

## Thrive 2050 Testimony before the County Council

June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Good evening and thank you for holding this important public hearing on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 general plan update. My name is Bill Kirwan. I am a life-long resident of Montgomery County and specifically the downtown Silver Spring area. I grew up in the Long Branch and Indian Spring Terrace neighborhoods, have lived in Woodside Forest, and currently live in Sligo Park Hills. I am a product of Montgomery County Public Schools as are my two oldest two sons, and my daughter is on her path through the system. I am an Architect and owner of a 16 person firm based in Bethesda, Maryland. So clearly I am fully vested in our community both personally and professionally.

I can unequivocally say that I have never been so excited about the prospects for Montgomery County based on the vision Thrive 2050 paints for our future. I commend the Planning Department staff who have worked so hard the past few years developing the recommendations incorporated into Thrive 2050. Having served on a few of the citizen advisory groups during the formulation of the recommendations, Planning Department staff should be commended by the Council for their commitment and hard work reflected in this excellent document.

As a long time resident I have seen our County become more and more unattainable for middle and lower income families struggling to overcome the exclusionary regulations and racist neighborhood covenants that are so deeply imbedded in our residential zoning ordinances; I have seen an over-reliance on the widening of the Beltway, 270, and our major arteries to solve car-centric transportation issues; I have seen the overlap of pedestrian and vehicular modes of transportation become more deadly as a result; I have seen our public transportation systems become less convenient and less affordable for the residents who depend on them; I have seen our parks become less accessible to those without access to a car; and I have seen our tributaries to the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers become more polluted by development sprawl causing these important waterways to become toxic to the wildlife that depend on them.

Thrive 2050 comprehensively envisions a future for Montgomery County that addresses and offers solutions to all of these issues.

As an Architect whose focus is sustainable residential architecture, I am most sensitive and encouraged by the propositions in Thrive 2050 that recommend an expansion of smart growth strategies for denser development and multi-modal transportation strategies and to reject sprawl and its negative impacts upon the environment. Coupled with this are recommendations for zoning amendments that will allow for a greater diversity of housing types greatly missing in most of our single family communities, from duplexes to low-rise apartment buildings. I firmly believe that creating this diversity of housing types is critical to making our communities more equitable, affordable, and attainable to people of all income levels.

I know that I want the future that Thrive 2050 envisions for my family. Knowing each of you, as I have gotten to know you in the past 5 years through my civic involvement, I am confident you want to see that future realized for your families and your constituents as well. I look forward to your support and adoption of the recommendations of Thrive Montgomery 2050 that will send our County off towards our collective and extremely promising future.