is not confident that the plan accomplishes this goal.
- Changes in housing have impact within the community
- Any changes in one community can have spillover impact on near-by communities.

- She believes that Thrive does not match with what the developers are interested in building homes at the price point that the County needs.
- She believes that jobs result in housing, not housing creates jobs, which is one of the Thrive goals.
- A significant concern is that Thrive makes no mention of Covid and how that has impacted work, telework, commuting, public transportation and lifestyle changes.
- She stated that those who pose these questions are not “NIMBY’s”, but concerned citizens who think Thrive is an idealistic document that needs a reality check.

Third Speaker: Conor Crimmins **(his comments begin at 39:30 minutes into the recording)**

Council Member, Town of Kensington and Co-Chair of the Town’s Development Review Board

- Clarified definitions and jargon used in the report.
- Conor reviewed County land use information: Montgomery County limits where housing can be placed. Although the County is huge, one third of the County is Agricultural Reserved. Fifteen percent of the County is Parkland.
- Thrive is meant to have the Planning Board look at how land is used and make recommendations.
- Zoning changes will be required as a next step to move forward with Thrive. Some zoning changes are already in draft form.
- County Council is decision maker and planning to approve Thrive in October. (Ed. Note: It was approved unanimously by the Council on October 25, 2022)
- Naturally occurring affordable housing in the area (Wheaton, Kensington, Parkwood, Kensington Estates, Etc.) could be seriously impacted.
- Developers are already targeting these areas.
- Additional concerns not addressed are lot coverage, set- backs, green spaces, tree canopy.
- The idea of “15-minute living” is not realistic due to traffic issues.
- Thrive is possible in theory, not as possible in practice.
- Thrive was marketed as a solution to affordable housing yet will not create this as currently planned. And may actually impact the existing “attainable housing”.

Question and related discussion from the Chat room. **(at 59 minutes into the recording)**

Criticism of outreach and inclusion of the general public in the Thrive process. The communities to be impacted don’t know about this plan and its potential consequences.

Also, Thrive does not discuss the issue of school enrollment and school overcrowding.

Where is the consideration of additional infrastructure costs?

Current demographic projections indicate that low-income population will increase in future.

How can citizens express their concerns about future impacts on quality of lives.

County Executive does not have authority over land use issues.

Jeff pointed out additional links that have been posted in the Chat. There will be additional and continuing discussions about Thrive as the new Council begins moving forward.

Jeff announced that the PRA plans to invite the County Council member representing Parkwood to the January PRA Membership meeting.

Kira thanked Jeff, the speakers and all who participated in the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 PM - Mary Ellen Savarese, PRA Secretary