Hi! My name is Dan Reed and my partner and I live and work in Silver Spring. I am Vice President of the East Silver Spring Citizens Association, which does not take positions on land use issues, so I’m speaking for myself. I’m here, again, to support Thrive 2050.

My partner and I bought our townhouse in 2019 after saving up for years and working five jobs between us. We chose this neighborhood in part because it’s the kind of place that Thrive talks about: a mix of housing types and styles and prices, walking distance to shops and parks and both of our jobs. And as this plan talks about, the result is a place that is pretty diverse and integrated, and one where people from all different backgrounds have access to the things that make life great. We figured this would be a welcoming, safe place to live for an interracial queer couple.

What I wasn’t prepared for were the neighbors. Mind you, most of our neighbors are awesome, kind, generous people. I think we live on the best block in Montgomery County. I’m talking about the folks who send me threatening emails unsolicited, the ones who accost my partner and my dog on the street, the ones who put BLM signs in their yards and then call their councilmembers to say I, a Black person, walk by their house too much and they’re scared.

Every single one of these instances occurred, in part, because of conversations about Thrive. I grew up in this county and was taught that we were this model of racial equity. And yet, when we have this plan before us that addresses all the things we say we care about, people are literally melting down.

Comments that townhomes like mine would “destroy, disrupt, and displace” our neighborhood; the Facebook ads and videos showing homes like mine and the ones my friends and family live in and describing them as a threat to their detached homes; the signs outside homes in my neighborhood that say “Save Our Neighborhoods.”

What exactly are we trying to save? Why are people so uncomfortable with different kinds of homes (and the people who might live in them) in their community?

This county was largely built for affluent white families, and it shows in everything from how neighborhoods are laid out to how our political process works. Over the past three years we’ve heard from some of the county's most privileged residents and communities that they’re not getting enough of a say. How are we supposed to create
a county that works for everyone - that works for people who look like me - if we continue to empower this behavior?

Some will read this, I’m sure, and feel very defensive and angry. They’ll say it’s divisive. They’ll say I’m racist for talking about racism. That’s fine. It doesn’t make it less true.

My family chose to come here from another country. I chose to move back here as an adult. I choose to speak out in favor of this plan, after a year of threats and harassment from good liberal people who insist that they have my best interests at heart. That’s because I love my neighborhood and I want more people to be able to enjoy it - to be able to find the homes they need at prices they can afford in the places they want to be. It is an imperative for racial equity, for climate change, and for the economic future of this county.

In spite of our history this county became a diverse, thriving place, and we celebrate it. But it didn’t just happen. It’s something you have to choose, again and again. In passing this plan this council - which declared racism a public health emergency last year - chooses to embrace what makes it great. I hope you’ll do it as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed