

## **ATTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES (AHS):**

### **An Analysis of What – How – Where – Why – Next Steps**

#### **WHAT IS THE ATTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES (AHS) INITIATIVE?**

- A report sent from the Planning Board to the County Council in June 2024.
- Recommends upzoning all single-family detached residential properties in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones in Montgomery County.
- Its complex set of recommendations would allow a diversity of housing types to be built, many “by-right” (obtain a building permit, no public review process if the redevelopment plan conforms to the Planning Department’s “Pattern Book,” which has not yet been developed).
- **Here is a link to the Attainable Housing Strategies report:**  
<https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-AHS-Final-Report.pdf>
- Here is a link to the Planning Department’s interactive map with details about the rezonings:  
<https://montgomeryplans.org/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=7f5f2305e4824e2290b635787fcb4d5d>  
On the map, click on the Layer List symbol in the upper right. Toggle on/off the various layers (R-40, R-60, R-90; R-200; AHOM Parcels; Priority Housing District) to view. Zoom in to view.

#### **HOW WOULD AHS BE IMPLEMENTED?**

- Only the County Council has the authority to implement changes to zoning.
- If the AHS concepts are adopted by the County Council, changes to single-family detached neighborhoods would be implemented through Zoning Text Amendments (ZTAs) and other legislation.
- The ZTAs would allow duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and/or small apartment buildings in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones. See charts below for details of the complex proposals.

**SMALL SCALE RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT AND WHERE**

<b>ZONES</b>	<b>DUPLEXES</b>	<b>TRIPLEXES</b>	<b>QUADPLEXES</b>
<b>R-200</b>	YES	YES IF IN PHD	YES IF IN PHD
<b>R-90</b>	YES	YES	YES IF IN PHD
<b>R-60</b>	YES	YES	YES IF IN PHD
<b>R-40</b>	YES	YES	YES IF IN PHD
<b>NOTES:</b>			
PHD: Priority Housing District = all properties in R-40, R-60, R-90 and R-200			
zones within one straight-line mile of the Red Line, Purple Line, and			
MARC Stations plus properties within 500 feet of any Growth Corridor			
Building types allowed "by-right" if conformed to "Pattern Book"			
2- 2.5 stories; development standards modified to allow "fit"			

**MEDIUM SCALE RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT AND WHERE**

			<b>SMALL</b>
<b>ZONES</b>	<b>TOWNHOUSES</b>	<b>STACKED FLATS</b>	<b>APARTMENT BLDGS</b>
<b>R-90</b>	IN GROWTH CORRIDOR	IN GROWTH	IN GROWTH CORRIDOR
<b>R-60</b>	IN GROWTH CORRIDOR	IN GROWTH	IN GROWTH CORRIDOR
<b>NOTES:</b>			
Recommends creating new Attainable Housing Optional Method zone (AHOM)			
AHOM allowed within 500' of Growth Corridor in R-60 and R-90 zones			
or beyond corridors if in a master plan or recommended in a floating zone			
3-4 stories; reduced setbacks, increased site coverage			
Approval by Planning Director for site plans with 19 or fewer units			

**LARGE SCALE RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT AND WHERE**

<b>NOTES:</b>	
Short-Term: Use master plans to identify R-60 and R-90 properties in	
Growth Corridors for high-density residential development	
through Optional Method Development (AHOM)	
	Also revise floating zones to incentivize rezoning
Multi-Story, Multi-Family buildings, 4+ stories (no height limit)	
Long-Term: Create new form-based zones (bypassing master plans)	

## SCHEMATICS OF DIFFERENT HOUSING TYPES ON LOTS:

Some examples - see Appendix F of the Attainable Housing Strategies report for a more complete set of illustrations.

