

My name is Pete Freeman. I live in Bannockburn with my wife and two children and I've considered Montgomery County my home for more than 45 years. I support Thrive Montgomery 2050 for the following reasons:

1. Resident Mix: When I grew up in Bethesda, my friends' parents were government workers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, educators, homemakers, and diplomats, and, while this area was not nearly as diverse as other parts of the Washington region (largely by design), our differing backgrounds were mutually enriching. This mix is already changing, and if we don't increase the variety and amount of available housing across the county, the only people who will be able to live here will slot into a narrow demographic.
2. Need for middle-market housing: We are quickly becoming a county that is not affordable to first responders, teachers, and other middle-income earners. Do we really want them to commute from West Virginia or Frederick, increasing traffic and time spent away from their families? Don't we want our police officers, for example, to live in our neighborhoods and connect with us beyond (often painful) interactions at work?
3. Need for affordable housing: Affordable housing should not just be located near other affordable housing or in high-density urban areas. Our current laws make building affordable housing of any type in areas such as west Bethesda essentially impossible. That is unconscionable and renders our colorful "all are welcome" signs meaningless.
4. We have room to grow: For the past 20 years, 2,000 square foot houses have been torn down and replaced with 5,000 square foot mansions. No one really complains about them anymore, so why would anyone care if they house two or three families? There will be plenty of time to build out public transportation and other infrastructure to meet increased need.
5. What matters won't change: Montgomery County is not an amazing place to live because only one family is allowed to live in one house. It's because of our proximity to jobs, restaurants, retail, and cultural resources. It's because of our public schools and our curious, intelligent, and friendly citizenry. Giving more people the opportunity to live here will not change any of that.

You will probably hear from some longtime residents warning that Thrive Montgomery 2050 will destroy the essential character of our neighborhoods. But my parents moved to Bethesda with me in 1975. I remember the Hot Shoppes, the cement factory, and Lowen's Toy Store. I had birthday parties at Farrells and Shakey's and went to Wood Acres, Pyle, and Whitman with my brother and sister. This native Bethesdan knows that more neighbors cannot destroy our neighborhoods, but inaction and fear might.

We need equitable and sustainable planning, and I urge the council and all Montgomery County residents to support Thrive Montgomery 2050.