



UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD Corridor Plan

University Boulevard Corridor Plan Community Questions and Answers

Development and Community Benefits:

1| How does the University Boulevard Corridor Plan ensure that development benefits existing residents?

The draft University Boulevard Corridor Plan prioritizes community-driven growth by encouraging mixed-use development to bring housing, retail, and public amenities together. For some properties in blocks along the corridor, the plan would allow property owners to build more housing types than what the law currently allows—but there is no obligation to do so. The plan also promotes what is called “Complete Communities,” where residents have access to daily needs. Finally, the draft plan advocates for investing in infrastructure improvements, such as better sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit.

2| How does this plan fit into the broader goals of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, and what does that mean for my neighborhood?

The draft University Boulevard Corridor Plan directly supports Montgomery County’s General Plan, *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, by:

- Focusing development along University Boulevard that is near a variety of public transit options and gives people more ways to get around.
- Encouraging the construction of a mix of housing types, sizes, and prices.
- Promoting the enhancement and creation of green spaces and sustainability initiatives to improve the urban environment.

Overall, this means a gradual transition toward a more walkable, transit-friendly community.

3| What’s the relationship between the recommendations in the draft plan and the County Council’s More Housing N.O.W. legislation, including ZTA 25-02?

The University Boulevard Corridor Plan and the County Council’s More Housing N.O.W. legislation both align with the goals of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, and they complement each other. However, More Housing N.O.W. seeks to add a greater variety of housing options along major transportation corridors across the county, whereas the draft University Boulevard Corridor Plan addresses housing and a broader scope of issues just for the University Boulevard corridor, including the environment, transportation, historical resources, urban design, community facilities, parks, and more. The County Council adopted ZTA 25-02 on July 23, 2025, with an effective date of November 1, 2025; the ZTA is one of the pieces of More Housing N.O.W. The University Boulevard Corridor Plan was transmitted to the County Council on July 1, 2025, and Planning staff anticipates that the County Council will hold public hearings on the draft plan in September and continue work on the plan through the fall of 2025.



Housing Affordability and Zoning:

1 | What is zoning?

Zoning is a legal classification that regulates the land uses and physical parameters of buildings on a property, including density, height, and placement. Properties included in the University Boulevard Corridor Plan are predominantly zoned R-60, a residential detached zone in which the current predominant permitted use is single-unit household living, located in detached houses.

2 | The plan area already has diverse homeownership demographics. Will allowing more types of housing drive up prices or limit availability?

The core purpose of any zoning changes will be to make it easier for people to buy or rent a house in the plan area—primarily by allowing more kinds of homes in more places. Having options on the supply side means we'll have options on the demand side, too. The only change to housing we're talking about here—and indeed, the only type of policy change Montgomery Planning is empowered to recommend—is zoning, which requires a public hearing before both the Planning Board and the County Council. Zoning merely describes what kinds of buildings and development are allowed where; again, this is about giving property owners options, not compelling anyone to build.

3 | What specific zoning changes are being proposed, and how do they compare to what's in place now?

The draft plan introduces zoning updates along University Boulevard to increase the opportunity for more people to be able to buy or rent a home that they can afford and live in an area that offers a high quality of life. The plan recommends replacing single-family zoning on blocks that front University Boulevard with the Commercial Residential Neighborhood (CRN) zone, allowing townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings. The draft plan encourages mixed-use development, combining housing with retail and services, at existing single-use commercial centers and near planned Bus Rapid Transit stations, and recommends transitions in the height and mass of new buildings to ensure the developments blend with existing neighborhoods.

The recommended CRN zoning for the majority of the existing detached residential properties will not allow commercial uses. However, an overlay zone, under development in response to community concerns, will recommend allowing uses that are currently permitted

or governed by the conditional use process in residential zones today, such as home-based occupations and small family daycares, to maintain neighborhood-serving uses.

The proposed zoning changes in the draft plan seek to achieve, over time, the type of community where every resident has access to a wider variety of housing that they can afford and enjoy a high quality of life with convenient access to safe and reliable transportation options, retail, restaurants, services, outdoor recreation and gathering space, and other public amenities that comprise great places.

