



MCCC Advocacy



Thrive Montgomery 2050
Montgomery County Planning Department
Public Hearing
November 19, 2020

Good evening Chair Anderson, Planning Board members, and Planning staff. My name is Tricia Swanson and I am Vice President of Government Relations for the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.

First and foremost, I want to thank each of you for your ongoing partnership with our Chamber. Whether it is briefing our members on the multitude of issues the Planning Board is working on, or attending our award dinners to support the business community, or going on hikes with me and my pugs, we cannot thank you enough for your engagement with and support of the business community.

As we look at the Thrive plan, the Chamber appreciates the focus on economic health, community equity, and environmental resilience. In tackling these topics, the County should use market-oriented approaches to solve our problems. As such, the Thrive plan must explicitly recognize the role of redevelopment in achieving our environmental and equity goals in addition to improving our economic competitiveness.

This economic competitiveness should directly tie in the top issue that is keeping employers up at night – talent. When our Chamber surveyed our industry-diverse board and members, above and beyond the top concern was access to, and retention of, top talent.

This plan must outline a plan for how our County will create and connect communities where talent wants to live. The ideas outlined for urban areas are exciting; however, our Chamber does want to raise the need for not a one-size-fits-all approach. While looking at Up County, we cannot create communities in the same way we are creating them in Bethesda, for example. Transportation and housing types that fit urban development areas do not fit Up County but investments in these are needed throughout the county.

Another unique component of the County is our Agriculture Reserve. A stronger economic vision for the future of the Ag Reserve is needed beyond a narrow definition of agriculture. We must preserve the economic vitality of farming but also shaping the Ag Reserve to serve our entire County.

It is our hope that you will see our Chamber as a partner in this plan moving into the future. While government agencies are listed throughout the plan, there is no mention of our organization or our partner organizations. Our members provide a wealth of diverse backgrounds and represent those who create the communities referenced in the document.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify this evening.