

October Program: Upzoning of Residential Neighborhoods in Montgomery County | Join us online to hear the latest on county-wide housing and rezoning proposals and what they may mean for your neighborhood | **P. 3**

MCCF Resolution on Proposed Rezoning of Residential Neighborhoods | This resolution will be voted at the meeting | **P. 5**

Montgomery County Housing Policies | Jerry Garson, a CPA with extensive knowledge of government accounting, budgets, and zoning laws parses the numbers being thrown about in the Fiscal Impact Statement of the Thrive Mont. 2050 Plan | **P. 8**

Montgomery County Proposes Major Increase in Density in Residential Neighborhoods | Planning consultant Frances Phipps tells us about it | **P. 16**

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of note

Next MCCF Meeting #926

Monday, October 11, 2021, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom.* Topic: “Montgomery County Housing Policies: Upzoning of Residential Neighborhoods.”

! **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**

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

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Meeting Minutes

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Executive Committee Meeting

SEPTEMBER 23

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Membership Application

Join or Renew Now

SEE FORM

Federation Meeting #926

Monday, October 11, 2021

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: September 13, 2021, General Meeting #925 **P.27**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. October Program: Montgomery County Housing Policies: Upzoning in Residential Neighborhoods **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, at 7:45 p.m. **So note time change!**

The October 11 meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:30 p.m.:

■ To be part of the video conference, download the Zoom **Zoom Client for Meetings here.**

■ Meeting Name: "MCCF Monthly General Meeting."

■ Date and Time: October 11, 2021, 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 859 4305 7487. 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

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TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 33

October Program: Upzoning of Residential Neighborhoods in Montgomery County

At our October 11 meeting, MCCF delegates will learn more details about proposed changes in Montgomery County's housing policies that have been the topic of much conversation over the last few months.

In particular, we will have presentations by two subject-matter experts on the issue of affordable housing, and we will consider a Civic Federation Resolution highlighting our member's concerns about proposed changes in the housing policies.

Our guests will be **Alissa Lupeke Pier** of Minneapolis, an AIA-honored architect and former Vice President of the Minneapolis City Planning Commission who has professional experience in urban planning and housing policy, and

who has first-hand experience in the policy discussions of upzoning. [See a recent related article here.](#) Also, we will welcome **Aseem Nigam**, Director, Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs, who will discuss what the County is currently doing to support affordable housing for its residents. [Visit the DHCA homepage here.](#)

At the same time that the County Council is considering the draft long-range planning document for Montgomery County, Thrive 2050, the Montgomery County Planning Board is proposing changes in Montgomery County zoning that would eliminate the existing zoning requirements for single-family neighborhoods throughout the County. Upzoning neighborhoods is recommended in the Thrive 2050 Draft. During

discussions on Thrive 2050, MCCF members were told by planners that such zoning changes would be considered during subsequent area master/sector planning processes. However, now this upzoning implementation is proposed to be done through a global Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) to the County's Zoning Ordinance. The proposed ZTA is now working its way through the Planning Board and would be sent to the County Council for consideration this year. This process is being referred to as the "Attainable Housing Strategy." [You can read and review the Planning Board's thinking on Attainable Housing Strategies here.](#)

The Planning staff's [preliminary recommendations for a new housing](#)

October Program, cont.

[policy can be found here.](#)

“Planning staff’s initial high-level recommendations are targeted to the Corridor-Focused Growth (Figure 10) area from the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Map. The recommendations include:

■ In the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones, allow house-scale duplexes and triplexes by-right and allow quadplexes by-right in areas closer to transit. In all cases, require conformance with a Planning Board-approved pattern book, which will give guidance on massing, scale, and design to ensure these housing types blend in among single-family homes.

■ Create a new optional method of development to encourage consolidation and development of duplexes, cottage courts, townhouses, and small multiplexes and apartments

near transit, along the Thrive Growth Corridors, and near the county’s centers of activity.

■ Support more corridor-focused master plans to identify locations ideal for large-scale attainable housing, including townhouses, stacked flats, and apartments along select growth corridors.

■ Modify parking standards for attainable housing units to right-size the parking demand and supply.

■ Create a new minor subdivision type for the small-scale attainable housing.”

The Civic Federation has expressed its view about the Thrive 2050 Draft Plan in its [Resolution dated September 13, 2021](#). In that Resolution, we expressed our deep concern about important omissions in the Draft, as well as our conclusions about the flawed policy of public engagement used by the Mont-

gomery County Planning Board and the Montgomery County Council.

And while the Thrive 2050 Draft Plan does not change County Zoning, it does recommend changes in the Zoning Code, particularly affecting single-family neighborhoods. As the Planning staff says, “The preliminary recommendations for the Attainable Housing Strategies initiative support the housing recommendations for zoning changes in single-family neighborhoods in the update to the county’s General Plan, known as Thrive Montgomery 2050.” [See the discussion of “Compact Communities” in the Thrive 2050 Draft Plan.](#)

Following Planning Board review and approval, the Attainable Housing Strategies recommendations are expected to be transmitted to the Montgomery County Council. The initiative’s timeline has been revised

October Program, cont.

to allow more time for Thrive Montgomery 2050 to be finalized prior to the transmission of the Planning Board's approved Attainable Housing Strategies recommendations.

Notwithstanding the Civic Federation's still-existing concern about the grossly inadequate public engagement effort of the Planning Board and the County Council and the apparent rush to complete this important work within an unreasonable time frame without the benefit of broad community consultation and input, members of the Civic Federation have expressed many concerns about shortcomings in the analysis regarding the proposed housing strategy. The likelihood, magnitude, implications, and unintended consequences of the Planning Board's recommendations

require substantially more work and dramatic increases in community

participation and ownership. ■

Resolution of the Montgomery County Civic Federation On Proposed Rezoning of Residential Neighborhoods

Whereas, the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., (Civic Federation) has been proud to represent civic associations and homeowners' associations throughout the County for nearly 100 years; and

Whereas the Civic Federation has expressed concern that current proposals may not lead to desired outcomes for improvements in meeting affordable housing targets set by the Council of Governments; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has expressed concern about the emphasis on upzoning residential neighborhoods in the Montgomery County Planning Board's Thrive 2050 Draft Plan currently before the

Montgomery County Council; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation remains greatly concerned about the accelerated time frame established for the development and approval of these drastic and unprecedented changes in County zoning policies affecting residential neighborhoods; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has previously expressed its view that there needs to be a substantially expanded process of community engagement and discussion about the proposed changes; and

Whereas, the members of the Civic Federation have many substan-

Rezoning Resolution, cont.

