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TO PRINT, USE **PRINT VERSION**

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #935

Monday, September 12, 2022, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom.*

Topic: “Setting Guardrails for Thrive Montgomery 2050.”

! **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**

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

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Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Federation Meeting #935

Monday, September 12, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: June General Meeting **P.23**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. September Program: Setting Guardrails for Thrive Montgomery 2050 **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 September 12 meeting will be held online via Zoom (see p. 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.

■ Date and Time: Monday, Sept. 12, 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 **820 5577 8104**. 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 28

September Program: Setting Guardrails for Thrive Montgomery 2050

By Alan Bowser, President

The September meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation will provide a valuable update on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 document which is currently before the Montgomery County Council.

We are pleased that our featured guest is Minneapolis architect and former member of the Minneapolis Planning Commission **Alissa Pier**, who spoke to the Civic Federation last year to share her experiences with the development of that city's general plan and her thoughts about the unintended consequences of that plan, especially in the area of upzoning and affordable housing. [A video of her October 11, 2022, presentation can be viewed here.](#)

At that time, she talked about the plan's impacts on the rents, afford-

ability, infrastructure, and the environment, and highlighted the crucial importance of stakeholder engagement to secure buy-in from the community.

In a 2019 *Planning Report* article entitled "**Minneapolis' Residential Upzoning Risks Unintended Consequences,**" Pier had also expressed the view that the city's "experiment" had not been fully examined, noting a number of unintended consequences. She highlighted the dangers of widespread land speculation by global investment firms which could undermine the fabric of low-income and



underserved communities.

She said that, "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, long-term harm to low-income families and communities

of color, and there is no way to undo the damage once Pandora's box has been opened."

She added, "In an effort to alleviate the affordable housing crisis,



September Program, cont.

the city 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 Civic Federation has repeatedly called on the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Montgomery County Council to give more opportunities for communities to learn about the proposed plan and to provide input.

A **recent report by the Council’s Office of Legislative Oversight** criticized the process which led to the drafting of the plan, observing that it had not engaged underserved communities during its development.

The Federation has called on the Montgomery County Council to

provide detailed assessments of the environment impacts, the economic impacts and impact on racial equity and social justice before finalizing Thrive Montgomery 2050. The Federation has noted increasing calls from County stakeholders to “pause” consideration of Thrive 2050 so as to get more information of value to residents, and to push a final decision on the plan until the seating of the new County Council.

Alissa D. Luepke Pier, AIA, is the 2022 AIA Minnesota Louis Lundgren Award for Service recipient. Each year, the Louis Lundgren Award for Service recognizes a Minnesota architect for his/her outstanding contributions in the areas of community and professional service. Through their work as citizen architects, recipients of the award are regarded by the peers for their prolonged and effective volun-

teerism.

Alissa Luepke Pier served on the Minneapolis Planning Commission for more than 13 years, helping shape the community’s built environment. During that time, she also ran her own practice and volunteered with students, neighborhoods, and equity initiatives, particularly in North Minneapolis.

Highlights of her extensive volunteering and speaking engagements include team leadership for AIA Minnesota’s Urban Design Committee, leading design charettes around the community, and speaking and leading tours for Preserve Minneapolis/Rethos. Beyond leadership in design, she has been a dedicated volunteer for the Animal Humane Society and celiac disease groups and has coached Lego League and led other STEM groups for children for many years. ■

Opinion: Montgomery County Must Update, Strengthen its Outdated Forest Protections Reforestation is Among the Best Ways to Mitigate Climate Change

By the Montgomery County Forest Coalition

[The following is reprinted from the July 9, 2022, *Bethesda Beat*.]

The risks posed by rapid deforestation and our changing climate make it imperative that county leaders update and strengthen Montgomery County's forest conservation law. We urge the County Council to strengthen forest regulations this year to protect public health, community well-being, homes, and businesses.

The climate crisis is bringing more intense storms that drop a deluge of rain in short periods of time, causing damaging floods, particularly in low-lying urban areas more likely to be inhabited by economically vulnerable residents and people

of color. Montgomery County's 2021 *Climate Action Plan* states that the county plans to cut 80% of its emissions by 2027 and 100% by 2035. Protecting our existing forests and planting new forest is one of the most affordable and effective nature-based solutions to sequester carbon and reduce emissions.

Reforestation is also among the best ways to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change by helping to reduce flooding, cool land and air, and purify our air and water. Forest ecosystems absorb immense amounts of water while also removing water pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which trees use to grow. Updating the forest conservation law to ensure a net gain of forest would be consistent with both the

county's Climate Action Plan and its new draft general master plan, *Thrive 2050*.

Montgomery County's Forest Conservation Law has remained largely the same since it was put in place in 1992, even as other Maryland counties have recently increased forest protections to mitigate climate change and protect the water we drink.

Montgomery County's 30-year-old *forest regulations* only require developers, in most cases, to preserve or replant about one-fourth of the trees they cut down—the minimum required by state law.

