

Thrive 2050 individual testimony
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Council Chair and Members –

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this evening. As a homeowner, resident of Montgomery County for more than a decade, and parent of children who have gone through the Montgomery County Public School system, I strongly support Thrive 2050. While it is not perfect, it is a big step in the right direction and needs to be passed without further delay.

We are in an affordable housing crisis. We have all seen the encampments of homeless people springing up around the area. There are roughly four times as many people living in this region as there were when my house was built in the 1950s. More demand and very little increase in supply results in a lack of affordable options, even for lawyers like me. With so many areas restricted to single-family homes, there simply isn't enough building going on to accommodate the influx of people to the region, resulting in sprawl, wildlife habitat destruction, long commutes, and higher greenhouse gas emissions.

I'm fortunate to live in a beautiful, close-in neighborhood near the intersection of Sangamore and Massachusetts Avenues. A few years ago I was just barely able to purchase my home from my previous landlord who – like the landlord before him – was about to sell it and force me to move. I very much doubt I could afford to do the same today.

All around me, neighbors and flippers are tearing down existing homes and building much larger single-family homes. I don't blame them for doing that – it's all they can do under the current rules, and it is what the market rewards. And almost everyone who lives here and buys those homes is white. Across the street from me, a black family sold their two-bedroom, two-bath home. The buyer added two stories and turned it into a six-bedroom, 4 ½-bath home. It sold for \$2 million in less than a week. Don't try to tell me that structure couldn't have housed at least two families. And while even those units would have been expensive, they would have cost less than \$2 million!

Some of my neighbors oppose Thrive 2050, and greater density in general, because they are worried about the impact on school crowding. My older daughter graduated from Whitman last June and I have two sophomores there now. Every school they have attended – Wood Acres, Pyle, and Whitman – have had major renovations during the time they went there. Montgomery County knows how to build or expand schools when they need to. While we can all attest to challenges with our public schools, they remain great and can be expanded to include more students.

Unfortunately my kids' education has sorely lacked diversity in the student population. How many discussions of history, literature, or other subjects would have been enriched by a more diverse student population? How much better prepared would they be for their professional and personal lives if they had more diversity in their peer groups at school and

elsewhere in the community? And the plain fact of the matter is lack of diversity is tied to housing affordability.

My beautiful neighborhood is changing into one that is even less affordable and less diverse. I support Thrive 2050 because it allows us to at least address these negative trends and move us in the right direction. I would prefer for the county to make more direct investment in affordable housing itself, and I would support any efforts to do that. In the meantime, passing Thrive 2050 immediately is our best option.