tive concerns about the impact of the proposed Planning staff recommendations on the quality of life in the County's residential neighborhoods, that include likely residential tax increases, the growing inadequacy of public facilities available to residents, gentrification, and likely serious environmental impacts associated with reduction of tree canopy and the increase in impervious surfaces; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has serious reservations about permitting less-regulated residential building construction in single-family neighborhoods "by right," with little, if any, regard to prevailing size, massing, and architectural styles; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation

notes that the Planning Department staff has continued to redefine the goals of a new housing strategy away from affordability toward "attainability"; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation notes that some jurisdictions around the United States have pursued and regretted similar upzoning development strategies that have had unintended negative consequences for their communities and particularly adverse impacts for low-income residents and communities of color; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation, recognizing the critical need to provide suitable housing for tens of thousands of future residents, believes that Montgomery County must adopt an aggressive strategy for truly affordable housing that would serve the needs of working families;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION, INC.,

1. Does not support the Montgomery County Planning Department's preliminary recommendations to eliminate zoning regulations affecting established single-family neighborhoods throughout the County through a global Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) to the County Zoning Ordinance; and, be it further resolved,

2. Does not support allowing new residential construction in single-family neighborhoods "by right," with no review and approval by appropriate County development authorities; and, be it further resolved,

3. Calls upon the Montgomery County Council to examine, refine

Rezoning Resolution, cont.

and make broadly available to the public:

- (1) a fiscal impact statement describing the expected consequences of Countywide upzoning for Montgomery County annual revenues and expenditures,
- (2) clarification of details regarding any possible residential tax increases associated with the upzoning proposals,
- (3) a racial equity and social justice impact statement regarding the proposed ZTA, and
- (4) detailed information regarding the likely environmental impacts of the upzoning proposals;

and, be it further resolved,

4. Calls upon the County Council to develop and propose a significant new affordable housing strategy that will provide suitable accommodations for Montgomery County's low- and middle-income residents to meet the Council of Government's targets for the number of affordable units needed; and be it further resolved,

5. Calls upon the County Council to establish metrics for success for tracking and meeting the Council of Government's targets for additional affordable units; and, be it further resolved,

6. Calls upon the Montgomery County Government to establish a policy of no net loss of naturally occurring affordable housing through new development; and, be it further resolved,

7. Calls upon the Montgomery County Government to ensure that master and sector planning is used to modify existing zoning in single-family neighborhoods, rather than by global zoning text amendments; and, be it further resolved,

8. Calls upon the Montgomery County Government to require that a property being converted from a single residential unit to a multi-plex be the primary residence of the owner; and, be it further resolved,

9. Calls upon the Montgomery County Council to undertake a broad public engagement and consultation process necessary to secure community ownership of any new upzoning policy, along with additional public hearings to solicit community input.

*Approved this 11th day of October
2021*

—Karen Cordry, Secretary ■

MCCF's Analysis of the Fiscal Impact Statement of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan

By Jerry Garson, Treasurer

[Garson is a Certified Public Accountant with knowledge of government accounting and, before moving to Montgomery County in 1990, was on the Borough Board of Brooklyn, N.Y., analyzing and commenting on the New York City Budget and holding hearings on the New York City Capital and Expense Budget for his community board.]

Based on the data provided in the various Thrive 2050 reports, the all-inclusive capital costs to the residents of Montgomery County are probably over \$80,000,000,000, or more than \$208,000 per family. These include costs of the County, fees paid to the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and fees paid by the residents as part of their tax bills for Front Foot Benefits (this

charge pays for the construction of the water and sewer lines leading to each property), for improvements of storm water sewers in front of their homes, and new sidewalks in front of their homes. The operating expenses would go up over \$1,100,000,000 per year.

The 37-page [Fiscal Impact Statement is available here](#). The 172-page [Thrive 2050 report is available here](#).

The Fiscal Impact Statement (FIS) attempts to show the net fiscal effect of the recommendations in Thrive compared to the aggregate recommendations in master and sector plans approved to-date. Given the general nature of many of Thrive's recommendations, and the fact that precise cost estimates are not available, the Office of Management and Budget and the Executive

Branch departments needed to base their calculations on very rough assumptions, most of which are described in the Fiscal Impact Statement. **Typically, such figures underestimate the true cost.**

The Office of Management and Budget calculates the net additional County capital cost attributable to Thrive to be \$8,187,400,000. "Net additional annual operating cost to the County is \$426,500,000," which would be \$12,368,500,000 over the next 29 years.

A number of expenses and capital expenditures are missing from this amount.

The proposal for additional bike paths of \$6,500,000,000 is not included in these numbers. The Bus Rapid Transit system and other

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

Mass Transit projects currently planned is shown for \$975,000,000.

The additional costs for improvements needed to the entire storm water sewer system in the County is not discussed in Thrive 2050. The County's storm sewers were built for the "10-year rain" that is often occurring many times a month and year. We have seen an increase in flooding occurring this past summer. This was not occurring when the last General Plan was adopted. Thrive recognizes Climate Change, yet the FIS neither reflects costs associated with addressing this change nor allows for addressing impacts resulting from additional housing recommended in Thrive 2050.

Thrive recommends identifying and allocating additional revenue for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF)



to meet the needs of low-income households; expand existing programs designed to increase access to homeownership, especially among low-income residents, people of color, and young adults; create new programs and entities—such as community land trusts—to maintain long-term affordable homeownership opportunities; and integrate people with disabilities, people transitioning from homelessness, and older adults into attainable housing with appropriate amenities and ser-

vices. The capital and annual costs for these programs are not shown.

A major component of the Thrive plan is the creation of complete, compact communities with mixed residential and commercial uses, allowing residents to be connected to retail and other services. Sometimes identified as "15-minute living," these communities will allow access to basic, day-to-day services within a 15-minute walk, bike, or drive. However, the statement provides no estimate of costs to put sidewalks in all the residential neighborhoods that do not currently have sidewalks. The cost of sidewalks would be a cost to the homeowner, as these are considered a Front Foot Benefit and would be paid by homeowners as an additional charge to their regular Real Estate Bills. As an example, the cost (for what, exactly, is not spelled

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

out) for Aspen Hill is listed as follows:

Department of Transportation	\$827,000,000
Fire and Rescue Capital	\$ 43,000,000
Fire and Rescue Expense (29 years)	\$211,700,000
Homeowner Cost for Sidewalks	<u>\$ 20,000,000</u>
Total	\$1,101,700,000

For the 32 potential “activity centers” designated in Thrive, the cost could be over \$35,254,400,000. The complete list of centers can easily be expanded to include many more complete communities.

The cost for attracting additional jobs or economic development is also omitted from Thrive 2050.

Today the County Office of Economic Development uses incentives to entice large employers to invest in our County, yet no costs have been attributed for economic development.

The proposal indicates that Thrive 2050 will result in an additional 200,000 residents moving into the County. The cost of building additional schools and the cost of school staff are not included in these numbers. The costs of other additional government employees such as police, fire, health, and transportation that will be needed are also not included; these costs are usually included as sustainability factors.

