

I am writing to express my concerns over what I see in Thrive 2050 as the indiscriminate plan to substantially alter the character of existing neighborhoods, as well as imposing significant and not well thought out burdens on those communities' infrastructure and schools. I don't understand all the ins and outs of this process, but I would ask that the Council consider the following suggestions that I have to make this plan better and more acceptable to affected neighborhoods.

1. Don't treat every neighborhood the same. Some neighborhoods have older houses with architectural merit. Many are nevertheless torn down, but others are bought by people who appreciate their unique architecture and renovate instead. With the huge boon that this proposal would give to developer's profits, the chances of any of these old beauties being saved is almost nil. Also, some neighborhoods near metro have very little developable land other than that zoned for single family homes. Around the Bethesda metro, on the other hand, there are many other areas that could be redeveloped to meet the goals of Thrive without the adverse impact on established neighborhoods. An example of this would be the townhouse development across from Bethesda Elementary.

2. Seek the input of neighborhood community associations or other groups: I have lived in my neighborhood for 26 years, as have many of my neighbors. Yes, it is important to provide middle income housing, but we should have a say in such a drastic change in the neighborhood that we have lived in for so long. In order to get buy-in, you must include the voices of the existing residents.

3. Don't ignore infrastructure issues: Parking is a prime example. In our neighborhood, for example, the streets are narrow and cars must do the "Edgemoor dance" to pass by each other which is already a dangerous proposition even without more cars parked on the streets. I frequently walk my dogs on the many roads in our neighborhood that don't have sidewalks (including my street) and it is already dangerous enough trying to navigate parked cars, landscapers' trucks, and cars using our neighborhood as a cut through. We are also a designated bike path and more cars on the street would make this dangerous for bikers as well. Any redevelopment into multiplex units absolutely must include two spots per residence for our neighborhood. (This may or may not be true for every neighborhood under consideration, illustrating why you can't treat every neighborhood the same under this proposal.)

4. Schools: The overcrowding of our local schools has been ignored for so long, I am not sure it is even a factor anymore. But obviously more housing means even more overcrowding. Please consider slowing down residential development until this issue can be addressed. My kids are out of the MCPS system now, but over the six years spread between my oldest and youngest, I saw a very significant drop in the quality of the schools due to overcrowding. This overcrowding has caused more students in areas like Edgemoor and Chevy Chase to transfer to private schools, thus weakening schools like BCC High School which have had both racial and socioeconomic diversity.

In sum, I don't disagree with the goals of Thrive 2050 to provide quality housing to every Montgomery County resident. I only ask that such a drastic change as is being considered in Thrive 2050 go through a thoughtful and deliberate process that takes into account the needs of future AND existing residents.