

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND
PLANNING COMMISSION

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050
HEARING DRAFT PLAN

7410 CONNECTICUT AVENUE
CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND

PUBLIC HEARING

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THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 19, 2020

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The Montgomery County Planning Board
met via video teleconference at 3:00 p.m., Casey
Anderson, Chair, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

CASEY ANDERSON, Chair
NATALI FANI-GONZALEZ, Vice Chair
GERALD CICHY
TINA PATTERSON

PARTAP VERMA

STAFF PRESENT:

KHALID AFZAL, Special Projects Manager,
Director's Office

CATHERINE COELLO, Administrative Assistant

DELISA COLEMAN, Associate General Counsel

JAKE EATMON, IT Support Specialist

MAREN HILL, Senior Planner

CAROLINE MCCARTHY, Chief, Research & Strategic
Projects Division

DOMINIQUE NEAM, IT Specialist

SHANNON OLSON, Sharepoint & Office 365
Administrator

CHRISTINA SORRENTO, Associate General Counsel

TANYA STERN, Deputy Director

GWEN WRIGHT, Planning Director

ALSO PRESENT:

SESSION 1

ALAN BOWSER, Montgomery County Civic Federation

LAUREN BROWN, Conservation Montgomery

WENDY CALHOUN

JENNIFER COOK

MICHAEL DUTKA, YIMBY MoCo

MICHAEL ENGLISH

SETH GRIMES

DENISSE GUITARRA, Audubon Naturalist Society

JAMES HEDRICK, Action Committee for Transit

DAVID HELMS

GRAY KIMBROUGH

WILLIAM KIRWAN III

STEVEN KRAFT

IRENE LANE, Town of Chevy Chase

ANDY LEON HARNEY, Section 3 of the Village of
Chevy Chase

JANE LYONS, Coalition for Smarter Growth

SANJIDA RANGWALA

DAN REED

ANDREW SAUNDRY

HERB SIMMENS, The Climate Mobilization MoCo

TINA SLATER

MAYOR JEFFREY SLAVIN, Somerset, MD

ZACHARY WEINSTEIN

MEREDITH WELLINGTON, Montgomery County Office of
the County Executive

SESSION 2

ROSIE ALGER
JENNA BAUER
CHRISTOPHER BOLTON
LIZ BRENT
SIENA FOUSE
SALIM FURTH
PETER GRAY
RAY HEINSMAN
NADIYA KUTISHCHEVA
KATHERINE LUCAS MCKAY
DAVID MAGILL
JEFFREY MOSLEY, Coalition Homes, Inc; Montgomery
County Coalition for the Homeless/Coalition
Homes
KATIE NOLAN
MAUREEN O'NEILL
JAMES OLSON, Action in Montgomery
JILL ORTMAN-FOUSE
JOHN PAUKSTIS, Habitat for Humanity Metro
Maryland
BENJAMIN ROSS
SUSAN SPOCK
RACHEL TAYLOR
CAROLINE TAYLOR, Montgomery Countryside Alliance
WALTER WEISS, Mont Co Faith Alliance for Climate
Solutions
DAN WILHELM, Greater Colesville Citizens
Association

SESSION 3

MARILYN BALCOMBE, Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber
of Commerce
KENNETH BAWER, West Montgomery County Citizens
Association
SHRUTI BHATNAGAR, Sierra Club Montgomery County
DAVID BLOCKSTEIN
JESSICA BRONSON
HEATHER BRUSKIN, Montgomery County Food Council
DEBORAH CHALFIE, Art Deco Society of Washington
DANNY CHU

MISHA CLIVE
RONIT DANCIS
KRISTY DAPHNIS, Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic
Safety Advisory Committee
JENNY SUE DUNNER, Citizens Coordinating Committee
on Friendship Heights (CCCFH)
BERK EHRMANTRAUT
FRANK FRITZ
ALISON GILLESPIE
ETHAN GOFFMAN
BENJAMIN KEEL
MARY KOLAR, Montgomery Housing Alliance
EYAL LI
PAMELA LINDSTROM
KATHLEEN MIHM
MEDHINI MURALI
ALAIN NORMAN
HAROLD PFOHL
MIKE PIERZCHALA
SCOTT PLUMER, Darnestown Civic Association
MAURICIO QUINTERO-AVILES
QUENTIN REMEIN, Cloverly Civic Association
PETER RIZIK
MARIA SALMERON MELENDEZ
DAVID SCULL
DAVID SEARS
STACY SILBER, Lerch, Early & Brewer on behalf of
NAIOP DC/MD
JOSHUA SILVERSTEIN, Randolph Civic Association
AVERY SMEDLEY, Students Toward Equitable Public
Schools

SEBASTIAN SMOOT

TRICIA SWANSON, Montgomery County Chamber of
Commerce

CAROL TOTH

NANCI WILKINSON, Cedar Lane Systems Study Group

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 3:04 p.m.

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: And it's time for the
4 Thrive 2050 hearing. We have about 30 people
5 testifying in this first group, then we have two
6 other groups of approximately 30 each. So we'll
7 be here pretty late. But hopefully, we'll pace
8 ourselves so we can take a little break in
9 between.

10 And so not everybody who's going to be
11 testifying will sit through the whole thing. I'm
12 going to turn it over to Gwen and Khalid for some
13 opening remarks and some legal mumbo jumbo that
14 they have to get out the record. And then we
15 will tee up our testifiers. Gwen?

16 MS. WRIGHT: Thank you. We're very
17 pleased to be here at the public hearing for
18 Thrive Montgomery 2050. This effort is the
19 result of nearly two years of staff work and
20 literally hundreds of meetings with the community
21 and a great deal of work by the entire Planning
22 Department staff.

1 This plan is unusual in that we
2 actually developed it from the ground up. Many
3 other folks who do updates to their general or
4 comp plans hire an outside consultant and
5 essentially have that consultant just write the
6 plan and then take it out to hearing. We decided
7 to take a different approach and to really start
8 with hearing our community.

9 And I am very proud at the fact that
10 I think we've reached a lot of people who haven't
11 normally participated in the planning process as
12 well as people who are very tied in to our
13 planning process. And I think the fact that we
14 have over 90 speakers for this public hearing is
15 an example of the fact that people are engaged.
16 They know about this project. They're
17 interested. They have great ideas.

18 And we definitely see this as not in
19 any way an end but really a beginning of getting
20 additional thoughts and making sure as we go
21 through the planning board work sessions we work
22 to include that input and reframe our

1 recommendations appropriate. With that, I'll
2 turn it over to Khalid Afzal who will do the
3 technical introduction to the plan.

4 MR. AFZAL: Good afternoon. For the
5 record, I'm Khalid Afzal, Special Projects
6 Manager with the Director's Office, Montgomery
7 County Planning Department. This is a public
8 hearing for Thrive Montgomery 2050 which was
9 advertised in the Washington Times on October 12,
10 2020.

11 Thrive Montgomery 2050 public hearing
12 draft plan is a comprehensive amendment to Wedges
13 and Corridors, Updated General Plan for the
14 Maryland-Washington Regional District in
15 Montgomery County, 1969 as amended; the General
16 Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for
17 Montgomery County, 1993 as amended; the
18 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master
19 Plan as amended; Master Plan of Highways and
20 Transitways, as amended; Master Plan of Highways
21 and Transitways, as amended; the Purple Line
22 Functional Plan, as amended; the Master Plan of

1 Historic Preservation, as amended; and the
2 Bicycle Master Plan as amended.

3 I would like to enter into the public
4 record the following documents: On Wedges and
5 Corridors, a General Plan for the Physical
6 Department of the Maryland-Washington Regional
7 District in Montgomery and Prince George's
8 Counties, 1964; On Wedges and Corridors, Updated
9 General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional
10 District in Montgomery County, 1969; General Plan
11 Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for
12 Montgomery County, 1993; the Master Plan of
13 Highways and Transitways, as amended; The Purple
14 Line Functional Plan, as amended; the Master Plan
15 of Historic Preservation, as amended; the 2013
16 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master
17 Plan, as amended; and the 2018 Bicycle Master
18 Plan, as amended; the Thrive Montgomery 2050
19 Public Hearing Draft Plan dated October 20,
20 including Appendices A, B, C, and D, and Appendix
21 COMMISSIONER VERMA: the Outreach and Engagement
22 Appendix published as a separate document; Thrive

1 Montgomery 2050 Working Draft Plan and the
2 related appendices and staff memorandum dated
3 September 24th, 2020; Thrive Montgomery 2050
4 Issues Report, dated February 2020; General Plan
5 Update, Scope of Work approved by the Planning
6 Board on May 30th, 2019.

7 The following supporting studies and
8 reports are also entered into the public record:
9 the draft Montgomery County Preservation of
10 Affordable Housing Study, 2020; Housing Needs
11 Assessment Study, Spring 2020; A Strategic
12 Framework for the Montgomery County General Plan
13 Update, 2019; Agritourism Study, December 1919;
14 Thrive Montgomery 2050 Strategic Framework, June
15 2019; Montgomery County Trends, A Look at People,
16 Housing, and Jobs Since 1990, January 2019;
17 Missing Middle Housing Study, September 2018;
18 Meeting the Housing Needs of Older Adults in
19 Montgomery County, May 2018; Montgomery County
20 Retail Strategy, September 2018; Montgomery
21 County Rental Housing Study, June 2017; Office
22 Market Assessment, Montgomery County, Maryland,

1 June 2015. All of these documents are listed
2 with a hyperlink in the reference section of the
3 public hearing draft on pages 160 to 164.

4 I'm also entering into the public
5 record the following correspondence: a letter
6 transmitting the public hearing draft plan to the
7 Council President Sidney Katz dated October 6,
8 2020; a letter transmitting the public hearing
9 draft plan to the County Executive Marc Elrich
10 dated October 6, 2020; a copy of the newspaper ad
11 and the affidavit of publication from the
12 Washington Times which is a certified proof of
13 publication in the October 12, 2020 issue; all
14 written testimonies received since October 2020
15 when the Planning Board approved, published in
16 the public hearing draft plan inside the public
17 hearing date of November 19th, 2020.

18 And finally, staff recommends that the
19 public hearing record remain open until December
20 10, 2020 at the close of business. And that
21 completes my statement for the record. Thank
22 you.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. So just to be
2 clear, everybody gets three minutes. We have
3 about 30 folks teed up for the first group before
4 we take a break. So we're going to move right
5 through it. First, I have Meredith Wellington
6 representing the County Executive, and I see
7 Meredith there. Whenever you're ready.

8 MS. WELLINGTON: Thank you very much,
9 Chair Anderson. I'm Meredith Wellington on
10 behalf of the County Executive. The County
11 Executive incorporates his letter of August 14th,
12 2020 with Department comments into his testimony
13 and makes the following observation.

14 Thrive Montgomery recommends rezoning
15 single family neighborhoods and corridors over
16 the next 30 years to allow new housing types in
17 the single family zones starting with
18 neighborhoods near transit. Thrive Montgomery,
19 however, does not restrict the rezoning to
20 neighborhoods near transit and it takes no
21 position on when the rezoning would occur. As a
22 result, if this plan is adopted, the Council may

1 through a single zoning text amendment rezone the
2 single family zones in the entire county to allow
3 market rate townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and
4 apartment buildings by right throughout the
5 single family neighborhoods requiring only a
6 building permit to move forward.

7 The rezoning of our single family
8 neighborhoods and corridors to prevent new
9 housing types could occur at any time, long
10 before the other recommended elements for
11 complete communities and 15-minute living are in
12 place and with no guarantee that these elements,
13 new parks, new sidewalks and bike trails, new
14 street grids and completion of our transportation
15 plans for transit, are feasible in all areas or
16 will ever be built. It also could be done
17 without sufficient engagement from the
18 communities themselves.

19 Thrive Montgomery 2050 will best serve
20 current and future county residents by
21 identifying their needs, amenities in our east
22 county communities, affordable housing and cost

1 prohibitive communities, and improved
2 transportation to bring our residents closer to
3 jobs and closer to each other and then lay out a
4 plan to accomplish these goals. This focus would
5 give more assurance that the county is able to
6 maintain the quality of life that county
7 residents have come to expect. Finally, the
8 County Executive asks for a six-month delay in
9 this process.

10 So far, however, it's full speed
11 ahead. At a minimum, with the work sessions
12 scheduled to occur during what in all likelihood
13 will be the worst part of the pandemic, it is
14 essential that residents and the executive branch
15 participate fully in the upcoming work sessions
16 through two-way communications on Team or Zoom.
17 The County Executive looks forward to working
18 with the Planning Board on this matter. Thank
19 you for your consideration.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
21 And next up, we have the Honorable Jeffrey
22 Slavin, Mayor of Somerset.

1 MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay. Can you hear me?

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mayor Slavin -- oh,
3 yeah, yeah. We heard you, but I'm afraid you
4 might've just muted yourself. Keep talking.

5 MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay. Can you hear --

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, again, we heard
7 you and then you cut out. Hit *6 one more time.

8 MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay. Can you hear --

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Hit it -- just hit it
10 once.

11 MAYOR SLAVIN: Yeah, so I --

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: There, we got you.
13 We hear you.

14 MAYOR SLAVIN: Just for the future, it
15 says in the instructions to press *6. But when I
16 did that, I got muted, just for the staff to
17 know.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: It's tricky, yes.

19 MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay, cool.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Go right ahead.

21 MAYOR SLAVIN: Yes. Chair Anderson
22 and members of the Planning Board, thank you for

1 this opportunity. I am Jeffrey Slavin, seven-
2 term mayor of the town of Somerset and a 65-year
3 resident of Council District 1. I'm speaking
4 today in my individual capacity.

5 As you know, our town is a proud
6 founding member of the Citizens Coordinating
7 Committee on Friendship Heights, and I strongly
8 support the committee's decision as expressed in
9 its November 17th letter to you. In addition, I
10 gladly signed the November 17th letter written by
11 the community coalition comprised of dozens and
12 dozens of down county municipalities and citizens
13 associations. I appreciate the hard work of the
14 Planning Board. I hope the final draft of Thrive
15 Montgomery 2050 will reflect many of the
16 suggestions these letters have made.

17 To conclude, I want to read into the
18 record the last paragraph of the coordinating
19 committee's letter. Jobs creation and affordable
20 housing should be the county's primary goals for
21 the future rather than providing missing middle
22 housing for which the priority and policy basis

1 have not yet been established. Montgomery Thrive
2 2050 should focus on those goals and the Planning
3 Board should rework the draft plan accordingly.
4 Thank you very much, sir.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Very nice
6 to hear from you. Irene Lane, and I'll apologize
7 in advance as I'm sure to mispronounce many
8 names. Are you there?

9 MS. LANE: Good afternoon.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Representing the town
11 of Chevy Chase. Okay. Go ahead. Oh, you muted
12 yourself again. Just hit it one more time. Go
13 now. Hello?

14 MS. LANE: Hello, Chair Anderson. Can
15 you hear me?

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you
17 now. Very good.

18 MS. LANE: Okay.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Go ahead.

20 MS. LANE: Thank you. Good afternoon.
21 My name is Irene Lane. And as a town council
22 member, I speak on behalf of the town of Chevy

1 Chase.

2 We very much appreciate the hard work
3 that the Planning Board and staff have put into
4 the development of this transformational plan
5 with its laudable goals. The town along with 26
6 other communities representing over 33,000
7 residents has already submitted a unified set of
8 detail written comments. Today, I would like to
9 discuss or focus on four suggestions for
10 improvement, first, the definition of community.

11 The plan should specify the parameters
12 for the diverse urban, suburban, and rural
13 complete communities that exist throughout the
14 county. And in order to meet the county's
15 affordable and attainable housing goals, we
16 encourage you to increase and diversify the areas
17 for missing middle housing as affordable housing
18 is more realistically achievable in areas outside
19 the one-half mile zones around rail and BRT.
20 Also, the plan should leverage naturally
21 occurring affordable housing options, including
22 adaptive reuse of malls and other retail office

1 buildings which post-COVID may no longer be
2 viable for their original and intended use.

3 Second, the recognition of municipal
4 regulatory authority and community input. While
5 we understand the need for missing middle
6 housing, the plan's implementation process should
7 expressly state that the plan's policies and
8 actions will be applied in a manner compatible
9 with the current master and sector planning
10 process as well as within the current physical
11 features of local neighborhoods. We recommend
12 that the plan expressly state that local
13 municipalities continue to retain their
14 regulatory authority over building regulations
15 for all types of residential housing within their
16 jurisdiction, including missing middle housing
17 and that unincorporated neighborhoods have a real
18 say about the physical changes that are being
19 proposed within their boundaries.

20 Third, the strategy for finance and
21 investment. We strongly recommend that Thrive
22 Montgomery provide equal weight to the importance

1 of job creation, transit and housing, and
2 including strategies for how public revenue will
3 substantially increase in order to fund a
4 complete community concept with its decentralized
5 public facilities, small local schools, and
6 transit infrastructure projects. Essentially,
7 there needs to be a plan for how the county will
8 thrive economically by attracting new industries,
9 companies, and small businesses to the county.

10 Fourth, the economic and lifestyle
11 impact of COVID-15 -- I'm sorry, COVID-19. As
12 this plan will impact all residents, business
13 owners, employees, regional commuters, and
14 visitors for decades to come, we feel it
15 important to factor the changing realities of
16 living and working as a result of the pandemic.
17 Let us not forget that only two weeks ago, the
18 chairman of the Federal Reserve stated that while
19 recent progress toward a vaccine was welcome
20 news, it was, quote, just too soon to assess with
21 any confidence the implications of the news for
22 the path of the economy and that the post-

1 pandemic economy was going to be different in
2 some fundamental ways, unquote.

3 The plan should design for the
4 likelihood that the county's budget will be
5 severely constrained for some years to come,
6 something that no number of PPPs will remedy. We
7 strongly recommend that careful attention be paid
8 to and revisions be made on the suggestions,
9 concerns, and questions outlined in the community
10 coalition detailed letter. Thank you for your
11 consideration.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
13 Andy Leon Harney from Section 3 of the Village of
14 Chevy Chase.

15 MS. HARNEY: Members of the Planning
16 Board, I'm the Village Manager of Section 3 of
17 the Village of Chevy Chase. Thank you for this
18 opportunity to address you today on the draft
19 Thrive 2050 plan. We in Section 3 also feel that
20 the plans are laudable but that it needs further
21 fleshing out with some additional thought before
22 the county adopts such an expansive change.

1 Like the Great Depression, this
2 pandemic is going to have a long-term impact on
3 the way we live and the way we work. Deficits
4 are already piling up, and this plan requires
5 massive investment in infrastructure and mass
6 transit. It seems premature to develop such a
7 comprehensive plan as many of the assumptions may
8 not be correct.

9 For example, the plan projects a need
10 for housing units for 200,000 more people by
11 2050. But that's based on pre-pandemic growth
12 projections. And how many of those will need to
13 be affordable housing we don't know either. The
14 metrics are key.

15 Let's go into some specifics. The
16 plan notes that Montgomery County's population is
17 getting older and larger and that large
18 dependent, as it's referred to, population will
19 have a budgetary drain on the county. It
20 describes the ideal 15-minute complete
21 communities.

22 And while this is a commendable goal,

1 we question if the elderly are going to stand in
2 the rain and snow at a BRT stop to visit their
3 specialist, run errands, work, or visit with
4 family and friends. We support public
5 transportation options. If the intent of the
6 plan is to entirely stop planning for cars,
7 however, this seems unrealistic as everything is
8 not going to be reachable by public transit by
9 the elderly by work to commute to and within the
10 county by residents of all ages who may be
11 visiting.

12 The alteration of single family zone
13 is, of course, our greatest concern. Single
14 family zones are and will remain an appropriate
15 land use strategies in many areas. Multi-family
16 dwellings in formerly single family zones will
17 significantly increase densities. But the plan
18 doesn't include any metric to define ideal
19 densities for urban, suburban, or rural complete
20 communities. And the rationale for these changes
21 is to provide housing diversity and affordable
22 housing. But down county, it's hard to

1 understand given the cost of land how that would
2 work.

3 Finally and most importantly, how
4 would the proposed change in zoning affect the
5 county as a whole? If you exclude the Ag Reserve
6 and the plans for denser 15-minute communities,
7 Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Takoma Park, all of
8 whom have their own zoning and will not be part
9 of Thrive 2050 changes in zoning, some 37,000
10 units of housing in single family HOAs, all of
11 whom have a mandate of single family housing in
12 their covenants and you exclude the units that
13 the county has already designated historic, that
14 puts undo pressure on a handful of communities
15 down county. In short, there is a disparate
16 impact on our communities and a concentration of
17 population growth in areas of the county that may
18 not be best for increased density. We think --

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, I have to ask
20 you to wrap it up.

21 MS. HARNEY: I have one sentence more.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay, very good.

1 MS. HARNEY: We think this plan needs
2 more work and respectfully ask that the questions
3 we've raised here and in our letter to the Board
4 be answered before proceeding.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. And I'm
6 sorry. I really hate to cut people off. I just
7 need to move it along as you can appreciate being
8 an administrator of municipal government
9 yourself.

10 MS. HARNEY: Right.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. David
12 Helms is up. Mr. Helms, are you there?

13 MR. HELMS: Can you hear me, sir?

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

15 MR. HELMS: Can you hear me?

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, I hear you.

17 MR. HELMS: Very good. Good
18 afternoon, Chair Anderson and Board. My name is
19 David Helms, and I'm a resident of Four Corners
20 and a bicycle and pedestrian advocate. In the
21 county, I'm the Pedestrian, Bicycle,
22 Transportation Safety Advisory Committee.

1 I support the General Plan's
2 direction, especially connectivity, safety
3 efficient travel, complete communities. And I am
4 a Boomer who will wait in the rain for the BRT
5 and support that. My points are that -- I'm not
6 going to talk about what's in the plan. I'm
7 going to talk about what's not in it, especially
8 kind of measures of effectiveness, how do we
9 understand what success is, and how do we know
10 how we're going to get there. And perhaps
11 there's some missing measure of effectiveness
12 that we ought to have.

13 Health is substantially controlled by
14 our environment. And I think that needs to be
15 central to the General Plan. In other words, one
16 of the core outcomes ought to be people centered.
17 Without really focusing on our residents' health
18 and well-being as a central outcome, the future
19 investments may be focused then in conflict.

20 So a lack of focus may make capital
21 investments more difficult to attract political
22 and public support. It's not unusual for general

1 plans to have public health elements. The
2 General Plan out of Richmond, California indeed
3 does.

4 So the public health and well-being
5 theme should be incorporated that adopt the
6 healthy Montgomery priority areas which include
7 obesity, behavioral health, diabetes, and
8 cardiovascular disease. A public health and
9 well-being theme should include policies
10 establishing partnerships such as our Healthy
11 Montgomery Transforming Communities Initiative, a
12 great crosscut with health industry and partners.
13 The theme should include demographic and economic
14 health outcome and equality across the county,
15 which include obesity, suicide, and injuries from
16 crashes.

17 The plan does not -- and this is an
18 opportunity to highlight the value of realized
19 action. I encourage the Planning Board to
20 include vignettes on value that are going to
21 support the policies. This would include clean
22 water, value of clean air, value of parks and

1 healthy living and the value less road miles to
2 maintain and certainly the value of human life.
3 So --

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Helms, I have to
5 ask you to wrap it up.

6 MR. HELMS: -- I would encourage you
7 -- yes, sir, right now -- to include public
8 health as a central theme and a core -- as a
9 theme as well as a core in the plan. Thank you,
10 sir.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. Thank
12 you. Zachary Weinstein, are you there?

13 MR. WEINSTEIN: Can you hear me?

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

15 MR. WEINSTEIN: Yes, I'm here. Can
16 you hear me?

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

18 MR. WEINSTEIN: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Zach Weinstein, and I rent in Downtown
20 Silver Spring. I strongly support Vision 2050,
21 especially its commitment to expanding housing
22 and transport options. I moved to Downtown

1 Silver Spring as a recent graduate because Silver
2 Spring offered plentiful housing choices and easy
3 access to D.C.

4 I believe this plan will make it
5 possible for future generations of recent
6 graduates to enjoy the same benefits I did and
7 more. I am also very excited by the idea of a
8 15-minute city. Montgomery County residents
9 should have access to grocery stores, parks, and
10 most other needs right in their own neighborhood.

11 However, I'm not sure the plan
12 specifically states that a 15-minute city does
13 not mean 15 minutes of driving but walking. We
14 must eliminate these short distance driving trips
15 if we hope to reach our climate goals. The
16 elderly and handicapped may not be able to drive,
17 especially benefit from this goal. I encourage
18 the Planning Department to specify that the goal
19 refers to what pedestrians can access in 15
20 minutes.

21 I also admire the plan's commitment to
22 sustainable transport. The plan rightly

1 emphasizes buses, biking, and walking as critical
2 to the county's prosperity and health. Vision
3 2050 is truly visionary in its call to build no
4 new highways and cease widening roads.

5 We have all the road capacity we need,
6 and any further investment in moving cars will
7 distract the county from more efficient modes of
8 transport. I would like to see the plan
9 specifically mention frequent transit as
10 frequency is a primary driver of usability. But
11 this plan outlines amazing transit goals.

12 I strongly encourage the Planning
13 Board to approve Vision 2050. It provides a
14 great foundation for sustainable, equitable, and
15 prosperous growth. I look forward to seeing
16 Montgomery County capitalize on its incredible
17 vision. Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Sanjida
19 Rangwala? Are you there, Sanjida?

20 (No audible response.)

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: You might need to hit
22 *6. Oh, there we go. Can you hear us?

1 MS. RANGWALA: Yes, can you hear me?

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you. Go
3 right ahead.

4 MS. RANGWALA: Okay, great. My name
5 is Sanjida Rangwala. I'm testifying as a
6 resident of the Four Corners area of Silver
7 Spring and thank you all for this opportunity to
8 share my thoughts. I had the opportunity to read
9 over the draft Thrive 2050 plan earlier this
10 fall, and I'm totally support of the general
11 principles outlined there.

12 Here in the next couple minutes, I
13 just want to take a moment to stress the
14 importance of building neighborhoods with the
15 variety and bounty of affordable housing. So I
16 bought a tiny, little old house just outside the
17 beltway in Silver Spring six years ago. And
18 there aren't many house like mine available
19 anymore in the market where homes are being sold
20 and redeveloped. I'm seeing larger and therefore
21 less affordable single family homes.

22 If Zillow and Redfin are to be

1 believed, in six years, my house has appreciated
2 about 100,000 dollars or about 30 percent. And
3 when I bought my house, I was a single person in
4 my 30s making about the area median income. If I
5 was that same person now, I would be stretched to
6 be able to afford this house. I'd probably have
7 to look somewhere further away, somewhere with
8 worse transit even less walkable in my
9 neighborhood.

10 So a lot of people have this story,
11 and mine happened in just six years. All this is
12 to say what many of us agree on, that there's an
13 affordable housing crisis in the county. So as I
14 was reading through Thrive 2050 plan, I was happy
15 to read the section clarifying where we could add
16 density in current single family neighborhoods.

17 I here want to encourage further
18 boldness. It's great that we're talking about
19 more affordable missing middle housing close to
20 existing transit. But the General Plan needs to
21 be clear that in the future, all communities in
22 Montgomery County are going to be these complete

1 communities.

2 I want to see everyone living in a
3 neighborhood where they can get to their
4 household needs, including transit by foot or by
5 safety within 15 minutes. So I suggest that
6 right now in 2020 where we have existing housing
7 but don't have transit to go shopping, we need to
8 be making a plan to be building transit and
9 furnishing walkable retail. And where we have
10 existing shopping, workplaces, and transit, we
11 need to be building more housing.

12 And if we're going to be allowing
13 housing to be built at all, it should be legal to
14 build a duplex or fourplex by right. So don't
15 get me wrong. I like living in my single family
16 home, and a developer should be allowed to build
17 one anywhere. But nowhere in the county should
18 we say that only single family homes are
19 committed to be built because that way lies the
20 path to segregation, inequity, and housing
21 shortages.

22 In short, we must make room for people

1 of all incomes and means to live in existing
2 communities and that includes all our existing
3 communities. When revising the General Plan,
4 please make sure that you're mapping out a future
5 where housing is a right and is legal everywhere.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
8 Stephen Craft, are you there?

9 (No audible response.)

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Craft, can you
11 hear us?

12 MR. KRAFT: Yes, can you hear me?

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, whenever you're
14 ready.

15 MR. KRAFT: Okay, great. Good
16 afternoon, everybody. My name is Stephen. I'm a
17 35-year-old resident and homeowner in
18 Gaithersburg, Maryland. I live in a town around
19 here.

20 As a county resident, I am aware of
21 the special position and influence Montgomery
22 County in influencing not just the region but the

1 United States as a whole. I am excited for
2 Thrive 2050, the promises it will deliver, in
3 particular, its mention for walkable communities,
4 varied housing types, connected by mass transit
5 in attempt to reach net zero carbon emissions.
6 As we continue in the 21st century, we must
7 permit Montgomery County to get to net zero
8 carbon emissions. I believe 2050 provides an
9 outline to achieve these goals.

10 I'm also excited about the prospect of
11 having mixed income communities with a range of
12 housing types with walkable amenities, jobs
13 connected by mass transit such as rails, BRT.
14 For example, I live near Flower Hill Development
15 which is a mixed housing development, single
16 family homes, townhomes, apartment, plenty of
17 parks all within walking distance of grocery,
18 retail, and schools. I would love to see more of
19 the county implement the same.

20 Right now, the county is commenting
21 about single family homes. But in order to meet
22 our housing and climate goals, we must change to

1 allow for more housing types and mass transit.
2 Housing should be a right, but transportation and
3 access to basic needs such as groceries should be
4 considered a right on its own. In particular,
5 climate change poses a grave and dangerous threat
6 to our communities and is another reason why I'm
7 a big proponent of walkable communities to reduce
8 our carbon footprint.

9 There is also a socioeconomic factor
10 as well. Climate change will be stressful posing
11 immense financial, physical, and mental hardships
12 on us all. Having close knit communities with
13 easy walkable access to communities, health care,
14 activities, and green space to cope with these
15 changes will be a big benefit.