New public schools will be needed for the additional 200,000 residents Thrive expects. The cost of new public schools is estimated \$1,330,000,000. The cost of operating the new schools over 29 years would be \$890,300,000.

The Zoning Text Amendments that will change R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones to allow additional housing units in those neighborhoods will result in higher property taxes starting in the three-year reassessment cycle. Property will be assessed at the highest land use potential, instead of the current land use allowable. Therefore, the land portion of the tax bill will increase significantly. In many residential properties, the land portion is more than two-thirds of the annual property tax bill.

If the Planning Board follows the Councilmembers Hucker and Riemer July request, they will now recommend that—unless located in one of the seven municipalities that have independent zoning authority (Rockville, Gaithersburg, Laytonsville, Barnesville, Brookville, Pools-

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

ville, Washington Grove)—all R-40 (roughly a minimum of 4,000 square feet), R-60 (minimum of 6,000 square feet), and R-90 (roughly a minimum of 9,000 square feet) lots be up-zoned and allow subdivisions to permit “by right” (meaning with no notice or no hearing) up to four units—plus Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)—for each lot. And don’t forget, if located in their (very fuzzy and undefined) Priority Housing District (PHD), this could add up to three units (plus ADUs); if not in the PHD, all R-200 lots could add up to two units (plus ADUs).

Hans Riemer said on September 20, “Oh, I’m going to show my hand. This is a vision document. The idea of a fiscal impact statement, I think, is a little bit of a misapplication here. We’re talking about ideas. I won-

der what we’ll get as a fiscal impact statement here. But, ah, I’m not overly concerned about doing a fiscal analysis of a philosophy. We do that to our master plans. That’s when it’s relevant.”

In the Thrive 2050 plan, the Montgomery Planning Department states, “The County has relatively little undeveloped land left to accommodate this growth, even if new construction is relatively compact. With 85 percent of our land already developed or otherwise constrained, accommodating even the relatively modest growth expected over the life of this plan is an ambitious undertaking.” We see conflicting numbers with respect to additional housing potential. In Planning pipeline documents, we see 44,383 approved development units waiting for permits and an additional 85,946 potential development units left to

build. This constitutes 130,329 additional units even without the ZTA being considered, which potentially could increase density by (approximately) an additional 100 percent. With inconsistent information, it is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy the extent of additional revenue needs. However, Planning Director Wright suggests the development tax could potentially help with additional revenue as Property Taxes will increase as a result of Thrive.

The Planning Board continues to say, “The total number of jobs in the county grew by five percent from 2004 to 2019, while 20 similarly sized counties across the country grew their employment base by an average of 21 percent. Montgomery County experienced the slowest rate of business formation in the Wash-

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

ington region from 2010 to 2019.”

Buildings designed to accommodate single uses, while less expensive when considered in isolation, created an inventory of structures that are inflexible and costly to reuse. Malls, office parks, and other large, single-use buildings are difficult to repurpose and the high cost of adapting their layouts to meet new spatial needs due to technological shifts, demographic changes, and market preferences shrinks their useful lives and makes them less sustainable. The consequences of the limited adaptability of our building stock are evident in persistently elevated office vacancy rates accompanied by an acute shortage of housing.

We remain heavily dependent on automobiles, with more than two-thirds of workers in the county

driving alone to and from work. Montgomery County has among the lowest percentages of commuters in the region who walk, pedal, drive, or ride transit.

For example, a rail-based transit line may serve to connect jobs to housing in different parts of the county or region, but sidewalks and bikeways are better suited to connecting offices to shops, restaurants, or apartment buildings in a town center or between a downtown and the residential neighborhoods surrounding it. Part of the Thrive plan considers bringing restaurants and other shopping in residential neighborhoods.

Between 2020 and 2040, Montgomery County is expected to need to add 63,031 new households, both working and nonworking households, specifically new residents who are seniors or persons with disabili-

ties. This would be approximately 200,000 people.

As of December 2019, there are 382,027 dwelling units and there are 44,383 units of housing already approved by the Planning Board, but not yet built. This number could probably accommodate over 150,000 new residents. There are 85,946 additional Zoned Residential Development Capacity. These could accommodate an additional 300,000 residents. I do not see the need to rezone most of the County to accommodate the 200,000 new residents.

Hearings by the County Council should be held to let residents express their opinions on the future costs of Thrive 2050.

Page 10 of a PHED Committee Memorandum dated July 23, 2021, states: “The lack of forward-looking text and graphics is an often-heard

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

comment. There are only five figures in the Plan that depict data past 2020, three of which show data on population estimates to 2040 in some form (total population or by age group). The other two figures show building permit data to 2030 and estimates of homeownership to 2040. Should the Plan include more forward-looking data—such as estimated growth in employment, travel trends, and factors affecting the environment—not as a predictor of the future, but to help frame the policy recommendations in the Plan which are designed to achieve a vision for 2050?”

I was extremely compelled by the reasoning in the memo dated June 10, 2020, in which County Executive Marc Elrich identified the lack of community participation and

raised concern with the only actual citizen participation with respect to the housing element of Thrive, the Zoning Text Amendment known as Attainable Housing HEAT (Housing Equity Advisory Team). The make-up of this “citizens group” primarily consisted of developers, realtors, architects, and lobbyists for the development community.

After reviewing the Fiscal Impact Statement, I find my concerns well-founded as to the cost/benefit review of Thrive. The benefits-to-expense ratio superseded the ratio of jobs-to-housing in Thrive compared to the jobs-to-housing in the previous Wedges and Corridors Plan. In Thrive, the fiscal expense cannot be justified with respect to property tax revenue resources. Fiscal expenses will significantly increase throughout the 29-year term of Thrive, with the potential effect of resident and

business flight as a result of exponential increases to taxes and other associated costs. There must be consideration to the refusal to fund vehicle transportation capital projects, which will only further exacerbate road congestion; housing prices will continue to rise with more urban development. In my opinion, Thrive should go through significantly more review to reduce its aggregate costs, balancing the net increase of housing with its potential significant cost so as to not cause residential flight from Montgomery County and not impact potential economic growth with more restrictive business costs.

The **County Executive in a memo dated June 10, 2020**, states in part: “The Executive objected to the county’s moving forward with Thrive Montgomery 2050. Montgomery County residents are inadequately

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

informed about Thrive Montgomery 2050 and know little, if anything, about the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative's complicated rezoning proposals that will make sweeping changes to their neighborhoods."

The Planning Department held four meetings with the Housing Equity Advisory Team (HEAT), and three meetings with the Community. HEAT's 14 members were selected by the Planning Department to advise Planning on the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative (AHSI). It appears that there was no public process or criteria for the selection.