### Undersized lot study: A 5,000 sf lot in R-60 Zone

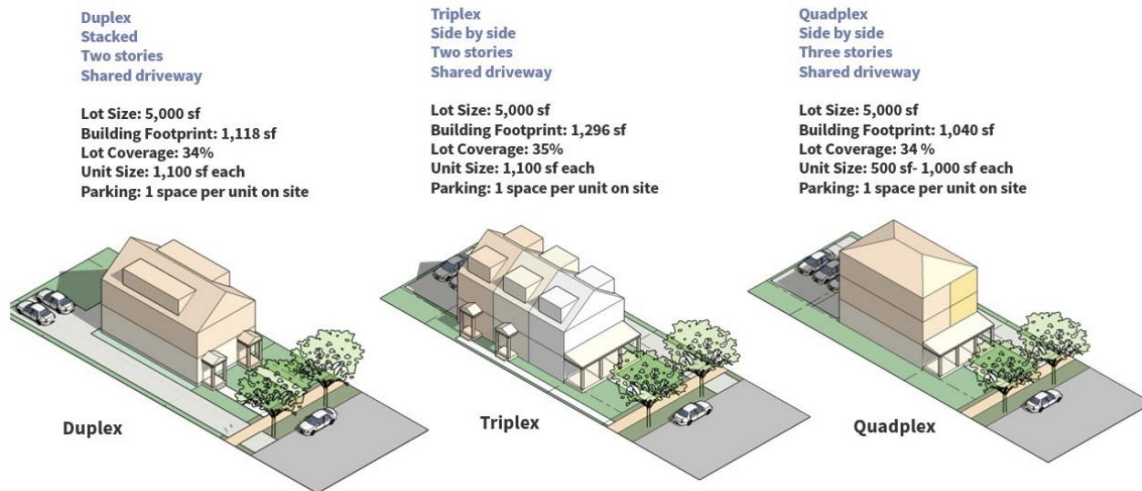
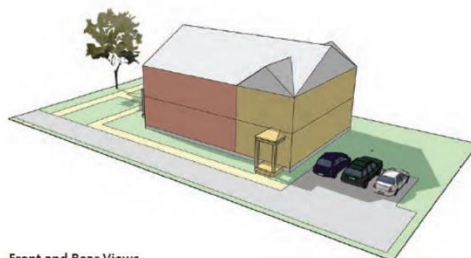
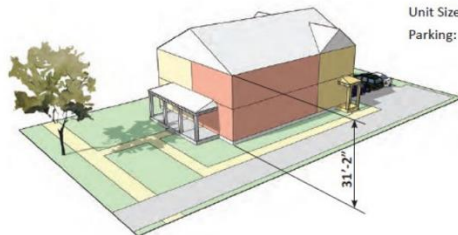


Figure 9 Undersized Lot Study

These building types are examples of what would be allowed by right- within 1 mile of Metro, Purple Line, and MARC stations and within 500' of a growth corridor



Site Plan



Front and Rear Views

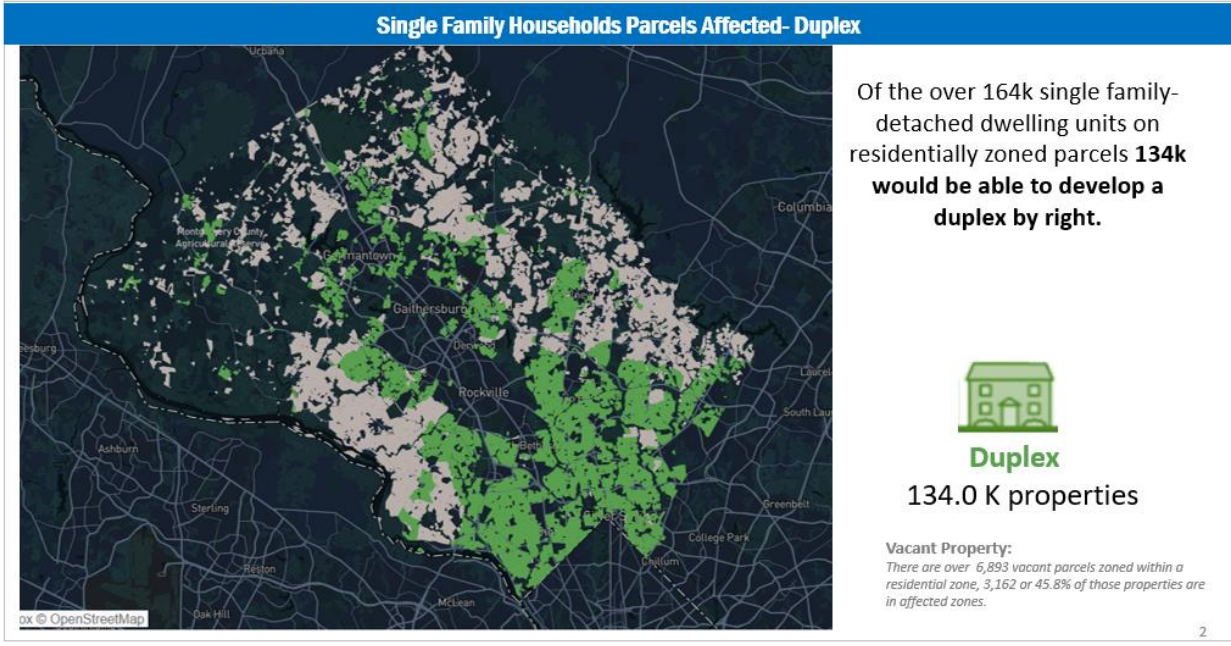
#### Triplex (Side by Side on Front/ Unit in Back)