16 In addition, walkable communities
17 lined with rain gardens, greenery, power by
18 solar, wind, and geothermal will help water
19 runoff, provide shade, and reduce overall
20 pollution, and of course, our CO2 footprint. In
21 conclusion, I am for Thrive 2050. I want to make
22 sure we build a wide array of housing types,

1 focus on walkable communities, community
2 integration, connect by mass transit, and
3 providing green space for all residents. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
6 Is Andrew Saundry there?

7 (No audible response.)

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Can you hear us, Mr.
9 Saundry?

10 MR. SAUNDRY: Hi, can you hear me?

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you. Go
12 ahead whenever you're ready.

13 MR. SAUNDRY: Wonderful. Good
14 afternoon, Chair Anderson and members of the
15 Planning Board. Thanks for the opportunity to
16 speak today. My name is Andrew Saundry. I am
17 here today as a nearly lifelong resident of
18 Germantown to show my support for some of the
19 positives in the Thrive 2050 General Plan and to
20 recognize the two areas where I think the Board
21 could make some adjustments to promote an even
22 more just and environmentally friendly future.

1 First, I just want to thank you for
2 your emphasis on racial and economic justice as
3 the backbone of this decision. Second, many of
4 the 200,000 new residents that the county is
5 projected to add by 2050 are going to be low to
6 moderate income and will struggle with the rising
7 cost of living here. I know I am.

8 To that end, I want to commend you on
9 encouraging the expansion of the county's MPDU
10 program. And I'd like to urge you to add action
11 on looking at rent stabilization efforts and
12 protecting legal rights of tenants. Third,
13 you've got a lot of great language about reaching
14 out and cooperating with communities on how
15 growth and development should proceed in their
16 area.

17 Many parts of the county, particularly
18 across the north and east county and
19 unincorporated areas like my hometown of
20 Germantown, have felt excluded from these
21 conversations in years past. If we want to
22 preserve historic sites and green spaces, foster

1 a sense of place and community identity, prevent
2 gentrification displacement while at the same
3 time creating affordable housing necessary to
4 accommodate the projected growth, I think more
5 needs to be done to engage directly. It would be
6 very easy to reach out to more community groups,
7 advertise opportunities to testify more broadly,
8 and create local offices where residents can go
9 to get more information and make their voices
10 heard.

11 Building on that, I'd like to request
12 that you more clearly define what a complete
13 community looks like in more rural and suburban
14 contexts where the community resources are always
15 going to be more than a 15-minute walk away. The
16 document speaks vaguely about public transit
17 several times. But I urge you to add some more
18 specific actions on greater expansions of bus
19 routes, increasing the frequency of buses, and
20 even investigating whether an extension of the
21 Red Line is possible.

22 Speaking of 15-minute living, I

1 believe that the key to both that goal and your
2 push towards better schools is the construction
3 of more new schools, particularly in rapidly
4 growing and historically disadvantages parts of
5 the county. Please add an action on building new
6 schools. I would also be remiss if I didn't
7 underscore the absolute necessity of protecting
8 the Ag Reserve and green space of the county. To
9 that end, protecting the TDR program, expanding
10 rural broadband, and increasing the tree canopy
11 are all welcome parts of the Thrive 2050 plan.

12 In conclusion, thank you all for your
13 work. I urge you to add some actions on rent
14 stabilization, renters' rights, school
15 construction, and public transportation as well
16 as to refine your definition of complete
17 communities in other contexts and to do a little
18 bit more to reach out to frequently unheard parts
19 of the county. Thank you so much for your time.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much, Mr.
21 Saundry. Is Tina Slater there?

22 MS. SLATER: Me?

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

2 MS. SLATER: Is this Chair Anderson?

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Go right ahead. Yes,
4 we hear you. Whenever you're ready?

5 MS. SLATER: Okay. I'm Tina Slater
6 testifying as an individual. I support the
7 Thrive draft plan. The parts that most inspire
8 me are these: compact growth, inclusion, and the
9 corridors.

10 For compact growth, protecting the Ag
11 Reserve requires us to do compact growth and
12 compact development. Mixes of use and housing
13 types will make room for our 200,000 expected new
14 residents. The design supports 15-minute living,
15 and that promotes walking, biking, and transit
16 which gives us a healthy lifestyle.

17 The 15-minute living also supports our
18 growing senior population who may no longer be
19 able to drive. It reduces auto use to lower
20 greenhouse gas emission. And, excuse me, town
21 center concept can be developed in all areas,
22 whether urban, suburban, or rural.

1 Secondly, the idea of inclusion. Our
2 older neighborhoods reflect our history of racial
3 and ethnic covenants. Racially and
4 socioeconomically integrated neighborhoods and
5 schools promote equity. We should aim for a
6 broad range of housing types that are accessible
7 to all races, all incomes in every part of our
8 county, and this would be in support of missing
9 middle duplex, triplex, small multifamily
10 apartments.

11 Finally, corridors. By locating
12 growth along corridors, we are building in the
13 needed density for good transit like BRT. I'd
14 like to close with a family story. Twenty years
15 ago, our daughter, Jessie, graduated from
16 Montgomery Blair High School. Back in 2000, the
17 school's enrollment was one-third White, one-
18 third Hispanic, and one-third Black plus Asian.

19 She chose a small New England liberal
20 arts college to go to based on the courses
21 offered but decided before the end of the first
22 semester that she wanted to transfer. Why?

1 Because the college enrollment was 90 percent
2 White.

3 She did know that when applying. But
4 until actually living there, she didn't know how
5 much a lack of diversity would affect her. So
6 she joined the Asian student group and the
7 African American house. But that wasn't enough.

8 During Thanksgiving break, she said,
9 I guess I never realized how lucky I was to have
10 attended Blair. I didn't know that the diversity
11 of students was as important to me as was the
12 academic program. She transferred her sophomore
13 year to another small college with a much more
14 racially, socioeconomically, and culturally
15 diverse student body and she loved it.

16 I believe that living, working, and
17 going to school with people with different
18 perspectives and different life stories is an
19 advantage. And Thrive 2050 promotes that
20 inclusion. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
22 Seth Grimes, are you there?

1 MR. GRIMES: Am I good?

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

3 MR. GRIMES: Great. I'm Seth Grimes,
4 a resident of Takoma Park and a former city
5 council member. I like the Thrive 2050
6 initiative, and I very much appreciate Montgomery
7 Planning's work. I figured that most comments
8 are going to be broad and high principles, so I'm
9 going to be instead very specific and focused on
10 three points. The first two are narrow.

11 The document discusses missing middle
12 housing, the desirability of changing zoning to
13 enable wider creation of smaller multi-unit
14 buildings. That's cool. However, Action 1148
15 calls for housing, particularly in the areas
16 located within 15-minute walk or bike ride of
17 rail and Bus Rapid Transit. I think we should
18 develop a robust action plan that will bring us
19 housing diversity benefits to all areas,
20 including areas governed by homeowner
21 associations, prioritizing high promise areas as
22 you're doing now with the Silver Spring downtown

1 and adjacent community plan. I think that maybe
2 some of the Chevy Chases and Somersets would be
3 great candidates to prioritize.

4 Secondly, I absolutely love Action
5 34318, eliminate motor vehicle parking minimums
6 for new development projects in downtown, et
7 cetera. But again, this should be extended to
8 adjacent areas as well, perhaps with the same 15-
9 minute criteria. I also appreciate Action 521,
10 the language about redeveloping surface parking
11 lots and underutilized property.

12 But once again, that action shouldn't
13 be limited to, in this case, mixed income housing
14 and employment centers. I'm thinking about
15 adaptive reuse of office park such as Rock
16 Spring. Now a much larger point that you
17 probably won't hear is my third.

18 Number ten under trends and challenges
19 is we need to look for regional solutions. In
20 our state, we have strong ties to the Baltimore
21 region. We must consider how to take advantage
22 of our proximity to economic opportunities

1 available on neighboring jurisdictions, job
2 centers, colleges, and universities, culture and
3 recreational attractions. We should consider
4 regional solutions.

5 The 1964 Wedges & Corridors features
6 six corridors and an asterisk designer on the
7 Washington, D.C. area. One of those corridors
8 was along I-95 in Prince George's County
9 paralleling the PG-Montgomery County border with
10 a direct connection to Baltimore-Washington
11 Airport. We did very little in Montgomery County
12 to take advantage of this corridor, really prior
13 to last decade's development in White Oak.

14 Think what we might've gained if
15 Montgomery County had worked with Prince George's
16 pursue East County corridor development over the
17 last half century. Those benefits would've
18 included lessened development pressure on
19 Bethesda and American Legion Bridge congestion.
20 The ingredients are in place or soon will be with
21 the Intercounty Connector, with the Purple Line,
22 Bus Rapid Transit on Route 29.

1 And these will help us connect the
2 routes of the corridor at the southern end in
3 Silver Spring and Langley Park, yet corridor
4 areas in cities such as Hillandale, Burtonsville,
5 and Fairland remain in sore need of attention.
6 So please do add in more than the very small
7 mention in the current draft of focusing on East
8 County and specific strategies that can be done
9 to enhance the development within East County.
10 Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much. Is
12 Jennifer Cook there?

13 MS. COOK: Hi.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: We can hear you.

15 MS. COOK: Hello. Can you hear me?

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, whenever you're
17 ready, feel free to go ahead.

18 MS. COOK: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Jennifer Cook, and I live in Downtown Silver
20 Spring. I strongly support the direction of
21 Thrive Montgomery 2050, especially the focus on
22 public spaces as a central element of the

1 community where neighbors can come together and
2 to encourage active lifestyles.

3 I live in a one-bedroom apartment, so
4 I love using the public spaces in Silver Spring
5 to get fresh air and meet with friends. I
6 believe residents would benefit greatly from a
7 network of inclusive and safe public parks,
8 trails, and recreational spaces. But I hope the
9 plan considers just how accessible these spaces
10 will be for all residents.

11 Today, the county has many parks and
12 public spaces. And while the spaces themselves
13 may be safe and inclusive, there often aren't
14 enough safe roads and sidewalks for pedestrians
15 and cyclists to get to these spaces, making parks
16 and trails inaccessible to so many residents.
17 Even if they're within 15 minutes, so many parks
18 require crossing busy and dangerous streets.

19 This is a much bigger problem for
20 residents with disabilities and parents using
21 strollers since there are uneven sidewalks and
22 wide intersections can make it impossible for

1 residents to get to public spaces. In
2 conclusion, I hope that the plan considers the
3 acceptability of both new and existing public
4 spaces for all residents in Thrive Montgomery
5 2050. Thank you for your time.

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
7 for testifying. Is Lauren Brown there?

8 MS. BROWN: Hi, my name is Lauren
9 Brown. I'm speaking on behalf of Conservation
10 Montgomery. It's spelled L-A-U-R-E-N and then
11 Brown, B-R-O-W-N, like the color. Thank you for
12 giving me the opportunity to share.

13 Conservation Montgomery addresses a
14 broad spectrum of environmental challenges facing
15 Montgomery County. We are proud to be
16 celebrating our tenth anniversary this year. We
17 believe the new far reaching General Plan
18 requires greater environmental consideration for
19 its ultimate success.

20 We also believe the process for
21 reviewing the plan must take into greater account
22 the COVID-19 pandemic which has changed the way

1 we live, work, and travel, likely with long-term
2 consequences. It is also clear the review
3 process needs to be slowed down. The plan must
4 return to the original intentions which consider
5 the environment as the true third leg of a
6 foundational stool.

7 When staff was exploring the ways we
8 could meet challenges of climate change with
9 vision and creativity, the ideas were sound,
10 stable, and promising. However, an early plan
11 review session, some of the staff's hard work was
12 dismissed and discarded, essentially removing
13 that third stabilizing leg. The retention of
14 environmental integrity particularly as it
15 relates to water quality, forest protection and
16 expansion as well as preservation of diverse
17 ecological systems throughout our parkland is
18 what will see us through the coming decades with
19 a healthy quality of life for all our residents.

20 This integrity is needed countywide
21 for the treasure that is our Agricultural Reserve
22 as well as for urbanizing down county areas.

1 Access to nature should be a human right and
2 available to every community. In our urban care
3 areas, quality green space has been sliced and
4 diced over the decades.

5 The connectivity stressed in the plan
6 must apply to natural areas as well. Natural
7 resource conservation is essentially preventative
8 care. Our existing park woodlands ranging from
9 small groves to local urban parks to the forests
10 and regional parks and the private and public
11 forests and farms of our Ag Reserve require full
12 protection.

13 Climate change will only worsen
14 impacts on our urban streams as we have seen with
15 water quality degradation caused by recent severe
16 rains. Too often, the environment is an
17 afterthought in the planning process. And we
18 fail to see the connections between livable
19 communities, public health, and environmental
20 stewardship until it is too late.

21 We had hoped given the initial
22 emphasis on preserving our natural systems that

1 the General Plan would set a bold new standard
2 for our county where the environment was given
3 equal footing. We must do better than this
4 current plan or else there will not be a question
5 of thriving in 2050 but surviving. Let's slow
6 this process and involve stakeholders fully. Our
7 county deserves for natural resources to be more
8 integral to thrive 2050. Thank you.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
10 Is Michael Dutka there?

11 MR. DUTKA: Can you hear me?

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

13 MR. DUTKA: Hello?

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.
15 Whenever you're ready.

16 MR. DUTKA: Okay. I'm Michael Dutka.
17 I live in Rockville, and I'm testifying as an
18 individual. What I want to say is I do support
19 all the goals outlined in Thrive 2050. I think
20 it's great that we're contemplating rezoning
21 single family areas to allow more missing middle
22 housing types.

1 I think we need to really, really,
2 really boost the production of housing within the
3 county. And we need to pursue a number of
4 different avenues that are outlined in this
5 current draft of the plan. So I support all
6 those goals.

7 I just wanted to say a few more
8 additional words and maybe a couple of
9 suggestions as to what the plan can do
10 additionally. Ultimately, this plan is asking,
11 who is this county for? And to answer that
12 question, we need to say -- we need to think
13 about who is this county for now.

14 Currently, it is for all the
15 transportation infrastructure. And the vast
16 majority of the land area, in fact, 92 percent of
17 land area is zoned for -- land area available is
18 zoned for exclusive single family use. So we
19 have to ask ourselves, are we okay with that when
20 the median value of a single family in this
21 county is now north of 700,000 dollars?

22 This county is not broadly accessible

1 to a diverse group of people and is getting
2 increasingly less and less accessible as time
3 goes on. Therefore, drastic changes are needed
4 to how we think about land use in this county.
5 Thrive touches on this, but I really do think it
6 needs to go further and really, really, really
7 attack the whole concept of single family zoning
8 countywide. That's all for me. Thank you very
9 much.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. And now
11 we have William E. Kirwan, III. Are you there,
12 Bill Kirwan?

13 (No audible response.)

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, I think you just
15 muted yourself, Bill. Just hit *6. There you
16 go.

17 MR. KIRWAN: Can you hear me now?

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

19 MR. KIRWAN: Thank you. My name is
20 William Kirwan, and I am testifying as an
21 individual. I'm an architect, a product of
22 Montgomery County public schools, and a lifelong

1 resident of Silver Spring. I have raised two
2 children here who have enjoyed the rich social
3 and ethnic diversity of Downtown Silver Spring
4 area and at the local public schools that they
5 have attended.

6 I'm going to start my testimony with
7 a quote. Make big plans; aim high in hope and
8 work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram
9 once recorded will not die. Make no little
10 plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and
11 probably will not themselves be realized.

12 This quote is from Daniel Burnham, an
13 American architect and urban designer who lived
14 from 1846 to 1912. I was introduced to that
15 quote by Daniel Burnham during my studies in
16 architecture school at the University of
17 Maryland. To this day, I use those words for
18 inspiration before every endeavor I undertake,
19 professionally and personally. I believe Thrive
20 2050 should be similarly inspired by those words
21 and should aim high. If there is no magic in the
22 Thrive 2050 plan to stir our blood, it will

1 likely never be realized.

2 There is much to be excited about by
3 the draft plan. I commend the Planning
4 Department and its years long effort to gather
5 public input and put forth a plan that suggests
6 that our county leaders adopt the progressive and
7 forward thinking approach to transportation,
8 smart growth, and social equity. While we have
9 stepped forward on so many fronts to advance our
10 county and help heal the wounds of prejudice, we
11 remain mired in our past when it comes to our
12 approach to one of the last remaining wounds of
13 racism and inequity in land planning, single
14 family zoning.

15 As Thrive 2050 points out, there is
16 insufficient undeveloped land in our county to
17 meet the demands of our projected growth in
18 housing units. The largest areas of developable
19 land in our county are currently restricted by
20 single family zoning. Elsewhere across the
21 United States, communities facing similar issues
22 are recognizing this and reforming their single

1 family zoning to enable a diversity of housing
2 types that can comfortably coexist in single
3 family neighborhoods, such as duplexes,
4 triplexes, quads, and courtyard apartments.

5 Diversity in housing types used to be
6 more commonplace in residential neighborhoods
7 across the United States and here in Montgomery
8 County. It provided affordable housing options
9 for citizens looking to establish roots in
10 communities where they could choose to raise
11 their children and not where today's restrictive
12 zoning and well intentioned affordable housing
13 initiatives direct them to live. While we have
14 corrected many of the old social injustices in
15 our county over the decades since the 1960s,
16 single family zoning remains the awkward uncle at
17 the table where latent racism and prejudice still
18 clings to life.

19 Thrive 2050 recognizes this, and it is
20 paramount that we address this issue and aim high
21 to create more equitable and diverse communities
22 in our county. For Thrive 2050 to ultimately

1 become the success in visionary planning, it must
2 address many issues to advance Montgomery County
3 into the second half of the 21st century.
4 However, without single family zoning reform,
5 Thrive 2050 will lack the magic needed for it to
6 transcend from being a small plan to becoming a
7 big plan and a true roadmap towards our best
8 future. Thank you.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much. I
10 wanted to call the Montgomery plan's blog, No
11 Little Plans, but I was outvoted on that.

12 MR. KIRWAN: It should've been.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, what are you
14 going to do. But we're working on it with the
15 General Plan. Thanks very much for that
16 testimony. Jane Lyons, are you there?

17 MS. LYONS: Yes, I am. Can you hear
18 and see me?

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear and see
20 you. You're the first person who's on camera.
21 Everybody else has been on the phone, so --

22 MS. LYONS: Oh, great. Well, thank

1 you. My name is Jane Lyons. And I'm testifying
2 on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth,
3 the leading organization advocating for walkable,
4 inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the
5 most sustainable and equitable way for the D.C.
6 region to grow. Please see our written testimony
7 for our full, very detailed comments.

8 We strongly support this draft of
9 Thrive, although we believe it can be made even
10 better. Thrive creates a vision for a county
11 that's more affordable, walkable, prosperous,
12 resilient, and racially and economically
13 integrated, and recognizes that the best way to
14 achieve that vision is through the principles of
15 inclusive smart growth, urbanism, and equitable
16 transit-oriented development. Thrive argues that
17 Montgomery needs to welcome 200,000 additional
18 residents over the next 30 years because that's
19 what's projected.

20 However, we'd argue that Montgomery
21 needs to welcome as many new residents as
22 possible near transit and jobs in order to

1 jumpstart the economy and meet climate goals.
2 Montgomery is uniquely positioned to help meet
3 state and regional climate goals given its
4 existing transit infrastructure, job centers,
5 proximity to D.C. Also given our values of
6 diversity inclusion, Montgomery is well
7 positioned to be a national leader in equitable
8 growth, breaking down traditional barriers to
9 integration.

10 We'd like to highlight the following
11 five points as our major recommendations. One,
12 rethink single family zoning, not just around
13 transit. We need to allow and encourage a range
14 of housing types in neighborhoods near transit.

15 However, we should not limit zoning
16 reform to these areas only. This has the
17 potential to spark opposition to new transit as
18 single family homeowners know that new transit
19 goes hand in hand with zoning reform. This also
20 has the potential to leave out areas of the
21 county that are predominately White and wealthy,
22 the kinds of places that are still exclusive

1 today due to racist policies of the past which
2 will not be undone without intentional planning
3 otherwise.

4 While our priority for growth should
5 be near high capacity transit, we must include
6 measures to diversify housing options in other
7 neighborhoods while also extending transit. Two,
8 provide a map to guide future growth. This will
9 help residents and decision makers understand
10 where growth should be directed, visualizing the
11 centers and web of corridors discussed in Thrive.
12 Excuse me.

13 Three, redundancies -- or reduce
14 redundancies. This document reads as if it were
15 written by a committee because it was. This
16 involves redundancies in the arguments that are
17 raised and could be improved by reorganization
18 and improving inconsistencies in voice. To help,
19 we suggest moving the policies and actions to
20 their own appendix.

21 Four, emphasize racial justice. We
22 commend including a section about the history of

1 red lining and discriminatory housing practices.
2 However, we believe that the plan can better tell
3 the story of segregation identifying both past
4 mistakes and successes so that we can better
5 identify future solutions. Therefore, we also
6 believe the goal of integration could be woven
7 into the plan's vision and goals much more.

8 Finally, five, create implementation
9 metrics now. We should not wait until two years
10 have passed after the completion of Thrive to
11 establish metrics for measuring the plan's
12 success. What gets measured gets done, and we
13 need this plan to get done. Thank you so much
14 for your consideration.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
16 for that testimony. Dan Reed, are you there?

17 MR. REED: I am.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. Whenever
19 you're ready.

20 MR. REED: All right. Hi, my name is
21 Dan Reed, and I'm testifying as an individual. I
22 grew up in Montgomery County, graduated from

1 MCPS, and my partner and I both live and work in
2 Silver Spring. I'm here to support the draft
3 Thrive 2050 plan.

4 The comedian, Dave Chappelle, who grew
5 up in Montgomery County has a joke that goes, my
6 parents moved me here so I could grow up poor
7 around White people. My mother and I moved here
8 in 1991 in our belate. I don't know if we were
9 poor. I definitely felt poor, but I had the
10 chance to grow up in Silver Spring, one of the
11 few places in the entire country where little
12 Black boys do as well as little White boys as
13 adults.

14 Why does that happen? It's hard to
15 say. I know that my mother, a first generation
16 immigrant, putting herself through the University
17 of Maryland could afford to rent a one-bedroom
18 apartment for us to share. I know that I could
19 go to good, diverse schools or visit my
20 grandparents who lived nearby. I know there was
21 a big park next to our building where I could
22 play with my friends.

1 As an adult, I realized how many
2 people in this community take that experience for
3 granted. My partner and I spent years saving up
4 and searching for a home we could afford. And
5 the only reason we could buy a home near Downtown
6 Silver Spring is because it's a townhouse.

7 It's been a year since we've moved in,
8 and prices have gone up so much we couldn't buy
9 our house today. That's why a lot of my friends
10 have moved out of the county or the region
11 because they too have struggled to build a live
12 here. Thrive replaces On Wedges & Corridors
13 which was written in the 1960s and creates the
14 county that we know and love today, like our
15 massive park system, downtowns and town centers,
16 or the Ag Reserve.

17 In some ways, it also contributed to
18 the issues we face now, an east-west divide,
19 segregated schools and neighborhoods, sedentary
20 lifestyles, stagnant incomes, and a chronic
21 housing shortage driving prices. I was impressed
22 when I saw all of those things mentioned in

1 Thrive 2050. I've never seen a planning document
2 Montgomery County talk about racial justice.

3 This plan talks about the need to do
4 more outreach and education about planning so we
5 don't just hear from people with the time and the
6 money to block change but people who actually
7 look like this county. This plan talks about
8 changing single family zoning which was
9 explicitly designed to make neighborhoods
10 segregated and exclusive to instead give more
11 people access to homes they can afford near jobs,
12 transportation, and daily needs. I recognize
13 this makes some people uncomfortable.

14 Some people here benefit from a status
15 quo that privileges them and their needs. I'm
16 sure they will demand that you stop this
17 important work. But to be honest, I'm losing
18 patience for people who say they care about
19 diversity or equity or climate change but insist
20 that nothing change around them and that they're
21 not inconvenienced.

22 Real people's lives and hopes and

1 dreams hang from that but, and we're foreclosing
2 on their future by trying to preserve somebody
3 else's past. We can't stop change from happening
4 here, but we can shape how that change happens
5 and who benefits from it. Let's move forward
6 with this plan and make a county that actually
7 works for everyone. Thank you.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
9 for that testimony. James Hedrick, I think I saw
10 him a minute ago. There he is.

11 MR. HEDRICK: I'm back.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, very good.
13 You're up.

14 MR. HEDRICK: Well, thank you. Thank
15 you, everybody, Chair Anderson and the rest of
16 the planning commissioners for letting me come
17 and speak today. I'm James Hedrick. For the
18 record, I'm a resident of the Twinbrook community
19 of Rockville here representing the Action
20 Community for Transit as our land use committee
21 chair.

22 It's hard to add more to some of the

1 great stuff that we've heard from the last couple
2 of folks that have talked, Dan and Jane and the
3 rest. I do want to say that we support broadly
4 the vision and the approach of Thrive 2050. I
5 think it's got a great focus on transit-oriented
6 development.

7 It's got a lot of attention to
8 redevelopment, reuse, and infill which is great.
9 I do want the Commission to consider two thoughts
10 that we have and that I have. And one is to be
11 as big and bold as possible and to say that
12 everything and all the goals that we have in this
13 plan start with more housing and having more
14 housing.

15 So we've identified the three major
16 outcomes that we want: economic health, equity,
17 environmental resilience. Each of those is
18 dependent on more housing. We said diversity,
19 the Thrive 2050 plan says diversity, inclusion
20 are our strength. It's essential for future.
21 Each one of those things is dependent upon us
22 having more housing.

1 And we say that we want to accommodate
2 and I think make room for 200,000 people. I
3 think we can do better. I think we can do more
4 than that. I think we can welcome folks in. I
5 think Montgomery County can be a leader in
6 equitable and sustainable growth.

7 I think to do that, we've got to start
8 with more housing, more housing everywhere.

9 Housing, we don't have enough of it and we need
10 more of it. So along that, I want you to broadly
11 consider a couple of things. I want us to
12 broadly reconsider the nature of single family
13 neighborhoods in general and expand what we mean
14 by near transit which we use frequently in the
15 Thrive 2050 draft here.

16 I represent the Action Committee for
17 transit. We're big fans of transit. We always
18 should focus on developed density near high
19 capacity transit. But we also need more housing
20 options and better and more -- more housing
21 options, better land use in communities that
22 might not now be considered near transit.

1 As I said, right now, my home is in
2 Twinbrook. I live about a mile and a half away
3 from the Metro station, probably really a little
4 far to be considered near transit under many
5 proposals. But I spend a lot of my time biking,
6 busing, walking to different places.

7 If we had more neighbors in there,
8 they could as well. For every new family, new
9 person that moves into a neighborhood like
10 Twinhill or Aspen Hill or Tilden Woods or Chevy
11 Chase or any of those, that's more potential
12 transit riders. It's less miles traveled by car.
13 More housing options for residents, more equity,
14 all things that we want in the plan.

15 Not to put too fine a point on it, but
16 to increase the options, increase housing options
17 in neighborhoods like that, what's often called
18 the missing middle housing as mentioned a couple
19 of times in the plan, duplexes, triplexes,
20 cottages, what have you, we need improve the
21 housing options and increase housing options
22 across as many different neighborhoods as

1 possible. That's going to go a long way to
2 meeting our goals, so the increased equity, the
3 increased growth, transit ridership. Ignoring
4 the possibilities of broadening housing options
5 in a lot of different down county and mid-county
6 communities is going to hurt us when we try to
7 meet the goals of the plan and not give us the
8 scale that we need to really get the outcomes
9 that we want from Thrive 2050.

10 So to conclude, I don't want to run
11 over my time, the Thrive 2050 draft provides a
12 really good vision for focusing on redevelop,
13 reuse, and infill right now. We absolutely could
14 and should prioritize density around high
15 capacity transit. But as the plan further
16 develops and as we move toward implementation, I
17 want to urge you to think more broadly, more
18 boldly about providing all the housing that we'll
19 need to meet this goal. That includes housing
20 zoning a lot of single family areas in places
21 that are currently exclusively single family --
22 includes single family zoning right now.

1 So again, the Thrive 2050 plan is
2 good. It offers a lot of potential for
3 Montgomery County to become a leader in
4 sustainable growth. It is an example of how to
5 plan and build and conserve. So like I said, I
6 just want to encourage -- I and Act want to
7 encourage you guys to think about land use in
8 communities otherwise not near transit.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Could we
10 hear from Denisse Guitarra from Audubon?

11 MS. GUITARRA: Absolutely. Can you
12 see me and hear me?

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we see and hear
14 you. How are you doing?

15 MS. GUITARRA: Awesome. Thank you.
16 Good afternoon, Planning Board. For the record,
17 I am Denisse Guitarra, Maryland conservation
18 advocate for Audubon Naturalist Society. For 123
19 years, ANS has inspired people to enjoy, learn
20 about, and protect nature.

21 We thank Montgomery Planning
22 Department for the opportunity to comment on

1 Thrive Montgomery 2050 working draft plan. ANS
2 appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with
3 planning staff on the plan's outreach efforts to
4 both environmental and Latinx communities. We
5 have submitted a full copy of our written
6 comments before today's public hearing.

7 I present the following areas that we
8 support and also propose to be amended in the
9 draft plan. ANS supports urbanism as a strategy
10 to protect natural areas that reduce sprawl while
11 concentrating development around transit
12 corridors and prioritizing affordable and
13 attainable housing. However, we would like to
14 see increased protection on stormwater management
15 that not only meets but exceeds our current
16 stormwater regulatory requirements knowing that
17 climate change is already increasing in the
18 frequency and volume of rain storms.

19 We applaud that the plan looks at
20 every policy with an equity injustice lense and
21 support the creation of civic led community
22 engagement groups that include individuals who

1 have been historically underrepresented in land
2 use and planning decision making processes. We
3 support a 15-minute living policy recommendation
4 to increase the access to green spaces for all
5 people while simultaneously working to eliminate
6 structural barriers that prevent individuals from
7 accessing nature. ANS recommends the following
8 five policy areas to be amended.

9 One, we recommend the addition of a
10 net zero forest loss policy in the General Plan.
11 Trees provide countless ecological services such
12 as flood prevention, carbon sequestration, air
13 and water purification. None of these services
14 could ever be replaced by built infrastructure.
15 Setting a policy goal in the General Plan to do
16 so would be an important step towards protecting
17 our natural resources as a key climate change
18 mitigation measure.