The county's regulations are lax compared to jurisdictions that have gone beyond state forest law mini-

Forest Protections, cont.

mums. For example, **Carroll County approved regulations** in 1992 that require developers to replace every 1 acre of forest cut down with 1 acre of new forest planted. **Newly released data** from the Chesapeake Conservancy and Chesapeake Bay Program show that Carroll County has gained about as much forest as it has lost to development in recent years. But over the same time span, Montgomery County lost 660 acres of forest to newly constructed roads, rooftops, and lawns, while adding only 100 acres—a major net loss. Another 1,800 acres of forest in Montgomery were fragmented or otherwise impacted by development, making them more vulnerable to invasive vines, deer, and other threats.

Other Maryland counties have made improvements to their for-

est protection laws over the past few years. **Anne Arundel increased its forest conservation protections** in 2019, substantially increasing the cost for failing to replace forest that's been cut down. That same year, **Howard County required new residential developments** to plant more trees on-site and expanded the definition of forests that receive protection to include small, wooded tracts. In 2020, **Frederick County passed the strongest local-level forest protection laws** of any county in the state of Maryland.

The Montgomery County Council has an opportunity this year to introduce and pass a bill to improve its forest laws and, with its statewide influence, re-assert itself as a leader in forest protections.

We, the **Montgomery County Forest Coalition**, are asking for the council to adopt the following poli-

cies:

- Require developers to replant 2 acres of forest ecosystem for every 1 acre of forest ecosystem cut down and incentivize replanting forest in the same watershed.

- Decrease the amount of credit developers get for preserving existing forest on other properties after they remove forest for a project located at an entirely different site. While preserving existing forest is commendable, without new forest areas being planted, this policy is resulting in massive forest loss.

- Give priority to development plans that protect existing forest on-site.

- Adopt forest biological community standards for newly planted forest to ensure the replacement forests are healthy ecosystems that support a diversity of wildlife and vegetation.

Forest Protections, cont.

■ Prioritize long-term tree and forest maintenance and create green job opportunities through community-based workforce development.

In April, the Montgomery County Planning Board proposed **slight improvements to forest protections** in the county. We're asking the County Council to go beyond the Planning Board's recommendations by using the above recommendations.

As part of a **comprehensive update to Montgomery County's forest and tree laws**, we also plan to work in the future with the Department of Environmental Protection to strengthen the **Tree Canopy Law** and with the Department of Transportation to improve components of the **Roadside Tree Law**.

We urge the County Council to act now to strengthen forest conser-

vation. **On Jan. 13, 2021**, during a Transportation and Environment Committee public hearing, Council Member Tom Hucker committed to "address the [forest replanting] ratio later this year" and he and Council Member Evan Glass specifically committed to "do more" in terms of tree and forest protection. Council Member Hans Riemer said, "We definitely should be looking at the bigger goal of forest protection." Despite this, the council has not yet introduced a comprehensive forest conservation reform bill.

We believe the time to strengthen forest protections and safeguard public health for our families and future generations is now.

We, the undersigned, believe the time to strengthen forest protections and safeguard public health for our families and future generations is now.

—*Eliza Cava, director of conservation, Audubon Naturalist Society; co-chair of Stormwater Partners Network*

—*Shruti Bhatnagar, chair, Sierra Club Montgomery County*

—*Caren Madsen, chair of board of directors, Conservation Montgomery*

—*Kit Gage,* president, Friends of Sligo Creek*

—*Sylvia Tognetti,* president, Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir*

—*Kim Coble, executive director, Md. League of Conservation Voters*

—*Erik Fisher, Md. assistant director, Chesapeake Bay Foundation*

—*Caroline Taylor, executive director, Mont. Countryside Alliance*

—*Hedrick Belin, president, Potomac Conservancy*

—*Jeanne Braha, executive*

Forest Protections, cont.

director, Rock Creek Conservancy;
co-chair, Stormwater Partners Network

—Jim Laurenson, facilitator and
co-founder, Cedar Lane Ecosystems
Study Group

—Doris Nguyen, MOCO CAP
Coordinating Committee member;
president, Glen Echo Heights Mobilization*

—Jeffrey Weisner, steering committee, 350 MoCo*

—Adam Roberts, executive director, Bethesda Green*

—Philip Bogdonoff, Biodiversity for a Livable Climate*

—Mike Tidwell, executive director, Chesapeake Climate Action Network*

—Kathleen Holmay, team leader, Environmental Justice Team, Cedar Lane UU Church

—Doneby Smith, chairperson, Green Sanctuary Committee of Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring*

—Walter Weiss, organizer, Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions*

—Diane Conway, president, Safe Healthy Playing Fields*

—Steven Findlay, president, Sugarloaf Citizens Association*

—Diana Younts, facilitator, Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee*

—Karl Held, MoCo CAP Coordinating Committee member and The Climate Mobilization*

—Margaret Schoap, organizer, Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended (TAME Coalition) ■

*These organizations are also members of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan (CAP) Coalition.

MoCo Provides Updates on Four 'Streeteries' for Fall

Four "Streeteries" that were created in early 2020 by Montgomery County as a temporary concept to support businesses struggling from the economic impacts of COVID-19 and allow residents to gather freely on public streets closed to cars are now being reevaluated for fall as the pandemic continues to ease. The County's Streeteries include Newell Street in Silver Spring, Price Avenue in Wheaton and Norfolk and Woodmont Avenues in Bethesda.