Lot Size: 9,000 sf  
Building Footprint: 2,160 sf  
Lot Coverage: 24%  
Unit Size: 1,400 sf each  
Parking: 1.0 space per unit

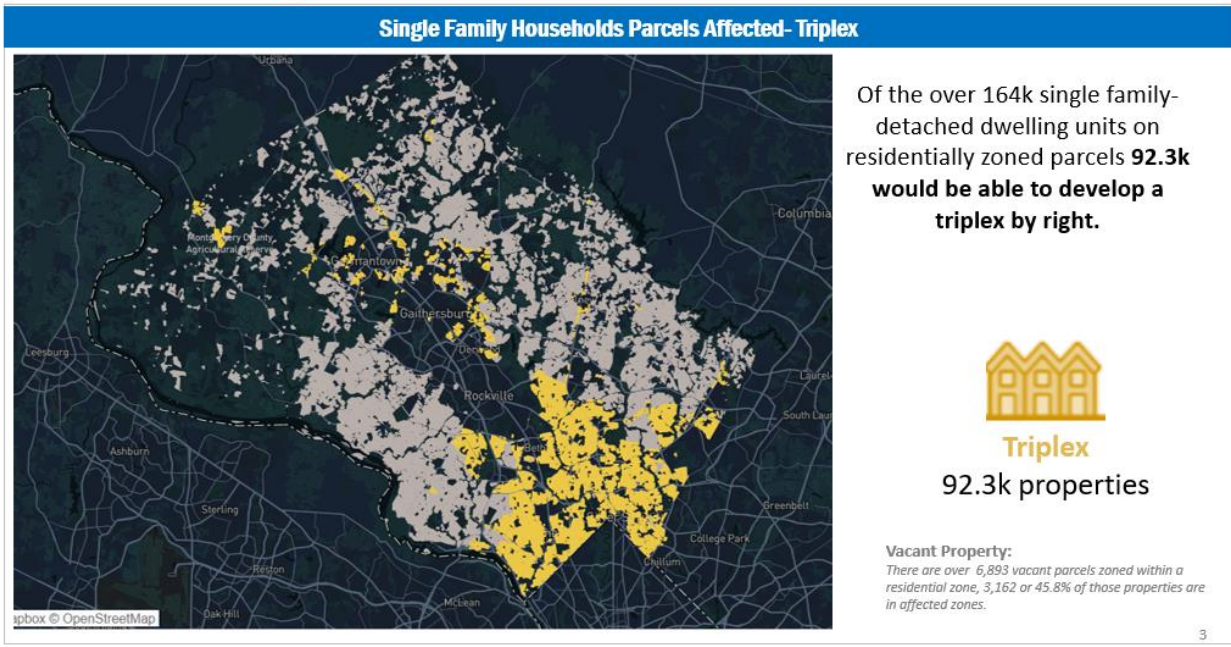
# WHERE ARE THE SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED RESIDENTIAL ZONES THAT ARE RECOMMENDED FOR CHANGE? WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL NUMBERS OF UNITS THAT COULD BE BUILT ON AN INDIVIDUAL OR ASSEMBLED LOT?

It's complicated, best identified in the series of maps and charts that follow.