19 Two, we recommend the addition of a
20 net zero buildings policy in the General Plan.
21 The plan does an excellent job in emphasizing the
22 need to plan for people and not for cars but

1 lacks a strong policy recommendation around
2 buildings which are the second largest
3 contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the
4 county.

5 Three, we want more stronger climate
6 change policies. We strongly recommend closer
7 cross collaboration and merge policy goals
8 between the General Plan and the climate action
9 and resilience plan, CARP. The General Plan
10 should also provide guidance on where local
11 renewable energy generation projects should be
12 sited in the county.

13 Four, the Agriculture Reserve, we
14 recommend that the General Plan includes a
15 complete analysis and set of policy
16 recommendations of where and what to the Ag
17 Reserve going forward while trying to find a
18 balance between food accessibility,
19 sustainability, equity injustice. And fifth,
20 metrics and implementation, we recommend that the
21 plan incorporates clear and more specific metric
22 requirements to ensure that the policies and

1 actions stated in the plan are enforced. Thank
2 you, Montgomery Planning Board and staff for
3 considering our comments and suggestions.

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.
5 And next up we have Michael English.

6 MR. ENGLISH: Hello. My name is --

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi.

8 MR. ENGLISH: -- Michael English. I'm
9 testifying on my own behalf. I've lived in
10 Downtown Silver Spring since 2012, and I was
11 lucky enough to be able to purchase a condo here
12 late last year. Before I start, I want to thank
13 the planning committee and staff for their bold
14 draft plan and for allowing me to give my
15 testimony. I've also submitted written
16 testimony.

17 First and foremost, Montgomery County
18 is in the midst of a severe affordable housing
19 crisis. Unless it applies to all shapes and
20 sizes and in great number, MPDUs and other
21 affordable housing support are continued and
22 expanded and existing affordable housing stock

1 preserved to the greatest extent possible, the
2 county will continue to become unaffordable for
3 all but the most fortunate. There's been talk
4 about the pandemic. Prices have not gone down.
5 The price of my condo has gone up in the time
6 I've bought it. We have to act now.

7 In the last decade, only households
8 earning 150,000 or more saw an increase in debt
9 home ownership. The household income required
10 for a median priced home exceeds the actual mean
11 income, and the number of cost-burdened renter
12 households is increasing, particularly in transit
13 accessible areas. All that said, I'm happy to
14 see many of the wonderful ideas and proposals
15 laid out in the current Thrive 2050 draft,
16 particularly the acknowledgment of the affordable
17 housing crisis and support for adding needed
18 supply, including missing middle housing.

19 If you take only thing away from my
20 testimony, let it be that the final draft of this
21 plan absolutely must maintain the strong focus
22 and expand upon it. That said, I understand the

1 concern my fellow homeowners have about
2 protecting their investment with increased
3 property values. However, to me, owning a home
4 is meant to provide some sense of financial and
5 residential stability and the ability to build
6 savings through equity is not meant to be an
7 entitlement to an ever growing return on
8 investment.

9 In order to truly move the needle on
10 affordability, density, both gentle and
11 otherwise, will need to be deployed much more
12 wisely than it is today, especially but not only
13 in areas accessible to transit as they will help
14 make transit more accessible to those who need it
15 most. Some argue that people don't have the
16 right to live wherever they want or to paraphrase
17 our current county executive, that they can live
18 in Frederick if they can't afford our county.
19 The same people saying this no doubt rely on
20 local, often low wage workers to staff retail,
21 teach children, maintain their roads, or any
22 number of other important jobs, excuse me, that

1 don't command the same wages as privileged few
2 are lucky enough to receive.

3 They are to make room for people to
4 live in vibrant, transit accessible, and
5 prosperous, excuse me, clear my throat, areas as
6 classist, cold, and not becoming of the
7 progressive values that our county justifiably
8 has come to stand for. I'm sure you will hear
9 people complain about the changing character of
10 neighborhoods that might be brought on by zoning
11 changes. Zoning is not a commandment from the
12 county on what will be built.

13 If the market dictates single families
14 are built in a location, that is what will be
15 built regardless of zoning. The character of the
16 neighborhood will be preserved unless it was
17 artificially imposed to begin with. And I will
18 shed no tears to such an outcome.

19 This is also, at best, a classist
20 viewpoint and, at worst, a racist one.
21 Historical districts and other types of single
22 family home exclusive zoning and simply the

1 current manifestation of explicitly racist
2 policies such as red lining in the past.
3 Character of the community is another way of
4 saying we don't want those kind of people living
5 here. It's fearmongering and it has no place
6 here.

7 This is a once in a generation General
8 Plan, and it's not going to be something we can
9 do over again anytime soon. Prices have not
10 fallen from the pandemic. And if we don't
11 dramatically expand the number and types of homes
12 available, it'll be nothing short of betrayal of
13 the principles of precocity, fairness, equality,
14 and just plain decency we like to stand for.
15 Please don't let that happen. Thank you.

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
17 Is Alan Bowser there?

18 MR. BOWSER: Good afternoon, members
19 of the Planning Board. Can you hear me?

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you. We
21 don't see you. Are you coming on in Teams or
22 you're on the phone?

1 MR. BOWSER: Well, I will try through
2 that.

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. It's not
4 required, but --

5 MR. BOWSER: I know. But we'll see
6 what happens here.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: There we go. There
8 you are. Yes, nice to see you.

9 MR. BOWSER: Chairman Anderson and
10 Planning Board Commissioners, my name is Alan
11 Bowser. I'm the president of the Montgomery
12 County Civic Federation. The association members
13 of MCCF represent over 150,000 households from
14 civic and homeowners associations across the
15 county.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to
17 provide comment to the proposed draft General
18 Plan. We appreciate the work and time with the
19 Planning Department on this document so far, and
20 we thank them for participating in some of our
21 meetings during the last year. While we
22 understand those work on the plan feel that they

1 have done much more outreach than usual, we think
2 more is needed, especially since residents are
3 focused on many other things right now than the
4 General Plan and these draft recommendations
5 which were just released in October.

6 By comparison, the District of
7 Columbia, which is 68 square miles compared to
8 the 500 square miles of Montgomery County,
9 adopted a comprehensive rewrite of their General
10 Plan in 2006 after many years of public
11 engagement. In additions, they have spent the
12 last four years working on an amendment to that
13 2006 plan with even more expansive engagement and
14 hearings. We've hear from members from Silver
15 Spring to Burtonsville, from Clarksburg to
16 Friendship Heights and communities in between.

17 Some of these communities have
18 submitted comments directly to you. Our members
19 have been unanimous in their comments to us that
20 this transformative plan needs much more
21 community input and discussion if it is to
22 address the county's current and future needs and

1 improve the quality of life for all. Our
2 September 14th meeting of MCCF, the federation
3 adopted a resolution calling on the Planning
4 Board to extend the public engagement process in
5 light of the current pandemic crisis.

6 MCCF strongly supports the idea of a
7 community-based planning framework which values
8 diversity and the need for a dynamic economic
9 foundation. The social and economic disruptions
10 of the current pandemic have raised serious
11 concerns about the future of the national and
12 regional economies and the unpredictable impacts
13 on transportation needs, job creation,
14 environmental stewardship and education, and the
15 implications of the global pandemic and
16 alternative economic scenarios must be taken into
17 account in any comprehensive planning framework
18 adopted by the county.

19 The current announced timetable for
20 the design finalization and approval of the
21 proposed General Plan without adequate public
22 consultation input is unreasonable and unsuited

1 for a legitimate community process in which
2 residents can take ownership of the final plan.
3 In order to continue planning for the future with
4 confidence and accuracy and sensitivity to the
5 needs of the county's communities, the Planning
6 Board should extend the public engagement process
7 until after the current health crisis is over.
8 We appreciate full consideration with these
9 concerns.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
11 Is Gray Kimbrough there?

12 MR. KIMBROUGH: Yes, I am.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: You're on. Go right
14 ahead whenever you're ready.

15 MR. KIMBROUGH: Okay, great. So I
16 would like to echo a lot of the comments that
17 have been made already that I do really --
18 there's really -- there's a lot to like about the
19 Thrive 2050 plan. I do want to talk at sort of a
20 high level about some of the issues that are just
21 major undercurrents here. So as I've said before
22 at such meetings as this, exclusionary zoning is

1 racist, and we need to deal with it. Is my
2 screen showing?

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: We can see it, yes.

4 MR. KIMBROUGH: So again, zoning has
5 explicitly racist origins as we, I think, all
6 know here. But only single family homes can be
7 built by right in most of Montgomery County.
8 However, less than half of the housing units are
9 single family detached homes.

10 So the kinds of houses that we're
11 allowed to build in Montgomery County don't look
12 like what we already have. And 45 percent of the
13 county residents are White, non-Hispanic. Sixty-
14 one percent of homeowners are White, non-
15 Hispanic. This is all called out in the plan. I
16 think that's a really great start.

17 I also want to add that exclusionary
18 zoning is also classist and ageist, that 35
19 percent of Montgomery County households rent and
20 they are not well served by this emphasis of
21 building single family homes. Eight percent of
22 households have zero vehicles, again, not well

1 served by these single family homes. And the
2 zoning restrictions fall harder on younger
3 people.

4 So about half of the homes in
5 Montgomery are in households led by people age 55
6 and over. Why is Montgomery County population
7 growth slowing? This is hinted at in the plan or
8 in Thrive 2050. But one major reason is that
9 we're not building enough housing for millennials
10 and younger adults as well. We're just not
11 building enough housing.

12 So I want to remind us on a historical
13 note that it's not just zoning. So we all know
14 about racist deed restrictions that are present
15 in much of Montgomery County. Here's an example
16 from Chevy Chase Park.

17 But what I want to point out is that
18 not only is there a racist covenant down there at
19 the bottom, there's also minimum home sales
20 prices. There are minimum setbacks. Number
21 three is that it has to be exclusively single
22 family. Number four, again, more setbacks. And

1 number five is there's the racial covenant,
2 right? So it says it's not to be sold, rented,
3 or otherwise placed in possession of any of the
4 African race.

5 Now one -- so again, the point here is
6 that these are all a group of the same kinds of
7 exclusionary measures that are being taken, not
8 just zoning, not just single family. We're
9 talking setbacks. We're talking other aspects of
10 these homes as well as race. These were all a
11 bundle together.

12 Now E. Brook Lee was responsible for
13 racist covenants in much of Silver Spring. Here,
14 we have an example where he really liked the one
15 that you couldn't see it to a race whose death
16 rate is greater than the White race. This is
17 from a Silver Spring home.

18 E. Brook Lee attached these racial
19 covenants to properties throughout Silver Spring.
20 He also proposed the creation of the Maryland-
21 National Capital Park and Planning Commission
22 which you probably know since that's you. So we

1 need to grapple with the racist origins of all of
2 these restrictions including zoning. And so what
3 I want to argue is while it's not just zoning
4 today either --

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Kimbrough, I have
6 to --

7 MR. KIMBROUGH: -- we still have the
8 setback --

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: I love this
10 presentation, but I have to ask you to wrap it
11 up. You're a little bit over --

12 MR. KIMBROUGH: Okay.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: -- time.

14 MR. KIMBROUGH: I'm going to wrap it
15 up. We have a setback. We have height limits.
16 We have parking minimums. And I'm going to wrap
17 it up to say that Thrive 2050 should include
18 concrete actions to address zoning and other
19 exclusionary practices countywide consistent with
20 the urgency of these issues that we have: climate
21 change, demographic challenges, and the housing
22 crisis. Thank you for your time.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. I really
2 appreciate you moving through that last part
3 quickly. Wendy Calhoun, are you there?

4 MS. CALHOUN: You bet you. Can you
5 see me?

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we see you.

7 MS. CALHOUN: Excellent. Okay.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: How have you been?

9 MS. CALHOUN: I've been great. I
10 can't believe I'm the only one here talking about
11 schools, but here I go again.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: The only one so far.
13 There's a long way to go.

14 MS. CALHOUN: Okay. Good afternoon
15 and thank you for the opportunity to speak about
16 the draft Thrive 2050 plan. I remember learning
17 about the old Wedges & Corridor plan during my
18 2002 Leadership Montgomery Class, the best class
19 ever. My hope is that the Thrive 2050 plan comes
20 to fruition, much as the Wedges & Corridor plan
21 did.

22 Unfortunately, this Planning Board

1 seems to be working in opposition to the new
2 Thrive plan when it comes to schools. From the
3 plan, in 2050, Montgomery County is a vibrant,
4 verdant, and welcoming place where all people
5 thrive with equitable access to affordable
6 housing, healthy food, parks and open space,
7 employment, education, services, and a variety of
8 travel options. From the goal, complete
9 community, orient neighborhoods around local
10 gathering places such as a park, a school, a
11 library, a recreation center, retail stores,
12 historical and cultural sites, and other
13 amenities.

14 From the goal, connectedness, provide
15 equitable access for all Montgomery County
16 residents to housing, jobs, services, educational
17 opportunities, and parks and open spaces at the
18 local, countywide, and regional level. From the
19 goal, safe and efficient travel, transform
20 Montgomery County into a community where public
21 transit, walking, and bicycling account for the
22 majority of daily trips. From the goal, diverse

1 and adaptable growth, redevelop key corridors
2 across the county to accommodate future
3 population growth in attractive, walkable, mixed-
4 use communities around transit stations with a
5 mix of housing, commercial uses, and public
6 amenities.

7 All of this points to walkable schools
8 within 15 minutes for every county student which
9 would be awesome. But at this point, it's
10 aspirational. I would expect the Planning Board
11 to work with MCPS towards these goals of walkable
12 schools, but I see no evidence of this to date,
13 in fact, quite the opposite.

14 For example, when discussing the SSP,
15 the Subdivision Staging Policy, now the GIP, the
16 Growth and Infrastructure Policy, the Planning
17 Board at MCPS needs to consider moving children
18 from their nearby walkable schools to other
19 schools in their cluster or even schools in
20 neighboring clusters up to ten miles away for
21 capacity reasons. Need I point out that schools
22 ten miles away from where one lives is likely not

1 walkable, let alone walkable in 15 minutes. I
2 hope the Planning Board intends to work towards
3 Thrive 2050 with MCPS and also by their own
4 actions to make the dream of walkable schools for
5 all county students in K through 12 a reality.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

8 And the last person on this group is Herb
9 Simmens.

10 MR. SIMMENS: Well, hi, and appreciate
11 your patience. I'm Herb Simmens of Silver Spring
12 testifying on behalf of the Climate Mobilization
13 Montgomery County Chapter. And we're the group
14 that got the County Council to unanimously adopt
15 the first U.S. declaration of a climate emergency
16 in 2017 as well as the most ambitious climate and
17 emission target set by any government in the
18 country. And we'll be presenting a handful of
19 recommendations today and others in writing.

20 We appreciate that climate is
21 integrated into this document in quite a few
22 places, 53 to be exact. However, it's apparent

1 that Thrive still has not recognized that the
2 climate crisis is more than a significant
3 inconvenience nor does Thrive say even one word
4 about the critical importance that the county can
5 and must play as a world model for emergency
6 climate action. Climate impacts, direct and
7 indirect, are an existential threat to most all
8 life on the planet and are likely to become
9 unstoppable unless emergency action is taken this
10 decade.

11 To have a 30-year plan that does not
12 recognize that the climate crisis may result
13 literally in the collapse of civilization in this
14 period unless emergency scale and speed action is
15 taken is unacceptable. For example, the trends
16 and issues section identifies 12 trends. Guess
17 where climate change ranks. Yes, number 12.

18 You only mention that the county even
19 declared the first climate emergency in the U.S.
20 buried in the middle of a paragraph, in the
21 middle of a section on page 97. And you chose to
22 exclude the target in the emergency resolution

1 to, quote, initiate large scale efforts to remove
2 carbon dioxide. It's just not in your document.
3 Indeed, many would say it's even of greater
4 importance than to eliminate emissions.

5 You also inexplicably chose to exclude
6 the county's central target of an 80 percent
7 reduction in greenhouse gases by 2027, only seven
8 years away in the document, a goal that will
9 require an unprecedented transformation of our
10 economy and way of life. Meeting this goal will
11 require the county to reduce emissions five or
12 more times faster than it has done in recent
13 years. Does Thrive meet this goal? It's
14 impossible to know from this document.

15 So we implore you to rectify these and
16 the many other climate-related deficiencies
17 through the following actions. Establish a
18 Thrive climate workgroup right away by December
19 1st made up of county, Planning Board staff, and
20 public to review this document and the county's
21 climate action plan when it's released in early
22 December to align each document with the other

1 and with the goals of the county Emergency
2 Climate Mobilization Resolution. Two, convene a
3 joint public meeting, public hearing with the
4 county after the CARP is released that focuses on
5 the connections and interrelationships between
6 these two efforts.

7 Three, add to your 2021 work plan a
8 detailed report on the opportunities to advance
9 climate mitigation, sequestration, and adaptation
10 in the coming years. Four, postpone the December
11 10th deadline for comments on the document until
12 at least ten days after the CARP is supposedly
13 released next month -- early next month and after
14 initial report of this workgroup is released.

15 How can we comment comprehensively on this
16 document without being informed by the county's
17 draft climate strategy which is due in just a
18 matter of days? Your initial reaction may be
19 that these actions --

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: I have to -- I've
21 already given you some leeway here, but you got
22 to wrap it up. You're over your --

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, one more
2 sentence. Your initial reaction may be that
3 these actions, however desirable, are not
4 possible within your specified time frame.
5 Please remember that we're in a declared
6 emergency and act accordingly. Thank you.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.
8 Okay. That concludes our first group. We're
9 going to begin with the second group. And I
10 believe Katie Nolan is up first for those who are
11 watching at home and wondering whether they're up
12 next followed by Rose Alger and Jenna Bauer and
13 then we'll go from there. I think we should take
14 -- well, go ahead and dial in if you're not
15 already dialed. But we'll be back in about five
16 minutes.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
18 went off the record at 4:29 p.m. and resumed at
19 4:39 p.m.)

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. We're ready to
21 kick off Session 2 of the Thrive 2050 public
22 hearing starting with -- and I should just say if

1 you haven't been following along, everybody gets
2 three minutes. And I have to enforce that even
3 though I hate to cut people off. So please help
4 me out. And we'll, of course, include your
5 written testimony if you have other things to
6 say. Is Katie Nolan there?

7 MS. NOLAN: I am.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Go ahead.

9 MS. NOLAN: Yes, I am. Good afternoon
10 and thank you for your time. My name is Katie
11 Nolan. As a renter with no car and a single
12 income household, I'm really excited about the
13 plans to make the county more affordable and
14 easier to travel around without a vehicle.

15 We need better public transportation.
16 Before my roommate lost her job, she sometimes
17 spent more time in transit than she did at work,
18 despite the fact that her job was a mere seven-
19 minute drive from our apartment. People can't
20 just spend their lives like that. We ultimately
21 want affordable housing and better support
22 systems for the disabled. My friend, Sebastian,

1 and his wife should be able to live in an actual
2 home instead of planning every day for an AirBnB
3 in someone's basement because they can't get
4 work.

5 But we also need to make racial equity
6 and economic justice priorities for our future.

7 I currently live in Downtown Silver Spring. But
8 for the seven years previous, I lived on Flower
9 Avenue where it intersects with Piney Branch
10 Road. Every time I passed the Purple Line
11 construction, I wondered that a universal
12 supermarket where I got most of my groceries
13 would get replaced by a Safeway, whether Asian
14 Delight would get replaced with a Panda Express.

15 I worried that gentrification would
16 drive out my neighbors, many of whom were Spanish
17 speaking immigrants. Historically, growth
18 without racial equity has led to the destruction
19 of Black and Brown communities. In the 1950s and
20 1960s, growth along River Road in Bethesda meant
21 the annihilation of River Road's African American
22 communities.

1 My friend Harvey's childhood home is
2 now a Whole Foods. Another friend's home is now
3 a Bank of America. Because of growth, County
4 Executive Elrich ignored Macedonia Baptist
5 Church's cry for justice and allowed Bethesda
6 Self Storage to continue the desecration of a
7 cemetery that predates the Civil War.

8 On the County Council's website for
9 2019, it says, racial equity and social justice
10 are urgent moral and socioeconomic endeavors for
11 our community. Our county's population has
12 changed, both in numbers and in diversity and
13 this has not happened overnight. Addressing
14 issues of racial equity is not only an ethical
15 obligation. It is essential to ensure the
16 continued economic vitality of our community.

17 Thrive 2050 has the potential to be
18 absolutely life changing for me and my community.
19 If it's going to live up to that potential, it
20 must prioritize racial equity. Thank you again
21 for your time.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Do we

1 have Jenna Bauer logged in? Jenna Bauer?

2 (No audible response.)

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: *6 maybe, one time.

4 Oh, there you go. Can you hear us?

5 MS. BAUER: Can you hear me?

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

7 We're ready when you are.

8 MS. BAUER: Perfect. Thank you. My
9 name is Jenna Bauer, and I'm a resident of
10 Downtown Silver Spring. First, I want to say
11 thank you again. I think it's clear the county
12 takes public policy seriously, and I appreciate
13 your time and the opportunity to provide my
14 input.

15 I would also like to emphasize my
16 support for Montgomery for All's platform. I
17 believe that there's a lot to be excited about in
18 the Thrive Montgomery plan. But I think there
19 are also opportunities to push forward,
20 especially in transit and housing policy to
21 ensure that we're building an inclusive,
22 sustainable, and affordable community.

1 First, I will highlight my support for
2 the idea of 15-minute living and not having to
3 drive for my daily needs. I love living in
4 Downtown Silver Spring. I lived in Bethesda, and
5 my husband is a graduate student at the
6 University of Maryland.

7 On many days, before the pandemic, of
8 course, we took public transit to get to work and
9 school. Some days when we had important meetings
10 or events, we wouldn't take public transit
11 because it was faster or efficient to drive. On
12 long days when I have work complications that
13 keep me in the office late or student meetings
14 that run long, traveling home on public transit
15 can add significant time on peak hours.

16 I would love to see the county to make
17 an effort to emphasize public transit as the
18 highest priority mode of transportation in
19 addition to walking and biking. I think this is
20 essential not only for environmental stability
21 but also economic and social equity. I think
22 COVID-19 has taught us all a lot and has forced

1 many people to reprioritize and reflect.

2 During this time, it has been
3 essential for me personally to have access to
4 open spaces and nature. And I think it's a key
5 component of any sustainable planning narrative.
6 I'm extremely supportive of the county's efforts
7 to emphasize networks as inclusive, safe, and
8 accessible public parks, trails, and recreational
9 spaces.

10 I think there's more that can be done
11 to emphasize intentional community design of
12 public spaces, including the community's input.
13 Finally, in addition to our physical environment,
14 the pandemic has shed light on the inherent
15 vulnerability of our economic institutions. To
16 me, and I hope to the county, it is clear that
17 housing is a human right.

18 While I'm happy that the county's
19 approach has been affordability and attainability
20 in order to protect truly housing as a human
21 right, I would urge the county to take bolder
22 steps to setting rent stabilization and a right

1 to legal counsel for evictions. Protecting the
2 right to housing requires a multifaceted approach
3 and these could be valuable tools for us to use.

4 Overall, I think there's a lot to be
5 excited about in the Thrive Montgomery plan. But
6 more can be done to emphasize transit, community
7 spaces, and provide protections for renters.
8 Thank you for your efforts to put together these
9 guiding documents. I'm excited for the future of
10 Montgomery County and appreciate your time.

11 Thanks.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: And we appreciate
13 your testimony. Is Walter Weiss there?

14 (No audible response.)

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Weiss?

16 MR. WEISS: Hello.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: You're on.

18 MR. WEISS: Hello, yes. My name is
19 Walter Weiss, and I am representing the
20 Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate
21 Solutions. We are a group of people from 50
22 congregations of many faiths spread throughout

1 the county who are very concerned about climate
2 change.

3 We feel that this a moral problem and
4 that we have to protect the earth and the county
5 for future generations. I want to focus my
6 comments today most on parts of the plan which
7 need to be more forcefully directed toward
8 reducing global warming and greenhouse gas
9 emissions. While I support many of the aspects
10 of the plan, I feel focusing on these in my
11 comments would be most beneficial.

12 The first thing is that I think the
13 Thrive 2050 plan should explicitly include the
14 county's stated goal of reducing greenhouse
15 gases, 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by
16 2035. I think the county is already committed to
17 this, and this should be stated clearly in the
18 plan. And all aspects of the future plan should
19 be evaluated as to how they address these goals.

20 The second thing is that I think as we
21 all know the CARP, the climate plan, is about to
22 be unveiled I think in November, the end of the

1 month. And I think there should be a complete
2 incorporation of all aspects of the climate
3 emergency plan into the Thrive 2050. I don't
4 know how much coordination there has been.
5 Obviously, the plans are slightly out of sync.
6 You've been working for a much longer time. But
7 I think ultimately we need to come up with one
8 plan and not two.

9 Third item is we all know that clean
10 energy is going to be one of the keys to making
11 our county a greener place to live and reducing
12 greenhouse gases. We need to be planning for
13 local solar energy generation in the county. I
14 don't think that this is included in the Thrive
15 2050 plan, but I think consideration should be
16 put specifically on this.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. You are about

18 --

19 MR. WEISS: Lastly --

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: -- out of time. So
21 if you could wrap it up, that would be great.

22 MR. WEISS: Okay. Lastly, I just want

1 to say all the buildings that we're talking
2 about, the new homes and the new building, they
3 need to be radically rethought. We need to be
4 getting away from using natural gas in buildings.
5 All our buildings should be net zero energy
6 within a fairly short time frame and as well as
7 being affordable for everybody. So thank you
8 very much.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Thank you
10 for your testimony. Siena Fouse, are you there?

11 MS. FOUSE: Can you hear me?

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

13 MS. FOUSE: Okay.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Whenever you're
15 ready.

16 MS. FOUSE: Yes. So thank you. My
17 name is Siena Fouse, and I live in Silver Spring.
18 I support Montgomery for All's platform,
19 especially prioritizing mass transit in addition
20 to walking and biking and providing more housing
21 options including multifamily homes around
22 transit.

1 I'm in my last semester as a student
2 at University of Maryland and will be entering
3 the job market soon in Montgomery County. And
4 it's important to me that Montgomery County
5 provides affordable housing options at all income
6 levels for folks who are looking to live in
7 Montgomery County for the future and will make
8 sure to provide protection for current vulnerable
9 populations or communities that may be at risk of
10 being priced out with the introduction of
11 improved access to amenities. As someone
12 beginning a career in Montgomery County, it's
13 important to me that we have public and active
14 transit to efficiently connect folks to jobs.

15 As a young person and student of
16 environmental science and policy, I believe that
17 it's critical that Montgomery County incentivize
18 smart growth around transit and provide safe and
19 convenient options to walk or bike to amenities.
20 We need to focus on ways to reduce driving in our
21 county, not only to reduce greenhouse gas
22 emissions and mitigate climate change, but also

1 to protect local environmental health and safety.
2 I would love to see a mixed-use walkable
3 community where 15-minute living without a car
4 becomes a reality.

5 In conclusion, I would like Thrive
6 2050 to prioritize mass transit and provide
7 housing, more housing around public transit
8 options. I look forward to continuing to live in
9 a beautiful and resilient county. Thank you.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much,
11 and congratulations on your upcoming graduation -
12 -

13 MS. FOUSE: Thank you.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: -- and entering into
15 the job market.

16 MS. FOUSE: Thank you so much.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Jill Ortman-Fouse,
18 are you there?

19 (No audible response.)

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Can you hear us,
21 Jill?

22 MS. ORTMAN-FOUSE: Good -- yes, I can.

1 Good evening.

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good.

3 MS. ORTMAN-FOUSE: Thank you to the
4 Planning Board members for this opportunity. I'm
5 Jill Ortman-Fouse, and I'm speaking today as a
6 longtime advocate for equitable opportunities for
7 our diverse community and also from my experience
8 as a former member of the Montgomery County Board
9 of Education. I'm excited about the potential
10 for Thrive 2050 to address longstanding equity
11 issues and urge boldness in tackling planning
12 challenges which have had a direct impact how and
13 what children learn in our schools, who they
14 learn with, and the environment and where we
15 teach them.

16 I've often spoken publicly about how
17 segregation in our schools built on a history of
18 restrictive zoning and housing policies impact
19 our kids as well as how our dearth of affordable
20 housing and lack of access to transit throughout
21 the county contribute to high mobility rates at
22 our schools that are already the most impacted by

1 poverty. My children attended a Title I school
2 where almost half the children were impacted by
3 poverty. In my role as the PTA president, I saw
4 the torment caused to families who could no
5 longer stay in their apartments due to rent
6 increases, unaffordability, or job location.

7 When I visited our students'
8 apartments, I was given certificates the children
9 had earned for perfect attendance taped proudly
10 to their wall. When underserved children whose
11 families already both face a host of challenges
12 must move from their home, the trauma directly
13 affects students' readiness to learn. We have
14 elementary schools with as many as 25 percent of
15 our children enrolling and withdrawing during the
16 school year, disrupting continuity of learning
17 and severing relationships with school staff.

18 The schools with our highest mobility
19 rates are most often our schools with majority of
20 students of color. Restrictive zoning has
21 contributed to segregated communities where
22 children grow up in areas with little opportunity

1 to learn and grow with the amazing diversity we
2 have in our town. From their inception, zoning
3 laws have perpetuated segregation of class and
4 race.

5 The basic idea that apartment
6 buildings should not occupy the same neighborhood
7 as single family homes has racist undertones.
8 Mandatory large loss of land in certain
9 neighborhoods prohibit anyone who is not wealthy
10 from living in those neighborhoods. And the
11 schools in restricted areas are segregated as the
12 neighborhoods themselves.

13 As a school board member who was part
14 of boundary changes made, what I heard too often
15 from some members of our community was, I'm not
16 racist. I just want my kids to go to the best
17 school. We paid a lot of money for our house,
18 and I don't want my home to lose value when other
19 kids come into my kid's school or my child having
20 to go to a school with different kids. For too
21 long, the wealth gap that starts with barriers to
22 homeownership has fallen on the backs of our

1 black families who historically have been
2 precluded from owning homes and still dictates
3 who gets to live where today, explaining why
4 schools are less than five percent Black in some
5 areas but a majority of Black in others,
6 mirroring school poverty rates.

