

Brian Ditzler comments on THRIVE for County Council hearing on November 30, 2021

Change is scary. I understand those concerns, but do not share them. Change is inevitable; smart growth is the solution, and it's embedded in the PHED Committee draft of Thrive Montgomery which I strongly support.

My family and I experienced a walkable, transit-oriented lifestyle when we lived in a townhouse in London some years ago, and that is what we were seeking when we moved to Silver Spring, within easy walking distance of the library, stores, restaurants, Metrorail and other transit. That's what more of the county needs and what Thrive would provide - more smart land use and transportation policies aimed at giving more county residents an opportunity to enjoy mixed use, mixed income, transit-served, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with plenty of parks and trees. Smart growth also means retrofitting existing roads to be safer, greater use of complete streets, frequent and reliable buses using dedicated lanes, and more infill development.

Thrive would help build the county's economic health, environmental resilience, and racial and ethnic diversity. Thrive would help us facilitate the integration of neighborhoods by race and income to ensure that the inequities of the past would not be perpetuated in the future. Multi-unit housing along major corridors near transit makes eminent sense. Building height and appearance restrictions can protect the look and feel of current neighborhoods, but single family zoning must be changed.

Thrive would be improved by requiring greater renewable energy generation in the county including more use of solar, and providing more protection of Ten Mile Creek and the clean water it provides.

In closing, let me note that the county's current economic health is not good, and must be improved. Thrive would make the county more sustainable, more equitable, more attractive to new employers and prospective residents, which would increase the tax base. Thrive deserves your support, and I encourage all the members of the County Council to support it.