

My name is Gray Kimbrough, and I live in a townhouse in East Silver Spring. I would like to start by thanking you for this opportunity to speak and by stating my strong support of the Thrive 2050 general plan. I would also like to go over a bit of history.

Most of the houses in my neighborhood, like much of Montgomery County, were established with deed restrictions that banned selling or renting them to anyone who wasn't white. Yes, this happened long ago, but decades later in 1970—after the first general plan had already been revised once—Montgomery County was still overwhelmingly white.

At that point, 92% of county residents were non-Hispanic whites. In 1990, just before the next general plan revision, 72% of county residents were non-Hispanic whites. Last year in the 2020 Census, 41% of county residents were non-Hispanic whites.

Today, most county residents living in detached single-family homes are non-Hispanic whites, but only 30% of those in multi-unit housing are. Crucially, much of the county is still zoned for the one kind of housing mostly owned by white residents.

We have in place a general plan written for a county that looked very different from the Montgomery County of today. In 1993, we weren't confronting the crises of climate change and incredibly high housing costs. There had been no widespread reckoning with our county's legacy of structural racism. We didn't even complete the Red Line until five years later.

It's time for a new general plan that recognizes that we live in a very different county than we had decades ago, and that confronts the enormous challenges we now face.

As we all know, Thrive 2050 will not itself remove exclusionary zoning restrictions. We have a long way to go to put in place the changes necessary to make our county more environmentally friendly, livable, and welcoming to all. But Thrive 2050's vision is a huge step toward addressing the crises we are facing.

You're going to hear a lot of people demand that we stop this plan, and that we stop the county from changing. But we need to understand that the county has already changed, that the challenges we face have changed, and that it's past time for a general plan that recognizes that.

I urge you to finalize and pass Thrive 2050 as soon as possible.