

TESTIMONY COUNCIL ON THRIVE 2050

Dear County Council,

As a real estate agent AND a longtime resident of the Brookdale Community near Friendship Heights (having grown up there), I am deeply concerned about the density changes being pushed through (via Thrive 2050) outside of the normal planning process. This "one sized fits all" approach seems to benefit developers but not homeowners (either existing owners or those seeking affordable housing).

Near Friendship Heights there is AMPLE rental apartment and condo inventory. On MLS I can access the individual rental stats and things are on market often for a month or more. **However there is an extreme shortage of single family homes compared to demand.** Houses sell with multiple offers 10-20% over asking as a rule in the past year (and generally). In addition there are several rental buildings coming online on the DC side, the redevelopment of Mazza and Lord and Taylor sites, AND the GEICO plan provides for multiple housing types if implemented. *To have developers competing with homeowners for single family properties they could convert to multifamily would worsen this shortage.*

In addition this would create parking and safety problems with no reasonable provisions for off street parking etc. Our streets are narrow. Thrive 2050 does not appear to require upgrades to infrastructure either which multi-family homes would strain.

Nothing in the Thrive 2050 plan would create more affordable housing-- it would only create development opportunities benefitting developers and realtors working in that field. I do realize developers contribute a GREAT DEAL of money to council members and I ask respectfully that this not cloud your judgment on this issue.

There is already a "by right" ADL option in our zoning allowing more affordable units to come online while maintaining the architectural character of Brookdale (built by Cooper Lightbown who also built Mar-a-Lago for Marjorie Merriweather Post). We already have the risk of tear downs for new homes but the lure for developers of more options via Thrive 2050 would destroy a unique and architecturally significant neighborhood. We don't want to be forced to go through historic designation restricting the

rights of owners to expand and improve as they wish. But we may be forced to reconsider should this go through.

Zoning changes of this magnitude should be required to go through the normal and lengthy master plan process, not be pushed through with inadequate public input (and understanding) during a pandemic. I have only just been made aware of this in the last few weeks and I work in the housing field.

You must hit pause on this plan and go through normal channels to reconsider zoning. That way you can consider which areas have a shortage of multi-family and affordable housing (the true problem) and developers could be required to provide affordable units as part of the plan. We have several very large sites even closer to Metro ripe for redevelopment the focus should be on those sites. An individual focus, not “one-size-fits-all” plan is what is called for.

We agree with County Executive Erlich’s grave concerns as well as expressed in his detailed letter to you.

Sincerely,

Dominique Rychlik