The process allowed the HEAT members to have direct access to Planning Staff for the drafting of the zoning proposals and were asked their opinions on important decisions that were part of the Thrive

review. For example, they were asked whether the new zoning rules would extend a half-mile or one mile from transit. **It is important to note that some HEAT members are developers and real estate professionals who may benefit from the changes in the zoning.**

Thus, the process favored developers and supporters of the rezoning who successfully impacted the legislative recommendations. Despite their best efforts, Planning Staff were unable to achieve the broad community outreach that is necessary to allow informed input from a broad group of community stakeholders.

On the next page are the probable costs listed in the Financial Impact Statement of implementing Thrive 2050.

Appendix A2 of the FIS is a list of road widening/construction projects to be cancelled and related

savings. All of these cannot be eliminated since many of them are for the proposed creation of BRT (\$283,967,000), unless we cancel all planned BRTs in the County. Many others are for RideOn or WMATA Bus routes or are projects that have been completed.

From my past experience in transportation analysis, I find it highly unlikely that we can add 200,000 more residents and solve the transportation congestion in the County by reducing all planned road widenings throughout the County. Therefore, we have not considered these proposals to be savings from Thrive 2050.

[This article is an updated version of Garson's comments already in circulation. You are invited to reprint this article, or quote from it, with attribution to Garson, MCCF, or the Civic Federation News.] ■

Thrive FIS Analysis, cont.

The following are the probable costs listed in the Financial Impact Statement of implementing Thrive 2050:

Fiscal Impact of Thrive	Capital	Expense per year	Expense over 29 Years
<i>Data assumes 20% increase based on population increase</i>			
Executive Branch's FIS	\$8,147,400,000	\$426,500,000	
Bike Paths	6,500,000,000		
Complete Communities	35,254,400,000		
Mass Transit Projects 6 year CIP includes BRT	975,000,000		
New Storm Sewers	20,000,000,000		
Montgomery County Public Schools	1,330,000,000	556,100,000	\$16,126,900,000
Public Safety		125,900,000	3,651,100,000
Other County Government Functions		90,180,000	2,615,220,000
Debt Service			0
Health and Human Services		72,800,000	2,111,200,000
Montgomery College		62,520,000	1,813,080,000
Transportation		46,360,000	1,344,440,000
General Govt. & Other Functions		43,060,000	1,248,740,000
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Comm.		34,000,000	986,000,000
Environment		33,640,000	975,560,000
Community Development and Housing		21,240,000	615,960,000
Libraries, Culture, and Recreation		19,980,000	579,420,000
<i>Not paid through County</i>			
New Water Mains & Sewers WSSC estimate	8,000,000,000		
New Sidewalks on Real Estate Bill	150,000,000		
Increased Assessments to Best Possible Use	\$80,356,800,000	\$1,105,780,000	\$32,067,620,000

Montgomery County Proposes Major Increase in Density in Residential Neighborhoods

By Frances Phipps, Planning Consultant

OVERVIEW

The Montgomery County Council and its Planning Board are in agreement that **major density increases are needed** for residential zones, including the single family zone. There are three zoning initiatives underway currently which share this goal of increasing density and housing types. They are: Thrive Montgomery 2050, Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan, and The Attainable Housing Strategy Initiative. While proposals are still in draft and may change this autumn, their essence is clear: **“to spur development of more diverse types of housing in Montgomery” by encouraging greater density “by right.”**

Specifically, that includes allowing duplexes and triplexes by right in R-40, R-60, and R-200 zones, and quadplexes in Priority Housing Districts. The owner is not required to reside on the property.

Additionally, for those areas near transit, i.e. **Priority Housing Districts**, there will be a new “optional method of development” to facilitate the changes above, as well as larger multifamily dwellings such as **cottage courts and apartment buildings through lot consolidation and the reduction or elimination of current parking requirements**. The optional method would only apply to certain parcels. The Planning Staff and Planning Board have discussed a couple of options, but have not decided where the geography for

that type of development would be. It would not be through the Priority Housing Districts.

Since 1928, when zoning was adopted in Montgomery County and revised in 1958, the goal of single-family zoning has been the careful creation of individual dwelling units subject to regulations designed to ensure compatibility and character of the neighborhood, with public input and review. The Attainable Housing Strategy’s goal is to induce construction of differing housing types with greater density **by decreasing development standards, reducing constraints, eliminating the requirement for compatibility and character, and eliminating public review and comment.**

Density Increase, cont.

THE COMPONENTS OF THE ATTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

The major components of this strategy are:

■ Owners of lots zoned for single-family homes will be allowed to build duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes “by right.” This means that there is no Planning Board review or opportunity for community comment. You are not even required to inform your neighbors.

■ There is a desire, but no commitment, that new buildings will be “house scale” or compatible to the existing neighborhood.

■ A “Pattern Book” is being developed for the design of certain multi-family units. This would replace the current system that requires Planning staff review and approval of proposed new housing. It is not

yet clear if the Planning Board will approve the use of the proposed Pattern Book. The Pattern Book, if adopted, deals only with the volume and mass of the proposed development within an increased footprint. It does not deal with issues of style or compatibility but rather how to accomplish as much density in the differing housing types.

■ There will be a new approval process for the development of optional development “middle density housing” that is more than four units, including small apartment buildings of three to four stories, and assemblage of multiple lots in certain Priority Housing Districts. It has not been decided if Planning Board approval will be required or if community input is going to be allowed.

■ There is encouragement of large-scale developments on major corridors as part of an area’s Master Plan

process.

■ Properties within 300 feet of any parcel zoned CR (Commercial Residential) may be rezoned to allow dense development, such as apartments and stacked units of four stories.

■ On-site parking requirement for newly constructed multi-family homes is reduced.

Finally, “by right” means there is no need to inform your neighbor of your intent to rebuild. Just as there is no need for a developer to tell you he or she intends to buy and tear down your house. He or she may even be in the process of assembling several properties for construction of an apartment building.

WHY THIS EFFORT?

The justification may vary, but most agree that more housing will be

Density Increase, cont.

needed in the future and that much of the current housing stock is far too expensive for large segments of the community. This is a fact and the situation we find ourselves in today. The goal is to diversify housing types in the hopes of increasing diversity in the neighborhoods.

However, unfortunately, many proponents of The Attainable Housing Strategy point to single-family zoning as solely responsible for this situation and castigate these communities as “exclusionary” and racist. While that may clearly apply to some communities, the reality is far more complex. The role of real-estate industry standards and procedures—including appraisals, financing decisions, cost of materials, and the impact of cyclical effects—play a significant role. The 2008 Reces-

sion has been and continues to be a major force in the reduction of new housing construction. And finally, there is to-date, a century of strong public policy establishing, endorsing, and regulating single-family zoning in Montgomery County which has encouraged the construction and maintenance of single-family neighborhoods

WHAT IS ATTAINABLE HOUSING?

