

## Statement of Joan Warren

Submitted to Montgomery County Council

On Thrive 2050

June 29, 2021

I think that most of us would agree that the general goals related to housing as outlined in the Thrive 2050 plan are well intended. The Thrive document presents trends for the growing number of households who are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. The data clearly demonstrate that we need more affordable housing. However, finding such housing in Montgomery County is very difficult. Given that achieving the goal of more affordable housing is unlikely, the Thrive 2050 Plan and the Planning Board have added the term “attainable housing” to the discussions of housing needs. The definition of attainable housing boils down to a range of housing that is suitable to a range of income levels. What has happened to affordability?

In March 2021, the Planning Board created the HEAT team to advise them on how to increase attainable housing. The process has been moving at light speed. Based on input from the HEAT team, the Planning Board staff has recently recommended upzoning for significant portions of the County. However the areas targeted for upzoning- near transit centers- have the most expensive land, making it unlikely that any higher density housing built would be affordable. Instead, the least expensive homes in areas near transit would be targeted by developers to be torn down and replaced with more dense housing that is more expensive.

I would ask that the Council consider several things. First, most citizens have only a vague awareness of Thrive 2050, and almost no citizens are aware of the Attainable Housing Strategy. Second, the process of creating the HEAT team to advise the Planning Board and the pace at which it has proceeded have largely excluded County residents. This is not an acceptable way to make such important decisions. I would encourage the Council to pause actions related to upzoning to allow residents to become fully informed about the proposed plans and how they might impact their communities. Finally, I encourage the Council to consider proactive government efforts that are required to produce what the County truly needs-an increase in affordable housing.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.