The County has been working with communities around each location to establish a long-term plan for each space. The Streeteries will continue in some fashion, although some will change their concept.

The Montgomery County Depart-

Four Streeteries, cont.

ment of Transportation (MCDOT) has managed the closing of streets to vehicles as part of the Streeteries plans. The closed streets have allowed residents and businesses to use public spaces for in-street activities such as biking, walking, outdoor dining, and retail activity. Management of the spaces has been led by the County's respective Regional Service Centers (RSCs).

"The Streeteries have provided a practical solution to a pandemic-related problem," said County Executive Marc Elrich. "They served as much-needed gathering spaces during the pandemic and provided a creative solution. Now as the situation has changed, we worked with the community in each area to decide how these spaces will continue to operate. The Streeteries showed

new possibilities and I would like to see how we might continue some form of these activities as we move beyond just trying to accommodate the activities within the constraints of the pandemic."

Streeteries generally, have had hospitality businesses involved and allow for alcohol consumption in public areas that were off limits previously.

Future plans for the four Streeteries for fall, as determined by input from their respective communities:

Newell Street, Silver Spring

Newell Street will reopen to cars after Labor Day. However, it will close to vehicular traffic for scheduled public events throughout the year.

Price Avenue, Wheaton

Price Avenue will remain in op-

eration as a Streetry for the foreseeable future.

The Mid-County RSC has indicated that it is looking to expand the Streetry to be more inclusive of bicyclists and walkers. A community meeting regarding the Streetry is planned for late September or early October to gather additional community feedback on ways to better accommodate pedestrian traffic.

This fall, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) has planned repairs to its facilities that run under Price Avenue. The work may require WSSC to temporarily close the Streetry for a few days.

Norfolk Avenue, Bethesda

Norfolk Avenue will remain in operation as a Streetry, and closed to vehicles, for the foreseeable future.

Four Streeteries, cont.

Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda

The Woodmont Avenue Streetry will be temporarily suspended, and partially reopened to traffic after Labor Day during construction of the partially constructed Woodmont Ave. Cycle Track. Construction is expected to commence after Labor Day.

The Streeteries were part of MCDOT's Shared Streets program, which included smaller pockets designated for recreation during the pandemic and allowed businesses to use streetside parking spaces and sidewalks.

Many of those businesses have already returned to normal operations. Streeteries have accessibility requirements built into their designs. ■

Mont. County Climate Action Annual Report Highlights 75 Accomplishments to Reduce Climate-Related Risks

[The following claims were made in a Montgomery County Press Release dated August 30, 2022.]

Montgomery County has released its first Climate Action Plan Annual Report, a work plan detailing Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) accomplishments and Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) plans to combat climate change. The report highlights 75 accomplishments in the first year since the plan was released in June 2021.

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a strategic plan to cut community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035, compared to 2005 levels. The plan also seeks to reduce climate-related risks to the County's residents, businesses and the built

and natural environment.

During the first year of CAP implementation, County departments and agencies actively worked on 75 climate actions out of the 86 actions identified in the CAP. In FY23, County departments and agencies intend to make progress on 77 climate actions.

"This summer has showed us that climate change is already here. Heat waves and storms are becoming more severe, underscoring the need for Montgomery County and other communities around the world to stay laser-focused on climate action," said County Executive Marc Elrich. "We will continue to accelerate our climate efforts in the coming year. I recommended, and the

CAP Accomplishments, cont.

County Council approved, record funding for our climate initiatives in the county's Fiscal year 2023 budget. Our local resources to address climate change will be enhanced by federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the recently enacted Inflation Reduction Act."

Adriana Hochberg, the County's climate change officer and acting director of the Department of Environmental Protection, said the first year of implementing Climate Action Plan initiatives showed how much could be accomplished in a short period of time.

"Combatting climate change takes all of us. Our accomplishments during the first year of implementing the Climate Action Plan show how much we can achieve when we focus our collective efforts on reducing

greenhouse gas emissions and increasing our community's resilience to the impacts of climate change," said Ms. Hochberg. "Through a tapestry of dozens of actions across multiple sectors, we will continue to drive down emissions and enhance quality of life in the County, with a special emphasis on members of our community who are the most impacted by climate change and have the fewest resources to cope with its impacts."

FY2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS CLAIMED

FY22 Climate Action Accomplishments include:

I Clean Energy. Many solar projects were installed, including a total of 1,027 new residential solar installations and two community solar projects for low- and moderate-income residents. Legislation

that funds the Montgomery County Green Brank to expand its clean energy work was passed by County Council.

I Buildings. The County Council unanimously passed Building Energy Performance Standards legislation, which requires minimum energy performance thresholds for existing covered buildings and drives them to improve their energy efficiency over a set time period, thus reducing carbon emissions.

I Transportation. RideOn service levels were restored to 80 percent of pre-COVID-19 levels by January 2022. Free fares have been made permanent on RideOn for those under 18, seniors and persons with disabilities. The first 25 electric Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) school buses have arrived as part of a plan to replace 326 diesel

CAP Accomplishments, cont.

buses with electric school buses over four years. The Department of Environmental Protection estimates that plug-in vehicles made up 9.5 percent of new vehicle registrations in the last year.

