

**Testimony of Cecily E. Baskir**  
**County Council Public Hearing on Thrive Montgomery 2050**  
**June 29, 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight about Thrive Montgomery 2050. My name is Cecily Baskir. I am the former mayor of the Town of Chevy Chase, but I testify this evening in my personal capacity as a resident and small business owner in the County. I focus my comments on two main issues: process and housing.

On process: In my role as mayor for the past year, I worked to try to engage and educate our neighbors throughout the plan's drafting process, with limited success. Many of my neighbors still do not understand the process or what is at stake. In a time dominated by a health crisis and polarizing national issues, the focus of most residents has been elsewhere. I understand the desire to update the general plan after almost 30 years, and I commend much of the forward thinking in this plan. But it proposes significant changes that many residents still do not know about. Please recognize this, expand public outreach even further, and do not rush to approve this plan for the sake of approving a plan.

On housing, I support the expansion of affordable and attainable housing. In particular, I support (1) financial incentives to boost creation of more affordable housing, (2) targeted strategies to prevent gentrification and to incentivize preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing, and (3) significant investment in the eastern part of the County as an important priority.

Some proposals under consideration, however, will not create more affordable or even attainable housing in neighborhoods like mine, where even small units will sell at high market prices unattainable for most people. Small expensive units will do nothing to address the County's unfortunate exclusionary history or promote greater racial equity or diversity.

This is a large, diverse County, and strategies must be tailored to fit neighborhoods. In some places, the plan commendably recognizes that, but the elimination of "compatibility" appears inconsistent with a context-sensitive approach. It is unlikely that any single set of County-wide design-based regulations, standards, or patterns will achieve the professed goals in every neighborhood. I support adopting reasonable rules for Missing Middle Housing and shared housing types that retain the concept of compatibility. One size does not fit all here, and to accomplish the goal of providing sufficient reasonably-priced, diverse housing for the next 30 years, the rules should be tailored appropriately.

Thank you for your consideration.