



Conservation Montgomery

TESTIMONY

For

Development Review Process Workgroup

On the Need to Improve Organizational Structure for the Development Review Process and Planning Department

August 1, 2023

When looking at how to improve the development review process it is critical to not just look at how the process works, but also look at the organizational structure of who is charged with carrying out the process.

The organizational structure and decision-making power at Montgomery County Park and Planning has evolved over the past 15 years to become more concentrated, and at times, unchecked. There is a need for a more balanced, specialized, holistic, and inclusive approach to the development review process, master planning process, and general decision making within the Planning Department, especially with regards to planning for environmental resilience.

There is a clear need for a new (reinstated) position – Chief of Environmental Planning.

It is helpful to have some historical context. In 2008 the Planning Department's budget was cut and Roland Stanley reorganized the agency into the current 3 sections by regions (Downcounty Planning Chief, Mid-County Planning Chief, Upcounty Planning Chief). This restructuring essentially eliminated the position of Chief of the Environmental Planning Division and the independent Environmental Planning Division. In doing so, environmental specialists and staff became subset to Section Chiefs.

Since this time, the need for the County and Planning Department to focus on the wide range of environmental impacts associated with planning and development has increased. Planning must be proactive, progressive, comprehensive, and coordinated in order to meet the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP) goals as well as the goals laid out in Thrive 2050. In particular the CAP contains many specific action items that are directly related to, and require incorporation into, the development review process:

"Thrive Montgomery 2050 was drafted in coordination with the county's Climate Action Plan (CAP). While Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a high-level land use document that focuses on long-range planning and policies to guide the physical development of the county, the CAP recommends specific near-term actions to achieve the goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, and to mitigate or adapt to the effects of increased heat and flooding, high winds, and drought... The Montgomery County Planning Department (Montgomery Planning) and Montgomery Parks also will implement recommendations in the CAP that are within the scope of

the M-NCPPC's responsibilities." (Thrive 2050, p. 19) See below for examples of CAP recommendations that require action by M-NCPPC / Park and Planning.

A new Environmental Planning Chief should be on the same organizational level as the Section Chiefs and should be able to participate in regulatory review, have the power and authority to uphold the professional staff's environmental recommendations, and help oversee environmental master plans and the implementation of the CAP action items that pertain to development review.

We appreciate your consideration of our position and look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