I Carbon Sequestration. Tree Montgomery planted 1,700 trees in FY22, for a cumulative total of more than 7,450 shade trees planted through the spring 2022 planting season.

I Climate Adaptation. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) completed the construction of Glenmont Forest Green Streets, with 53 rain gardens, bio-retention gardens, and tree boxes installed. DEP and the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS) began installing 35 early warning flood sensors that

can alert residents sooner about high water or flooding events.

I Governance. DEP, the Office of Innovation, and the Office of Human Resources sponsored five climate training programs for 75 County government staff from 20 departments and developed a comprehensive set of resources for the new Climate Change Ambassador Training Program to build understanding and engagement among County government staff about climate change.

I Public Engagement, Partnerships, and Education. The MCPS Board of Education unanimously passed a Sustainability Policy, committing MCPS to cut greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035 compared to 2005 levels, in line with the CAP.

I Public Engagement, Partnerships, and Education. DEP

organized climate storytelling workshops, facilitated by Climate Stories Project that had community members develop, record and share their personal and community relationships with climate change. The project focused on amplifying the voices of under-represented and frontline community members. Montgomery County also co-launched the Maryland Coalition of Counties and Cities for Climate Action.

FY2023 PLANS

Actions planned for FY23 include:

I Clean Energy. Solar panels will be installed at four MCPS schools and at multiple other County locations including maintenance yards, landfills, parking lots and the animal shelter.

I Buildings. DEP will launch an



CAP Accomplishments, cont.

Electrification Incentive Program in partnership with the City of Takoma Park. The Department of General Services will complete the Holiday Park Senior Center net-zero building retrofit.

I Transportation. Ride On will operate a total of 14 electric buses in FY23. The Department of General Services (DGS) will procure an additional 100 electric Ride On buses over three years, including approximately 45 electric buses in FY23. DGS awarded a contract to install publicly accessible EV-charging stations at approximately 65 libraries, recreation centers and swimming pools; installation will get underway in FY23. MCPS will continue testing and increasing its electric school bus fleet.

I Carbon Sequestration. DEP, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Montgomery Planning and Montgomery Parks will continue tree planting efforts across the County, including reforesting some areas.

I Climate Adaptation. DEP and OEMHS conducted an Urban Heat Mapping Campaign with community volunteers in early August. Through assistance from Thriving Earth Exchange scientists, the County will analyze the data gathered to identify communities to target for shade tree plantings on private property and along streets. The County also will continue developing a comprehensive Flood Management Plan.

I Governance. DEP will launch a pilot program to provide climate resilience funding for low- and moderate-income housing to fill funding gaps in existing programs that these

households may benefit from.

I Public Engagement, Partnerships and Education. MCPS will begin implementing its new Sustainability Policy. DEP, other County departments and the Montgomery County Racial Equity Network on the implementation of the Community Justice Academy are working with “Community Ambassadors” who will co-create integrated health, equity and quality-of-life solutions that center on the needs and desires of low-income and Black, Indigenous and Other People of Color communities in the County.

For more information, see:

I [Climate Action Plan Annual Report](#)

I [Climate Action Plan](#)

For questions or comments about the County’s climate action, email climate@montgomerycountymd.gov. ■

Montgomery County Planning Department Released Pedestrian Master Plan's Draft Design, Policy, and Programming Recommendations on July 14

The Montgomery County Planning Department, part of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, on July 14, 2022, released the draft Design, Policy, and Programming Recommendations for the **Pedestrian Master Plan**. Part of Montgomery Planning's first dedicated effort to specifically improve the countywide pedestrian experience, these recommendations offer solutions and strategies to make walking and rolling safer, more equitable, and more direct in support of the plan's four goals:

- Increase walking rates and pedestrian satisfaction;
- Create a comfortable, connected, convenient pedestrian network;
- Enhance pedestrian safety; and
- Build an equitable and just pe-

destrian Network.

View the **draft recommendations here**.

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 pedes-

trian lighting;

- Remove sidewalk obstructions; and

- Identify new revenue sources to fund pedestrian improvements.

Planners are asking the public to weigh in on the draft recommendations online and at a community meetings (7-9 p.m.) on September 7 (virtual) and September 13 (in-person). Following this engagement period, planners will present the draft recommendations to the county Planning Board in September 2022.

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 over 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. ■

Applications Are Now Being Accepted to Participate in The 2022 Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade

Montgomery County is looking for colorful performing units and creative groups to march in the annual Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade, which this year will begin at 10 a.m. on Saturday, November 19, in downtown Silver Spring. Applications for units to participate are due on September 19. The Montgomery County event is the only Thanksgiving Parade in the Washington metropolitan area.

More information on the parade, and applications to participate, **can be found here**. There is no fee to participate.

The exciting parade traditionally kicks off the holiday season in the Silver Spring Arts and Entertainment District. The parade steps off from Ellsworth Drive and Fenton

Street and proceeds south on Georgia Avenue, ending at Silver Spring Avenue. It annually attracts thousands of spectators.

