

Written testimony for November 30, 2021 Montgomery Council Session: Thrive Montgomery 2050
Public Hearing

My name is Erika Jorgensen. I've lived in the Sumner neighborhood of Bethesda since 2007. What I want to share with the Council today is my growing alarm at the way Thrive Montgomery is being forced onto our communities, without really considering or perhaps not really caring how the County's citizens, its voters and therefore your bosses, will be affected.

It seems to me that the plan's proposal for market-rate multi-family housing units in single-family neighborhoods is a gift to real estate developers who will push out lower income families from the cheapest existing houses. In Sumner, we will end up with the loss of trees and open space, further overcrowding of schools, and additional congestion on our roads, along with hulking fancy apartment buildings crowded next to our homes.

Thrive Montgomery and related Zoning Text Amendments must be paused and rethought.

First, how can this be the right time for a new 30-year plan? Do any of us at this point know the long-term impacts of the pandemic? Will people continue to work mostly remotely? How will housing demand across the County be affected? Nobody knows!

Secondly, it seems to me that the nuts-and-bolts details, rather than the lofty language and throwaway slogans, reveal the true vision of Thrive Montgomery: a county addicted to growth, driven by the preferences of developers rather than citizens, where county finances face collapse unless saved by an ever-expanding tax base -- a tax base that endlessly tries to catch up with requirements for infrastructure and schools and services already incurred by past haphazard growth. This is not a vision of a sustainable livable county. It's a Ponzi scheme.

Please, step back. Slow down. Let's take our time. Throw out the developers and consult with neighbors instead. We've waited 30 years for this plan. Another year or two won't matter. Thank you.

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