

August 12th, 2020

Dear Montgomery Planning Board,

The coalition of organizations and individuals undersigned request additional outreach activities for the upcoming release of the working draft plan of Thrive Montgomery 2050. Many of our organizations have worked with the planning staff and have seen their diligent and innovative ways of conducting outreach during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, community leaders and organizations working with highly impacted communities see an interest and a need to take additional action in order to fully engage all communities. The communities of color that have been the most affected by COVID-19 in our county are the same communities where more Thrive 2050 outreach is needed, and comments are missing.

It is our understanding that the Montgomery Planning Department intends to release the working draft plan of Thrive Montgomery 2050 on September 24th, hold a Planning Board review meeting on October 1st, hold a public hearing on November 19th, and maybe allow the public to submit comments until two weeks after the public hearing.¹ We propose the following extensions, recommendations, and additional outreach strategies.

- A working draft in both English and Spanish least 30 days before the November public hearing.
- We ask for a second public hearing that is scheduled 30 to 45 days after the working draft plan has been released in Spanish.
- Create more live multi-bilingual / bilingual outreach opportunities to have bilingual discussions between community members and planners on all sections of the working draft plan.
- Conduct in-person outreach that is safe, outdoors, and physically distant, such as at food distribution centers/ hubs and at parks across the county.
- Create and simultaneously release one-page multilingual informational fact sheets that highlight key sections and points of the working draft plan. Additionally work closely with community organizers to disseminate information and conduct community outreach on the working draft plan.

We appreciate and thank the Planning Board for the opportunity to provide feedback on the working draft plan. We look forward to continuing to be partners in the Thrive 2050 conversation and find new and innovative ways to conduct outreach.

¹ Thrive 2050 Public Comment Timeline. (Last Updated on August 4th, 2020). Available from: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/master-plan-list/general-plans/thrive-montgomery-2050/>

Sincerely,

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CC: Montgomery County Council; Montgomery County Executive; Montgomery Planning Director