Often seen in the parade are larger-than-life inflatable turkeys and penguins, glittering floats, marching bands, and dancing groups from different areas of the world.

Thanksgiving or holiday-themed units are welcome, as well as marching bands, multicultural groups, majorettes and baton twirlers, artists, clowns, dance and gymnastic troupes, floats, sports teams, costumed characters, beauty queens, classic car clubs, and many types of innovative displays.

For more information, call Media Contact Elizabeth Gallauresi at 301.793.2928. ■

What You May Not Know About Thrive Montgomery 2050: Racial Equity, Social Justice

By Cary Lamari, Responsible Growth for Montgomery County
[The following letter was sent to Jordan Exantus at Nspiregreen Consulting.]

Jordan, Thank you for returning my call on August 19, 2022.

As I mentioned, I was concerned that your presentation at the August 16 Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) public zoom meeting included only the Planning Board's narrow point of view. In both the August 9th and 16th sessions, Thrive's goals were presented as if they *were* the plan, with no details on how it would be implemented. The entire purpose of the RESJ outreach is to elicit information from constituents, especially those representing minority and low-income groups, on their views and priorities on Thrive

Montgomery 2050. Yet many of us were not allowed to share our views or the facts that people need to reach informed conclusions. In fact, some participants were blocked from submitting information in the chat, which suggests censorship and an effort to quash opposing points of view.

To many of us, it appears that Nspiregreen is operating only from information supplied to you by the Planning Board. We are concerned that the Council has given you about six weeks to complete an analysis that you believe would require a year to do properly. We believe that this rushed timetable (and the withholding of key information from participants and possibly from your company) are among the reasons, as your polling revealed, that 88% of

those present said they did not trust the Planning Board's process. These factors could clearly compromise the RESJ study results and your company's valued reputation as an honest broker in this critical undertaking.

We deeply appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with you, and we respectfully share the following thoughts and resources related to the RESJ important study you are conducting.

BACKGROUND ON THE RESJ STUDY

On February 15, 2022, in response to a request from Montgomery County Council President Gabe Albornoz for a Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) analysis of Thrive Montgomery 2050, Elaine

RGMC on RESJ, cont.

Bonner-Tomkins, Ph.D., of the Office of Legislative Oversight submitted a **preliminary analysis of Thrive Montgomery 2050**. Concluding that the PHED committee draft (the official draft at that time) lacked the details for an adequate RESJ review, Dr. Bonner-Tompkins stated that the Planning Board should “elicit the **meaningful input of residents of color from communities of color and low-income residents** to co-create and update Thrive so that it reflects a consensus of land use policies and practices aimed at advancing RESJ; and describe the historic and current drivers of racial inequities in land use, housing, transportation and other policy areas that Thrive seeks to address.” The economic development model behind Thrive, she stated, “could

widen racial and social inequities as it primarily offers benefits to affluent and disproportionately White people.”

In August 2021, the **County’s Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice** had drawn similar conclusions, stating that “there should be more community outreach to residents of color, done in a way that reaches them where they are, and then, and only then, there should be more County Council public hearing dates in the fall.” They also recommended that “the Planning Board Draft of Thrive Montgomery 2050 must be reframed to address the institutional failings of government and the private sector to create policies and provide services to communities of color that are the right of all residents.” ORESJ stated that an entire chapter on racial equity be included in Thrive.

Both reviews show that participants need specifics about Thrive’s impact on their lives to participate meaningfully—as co-creators—in the exchange of ideas the study requires. Yet how can participants help you meet these challenges if all they know about the plan is its stated goals—not how its implementation would affect their lives?

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR
COMPLETE RESJ ANALYSIS**

How many new residents are expected in our county during the next 30 years: 200,000 (Thrive Montgomery 2050, Working Draft Plan, p. 13, ¶ 2).

How many units are currently in the pipeline of approved projects: 44,383. In addition, the County has **85,946** additional zoned residential devel-

RGMC on RESJ, cont.

opment capacity, according to the Planning Board's residential development capacity analysis. ***These figures indicate that the County right now has the Housing available for at least 130,000 new residents, or 65% of the 30-year goal***, with capacity to approve housing for an additional 200,000+ residents. The key issues are affordability; the loss of currently affordable housing to corporate-managed gentrification; matching new dwelling opportunities with new employment opportunities; adequate business investment in the County (which has been declining); and implementing infrastructure to support housing, jobs, and transit needs for current and new populations.

In other words, the argument that Thrive is needed to accom-

modate these new residents lacks context and is largely inaccurate.

I Upzoning and complete communities will NOT significantly ease our County's housing affordability crisis. The Planning Board's *Missing Middle Housing in Montgomery County staff report* (page 15) showed that the least expensive missing middle housing in Silver Spring would cost upwards of \$715,000. The usual justification for emphasizing missing middle is that such housing is less expensive than McMansions. This observation ignores the fact that missing middle will not be affordable for most lower- and middle-income residents. For example, the estimated required income for even a six-plex in Silver Spring (not part of current planning) would be \$85K to \$90K.

I How many new residents

are likely to be low-income, earning less than \$50,000?

