

CLIENT

Montgomery County Planning
Commission

DATES

April 2024 - February 2025

COLLABORATORS

Rvesta Consulting

REFERENCE

Vaughn Ross, Consultant
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BUDGET

\$60,000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Connect the Dots (CtD), in partnership with Rvesta, supported the Montgomery County Planning Commission in the creation of the next comprehensive plan, Montco 2050: A Comprehensive Plan for a Changing World, which will guide County decisions and policies on the future of housing, transportation, land use, and other necessary investments for the next 25 years. The project's purpose was to build on the success of its current comprehensive plan to create better connected municipalities within the County, enhance sustainable practices, and strengthen the business economy of Montgomery County. CtD enhanced the County's research and engagement process by conducting comparative analyses of other counties and policies, as well as facilitating interviews and focus groups in collaboration with local partners to better connect with underrecognized groups that had not been engaged in previous efforts. The insights gathered from these conversations were compiled and presented to the Commission to help ensure that the perspectives of underrecognized groups were considered in shaping the comprehensive plan.

SERVICES PERFORMED

With the collaboration of local partners, CtD conducted eight interviews and four focus groups to learn more about the specific needs, challenges, and ideas of low-income, disabled, and limited-English proficiency groups that the County can develop into policy updates and priorities for the comprehensive plan.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

Engagement Outcomes:

- 8 Interviews were conducted with representatives from community organizations reaching historically overlooked populations, libraries, social service groups, and religious institutions
- 4 Focus Groups were conducted with 7-9 participants in each, and one conducted entirely in Spanish
- Topics discussed during the conversations included Transportation, Housing, Food Access, Communal Spaces, Access to Social Services or Resources, and Outreach

Insights and Implications:

- Pedestrian safety: Montgomery County lacks safe walking conditions due to speeding drivers, unreliable public transit, and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure.
- Housing challenges: High rental costs, significant moving expenses, and strict entry requirements like credit checks limit housing accessibility.
- Food access: Without a car, residents struggle to reach affordable grocery stores and restaurants, especially for culturally-specific foods.
- Community spaces: More accessible and inclusive gathering places are needed, including enhanced park programming and additional "third places."
- Information sharing: Residents prefer communication through community organizations, word-of-mouth, and local business postings.
- Resource navigation: Accessing county services is frustrating and time-consuming; many are unaware of resources like the Office of Community Connections.

Strategic considerations were shared with the commission to review and develop further in their planning process.