## Attainable Housing Overview



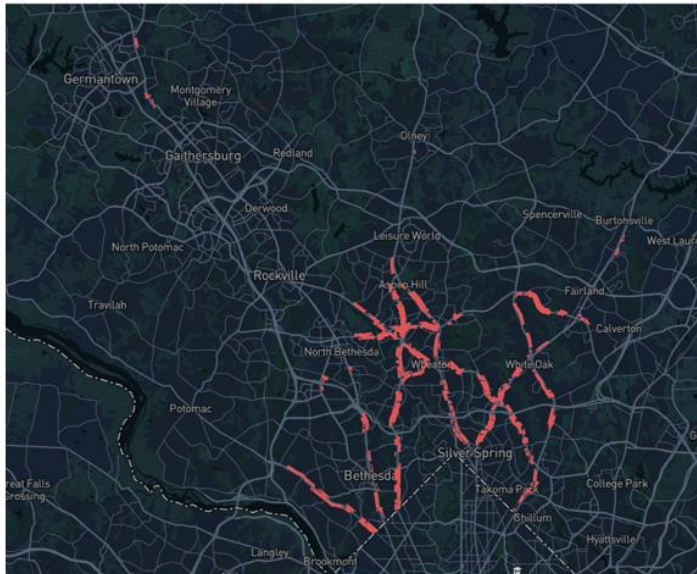
## Attainable Housing Overview





## Attainable Housing Overview

### Single Family Households Parcels Affected: AHOM Thrive Corridor



There are approximately 11,100 single-family detached homes on residentially zoned parcels along the Thrive-designated Growth Corridors. Of these, around 9,400 are within the R-60 or R-90 zones and could potentially be redeveloped under AHOM, though most parcels would likely need to be combined with others to be large enough to fully benefit from AHOM.



**Vacant Property:**  
There are over 291 vacant parcels zoned within a residential zone along the Thrive 2050 corridor.

6

### Growth Corridors shown on this map:

- Rockville Pike (MD 355) between Washington, DC and Clarksburg
- Georgia Avenue (MD 97) between Washington, DC and Olney Town Center
- Colesville Road/Columbia Pike (Route 29) between Washington, DC and Burtonsville
- New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) between Washington, DC and Randolph Road
- Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) between Washington, DC and Georgia Avenue
- University Boulevard between Prince George's County boundary and Connecticut Avenue
- Veirs Mill Road (MD 586) between Georgia Avenue in Wheaton and Rockville Pike in Rockville
- Randolph Road and Old Georgetown Road/Rock Spring Drive between Rock Spring and Columbia Pike (Route 29)
- River Road between Washington, DC and Cabin John Shopping Center

## Attainable Housing Overview

### Single Family Household Parcels Affected - AHOM Density Calculations

The recommended base densities for the AHOM vary based on the underlying zone and are based on gross tract area:

- R-90 zone: 10 units/acre
- R-60 zone: 13 units/acre

*At the standard unit size of 1,500 sq ft, fewer than 300 parcels would be large enough (without combining adjacent parcels) to be redeveloped under AHOM.*

The AHS recommendations include a density bonus provision, similar in concept to the density bonuses available for the MPDU optional method of development. The Board recommends an increase in density when a project's average dwelling unit size is lower than the maximum allowed average unit size. The Board recommends a straight line of a two-percent density increase for each one-percent decrease in average unit size.

Unit Size (sq ft.)	R-90 standard Density	R-60 standard Density	Unit Size Decrease	Density Bonus Increase	R-90 units per acre with Density Bonus	R-60 units per acre with Density Bonus
1500	10	13	0%	0%	10.0	13.0
1250	10	13	17%	33%	13.3	17.3
1000	10	13	33%	67%	16.7	21.7
750	10	13	50%	100%	20.0	26.0

*With the possibility of density bonuses based on unit size, many current/individual R-60 and R-90 parcels along the Thrive Corridors could be redeveloped under AHOM to produce five or more units (subject to the final ZTA recommendations and site standards). However, a considerable number of these parcels are not likely candidates due to their size. Fewer than 1,000 of the current R-60 and R-90 parcels along the Thrive Corridors would be large enough to practically benefit from AHOM without combining adjacent parcels.*

7

## Attainable Housing Overview

### Single Family Households Parcels Affected: AHOM Density Calculations

#### 1/4 Acre Lot

Unit Size	R-90 standard Density units per acre	R-60 standard Density units per acre	Unit Size Decrease	Density Bonus Increase	R-90 units per acre with Density Bonus	R-60 units per acre with Density Bonus
1500	2.5	3.25	0%	0%	2.5	3.3
1250	2.5	3.25	17%	33%	3.3	4.3
1000	2.5	3.25	33%	67%	4.2	5.4
750	2.5	3.25	50%	100%	5.0	6.5

