

Town of Chevy Chase Testimony
County Council Public Hearing on Thrive Montgomery
June 17, 2021

Good evening, my name is Barney Rush, Mayor of the Town of Chevy Chase. Our Town is a member of the *Thrive Montgomery 2050 Neighborhood Coalition*. The coalition, consisting of more than twenty-five communities across the County, will provide you with a formal letter expressing support of key principles of the “Thrive” Draft Plan, but also proposing seven critical modifications. Tonight, I will focus my remarks on a few of the modifications.

First, the county should continue to use the master & sector planning processes as the vehicle for change. The development of “complete communities” involves additional density and Thrive anticipates higher density development in single family residential communities. What must be avoided is a binary approach that leaves residents either opposed to any change or in favor of large-scale change. Residents have a continuum of views, with many accepting some additional density. But it is a matter of degree – and the degree matters.

Finding the right balancing point for a given area cannot be done with a “one size fits all” approach. Instead, a carefully considered local solution, focused on the street patterns and existing density of that area, and incorporating engagement with residents, will have the best chance of attracting the broad support that fundamental change requires. Also, such a local approach will be best suited to create and tailor incentives to retain and refurbish existing attainable and affordable housing -- vital components of the County’s housing stock.

Second, robust funding methods are required to finance the proper level of infrastructure needed to attain Thrive’s vision of complete communities. Where will the funds be found for the added pedestrian, bicycle, bus rapid transit, stormwater, and school infrastructure projects? And how will such costs be shared amongst developers, commercial interests, and residents? Decreasing impact fees is not a funding strategy. This issue, too, could be addressed in conjunction with a master or sector plan process.

Third, the underpinning for achievement of all these goals will be sustained job creation and economic growth. This, too, must be a focal point of our new general plan.

We care deeply for our community and county and want to see everyone *thrive*. Let us find the common ground to achieve this result, by committing ourselves to economic growth, sound financial planning, and use of the master and sector planning processes as the means of instituting zoning changes.

Thank you.