After struggling for months with the concept, initially including “affordable” as a standard, the Planning Board’s current working definition is **“unsubsidized market rate housing that is appropriate and suitable for the households that live there.”** What this generic definition means is any housing type at any price point for which there is a market demand is “attainable.” In-

creased density and variety of housing types is the goal. The hope is to create more ownership opportunities for more households and diversifying communities by diversifying its housing stock. The goal is to create “equity” for many who have not been able to participate in the housing market. While this is laudable, it ignores the fact that there is a parallel issue of “equity” for existing homeowners for whom their house is their major financial asset, bought under existing public policy, and whose equity might be seriously impacted by this initiative. Moreover, this Attainable Housing Strategy is not based on the lack of housing availability, **but rather on the lack of diversity in the “type” of housing available.** For example, in the Silver Spring study area, single-family housing makes up just four per-

Density Increase, cont.

cent of all available units. And the most recent residential vacancy rate (2019) in downtown Silver Spring, calculated before many of the recently constructed apartment buildings came on line, was six percent, a number which is considered desirable in terms of matching turn-over with new renters.

There is the **market reality**. The *Market Study* on attainable housing which was commissioned by the Montgomery County Planning Board this spring concluded that land prices, particularly those in “transit rich” and “urban in-fill areas” [Priority Housing Districts] are just too expensive to make this initiative financially feasible in almost all cases. That fact, combined with the cost of construction of multiple small units, makes the proposal

of generating multifamily units on a single-family lot financially unattractive. Moreover, the Study found that prices for the finished product would be in the range **of \$750,000 to \$850,000**. This price range is already unattainable for those who have been unable to enter the market. This *Market Study* was loudly criticized by the Planning Chairman, unhappy with these findings, for “just looking at the economics.” A remarkable comment for a study whose sole function is to “just look at the economics.”

Lest we think the Planning Department’s market study findings are unique, we need only to look at the recent analysis by the Turner Center for Housing at UC Berkeley regarding the just-approved California legislation which allows construction of more than one housing unit on single family lots. The Turner Center

concluded that the extra construction wouldn’t make financial sense in most place, with only about 5.4 percent of all possible projects in the entire State penciling out. And, in Austin, Texas, for example, Attainable or Missing Middle housing accounts for only two percent of all home construction in the last decade. The few other examples of the jurisdictions which have endorsed this approach in the past several years have had a similar experience.

Finally, while attainable housing strives to create “equity” for a new cohort of home owners, the reality is that most of what is being proposed—such as triplexes, quadrplexes, small and large apartment buildings—will be rental.

OTHER MARKET REALITIES

There are other market realities

Density Increase, cont.

which play an almost larger role in housing development than zoning.

1. The Role of Appraisals

a. The basic foundation of establishing value by the appraisal process is based on “comparables.” That is, how does your house compare with others in terms of square footage, number of beds/baths, quality of kitchen, and other amenities? It is a carefully calibrated system to locate the value of your property and is the basis on which most lending institutions make a loan. Introducing a distinctly different housing type built with distinctly different development regulations into an existing single-family neighborhood will affect the valuation not only of the new unit, but of the existing ones. Appraisers are never criticized if the appraisal is

“conservative.” If a new multifamily dwelling is judged to be disruptive of the neighborhood, your valuation may decline.

b. Uncertainty stymies investment. Current Montgomery Real Estate contracts require disclosure of known potential changes in a neighborhood and of any known planning changes. If a potential buyer is concerned that the neighborhood he likes may soon be characterized by new duplexes and triplexes when he wants a single-family neighborhood, he may be reluctant to buy. Your home insurance may also be affected if a triplex or small apartment building is developed next door.

2. The Role of Lenders

a. Banks/lenders are, by nature, risk adverse and conservative. They are usually reluctant to lend unless all signals are green, and even then

sometimes require additional information or impose additional conditions.

b. Residential lenders are happiest when a housing unit is comparable if not identical to those around it. That has been a major impetus for cookie-cutter suburban development since the 1950s.

c. Commercial lenders are most comfortable with large developers with a track record. They often regard small developers with extreme caution. Small developers are the ones most likely to try to develop the in-fill multifamily units being proposed.

d. Attainable Housing is a new, untested commodity. It is unlikely to attract large developers because there is little or no profit margin, and construction of in-fill is far more labor- and cost-intensive than new

Density Increase, cont.

construction on undeveloped land.

It is for these reasons that the Planning Board has **adopted a posture of eliminating, as far as possible, the regulatory and participatory constraints of new development within established neighborhoods**, such as reducing set-backs, eliminating design review for compatibility and character, allowing lot consolidation, and no longer requiring the owner to live on the property. The issues regarding appraisal processes and lending reluctance have not been addressed. Both these industries will need to **dramatically change their cultures** if they are to participate in the development of Attainable Housing. One of the few inducements that hasn't been mentioned is for jurisdictions to

offer subsidies for construction of such housing types. However, the crucial decision has been made that the public sector's role will be to "induce" and then stand back and **let the private market drive the process with little control. This is truly a revolutionary approach.** We'll have to see if that works. There was one sentence in an earlier planning staff report that caught my eye which stated: "If we get only one multi-unit built, it will be worth the effort."

WHAT ARE PRIORITY HOUSING DISTRICTS?

Priority Housing Districts are defined as those areas with proximity to transit stations and to the Thrive Growth 2050 Corridors: **"a straight line buffer of 1 mile from the Red Line, Purple Line, and MARC Stations, plus 500 ft. from a**

BRT Corridor plus River Road and Connecticut Ave." These areas are the top focus of the Attainable Housing Strategy and would, in addition to duplexes and triplexes, allow quadplexes and reduce parking requirements. Takoma Park is a Priority Housing District. In general, these districts are concentrated along Maryland's border with the District of Columbia and Eastern Montgomery County following the Red Line north, including Clarksburg and Germantown, as well as Bethesda and Chevy Chase. A map of these districts is found in the draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

In the past, concentrating housing in transit-rich areas was planning gospel. However, Covid may have permanently changed this equation. Is this connection between housing and transportation as

Density Increase, cont.

relevant when commuting to work is no longer standard, office buildings have been emptied out, and working from home has become the new normal? It is surprising to find that this question has not been seriously considered. Given the focus on transit, inducing multifamily construction in the northern and western areas—where housing lots are generally much larger and could more easily accommodate multifamily housing—is given no priority.

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE ATTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGY?

They are many and sometimes in conflict. **It is not a zero sum game.** On the plus side, the focus on Priority Housing Districts adja-

cent to mass transportation corridors could, with more density, make more efficient use of existing public transit, help reduce congestion and greenhouse gases/carbon production, and combat climate change. This is of major benefit. To this end, Priority Districts are largely concentrated on the eastern portion of the County and are absent in the northern and western segment, which is less densely populated.