7 Finally, and most importantly,
8 separate is still unequal. I look forward to the
9 Thrive 2050 plan taking on inclusion head on and
10 breaking down those barriers that isolate
11 populations and give all of our families the
12 opportunities they deserve in order to contribute
13 their best to Montgomery County. Thank you.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that
15 testimony. Is Dave Magill there?

16 MR. MAGILL: Can you hear me?

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, I can hear you
18 now.

19 MR. MAGILL: Hello.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Go right ahead
21 whenever you're ready.

22 MR. MAGILL: Great. Thank you. It

1 always takes a second to unmute. Thank you. I'm
2 Dave Magill. I am a resident of Rockville, and I
3 am the Maryland advocacy director for MORE, Mid
4 Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts. We are a regional
5 mountain biking group that, in addition to
6 riding, take care of natural surface trails, 750
7 miles in this county and many of the surrounding
8 counties.

9 I'd like to speak about matters that
10 are close to effectively recreation and lifestyle
11 in this plan. I think the plan is a -- from what
12 we've seen is a very good step forward. But a
13 couple key points to make is I think it's really
14 important to continue to encourage healthy
15 lifestyles. Parks can really help with this.
16 It's relatively easy to add trails and other
17 amenities to help citizens stay healthy and fit.

18 Support active recreation. This is
19 probably a really important point in the sense
20 that in the past, there was a very high emphasis
21 put on treating our parks as essentially forest
22 conservation areas and encouraging other than

1 ball fields only passive or contemplative uses of
2 trails. But there's really a big demand for
3 longer hikes, trail running, mountain biking,
4 horseback riding. And these uses really are
5 fully compatible with good park stewardship.

6 Really often only a thin ribbon of
7 dirt or a paved trail is needed along with
8 exercise features like skills parks and outdoor
9 exercise equipment. So having a mindset that the
10 parks can be good stewards of the land and
11 strongly support active recreation is really a
12 key element of the plan. I think an area that
13 didn't come across as strongly is that we have an
14 opportunity to build a really strong regional
15 trail network.

16 Cyclists in particular but also
17 walkers and runners like to go long distances.
18 And that means not only connecting Montgomery
19 County trails internally but with surrounding
20 counties as well as D.C. and even Virginia. So
21 make sure to think really regionally about the
22 opportunities that are being offered to our

1 citizens, at the same time, beyond regionally,
2 create lots of local options.

3 There are -- put parks near as many
4 neighborhoods as possible, even if they're small,
5 with trails in them or with exercise features and
6 with connections wherever possible to get people
7 to those parks. That should be a really clear
8 goal of the general plan, not only a regional
9 view but lots of local options. Thank you very
10 much for the opportunity to testify.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
12 for that testimony. Is Rachel Taylor there?

13 (No audible response.)

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: I think you're there,
15 Ms. Taylor.

16 MS. TAYLOR: Can you hear me?

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

18 MS. TAYLOR: All right. Good evening,
19 hello, and thank you. My name is Rachel Taylor,
20 and I live in Clarksburg. I think it's good to
21 be ambitious with this plan. While there are
22 some portions of the county that are closer to

1 fulfilling the goals described in Thrive 2050,
2 there are others that have further to go. So
3 that's why I consider this plan to be ambitious.

4 I like the parts in this plan that
5 mention wanting to have complete communities with
6 varied types of housing and overall developing in
7 a way that is conducive to safer and more
8 sustainable transportation like transit, walking,
9 and biking. Where I currently live, there aren't
10 really a lot of places that are convenient to
11 reach via transit, walking, and biking because
12 development is rather car-centric and I wish it
13 were different. Overall, there are still plenty
14 places in the county that are just not very
15 walkable, bikeable, or well served by transit and
16 that is something that I'd like to see change.

17 So I like that Thrive 2050's goals are
18 towards a county that is easier to get around by
19 modes others than driving. It also really is
20 important that the county is able to create more
21 and varied types of housing in the future due to
22 how the situation is forecasted to grow. All

1 these people will need places to live and so that
2 needs to be accommodated. And I'm young. I grew
3 up in the county and I would like to continue
4 living here in the future. So I like that Thrive
5 2050 has a section that mentions creating more
6 housing and more types of housing that are
7 suitable and attainable for younger and less
8 wealthy residents.

9 The plan doesn't seem to specifically
10 describe what a complete community might look
11 like in the more suburban area. So I think more
12 detail about that would be good to include. And
13 I would also like to see something in the plan
14 about building and maintaining an urban tree
15 canopy.

16 Trees benefit the environment and they
17 also provide shade which makes it a lot more
18 pleasant for people to be outside during the
19 summer. Additionally, it would be good to add
20 something in the plan about how success in
21 accomplishing the plan's goals will be measured.
22 It would just really be good to have a more

1 concrete idea about this.

2 However, overall, I support the Thrive
3 2050 plan, especially the focus on having future
4 development that supports transportation modes
5 other than driving and having more and varied
6 types of housing for people of all ages and
7 income levels as well as how this all ties into a
8 more environmentally sustainable county. Thank
9 you for your time.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
11 Nadiya Kutishcheva, are you there? And I hope
12 I'm coming close to pronouncing that correctly.

13 MS. KUTISHCHEVA: Am I --

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.
15 Go ahead.

16 MS. KUTISHCHEVA: Hey there. I'm
17 good?

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, you're all set.

19 MS. KUTISHCHEVA: All right. All
20 right. Wonderful. Thank you so much. My name
21 is Nadiya Kutishcheva, and I am testifying on
22 behalf of myself and my close friend, Rebecca

1 Mann, who can't make it today. We both grew up
2 in Gaithersburg and now work for Montgomery
3 County based companies. She is a homeowner in
4 Silver Spring.

5 As long-term Montgomery County
6 residents, we support the direction of Thrive
7 2050, particularly the plans for safe and
8 efficient travel. We both grew up riding bikes
9 and turned it into the natural way of getting
10 around the University of Maryland's large campus
11 and enjoyed cycling after graduating. But we
12 have run into the fact that using bikes to travel
13 outside of college towns is usually unsafe in
14 Maryland.

15 This sad fact was made extremely clear
16 when three years ago Rebecca was hit by a car
17 while cycling in Downtown Silver Spring resulting
18 in a severe concussion and fractured skull.
19 Neither of us have stopped cycling, and Rebecca
20 regularly rides her bike to her Downtown Silver
21 Spring office. But it showed us how much has yet
22 to change.

1 Beyond the direct benefits of safer
2 cycling, we believe that strategically combining
3 cycling and transit is an effective way to solve
4 the last mile problem. Adding bike racks to the
5 fronts of buses, allowing bikes on the Metro
6 during peak times, and the increasing number of
7 protected bike lanes are all important steps.
8 But the county needs to go further in making a
9 comprehensive interwoven network of protected
10 bike lanes and transit so both high- and low-
11 income residents can easily connect to the rail
12 and Bus Rapid Transit.

13 We worry that connectivity and safety
14 issues are particularly strong in lower income
15 and higher minority areas. The Bethelwood and
16 New Hampshire Estates, a dense, moderate income,
17 majority Hispanic neighborhood, the neighborhood
18 has good bus access and will be on the Purple
19 Line route but is very disconnected from the rest
20 of Montgomery County in terms of safe cycling
21 routes or transit to the closest Metro stops. We
22 would love to see communities like New Hampshire

1 Estates maintain their current residents and
2 affordability while increasing their safe access
3 to transit.

4 In conclusion, maintaining
5 affordability, increasing diversity, and moving
6 towards sustainability will require many changes,
7 including Thrive 2050. And we especially look
8 forward to strategically combining cycling and
9 transit to better serve the county. Thank you.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
11 for that testimony. Do we have Christopher
12 Bolton on the line?

13 (No audible response.)

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, we'll give him
15 a minute. Are you there, Mr. Bolton? Can you
16 hear us?

17 (No audible response.)

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: You might need to
19 unmute the -- you might've pressed *61 when you
20 need to press mute. Yeah.

21 MR. BOLTON: Okay. Can you hear me?

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, now we hear you.

1 Very good. Go ahead whenever you're ready.

2 MR. BOLTON: Okay. There we go. All
3 right. All right. Good evening, everyone. My
4 name is Christopher Bolton. I'm a lifelong East
5 County resident, and my comments on this is just
6 to put some considerations to the Thrive 2050
7 plan.

8 Now in East County, we have a lot of
9 apartment buildings over there and a booming AMI,
10 average median income, that is just going up and
11 up and up. And with the plans that are suggested
12 for East County and the high minority population
13 over there, a lot of the apartment buildings over
14 there are coming to their end of use. I think
15 the county says it's 30 to 50 years for an end of
16 use.

17 And with all these plans coming up, I
18 fear that gentrification is going to become a
19 reality for East County. With the FDA
20 consolidation coming there, the White Oak Master
21 Plan, the Science Gateway Master Plan coming up,
22 I feel that East County is going to become

1 unaffordable. Right now, the AMI is 70,000
2 dollars. When all this is said and done and all
3 these construction projects are completed, I feel
4 the AMI will be somewhere around 120,000 dollars.

5 I want my kids to be able to live
6 where I grew up. We love East County, and East
7 County is different from the rest of the county.
8 But we're growing and booming. So I want just
9 considerations to be taken into mind that with
10 that, a lot of people who live over there live in
11 apartment buildings, pay rent. And as their
12 buildings come to their end of use, when new
13 buildings are built, prices will go up and it'll
14 become unaffordable for the people who want to
15 live and work in East County.

16 I know that there's an emphasis on
17 that and other parts of the county, your
18 Bethesdas, Rockvilles, your Downtown Silver
19 Springs. So I just want that same consideration
20 given to the residents of East County who might
21 not have that much of a financial opportunity to
22 get into gear. Thank you.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

2 Is Danny Chu there?

3 (No audible response.)

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Danny Chu is next.

5 (No audible response.)

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Chu, can you hear
7 us?

8 (No audible response.)

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: If not, we will come
10 back to him and see if he's dialed in. We
11 might've lost him. Is Peter Gray there?

12 (No audible response.)

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Yes, I'm told
14 Danny Chu will come later. I thought I heard
15 Peter Gray there for a second, but then --

16 MR. GRAY: Yes, yes.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: There you are. Okay.

18 MR. GRAY: Can you hear me?

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

20 MR. GRAY: My name is Peter Gray.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Whenever you're
22 ready.

1 MR. GRAY: Okay. My name is Peter
2 Gray. And I'm testifying on behalf of the
3 Washington Area Bicyclists Association and the
4 1,500-plus WABA members who live in Montgomery
5 County plus the additional thousands of other
6 county residents who joined in actions in support
7 of better bicycling in the region. As an
8 advocate for people who bike but also for
9 pedestrians and transit users, I applaud the plan
10 highlighting the Trend/Challenge No. 9, that the
11 county needs to stop planning for cars only and
12 should emphasize transit, walking, and biking.

13 As we emerge from the COVID crisis,
14 it's even more clear that we will not thrive
15 transportation-wise if we do not emphasize non-
16 auto alternatives to get around the county. This
17 idea is further reinforced by Trend Nos. 11
18 related to health and 12 relating to climate
19 change. We need to take more trips, especially
20 shorter ones, by biking, walking, and taking
21 transit.

22 In addition, the plan's emphasis on

1 equity means we should be planning and
2 implementing ideas that allow county residents
3 who cannot afford to use cars to have reasonable
4 and safe alternatives to the automobile.
5 Moreover, WABA wholeheartedly endorses the plan's
6 commitment to a compact form of development which
7 will facilitate the use of non-auto modes of
8 transportation by placing more jobs and
9 commercial activities in easier reach of county
10 residents.

11 I'm a resident of Forest Estates
12 neighborhood in Silver Spring. And as such, I'm
13 fortunate to be a ten-minute walk from the Metro
14 station. But my neighbors and I still lack truly
15 walkable commercial amenities such as groceries,
16 restaurants which development adjacent to the
17 Forest Glen Metro, for instance, might bring. We
18 also suffer from the lack of safe walkable and
19 bikeable connections from our neighborhood to the
20 Silver Spring and Wheaton CBDs which are both
21 only a few miles away.

22 The neighborhood's children should

1 also have a safe route to get to the public
2 schools that they attend which is now lacking.
3 These problems could be resolved by a full
4 implementation of Goal 4 including a full build
5 out of the county bike master plan and BRT
6 implemented for us along Georgia Avenue. Most
7 residents for the county suffer even more from a
8 lack of walkable, bikeable, and transit
9 connections to commerce and jobs than me and my
10 neighbors.

11 The concepts in the plan we're
12 consider can solve these problems once the plan
13 is approved and funding is provided to implement
14 the solutions the plan proposes such as with
15 Goals 1.1 and 1.2. In summary, WABA calls for
16 the approval of this plan by the Planning Board
17 and the council and then a robust set of
18 legislative and budget initiatives that ensure
19 that the plan is fully realized. Thank you.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
21 for that testimony, Mr. Gray. And next up, we
22 have Ben Ross, author of Dead End among other

1 things. Ben Ross --

2 MR. ROSS: Thank you --

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: -- are you there?

4 MR. ROSS: Yes. Thank you very much
5 for the plug. I'm Ben Ross, resident of Bethesda
6 speaking for myself. I strongly support the
7 direction of Thrive Montgomery. What is still
8 needed, though, is a clearer and more succinct
9 explanation of the need for that direction.

10 You can read the text and get the
11 message that this plan is a course correction and
12 already successful plan and it just is an update
13 in the light of new developments. That's not so.
14 It's true that the county's land use has evolved
15 over the last half century much better than most
16 of our suburban peers.

17 But our successes are due to
18 departures from the 1964 Wedges and Corridors
19 plan as much as they're due to following it. And
20 there are failures which we must acknowledge in
21 order to correct them. The great success of the
22 '64 plan is the wedge, the Agricultural Reserve.

1 But the corridors have succeeded by growing
2 differently from how that plan foresaw them. In
3 the 1964 plan, the high density urbanized centers
4 were built on empty land or farmland outside the
5 beltway. Downtown in Bethesda and Silver Spring
6 were supposed to remain low density commercial
7 districts serving only the surrounding
8 neighborhoods. And also while the plan talked a
9 lot about transit, it really foresaw a county
10 designed around automobile travel.

11 When you look at the drawings of the
12 corridor cities, they're sort of denser versions
13 of Tyson's Corner with wide streets and
14 expressways. So the plan needs to really
15 explicitly acknowledge what went wrong in what we
16 inherit as well as what went right. One thing --
17 one clear thing, a problem that we inherited is
18 office parks along I-270 that are full of empty
19 space. Another is the townhouses and garden
20 apartments that are built in seas of parking
21 lots. This problem really isn't addressed at
22 all. Now they're aging into affordability, but

1 they're really not well adapted to be working
2 class neighborhoods.

3 It's difficult and dangerous to walk
4 to the bus stop or to the store. Children don't
5 have space to play near home. The residents are
6 isolated from surrounding neighborhoods. That's
7 really one of the county's biggest land use
8 failures and the plan as written does not address
9 it. Some of the specifics deal with it, but the
10 analysis doesn't.

11 The promise of the 1964 plan was your
12 neighborhood will never change. That's a concept
13 that we must explicitly reject. We need to
14 change and evolve toward a future of greater
15 variety, greater interconnectedness, and great
16 sustainability. We need bridges, not buffers,
17 change in place of stasis, walkability rather
18 than high speed traffic, mixing of people and
19 activities instead of single use zones. Thank
20 you very much. And in my written testimony, I
21 have a bunch of specific comments on individual
22 items.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
2 for that testimony. Liz Brent who I see right
3 there. You're up.

4 MS. BRENT: Thank you for the
5 opportunity. Mr. Ross, you're a hard act to
6 follow and I'm reading your book right now. My
7 name is Liz Brent. I have lived in Downtown
8 Silver Spring for 24 years.

9 I'm the broker and owner of Go Brent
10 Real Estate. I'm also the founder of the
11 nonprofit, Silver Spring Cares. I strongly
12 support the housing goals of Thrive 2050, in
13 particular, additional density through
14 multifamily housing such as duplexes and
15 triplexes.

16 The lack of market rate housing has
17 reached a crisis point in Silver Spring. This is
18 a problem that has been building for many years.
19 We know from the report that the share of
20 householders living alone has increased, and the
21 traditional family type, married couples with
22 children under the age of 18, has decreased.

1 People simply do not want to leave. I see that
2 in both my work life and personal life. Fifteen
3 fellow moms that were in the trenches with me
4 raising kids, all empty nesters, all in single
5 family detached homes, all walkable to Downtown
6 Silver Spring, not one has plans to move.

7 They would consider moving in the
8 area, but there's really no options on where to
9 move to as far as housing styles. So they stay
10 in their houses that are too big for them.
11 Homeowners in smaller houses then can't move up,
12 so they renovate and expand their small houses.
13 And we lose those small homes forever which makes
14 it harder for condo owners because they have
15 fewer move-up options.

16 Small homes in poor condition are torn
17 down and replaced with homes that cost 1.3
18 million and above. And we forever lose the
19 opportunity to provide multifamily homes on that
20 same lot. It's a vicious circle, and the circle
21 keeps tightening. A cottage for sale recently
22 garnered 22 offers. So that means there were 21

1 extra buyers in the price point range of 850,000
2 to 925,000 dollars.

3 Another recent listing had 16 offers.
4 There were 15 extra buyers that lost out on a
5 simple 1940s red brick colonial. Those buyers
6 were willing to pay between 700,000 dollars and
7 775,000 dollars.

8 Eighteen offers on a home in the
9 500,000-dollar range a block off of Colesville
10 Road a mile outside the beltway. Ten offers on a
11 house priced in the 600s just outside the
12 beltway. You get the point.

13 Thrive 2050 calls for a comprehensive
14 review of impediments to increasing the housing
15 supply, a will to change current policies when
16 necessary, and an acceptance by all that more
17 housing and new residents are a benefit to the
18 county and the region. I agree with all of that
19 except for changing current policies when
20 necessary. Our county is way past necessary.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: I'm having a problem

1 unmuting myself. Thank you very much for that
2 testimony, though. It was great. Dan Wilhelm,
3 are you there? I see you.

4 MR. WILHELM: I'm on mute.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oops, Dan. Oh, there
6 you go.

7 MR. WILHELM: Can you hear me?

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Now you're unmuted.
9 Great. Nice to see you.

10 MR. WILHELM: I can see you too.
11 Anyway, for the record, I'm Dan Wilhelm,
12 President of the Greater Colesville Citizens
13 Association. The SSP and the impact legislation
14 that was passed on Monday forms a major step
15 towards addressing the implementation of the
16 challenges found in the document being addressed
17 today.

18 We thank the Planning Board and the
19 staff for making the far reaching proposals you
20 provide to the council and actively supporting
21 them through 19 work sessions. I didn't realize
22 it was that many. Various council members

1 indicated at multiple times that these two
2 legislative actions were the most important for
3 the entire year except dealing with the pandemic.
4 We strongly support that. We thank you and the
5 Planning Board for all your support on that.

6 Our testimony was provided
7 electronically, and we will only cover a few
8 highlights during the oral testimony. There are
9 many good ideas in the draft plan. After reading
10 166 pages, we found it hard to, at times, point
11 out many goals and policies where we disagree.
12 On the other hand, we also found it difficult to
13 point out the thrust. Rather, it is more like a
14 collection of ideas from multiple different
15 people put together with minimum organization and
16 focus. Our comments are intended to fill two
17 purposes. One, identify proposals that we
18 support or opposed and also to provide
19 suggestions for improving the document in terms
20 of organization and focus.

21 The 12 trends and challenges topic is
22 generally good and they should form the basis of

1 the goals and policies provided later in the
2 document. However, the seven trends need to be
3 separated from the five challenges. The most
4 important challenges should be identified first.

5 We think that the three overarching
6 challenges facing the county must be -- where the
7 county must be successful are economic
8 development, efficient mobility other than
9 driving, and the environment. We agree that
10 housing is a challenge. But addressing the three
11 prior challenges will go a long way towards
12 addressing that, particularly with complete
13 communities.

14 The regional solutions is not a
15 challenge but rather part of an element. The
16 subject of equity should be included in the list
17 of challenges. The major themes on pages 36 to
18 44 need to be linked back to the five challenges
19 and form the basis for the elements that follow
20 it.

21 One vehicle for starting addressing
22 all five challenges is the complete communities

1 which we would -- which should be applied to the
2 desired growth community centers. We don't agree
3 that there should be a lot of development between
4 the centers along the corridors. Existing single
5 family housing between these centers will largely
6 remain unchanged since large numbers of
7 individual homeowners will not be converting
8 them. The redevelopment will largely occur in
9 existing retail centers and older multifamily
10 houses. For the themes --

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: I have to ask you to
12 wrap it up. I'm sorry.

13 MR. WILHELM: Okay. I --

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: You're over three
15 minutes.

16 MR. WILHELM: Okay. I'm basically
17 finished. For each of the themes, tax needs to
18 be added to explain the trends and challenges.
19 And I'll stop at that point. Thank you for your
20 time.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you very
22 much. I appreciate that, and I'm sorry to have

1 to cut you short a little bit. James Olson from
2 AIM, how have you been?

3 (No audible response.)

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oops, you're muted.
5 Mr. Olson, you're muted.

6 MR. OLSON: Can you hear me now?

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: There you go, yeah.

8 MR. OLSON: All right. Sorry. Yeah,
9 I'm fine. My name is James Olson, and I'm
10 testifying on behalf of Action in Montgomery or
11 AIM. You should look at AIM's written testimony
12 for our more complete comments. AIM is a
13 nonpartisan organization of almost 30 faith and
14 civic institutions in Montgomery County which
15 have come together to help solve pressing social
16 issues. Since its founding 20 years ago, AIM has
17 been involved in efforts to address the
18 increasingly severe housing problem in the
19 county. AIM agrees with the draft General Plan
20 that the county is not producing enough housing
21 and in particular, enough affordable housing.

22 While this is a region-wide problem,

1 Montgomery County consistently lags most other
2 jurisdictions in the rate of new residential
3 construction with a substantial drop in the rate
4 of addition of housing units over the past
5 decade. Partially due to the lack of production,
6 number of cost burden renters in the county
7 reached slightly over 40 percent by 2016. The
8 draft plan generally heads in the right direction
9 that more should be done given this situation.

10 More emphasis should be given to the
11 provision of decent housing as a right for all
12 citizens in the county. In addition, the plan
13 should more explicitly address the need for
14 increased racial and economic integration in the
15 county's housing pattern. Today, most areas of
16 the county are highly segregated, both racially
17 and by income.

18 One step among many toward remedying
19 the situation would be to amend the zoning code
20 to allow more missing middle housing to be built
21 throughout the county. As mentioned, the draft
22 proposes policies and actions that AIM supports.

1 We agree that the MPDU program should be
2 strengthened, including to incentivize the
3 creation of more large units.

4 Pilots should be used where necessary
5 to ensure the development of affordable housing,
6 and the HIF should be expanded and leveraged to
7 produce more affordable housing. In that regard,
8 the HIF can be used in conjunction with use of
9 the county's bonding authority, both to support
10 new construction and to preserve existing market
11 rate affordable housing with particular attention
12 to properties near the Purple Line.

13 The proposal to create an inventory of
14 all vacant and unutilized public lands is long
15 overdue. And priorities should be given to
16 considering the use of such land for affordable
17 housing. Public agencies should also be required
18 to consider possibilities for co-location of
19 affordable housing when deciding to build.

20 Finally, the county should develop
21 mechanisms to encourage and support the
22 development of affordable housing by faith-based

1 institutions and other nonprofits. The
2 affordable housing crisis is such that all of the
3 steps listed above and many more are necessary to
4 reverse the current trend and help create a
5 situation where all residents of the county are
6 able to enjoy decent and affordable housing.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
9 Is Salim Furth there?

10 MR. FURTH: Yes. Good evening. Can
11 you hear me?

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes. Whenever you're
13 ready.

14 MR. FURTH: Thank you so much. My
15 name is Salim Furth. I'm a Takoma Park resident
16 and an urban economist. And I want to first note
17 that my remarks do not necessarily represent the
18 views of my employer. Thank you for the
19 excellent and thorough work you've done in
20 preparing this comprehensive plan. Complete
21 communities is an attractive and attainable
22 organizing principle and strikes a reasonable

1 balance among several important priorities. I'm
2 sure you know my neighborhood in Takoma Park.
3 It's the site of a 15-year battle over the fate
4 of a small surface parking lot. And I want to
5 make three quick suggestions which are related to
6 that, though not driven by it.

7 So first is the county should keep its
8 eye on process. Envisioning outcomes is great,
9 but the county is not generally the primary
10 actor. And given its regulatory role, county
11 planning should emphasize process which does
12 control. And a review of county regulatory
13 process should aim to provide developers with
14 certainty and clarity, the duration of the
15 process, what is and isn't allowed, and all the
16 monetary costs they should be able to expect. So
17 the new school impact fee schedules is a great
18 step in that direction.

19 Community input should be primarily at
20 the planning phase as we're doing today and
21 should not be required for projects that fit into
22 the planning vision for an area. And for

1 adaptive reuse especially processes most of the
2 ball game. The building is there and the
3 question is whether that process can move fast
4 enough to make it worthwhile.

5 Secondly, I was surprised to see so
6 little written in the plan about parking
7 requirements. I support the complete removal of
8 parking requirements in the entire county. And
9 at a minimum, there should be no parking minimums
10 for the reuse of existing structures.

11 Third and finally, I think the county
12 should reconsider its enthusiasm for reserving
13 land for production distribution and repair.
14 Functionally, right, this keeps land cheaper for
15 those favored land uses. In theory, those could
16 include light manufacturing. In reality, it's
17 going to be warehouses, serve and delivery, and
18 big box retail. And although I'm very grateful
19 for Amazon, especially this year, I don't think
20 it should have preferential access to land.
21 Small businesses have a hard enough time
22 competing without a tilted playing field via a

1 land use regulation. So thank you so much for
2 your excellent work and for your time this
3 evening.

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that
5 testimony. Appreciate that very much. Is
6 Jeffrey Mosley there from Coalition Homes and
7 Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless?

8 MR. MOSLEY: Yes.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, there you are.

10 MR. MOSLEY: Good evening. Yes, I've
11 been here all the time.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Nice to see you.

13 MR. MOSLEY: Thanks for -- it's good
14 to see you as well. My name is Jeff Mosley. I'm
15 the chief real estate officer for the Montgomery
16 County Coalition for the Homeless and director of
17 its affiliate, Coalition Homes.

18 The Montgomery County Coalition for
19 the Homeless provides solutions in the county to
20 ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and
21 nonreoccurring. This mission is underscored by a
22 vision to build a community where everyone has a

1 safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.
2 Coalition Home's mission is to expand the supply
3 of permanent supportive housing.

4 MCCH and Coalition Homes are a member
5 of the Montgomery Housing Alliance which you'll
6 hear from later tonight, and we support their
7 platform. We're also a member partner with
8 Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County who
9 you'll hear from shortly. I also support
10 Montgomery for All platform. I'm here to support
11 the goals and objectives of Thrive Montgomery
12 2050 but definitely encourage the plan to do
13 more, particularly for those who are struggling
14 with homelessness.

15 Last year, MCCH served almost 890
16 single adults operating in the men's shelter
17 program. Ninety-eight percent of those
18 households in the permanent supportive housing
19 programs last year did not return to
20 homelessness, increasing our annual housing
21 stability rate, showing the promise and need for
22 support in this area. Coalition Homes itself

1 operates 181 units of permanent supportive
2 housing for individuals and families struggling
3 with homelessness.

4 There were a few key areas where
5 Thrive Montgomery 2050 must give greater
6 attention; shelter space, permanent supportive
7 housing, and rental assistance. HHS, Housing and
8 Human Services, currently estimates that shelter
9 capacity should be between 250 and 400 beds. In
10 this time of COVID and space distance
11 requirements and anticipated housing evictions
12 and county growth, Thrive 2050 must ensure that
13 sufficient planning is dedicated to the shelter
14 capacity for men, women, and families.

15 For permanent support of housing and
16 rental assistance, permanent supportive housing
17 is a critical element of the housing continuum
18 needed to reliably support residents with no to
19 very low incomes. Currently, the county
20 estimates that there's a need for 80 additional
21 permanent supportive housing units. We need to
22 ensure that there is sufficient stock for these

1 residents. We rely on and expect that the
2 Department of Housing and Community Affairs
3 financing program such as the HIF will help
4 increase that portfolio.

5 Finally, I want to give point to the
6 need for racial equity and social justice
7 attention in the plan. African Americans, Latinx
8 and other people of color are overrepresented in
9 our shelters, the affordable housing that we
10 provide. We applaud that the county's racial
11 equity and social justice program requires that
12 each department and office develop a racial
13 equity and social justice plan. It is hoped that
14 this new filter will help ensure that those who
15 are most marginalized will get the attention and
16 needed resources to meet the goals and objectives
17 of this master plan. Thank you for your time and
18 giving me the opportunity to share these
19 observations.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
21 for that testimony. Oh, I also want to mention
22 that you're not required to turn off your camera.

1 But if you're done speaking and you don't turn
2 off your camera, there's going to be a lot of
3 people who can see you while you're watching the
4 rest of the testimony. So just heads up on that.
5 I mean, it's the same thing as if you came here
6 in person, right? If you were sitting in the
7 front row, you'd probably still be on camera.
8 But just sometimes people forget that, so I just
9 wanted to remind everybody. Who have we got
10 next? John Paukstis from Habitat from Humanity,
11 I believe he's here.

12 MR. MOSLEY: He was here.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, I saw him on
14 camera a little while ago.

15 MR. PAUKSTIS: I lost my --

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, now --

17 MR. PAUKSTIS: -- connection. I'm on.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, I see. Okay,
19 great. Well, we're ready for you on the phone or
20 on video or however you want to do it.

21 MR. PAUKSTIS: Great. My name is John
22 Paukstis. I'm the President and CEO of Habitat

1 for Humanity Metro Maryland. We are a nonprofit
2 providing affordable housing, working to provide
3 equitable access to homeownership in Montgomery
4 County since 1982.

