

## Background on Thrive

Since at least 2019, Montgomery County politicians and planners have been drafting revisions to our General Plan, in a controversial project called “[Thrive Montgomery 2050](#),” this proposed new General Plan is now before the County Council. This is critical because our housing equity and economic justice; food and water security; forests, parks and public health are all deeply affected by the land use and transportation policies in our General Plan. Following the guidance of the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO), the Council has begun working with consultants<sup>1</sup> to develop [a Racial Equity and Social Justice review](#) of the policies and practices recommended in the Plan.

Our [existing General Plan](#) (last updated in 1993) has guided our county’s growth for fifty years<sup>2</sup>. Our General Plan has been hailed as a model of Smart Growth, because it focused urban growth in existing urban centers; led to stewardship of our 93,000-acre Ag Reserve; created our system of 420 public parks; and kept our rural areas low-density in order to protect our region’s clean drinking water supplies. **Rather than tear apart this Smart Growth structure of our General Plan as Thrive proposes, we need to keep it – and build upon it to fulfill our affordable housing, Racial Equity and Social Justice, climate response, and other commitments.**

The maps on the following two pages show the geographic regions in our existing General Plan as updated in 1993: [General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County](#). Each geographic region serves a specific function that’s reflected in its land use and transportation policies, zoning and other regulations. According to our existing General Plan, it’s roughly one-third urban and two-thirds rural/low-density “Wedge.” The Wedge is comprised of the Agricultural Reserve, and the low-density residential areas.

This existing General Plan starts as a model of Smart Growth, whose hallmark is the maintenance of distinct boundaries between urban and rural regions. Smart growth policies focus future growth in existing urban areas already served with transit, sewer pipelines, and other urban infrastructure, and they keep rural regions low-density, in order to support their prime purpose of food and fiber production, drinking water supply and open space protection. Rural residents are served with appropriate rural infrastructure including well and septic, rural and rustic roads, and other facilities.

**The challenge to Montgomery County in seeking to update our General Plan, is to keep what works – and that means keeping our existing Smart Growth geographic regions intact and functioning. Thrive fails to do this, so the Council must reject Thrive and undertake a new, inclusive and respectful planning process that builds on our existing General Plan.**

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1 Montgomery County Council, July 2022 update on Thrive, regarding [Nspiregreen](#) and [Public Engagement Associates](#), a team of consultants with “extensive planning and public engagement experience.” <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/resources/Thrive2050/index.html>

2 Montgomery County Planning Department, 1964 [General Plan On Wedges and Corridors updated 1993](#) accessed 7/16/2022

**Montgomery County's Existing General Plan Is a Smart Growth Plan.  
In seeking to update our General Plan, we must build on it – not tear it apart.**

Map below is page 22 of the [General Plan Refinement Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County \(1993\)](#).