Although these numbers can only be estimated, one of two new Montgomery County households since 2010 had a net income of less than \$50,000 (*Montgomery County Needs Assessment, July 2020, p. 24*). Significantly, since 2010, Montgomery County attracted only 5% of new area residents but "captured" 20% of the lowest income new residents in the Metro area. (Only D.C. had more, at 21%.) (*Same Needs Assessment, p.23*.)

I Economic trends will reduce the County's capacity to fund needed services. As a respected former County Council analyst has noted, "Over the last decade though, Montgomery County is gaining residents at a rate of 0.66% per year and gaining jobs at a rate of only 0.24%

RGMC on RESJ, cont.

per year. That's not a sustainable trend because services such as public K-12 education are really expensive, whereas the services that specifically benefit businesses are, relatively speaking, less common and less expensive. **And the gap between our job growth rate and the job growth rates in Arlington and Fairfax are really big** (their job growth rates are roughly 4× and 3× the Montgomery County job growth rate)." Plans to blanket upzone the entire county would exacerbate these problems.

**THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050
AND UPZONING**

Because of the absence of implementation strategies in Thrive, the plan veils its reliance on the **Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative**,

developed simultaneously with Thrive, and on its core concepts, such as **missing middle housing** and upzoning (changes in zoning classification of land to a more intensive or less restrictive district, such as from residential district to commercial district or from a single-family residential district to a multiple-family residential district).

While the current version of Thrive includes no specific zoning changes, it is clear from Councilmembers' **Hucker's and Riemer's March 8, 2021, letter to the Planning Board** that Thrive would likely lead to significant upzoning throughout the County.

As stated on **page 6 of Thrive**, "*Area master plans, sector plans, and countywide functional plans will remain valid until modified pursuant to the guidance in this plan.*" From this statement, it seems

fair to infer that the kinds of upzoning featured in AHSI can be expected to follow the passage of Thrive. And, by implication, that Thrive is intended to legalize the kinds of AHSI initiatives that are not now permitted under the current zoning rules.

The Appendix to this letter includes an annotated bibliography of scholarly research showing the clear relationship between upzoning and gentrification and displacement. Typical of such research is **Black Response Cambridge on Upzoning Petition: 'Missing Middle' Fails for Housing Affordability** by Stephanie Guirand, which argues that upzoning does not "provide a steppingstone for low-income families to escape the trap of low-income housing." She suggests, instead, creating a program for nonprofit and cooperative developers to have priority and making all

RGMC on RESJ, cont.

inclusionary housing a rent-to-own program (good alternatives not suggested in Thrive).

Other alternatives, as suggested by **Liz Enochs**, include building more public and cooperative housing, increasing housing subsidies so those hurt by segregationist policies can afford to live in what are now known as “high opportunity” areas, and investing more heavily in urban amenities like parks and schools. Other alternatives, such as community land trusts, could create affordable housing and, through the use of master planning, avoid the unintended consequences of upzoning. None of these alternatives are mentioned in Thrive.

Another important article, *Farm Road: Rural Gentrification and the Erasure of History*, documents a

notorious 1990s case in Montgomery County, where the Planning Board authorized a new development that displaced a Black community near Sandy Spring, founded by freed slaves after the Civil War. The development blocked the only access road to the homes of Black residents, permanently limiting their ability to reach their homes. This article refutes any claims that gentrification and displacement do not happen in Montgomery County.

ABSENTEE LANDLORDS

An extremely important driver of inequality not addressed in Thrive is that corporate landlords are buying almost **one of seven available homes nationwide**. These purchases by wealthy investors increase renter-ship and make home ownership less available to individual buyers. Passing Thrive without accounting for its

likely impact and without safeguards for the community would create greater incentives for this unhealthy and inequitable trend.

**THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050
WILL PRODUCE MORE—NOT
LESS—INEQUITY**

We believe the current proposed Thrive 2050 and Planning staff’s proposed Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative will have the effect of increasing housing costs, increasing taxes, and making equity building for new first time home buyers almost impossible.

We believe upzoning will reduce tree canopy, increase carbon emissions in suburban and urban areas, threatening the health, safety, and welfare of the public, especially in our more affordable neighborhoods (environmental racism) and po-

RGMC on RESJ, cont.

tentially harm the health of many groups, including seniors—who will comprise between 20% and 30% of the county population in the next 30 years but merit only four brief references in Thrive.

We also believe blanket upzoning will adversely affect schools, public safety, sewer and water capacity, and other crucial infrastructure. While these issues are far too extensive to discuss here, [our Facebook page](#) and [our website](#) present a wealth of supportive data on these issues.

For these reasons, we strongly recommend postponing the vote on Thrive until its many deficiencies can be resolved. ■

How Will Thrive Mont. 2050 Meet Its Racial Equity Goals?

By Elizabeth Joyce, MCCF Second Vice President

Right now, the Council has paused the approval process for Thrive Montgomery 2050 to allow Nspiregreen, the consultant hired to conduct a racial equity and social justice (RESJ) analysis of the plan, to carry out its work. Their report to the Council is due in early September. Nspiregreen held two focus group sessions in August, aiming to inform minority and low-income residents about Thrive and elicit their views about it. But the surveys used to collect feedback and the sessions themselves have raised as many questions as they sought to resolve.