#### 1/3 Acre Lot

Unit Size	R-90 standard Density units per acre	R-60 standard Density units per acre	Unit Size Decrease	Density Bonus Increase	R-90 units per acre with Density Bonus	R-60 units per acre with Density Bonus
1500	3.3	4.29	0%	0%	3.3	4.3
1250	3.3	4.29	17%	33%	4.4	5.7
1000	3.3	4.29	33%	67%	5.5	7.2
750	3.3	4.29	50%	100%	6.6	8.6

#### 1/2 Acre Lot

Unit Size	R-90 standard Density units per acre	R-60 standard Density units per acre	Unit Size Decrease	Density Bonus Increase	R-90 units per acre with Density Bonus	R-60 units per acre with Density Bonus
1500	5	6.5	0%	0%	5.0	6.5
1250	5	6.5	17%	33%	6.7	8.7
1000	5	6.5	33%	67%	8.3	10.8
750	5	6.5	50%	100%	10.0	13.0

8

## ORIGINS OF THE AHS:

- In September 2018, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) was briefed on a “mismatch” between forecasted jobs and housing. The forecasts showed job growth outpacing the number of households available for the resulting anticipated growth in population. As a result of these forecasts, COG identified a shortfall of 75,000 households in the region.
- In September 2019, the COG Board of Directors adopted housing targets to accommodate anticipated population growth related to job growth. Here is what they said:

## ADDRESSING UNMET NEEDS: SETTING REGIONAL HOUSING TARGETS

Under the direction of the COG Board of Directors, local housing and planning directors and COG staff spent a year studying what it would take to increase the area’s housing supply to accommodate the region’s growing workforce. Their findings have been distilled into three regional aspirational housing targets focused on the Amount, Accessibility, and Affordability of additional units. The three targets were adopted by the COG Board of Directors in September 2019.

### Regional Target 1:

#### AMOUNT

At least 320,000 housing units should be added in the region between 2020 and 2030. This is an additional 75,000 units beyond the units already forecast for this period.

### Regional Target 2:

#### ACCESSIBILITY

At least 75% of all new housing should be in Activity Centers or near high-capacity transit.

### Regional Target 3:

#### AFFORDABILITY

At least 75% of new housing should be affordable to low- and middle- income households.



- Montgomery County had already projected a buildout of approximately 31,000 units by 2030, based on the zoning capacity established in approved master plans. The County was assigned an additional target of 10,000 units. Of those, the municipalities of Rockville and Gaithersburg were each assigned 1,000 units.
- In November 2019, the Council passed a resolution supporting the COG goal that 75% of new housing be in Activity Centers or near high-capacity transit. The Council also resolved to undertake efforts to analyze and find solutions for barriers to increasing housing production, particularly for housing affordable to low- and middle-income households. See the Council resolution here:  
[https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/cclims/DownloadFilePage?FileName=9493\\_1\\_9869\\_Resolution\\_19-284\\_Adopted\\_20191105.pdf](https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/cclims/DownloadFilePage?FileName=9493_1_9869_Resolution_19-284_Adopted_20191105.pdf)

#### **WHAT HAPPENED NEXT:**

- In 2021, the County Council sent a letter to the Planning Department, asking that it “consider zoning reforms that would allow greater opportunities for Missing Middle housing”; the request did not include a reference to affordability.
- The Planning Department and two different Planning Boards developed AHS over the next three years. Although they cite many “community engagement” events held during this time, most residents were unaware of the events or the scope of the proposal until recently.
- Over the course of the three years, AHS was modified to include recommendations for rezoning properties in the Growth Corridors identified in the Thrive 2050 General Plan.
- The AHS final report was transmitted to the County Council in June 2024. Shortly thereafter, the Planning Department briefed the Planning, Housing, and Parks Department committee on their recommendations.

#### **WHAT AHS DOESN'T DO:**

- It does not address housing affordability. In fact, the AHS report is clear that the additional housing households will be market-rate units – see page 3 of their “Attainable Housing Strategies Explainer”:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AHS-Explainer-2024-Final.pdf>

- It does not address the need for additional opportunities for home ownership for low-income households.
- It does not address concerns that its recommendations may create incentives for outside real estate speculators to purchase single-family homes for redevelopment.
- It does not address how COG’s latest forecast affects housing targets for 2030. See the **highlighted** household numbers in the earlier Round 9.2 forecast below, compared with the latest Round 10.0 forecast. It reduces by 6,000 the estimated number of households needed by 2030 (based on a decline in their jobs forecast – the two are always linked).

