

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Engagement Synopsis
Adapted from Thrive Montgomery 2050 Communication Plan
Updated: 6.25.2021

Thrive Montgomery 2050 Outreach and Communication Strategy

A major element of the General Plan Update effort was a comprehensive outreach and communication program to gather the input of external (residents, business owners, nonprofit and other organizations, experts and influencers) and insider (county government) audiences. Together, Montgomery Planning and the community will draw on lessons of the past, current experiences, and research on trends to propel us forward. Over the next year, Montgomery Planning will engage the community to imagine what life in Montgomery County will be like in 2050 and what we need to put in place to allow us to thrive in the decades to come. The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Communications Plan describes the goals, audiences, process and approach for Thrive Montgomery 2050 outreach and engagement. It also outlines an implementation plan for reaching and motivating audiences to engage and eventually support the plan update. These elements are summarized here:

Goals of Thrive Montgomery 2050 Communications Plan:

Outreach and engagement to the public will be considered successful when community members:

- Provide significant and meaningful input and feedback throughout the process.
- Are interested in and excited about future possibilities and feel motivated to participate in outreach and engagement activities.
- Are historically underrepresented in planning processes but feel motivated to engage.
- Understand that this planning is long view thinking and the outcomes will come over many decades.
- Feel that they've been heard and see how their input is used.
- Understand why some plan recommendations don't reflect their precise input.
- Support and advocate for the plan.

Outreach and engagement to partner and influential groups will be considered successful when county officials and community-based organizations:

- Provide expertise, insight, and feedback throughout the process.
- Help to engage community members.
- Feel good about and support plan recommendations, and specifically embrace the policy recommendations that come from the plan.

Communications Approach

The overall outreach and engagement approach is audience-centric and focused on making Thrive Montgomery 2050 about the community. To do this, for each phase of implementation, we:

- Examine the audience's place in the overall Thrive Montgomery 2050 journey.
- Make it easy for people to participate.

- Meet people where they are rather than asking them to come to us.
- Invite a conversation and sharing rather than participation in a process.
- Shine a light on community contributors.
- Show what's at stake and what's possible for the future.
- Frame questions differently and be provocative to pique interest and appeal to values.

This approach is designed to create openings to educate community members about future drivers and potential actions, and to help them understand the significance of the General Plan Update so that they are well-informed and ready to provide feedback when the draft recommendations are ready for review. To accomplish this goal:

- Outreach will be simple and easy to understand, avoiding planning jargon and technical details.
- Engagement activities will not require prior planning or policy knowledge.
- Strategies and staffing must be tailored to the target audience(s).
- Planners will form and strengthen relationships with community-based organizations and influential individuals to build connection and trust across diverse populations.
- Outreach and engagement will be integrated in the planning process.
- Internal communications will be a priority for consistency and accuracy of messaging and engagement.
- Tools and mechanisms will be developed for evaluation and reporting.

With equity among the three outcomes of Thrive Montgomery 2050, as well as a priority for [Montgomery Planning and the county](#), our communications approach has and will continue to consider equity in all outreach and engagement so that all members of our community have opportunities to shape the future of our county.

For historically underrepresented audiences, outreach focused on leveraging community influencers who have established authority and trust with their communities. We partnered with these organizations by co-hosting listening sessions and events, providing content for their events and communications, and engaging their staff with tools like meetings-in-a-box and talking points.

In addition, communications considered:

1. Literacy level - Communications provided background for complex concepts, used images and graphics, and avoided acronyms. Additionally, staff was available for verbal explanations and surveying as alternatives to written materials and questionnaires.

2. Socioeconomic status - Event locations and timing considered convenience for the given community as well as accessibility to public transportation, childcare and food.

3. Language - Thrive Montgomery 2050 messaging, materials and other communication were translated from English into the major languages spoken in Montgomery County where limited English proficiency is greater than 10 percent (see Figure 2). Written translations and verbal interpretation were provided based on the prevalence of languages spoken in a given geographic area and considering areas where there are large numbers of people with low English proficiency.