The Planning Board, which had strongly opposed this study, seems to be in charge of the outreach and

providing the consultant the information on which to base its analysis. On August 9, the consultant admitted that his company has been asked to do in six weeks a study that they believe should take an entire year. This admission came, oddly, after a participant asked why most of the session addressed no racial equity information at all.

What is going on here? Currently, only insiders know the details of the commitment between the Council and the consultant. We know that, on February 15, 2022, a memo from the County's Office of Legal Oversight's (OLO) stated the need for more outreach to low-income and minority residents because the Plan lacks the details to subject it to a standard racial equity study. In



Racial Equity Goals, cont.

particular, the economic development model behind the plan, said OLO experts, will disadvantage minority and low-income residents and privilege the already prosperous. But the materials distributed at the focus groups touted the lofty goals of Thrive (such as more residential housing options, wider ranges of housing types, and promoting racial equity and diversity) ***without specifying how they define equity*** or explaining in concrete terms how they will seek to achieve these goals. How can participants give meaningful input on a plan without knowing how it will be implemented? Unlike some earlier general plans, Thrive omits such information, which most jurisdictions require as common practice.

The February 15 OLO memo rec-

ommended that a chapter on racial equity (which was removed from Thrive after public input in 2020 and rewritten by the Planning Board without any meaningful further public engagement) be restored to the Plan. Is a new racial equity chapter being written now, before the Council can study Nspiregreen's recommendations? If so, how responsive to participants' concerns would the new chapter be?

Advocates for the environment, citing environmental racism, are also insisting that chapters on the environment and economic development also be restored to the document. How can these chapters be written and subjected to public hearings before the Council is scheduled to vote on the Plan by October 25, 2022?

The schedule for future work on the RESJ analysis and Thrive is as

follows: On 9/13, the Council will receive a briefing from the consultants. On 9/20, 10/4, and 10/11, the Council is scheduled to hold work sessions on the Plan. Advocates should pay close attention to these sessions and insist that the Council hold more public hearings on any new drafts of the Plan. If this Council votes on the Plan, it must do so before October 31.

The Montgomery County Countryside Alliance (an environmental consortium) is petitioning the Council to stop the approval process, engage the public, and revise Thrive to get it right! (See [petition and excellent article here.](#)) ***We urge everyone to read and sign their petition right away.*** It's a 30-year plan, we are just coming out of a two-year pandemic, and the Council needs to take the time to get it right! ■



Minutes of June 13, 2022, MCCF General Meeting #934 Held Virtually Via Zoom

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

[Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. A total of 36 persons attended on the Zoom platform.]

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

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

Approval of May Minutes: moved, seconded and approved by voice vote.

The MCCF Executive Committee expressed appreciation to all of the

Civic Federation delegates for their participation and hard work over the year. Alan thanked ExCom members for all of their help over the year.

Treasurer's Report (Jerry Garson): Since July 1, we had annual receipts of \$1,387, with total expenses of \$1,438, for a net balance of -\$51. Current bank balance is \$8,937.

Alan noted we have new membership software in the newsletter and on the website.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Monday MCCF will have a Council At Large Candidates' Forum. Reminders will be sent out. Have had seven of eight candidates accept so far. Email your questions to Alan Bowser or post them on MCCF's Facebook page so we will have those

for the discussion.

JUNE PROGRAM—AWARDS 2022 Star Cup

Liz Joyce received this award for "Outstanding Public Service on behalf of Montgomery County. The June newsletter has an extensive discussion of her good works. She noted that she had primarily been involved in working on women's issues but she had gotten interested in the zoning and housing issues that had been coming up recently and thanked Alan and the rest of board for providing useful information about all of the proposals being made. Civic Fed has done a lot to make sure the facts are there so we can get accurately based proposals and actions.

June Minutes, cont.**2022 Sentinel Award**

McKenney Hills-Carroll Knolls Civic Association received this award for its “Significant Contributions to Good Government at the Local Level.” It had been a somewhat sleepy little association but, with new leadership and new energy, it transformed itself and has had a huge spurt in growth. Communications Chair Maggie Flowers noted they were so excited to get the award and it had been really fun giving everyone a reason to get out and be in touch with folks during the pandemic, including a block party ice cream social.

Alan Bowser noted that MCCF will highlight MH-CK civic association at one of its fall meetings to talk about their efforts to encourage involvement including focusing on

traffic/pedestrian safety and tree canopy issues.

2022 Wayne Goldstein Award

Amanda Farber won this award for “Outstanding Public Service to the people of Montgomery County.” Beginning with work to document the loss of tree canopy in Montgomery County and advocate for replacement and moving on to many other county issues, Amanda has spent uncounted hours working on issues to help all her fellow citizens.

Amanda noted she was sorry she had never met Wayne but she had looked at his pictures and saw he always had a smile, which helped to sway people—along with being smart, persistent, and hardworking. She noted Wayne also had a signature hat and she was wearing a special one in his honor. It lights up, which is helpful when you’re go-

ing down rabbit holes. Persistence, honesty, and humor are key, along with realizing it’s always a team effort and noting the many groups she had worked with over the years. Karen Cordry (who is a successor to Wayne in the Kensington Heights Civic Assn.) said she was sure Wayne would definitely appreciate her work and that of all the other award winners.