5 Habitat for Humanity is extremely
6 pleased with the Thrive 2050 draft. We applaud
7 the planning staff for lifting up housing as a
8 right for all people for highlighting the
9 importance of housing in addressing racial
10 inequities and supporting increased density along
11 transit corridors. Segregated neighborhoods have
12 led to incalculable inequalities in wealth,
13 policing, education, health, and access to high
14 quality transit, green space, and other important
15 amenities.

16 It is critical that as a county we
17 implement policies that ensure housing
18 affordability at all income levels in all
19 communities. We must also ensure that affordable
20 housing includes both rental and ownership
21 opportunities. Habitat is particularly concerned
22 that the homeownership gap between White and

1 Black households and between White and Latinx
2 households, a gap of 36 points and 22 points
3 respectively.

4 Habitat strongly supports the actions
5 of Section 5.1.9 that encourages the inclusion of
6 programs that provide financial education credit
7 training to young adults. The county can also
8 reduce homeownership gap by increasing
9 opportunities to build missing middle housing.

10 Habitat strongly supports rezoning on transit
11 corridors throughout the county to allow for
12 affordable housing options, including duplexes,
13 triplexes, ADUs, quads, and garden style
14 apartments.

15 All families should have the
16 opportunity to live near their jobs, public
17 transit, and high quality schools and amenities.
18 Through its work with older adults, individuals
19 with disabilities, Habitat has seen a significant
20 need for accessible housing across the county.
21 Nonprofits often play a critical role in
22 providing accessibility modifications but are

1 unable to access tax credit incentives.

2 The county must ensure that there's
3 both funding available and tax and non-tax
4 incentives in place to encourage retrofits of
5 existing housing and the development of
6 accessible homes. More broadly, Montgomery
7 County needs more housing, especially at levels
8 affordable to lower income households. The
9 county can help affordable housing providers by
10 increasing the Housing Initiative Fund,
11 streamlining the entitlement process, utilizing
12 right of first refusal for both rental and
13 homeownership opportunities, and providing
14 flexible zoning, creating an affordable housing
15 ombudsman, reducing costs to build, and
16 prioritizing land for housing. Thank you very
17 much.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you very
19 much. Appreciate that. Caroline Taylor from
20 Countryside Alliance. Are you there, Ms. Taylor?

21 MS. TAYLOR: I am. Hi, I'm here. For
22 the record, Caroline Taylor. I'm here on behalf

1 of Montgomery Countryside Alliance. And in the
2 spirit of Thanksgiving, I'd like to start by
3 offering sincere appreciation for Planning
4 Director Wright and the Thrive 2050 staff who
5 took the time to visit us in the Agricultural
6 Reserve to learn more about the diverse
7 landscape, our community, and our pursuits.

8 I bring good news from the Reserve.
9 Our farmers have stepped up to meet the growing
10 need to support community members affected by
11 COVID-19 by donating and supplying tens of
12 thousands of pounds of food. We're grateful that
13 the new and expanding farm operations have been
14 assisted through grant funding for PPE and
15 additional production to supply food relief.

16 Moreover, the pandemic has brought an
17 amazing uptick in participation in Land Link
18 Montgomery. We've added 19 farmers and support
19 organizations such as AFRA Thrive to the program
20 alone this year. The Reserve will play a central
21 role to our future resilience. We are grateful
22 for solid recommendations from colleagues such as

1 Conservation Montgomery, West Montgomery Citizens
2 Association, Montgomery for All, TAME Coalition,
3 Darnestown, and the Audubon Naturalist Society.
4 We'll send further comments in by the December
5 10th deadline.

6 Taking note that so much of what we do
7 with regard to land use planning is driven by
8 metrics. I offer a revelatory number. A single
9 mature oak provides habitat for 200 species, 280
10 species of invertebrates. This one statistic
11 underscores the importance of biodiversity and
12 the need to understand and take into account the
13 complex nature of the living world that sustains
14 us.

15 We've set big important goals for our
16 future, including carbon emission reduction, zero
17 waste, equity, affordability so that we might
18 truly thrive. The only way that we'll be able to
19 meet these goals is by building and maintaining a
20 strong relationship between our government and
21 citizens. We have to do this together. This
22 will demand open communication, mutual respect,

1 and civility. Sadly, we are in a number of ways
2 a microcosm of what we see at the national level
3 where the disintegration of mutual respect and
4 its adversarial posturing overshadows and
5 disturbs or working relationship. Those of us
6 who come before this Board are not your
7 adversaries. We're residents, organizations,
8 businesses that care deeply.

9 We do not ask that you agree with us,
10 but we should be afforded civility and respect.
11 So know this. We see comments on decision
12 makers' social media that level name calling such
13 as NIMBYs or worse. And when we witness this in
14 conduct and hearings and elsewhere that create a
15 chilling effect, in inhibits public
16 participation. The planning staff should be
17 afforded consistent professional regard and
18 respect. And I trust we'll strive to do better,
19 and we'll do our best to work with you. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Katherine
22 Lucas McKay, are you there?

1 MS. LUCAS MCKAY: I am.

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: We hear you, I think.

3 MS. LUCAS MCKAY: Yes, you can hear
4 me?

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: There you go. Yes,
6 we can hear you. Go ahead whenever you're ready.

7 MS. LUCAS MCKAY: Thank you. I'm
8 Katherine Lucas McKay. My wife and I moved to
9 Silver Spring in 2013, then renting downtown. We
10 are now homeowners living off of 16th Street.
11 I'm disabled and drive less than once a week.
12 That plays a huge role in my experience in the
13 community. And while I'm here in my personal
14 capacity as a resident, I am the secretary of the
15 Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board. And my
16 understanding of our community's needs is deeply
17 informed by that experience.

18 My main point for you is that while
19 this plan uses the right set of objectives,
20 specifically becoming more racially equitable,
21 planning for people instead of vehicles,
22 identifying and growing compactly, prioritizing

1 housing affordability, and adapting to climate
2 change, it lacks key milestones for the next 30
3 years. How long is too long to wait for
4 progress? And it also lacks success metrics. It
5 leaves out a number of critical specifics.

6 Before I get into them, I want to say
7 I plan to live here in 2050. By then, I want the
8 county to be more racially and socioeconomically
9 integrated with fewer economic and health
10 disparities between all demographic groups,
11 larger in population, more affordable for
12 families, the best county in the state for low
13 income kids upward economic mobility, less
14 hostile both legally, economically, and
15 culturally to renters, more accessible to first
16 time home buyers. It took us many years.

17 We moved here in 2013. We bought in
18 2019. And we make the median income. More
19 accessible to first time home buyers, less car-
20 centric and more safety walkable everywhere,
21 greener climate resilience, stable -- home to
22 stable and thriving businesses and dynamic large

1 businesses, a place with thousands more good
2 quality jobs than today, and an appropriate
3 amount of new houses at all price levels
4 everywhere that they're needed, and that the
5 county that will be an easier place to grow old
6 and live independently for disabled folks.

7 There are a few ways that the master
8 plan can support those goals that currently fall
9 short. I mention the lack of milestones and
10 success metrics. We as residents need those but
11 so do policymakers and planners. Similarly,
12 there's not an analysis of the levels and types
13 of remedies that are needed to achieve the vision
14 and the objectives of the plan. It should but
15 does not yet identify quantifiable metrics for
16 racial equity across a variety of dimensions.
17 And that would be really helpful for future
18 decision makers.

19 The plan does prioritize
20 identification of residential neighborhoods which
21 is great. But it did not do enough to prioritize
22 adding housing in existing higher income

1 residential areas which is really key to
2 socioeconomic integration or consider what
3 changes to current residential development
4 regulation could help achieve the plan's
5 objectives. That phrase appears once while
6 zoning changes are mentioned 78 times.

7 And then finally one thing that is not
8 yet there at all is a commitment by the county to
9 ensure that development does not cause physical
10 or cultural displacement or existing vulnerable
11 communities. That is something that the county
12 has worked on which should make an explicit
13 commitment to. You can do it through more
14 proactive engagement with leaders in those
15 communities from the start of planning processes
16 all the way through to the end, prioritizing BRT
17 and making cycling and walking safer and
18 investing in housing preservation alongside
19 housing growth.

20 That is a really critical thing for
21 the future affordability and inclusiveness of our
22 communities and should be central to part of the

1 -- to the Thrive plan. So just to wrap up here,
2 I have lived in 11 cities in 36 years, and this
3 is the first and only place I just fell in love
4 with. I'm invested here in Silver Spring and in
5 Montgomery County for the long term, and that's
6 why I want to see the plan tweaked a bit to be
7 more specific and address those issues. But
8 overall, it's great and I look forward to living
9 in the county that it envisions. I also cosign
10 everything that Ms. Brent said earlier. Thank
11 you again. It was wonderful to have this
12 opportunity to speak.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks so much for
14 testifying. Is Maureen O'Neill there?

15 MS. O'NEILL: Hi there.

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: There we go.

17 MS. O'NEILL: Hi there. Thank you.

18 I am Maureen O'Neill. I'm speaking at the
19 encouragement of the Coalition for Smarter
20 Growth. I moved with my family to Montgomery
21 County after living many years in Hong Kong. We
22 did not own a car in Hong Kong and hoped to live

1 in the U.S. without a car, partially for economic
2 reasons and partially for environmental reasons.
3 We decided to live in Downtown Bethesda as it
4 seemed like a place you could live without a car.
5 It has proven to be very convenient indeed to
6 live here. And other than work, we have very few
7 reasons to leave Bethesda to meet our daily
8 needs.

9 However, our life in Bethesda comes at
10 a very high economic cost as the rent is very
11 expensive here. Other more affordable areas in
12 Montgomery County develop similarly around Metro
13 stations, providing urban density in areas
14 adjacent to transit, and a resulting growth of
15 business to support transit-based neighborhoods.
16 Encouraging high density housing and retail
17 development adjacent to mass transit makes sense
18 and will allow other families like my own who
19 wish to live without a car to be able to afford
20 this environmentally beneficial choice. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

1 Is Ray Heinsman there? We can hear you, but
2 you're a little soft. Can you hear us, Ray?

3 (No audible response.)

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: We'll try calling you
5 back and we'll go to Susan Spock. Is Susan Spock
6 there?

7 MS. SPOCK: Hi. Here I am. Thank
8 you, Chairman Anderson. My name is Susan Spock.
9 I'm a resident of Bethesda. And thank you for
10 allowing me to express my views and those of my
11 husband, Caldwell Harrop. There's a lot to like
12 about the plan, and we endorse the goals of the
13 plan, equity, environmental, economy. And we
14 applaud the plan's hope to expand transit,
15 walking, and biking. We believe we must promote
16 energy wise cars and find alternatives to
17 driving.

18 But I'm here today to discuss the
19 concept that the county should, quote, plan for
20 people and not cars, which sounds catchy. But
21 people actually drive cars, and the plan goes too
22 far in the false belief that by limiting roads

1 and parking, people will stop wanting or needing
2 to use cars. Cars are a necessary tool for many
3 people and purposes, and the county needs to
4 recognize that and plan accordingly.

5 My husband and I are fortunate to live
6 in a walkable area with good access to mass
7 transit. My husband has biked to work for 26
8 years, and I've worked from home. We can and do
9 walk often to stores, doctor appointments,
10 restaurants, and the library.

11 Unlike most of my friends, we've taken
12 buses including Ride On and Metro buses and the
13 Metro frequently. But nevertheless, we also use
14 our one car for many purposes. I've detailed my
15 residents rely on cars in my written testimony
16 which I hope you will read because it makes many
17 points I do not have time to cover here. The
18 Thrive plan's approach is a little bit too
19 draconian. It's too one size fits all. The
20 suburban and rural areas of the county cannot now
21 access mass transit easily. And although we
22 strongly support improving transit in those

1 areas, the cost to service them is staggering and
2 prohibitive.

3 The idea that people will substitute
4 biking for cars is beneficial for the very
5 powerful bike lobby but impractical for the
6 growing numbers of seniors and many families in
7 the county. And it's difficult in rain, snow,
8 and extreme heat, all of which are common here.
9 We therefore strongly object to the idea that
10 parking should be restricted near Metro stations
11 and bus stops. If we want people to access
12 transit, they need to drive there sometimes.

13 We also object to the idea that left
14 turn lanes should be eliminated. Certainly it's
15 important to allow pedestrians and bikes to cross
16 roads safely but also important to eliminate the
17 traffic congestion that at least before COVID hit
18 was choking the county's economy and family life.
19 The concept that everyone can move around the
20 county without cars is a pretty vision but it is
21 illusory and a dangerous way to plan for the
22 county as a whole.

1 Because the statements in the Thrive
2 plan will be used to design the master plans for
3 the next 30 days, eliminating parking and roads
4 but never adding enough transit will cause just
5 frustration. We are not New York City. We live
6 in a largely suburban and spread out area
7 difficult to manage, and we hope you will plan it
8 more realistically. I know that's not too
9 popular, but I believe that we have to just be
10 more pragmatic in our planning. Thank you so
11 much for my time.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
13 Oh, we have somebody who skipped earlier because
14 she was not on, Rosie Alger. And after that, we
15 will take a break from Session 2 for about half
16 an hour to have dinner before Session 3. But
17 let's hear from Rosie Alger. Are you there?

18 MS. ALGER: I am. Thanks so much for
19 having me. Good afternoon -- evening, and thank
20 you. My name is Rosie Alger, and I live in
21 Downtown Silver Spring. I support the direct of
22 Thrive 2050, especially in diversifying housing

1 and creating equitable house and transportation
2 opportunities. I move to Silver -- or to
3 Montgomery County in 2018 so that I could work in
4 the theater industry and education in Bethesda.
5 I've loved living here, but I certainly was able
6 to make that happen because of my family support
7 and privilege.

8 The wages that made during that
9 position does not support the cost of living in
10 Downtown Silver Spring. And I'm fortunate to
11 have a roommate who had a salary position who's
12 able to cover a lot of the costs. Her work is in
13 D.C. and she needed Metro and transit access, and
14 any housing that we could find within walkable
15 distance of the Metro pushed the boundaries of
16 our budget.

17 Again, I've been able to get some
18 support from my family during particularly rough
19 patches such as during the pandemic. But many
20 who do not have my level of privilege would not
21 have been able to do the same thing. In
22 addition, the lack of reliable transit between

1 Silver Spring and Bethesda means that I either
2 had to ride the Red Line down and around for over
3 an hour to get to work or drive. I am very
4 fortunate to have a car that was given to me by
5 my grandmother, but I certainly would not have
6 been able to afford a car on my own. The Purple
7 Line is a great step in the right direction. But
8 additional transit is needed around Montgomery
9 County if we want to encourage people of all
10 economic backgrounds and racial or ethnic
11 backgrounds to live and work here.

12 I also have coworkers making the same
13 amount of money as me but were part of minority
14 groups and did not have the same safety net that
15 I have. They were often forced to commute much
16 longer distances from out of the county in order
17 to find housing that they could afford. I also
18 have a few friends who grew up in Montgomery
19 County and live in the suburbs of Silver Spring.
20 The difference in the structure of communities
21 even from downtown to a friend's house in the
22 suburbs is striking. Not only is there no public

1 transportation at all, but houses that are there
2 are suddenly single family, very large, and very
3 expensive. Not surprisingly, these communities
4 are almost all exclusively White.

5 I believe that the Thrive 2050 plan
6 would help strengthen our community connections
7 between different areas of the county. I also
8 work in education and I know that many higher
9 income families move to Montgomery County to take
10 advantage of its world class education system. I
11 would love to see more families of mixed income
12 levels be able to benefit from all that
13 Montgomery County has to offer its students
14 rather than it being edged out of the housing
15 market by wealthier families from out of town.

16 In conclusion, I would like to see
17 more housing options and efforts to desegregate
18 communities within Montgomery County. More needs
19 to be done to ensure equitable opportunities for
20 all residents and citizens. And I support Thrive
21 2050's plan for making the county more affordable
22 and diverse. Thank you for your time.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. So as I
2 said, that wraps up Session 2. We'll come back
3 for Session 3. And if we could get Board members
4 to please log in by say 6:15 or so, we'll try to
5 get that going as quickly as possible. That will
6 leave a little less than half an hour for dinner.
7 We have 40 people in the last section signed up.
8 So give or take, that'll be a couple hours. So
9 get some dinner and get recharged. And we'll see
10 you at 6:15.

11 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
12 went off the record at 5:52 p.m. and resumed at
13 6:38 p.m.)

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: We're back from
15 dinner and ready for the third session of the
16 Thrive 2050 public hearing. We have about 40
17 people testifying. So if we do this efficiently,
18 that'll be a little over two hours. First up, we
19 have Dave Scull. Mr. Scull, are you there?

20 (No audible response.)

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: You might need to
22 press *6.

1 MR. SCULL: I did. Can you hear me?

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. You're in.

3 Yes, we can hear you.

4 MR. SCULL: Mr. Chairman and members,
5 thank you very much. I'm Dave Scull, a lawyer in
6 Bethesda, a regular volunteer on County Trails,
7 and an enthusiastic biker and hiker. But most
8 important, I'm the son of Elizabeth Scull who
9 during her years on the County Council in the
10 '70s sponsored the massive down zoning that
11 created the Ag Reserve of which we're all very
12 proud.

13 And she was very enthusiastic about
14 recreation. And were she still here, I'm sure
15 she would be testifying in favor of greater
16 recreational use of the Reserve. I spend as much
17 time as I can there biking and walking, and we
18 all know that the pandemic has tripled the number
19 of people in the outdoors.

20 And so I would urge the Commission to
21 tilt its budget in the direction of more
22 recreational use of the Reserve, especially

1 trails. And I'm sure there are plenty of
2 volunteers who would be happy to help that cause.
3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much for
5 that testimony. Next we have Mauricio Quintero-
6 Aviles. Are you there?

7 MR. QUINTERO-AVILES: Hello?

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.
9 You can go ahead whenever you're ready.

10 MR. QUINTERO-AVILES: Good morning.
11 My name is Mauricio Quintero-Aviles, and I'm here
12 testifying for an equitable Montgomery County. I
13 want to begin by thanking the Board members for
14 organizing Thrive 2050. Their work is ensuring a
15 more inclusive, diverse county because of their
16 emphasis on affordable housing.

17 I first have been impacted by the
18 housing segregation in Montgomery County. My
19 whole life, I have grown up in a predominately
20 White community. It was rare for me to see
21 people who look like me.

22 It is impossible to promote a diverse

1 county when our county is segregated by expensive
2 single home, predominately white areas, and
3 diverse urban areas. Affordable housing is
4 something that should be available in all parts
5 of our county. Commute times are one of the most
6 prominent examples of how this segregation
7 affects largely people of color.

8 Residents who live in East County have
9 longer commute times than residents of other
10 parts. Racism and classism can only be defeated
11 through exposure. Our future generation has to
12 interact with members of all backgrounds, not
13 just people who look or are like them. It is up
14 for us to ensure a fair and equitable Montgomery
15 County for decades to come, and it all starts
16 with affordable housing.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
18 Benjamin Keel, are you there?

19 (No audible response.)

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Benjamin Keel?

21 MR. KEEL: Hello?

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

1 MR. KEEL: All right. Good evening to
2 the Planning Board, and thank you for your time
3 tonight. I'm Ben. I work in Downtown Silver
4 Spring. I got a job there first time out of
5 college, and I have been renting a room in a
6 group home in Silver Spring for about four years
7 now.

8 I'm calling tonight in support of the
9 Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, specifically the top
10 line support of attainable housing for all income
11 levels and the evolution of single family
12 neighborhoods near transit. I support these
13 items because I like the community that I live
14 in. I bike to work. I can catch a train or a
15 bus to almost anywhere. And I live among very
16 kind neighbors.

17 However, it's expensive and neither I
18 nor my roommates currently see a good path for
19 growth in Montgomery County, I mean at least
20 without moving further up the highway corridor or
21 away from the Metro, getting a car, changing my
22 career to a more lucrative field, or I could find

1 probably in other counties or a state at a more
2 efficient rate. But I mean my Maryland driver's
3 license doesn't expire for another six years. So
4 I would like to stick around.

5 Yet currently, our individual
6 situations at least in my house are about 50
7 percent of varying median income for the D.C.
8 area between 40 and 50,000 a year. And the
9 average rent close to a Metro station or popular
10 bus stop on Georgia Avenue sucks up about half or
11 more of our month's pay. If we want to move out
12 further and even save up for residential
13 ownership of an average Montgomery County home,
14 it'd take over 25 years to save a healthy down
15 payment on those houses, but even if we --- and
16 that's if our wages and home prices stay flat.

17 Duplexes and other ways of introducing
18 density in single family neighborhoods close to
19 transit would increase the supply of what the
20 county needs and hopefully better maintain or
21 reduce costs of even older places, the ones that
22 I'd be more than fine with renting. These

1 changes would open up opportunities for a variety
2 of professionals like me who would want to live
3 close to transit and stay for their future --
4 more new employees somewhere to live.

5 I must recommend the most affordable
6 places within Montgomery County but then require
7 car and leave them with no savings. Attainable
8 housing and evolution of single family
9 neighborhoods near transit will help each of
10 those goals in the long run. I look forward to
11 these long-term changes promoted by the new
12 General Plan, and thanks again.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
14 Is Carol Toth there?

15 MS. TOTH: Yes.

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: We can hear you.

17 MS. TOTH: Do you hear me?

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, you can go ahead

19 --

20 MS. TOTH: Okay.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: -- whenever you're
22 ready.

1 MS. TOTH: Thank you. My name is
2 Carol Toth, and I have been a resident of
3 Montgomery County for 17 years in the Cloverly
4 area. This is a highly diverse community with a
5 mixture of townhouses and single family homes.
6 While I appreciate that Montgomery County has
7 been working for several years to tackle issues
8 of affordable housing and climate change, I think
9 we're at a point given the COVID crisis where the
10 county needs to like pause in the implementation
11 of the Thrive program and allow its constituents
12 time to adjust financially to the crisis that
13 we're currently in.

14 The initial master plans for MoCo were
15 written with great care as the county was built
16 out, taking 40 to 50 years to slowly build out
17 the county, creating housing options, providing
18 community amenities, and a variety of
19 transportation options, all while trying to
20 protect the important watersheds that are so
21 crucial to the success of this area. In fact,
22 the obvious care that was taken in creating the

1 master plan was one of the reasons why my husband
2 and I chose to live in this county.

3 Now I certainly understand your
4 concerns that need to be addressed in the next 25
5 years. However, the plan to rezone existing
6 communities and increase density to create the
7 complete community is very concerning for the
8 Cloverly master plan area, which is a less dense
9 suburban area. The plan needs to fully develop
10 how it will implement less and less dense
11 suburban areas and how far it intends to urbanize
12 the New Hampshire area corridor.

13 Additionally, I am also concerned
14 about the effect of the Thrive program on
15 property taxes. Comet has dramatically changed
16 the transportation patterns of people. The
17 transportation corridors through MoCo are
18 actually manageable now during rush hour as is
19 beltway traffic.

20 Most people now work from home, thus
21 proving that their job is capable of continuing
22 from a home office situation. This will likely

1 encourage businesses to consolidate office space
2 and allow more workers to work from home even
3 once the pandemic is over. Thus less automobiles
4 on the road mean less harmful emissions, and the
5 goals of environmental sustainability are
6 furthered.

7 The COVID pandemic has created a
8 dramatic impact on Montgomery County with over 70
9 restaurants having closed, movie theaters have
10 largely gone out of business, and many employees
11 have lost their jobs. So at this point, I think
12 we just needed time to kind of regroup and figure
13 out whether the same issues are current issues
14 post-pandemic. Thank you.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Is Scott
16 Plumer there? I think you just muted yourself
17 but looks like you're back. Can you hear us?

18 MR. PLUMER: I'm here.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, okay. We can
20 hear you. Very good.

21 MR. PLUMER: Sorry about that. We
22 have a slide for IT to put up on the screen if

1 possible.

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, he's --

3 MR. PLUMER: Thank you all. Hello
4 everyone.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Dominique is working
6 on that right now.

7 MR. PLUMER: Okay. I'll just continue
8 on, and the slide will pop. It's a single
9 picture for the entire talk.

10 (Simultaneous speaking.)

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Sure. I'll let you
12 know when it pops up.

13 MR. PLUMER: Okay, very good. Thank
14 you. For the record, my name is Scott Plumer
15 with Darnestown Civic Association, which is to
16 thank Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Fani-Gonzalez,
17 and the rest of the Board for allowing us to
18 testify today. We also wish to thank Director
19 Wright, Assistant Direct Stern, and the entire
20 Montgomery County Planning staff for your
21 exceptional work as stewards of our future. We
22 enjoy the results of your work every day as we

1 live our lives in Montgomery County.

2 While reviewing all the material over
3 the last year, along with a re-read of the 1993
4 refinements, we and perhaps others arrived at a
5 startling conclusion. The proposed new plan has
6 less overarching protections for the environment
7 and against sprawl than the plan it intends to
8 replace. The proposed new plan is packed full of
9 goodness.

10 Alarmingly, what it misses is an
11 ability to contain the trajectory of future
12 development. Important protects are being
13 dropped. The plan deserves well-crafted
14 preventative goals, policies, and actions, worded
15 to avoid circumvention by special interests. The
16 new plan promotes more desirable paths forward
17 than its predecessors, and if implemented takes
18 pressure off sensitive and strategic protected
19 areas. However, promoting --

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: By the way, your
21 slide --

22 MR. PLUMER: -- best practices --

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: I just want to let
2 you know your slide is up.

3 MR. PLUMER: However -- again, I love
4 that picture. That's now my favorite picture.
5 Thank you, sir. However, promoting preferred
6 practices is not enough. Harmful practices must
7 be banned or required to meet extremely difficult
8 hurdles.

9 Promoting infill and compaction near
10 transit is not enough. You must protect against
11 sprawl where it is likely to occur. Protections
12 against sprawl and for the environment need to be
13 up front, concise, explicit, and take precedence.

14 The 1993 refinement has a section in
15 each chapter highlighting the changes from the
16 previous plan. We suggest you provide the same
17 cross reference for the proposed new plan. We
18 also suggest you provide an index of changes to
19 guide us through the differences from the current
20 draft to the next draft.

21 The 16 square mile area of Darnestown
22 where I live represents around 3 percent of the

1 county's total land area. Darnestown is
2 surrounded by critical watersheds, heritage
3 areas, and green corridors. We need strong
4 increases in protections regarding infrastructure
5 expansion.

6 When we first began considering a new
7 General Plan, we imagined a recognition of the
8 rural west residential wedge of Darnestown,
9 Travilah, and Boyds, something similar for our
10 contemporaries in the rural east as well. We now
11 broadened our efforts to include the entire area
12 outside the current sewer envelope, including
13 most of the Agricultural Reserve. That area is
14 in the map that you see now.

15 The 1993 refinement recognized these
16 same areas as being unique and vital, and were
17 named The Wedge, part agricultural, part rural
18 residential. Rural residential is an important
19 transition zone and buffer between widely
20 divergent density gradients. We look forward to
21 working with staff to develop language and maps
22 aimed at tight control over development and

1 traffic outside the sewer envelope to protect the
2 environment and reduce sprawl.

3 We also look forward to continuing to
4 help shape the collaborative nature of planning
5 and lay the groundwork for the efforts described
6 in the Civic Capacity Goal 2.2 of the proposed
7 new plan. Thank you for your time in advance for
8 including our pro-environment, anti-sprawl
9 initiatives.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
11 for that testimony. Next up, Mary Kolar.

12 MS. KOLAR: Good evening. My name is
13 Mary Kolar, and I'm testifying on behalf of
14 Montgomery Housing Alliance. MHA is a coalition
15 of nonprofit developers, direct service
16 providers, and other organizations focused on
17 affordable housing in Montgomery County as a
18 policy goal. MHA supports the draft of Thrive
19 Montgomery 2050, especially its recognition of
20 the need for increased housing development and
21 affordability.

22 We commend the plan's action around

1 adaptive reuse, incentivizing accessible housing
2 through non-tax incentives, flexible zoning, and
3 financial and administrative help for affordable
4 housing developers. We do, however, feel that
5 Thrive can take an even stronger position on
6 housing to ensure that into the future,
7 Montgomery County neighborhoods are affordable to
8 households of all incomes, including those with
9 the lowest incomes. As you know, the need for
10 affordable housing in Montgomery County is acute
11 and it's projected to increase over the next
12 several decades, especially for households with
13 incomes at our below 50 percent of the area
14 median income.

15 We are pleased to see increased
16 support for existing housing programs included in
17 Thrive. But in order to effectively meet growing
18 housing need, the county cannot simply continue
19 what it has been doing. We need a bolder vision
20 which goes beyond existing programs. We feel it
21 is critical for Thrive to include more explicit
22 messaging around subsidized housing and around

1 meeting the housing need of those with the lowest
2 incomes, including through expansion of shelter
3 space, permanent supportive housing, and rental
4 assistance programs.

5 Thrive can also be strengthened by
6 broadening the call for reform of single family
7 zoning. While expanding the range of housing
8 types around transit is crucial, it is also
9 important to ensure that households of all
10 incomes can afford homes in all parts of the
11 county. Thrive presents an opportunity to reform
12 single family zoning in predominately white, high
13 income areas, a necessary step towards undoing
14 policies that have perpetuated racial and
15 economic segregation in our region.

16 As affordable housing providers and
17 advocates, MHA members recognize the way zoning
18 decisions crucially impact low income residents
19 in communities of color. In particular, single
20 family zoning has historically impacted housing
21 outcomes and contributed to segregated
22 neighborhoods. Residential segregation results

1 in inequitable access to many important aspects
2 of residential life, including health care,
3 transportation, schools, healthy food options,
4 and parks and recreation facilities.

5 By expanding reform of single family
6 zoning throughout the county, Thrive can play an
7 instrumental role in helping to institute
8 inclusive policies that foster development of
9 high quality affordable units across the entire
10 continuum of housing in all communities. Again,
11 we are pleased to see the attention Thrive gives
12 to housing development and affordability and feel
13 that with an expanded focus on subsidized housing
14 and reform single family zoning, there will be an
15 even stronger blueprint for the county's future.
16 Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that
18 testimony. We appreciate it. Is Medhini Murali
19 there?

20 (No audible response.)

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Can you hear us?

22 (No audible response.)

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: We think you're
2 unmuted, so --

3 MS. MURALI: Can you hear me? Sorry.

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.
5 Very good. Whenever you're ready.

