



## THE OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Jeremy V. Criss  
*Director*

July 19, 2021

Hans Riemer, Chair  
Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Board Draft--The Planning Board Recommendations

Dear Chair Riemer:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture-OAG, please accept this letter with our thoughts on the Montgomery County Planning Board recommendations for the Planning Board Draft - Thrive Montgomery 2050.

We support the recommendations from the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, as well as those from the County Executive as outlined in his June 10, 2021 letter.

The Agricultural Reserve was created in 1981 to establish a preferred area for farming as the primary use. The OAG does not believe the Planning Board's recommendations fulfill the legislative spirit and intent of the Master Plan that established the Agricultural Reserve to protect farmland and agriculture.

By moving the Planning Staff recommendations on the Agricultural Reserve into a separate appendix that will not be included in the new General Plan, the Planning Board draft diminishes the County's sustained commitment to agriculture. Instead, it deemphasizes the importance of this unique nationally recognized land resource at a time when climate change promises to present challenges to food and water supplies. The new General Plan should provide policy and program recommendations that reinforce the importance of the Reserve and provide critical support for the success of farming and agricultural operations in Montgomery County. The County's working farms, pick-your-own fruit farms, wineries, breweries, bike routes, pastoral scenic vistas, and water resources need your continued support.

We ask that you do not support the Planning Board recommendations on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 that pertain to the Agricultural Reserve.

Sincerely,

Jeremy V. Criss, Director