On the other hand, in terms of environmental impacts, larger lot coverage will mean a reduction in green/open space on individual lots, will probably require the clearing of the site, the cutting of trees, and will increase the issues of water retention and storm water run-off. Some have characterized this result as creating a successive series of heat sinks. Since on-site parking requirements are

reduced, there will be more on-street parking and congestion on some of the older, narrower streets in the districts. Some comments mention potential issues such as the need for additional utilities to service these areas, including new electrical and water and sewer service, and the potential overcrowding of schools.

Finally, if demolition is required to construct new Attainable housing, there is the environmental impact of demolition and of sending the debris to a landfill. This could be partially mitigated if “deconstruction”—not demolition—were required. There is a growing market for recycled wood, older lighting fixtures, tiles, and hardware. Demolished concrete can be recycled as well. If this initiative goes through, this type of approach should be considered. This approach has not been considered.

Density Increase, cont.

THE PATTERN BOOK

Staff of the Planning Department is developing a “Pattern Book” for the design of certain multifamily units. This would replace the current system that requires Planning staff review and approval of proposed new housing. It is not yet clear if the Planning Board will approve the use of the proposed Pattern Book. The Pattern Book, if adopted, deals only with the **volume and mass of the proposed development** within an increased footprint. It does not deal with issues of style or compatibility but rather how to accomplish as much density in the differing housing types. On the plus side, the use of such a Pattern Book may constrain some of the potential excesses to which developers are prone.

MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

There is a need to create a wider diversity of housing types, one that will meet the financial and physical needs of young/single first-time buyers and older people who are looking to stay in the neighborhood in smaller units. In earlier times, especially in the 1930s and '40s when “complete neighborhoods” were being constructed in new urban/suburban areas, there was often a compatible combination of small multifamily buildings with single-family structures. In fact, Takoma Park, from its inception, has had several scattered examples of this, especially in the Historic District, along Maple Ave., Carroll Ave., and elsewhere. However, it is important to emphasize that the developers of that time considered style, scale, compatibility, and character as extremely important

criteria in this development.

I believe that unfortunately **this Attainable Housing approach is an abdication of public responsibility**. As a goal, it is aspirational. As a policy, it is neither effective nor practical. As proposed, it could be highly disruptive of established neighborhoods and will not truly generate the sufficiency of housing or the diversity that is its goal. As a policy and a process, it washes its hands of public responsibility for outcomes and abruptly revolutionizes a century of housing practice. It turns all implementation over to the private market and hopes for the best. **Zoning reform alone is simply not enough**. When the public sector wishes to accomplish a major goal, it has always needed to put money behind it. If the Planning Board and the County Council

Density Increase, cont.

are truly serious about this initiative, they would attach either property tax incentives or direct subsidies to accomplish their goal.

What should be done? Well, I suggest that the County Council and the Planning Board stop drinking the Kool Aid and go back to the traditional hard work of identifying specific areas where new housing types are both doable and desirable and put money and tax incentives behind it. In Takoma Park, we have two significant areas that come to mind where such housing would be welcome: the Adventist Hospital site and along New Hampshire Avenue.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Well, I hope you think carefully about these issues and make up your own mind. You should read the

planning staff reports that are on-line as well as the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050. I believe we all have a role in creating how our community looks, functions, and moves into the future. I've said before, there are no accidentally beautiful and func-

tioning neighborhoods. You should communicate with your County and Takoma Park elected representatives and let them know what you think. The County's final reports are due out in October. ■

P3 Program is Now Called 'Op Lanes Maryland'

There's a new name for the State Highway Administration's public-private-partnership (P3) program. It will now be known as Op Lanes Maryland. "Op Lanes Maryland" stands for "Options and Opportunities for All."

"The P3 Program has evolved from when it began four years ago," says the Maryland Department of Transportation, "and the new name, reflects this evolution as [they] con-

tinue to collaborate with Montgomery, Frederick, and Prince George's Counties, community organizations, residents, businesses, agencies, regional partners and other stakeholders."

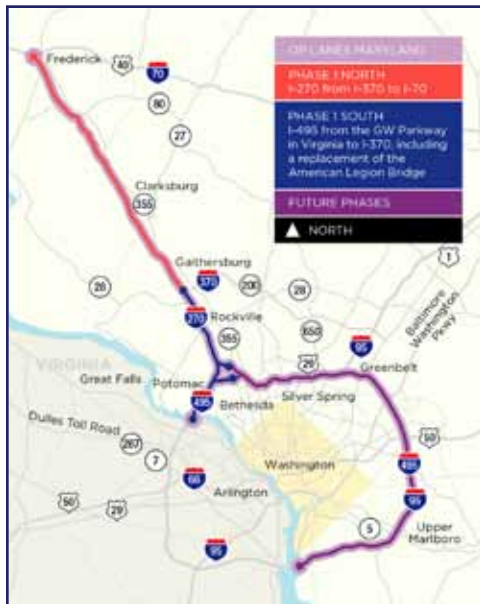
The New American Legion Bridge I-270 Traffic Relief Plan falls under the Op Lanes Maryland umbrella, replacing the 60-year-old American Legion Bridge and break-

Op Lanes Maryland, cont.

ing, MDOT says, “one of the nation’s worst bottlenecks.”

The **Phase 1: New American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-70 Traffic Relief Plan** is the first major project under Op Lanes Maryland. Upon Maryland Board of Public Works approval in August 2021, MDOT executed a Phase P3 Agreement and began “robust” predevelopment work with Accelerate Maryland Partners, LLC (AM Partners) to collaborate with stakeholders on further reducing and avoiding potential impacts to advance **Phase 1 South: American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-370** as the first section of the project.

This predevelopment work also will support completion of their ongoing Managed Lanes Study



THE ‘OP LANES’ MARYLAND PHASE 1 (NORTH AND SOUTH) COVERS I-270 AND I-495 FROM I-270 TO THE AMERICAN LEGION BRIDGE

under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If selected at the conclusion of the study, the Phase 1 South preferred alternative will deliver a new wider American Legion Bridge and two “dynamically priced” high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes in each direction from the vicinity of the George Washington Memorial Parkway across the bridge to I-270, and north on I-270 to I-370 with no action on I-495 east of the I-270 east spur at this time.

