

County Council Public Hearing June 29, 2021

Thrive Montgomery 2050

Testimony of Françoise M. Carrier

Good evening. For the record my name is Françoise Carrier and I am speaking tonight on my own behalf, as a 24-year resident of Montgomery County who has had spent a great deal of time thinking about and observing land use trends and patterns. I am here to support the draft comprehensive plan that is before you as a forward-thinking plan grounded in three essential goals: equity, economic development, and environmental sustainability. I applaud the Planning Board and Planning Department for identifying and embracing these three goals, which will be key to creating a future for Montgomery County that can be as bright as its past.

For many years, the County's General Plan has been something of an afterthought. You now have the chance to change that by adopting Thrive Montgomery. This plan will set the stage for future master plans and zoning changes that will create new possibilities for more complete communities, so that more of the County's residents can experience the convenience of 15-minute living. More fundamentally, Thrive will promote the new land use patterns that the County needs to achieve greater equity, rather than continuing to have our neighborhoods diverge, as some become more and more affluent, with bigger and bigger houses, while others make do with older, crowded housing stock and little in the way of renovation or improvement.

The changes that Thrive will support are also important for the County's economic future. I'm sure you are all acutely aware that recent years have not seen the level of economic vitality we need to support the County's tax base, particularly in comparison with some neighboring jurisdictions. We need the changes that Thrive will promote to meet the demands of our times for more housing, more vibrant neighborhoods, and a land use system that makes it easy to build a variety of housing types and non-residential buildings that complement one another, rather than limiting the opportunity for those synergies to a tiny portion of the County's land area.

Montgomery County's many decades of careful land use regulation have given us so many advantages. We have vibrant downtowns, attractive neighborhoods, a first-class park system with lots of open space and recreational opportunities, and of course the Ag Reserve. It's time to get ready for the next 50 years of good land use regulation by adopting a forward-thinking general plan that directly supports the County's major policy goals. Years from now, I believe you will all be proud to have this plan as part of your legacy. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.