4 | If zoning changes allow duplexes, triplexes, or small apartment buildings, what prevents developers from simply building high-end housing that current residents can't afford?

The draft plan introduces zoning updates with built-in affordability safeguards. These include requirements for Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) in any new development above a certain size, incentives for more affordable housing and preservation policies to protect existing affordable housing and prevent displacement. While people may still build market-rate housing, these measures help ensure affordability is part of future growth. Additionally, improving housing supply can significantly enhance affordability. Housing scarcity leads to higher prices and rents, consuming a larger share of income, especially for lower-income households. Increasing supply can help mitigate these effects.

5 | The draft plan suggests increasing density, but what safeguards exist to ensure that existing single-family neighborhoods don't become overcrowded or lose their character?

The draft plan introduces measures to ensure compatibility between new growth and existing neighborhoods. It seeks transitions between single-family homes and denser developments, restricts building heights near single-family areas, and uses design guidance to maintain consistency. The zoning change is focused on blocks along University Boulevard and near planned Bus Rapid Transit stations, not within existing single-family areas that do not front University Boulevard.

6 | How does the draft plan ensure that existing rental housing remains affordable and isn't replaced by more expensive units?

The draft plan prioritizes the retention of market-rate affordable housing while allowing for redevelopment in key areas. This approach ensures no net loss of affordable housing by aiming to replace affordable units at similar price points if redevelopment occurs.

7 | If single-family homes facing University Boulevard are replaced with multi-unit housing, what impact will that have on school capacity, and is there a plan to expand schools accordingly?

School enrollment was evaluated as part of the draft plan process. The analysis is available in the University Boulevard Corridor Plan's Planning Board Draft appendices, available at montgomeryplanning.org/ubc.

In addition, the analysis completed for the draft school capacity will also be considered and addressed through existing policies, including those outlined in the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, which is updated every four years. For instance, any proposed development in Montgomery County is subject to transportation and school infrastructure impact taxes, as well as any required payments to specifically mitigate impacts on crowded schools.

Montgomery County Public Schools projections indicate that by 2030, across all the schools serving the plan area, there will be a surplus of about 440 seats at the elementary school level, and 500 at the middle school level. Enrollment is still growing at the high school level, but the reopening of Charles Woodward High School and the addition at Northwood High School is scheduled to provide 3,000 additional seats to address the capacity needs across schools in the Down County Consortium and Walter Johnson High School.

8 | Why isn't there a stronger commitment to preserving existing single-family neighborhoods?

The draft plan maintains single-family zoning for the majority of residential areas in the plan area. The recommended zoning changes are primarily to blocks facing University Boulevard, facilitating gradual growth near existing and planned transit while preserving neighborhood integrity. The draft plan recommends rezoning approximately 30% of existing detached residential properties in the R-60 or R-90 zones to the proposed Commercial Residential Neighborhood (CRN) zone that allows townhouses, triplexes, and small apartment buildings at a maximum height of 50 feet along the corridor. The height reduces as the corridor-fronting blocks transition to the single-family detached neighborhoods that do not front University Boulevard.

9 | The draft plan discusses an overlay zone. What is an overlay zone and when will the details of the overlay zone be available?

The proposed University Boulevard Overlay Zone would work together with the zoning requirements and master plan recommendations to ensure future development transitions appropriately to neighboring properties and maintains overall neighborhood scale and character. The overlay zone is anticipated to include requirements like building setbacks, allowed building uses, and other neighborhood compatibility requirements. Any approval of the overlay zone will follow a parallel process with the draft plan, with public hearings held by the Planning Board and the County Council.



Community Services and Infrastructure:

1| More housing means more people—how will the county ensure that schools, parks, and public services can handle this growth?

As part of the master plan process, Planning staff evaluates how the plan's recommendations will affect infrastructure and coordinates with relevant county agencies and service providers to determine if additional facilities and infrastructure will be needed to accommodate the growth anticipated in the plan's vision.

