

Testimony on Thrive Montgomery 2050
November 30, 2021 County Council Listening Session

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Dedun Ingram. I have lived in Montgomery County for 35 years, raised my two sons here, and volunteered many hundreds of hours – despite mobility challenges due to a visual impairment.

I appreciate that Thrive emphasizes the importance of developing parks in urban areas. The County has many large parks but they are not accessible unless you can drive to them, so creation of restful green spaces in our increasingly urban areas that we can walk to is essential. I am proud that my community, the Town of Chevy Chase, has approved contributing up to \$4 million to help the County develop the park that will surround the Bethesda Farm Women's Market. We look forward to the completion of the financial plan, so that the creation of this important new green space in rapidly urbanizing Bethesda, can be assured.

I have four areas of concern about the draft plan.

First, Thrive does not acknowledge that municipalities can be important partners in the formation of complete communities. Municipalities serve a vital link between neighborhoods and activity centers and have proven themselves to be valuable partners for the County. Thrive ignores municipalities and their potential usefulness in achieving its goals.

Second, Thrive lacks evidence or established metrics that prove complete communities create employment opportunities. Thrive simplistically asserts that providing more homes will bring the kind of workers that employers want. But these “build it and they will come” assertions are not backed up by evidence. Locally, Fairfax and Loudon Counties don't have a lot of complete communities, yet they are growing more rapidly than Montgomery County. Just as other Maryland county general plans do, Thrive must include true job creation strategies.

Third, Thrive does not really address the need for middle- and low-income housing. Its call for higher density in neighborhoods near metro stops may help meet the need of affluent Yuppies, DINKs, and couples with one child, but Thrive fails to realistically address where and how housing will be built at a price point that middle and low-income families can afford, how to maintain naturally occurring affordable housing and how to prevent displacement and gentrification.

Fourth, Thrive transportation needs to include more transformational ideas than wider sidewalks and more bike lanes. How will mass transit connect existing suburbs to activity centers, not only those within the County but those in surrounding counties? How does a suburban resident get to transit? How will the County make transit efficient enough, convenient enough, and cheap enough to get people out of their cars? How

can an EV-centered shared ride hailing system help? The Climate Action Plan mentioned a lot of ideas but Thrive doesn't incorporate any of them.

Thank you

Dedun Ingram
Chevy Chase, MD 20815