

Testimony of Deborah Cohn, Resident, Bethesda, MD
Thrive Montgomery 2050
Support with Modifications

I am Deborah Cohn. I have lived in the County since 1986. I raised my children here and my first grandchild was born here this summer. I care about their future and thus support Thrive Montgomery 2050. But, two areas need greater emphasis, specific recommendations and measurable goals: (i) ensuring mixed economic communities, and (ii) increased natural flood and draught management and reduced heat island effect.

Thrive Montgomery envisages denser development to address some of the County's current problems – (1) an inadequate housing supply resulting in a lack of affordable housing, (2) car-centric development resulting in congested roads and weaker communities, (3) economically and racially segregated communities, and (4) a lack of areas, particularly in the East County, where people can shop, eat or just hang out. The goal would be to create vibrant, diverse walkable communities that support healthy, informal interactions among local residents. These communities would have a mixture of housing types and sizes, residents of diverse economic levels, commercial and retail areas to serve those communities, and local recreational infrastructure.

Denser development, however, could create other problems. Thrive Montgomery must identify specific steps to protect against gentrification and displacement of existing lower income residents and informal mutual support systems as infill development increases land values. It should identify metrics and natural strategies to increase resiliency against heat, flood and draught. These could include (i) tree canopy goals of 40% or more in each section of the county, (ii) recommending that DPS gains authority to enforce the site suitability standards of the IgCC, (iii) numerical acreage goals and increased financial incentives for increasing contiguous forests and supplanting grass with native species, and (iv) significantly increased fines for tree removal.

I urge you to support Thrive Montgomery with these modifications.