



Applying the Equity Emphasis Areas Framework in Montgomery County



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District 4
Montgomery County, Maryland
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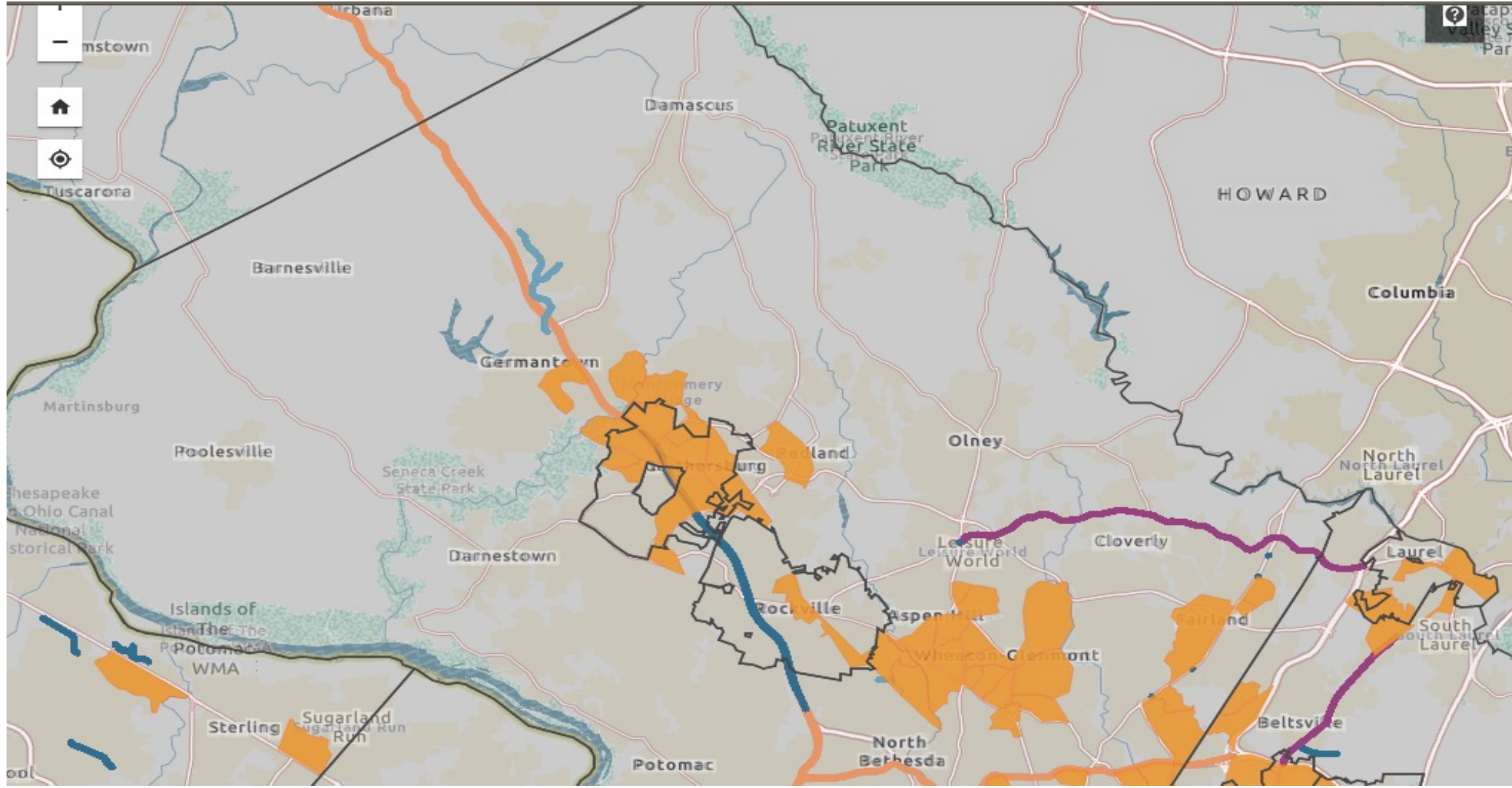
Racial Equity and Social Justice Act – Bill 27-19

- Adopting the County’s Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Act was a year-long process (first in the region)
 - Resolution adopted April 2018
 - Community engagement process in Spring, Summer, & Fall of 2019
 - Created bi-lingual toolkit that was used to guide community conversations
 - Bill 27-19 introduced Oct. 17, 2019 & adopted on Nov. 26, 2019
 - Adopted amended Bill 44-20 on Dec. 1, 2020
 - Legislation modeled on this bill to establish the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice in New York State was recently approved by the New York State Legislature and awaits the Governor’s signature
- This process also included training of top leadership, and the creation of a bilingual toolkit to promote community engagement
- More than 1000 participants in County sponsored community conversations, in addition to groups, nonprofits, associations, etc. who held their own events by utilizing a bilingual toolkit we produced as a guiding tool – people of color accounted for two-thirds of participants