**Table 5: Summary of Household Forecasts Round 9.2 Cooperative Forecasts (Thousands)**

JURISDICTION	Round 9.2 Base Year	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2020 to 2045 Growth		
	2015							Number	% Change	Share
District of Columbia	297.1	319.3	341.0	362.5	380.6	396.2	411.9	92.6	29.0%	17.3%
Arlington County	103.2	109.2	117.9	123.8	129.7	135.8	141.4	32.2	29.4%	6.0%
City of Alexandria	71.2	75.7	82.7	88.2	92.6	97.1	103.7	28.0	37.0%	5.2%
<b>Central Jurisdictions</b>	<b>471.5</b>	<b>504.2</b>	<b>541.6</b>	<b>574.6</b>	<b>602.9</b>	<b>629.1</b>	<b>656.9</b>	<b>152.7</b>	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>28.5%</b>
Montgomery County	374.9	391.2	405.7	422.3	438.1	450.9	461.9	70.8	18.1%	13.2%
City of Rockville (1)	26.4	28.8	31.1	33.5	35.2	37.4	39.4	10.6	36.6%	2.0%
City of Gaithersburg (1)	24.7	26.0	27.5	28.9	30.5	32.1	33.4	7.4	28.3%	1.4%

**Table 5: Summary of Household Forecasts Round 10.0 Cooperative Forecasts (Thousands)**

JURISDICTION	Round 10.0 Base Year	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2020 to 2050 Growth		
	2020							Number	% Change	Share
District of Columbia	312.4	344.2	366.8	386.6	407.6	426.0	441.4	129.0	41.3%	19.1%
Arlington County	109.9	118.2	126.2	133.3	140.0	146.9	153.6	43.7	39.8%	6.5%
City of Alexandria	75.6	85.7	96.4	106.7	115.4	122.0	126.0	50.5	66.8%	7.5%
<b>Central Jurisdictions</b>	<b>497.9</b>	<b>548.1</b>	<b>589.4</b>	<b>626.6</b>	<b>663.1</b>	<b>695.0</b>	<b>721.1</b>	<b>223.2</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>33.0%</b>
Montgomery County	386.6	398.4	416.5	434.1	450.0	463.2	474.3	87.7	22.7%	13.0%
City of Rockville (1)	28.2	29.9	31.7	33.7	35.8	38.1	40.6	12.4	43.8%	1.8%
City of Gaithersburg (1)	25.9	27.2	28.9	30.3	31.7	33.0	34.2	8.3	32.0%	1.2%

- It does not address the environmental consequences of increased land coverage from the larger building footprints of higher density development, resulting in increased imperviousness, stormwater runoff, and loss of tree cover.
- It does not consider its effect on “sprawl,” one of the basic tenets of Smart Growth. Instead, it recommends establishing “Priority Housing Districts”

(PHDs) within a one-mile straight line measure from the Red and Purple Lines and non-high-capacity MARC Stations (some in the Agricultural Reserve) – a measure that is double the half-mile buffer widely accepted as the transit “walkshed.” And it recommends large scale upzoning along nine corridors, some of which do not have high-capacity transit.

- Its countywide rezoning of four residential single-family detached zones - almost 134,000 properties – upends the master plan process, which is geared to looking at each community carefully and includes a process for public review and engagement.
- It does not explain (1) how existing zoning capacity (already in place through approved and adopted master plans) factors into meeting housing targets; and (2) how the 30,000+ housing units in the county’s development “pipeline” - approved but not built – factor into meeting those targets. These projects are approved plans ready for construction – they only need to pull the permits. See May 2024 Pipeline here: [https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/May2024\\_PipelineBuildoutChart.pdf](https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/May2024_PipelineBuildoutChart.pdf).
- It does not address the loss of trees on properties that redevelop. Trees are important for addressing climate change and for absorbing water to lessen stormwater runoff and flooding.
- It does not address road capacity needs for the additional cars that likely would come from additional households.
- It does not address the effects of reduced parking requirements, instead relying on street parking to accommodate additional households, many of which could be built along residential streets not wide enough to accommodate both through-traffic and cars parked on each side.

