

TESTIMONY OF THE GREATER CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

Regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Board Draft Plan

June 29, 2021

Good evening Council President Hucker and members of Council. My name is Jan Brito and I serve as the President of the Greater Capital Area Association of REALTORS® (GCAAR) – the voice of Montgomery County’s more than 12,000 REALTORS®, property managers, title attorneys, and other real estate professionals, as well as thousands of area consumers and residents. This evening I would like to share our association’s perspective on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Planning Board Draft.

It is readily apparent, both to those with passive interest in the market and the seasoned veterans of the industry, that housing in Montgomery County is at an inflection point. With staggeringly high prices and record low inventory, the divide between those that have found a place of their own and those looking to put down roots is growing. The inequity is further amplified when looking at homeownership rates among minority households.

We would like to thank the Planning Board for the vision laid out in this plan and for putting together a blueprint we can work from to better our communities. You have shown with alarming precision the need for change, and the message this plan sends is clear.

We need more housing.

We need more housing across the household income scale, from workforce housing to MPDUs to “luxury” housing. We need to fill in the gaps of missing middle housing. And we need an assortment in the types of housing we develop in all categories to meet the varying demand.

The rise in property values and home sales prices are undoubtedly positive for homeowners and our county’s tax coffers. For now. The inflated housing prices we have seen throughout the pandemic have not abated and are not sustainable long term.

While the receipts from the last year – aided by federal pandemic aid – were much more positive than the grim predictions of last summer, our revenue streams cannot bear to be stretched this thin. Younger residents and blue-collar professionals (not to mention our first responders and county government personnel) are continuously forced outside our jurisdiction to find homes. We cannot hope to sustain our county’s superb network of services if those who make up those efforts must leave when they punch out each day. More housing across the economic spectrum is among the strongest tools to stabilize such a spike in housing costs.

The National Association of REALTORS® released a study earlier this month that called for a “once-in-a-generation response” to address the housing supply crisis in our nation. While we cannot and do not expect Montgomery County to be the pinnacle of this concerted, long term effort, we cannot ignore the facts on the ground here today. In the most modest of projections, tens of thousands of new residents will call Montgomery County home over the next three decades. Based on the housing development that has taken place over the last 15 years, we are already grossly behind. If we are to build a better future for our county then we need to grapple not only with the change that is on the horizon, but the choices we have laid out in front of us today.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our Association’s perspective and look forward to our continued work together to make Montgomery County a welcoming home for all.