



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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TO: Hans Riemer, Chairman
Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Adam Ortiz, Director
Department of Environmental Protection

SUBJECT: Comments on Thrive 2050

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would like to provide the following comments to the PHED committee on the Thrive 2050 plan developed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC).

1. The absence of *direct* recommendations related to the environment and resilience is of great concern. A new chapter, drawing on the substantive staff recommendations in the *Healthy and Sustainable Solutions* chapter in the Public Hearing Draft, along with DEP recommendations, should be added back in.
2. While environmental issues such as energy efficient buildings, modern/enhanced stormwater management, and others are mentioned throughout the plan, they are mostly implied as opposed to being explicit. Similarly, most of the environmental recommendations are indirect and flow from the plan's focus on urbanism, compact development, infill, and complete communities.
3. The plan must include actions that are restorative and regenerative as opposed to simply doing less harm by, to use the words from the Planning Board draft, "minimizing the negative externalities associated with the development of land and intensification of its uses."
4. The plan should include substantive and *direct* actions that increase forested areas and tree canopy; improve water quality; support regenerative agriculture; enhance pollination and biodiversity; facilitate distributed energy, battery storage and grid modernization; and better facilitate composting/food waste recovery and other circular economy solutions.
5. Since the impacts from climate change are already bearing down on Montgomery County, and likely to get worse, the plan should include specific recommendations related to building resilience.
6. There should be explicit actions to address supply chain and utility service disruptions such as the creation of resilience hubs, innovative food security strategies such as more widespread community gardens and "edible forests," and import substitution strategies to build greater economic self-sufficiency.