In addition to the process that occurs with the master plan, the Planning Board only approves new development after determining that the surrounding infrastructure, such as sidewalks, roads, and schools, can meet the needs of new residents, visitors, and students. The Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP), which establishes a process for analyzing a new

development's impact on public infrastructure and sets standards for determining if the infrastructure is adequate to accommodate the proposed development, guides how the Planning Board makes that determination. It also outlines how a developer can bring infrastructure up to standard so the project can proceed. Montgomery Planning initiates an update to the GIP every four years to ensure that the county is using the best tools to advance our goals.

The county utilizes impact taxes that developers pay to fund expansions of schools, parks, and infrastructure upgrades, consistent with the county's GIP, which is updated every four years.

Transportation and Traffic:

1| How does the draft plan address concerns that increased housing density will make traffic congestion worse?

Mixed-use development decreases car dependency because services and other amenities are much closer to housing options, enabling more residents to not have to use a personal car for daily needs. Additionally, a robust network of alternative ways to get around an area can improve traffic conditions for drivers, especially when combined with diverse land uses that allow people to access their daily needs on foot, by bicycle, or via short public transit trips. Alternative modes of transportation, including well-maintained sidewalks and bus coverage, will result in fewer cars on the streets. The draft plan also supports on-demand transit, like Ride On Flex, to connect more people to travel without a car.

- Speed reduction strategies and Vision Zero policies seek to eliminate severe and fatal crashes through redesigned intersections and traffic-calming measures.
- Right-sizing roadways and intersections to create a safer and more comfortable driving and pedestrian environment. This involves creating a complete network of comfortable walkways and low-stress bikeways, connected by safe, and more frequent protected crossings.

2| What steps are being taken to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety along University Boulevard?

The draft plan includes several measures to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety along University Boulevard:

- Sidepaths that are separated from traffic by a landscaped buffer are recommended to make walking and biking safer and more appealing.
- Safer crosswalks and pedestrian signals are recommended, particularly near schools and transit stops. Specific measures include upgrading all intersections with high-visibility continental or ladder crosswalk markings for all pedestrian approaches.



3 | Will public transit improvements, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), be completed before new developments are built?

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is currently in the planning stages and may not be completed by the time the University Boulevard Corridor Plan begins implementation. However, the draft plan includes measures to preserve right-of-way, allowing for future transit expansion when funding becomes available. Additionally, infrastructure improvements for bus stops and transit access are recommended for implementation alongside new developments, ensuring that transit readiness is maintained. The draft plan also recommends improvements to neighborhood streets be completed before BRT completion, if needed, and includes recommendations for safety improvements and additional street connections with redevelopment that make getting to both existing and planned transit services more convenient and accessible using a variety of travel modes. Meanwhile, the Ride On Reimagined “Year 5 Network” includes plans to implement new transit services in and near the plan area, including an expanded on-demand Flex service area and weekend service to the Wheaton Ice Arena.

4 | Does the draft plan change parking requirements?

Unless otherwise reduced or exempted, Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance Sec 59.6.2 establishes minimum and maximum number of required vehicle parking spaces per residential unit.



5 | Will the draft plan’s transportation recommendations for University Boulevard take some of my front yard?

The draft plan makes two distinct sets of transportation recommendations for University Boulevard:

1. Outside Four Corners (approximately west of Lorain Avenue and east of Lexington Drive): The draft plan recommends maintaining the existing location of street curbs. From those existing curbs, the plan recommends moving the sidewalks 8 feet outward (i.e., away from the center of the street) to accommodate space for landscaped street buffers and a wider sidepath that can safely accommodate people walking, biking, and rolling. A 2-foot maintenance buffer (e.g., a grass strip) outside each sidepath is also required. While the plan does not recommend widening the roadway itself, it anticipates needing the 124-foot right-of-way identified in previously adopted master plans to accommodate landscaped street buffers, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and maintenance buffers. The existing right-of-way varies along the corridor, but it is generally narrower than 124 feet. The additional right-of-way needed to accommodate the plan’s recommendations will require dedication through redevelopment or partial acquisition along property frontages, which will be determined at the time of future redevelopment or detailed engineering of capital improvements in consultation with the property owner.
2. Within Four Corners (approximately between Lorain Avenue and Lexington Drive), the plan recommends repurposing one traffic lane per direction as a dedicated transit lane. In addition, the plan recommends narrowing the remaining existing traffic and turn lanes to 10 feet each, moving the curbs inward (i.e., toward the center of the street), and minimizing the acquisition of additional right-of-way to make space for landscaped street buffers and wider sidewalk and sidepath facilities for people walking, biking, and rolling; the plan anticipates a need for between zero and four feet of additional right-of-way (through redevelopment or a capital project) on each face of University Boulevard. The plan also includes a recommendation for an interim condition that does not provide the recommended buffers and wider sidewalk and sidepath facilities and does not require additional right-of-way.