Any questions or comments should be directed to the State Highway Administration of the Maryland Department of Transportation via phone at 833.858.5960 or email oplanesmd@mdot.maryland.gov. You can find a [program overview online at MDOT](#). ■

Latest Covid-19 Case Numbers in Montgomery County by Zip Code

<u>10/3</u>	<u>10/4</u>	<u>Per 1K</u>	<u>Zip</u>	<u>Town/Area</u>	<u>10/3</u>	<u>10/4</u>	<u>Per 1K</u>	<u>Zip</u>	<u>Town/Area</u>
15	15	58.82	20812	Glen Echo	84	84	106.33	20868	Spencerville
1461	1462	52.89	20814	Bethesda	1568	1573	119.80	20871	Clarksburg
1372	1373	47.21	20815	Chevy Chase	1010	1013	77.30	20872	Damascus
634	635	39.18	20816	Bethesda	4926	4931	85.96	20874	Germantown
1664	1669	46.05	20817	Bethesda	2119	2119	83.11	20876	Germantown
57	57	29.05	20818	Cabin John	4303	4306	125.46	20877	Gaithersburg
1485	1485	59.48	20832	Olney	3730	3733	59.78	20878	Gaithersburg
496	496	64.12	20833	Brookeville	2551	2554	104.84	20879	Gaithersburg
340	343	59.25	20837	Poolesville	889	891	63.36	20882	Gaithersburg
10	10	38.61	20838	Barnesville	3445	3452	103.72	20886	Montgomery Village
16	16	74.77	20839	Beallsville	57	57	57.00	20889	Bethesda Walter Reed
483	484	46.27	20841	Boyd's	83	83	83.00	20892	Bethesda NIH
96	96	52.63	20842	Dickerson	1207	1208	63.40	20895	Kensington
3324	3332	71.90	20850	Rockville	3021	3022	86.76	20901	Silver Spring
1288	1289	90.83	20851	Rockville	5451	5455	111.69	20902	Silver Spring
2776	2782	68.92	20852	Rockville	2816	2816	119.20	20903	Silver Spring
2629	2639	88.94	20853	Rockville	5716	5721	104.76	20904	Silver Spring
2312	2318	46.72	20854	Potomac	1388	1388	76.92	20905	Silver Spring
995	996	69.67	20855	Derwood	7297	7301	112.85	20906	Silver Spring
214	214	89.32	20860	Sandy Spring	2757	2758	73.65	20910	Silver Spring
195	195	104.00	20861	Ashton	1993	1995	80.42	20912	Takoma Park
20	20	58.31	20862	Brinklow	430	434			Unknown
1452	1452	108.81	20866	Burtonsville	80175	80272	81.79		Montgomery County

Minutes of September 13, 2021, MCCF General Meeting #925, Virtual Zoom Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Sec.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. A total of 43 persons attended on Zoom.

Call to Order: Alan Bowser called the Meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and led introductions.

Approval of Meeting Agenda:

Modified to add (a) approval of 2021–2022 budget, (b) election of officers, and (c) moment of silence. As amended, moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported that, over the course of the previous year, we had receipts of \$1,468 and expenditures of \$1,639, for a \$172 deficit for the year. In the

last month, we paid for the plaques and engraving of the Star Cup for the awards ceremony in June. The bank balance at the end of the year was \$9,077. The **proposed budget on page 15 of the September newsletter** was approved. For the month, we received dues of \$419 and the only expenses were \$2 for bank charges. Bank balance of \$,9356.00.

Nominations Committee Report:

The **slate of candidates listed on page 10 of the September CFN** was recommended by the Committee, reported Chair Jacquie Bokow. Alan Bowser, President; Joshua Montgomery, First Vice-President; Elizabeth Joyce, Second Vice-President; Karen Cordry, Secretary; and Jerry Garson Treasurer were nominated. There were no other nominations from the

floor and those nominated were approved by voice vote. Alan noted that we continue to welcome additional volunteers for ExCom at large members as well as chairs and/or members of various committees. Peggy Dennis noted she headed the legislation committee and would be very welcoming of additional members.

In Memoriam: It was noted that Justin Chappell of the South Silver Spring Neighbors Association, Safe Silver Spring, and who had been a great advocate for persons with disabilities had passed away in his sleep last week. A moment of silence was observed in his memory.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Cary Lamari, on behalf of Citi-

September Minutes, cont.

zens for Responsible Growth, noted a number of concerns with the present Thrive Montgomery/Attainable Housing Strategy Initiative and that there is a petition drive being worked on in that regard.

■ Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad noted that redistricting discussions by Council are expected to start looking at redrawing Council maps beginning during first week of October.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

Our speaker was Meredith Wellington, discussing the Thrive 2050 Plan. The plan is currently being reviewed by the Council. The MCCF Executive Committee has prepared a resolution that we will discuss and vote on. Our testimony before the Planning Board in November and the Council in June primarily focused on

the process and the degree of community involvement (or lack thereof).

Wellington is an advisor on land use policy analysis for the County Executive and was a member of the Planning Board for eight years. The County Executive's concerns were set out in a June 10 letter to the Council. It focused on issues regarding the extent of community involvement in trying to deal with the overlapping issues of Thrive Montgomery and the housing/rezoning ZTAs at the same time. The proposal initially sought to create "affordable housing" by building smaller houses but the analysis indicated that the townhouses would run at least \$7-800,000, which would be far above what median income buyers could afford. The County Executive's view is that these issues should be addressed on a micro-level model, not one size fits all. There should be a more detailed

and focused outreach approach.

The current Thrive Montgomery draft has recommendations in two chapters that support the rezoning process and, in their current form, would form the predicate for the proposed rezoning and ZTA.

Alan Bowser and others also noted other concerns such as the discussions on economic development and environment, which had been initially discussed in separate chapters but were removed in the current draft. There are strong reasons to keep both chapters, particularly in light of the effects of development on the environment and the ever more obvious effects of climate change in many areas.

Wellington noted the administration wants to preserve existing affordable housing as well as provide direct measures such as subsidies

September Minutes, cont.

for affordable units. It will require intentional efforts to do that. There were a number of questions about the proposed “Attainable Housing” ZTA that would upzone to allow duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes to be constructed by right in existing single-family neighborhoods throughout most of the county and what effects that might have. There were also questions about whether a ZTA was an appropriate measure for such a major change and Wellington noted that the Master Plan process and “Small Area Planning” were more appropriate ways for finding appropriate spots for such projects.

Other concerns relating to the “Attainable Housing” ZTA proposal and Thrive generally were how to deal with the increasing frequency of heavy rains, flooding, and impacts on

infrastructure as well as tree preservation as increasingly dense coverage would inevitably result in tree loss in existing neighborhoods.

There were questions about how Thrive would affect the Ag Reserve, particularly the suggestion that it should be available for use for “active recreation,” which might not be compatible with having it be primarily used for farming, not recreational space.

RESOLUTION ON THRIVE 2050 DRAFT

A draft resolution on Thrive was recommended by the Executive Committee and was **published in the September newsletter**. It was read aloud to the audience and then was opened for discussion. A number of friendly amendments were presented and accepted. The final version is attached to these minutes (**read it here**). At the

end of the discussion, adoption of the resolution was moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote. There was one abstention.