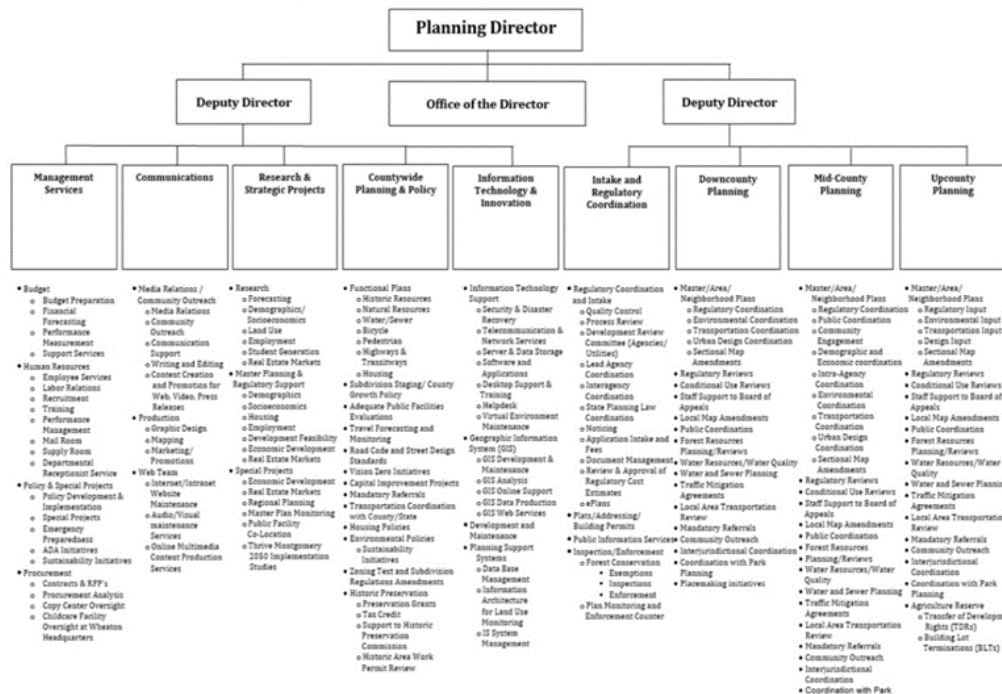


Table 14: CAP carbon sequestration actions

| Action | GHG Reduction* | Climate Risk Reduction | Racial Equity & Social Justice | Public Health | Environmental Stewardship | Economic Prosperity | Authority | County Investment | Private Investment | Lead | Contributors |
|--|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|--|
| S-1: Retain and Increase Forests | Level TBD | Extreme Precipitation | + | ++ | ++ | + | County with Change | \$\$ | \$ | M-NCPPC | DEP, DPS |
| S-2: Retain and Increase Tree Canopy | Level TBD | Extreme Heat | + | ++ | ++ | ++ | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$ | DEP, M-NCPPC | MCDOT |
| S-3: Restore and Enhance Meadows and Wetlands | Level TBD | Extreme Precipitation | + | ++ | ++ | ++ | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$ | M-NCPPC | DEP |
| S-4: Regenerative Agriculture | Level TBD | High Winds | Neutral | + | + | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$ | OAG, M-NCPPC | DEP, MCGB |
| S-5: Restore Soil Fertility, Microbial Activity, and Moisture-Holding Capacity | Level TBD | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | + | ++ | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$ | \$\$ | DEP | M-NCPPC, DHCA, OAG |
| S-6: Whole-System Carbon Management and Planning | Level TBD | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | County | \$ | \$ | DEP, M-NCPPC | OMB (CountyStat), DOF, WorkSource Montgomery |

* While carbon sequestration actions will reduce County greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the level of emissions reduction is to be determined (TBD) and cannot be estimated without further study.

Table 15: CAP climate adaptation actions

| Action | Climate Risk Reduction | Racial Equity & Social Justice | Public Health | Environmental Stewardship | Economic Prosperity | Authority | County Investment | Private Investment | Lead | Contributors |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---|
| A-1: Water Infrastructure Resilience | Extreme Precipitation | + | ++ | + | Neutral | Outside County | \$ | \$ | WSSC Water | DEP, municipalities, DC Water |
| A-2: Repair and Enhancement of Stormwater Conveyance Systems | Extreme Precipitation | + | + | + | Neutral | County | \$\$\$ | \$ | MCDOT | DPS, M-NCPPC |
| A-3: Temperature Monitoring and Alerts | Extreme Heat | ++ | + | Neutral | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$ | \$ | OEMHS | HHS |
| A-4: Extreme Weather Energy Efficiency Building Code | Extreme Heat | + | + | Neutral | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$\$ | DPS | DHCA, MCGB |
| A-5: Climate-Adapted Housing Incentives/Subsidies | Extreme Heat | + | ++ | Neutral | + | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$ | DHCA, DEP | MCGB, DPS |
| A-6: Green/Cool/PV Roof and Pavement Code | Extreme Heat | - | ++ | + | ++ | County with Change | \$\$ | \$\$\$ | DPS | DHCA, MCGB |
| A-7: Green Public Spaces | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | + | ++ | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$ | DEP, MCDOT | DPS, M-NCPPC |
| A-8: Harden Emergency Shelters and Install Resilience Hubs | Extreme Heat | ++ | ++ | Neutral | Neutral | Outside County | \$\$\$ | \$ | HHS | DGS, OEMHS, MCPs, FRS, DPS |
| A-9: Mold Protection and Remediation | Extreme Precipitation | ++ | ++ | Neutral | + | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$\$ | DHCA, DPS | DEP, MCGB |
| A-10: Green Infrastructure | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | + | ++ | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$\$ | DPS, DEP | MCDOT, M-NCPPC |
| A-11: Climate Adapted Development Standards | Extreme Precipitation | + | + | Neutral | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$\$\$ | DPS | DGS, DEP |
| A-12: Stormwater Retention Credit Trading | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | + | + | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$ | \$ | DEP | M-NCPPC, DPS |
| A-13: Ban Stormwater Management Requirement Waivers | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | + | + | - | County with Change | \$ | \$\$ | DPS | M-NCPPC, DEP |
| A-14: Update Floodplain Maps | Extreme Precipitation | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$ | \$ | DPS, OEMHS | M-NCPPC |
| A-15: Water Supply Protection | Drought | + | ++ | ++ | Neutral | County with Change | \$\$\$ | \$ | DEP, WSSC Water, M-NCPPC | Municipalities |
| A-16: Flood Rescue Resources | Extreme Precipitation | + | + | Neutral | + | County | \$\$\$ | \$ | FRS, MCPD, MCDOT | DGS, OEMHS, PIO, municipal police departments |
| A-17: On-Site Water Reuse | Drought | + | Neutral | + | Neutral | Outside County | \$\$ | \$ | DPS, WSSC Water | Municipalities |
| A-18: Expanded Community Gardens | Drought | + | ++ | + | + | County with Change | \$ | \$ | M-NCPPC | MCPs, OAG, HHS |
| A-19: Advocacy for Off-River Water Storage | N/A | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Outside County | \$ | \$\$\$ | DEP, WSSC Water | OIR |
| A-20: Study Potential for Buildings in the County to Flood and Possible Remedies | N/A | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | Neutral | County | \$\$ | \$ | DEP, OEMHS | DPS |