6 MS. MURALI: Good evening and thank
7 you all. My name is Medhini Murali, and I live
8 in Germantown. I strongly support the direction
9 of Thrive 2050, especially regarding complete
10 communities which are socioeconomically and
11 racially diverse.

12 It is crucial for Montgomery County to
13 have neighborhoods and communities which offer a
14 variety of housing types which are affordable to
15 all. Currently, areas along the Potomac River,
16 such as Bethesda, Chevy Chase, and Potomac, are
17 primarily composed of high income individuals.
18 These areas also contain more single family homes
19 and a higher level of educational attainment.

20 In contrast, areas along I-270 and I-
21 495, such as Prince George's County,
22 Gaithersburg, and Silver Spring, are primary

1 composed of residents with lower income levels
2 and multifamily housing. Communities in these
3 areas also tend to be less affluent and endure
4 longer commutes to work due to their financial
5 status restricting them from moving to
6 communities with expensive living costs and
7 shorter commutes. But incorporating multifamily
8 housing types, we will be able to inhibit the
9 separation of higher income communities from
10 communities with lower incomes.

11 Complete communities such as these
12 will allow all communities to enjoy the same
13 level of affluence and educational attainment.
14 In addition, creating complete communities will
15 reflect the increasingly racially diverse nature
16 of Montgomery County. According to the 2016
17 American Community Survey, African American and
18 Hispanic households are more likely to have
19 incomes below \$50,000.

20 These communities are concentrated in
21 areas such as Gaithersburg and Germantown which
22 are previously mentioned to be less affluent. In

1 contrast, white and Asian households are likely
2 to have incomes above \$100,000. These
3 communities are primarily in areas such as
4 Bethesda and Potomac which are previously
5 mentioned to be more affluent. If we are able to
6 create affordable multifamily housing to those of
7 even the lowest of incomes and incorporate that
8 housing into communities which are previous
9 composed of primarily single family homes, we
10 will be able to prevent unintended segregation in
11 our county and create neighborhoods which are
12 racially diverse.

13 Furthermore, diverse neighborhoods
14 will lead to Montgomery County schools being more
15 economically and racially diverse to benefit
16 students of all backgrounds. This allows
17 students across our county, no matter their
18 ethnicity, race, or socioeconomic status, to have
19 access to an equal education. In conclusion, I
20 would like to see Thrive 2050 provide a better
21 explanation of incorporating housing affordable
22 to all socioeconomic backgrounds into our

1 community and would like to see Thrive 2050
2 guarantee affordable housing to those with even
3 the lowest of incomes. Thank you.

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Danny
5 Chu. Is Danny Chu there?

6 MR. CHU: Hello. Can you hear me?

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

8 MR. CHU: Great. My name is Danny
9 Chu. I'm a longtime resident of Montgomery
10 County. I'm also a supervisor at the visual arts
11 center at Rockville Town Center.

12 In my time here, I have seen a lot of
13 places come and go by. I watched the Pike & Rose
14 be constructed, which was mentioned in the Thrive
15 2050 plan. I'm totally for the plan. I like it
16 so far right now.

17 My only fear is that pretty much for
18 businesses if there's any protections against
19 businesses being overcharged for things like
20 brands or even just people coming into the area,
21 if there's going to be charges on parking.
22 Because there's so much money invested in these

1 new dwellings and constructions, if they're going
2 to be -- if a lot of people are going to be
3 priced out of it. Because in Rockville Town
4 Center, I've seen dozens of businesses come --
5 they go in and out of all these stores.

6 It's just horrible seeing that. So I
7 want to see if there's more protections regarding
8 how much people can charge to live in these
9 houses, and how much these rental companies can
10 charge for selling to businesses. Pretty much
11 otherwise, I really like the idea of increasing
12 the diversity, creating a lot of moderately
13 priced housings, and just building closer instead
14 of farther away because it is difficult having to
15 choose which area I like to go to every night.
16 But yeah, that's it. Thank you.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.
18 Alison Gillespie is next. Alison Gillespie, are
19 you there?

20 MS. GILLESPIE: Yes, can you hear me?

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. Yes, we
22 can hear you. Whenever you're ready.

1 MS. GILLESPIE: My name is Alison
2 Gillespie, and I often testify as a Board member
3 for MCCPTA. And I'm the president of Forest
4 Estates Community Association. But tonight, I'm
5 making comments as an individual.

6 I'm very pleased by the Thrive 2050
7 plan. I think it addresses three really big
8 urgent needs in our county: racism, climate
9 change, and economic polarization. We should not
10 try to deny it any longer. Much of this county
11 is urban, and it needs to be managed accordingly.

12 I'm heartened that this document
13 clearly addresses the need to see our
14 urbanization as something that can be positive if
15 it is addressed honestly and thoughtfully. I
16 support the need to undo so many of the past
17 exclusionary zoning policies, many of which
18 divided our community along racial lines.
19 Although we'd like to think of Montgomery County
20 as a very progressive place, there are many ways
21 we codified racism through housing policies
22 during the 20th century.

1 So I support changing that through
2 better housing policy and zoning changes that
3 will include a lot more multifamily options. And
4 really anything that goes beyond single family
5 homes will be of great benefit to everyone who
6 lives here because we need more places for people
7 to live. But we can't just create boxes for
8 people to live in. We have to create livable
9 communities, and this plan embraces that idea in
10 a big way.

11 I'm really excited about the idea of
12 changing our huge, dangerous arterials full of
13 multi-lane cars into green walkable boulevards.
14 And I want us to redouble our efforts to make
15 this a fully transit-oriented community. And I
16 see that's supported in a lot of the pages of the
17 Thrive report too.

18 I'm a big parks advocate, and I'm
19 grateful to know that open space and green space
20 will be a big part of the entire scheme of this
21 plan. High quality parks are important for
22 people to enjoy and also for the ecosystem

1 services they provide through things like
2 increased air and water quality and habitat for
3 wildlife. But mostly, I want to underscore my
4 confidence in MNCPPC tonight.

5 Over the last few years, I've
6 advocated for amendments in addition to three
7 different sector plans: the Veirs Mill Corridor
8 Plan, the Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Plan, and
9 now the Silver Spring Downtown Plan. And I've
10 also participated in many, many hours of meetings
11 about the recent subdivision staging policy and
12 housing moratorium. I'm a transportation
13 advocate. I've spent countless hours in meetings
14 over road-related issues.

15 And I really want to say that I found
16 this to be a skilled team of highly engaged
17 professionals who work hard and prioritize
18 community engagement and stakeholder
19 consideration. I've seen the enormous effort
20 they've put into talking to people about -- in
21 all parts of this county about the Thrive plan.
22 I really don't think the pandemic has stopped or

1 even slowed down this process.

2 I think tonight having 80-some people
3 sign up is a testament to that. As far as I can
4 ascertain, it's actually geared up over the
5 recent months. And I'd argue that due to an
6 increased focus on technology during COVID, we
7 have a more diverse group that's now testifying
8 and has been involved recently than any time I
9 remember because we're not all having to drive
10 across the county just to attend meetings.

11 So in short, MNCPPC has earned my
12 trust and respect as a citizen. With that in
13 mind, I'd like to offer a cautionary note about
14 this. We cannot delay the work that is in Thrive
15 2050.

16 I really think -- I really believe
17 that what we need is an overarching philosophy
18 that can engender action. And I think it needs
19 to be written in plain language, which largely
20 the plan right now is. But I think it needs to
21 be accessible and understandable.

22 If COVID has taught us anything, it's

1 the need to remain flexible and nimble. So I
2 would urge you not to chain yourself to a long
3 list of prescriptions. Trust the sector plan
4 process. It is an excellent process, and it is
5 well carried out by this staff.

6 And the hearings that follow, always
7 they do what they are designed to do. I
8 certainly trust that process at this point. I
9 think we need to let planners that come after us
10 and in the ensuing decades to come be inspired by
11 concepts and ideals that we set forth. Let's not
12 shackle them to any tightly prescribed
13 parameters.

14 As much as possible, we should set up
15 the future staff of MNCPPC and future residents
16 of Montgomery County for success by envisioning
17 something better and allowing them the room to
18 get there, even if another global crisis
19 interrupts in the future. What I hate to see is
20 any kind of delay. Let's get started now.

21 There's no sense in waiting until some
22 perfect moment arrives and we have an

1 encyclopedia-like document. And we've completed
2 it and everybody has weighed in completely 100
3 percent rewritten every paragraph. My kids, both
4 of whom are on the precipice of adulthood, need
5 us to get started on this. And we owe it to them
6 and the next generation to get working on a
7 better future right now. So let's dig in. Let's
8 begin to thrive right now. Thanks.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
10 Maria Salmeron Melendez, are you there?

11 MS. SALMERON MELENDEZ: Hello. Happy
12 Thursday. Thank you so much for having me here.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, happy Thursday
14 to you. Thank you for joining us.

15 MS. SALMERON MELENDEZ: Of course. Of
16 course, and giving me the opportunity provide
17 this testimony. So yes, so my name is Maria
18 Salmeron, and I'm a student leader from Silver
19 Spring, Maryland. I champion diversity and
20 inclusion.

21 I'm here today because Montgomery
22 County is my home. Montgomery County is for us,

1 and Montgomery County is for all. With that
2 being said, this place that I'm proud to call my
3 home away from home as I was born and raised in
4 Honduras. A place that is highlighted in the
5 Thrive 2050 platform should provide strong and
6 physical connections that uplift each other
7 regardless of background, regardless of zip code.
8 It is our time to act.

9 By supporting diverse and adaptable
10 growth, you impact young student leaders like me,
11 young student leaders that immigrated from their
12 native country in Latin America to pursue the
13 American Dream, young students with a vision like
14 mine, specifically handpicked, BCC and Westland
15 Middle School at the schools that my brother and
16 I would attend before even landing in the United
17 States and moving to Maryland. Yet cognizant
18 students like me quickly became stunted by the
19 detrimental effects of de facto segregation
20 secretly affecting MCPS schools and neighborhoods
21 today. We're all made to attend the most
22 understaffed schools at the expense of inequity.

1 Vulnerable students like me who live
2 in unsuitable and unaffordable living parameters
3 pushed my family towards pursuing other options
4 which one of them spoke to moving out of Bethesda
5 and landing upon the great Silver Spring,
6 Maryland, which is something every day I'm
7 thankful and grateful for. Nonetheless, I still
8 question to this day as I grow older, every day I
9 continue my college education. I wish to
10 continue to challenge ourselves and the current
11 status quo. Let's do this together, so we
12 realize Montgomery County should be for all,
13 Thrive 2050 should be for all. And with that
14 being said, thank you and have a blessed night.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
16 for that testimony. Is Kenneth Bawer there?

17 MR. BAWER: Yes, I am. Can you hear
18 me, sir?

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, and now we see
20 you too.

21 MR. BAWER: Okay, great. Thank you,
22 Chair Anderson and members of the Planning Board.

1 My name is Kenneth Bawer. I'm representing the
2 West Montgomery County Citizens Association. We
3 acknowledge the efforts of those who have
4 contributed to this very important document.
5 Clearly a lot of time and thought went into this
6 draft document, and we thank you.

7 First, we would like to suggest that
8 the time frame for finalizing this document be
9 greatly extended due to the pandemic. It has
10 been extremely disruptive, and we'll have
11 uncertain consequences. There's a lot of this
12 draft that we like, but we do have suggestions
13 that differ in their focus. Please see our
14 written testimony for details.

15 Our vision for 2050 is a county where
16 we don't compare our growth to other
17 jurisdictions. And while our main goal and
18 indicator of success is not growth but as being
19 at the top of the happiness ratings, having a
20 high quality life, and above all, respecting and
21 enhancing the environment. Our vision as a
22 county which is not developer-centric but rather

1 as resident-centric and environment-centric,
2 where the focus is on sustainable growth, not
3 simply population, business, and job growth.

4 Our vision is a county that has
5 maintained the green wedges and corridor
6 structure from the current plan rather than being
7 disappeared from this draft document. This draft
8 seemed to condemn us all to becoming a county of
9 all corridors and no green wedges. We need to go
10 back to the wedges and corridors concept, which
11 more clearly delineates areas of development.

12 Our vision is a county in which the
13 creation of wildlife and nature corridors has the
14 same priority as development corridors. Our
15 vision is a county in which low density and rural
16 areas outside the sewer envelope are afforded
17 special protection, since these areas contain
18 watersheds which contribute drinking water to
19 millions of people. These protections should
20 include severe limitations on new road
21 construction and widening, and stricter
22 requirements to control stormwater and impervious

1 surfaces.

2 Our vision does more to protect well
3 water quality in these areas. Our vision is a
4 county where all decisions and policies are
5 informed by science. Decisions will be based on
6 the fact that any amount of impervious surface
7 degrades our water quality, including development
8 in the 10-mile creek watershed.

9 So-called stream restorations, which
10 convert our natural areas into engineered
11 stormwater conveyances will be banned. Our
12 vision is a county committed to actually
13 enforcing county codes and regulations. Today
14 waivers and rulings are being made in seemingly
15 arbitrary and capricious manners.

16 Our vision is a county that is honest
17 about air quality and water quality conditions.
18 Currently, we have only a single air quality
19 monitoring station. Our vision is a network of
20 roadside monitoring stations.

21 Our vision is for emergency alerts for
22 sewer overflows similar to air quality alerts.

1 Our vision balances any up zoning with down
2 zoning in other areas. Our vision does not
3 include flexible regulations, zoning controls,
4 and zoning initiatives. We don't have flexible
5 speed limits for a reasons. Regulations and
6 zoning controls should be fixed and enforced, not
7 flexible. We appreciate this opportunity to make
8 our comments to improve this plan. Thank you
9 very much.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Is Mark
11 Pierzchala there?

12 MR. PIERZCHALA: Yes, I'm here.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. And we
14 see you.

15 MR. PIERZCHALA: Thank you. Good
16 evening, Chair Anderson and members of the
17 Montgomery County Planning Board. My name is
18 Mark Pierzchala, testifying as an individual.
19 However, my opinions are formed from nine total
20 years as a Rockville council member.

21 Rarely do so many policy areas come
22 together so nicely as in this plan. It well

1 documents the terrible economic stagnation and an
2 acute shortage of housing on which I will focus.
3 The provision of housing units far lags
4 population growth, resulting in high housing
5 costs.

6 The well enough off manage, and we
7 take care of some of the poor. But we harm those
8 in between. These are people who 40 years ago
9 would have found reasonably priced housing in
10 Montgomery County. Now they pay too much, live
11 marginally, or live elsewhere.

12 We are not providing for teachers,
13 healthcare workers, first responders, or even our
14 own children. By transferring our many decrepit
15 commercial properties into livable, walkable
16 communities near transit, we would get many wins
17 and few negatives. Wins include reduced car
18 trips, better transit, lower energy usage, more
19 stormwater management, prosperity, higher tax
20 base, money for school construction, and human-
21 sized communities and local shops.

22 So what is the problem? There's a

1 political problem and it has been around for
2 years. There's a visceral reaction from many
3 homeowners whenever and wherever high density
4 projects are proposed. Many anticipate more
5 traffic, congestion, and overcrowded schools.

6 Opposition can be loud, ugly, and
7 classist. These opponents vote in numbers and in
8 blocks and they have long memories. However, to
9 stop the kind of development featured in this
10 draft plan in this day and age is to hurt our own
11 children.

12 Yes, people love their children. I
13 know that. And I don't want our children in
14 portable classrooms either. But the far bigger
15 questions are these. Where are our own children
16 going to live when they grow up, and where will
17 they work?

18 Increasingly, that is not in
19 Montgomery County. We have loaded so much
20 baggage on our younger generation, including a
21 crushing national debt, the huge and increasing
22 burden of supporting baby boomer retirees, and an

1 aging infrastructure that is not being replaced
2 or maintained fast enough, if at all. Our
3 children will need all the economic opportunity
4 they can get.

5 In conclusion, I support the
6 recommendations of the plan for all the reasons
7 it states, but even more for a reason it does not
8 state. That is this plan is the best way to
9 support and provide for our own children when
10 they become adults. Let's give our own children
11 a chance to prosper here in Montgomery County.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
14 for that testimony. We always appreciate hearing
15 from our friends from Rockville even though we
16 don't have land use authority there. So nice to
17 see you. Jessica Bronson, are you there?

18 MS. BRONSON: Hi. Yes, I'm here. Can
19 you hear me?

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

21 MS. BRONSON: Great. Hi, good evening
22 and thank you for the opportunity to comment. My

1 name is Jessica Bronson and I live in
2 Gaithersburg. I support the direction of Thrive
3 2050, including the idea of encouraging
4 transportation by means other than cars.

5 It's vital that we think about how
6 people will be getting around within the next 30
7 years, and how these modes of transportation will
8 either mitigate or worsen the impact of climate
9 change. The fact is more people are alarmed
10 about climate change than ever before. According
11 to the Yale Program on Climate Change
12 Communication, 70 percent of people in our area
13 are concerned about it, and 71 percent think it
14 will harm future generations. Fifty-four percent
15 believe that local officials -- wink, wink,
16 that's you guys -- should do more to address it.

17 So we as individuals can take steps to
18 try to address climate change. But really, our
19 government can and should be doing more. And
20 this can include developing communities that are
21 not so reliant on cars, one of the primary
22 drivers of climate change.

1 So I moved to Montgomery County about
2 nine years ago to attend law school in D.C. And
3 at the time, I was a young single mother with a
4 three-year-old toddler. And for several years,
5 we lived in an apartment complex close to a Metro
6 station, which I was pretty excited about when we
7 moved in.

8 However, we still ended up relying on
9 my car most of the time because many of the
10 necessities like grocery stores, pharmacies, and
11 preschools were not really accessible to us. We
12 realized that just how inaccessible things were
13 when my car once broke down for three months.
14 And suddenly what would have been a 10 to 15-
15 minute drive turned out to be a one or two-hour
16 trip using the train or the bus or both.

17 I vividly remember times when I'd be
18 sitting on the bus with my toddler next to me
19 trying to study my books, keep him occupied, and
20 also keep track of the bus stops. So as
21 environmentally conscious as I thought of myself,
22 of course I rushed back to using my car as soon

1 as I could. So it left me wondering how can we
2 address climate change and build communities
3 where better methods of transportation are easy,
4 accessible, safe, and affordable.

5 And I'm pretty excited about the idea
6 of investing less in building highways and
7 widening roads, and instead investing more in
8 mass transit and buses. I also like the idea of
9 developing communities where individuals and
10 families can walk or ride their bikes to reach
11 important necessities. In fact, I'd like to see
12 an even stronger emphasis on mass transit and
13 buses, as well as walking and biking as the
14 highest priority modes of transportation.

15 I'd also like to see greater emphasis
16 on tackling food deserts and bringing important
17 necessities like grocery stores, healthcare
18 services, and good jobs closer to people where
19 they live. So in conclusion, I'd like to see
20 Thrive 2050 and promote communities where
21 residents can access most of the things they need
22 without setting foot inside a car which is so

1 important to address the crisis of climate
2 change. Thank you for your time.

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. I very
4 much appreciate that testimony. Kristy Daphnis,
5 I see you but I don't hear you. I think you're
6 muted.

7 MS. DAPHNIS: How about now?

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: There we go. Oh,
9 well, I got you for a minute and then you muted
10 again.

11 MS. DAPHNIS: Can you hear me now?

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, there we go.
13 Okay, yeah.

14 MS. DAPHNIS: Okay, great. Sorry.
15 I'm using my phone for audio.

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Got you.

17 MS. DAPHNIS: Thank you so much,
18 Chairman Anderson and the rest of the Planning
19 Board, for allowing me to testify tonight. I'm
20 testifying on behalf of the Montgomery County
21 Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory
22 Committee. The Montgomery County PBTSAC commends

1 the planning staff on the comprehensive revision
2 to the Montgomery County Master Plan.

3 The Thrive draft encapsulates many of
4 the principles we had hoped to see in the draft,
5 including an increased recognition of the
6 importance of complete communities, context
7 sensitive roadway design, corridor-based planning
8 and design, and community connectivity. It also
9 recognizes the stature and importance of
10 Montgomery County within the D.C. metro area and
11 the need for better coordination between the
12 District of Columbia, Baltimore, and Northern
13 Virginia. Further, the plan focuses on multi-
14 modal mobility and not just cars.

15 It prioritizes transit, walking,
16 biking, and Bus Rapid Transit. And it aims to
17 provide a transportation system that's safe for
18 everyone. We applaud all of these efforts.

19 I do have a few observations to share.
20 First -- sorry, lost my place here. First, we'd
21 like to request that the safe and efficient
22 travel section, you consider assigning a higher

1 priority to safety and equity. While these
2 principles are covered in the draft, they are
3 pretty far down on the list of specific goals and
4 priorities listed in the chapter.

5 As you all know, pedestrian and
6 bicycle serious injuries and fatalities are up
7 nationwide. And they disproportionately impact
8 low income and vulnerable populations. These
9 goals should really be front and center in the
10 design of our communities and transportation
11 network, and should be reflected as such as one
12 of the top priorities within the safe and
13 efficient travel section of the document.

14 Second, while connectivity and
15 efficiency is mentioned in this section, we would
16 ask that you consider including a separate and
17 specific goal and measure to gauge efficiency.
18 For example, comparing the cost of the transit to
19 car travel per trip and comparing transit travel
20 times to car travel times between communities and
21 points of interest within a community.
22 Currently, there's no real discussion about the

1 routing and frequency of public transportation.

2 And adding something on this element
3 would be helpful, particularly if it's grounded
4 in the same 15-minute principle that's embraced
5 in other parts of the document. Adding a more
6 specific time element as a measure of convenience
7 of mobility would put more focus on the
8 importance of eliminating circuitous routes and
9 cumbersome transfers, which are often factors
10 that deter people from using transit as Jessica
11 just mentioned in her last testimony.

12 Third, while Montgomery County's
13 Vision Zero program might be considered the
14 transportation safety program du jour, there's no
15 recognition of these framework in the Thrive
16 master plan. We would recommend adding
17 additional context setting to connect this master
18 plan to the county's Vision Zero plan, as well as
19 additional context on the county and state's
20 joint complete streets program and guidance.
21 While these programs may not endure over the 30-
22 year span of the master plan, a brief discussion

1 in this document on both Vision Zero and complete
2 streets would help to connect where we are now to
3 where we need to continue in the future. And it
4 would also help contextualize these concepts
5 within the broader realm of complete communities.

6 Lastly, we'd like to see additional
7 options incorporated into the plan that would
8 allow for more pilot projects and demonstration
9 programs, particularly around transit and micro-
10 mobility, and walking and biking infrastructure.
11 The transportation in a mobility landscape is
12 rapidly changing. And giving more leniency to
13 allow creative and innovative mobility actions
14 would be welcome.

15 The planning staff has been really
16 fantastic in engaging the community over the past
17 year, as Alison noted in her testimony while they
18 were developing this draft plan. The planners
19 working on the project are highly professional
20 and highly engaged. With that said, we would ask
21 that the Planning Board consider some additional
22 public engagement opportunities for this plan,

1 including the possibility of an additional public
2 hearing.

3 As others have pointed out, we've
4 faced some unprecedented times over the past
5 eight months. And while we need to keep this
6 process moving in a timely manner, given the
7 importance of the county master plan, it would
8 likely be beneficial to provide a reasonable
9 additional amount of time for public
10 consideration, input, and dialogue. Thank you
11 again for your time and for the opportunity to
12 testify this evening. We look forward to working
13 with you more in the future as this plan
14 continues to develop. Thank you.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
16 And I see it's time. We've reached Tricia
17 Swanson and her pugs.

18 MS. SWANSON: Yes, one is on the couch
19 and one is in my lap. But we are here. Good
20 evening, Chair Anderson, Planning Board members,
21 and planning staff. My name is Tricia Swanson,
22 and I am vice president of government relations

1 for the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.
2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight
3 on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.

4 First and foremost, I do want to thank
5 each of you for your ongoing partnership with our
6 Chamber, whether it's briefing our members on the
7 multitude of issues that the Planning Board is
8 working on, or attending our awards dinners and
9 supporting the business community, or frankly
10 going on hikes with me and my pugs. We cannot
11 thank you enough for your engagement and support
12 of the business community. So as we look at the
13 Thrive plan, the Chamber appreciates the focus on
14 economic health, community equity, and
15 environmental resilience.

16 In tackling these topics, the county
17 should look at market-oriented approaches to
18 solve our problems. As such, the Thrive plan
19 must explicitly recognize the role of
20 redevelopment and achieving our environmental and
21 equity goals in addition to improving our
22 economic competitiveness. This economic

1 competitiveness should directly tie into the top
2 issue that is keeping employers up at night which
3 is talent.

4 We surveyed our Chamber Board members
5 and our members and asked them specifically that,
6 what's keeping you up at night? And the answer
7 above and beyond was talent, and it was accessing
8 and retaining top talent. So this plan must
9 outline a plan for how our county will create and
10 connect communities where talent wants to live.

11 The ideas outlined for urban areas are
12 exciting. However, our Chamber does want to
13 raise the need for not a one-size-fits-all
14 approach. While looking at a county, we cannot
15 create communities in the same way we're creating
16 them in Bethesda as an example. Transportation
17 and housing types that fit urban development
18 areas do not fit in upcounty. But investments in
19 all of these are needed throughout our county.

20 Another unique component of a county
21 is the Ag Reserve. A stronger economic vision
22 for the future of the Ag Reserve is needed.

1 Beyond just a narrow definition of agriculture,
2 we must preserve the economic vitality of farming
3 but also shape the Ag Reserve to serve our entire
4 county.

5 It is our hope that you will see the
6 Chamber as a partner in this plan moving into the
7 future. Government agencies are listed
8 throughout this Thrive 2050 plan, and there's no
9 mention of our organization or partner
10 organizations. Our members provide a wealth of
11 diverse background in industries and represent
12 those that create the communities referenced
13 throughout the document.

14 So again, I thank you for the
15 opportunity to testify. And we look forward to
16 working with the Planning Board and the council
17 moving forward on this incredibly important plan.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
20 Peter Rizik?

21 DR. RIZIK: Hi.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Hello.

1 DR. RIZIK: Hi, can you hear me?

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you
3 and see you.

4 DR. RIZIK: Great. Thank you. I just
5 have a few comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050
6 plan. I lived here 20-some years ago and have
7 since moved back. And I'm very excited to be
8 here in the county. And I think this plan and at
9 least the legacy plans that preceded it have been
10 very informative in terms of shaping how the
11 county moves into the future.

12 So I'm very excited about it. I think
13 it's a great first draft, it's got some good
14 artwork. I'd like to urge you and others on the
15 Board to rethink some of the elements of the plan
16 and rewrite some pieces of it, hold it before its
17 final release. And I'll give you a couple of
18 reasons.

19 The plan itself is unclear in some
20 areas. It's got -- it repeats itself. It's got
21 these kind of three central ideas that are
22 repeated and kind of recapped in different ways.

1 Some of the assumptions that are made
2 are really not assumptions that are necessarily
3 widely held among people in the county. What it
4 lacks really is kind of a new big idea. And I'd
5 like to see -- I know that we could get a little
6 more energy and effort behind that.

7 I'll give you three specific areas
8 where I feel there's a little bit of a
9 disconnect. It seems as if a lot of the material
10 was authored before the COVID pandemic. A lot of
11 the notions of safety, at least from the
12 perspective of public health officials,
13 infectious disease, epidemiologist center suggest
14 that density drives higher infection rates.

15 And a lot of the concepts here in this
16 plan push higher density solutions. We cite the
17 wedges and corridors concept. It was great in
18 1964. I'm not sure that's ever been challenged
19 as to whether it's still applicable today. The
20 15-minute commute idea is a good one. But again,
21 it drives density.

22 And the middle market housing, great

1 idea, I mean who's not behind that? But where
2 are you going to put it? Are you going to jam it
3 into other areas that are already dense, R-90, R-
4 60 neighborhoods, et cetera, and create more
5 density? And so I just want to make sure that --
6 and maybe you already have it and I missed it. I
7 want to make sure that the review boards and the
8 advisors that you have include public health
9 officials, medical specialists, et cetera.

10 Second point, the elderly. I feel
11 like some of the neat ideas like this 15-minute
12 commute sounds neat. But I'm not sure that's a
13 reality for the elderly. In the next couple of
14 decades, the elderly will be at least 20 percent
15 of the total county population, and I just don't
16 see a lot of elderly people walking through 95
17 degree heat for 15 minutes with their groceries,
18 through rain or snow. And in addition to that,
19 it could present some other traffic safety issues
20 that run counter to the Vision Zero concept and
21 plan that another person mentioned recently.

22 And then lastly, the document seems to

1 be void of revenue, the vision and the strategy
2 for what's our revenue model, what's our tax
3 base, how are we going to pay for all this. As
4 you know, wealth is mobile. And maybe this
5 wasn't the case 40 years ago, but we're competing
6 with other neighboring counties.

7 And I'd like to see in this document
8 a breakdown of our tax basis that we're planning
9 over the next several decades. What are we going
10 to promote? What are we going to protect? What
11 are we going to grow? Kind of the classic
12 strategy breakout.

13 And if we can address those things, we
14 might be able to bring some strength to this
15 document. It's a great first start. Again, I'm
16 just urging you to hold off on its release. I
17 think we'd benefit from a little more work.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Ronit
19 Dancis, are you there?

20 MS. DANCIS: I am. Can you hear me?

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

22 MS. DANCIS: Okay. First of all,

1 thank you to the Chair and to all the
2 Commissioners for the opportunity to speak. My
3 name is Ronit Aviva Dancis. I am a member of the
4 Action Committee for Transit, but tonight I'm
5 testifying as an individual. I will stop to say
6 that I, of course, support ACT's call to be bold,
7 to be brave, and to not waste time as this plan
8 goes forward.

9 What I would like to talk about a
10 little bit tonight are the health and
11 environmental implications that we don't normally
12 think about when we think about sidewalks and
13 bikeways. Every sidewalk is an opportunity to
14 get someone out of a car. Every bikeway is an
15 opportunity to reduce a car trip.

16 A sidewalk that we don't build, a
17 bikeway that we don't build, a sidewalk that
18 isn't safe and therefore people do not use, these
19 are opportunities we have lost to reduce car
20 traffic. These are climate issues. We need to
21 start looking at our sidewalks and our bikeways
22 the same way we look at trees.