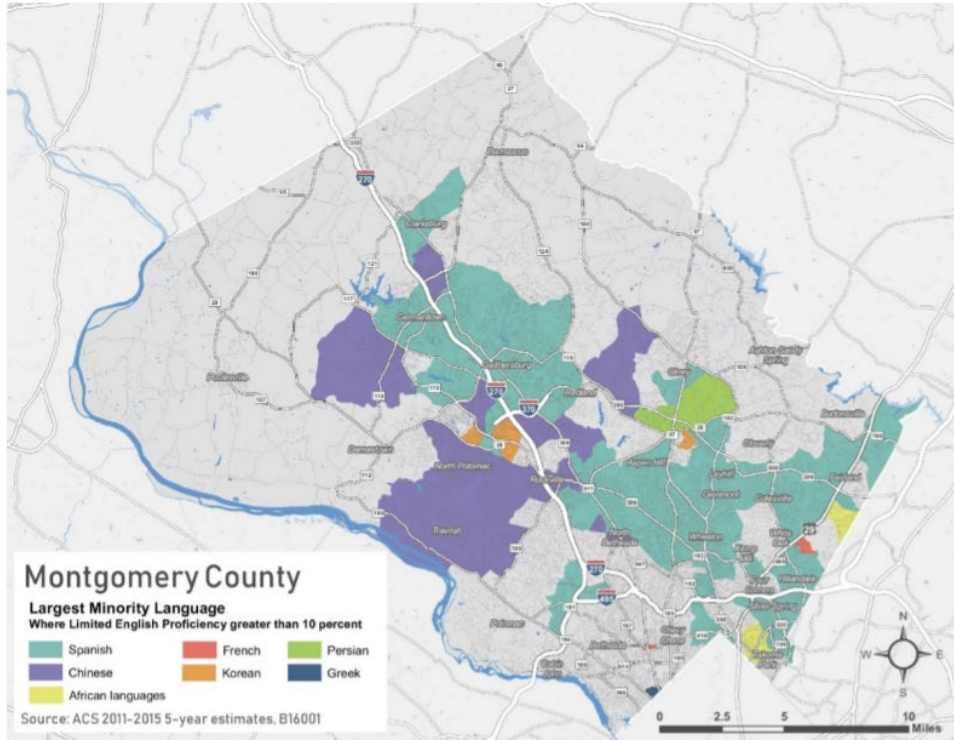


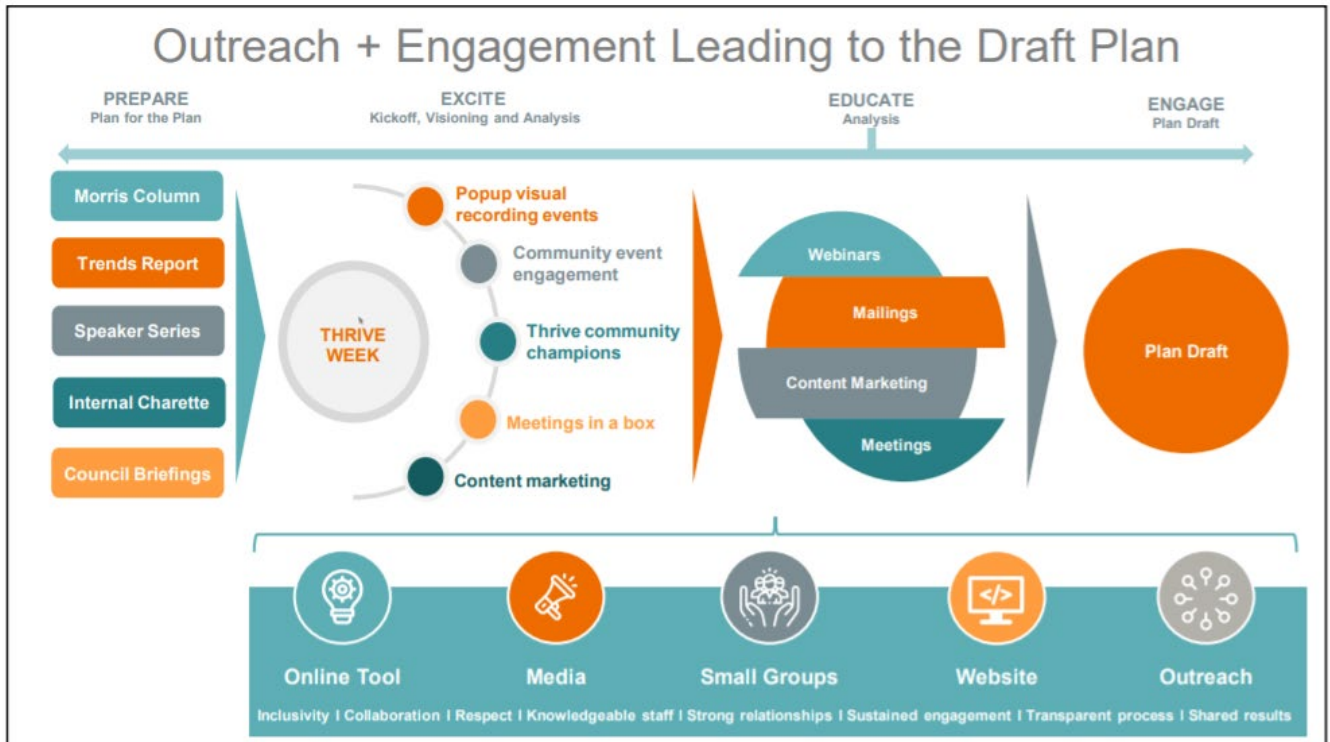
Figure 2: Montgomery County Largest Minority Language Where Limited English Proficiency is Greater than 10 percent

4. Culture - Language translation is just one part of effectively communicating with Montgomery County’s multicultural population. Communication also considered cultural norms, such as previous experience with public participation and democratic processes, comfort sharing ideas in public and community methods for decision-making.

5. Physical and mental ability - All communications and access to events and services followed the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and comply with ADA regulations.

[See the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Communications Plan \(Appendix II\) for more information on equitable engagement.](#)

Thrive
 蓬勃发展 计划
Prosperar
 번창하는
 Développement
 پیشرفت
Hưng Thịnh



Excite

Rather than leading with who Montgomery Planning is, what the General Plan Update is and what the process looks like, we started by inviting community members to vision, predict, speculate and futurescape with us in a way that is relevant to them and those they care about. By using provocative statements and interesting questions, we piqued the community's interest in the future and gave them reasons to care about visioning for the county's future. And we offered Thrive Montgomery 2050 as a way to help them chart the course to their future, while they shared with us valuable insight into what they care about, need, desire, hope for, are frustrated about and imagine for Montgomery County in 2050. The communications purpose of this phase was to pique interest, engender curiosity and build enthusiasm for the "asks" to come in subsequent phases. This phase included "Thrive Week" with graphic recordings, the Thrive 2050 online quiz, digital, print and transit advertising and community events.

Educate

Visioning happened concurrent with the analysis work done by planners and fed into the Educate process. Toward the end of that analysis period, we shifted our outreach focus to education that prepared community members to provide meaningful feedback on draft plan recommendations. Before audiences invested their valuable energy and time in reviewing draft recommendations and providing feedback, they needed to understand what the General Plan Update is and why they should care about it. While education happened throughout the plan development process, this phase aimed to leverage the interest and excitement built during the visioning phase to help "make the case" for the utility of the General Plan Update and each participant's engagement and involvement in the

General Plan Update process. This phase included the Big Ideas Speaker Series, community meetings and advertising.

Pandemic Distance Engagement

The plan transitions from in person engagement to online [Distance Engagement Strategy](#) due to COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Montgomery Planning offered many ways to participate in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 process while respecting social distancing. This phase includes virtual events such as: Pints with a Planner, Ask Me Anything, Community Chats, mass mailings, explainer documents and videos.