### **UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES?**

- Master plans adopted over the past several years have zoned for a significant amount of additional housing density at or near transit-oriented areas – centers intended to create a critical mass of people to support jobs and retail. Much of this zoned capacity remains unbuilt today. Yet AHS recommends creating new, denser market-rate housing

away from the centers, proposing numerous ways to facilitate it in neighborhoods farther from jobs and retail. This incentivizes those who can afford market-rate housing to move from the centers to some areas that now offer affordable rents and home-ownership opportunities for lower income households, potentially causing displacement.

- AHS acknowledges that conversion of individual properties from single-family homes to other housing types is a heavy lift for the average homeowner (see AHS report pages 45-48 describing “catalyst policies” such as property tax refunds, “conversion assistance toolkits”, and conversion loan funds). This suggests the possibility that investor-driven redevelopment is more likely, potentially affecting the County’s rental housing market:
  - Upzoning increases land values, which in turn raises property taxes. This may incentivize property owners to sell to investors for redevelopment of one or several properties in a neighborhood – particularly owners who rent out their single-family detached properties or have purchased them to roll them over for profit.
  - Gentrification can occur in neighborhoods where housing is currently affordable, as higher-income residents move into new, market-rate housing.
  - Some renters may be displaced – currently, single-family housing stock in the County accounts for more than 2/3 of the family-sized rental units. Based on Countystat analysis, 5 – 15% of single-family detached homes in many neighborhoods are rental-occupied properties. Of the 7,500 renter-occupied units, 40% or an estimated 3,000 are affordable to a family making 65% AMI or below (based on HUD Fair Market Rent Documentation). These homes are at risk of being redeveloped into more expensive housing units. Even if renters are not displaced, rents may rise as property values increase.
- Larger “footprints” on redeveloped lots mean increases in impervious land coverage, more stormwater runoff, and the potential for increased flooding. This could be exacerbated by the loss of trees removed during redevelopment in areas where there are few places to replace them.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

For reasons articulated both locally and nationally, addressing the need for more affordable housing is important, and adding diverse housing types in single-family neighborhoods can help to address the need – it was done successfully years ago in Takoma Park. This document responds to the many requests from residents who want to understand what is needed, why, and how best to get where we need to go. Is a countywide rezoning of 82% of the county’s single-family detached neighborhoods necessary or advisable? Have all the right questions been asked and answered? Is this an equitable way to increase the housing supply? How does more market-rate housing address the county’s most pressing need, which is affordable housing?

There are numerous articles and studies about the need for more housing nationwide, almost all of them focused on affordability. The Attainable Housing Strategies report is not focused on affordability; instead, it is premised on the unique term, *attainable* housing, defined as “a focus on providing more diverse housing options that allow more neighborhoods to be attainable to more households” (AHS report, page 3). So, attainable housing is more attainable. Although too numerous to list here, there are many articles and studies that discuss zoning changes adopted by other jurisdictions – mostly by cities – and the effects of these changes on the housing market. You may want to search for them if you are interested in gaining a greater understanding of the issues.

The Planning Department spent three years developing AHS; the public is being asked to absorb it all and comment in a series of sessions to be held over the course of three weeks in September.

County Council President Andrew Friedson and district Councilmembers will host in-person “community meetings” or “listening sessions” in each of the County’s five regional services centers. Montgomery Planning staff and Montgomery County Planning Board members will participate. If you have questions to ask, comments to make, alternative solutions to propose, this is the time to become involved. You can do so by reaching out to your council members and by participating in the upcoming listening sessions – see the next page for a complete list of the dates and times.

**Scheduled Listening Sessions:**

- **Wednesday, September 11 – Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center, 7-9 PM**
- **Thursday, September 12 – Wheaton Community Recreation Center, 7-9 PM**
- **Tuesday, September 17 – White Oak Community Recreation Center, 7-9 PM**
- **Monday, September 23 – Germantown Community Center, 7-9 PM**
- **Wednesday, September 25 – Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 7-9 PM**
- **A virtual session is scheduled for Wednesday, October 2 on Zoom from noon to 1:30 p.m.**

This document was compiled by the Office of the County Executive.  
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**END**