1 I have seen any number of folks who
2 will put signs up in their yard telling me how
3 much carbon is embedded in their tree. Well, we
4 need to start thinking about our sidewalks and
5 our bikeways the very same way. They are just --
6 they are critical to making sure that we can
7 survive on this planet.

8 And I would also like to point out
9 that as everybody who has taken up walking,
10 biking, or jogging during the pandemic, this is
11 how we stay healthy, both physically and
12 mentally. I've been living in Downtown Silver
13 Spring for about five years. And when I moved
14 here, a friend came to help me unpack and get
15 settled in, someone who lives in sort of a more
16 rural part of Pennsylvania.

17 And he didn't understand why I wanted
18 to walk whenever we needed to pick something up,
19 whether it was from Snider's or from the grocery
20 store. And I said to him, by the time we find
21 the car, park the car, and get there, we may as
22 well have walked. But what really got to him was

1 after the second or third or fifth time that we
2 ran into someone that I knew.

3 The point is that walking, bikeable,
4 transit-oriented communities, these are healthy
5 communities. They are good for our hearts. They
6 are good for our minds. They are good for our
7 souls. They are good for our friendships. And
8 they are good for our planet.

9 I urge you to make this county as
10 walkable and as bikeable as possible. We are on
11 a rapidly boiling planet, and we don't have time
12 to waste. Thank you.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
14 Avery Smedley, are you there?

15 MS. SMEDLEY: Can you hear me?

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

17 MS. SMEDLEY: Can you all hear me?

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

19 MS. SMEDLEY: Okay, great. Good
20 evening, Board members and thank you so much for
21 your time. My name is Avery Smedley. I'm a high
22 schooler and a resident of Silver Spring. I

1 thank you all for the great work that you've done
2 around Thrive 2050, especially as it concerns
3 with affordable housing.

4 This issue is really important to me
5 because I've personally felt the harm that
6 residential segregation causes which is something
7 affordable housing can alleviate and why Thrive
8 2050 is such an important step. I remember one
9 day in first grade particularly my mother
10 suggested that we stay at the school so I could
11 play outside. And I just burst into tears
12 because I was horrified at the idea of getting
13 any darker.

14 I lived in a virtually all White
15 neighborhood and went to a virtually all White
16 elementary school. A few weeks prior, a White
17 friend had told me that she wouldn't play with me
18 if I got any darker because she didn't want to
19 catch it. If my neighborhood had been less
20 segregated, I would've been around more kids that
21 look like me and I wouldn't have felt so
22 bothered.

1 The girl would understand that people
2 of color aren't any different and you can't catch
3 our skin color. Exposure to people of different
4 cultures and races as Mauricio said earlier is so
5 important to omitting racism and xenophobia. My
6 neighborhood hasn't changed much since when I was
7 in first grade.

8 A few weeks ago, my neighbor, one of
9 the few Black men on the block, was parking his
10 car in his neighbor's driveway, something he was
11 paying for permission to do. Two White women
12 stopped him and questioned his right to be there.
13 He explained that he knew the neighbor and was
14 paying to share her driveway. The White woman
15 ignored him, walking past him to knock on the
16 neighbor's door and confirm what my friend was
17 saying all along. Apparently, Black people need
18 permission from White people to be in the
19 neighborhood.

20 A few months prior to that, a White
21 neighbor emailed the whole neighborhood to alert
22 them that they saw Black sister and brother

1 walking around the neighborhood. I wondered if
2 it was my brother and I. I look forward to a
3 future that Thrive 2050 describes, a future in
4 which people of different races, backgrounds, and
5 incomes can live together where it's not a threat
6 or a surprise to see Black people in a White
7 neighborhood, and a future where we can truly
8 benefit from the unique diversity of Montgomery
9 County. Thank you so much for your time.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much for
11 that testimony. We really appreciate it.
12 Heather Bruskin, are you there?

13 MS. BRUSKIN: I am. Good evening. I
14 assume you can hear me.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you
16 and see you.

17 MS. BRUSKIN: Excellent. Well, my
18 name is Heather Bruskin and I'm the executive
19 director with the Montgomery County Food Council
20 as well as a county resident because I'm here
21 this evening testifying on behalf of our
22 nonprofit organization, the Food Council. Thank

1 you very much to Chairman Anderson, the Planning
2 Board, and your entire department for the
3 continued opportunities to provide feedback on
4 Thrive 2050 and for the time and careful thought
5 that has been dedicated to this process.

6 We appreciate the addition of new
7 content and clarity related to the food system,
8 particularly within the healthy and sustainable
9 environment section. Food is not simply an
10 amenity but a basic human necessity that is
11 connected to all aspects of a resident's life.
12 Thrive 2050 should reflect this by applying a
13 food system throughout and by drawing additional
14 insight from diverse community members when
15 considering health equity, food justice, economic
16 opportunity, and environmental resilience.

17 Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it's
18 estimated that the number of Montgomery County
19 residents experiencing food insecurity has risen
20 to more than 100,000 people with food assistance
21 providers reporting up to five times increased
22 demand for services. We applaud the report's

1 efforts to address root causes of food insecurity
2 but see a gap in addressing key food access
3 issues. The complete communities element should
4 ensure that multiple food access points offering
5 culturally appropriate, affordable, and
6 nutritious food options are available within each
7 community and accessible through public
8 transportation.

9 We suggest incorporating specific
10 recommendations into the plan that would align
11 with the 2017 retail trends and support the
12 establishment of healthy corner stores, farmers'
13 markets, and other access points for federal
14 benefits usage in communities with the highest
15 rates of food insecurity. Data collection and
16 analysis will help to identify and eliminate
17 those concentration sources of unhealthy food
18 within our communities and work towards
19 establishing a more inclusive, nutritious, and
20 locally produced offerings.

21 As climate and health emergencies
22 continue to impact global food production and

1 distribution beyond COVID-19, strengthening and
2 supporting our local food production capacity is
3 increasingly important. To support our local
4 growing food and beverage sector, shared use
5 kitchens, cut and wash facilities, and processing
6 equipment for farm produce, meat, and grains and
7 aggregation and distribution infrastructure as
8 well as long-term access to affordable farmland
9 and protected land leases are needed for local
10 small businesses to accommodate expanding local
11 procurement opportunities and to address future
12 crises. Support for urban and community
13 gardening as well as residential agriculture will
14 similarly bolster a sustainable, nutritious, and
15 culturally appropriate local food supply.

16 We also encourage the inclusion of
17 plans to explore and implement a food waste
18 composting infrastructure within the county's
19 borders to bring us closer to meeting the
20 county's zero waste goals. The Food Council
21 welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the
22 Department of Planning to envision a roadmap to

1 end food insecurity as a component of the General
2 Plan, an extension of our county's food security
3 plan.

4 We must also intentionally integrate
5 the voices of our community, including farmers,
6 food producers, food assistance providers and
7 recipients and the residents to address these
8 issues and develop solutions. Thank you for the
9 opportunity to speak tonight. And we look
10 forward to continuing to serve as a resource and
11 partner to the Planning Board throughout this
12 process. Thank you.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
14 for that testimony. We're going to go a little
15 bit out of order because we're having a little
16 bit of trouble maintaining a connection with Josh
17 Silverstein. Is he on the line now? Can you --

18 (Simultaneous speaking.)

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

20 MR. SILVERSTEIN: I'm sorry. Can you
21 have me be next, please, because I'm still trying
22 to bring my testimony up? Sorry. I was bringing

1 --

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, okay. Yes, could
4 we get --

5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Sure. You'll be up
7 next. And I'm hoping I'm not going to
8 mispronounce this, but I'm not optimistic. Eyal
9 Li, is that right?

10 MR. LI: Pretty good. Can you hear
11 me?

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Every once in
13 a while, I get lucky and get it right. Thank
14 you. Go right ahead.

15 MR. LI: Sure. Thanks. Good evening,
16 Chair Anderson and County Planning Board members.
17 And thank you for the opportunity to speak
18 tonight. My name is Eyal Li, and I live in
19 Takoma Park, Maryland.

20 I'm excited about the general
21 direction of the Thrive 2050 draft plan and
22 especially about the goal to prioritize planning

1 for walking, biking, and transit use. I'd like
2 to reiterate what others have stated in this
3 hearing. We are in a climate crisis, and any
4 project to expand roadways and increase driving
5 is climate denial, plain and simple.

6 My family has recently gotten rid of
7 our car and taken to bicycling to go do grocery
8 shopping in Downtown Silver Spring. But my mom
9 has been hesitate to bike downtown ever since she
10 was hit by a car on Fenton Street near Ellsworth
11 Drive last April. She was okay, thankfully. But
12 if we are serious about getting people out of
13 cars, the county must take bold action to make it
14 easier to take alternate modes of transport and
15 harder and more expensive to drive. This means
16 slower traffic, protected bike lanes, and more
17 frequent buses.

18 I'm also concerned about the rising
19 costs of housing in MoCo and would like to see
20 action to preserve and create more affordable
21 housing for residents with low and extremely low
22 incomes. The racial and ethnic diversity in

1 Montgomery County was a special part of growing
2 up and attending schools here. And increasing
3 affordable and attainable housing is crucial to
4 retaining and nurturing this diversity.

5 In this regard, the county should
6 create policies to limit displacement in
7 redeveloping areas. We can lead the way in
8 providing more access to opportunity for all by
9 addressing socioeconomic integration more
10 explicitly in the plan and developing programs to
11 build more affordable housing in wealthy areas
12 that have traditionally opposed new construction
13 in their neighborhoods. Tying affordability back
14 to the climate crisis, we cannot afford to build
15 out more sprawling exurbs that require long, hard
16 commutes.

17 A promising strategy to accelerate
18 housing growth and limit new vehicle miles
19 traveled would be to eliminate single family
20 zoning countywide and locate the majority of new
21 housing near transit. The corridors of
22 opportunity project located along the Metro Green

1 Line between St. Paul and Minneapolis in
2 Minnesota is a good example of equitable transit-
3 oriented development that Montgomery should model
4 for future development along the Red and Purple
5 Line corridors. In addition to building out
6 affordable housing near transit, we need to
7 remove barriers to create more housing elsewhere
8 such as regulations that prevent the construction
9 of so-called missing middle housing and archaic
10 minimum parking requirements.

11 In conclusion, Montgomery County be a
12 leader in addressing the two most pressing
13 challenges of the 21st century: climate change
14 and social inequity. We need bold action on many
15 fronts to make driving the least convenient
16 option to get around and make living in the
17 county affordable for all. I would very much
18 like to see bolder goals and tactics in the final
19 plan. Thank you very much and have a good
20 evening.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that
22 testimony. So now we're going to try Josh

1 Silverstein -- or is Silverstein? I'm sorry. I
2 didn't quite catch it.

3 MR. SILVERSTEIN: Silverstein. Thank
4 you very much.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. Are you
6 ready?

7 MR. SILVERSTEIN: Yes. I really
8 appreciate the flexibility, and I apologize for
9 the connection issues.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, no problem.
11 Whenever you're ready.

12 MR. SILVERSTEIN: First of all, thank
13 you, Chairman Anderson. We really appreciate the
14 opportunity to testify today. My name is Josh
15 Silverstein. I've been a resident of Montgomery
16 County for 35 years, and I'm currently the
17 president of the Randolph Civic Association or
18 the RCA.

19 The RCA represents over 1,340
20 households in the North Bethesda area. That is
21 the triangle that's roughly bounded by Randolph
22 Road, Nicholson Lane, or the CSX tracks and Rock

1 Creek.

2 The RCA has remained an engaged
3 stakeholder and collaborator with Montgomery
4 County Planning through the development of the
5 White Flint Sector Plans 1 and 2. We also
6 regularly communicate with our residents through
7 our Echo print newsletter which has been
8 delivered free of charge to all of our residents
9 since 1956. The RCA held a meeting in the box --
10 a meeting in a box, excuse me, in January of 2020
11 and submitted online comments to the County
12 Planning Board.

13 And our comments primarily focused on
14 the following: number one, east-west equity and
15 connections within the county; number two
16 preservation and connection of green spaces;
17 number three, reduction of barriers to starting
18 and expanding businesses; number four, expansion
19 of mixed-use development along with a
20 comprehensive focus on public transportation,
21 walkability, and bikeability. And we are very
22 pleased to see many of the same issues addressed

1 conceptually and practically in the public
2 hearing draft for Thrive Montgomery 2050.

3 The RCA agrees with the overarching
4 desired outcomes related to the economic health,
5 equity, and environmental resilience. And we're
6 also in agreement with the main principles of
7 complete communities, connectedness, resiliency,
8 safe and efficient travel, affordability and
9 attainability, environment, diverse and adaptable
10 growth, and also an emphasis on design, arts, and
11 culture. We'd like to highlight a few areas for
12 further emphasis, clarification, or consideration
13 in any subsequent General Plan under Thrive
14 Montgomery 2050.

15 Regarding complete communities, we
16 were excited to see the concepts within 15
17 minutes of living in the public hearing draft,
18 including an emphasis on walking and biking for
19 communities in areas like the RCA's. A
20 consideration mentioned throughout the public
21 hearing draft but not reemphasized in the
22 complete community's section is the importance of

1 accessibility for those who are unable to walk or
2 bike. The RCA also agrees with the concept of
3 connectedness and supports the Planning
4 Department's objectives to increase
5 accessibility, transparency, and plain language
6 effort so that the public can better participate
7 in and understand the planning process.

8 We also support the expansion of
9 communications IP infrastructure such as free
10 public network access in critically underserved
11 parts of the county. In terms of resilience, we
12 do agree that the county will require a diverse
13 base of industries and workers with connections
14 between employment centers and transit hubs as
15 well as well-paying jobs that don't require an
16 advanced degree. We support the goal of making
17 public transit, walking, and cycling the
18 preferred travel mode, including increasing rail
19 capacity and stations along the MARC Brunswick
20 Line.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Silverstein --
22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: -- I don't want to
2 cut you short, but you're a little bit over time.
3 So if you could kind of wrap it up, that would be
4 great.

5 MR. SILVERSTEIN: I'm sorry. I
6 thought I had three minutes.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, I think you're
8 over three at this point.

9 MR. SILVERSTEIN: Okay, okay.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: I'm not trying to cut
11 you short. Just if you could kind of wrap it up.

12 MR. SILVERSTEIN: Thank you. I
13 appreciate that. I will cut to the end. We
14 understand that we're in the early stages of
15 Thrive Montgomery 2050. We are excited that
16 you've also engaged with many different segments,
17 and we encourage direct dialogue and
18 collaboration with civic associations like the
19 RCA. So with that, we appreciate a thoughtful
20 public hearing draft and look forward to working
21 with the Planning Department in the future.
22 Thank you.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you so much.
2 Yeah, Randolph Civic, former home of Dan Hoffman
3 and still home of Chad Salganik, right? So
4 you're the latest in a long line. Okay. Berk
5 Ehrmantraut?

6 MR. EHRMANTRAUT: Hello.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi there.

8 MR. EHRMANTRAUT: All right. Hi, my
9 name is Berk Ehrmantraut, and I live in Silver
10 Spring. Thank you for taking the time to listen
11 to testimony today. I'd like to express my
12 support for Thrive Montgomery 2050 and ask you to
13 lean in to create a more diverse mixed income
14 communities and a county that is affordable for
15 everyone.

16 I didn't grow up in Montgomery County.
17 But I love it here and it has become my home. I
18 love the ten-minute walk to Metro from my
19 apartment. I love being a quick walk away from a
20 thriving, diverse downtown. I love the protected
21 bike lanes and great parks right outside my
22 building. And I really love ordering pupusas

1 from La Casita.

2 I want to put down roots here,
3 hopefully buy a home, and eventually raise a
4 family. But when the average home price is over
5 half a million dollars in the county, it's not
6 exactly affordable. That's why I'm excited this
7 plan calls for more diverse housing types,
8 building new projects near transit, and
9 distributing affordable housing across the
10 county, including in wealthy areas. That said,
11 I'd like to see more emphasis on socioeconomic
12 integration and addressing barriers to missing
13 middle housing. Additionally, there should be
14 bolder action on rent stabilization, eviction
15 protection, and affordable housing for low income
16 folks.

17 Montgomery County is a great place to
18 live, and a lot of people want to live here. So
19 we need the housing stock to make that possible.
20 That means lots of types of housing for many
21 types of people. One of our county's greatest
22 strengths is its diversity. That's why Thrive

1 Montgomery 2050 should be focused on ensuring our
2 county is affordable, accessible, and welcoming
3 to all.

4 I have one quick note about COVID-19
5 and density. I grew up in South Dakota. My
6 parents now live in North Dakota. These are not
7 dense places but they're the worst hit places in
8 our country right now by a long shot. We get
9 through this with effective public health
10 measures, not less density.

11 As we draw up the plan for the next 30
12 years, we have to take climate change and our
13 environmental impact into consideration as well.
14 I'm excited the plan talks about reducing sprawl,
15 developing a carbon tax, and developing the
16 infrastructure to prevent and adapt to climate
17 change. However, I'd like to see more
18 integration with the county's climate action plan
19 and more green building capacity. In addition,
20 this plan should take on important local
21 environmental issues that really affect quality
22 of life like tackling food deserts.

1 I am so excited to see what these next
2 30 years bring for our county and for my life
3 here. I hope in 2050 we can sit down together in
4 La Casita, chow down on some pupusas, and I can
5 tell you how this General Plan made it possible
6 for me to buy a home near the Metro, start a
7 family, and send my kids to great public schools
8 as diverse as Montgomery County. And I hope that
9 thousands of other people from all socioeconomic
10 backgrounds can do the same. Thank you.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: See you at La Casita
12 in 30 years, yes. Sounds good. Is Quentin
13 Remein there?

14 MR. REMEIN: I'm here.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Whenever you're
16 ready, go right ahead.

17 MR. REMEIN: Thank you very much,
18 Casey Anderson and the Board. My name is Quentin
19 Remein. I'm the president of the Cloverly Civic
20 Association. I was on a citizens advisory
21 committee for the Cloverly master plan.

22 The plan could better support the

1 environment. As Lauren Brown and the Audubon
2 Society, Caroline Taylor, Scott Plumer, Kenneth
3 Bawer, people I don't really know that well but
4 has just presented, the environment has been
5 neglected by this plan. There are 10 million
6 people in -- over 10 million people in Montgomery
7 County but trillions of other living plants and
8 animals.

9 The development proposed needs to not
10 put them at risk. All living creatures depend on
11 clean water and streams. People driving cars is
12 another issue that the plan speaks out on. As
13 Susan Spock spoke, we agree with what she
14 presented.

15 Service workers, many who are
16 immigrants, need cars to do their jobs as
17 electricians, plumbers, home repair, home
18 healthcare workers, elder care, office and
19 cleaning people. They need to get to their jobs
20 quickly. They need to find parking places.
21 Right now, this is a big problem for them to do
22 their jobs and they're not able to adequately do

1 their jobs to make a living if they have to spend
2 their time looking for parking and driving in
3 urban areas. Also, families need cars to get
4 their children to after-school activities.

5 In addition, somebody just brought up
6 the food pantries. Our church supports 800 to
7 900 people who use their cars to pick up food
8 from our food pantry every Tuesday. Without
9 those cars, they wouldn't be picking up their
10 food. And the people who are bringing those food
11 items to the church for distribution also need
12 their cars to do that. This plan serves as an
13 urban lifestyle primarily but it neglects the
14 suburban and rural community. The plan also
15 doesn't support children and the elderly as much
16 as it could.

17 Single family homes support more than
18 just single families, and it's sort of a
19 misnomer. Many single family homes have multiple
20 homes in it. They have multiple generations
21 living in the same home. And so just to say that
22 only single family homes are supported by this is

1 unfortunate.

2 I'm sorry that many people have
3 suffered from racism, segregation, and lack of
4 inclusion. But plans cannot change these
5 problems. These are matters of the heart of
6 individual residents. I hope residents can work
7 together to make real changes using love and
8 respect of others and look forward to -- our
9 community looks forward to continuing to serve
10 others in our community. Thank you.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.
12 David Sears, are you there?

13 MR. SEARS: Yes.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Ah, very good. We can
15 hear you.

16 MR. SEARS: You should be able to see
17 me in a second.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: There you are. It
19 looks like you're in the attic.

20 MR. SEARS: I am. I am. Starting at
21 the top, right?

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: That's right.

1 MR. SEARS: Lead us to the top. Good
2 evening, Chairman Anderson and Planning Board
3 members. My name is Dave Sears. I live in
4 Bethesda in an attic as you see. I'm testifying
5 tonight as an individual. Thanks to both the
6 Planning Board and Planning Department staff for
7 working hard and smart on preparing this
8 document.

9 My overall view is this is a very good
10 document. I hope that the County Council will
11 embrace its vision. It's an important document.
12 It creates a strong portrait of the county we
13 want to see in 2050. Without this plan, too many
14 decisions made during the next 30 years will be
15 ad hoc decisions rather than thoughtfully placed
16 in the context of what kind of county we want to
17 be.

18 Let me enumerate some of the plan's
19 key principles that I applaud. First, change the
20 mindset from preserve the world as it now exists
21 to create a new world which gives folks a higher
22 quality of life. Second, (Audio interference.)

1 interest to honor countywide interest.

2 In short, don't let parochial
3 neighborhood interests outweigh the interests of
4 the county as a whole. For instance, increasing
5 density in existing neighborhoods via missing
6 middle housing is good for the county. And
7 locating solar in the Ag Reserve is good for the
8 county as a whole.

9 Third, change the mindset from moving
10 cars efficiently and safety to moving people
11 efficiently and safety. Fourth, change the
12 mindset from equity and inclusion in the schools
13 to equity and inclusion in the community which of
14 course will then include the schools. Fifth,
15 change the mindset from some folks live in single
16 family homes, the rest live in high rises to
17 folks have a wide range of housing options
18 throughout the county.

19 In spite of the plan's substantive
20 strengths, the presentation, I think, needs some
21 work. Here's a couple of suggestions. To help
22 grab the reader's attention, I suggest the plan

1 should include in a prominent position three to
2 five short vignettes, each describing a specific
3 person going about her/his daily life in 2050
4 enjoying the benefits of the great future,
5 Montgomery County.

6 To help the reader understand that
7 Thrive is not just a laundry list of good ideas,
8 present several compelling examples of how the
9 various key components and principles interact.
10 For instance, providing substantially more
11 affordable housing will simultaneously address
12 equity, economic development, and climate change.
13 After reading the plan or skimming it for 15
14 minutes, the reader should be able to verbalize
15 with passion the three to five major ways in
16 which Montgomery County in 2050 will be a great
17 place to live. In conclusion, I strongly support
18 this plan. My children and grandchildren will
19 enjoy the benefits of the great Montgomery County
20 of 2050.

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
22 for that testimony. Marilyn Balcombe, are you

1 there?

2 MS. BALCOMBE: I am. Can you hear me?

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, nice to see you.

4 MS. BALCOMBE: Nice to see you too.

5 Chairman Anderson, Planning Board, thank you for
6 the opportunity to share my feedback. My name is
7 Marilyn Balcombe. I'm the president and CEO of
8 the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce
9 and a resident of Germantown for over 25 years.

10 In general, the Chamber supports the
11 vision of compact development and complete
12 communities. We see a great benefit to having
13 robust and dynamic walkable communities with the
14 balance of jobs, housing, and recreational
15 opportunities. The 1964 Wedges & Corridors plan
16 had a profound effect on the growth of
17 Gaithersburg and Germantown.

18 The '64 plan and subsequent area
19 master plans envisioned a strong commercial
20 corridor along I-270 with the balance of
21 residential and retail land use. While the
22 residential and retail components have come to

1 fruition, the balance of commercial enterprise is
2 still lacking. Given the new direction of the
3 Thrive General Plan to focus on urban areas with
4 ready access to transit, the question remains as
5 to how the suburban communities in the upper
6 areas of Montgomery County will thrive.

7 In reading through the plan, I can see
8 the communities of Silver Spring, Wheaton,
9 Bethesda, Rockville all represented in the plan.
10 And I can envision how they will evolve into 15-
11 minute living communities. I can even see it in
12 Germantown town center and pockets of
13 Gaithersburg. But I don't see the rest of the
14 county represented in this draft plan.

15 Goal 1.1 makes reference to a broad
16 array of complete communities throughout the
17 county with an urban, suburban, and rural
18 context. The draft does an excellent job of
19 laying out the vision for the urban context.
20 However, the vision and details of the plan need
21 to be extended for both suburban and rural
22 communities.

1 In terms of transportation, we
2 certainly need to focus on walkability and
3 transit, and the Chamber has advocated for both.
4 However, we need an all-of-the-above approach.
5 There are areas of the county that cannot meet
6 our current transportation needs without
7 increased road capacity.

8 One major solution for the housing,
9 transportation, jobs conundrum throughout the
10 county is to bring more jobs to the upcounty. If
11 we had more jobs in Germantown, we'd have shorter
12 commute times, less traffic congestion, and much
13 less greenhouse gas emissions. This plan needs
14 to explicitly support that goal.

15 I want to be clear. I'm not saying,
16 not in my backyard. Quite the opposite, I'm
17 saying, yes, bring it on. As the draft Thrive
18 2050 plan moves forward, we're asking for more
19 explicit inclusion of the upper Montgomery County
20 communities.

21 The draft plan creates an exciting
22 vision for Montgomery County. We want to see our

1 communities represented in this vision. And I
2 thank you all for your hard work, for staying
3 with us this late into the evening, and for your
4 dedication to our community. My written
5 testimony goes into a lot more detail. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
8 for that testimony. Pam Lindstrom, are you
9 there?

10 MS. LINDSTROM: Am I here?

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, now we hear you.

12 MS. LINDSTROM: My statement urges
13 people to look at the document, what the document
14 actually says rather than perceptions. And the
15 statement is inspired by Casey Anderson's
16 statements to the Planning Board's discussion of
17 Thrive. The draft reflects an enormous amount of
18 work by the staff, but it does not show
19 inspiration nor does it inspire the readers,
20 other than the ones who are testifying right here
21 and now, the readers in the future to meet the
22 goals and take the vast number of actions it

1 prescribes.

2 I'm sure the planners and the Board
3 have read On Wedges & Corridors repeatedly, and
4 they will have noticed the differences between
5 its beginnings and the beginnings of this draft.
6 On Wedges & Corridors paints a vision for the
7 readers of green suburbs, forests, farms, livable
8 corridor cities whereas Thrive starts with 40-
9 some pages of recitations of problems and
10 prescriptions for actions but no rewards for
11 taking the actions.

12 In my terms, the document -- the
13 Thrive document desperately needs to be
14 visionary. That is, it needs to portray a vision
15 of the county in which the future that inspires
16 officials, residents, and businesses to
17 implement. The draft Thrive document has many
18 pages of visions, but that is no substitute for a
19 single, clear, compelling vision.

20 Casey did not use the term, but I
21 think that's what you meant with your request for
22 the next draft. He showed that a vision can be

1 spun from one of the plan elements, in your case,
2 urbanism. It affects not just compact
3 communities but it also affects connectedness,
4 social capital, health, and I would add climate
5 protection.

6 I would ground the vision on social
7 housing, that is, urban affordable housing. And
8 I am writing down and submitting in writing how
9 complete communities -- sorry, urban affordable
10 housing affects complete communities and all the
11 other elements too, including better priced
12 retail in the urban centers benefits businesses
13 and store owners and people -- residents from low
14 income to high income. Most of the growth will
15 take place in transit served complete
16 communities. Thus, encounters among diverse
17 people, racially and economically -- diverse
18 people will increase naturally without deliberate
19 -- without having to take action to make it
20 happen.

21 Lower income residents also use public
22 transport. More riders of public transport

1 justifies more service and thus yet more riders
2 and less car travel in positive spirals. And
3 everyone involved minimizes their impact on
4 climate change. Thank you. Bye-bye.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
6 Deborah Chalfie, are you there?

7 MS. CHALFIE: Yes, I'm here. Can you
8 hear me?

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you, and
10 now we see you too.

11 MS. CHALFIE: Wonderful. Well, good
12 evening, Chair Anderson and members of the
13 Planning Board. I'm Deborah Chalfie. I'm a 40-
14 year resident of Montgomery County and a Board
15 member of the Art Deco Society of Washington.
16 ADSW appreciates the opportunity to participate
17 in this process, and we've also submitted a
18 letter for the record.

19 Founded in 1982, the Deco Society is
20 a nonprofit membership organization covering the
21 Washington, D.C. region. Our mission is to
22 foster awareness of, to celebrate and preserve

1 the architectural, decorative, industrial, and
2 cultural arts of the art deco era and adjacent
3 modern movements of the 20th century.

4 Architectural preservation is a strong element of
5 our mission, and we've had many successes
6 including right here in Montgomery County.

7 ADSW was excited by many aspects of
8 the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. Its
9 recognition that historic resources (Audio
10 interference.) commitment and prioritization of
11 adaptive (Audio interference.) And the fact that
12 it appears to create (Audio interference.)
13 creation of incentives for projects that
14 adaptively at least (Audio interference.) of an
15 existing structure and existing building
16 materials.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Ms. Chalfie, I'm
18 sorry to interrupt you, but you're kind of
19 getting a little bit of breaking up. I think
20 it's because of the bandwidth and you're
21 limitations. If you turn off your video,
22 sometimes that helps to conserve bandwidth so the

1 audio will be more clear.

2 MS. CHALFIE: Let's try this. Is that

3 --

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

5 MS. CHALFIE: -- sound any better?

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: That does sound

7 better, yes.

8 MS. CHALFIE: I'm sorry.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: I'm sorry to
10 interrupt you, but I want to make sure we can
11 understand you.

12 MS. CHALFIE: No problem. I was about
13 to say it was our primary concern about the
14 (Audio interference.) the location atlas index.
15 Montgomery County's (Audio interference.)
16 preserving the county's (Audio interference.)
17 record on preserving our 20th century
18 architectural heritage is unsatisfactory. Many
19 of our county's cities have seen a great deal of
20 change over the last generation, yet the county's
21 locational atlas for historic resources has only
22 included piecemeal updates since its creation in

1 1976.

2 There needs to be a systematic review
3 and updated survey of the county's historic and
4 potentially historic resources. Importantly,
5 during this interim period, buildings erected in
6 the 1950s and '60s are now 60 to 70 years old and
7 warrant historic protection. Mid-century modern
8 architecture is the next frontier of historic
9 preservation, not only as unique examples of
10 modernist design and architecture but also
11 because of the stories these buildings tell about
12 our history.