Community Conversation at the Silver Spring Civic Center, Spring 2018

49 Equity Emphasis Areas in Montgomery County



Montgomery County's Equity Emphasis Areas Resolution

- Following COG's lead, the County Council has adopted several resolutions: **Updated Housing Targets, National Capital Trails Network, High-Capacity Transit-Areas and Equity Emphasis Areas**
- I introduced the Equity Emphasis Areas resolution, along with a resolution to support High-Capacity Transit Areas as a planning tool on **November 9, 2021**. It was unanimously adopted on **November 16, 2021**.
- The resolution supports COG's endorsement of Equity Emphasis Areas as key planning concepts and tools to inform decision making, and provide a framework that the County can use to address disparate racial equity outcomes and promote smart growth
- This resolution, along with the High-Capacity Transit area resolution, builds upon other resolutions the County has adopted to support COG's benchmarks and goals

Montgomery County's Equity Emphasis Areas Resolution

Key Features

- **The resolution was co-sponsored by the entire Council and was adopted unanimously**
- Incorporates High-Capacity Transit Areas – Important to link the accessibility to transit to improve equity and eliminate disparities
- Language mirrors Council of Governments' resolution in key areas – **transportation, land use, education, healthcare, climate, and economic opportunities**
- Calls upon the Council and Executive to work collaboratively to identify opportunities and implement solutions
- Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation is an important framework for tools like these, but absent legislation Equity Emphasis Areas can be useful to address disparities

Equity Emphasis Areas- Practical Application

Bill 31-21 - Adopted on October 5, 2021

- The intent of the original bill was to implement minor modifications to the **County's Green Building Tax Incentive Program**
- **The Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact statement** attached to the original bill **identified an opportunity to advance equity** and begin to address the environmental justice issues that have plagued communities of color for decades.
- I proposed an amendment that expanded the County's Energy Efficient Buildings Property Tax credit by **providing an additional 10% in tax credits for qualifying multi-family and commercial buildings in one of the County's 49 Equity Emphasis Areas. It was adopted.**

Equity Emphasis Areas- Practical Application

Bill 44-21 - Adopted on February 1, 2022

- The original bill dedicated 10% of the County's Fuel Tax revenue to the Green Bank – **estimated at \$17.6 million**
- **Montgomery County Green Bank** - Partners with the private sector to provide more affordable and flexible financing options for County residents and businesses for clean energy and climate-resilient projects.
- I supported an amendment to require the County's Green Bank to **dedicate 20% of the County's funding allocation to Equity Emphasis Areas, in order to address disparities.**



Equity Emphasis Areas Shaping Transportation

- The Montgomery County Planning Department is using Equity Emphasis Areas to shape their approach to planning along the Purple Line
 - **8 of the 11 Purple Line Stations serving Montgomery County are in Equity Emphasis Areas**
 - **Prioritizing EEAs as the Purple Line develops will be key in avoiding the mistakes of the past that created these disparities**
 - Opportunity: Purple Line Construction Zone Program is modeled on the County's Small Business Assistance Program and can target relief to disproportionately affected businesses in EEAs
 - EEAs facilitate the establishment of these type of programs

Equity Emphasis Areas Shaping Land Use Policies

Montgomery County's Parks & Planning has begun using **Equity Focus Areas** to guide their planning projects and processes

- Land Use is a critical part of reversing decades of inequity
- **Equity Focus Areas** - characterized by high concentrations of lower-income households and residents with limited English proficiency
- Approximately **276,000** individuals in Montgomery County reside in **Equity Focus Areas** – one quarter of the County's population
- Equity Emphasis Areas and Equity Focus Areas overlap
- Council requested a deeper Racial Equity and Social Justice analysis of Thrive 2050, the County's update to the General Plan

POTENTIAL APPLICATION OF EQUITY EMPHASIS AREAS

Vision Zero Resolution – adopted on February 2, 2016

- **Goal: Eliminate traffic fatalities by 2030**
- A Governors Highway Safety Association report from March 2021 stated that Black people were killed at a rate **twice as high** as their White counterparts. *(Sims, 2021)*
- In 2020, **Blacks and Hispanics each accounted for 21% of fatalities, even though Black people account for 12% of the U.S. population, and Hispanic people account for 19% of the population.** Asians make up 3% of the U.S. population but accounted for 5.7% of pedestrian deaths. *(Sims, 2021)*
- Using the EEA framework can help the County and State strategically target its resources

Conclusion

- The use of **Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs)** as a tool will foster equitable outcomes in land use, transportation, economic development, environmental issues, and more.
- It is a good starting point for jurisdictions that do not have Racial Equity and Social Justice legislation in place.
- Grateful to MWCOCG for assisting the region in the development, adoption and application of these important tools that will help eliminate historic disparities. This effort will greatly improve the region's socio-economic standing.



THANK YOU

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**To access this more about our Racial Equity and Social Justice policy
and the Toolkits:**

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/EquityMatters.html