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

Alan Bowser noted we needed officer candidates for the fall elections since he’s term-limited and other spots need to be filled. He also noted that, if anyone has some HOA or CA “best practices” and ideas they like to share, let us know and we’ll bring them into a fall meeting. COVID has let us see how inventive folks can be.

The next Executive Committee

June Minutes, cont.

meeting is on Jun 23. Alan noted we were considering a special, longer meeting on tactics for setting up and/or regaining a vibrant civic association and making it work better.

We might also have a separate “tree summit” program to talk, among other issues, about how to have roads fixed without taking out all the trees.

There was a round of thanks and applause for Alan’s exemplary services during his term as President.

COMMITTEE REPORTS*Legislation*

■ A couple of bills passed at the state that we supported.

■ With Sen. Kramer’s help, an Inspector General was set up over the Board of Education. The IG’s first

report came out this year, noting that some teachers were overcharged for some of their health care costs.

Public Safety

■ There are not enough police officers; morale down; problems with being able to afford to live in county since our wage scales were low. Co. Exec Elrich is proposing raises.

■ Downtown Silver Spring has gotten some more attention and incidents seem to be down these days.

■ Ira Ungar noted that there have been some hate crimes in the Kemp Mill area; at Cary Lamari’s suggestion, we will put out a statement about it.

Land Use

■ Thrive and ZTAs are in stasis due to the RJSE study which is not due until the end of August.

Transportation

■ Transportation levels getting back to pre-COVID levels.

■ The Purple Line is still delayed, with delivery expected in maybe 3 years.

■ The American Legion Bridge project is progressing on the Virginia side but Maryland hasn’t started yet.

■ RideOn buses will go back to a \$1 fare starting in July.

■ They are doing studies on BRT for several areas, noting that it will probably need to charge higher fares than the current RideOn fares.

Utilities

■ Pepco put out its annual report on fuel sources used: 22% from coal, 38% from natural gas, solar less than 1%, and wind about 3.36%. With those sources, likely to see significant cost increases on bills.

June Minutes, cont.

Education

■ School board members are concerned about mental health and public safety in the schools after the effects of COVID.

Environment

■ The planet is experiencing more severe weather and storm water is a growing problem.

■ Not enough rainscaping work done yet.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m. ■

Minutes of the June 23 Executive Committee Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

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

Treasurer's Report was provided by Jerry Garson.

MCCF COUNTY COUNCIL AT-LARGE CANDIDATE FORUM

There was a quick recap of the candidate's forum, which was viewed as having gone well in terms of the questions and responses. The attendance peaked at 101, the maximum available for the program package so that was a good turn out. The moderators did a good job of keeping people on track and on time.

The videos have been posted on

the MCCF Facebook page and sent to a number of neighborhoods. It will be posted on the website, too.

THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

An article in the *Bethesda Beat* reported that the Council is hoping to finish work on Thrive in Fall 2022. It also discussed other changes for the draft, including chapters on the environment and economic development.

ELECTIONS

There was further discussion about nominations and the upcoming elections for MCCF officers.

MEMBERSHIP SOFTWARE

We still need to have a focused meeting to discuss and demonstrate

June ExCom Mtg., cont.

the new software and clarify the transition of responsibilities for the mailing list and communications.

POSSIBLE MCCF PROGRAM TOPICS 2022–2023

- 1) Organizing and best practices for homeowners/civic associations;
- 2) Continued attention to discussions and changes being made to Thrive and the various proposed ZTAs in the fall, including what is happening with the RESJ process;
- 3) Possibly another candidate forum for County Exec and/or at-large candidates.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m. ■

Minutes of the August 3 Executive Committee Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

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

2022–2023 MCCF PROGRAMMING

Members discussed programming for the next year and recommended the following 10 program for the 2022–23 membership year:

- September: Thrive Program on current status and discussion of whether final action should be postponed until after election;
- October: Civic Association Best Practices (McKinney Hills/Carroll Knolls);

- November: Transportation and Pedestrian Safety;

- December: Montgomery County Chief of Police;

- January: Montgomery County Executive;

- February: FY24 Budget Briefing (Madeleno);

- March: Affordable Housing, HOC, NOAH, County proposals to do something;

- April: Environmental Issues;

- May: State Legislative Review;

- June: MCCF Awards Program.

THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

On Thrive, it was noted there was a Community Forum scheduled for Aug. 16.

Liz Joyce noted some issues with

August ExCom Mtg., cont.

the wording/design of the survey that had been circulated on the Racial Justice/Social Equity study. The report is now due at the end of September, and the Council still wants to vote on Thrive by the end of October.

STATE AND COUNTY LEGISLATION

Members discussed priorities for state and county legislation, noting the importance of funding an Office of the People's Counsel, among other things.

MCCF OFFICER ELECTIONS

Members discussed the need to identify candidates for MCCF officer elections.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Montgomery County Civic Federation

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Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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