NEW BUSINESS

■ There was a discussion of the problems with the Residential Parking Permit program and issues with the contractor. It was proposed that MCCF send a letter to MCDOT outlining the automation issues and requesting resolution.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Environment

■ Alan Bowser noted that the extreme weather is overwhelming the storm water systems in areas like East Silver Spring. Fixing it will be expensive and we don’t know how to pay for it yet. Stormwater Partners Network has a good website. Artifi-

September Minutes, cont.

cial turf issues were discussed. Some proposals include extended producer responsibility and requiring them to make payments to cover recycling, disposal, etc. (and have the product reflect its true costs). It's been passed in Maine, but hasn't gotten traction yet in Md. The bottle deposit bill is another focus item but again the legislature doesn't seem inclined to take it up this year.

■ Cary noted that we desperately need to deal with the incinerator issue to either get rid of it or upgrade it significantly. The CE has noted that there is a current contract that makes it difficult to close quickly.

Land Use and Planning

■ Housing will be the focus of the October meeting. There is interest in re-establishing funding in the budget

for the Office of People's Council.

Education

■ A member requested that members review and sign on to Woodside Forest letter request to MCPS to increase use of outdoor eating at schools to help cope with COVID.

Transportation

■ Jerry Garson noted that traffic was roughly back to the same numbers although it was more spread out. Cary Lamari noted that Thrive was proposing no new roads even though many proposals have been in the Capital Improvement Plan for years and even if we change to electric vehicles, transit, bicycles, etc. we'll still need roads to allow for development in some areas.

■ Traffic Issues: there are lots of reports about drivers speeding, drag racing, no mufflers, etc. Policy

has recently been against pursuing simple traffic violators because of dangers of high-speed chases, but the result seems to be that these problems are getting worse.

Utilities

■ Louis Wilen noted that WSSC still has some delays in doing meter reading and has been billing for longer periods, which has resulted in higher bills.

■ People have been complaining on social media that they haven't been able to get through to WGL about any kind of issue and it has sent out an email conceding that it hasn't been able to stay staffed properly.

FUTURE MEETINGS

We expect to be staying virtual for the foreseeable future.

Adjourned at 9:42 p.m. ■

Minutes of the MCCF Executive Committee Meeting, September 23, 2021

By Karen Cordry, MCCF Recording Secretary

Call to Order: 7:05 p.m. Alan Bowser, Karen Cordry, Jerry Garson, Bailey Condrey, Joshua Montgomery, Liz Joyce, Harriet Quinn.

Approval of the Meeting Agenda: The meeting agenda was approved on voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Nothing has changed since the September meeting report. Currently have \$9,356.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Jerry noted that he had circulated a draft financial impact statement that had been prepared on the effects of the Thrive 2050. Council will be holding a town hall meeting on Sept.

29; 7:30 to 9 p.m. You can sign up to speak on any topic.

■ County will have Thanksgiving parade this year in DTSS, starting in Veterans' Plaza. It will be the Saturday before Thanksgiving and starts at 10 a.m. on Nov. 20. We can have a car with signs drive through. County will provide signs and there is no cost.

OFFICERS

President Alan Bowser, Secretary Karen Cordry, and Treasurer Jerry Garson were re-elected at the September General Meeting. Two new Board members were also elected and welcomed. First Vice-President Joshua Montgomery is the Immediate Past President of McKenney Hills Carroll Knolls Civic Association which grew from 60 members to 600

in two years. Second Vice-President Elizabeth Joyce of Saratoga Village in Silver Spring is a longtime resident and interested in a lot of local issues and helping ensure County policies benefit all.

PLANNING AND GOALS GOING FORWARD

■ Alan has prepared a Civic Federation Basics sheet to describe structure of Civic Fed to provide information for interested persons. He noted that we could add appointed officials who can be nominated by the Chair and confirmed by the membership. There are three standing committees on general structure (such as nominating and audit) and about eight substantive area committees, all of which use chairs and/

ExCom Minutes, cont.

or members.

■ 2021-2022 Goals: Increase membership and build the executive committee to have a large working membership.

■ Noted a number of other positions we could fill.

■ It was also discussed that the by-laws could stand to be reviewed and updated to give more flexibility such as when COVID came along and we needed to go virtual.

■ He also noted that he had shared the Planning Board's resources for civic/homeowners's associations and they had a list of those groups that can be used to compile mailing lists. It's not fully up to date but it's a good start.

■ He's also evaluating software for automating membership renewals.

OCTOBER MEETING

■ The meeting topic for October will be Housing and for November will be Transportation, which will include pedestrian issues. Alan and Liz will coordinate October speakers and content as well as resolution and newsletter article.

■ Liz noted that there had been numerous efforts across the country to do "upzoning" with the goal of providing affordability, diversity, etc., but that the results in practice had not lived up to that.

OLD BUSINESS

■ Discussion of the ability of the Civic Fed to respond to requests from Climate Change Coalition. We will leave membership at the current level for now, but consider further whether we can participate at a higher level. Perhaps it could be

a useful presentation topic to have them come and present on various topics they are working on (such as the Green Building Code).

■ As requested at the September General Meeting, MCCF will send a letter to the MCDOT Director and County Executive regarding the problems with the automated parking permit renewal process and the need for a new contractor.

NEWSLETTER

■ The monthly deadline for articles is the 26th of the month.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m. ■

Dear Civic Leader in Montgomery County:

I'm writing to remind you to renew your membership in the Montgomery County Civic Federation as we begin our 2021–2022 membership year. Or, if you and your association are not current members of the Civic Fed, we invite you to join us in our work. You can now **renew online** or **by mail**.

As you may know, by renewing or joining the Civic Federation, you become part of our County-wide organization in support of our civic associations and homeowner's associations. With your help, we can continue our active advocacy work on behalf of our neighbors and maintain the high level of service we provide to MoCo's residents.

We are fortunate to have a great group of Civic Federation officers who give selflessly of their time to

monitor programs, policies, and events at the County and State levels and who work tirelessly to educate our members and advocate for valuable changes in policies.

We invite the participation of you and your organization at our meetings and in the work of our Executive Committee and in our subject-matter committees. And there are many opportunities for your delegates to serve as chairs of Civic Fed committees and to be part of our Executive Committee team.

We'll be meeting virtually for the foreseeable future due to the coronavirus pandemic, so it will be easier to participate in our regular monthly and special meetings.

Thank you for your time and we hope to see you soon.

—Alan Bowser, President ■

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The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August by the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. 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.”

Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month. Send to CFN at [civicfednews AT montgomerycivic.org](mailto:civicfednews@montgomerycivic.org).

Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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