Impact on Local Businesses and Neighborhoods:

1| **The Kemp Mill Shopping Center and other commercial areas are critical to our community—how will this plan affect them?**

The draft plan proposes rezoning the Kemp Mill Shopping Center to a Commercial Residential Town (CRT) zone, which allows a mix of retail, office, and residential uses. This rezoning includes some additions to height (proposed change from 1-2 stories to 5-7 stories) and overall Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which is the ratio of a building's total floor area to the size of the land on which it stands. The proposed zoning change expands the amount of commercial activity that can take place on the site and ensures that residential development comes with the requisite public benefits and Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs). Without implementing any change to the property's zoning, the property's current zone allows up to 100% of the site to be residential.

The plan recommends rezoning the Kemp Mill Shopping Center, but it is ultimately up to the property owner to determine if they would like to develop or sell a property. This often depends on the market and the property owner's interest. A master plan cannot, and will not, force a property owner to sell, terminate any leases, or redevelop.

The Planning Board Draft Plan also acknowledges that the Kemp Mill Shopping Center fulfills a critical need in the community and includes recommendations to encourage any new development to retain retail space that serves community needs..

2| **What protections exist for small, community-focused businesses like those in Kemp Mill?**

Rezoning does not force immediate redevelopment, so existing businesses can stay as long as property owners choose. Community engagement will shape redevelopment proposals, ensuring the needs of Kemp Mill businesses are considered.

Environmental and Sustainability Concerns:

1| **How does the draft plan protect green space as more development happens along the corridor over time?**

Green space may change as the area develops. Development on individual private lots may add or remove green space depending on site design and constraints. The draft plan includes a number of recommendations to increase green cover and green space on public properties, including parks, schools and road rights-of-way, and to require tree canopy over surface parking lots and green cover on larger developments. The goal of these recommendations is to make the University Boulevard Corridor a greener community that is more resilient against climate change.

2| **Will new housing developments be required to include energy-efficient features such as geothermal heating and solar panels?**

The University Boulevard Corridor Plan includes recommendations for site designs that will help reduce energy use. It encourages and incentivizes, but cannot require, the use of renewable energy sources in new developments. Certain building types above a minimum square foot area are subject to energy and sustainability requirements in the county's building codes per the International Green Construction Code. These requirements are enforced by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services.

3| **How will stormwater management be handled to prevent flooding as development increases?**

Stormwater management requirements are reviewed and enforced by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services. The University Boulevard Corridor Plan makes recommendations to minimize new impervious surfaces, increase tree canopy and vegetative cover, and use landscaping to help reduce runoff.



Community Equity:

1| If this plan is supposed to support racial equity and social justice, what specific policies ensure that long-time residents, particularly lower-income and minority communities, won't be displaced?

As noted in the [Neighborhood Change in the Washington Metropolitan Area Study](#), neighborhoods that have added more housing in Montgomery County have grown inclusively, meaning they have added more high- and low-income residents at the same time. When more market-rate and affordable housing is encouraged, more people of all income levels have more opportunities to live in the county's neighborhoods.

The more-of-everything approach to housing recommended by *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, and reaffirmed in the University Boulevard Corridor Plan

is fully consistent with best practices in the field. Increasing the housing supply by easing land use restrictions and encouraging alternative housing options slows the pace of gentrification by giving more buyers at all income levels the opportunity to find homes. The [Urban Institute recently wrote about this](#), and Montgomery Planning [published a blog](#) in March 2025 showing resident displacement following redevelopment is not happening in Montgomery County.



For more information, including to view an interactive map of the zoning recommendations, please visit [Montgomeryplanning.org/ubc](https://montgomeryplanning.org/ubc)