Engage

This phase focused on reviewing the draft plan and recommendations with the community. First, we explained the what and the why of these recommendations, then we engaged community members in conversations about the draft plan. Specific methods for this engagement were determined based on the plan recommendations. This engagement included showing the community how their input was used to develop the draft plan and address community concerns, so planners will develop a system for tracking, incorporating, and explaining how community input is used. This phase included community meetings, blog posts, explainer documents and videos.

Endorse

While planners incorporated community feedback to revise the plan, communications focused on motivating and equipping community members to advocate for Thrive Montgomery 2050 drafts to the Planning Board and, ultimately, to the County Council.

Links and Resources

View the [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Scope of Work and Communications Strategy](#) (May 30, 2019)

View the [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Distance Engagement webpage](#) (March 2020)

View the [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Outreach and Engagement Appendix](#) (April 2021)

View the [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Engagement recap video](#) (June 2021)

Graphic Recordings

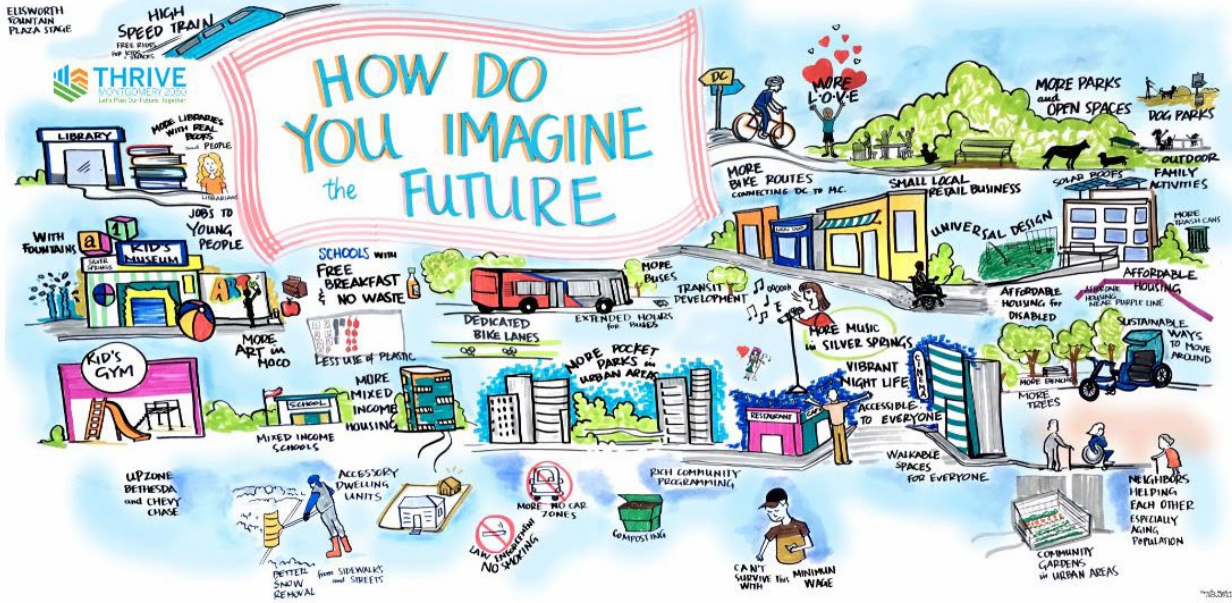
SHADY GROVE FARMERS MARKET



GERMANTOWN - SPLASH PARK



ELSWORTH
FOUNTAIN
PLAZA STAGE



VAPPY HOUR AT ELM STREET PARK



Hung Thinh

بشير قاسم

Thrive

董物发展 计划

변창하는

Developpement

THURSDAY, 11/11/2021

HOW DO YOU IMAGINE the FUTURE

BRITTA BULLOBBINO
©2014 BY

TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT

LUCIANA LORING for
SCHMIDT & CO.