13 ADSW believes it's absolutely critical
14 for the Planning Board to add an action step
15 under Goal 8 that would require more regular and
16 systemic maintenance of the locational atlas and
17 index. And the atlas must include the addition
18 of mid-century buildings. Thank you.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that
20 testimony. We appreciate it very much. Is
21 Kathleen Mihm there?

22 MS. MIHM: Yes, I'm here. Thank you.

1 Thank you for the opportunity to provide my
2 comments on and during this testimony. I'm
3 encouraged by the county's long range planning
4 and incorporation of economic growth and
5 environmental concerns over the long run and to
6 make these opportunities available to all
7 communities across Montgomery County, including
8 both diverse and less diverse communities.

9 I've lived in Montgomery County for
10 over 60 years. And during the COVID pandemic, I
11 was amazed and thrilled to see people from all
12 walks of life flocking onto the network of
13 natural surface trails that canvas the county.
14 The available trail systems provided a very much
15 needed escape from the confines of COVID and for
16 people to get out and hike and bike or just sit
17 and enjoy the scenery often close to their own
18 backyard.

19 So as part of Thrive 2050, I encourage
20 the county to continue development and expansion
21 of the natural surface trails, providing off road
22 connections between these trails, and expanding

1 the network to enable more residents in diverse
2 communities to enjoy the trail system. The trail
3 system adds high value to county residents in
4 that it offers opportunities for outdoor
5 recreation that are close to home, encourages a
6 healthy lifestyle for people of all backgrounds
7 and ages, and provides an added bonus to attract
8 companies and residents alike to make Montgomery
9 County their home which contributes to the
10 economic health of the county.

11 As an occasional bike commuter to the
12 Rockville area, I would also like to add that
13 natural surface trails also provide an
14 alternative transportation route across the
15 county that can avoid some of the busy roadways,
16 increasing cyclist safety. And also to note as
17 the county population grows, a strong and vibrant
18 network of neighborhood connected trails can also
19 help to alleviate overcrowding and overuse at the
20 more established and very popular natural park
21 system -- or natural parks and trails in the
22 county. And that's all. Thank you for your

1 time.

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
3 I really appreciate that testimony. Is Misha
4 Clive there?

5 MS. CLIVE: Hi. Yes, I'm here. Can
6 you see me?

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes. Hi there.

8 MS. CLIVE: All right, great. Thank
9 you. Hi, I'm Misha. My pronouns are they/them.
10 I grew up right outside Downtown Silver Spring.
11 I've lived here my whole childhood, and I've been
12 here as an adult since 2008. And thank you for
13 the opportunity to speak.

14 I support the general direction of
15 Thrive to build a more equitable county. And I'm
16 chiming in with testimony here, calling for MoCo
17 to create livable communities and to directly
18 address the ongoing impacts of systemic racism
19 and housing. This plan should be integrated with
20 our climate action and resiliency plan as well.
21 That's vital to its success.

22 I want to live in a thriving,

1 inclusive community, and I see the effort from
2 the creators of this plan to center this plan on
3 equity. But I also see a lot of references to
4 affordable housing in the plan without much
5 detail on what does that mean. What is
6 affordable? Like, literally, what do you mean?
7 There are lots of ideas, but what's affordable?

8 So I want to take a moment to address
9 an example of this that I've engaged with,
10 specifically with our concept of moderate
11 household income. So I used to live in
12 California where I could only afford to live by
13 renting in a group house where one person slept
14 in the kitchen. So I moved back to Silver Spring
15 in 2008 for family help support, and I was able
16 to land a full-time nonprofit job in D.C. paying
17 me about 1,700 dollars a month after taxes.

18 So even back then, most D.C.
19 neighborhoods were already asking for 1,000
20 dollars a month for rent for a room in a five-
21 person house. I couldn't swing over 50 percent
22 of my income. So I moved back home with mom for

1 four years.

2 Then I finally found a shared house in
3 Downtown Silver Spring where I could manage 700
4 dollars to rent a room. It wasn't a great
5 situation, and I wanted to move into an apartment
6 with a friend. So I looked into the MoCo housing
7 program that helps people of moderate income.

8 At the time, there was a rental
9 program that allowed up to 52,000 in income for
10 an individual. But for two people, the max was
11 60,000. So if you have two people in a family,
12 you could only make 8,000 more jointly above an
13 individual. And I had worked extremely hard to
14 get my salary a little bit above 30k and so had
15 my friend. And so we were maxed out of the
16 program.

17 Now I've looked at the homeownership
18 program right now, and these numbers are up a
19 bit. But the max is still 70,000 dollars. And
20 35,000 dollars a person in MoCo does not go far,
21 especially if you have a disability.

22 So today I'm chronically ill. I spend

1 a whole rent payment worth of income on out-of-
2 pocket healthcare costs, and my partner and I are
3 struggling. She's on minimum wage, and it's very
4 difficult. I'm spending a lot of money living in
5 a luxury loft to be able to access the walkable
6 community that I rely on for my independence.
7 When I grew up with a middle class family whose
8 house cost 125,000 in the 1980s and now would
9 cost 700,000 dollars to live in my own
10 neighborhood.

11 So to wrap up, these are some of the
12 struggles that I've had as a White person, born
13 here, raised middle class, benefitting from
14 generational wealth, and despite all that
15 privilege, struggling to get ahead in housing at
16 a moderate income level and hitting a wall with
17 county support. I love living in MoCo, but I
18 don't know if I can afford to stay here. And if
19 I can't make it, I wonder about my neighbors.
20 How many people of color, especially Black and
21 Brown people, immigrants, and working class
22 families can have a future here.

1 So I hope that the Thrive 2050 plan
2 can drive concrete solutions for affordability
3 and pathways to financial security and prioritize
4 our underserved communities, our Black and Brown
5 families, our immigrant families, and our working
6 class families. And I hope that my family can
7 find a way to stay here and get to be a part of
8 building a better MoCo where everyone can thrive.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
11 for that testimony. We really appreciate it.
12 Ethan Goffman, are you there?

13 MR. GOFFMAN: Yes, I am. Hello.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good.

15 MR. GOFFMAN: You can hear me. Okay.
16 Thank you --

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

18 MR. GOFFMAN: -- Planning Board, for
19 all of your hard work, this thoughtful,
20 groundbreaking plan. I just have a few
21 suggestions that maybe could make it better. So
22 it's a little bit of a grab bag.

1 So first of all, economic growth is
2 often given priority above everything else. And
3 so think about equity and environmental
4 sustainability as actually more important
5 objectives than economic growth. That's kind of
6 a big umbrella one.

7 Just improving conditions in low
8 income and vulnerable communities is not enough.
9 So I just want to add to what people are saying.
10 And actually, we need to completely end racial,
11 economic, and ethnic segregation if we ever want
12 full equity.

13 We also -- you have something about
14 this in the plan but just emphasize working
15 aggressively with the state to build schools in
16 transit-oriented areas because that has been kind
17 of a roadblock to smart growth. Let's see. The
18 east-west imbalance, a lot has been said about
19 that. So bring jobs to the east where there's
20 more housing. And Silver Spring where I lived for
21 about three years, you know, it's a hub. There's
22 Metrorail, MARC, many different buses, and then

1 the Purple Line, if it ever gets built, will also
2 be there. I actually thought we should've tried
3 to get Amazon to move to Silver Spring. I
4 thought that that can compete with Arlington and
5 maybe even outdo it for just transit-oriented
6 walkability, especially if we keep working on
7 developing it.

8 Let's see. And then as far as car
9 use, I would like to see the county finding ways
10 to charge for people who use their cars because
11 cars cause congestion, accidents, air pollution.
12 So drivers should pay maybe through a congested
13 charge or possibly some kind of countywide
14 parking fee.

15 SUVs, there's reports out actually for
16 several years. They kill pedestrians at twice
17 the rate of ordinary cars, and they also have a
18 disproportionate environmental impact. So I
19 think a health impact fee or an educational
20 campaign or even both for SUVs and oversized
21 cars.

22 And overall, I think we need four

1 transportation networks but each are connected
2 and safe, one for public transit, one for cars,
3 one for pedestrians, and one for bicycles and
4 small vehicles like scooters. And since cars
5 have by far the greatest environmental and health
6 impact, they should stop receiving priority.

7 Okay. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Jenny Sue
9 Dunner?

10 MS. DUNNER: Good evening.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: Are you there? Hi
12 there. Long time, no talk to.

13 MS. DUNNER: Right. My name is Jenny
14 Sue Dunner, and I'm testifying tonight on behalf
15 of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on
16 Friendship Heights. We appreciate the amount of
17 hard work that the planning staff and the Board
18 have put into the draft plan's development as
19 well as its goals regarding policies for the
20 county for future years. However, we also agree
21 with Chairman Anderson's numerous comments at the
22 October 1st Planning Board meeting when he

1 referred to the draft plan as confusing, too
2 specific, yet not developed enough to define why
3 anyone would want to read it.

4 We agree that the draft does need to
5 be reworked. We request when the draft is final
6 that the Planning Board conduct another public
7 hearing. You might not want to hear that after
8 tonight. If this is not feasible, then we would
9 urge the Planning Board to establish a process
10 for citizens to participate during the work
11 session.

12 Due to time limits, I'm only going to
13 mention two items of concern. The Thrive
14 Montgomery plan is anti-automobile. That is a
15 noble goal given the need to adopt strategies to
16 thwart climate change. However, implementation
17 would necessarily discriminate against large
18 numbers of county residents for whom vehicular
19 travel is a necessity in circumstances in which
20 walking and biking are not practical.

21 For tonight, it is enough to say
22 relying almost exclusively on non-automobile

1 modes of transportation is obviously not
2 realistic, yet it is the heart of the draft plan.
3 What are the goals and priorities that people are
4 talking about and want? Many believe it should
5 be economic growth, job creation, and affordable
6 housing. What are the plans for infrastructure?
7 How will it be funded?

8 Under the current plans, zoning will
9 take place before infrastructure. This is the
10 cart before the horse. Perhaps most
11 significantly, the draft plan fails to recognize
12 that the county is suffering from severe
13 constraints on its operating and capital budget
14 likely for many years to come.

15 According to the county exec's office,
16 a one billion dollar deficit in the county budget
17 is projected by the end of the next six years.
18 The county has also had sluggish job growth over
19 the last 15 years which has stood at five percent
20 annually. By comparison, job growth in similar
21 counties has grown by 21 percent.

22 With these fiscal facts in mind, we

1 question how Thrive Montgomery can assume that
2 the county will be able to provide reliable and
3 efficient transit, schools, utilities, healthcare
4 facilities, parks, libraries, athletic fields,
5 and community centers among other facilities that
6 would be necessary to support new, complete
7 communities featuring 15-minute living. We also
8 question how the county will be able to afford
9 retrofitting existing established neighborhoods
10 with the infrastructure and amenities that they
11 currently lack to turn them into complete
12 communities. The draft Thrive Montgomery plan
13 will require a great deal of capital investment
14 in new or existing county communities to achieve
15 the plan's goal.

16 Finally, we note that the draft plan
17 assumes that if you build it, they will come.
18 This assumption won't work, however, unless a
19 significant number of new jobs are created.
20 Simply putting it, adding housing does not
21 necessarily lead to job growth or a healthy
22 business climate. In closing, job creation and

1 affordable housing should be the county's primary
2 goals for the future rather than providing
3 missing middle housing for which the priority and
4 policy basis have not yet been established.
5 Montgomery Thrive 2050 should focus on those
6 goals, and the Planning Board should rework the
7 draft plan accordingly. Thank you.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
9 Nice to see you.

10 MS. DUNNER: Nice to see you,
11 Chairman.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Nanci Wilkinson, are
13 you there?

14 MS. WILKINSON: Can you hear me fine?

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

16 MS. WILKINSON: All right, good.

17 Thank you. And thank you for allowing me to
18 testify, Mr. Anderson and Planning Board. Thank
19 you.

20 My name is Nanci Wilkinson, and I'm
21 testifying on behalf of the Cedar Lane Ecosystem
22 Study Group which is a collective of

1 approximately 30 scientists, engineers,
2 sociologists, and concerned citizens primarily
3 residing in Montgomery County who came together
4 when the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate
5 Change gave its most dire warning yet, that the
6 world faces an existential threat to civilization
7 as we know it unless we implement, quote, rapid,
8 far reaching, and unprecedented change in all
9 aspects of society.

10 We do applaud your statement of
11 purpose that Thrive Montgomery 2050 isn't about
12 reinvention. It's about adapting to new
13 realities, addressing historic inequities, and
14 shifting the way we think about how the county
15 should grow. This statement is very much similar
16 to our group's perspective.

17 We are aware that there are other
18 realities in addition to climate change that we
19 think are important to the county's 30-year plan,
20 including the assumption that we have an almost
21 endless supply of fossil fuels and other natural
22 resources on the planet for our own use. Thrive

1 Montgomery appears to have been developed and
2 assumed this same assumption of unlimited supply.

3 The supply of oil is finite. Our
4 remaining oil is mostly in shale formations which
5 is source rock. That means there's no oil
6 remaining after that. If we stop drilling, the
7 underlying annual decline rate in major oil
8 producing regions will drop approximately 42
9 percent a year and yet renewables are not at the
10 time at which they can completely fill in the
11 gap.

12 Fossil fuels are literally what fuel
13 our economy at the moment. And they are
14 diminishing and our economy and communities are
15 affected. And they will be continually impacted
16 significantly with this dominion. We are also
17 rapidly depleting the earth's supply of other
18 non-renewables, including metals and nonmetallic
19 minerals.

20 We have designed our lives to depend
21 on these resources which we use almost every
22 point in our industrialized lives. We are, in

1 addition, to the increasing in greenhouse gas
2 emissions we are producing, and there are
3 subsequent threats to human existence due to
4 climate change. This makes us very vulnerable in
5 the future.

6 As a result, we think the plan should
7 include two more scenarios, one in which our
8 current economy and lifestyle remains level to
9 what it is currently and another scenario in
10 which our economy declines at say six to eight
11 percent per year. And our lifestyles and policy
12 options become much more increasingly
13 constrained. We will provide with more -- you
14 with more extensive information and references in
15 our written testimony before the comment time
16 closes.

17 Additionally, we request that you
18 extend the deadline for submission of public
19 comments on this plan to coincide with the timing
20 of the public release of the county CARP in
21 December. And then allow the public a reasonable
22 period of time to review and comment on both

1 documents together since it will be important for
2 these two county documents to match one another
3 in their plans and recommendations. In
4 conclusion, many communities around the world are
5 suffering from extreme financial strain and
6 resource scarcity due to the impacts from our
7 lifestyle choices here in the U.S.

8 Most of us in Montgomery County are
9 not currently experiencing these consequences of
10 our lifestyle choices. We are also, however,
11 facing some tough decisions on how to allocate
12 our remaining resources wisely as we transition
13 to a much lower impact form of living. We
14 encourage the Planning Board to confront these
15 realities and update the plan accordingly. Thank
16 you so much for the opportunity to testify.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
18 for your testimony? Is Betsy Mendelsohn there?
19 Oh, apparently she's not logged on. So I'm going
20 to go to Stacy Silber. Is Stacy Silber there?

21 MS. SILBER: Yes. Hi there. Can you
22 hear me?

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi there. You're a
2 little soft. You might want to get closer to
3 wherever the mic is.

4 MS. SILBER: Good evening. My name is
5 Stacy Silber, an attorney with Lerch, Early, and
6 Brewer. I'm testifying today on behalf of myself
7 as a Bethesda resident and my (Audio
8 interference.) land use group colleagues. I'm
9 also testifying today as a board member and
10 legislative committee chair for AFDC Maryland, as
11 association representing many of the mixed-use
12 developers in the region.

13 We'd like to commend the efforts of
14 your staff and particularly Khalid Afzal. We
15 know this is a significant undertaking, and the
16 draft plan provides an excellent framework for
17 the next 30 years. Furthermore, we appreciate
18 staff's recognition that to ensure a vibrant,
19 strong, and competitive economy.

20 We need to attract and maintain major
21 employers, support small business and innovation,
22 and attract a diverse workforce. Of great

1 importance, the plan stresses the notion of
2 equity, creating a place for residents to have
3 equal access to affordable housing, employment,
4 transportation, and education. In reviewing the
5 Thrive plan, it's clear that there's an
6 understanding that economic health and economic
7 disruption need to be drivers to affect change.

8 The plan identifies many issues and
9 challenges that should be solved over the years.
10 But we submit that without the influx of private
11 economic investment and public investment
12 infrastructure, the county will not be able to
13 fully solve and address these issues. As such,
14 the Thrive plan must prioritize economic health
15 for such will serve as a catalyst for attracting
16 investment and in turn provide the necessary
17 ingredients for the county to achieve its goals.

18 With that in mind, as staff and the
19 Board work through the draft, we ask that you
20 consider the following. Again, the plan
21 acknowledges that in promoting long-term economic
22 health of the county, there needs to be policies

1 envisioned that incentivize investment. With
2 construction costs continuing to increase and
3 rents remaining flat, developers and investors no
4 longer just evaluate whether to invest in
5 Montgomery, Fairfax, and D.C. as they had in the
6 past.

7 Rather, they consider places like
8 Charlotte and Atlanta that also have great need
9 for housing and the policies that are in place to
10 attract businesses. Thus, to ensure economic
11 investment in the county, the plan needs to set a
12 hierarchy of priorities so that policies which
13 encourage investment in housing are not offset by
14 those that inadvertently negate those same
15 policies because of costly factors. By way of
16 example, an executive with the Montgomery County
17 based advanced immunology and life science
18 company was asked at a business roundtable
19 discussion yesterday, what would be helpful to
20 stay and expand in Montgomery County?

21 He answered that his company needed
22 more real estate to accommodate lab space and the

1 ingredients to attract in-house talent in the
2 county. To that end, we commend staff in its
3 creative thinking on increasing housing and
4 promoting diverse housing types in the county.
5 While encouraging diverse housing along the
6 corridor, it's very important and near transit is
7 key, there also needs to be policies that allow
8 missing middle housing throughout the county.

9 In order for supplying this housing
10 demand over the next 30 years, multiple tools and
11 approaches are needed. We appreciate the plan's
12 clear advocacy that tax abatements, pilots, and
13 TIFs should be used to encourage diverse housing
14 types and high density housing near transit. We
15 recommend this type of advocacy throughout the
16 plan.

17 Furthermore, the plan rightfully
18 focuses on identifying and removing regulatory
19 barriers that slow down delivery of development.
20 Finally, we suggest you consider distilling the
21 draft's primary goals and actions and shortening
22 the overall content. Thank you very much for the

1 opportunity to testifying today, and we look
2 forward to working with you.

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.
4 I'm sorry. Your background is blurred. We want
5 to see what you're reading. Maybe you can fill
6 us in on that some other time. Harold Pfohl, are
7 you there?

8 MR. PFOHL: Can you hear me?

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

10 MR. PFOHL: And you see me?

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: And we see you.

12 MR. PFOHL: Okay, great. Chairman
13 Anderson and Commissioners, thank you very much
14 for the opportunity to testify. My name is
15 Harold Pfohl, and I live on Summer Village. And
16 I'm testifying as an individual this evening.

17 The concept of complete communities is
18 a case of deja vu for me. In 1976, I came down
19 to Washington as part of a team to analyze the
20 HUD New Communities program. In the midst of all
21 the civil rights strife and social upheaval of
22 the 1960s, the Johnson Administration listened to

1 urban planners who were convinced that they had a
2 solution to the social distress which was new
3 communities.

4 As a result, Congress passed
5 legislation that enabled HUD to issue bond
6 guarantees facilitating the private development
7 of 13 new cities on raw land in various parts of
8 the country. These developments incorporated
9 avant-garde concepts of urban planning for bike
10 paths, walkability, commercial centers, trails,
11 architectural covenants, et cetera. The idea was
12 build it and they will come, Black and White,
13 rich and poor. We'll live in peace and harmony.

14 In the excitement of getting these
15 dream communities created, HUD had little
16 interest in financial feasibility. The projects
17 were incredibly complex, the front end costs were
18 enormous, and HUD loaded them with social
19 conditions. They were all failures
20 unfortunately.

21 From that perspective, I look at the
22 Thrive Montgomery 2050 concept of complete

1 communities which is a result of a great deal of
2 hard work by many good people. I see a utopian
3 plan that is vast and unbelievably expensive. It
4 doesn't have a prayer of being implemented at any
5 meaningful level over the course of the next 30
6 years when you consider the plan in its totality.

7 The four cornerstones to any strategy
8 are people, assets, time, and money. The county
9 is suffering severe revenue shortfall, net new
10 business formation is stagnant, and needs of
11 social programs are increasing. The plan gives
12 no consideration to cost, simply assuring the
13 reader that resources will be found in the
14 future. But the costs are enormous.

15 Matters of money cannot be ignored in
16 any plan. All of the elements are interrelated
17 and interdependent. Priorities cannot be set
18 without considering cost.

19 Dense development with ready access to
20 Metro stops makes a great deal of sense and will
21 be pursued. But how do you create parks, trails,
22 and open space there? Complete communities

1 within areas that are fully built out requires
2 the acquisition, demolition, and redevelopment of
3 numerous residences. The cost of that is huge.

4 Will it be feasible, and the
5 acquisition of land for trails and parks? The
6 county most certainly needs much more affordable
7 housing. But insofar as attracting business and
8 employment is concerned, transportation is far
9 and away the most important consideration.

10 Finish the Purple Line and radically
11 improve bus service, where's the money to do
12 this? This plan is full of dreams and
13 aspirations that are beyond reach, admirable but
14 beyond reach. The authors state the plan must be
15 implemented now in order to deal with the
16 unprecedented chaos and economic collapse we're
17 confronting.

18 If so, any plan that purports to deal
19 with our distressed condition must offer guidance
20 for the possibility that recovery may be very
21 prolonged. This plan ignores that altogether.
22 It simply sticks with what is wishful. Wait a

1 couple of years until things settle down and we
2 can get a better view of the future and then
3 let's revisit this. Thank you very much for your
4 time.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Is David
6 Blockstein there?

7 MR. BLOCKSTEIN: Yes, good evening.
8 I'm David Blockstein, and thank you for your time
9 tonight. I think we've all learned a lot. I'm a
10 Takoma Park resident for 25 years. I have a
11 doctorate in ecology.

12 I'm a member of the Clean Energy
13 Working Group that's involved in preparing the
14 county's climate action and resilience plan. And
15 I am also a member of the Takoma Park
16 Mobilization Environment Committee that will be
17 submitting written testimony. First, I want to
18 associate myself with the comments from the other
19 environmentalists who testified tonight and
20 previously the Audubon Naturalist Society, the
21 Takoma Park Mobilization -- or the Climate
22 Mobilization Montgomery County, Montgomery

1 Countryside Alliance, Western Montgomery
2 Association, and also the comments of the county
3 executive in the Department of Environmental
4 Protection.

5 The top line of this plan, economic
6 health, equity, and environmental resilience, is
7 unassailable. However, the draft plan segregates
8 these activities rather than integrates them. I
9 recommend that you put in a new top line,
10 something like the health, the wealth, and equity
11 of life for all Montgomery County residents
12 supported by a nurturing biodiverse natural
13 environment.

14 There are lots of good policy ideas
15 and recommendations in the draft. But there are
16 a few shortcomings that I'd like to highlight.
17 So there are three concerns that I'm going to
18 mention.

19 First of all, nature seems like a
20 sidebar. There's good language, but it's thin on
21 substantive recommendations. Section 6.5 has
22 more study than specific actions. Biodiversity,

1 the foundation of all life on the planet and
2 economic well-being is only mentioned three
3 times.

4 Forest protection is identified as
5 something to be studied. I associate myself with
6 the recommendations by the Audubon Naturalist
7 Society. For a no net loss of forest, I would
8 actually go further and say a net increase of
9 native forests.

10 Secondly, climate change. Climate
11 change needs to be central to this document, not
12 just stuck away in Section 6.2. The climate
13 emergency that is recognized by the county in the
14 2017 climate emergency resolution is not an
15 overstatement. We need to rethink everything in
16 the context of climate change.

17 And so we need to think about things
18 like the impact of storms and more variable
19 precipitation on our goals for stormwater
20 management and the impacts on low income people.
21 A couple of people have mentioned already this
22 plan is out of sync, but not too much out of

1 sync, with the climate action and resilience
2 plan. The draft is going to be released in a
3 couple of weeks. Section 6.2.2 says to take that
4 into account. But I think to do that, you need
5 to delay your next phase, extend the deadline a
6 bit, and really look at that climate action and
7 resilience plan to make sure that these two
8 central documents for the county really are in
9 sync.

10 Finally, I want to talk about density
11 briefly. Density is not panacea. Montgomery
12 County is urban. It's suburban. It's rural.
13 Density by itself does not decrease stormwater
14 runoff or mitigate climate change.

15 For example, the illustration on page
16 107 of a dense urban environment has more
17 impervious surface, and I don't see anything
18 there to mitigate climate change. The plan needs
19 to not only tag people that mitigate the impacts
20 of urbanism. For example, generation of solar
21 and renewable energy in the urban zone, great
22 potential there. Great opportunity for creating

1 jobs and wealth to the county residents.

2 I think there should be a goal of net
3 zero urban areas for the county and to look at
4 other recommendations in the climate and action
5 and resilience plan as its unveiled in the next
6 couple weeks. So I thank you all. I know that
7 there's been a lot of work that's gone into this,
8 and there's a lot there that we can build on. So
9 thank you very much for your time tonight.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for
11 testifying. Is Frank Fritz there?

12 MR. FRITZ: Yes, here I am. Should I
13 start?

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, please.
15 Whenever you're ready.

16 MR. FRITZ: Thank you. My name is
17 Frank Santos Fritz. As you see with the
18 pronouns, I'm an activist and organizer from
19 Downtown Silver Spring. I've worked in the labor
20 movement representing public sector workers here
21 in Montgomery County, and I've also worked as a
22 climate justice activist as well. As someone

1 who's moved to the DMV area from suburban New
2 Jersey, I deeply appreciate the thought Thrive
3 2050's plan and focus on improving transit
4 connection in between -- in and between our
5 communities as well as its focus on promoting
6 walkable mixed-use development.

7 Silver Spring is an incredible
8 community that has allowed me to access the best
9 that Montgomery County and the District of
10 Columbia have to offer, all without needing a
11 car. I want to congratulate the work of the
12 Montgomery for All coalition on its efforts to
13 organize robust public engagement on the master
14 plan process. I'm not someone that normally
15 weighs in on zoning, but they have asked a lot of
16 people and I appreciate their efforts.

17 I want to emphasize Montgomery for
18 All's emphasis on their platform planks,
19 stressing the need for quality housing for all
20 and protecting vulnerable communities. In my
21 testimony tonight, I urge county leadership to
22 expand its focus in the plan on affordability

1 with real concrete measures to truly build
2 affordable housing in our communities while
3 protecting low and middle income communities that
4 already live in our county. The Metropolitan
5 Council Government Resolution 27-2019 sets
6 targets that we need an additional 10,000 units
7 of housing above the current projected
8 construction.

9 Something that has gone underreported
10 is that they also found that at least 75 percent
11 of new construction in the region should be
12 affordable to low and middle income households.
13 Montgomery County being such an expensive
14 jurisdiction probably has a larger responsibility
15 than other jurisdictions in making sure that it
16 supports our lower income and middle income
17 neighbors. Our working families, many of whom
18 I've worked with in the labor movement, pay a
19 premium to access the world class services here
20 in Montgomery County.

21 Unfortunately, even prior to the
22 COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, our county

1 led the state of Maryland with an estimated
2 52,806 households facing a severe housing cost
3 burden. That is 50,000 households paid more than
4 50 percent of their income on housing between
5 2014 and 2018. Many more pay for unaffordable
6 housing through longer commutes from neighboring
7 jurisdictions, making a larger climate equity
8 issue for the county as well.

9 To achieve a truly inclusive housing
10 policy that aligns with our stated goals of
11 social justice and racial equity, there must be a
12 clearer intention in policy and planning when
13 building affordable housing for every income
14 level. Truly affordable housing at every level
15 is an economic justice issue, a racial justice
16 issue, and an environmental justice issue. And
17 integrated approach that combines smart planning
18 with state and local policy such as the Stable
19 Homes Act introduced by Delegate Jheanelle
20 Wilkins which would set a just cause standard for
21 tenancy, a right to counsel for tenants facing
22 eviction, robust funding for the Social Housing

1 Act introduced by Delegate Vaughn Stewart to
2 construct income diverse housing for not for
3 profit and public means, your transit and rent
4 stabilization as seen in Takoma Park, and
5 currently as a sector in the pandemic as a relief
6 measure.

7 While my ideal vision for housing was
8 one that posits quality housing as a basic human
9 right. I think in the short run, we can all
10 agree that every member of our community
11 including every person who works here should have
12 the economic ability to live here without cost
13 burden. That is a prerequisite of a county where
14 we can all thrive now and into the future. Thank
15 you for your time and consideration of my
16 testimony, and good luck with your continued work
17 on the master plan.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much for
19 testifying. Shruti Bhatnagar? Are you there
20 Shruti?

21 MS. BHATNAGAR: Yes, I'm here. Thank
22 you.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi there.

2 MS. BHATNAGAR: Hi. How are you?

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Great to see you.

4 MS. BHATNAGAR: Great to see you too.

5 Good evening, Chairman Anderson and members of
6 the Planning Board. My name is Shruti Bhatnagar.
7 I'm chair of Sierra Club Montgomery County Group,
8 and I'm testifying on behalf of the group.

9 I'm very pleased that the Planning
10 Board is preparing this major planning document
11 and support the draft plan for Thrive 2050. We
12 believe that this will set a strong foundation
13 for the county over the next 30 years as we move
14 forward to address our many challenges and fully
15 embrace some great opportunities. Together we
16 can create a more vibrant, equitable, and
17 liveable community.

18 We believe the major themes of Thrive
19 are accurate descriptors of where the county
20 needs to move over the coming decades. Thrive
21 advocates for a robust feature that includes
22 compact development, creation of diverse

1 neighborhoods to promote racial justice and
2 equity, roads concentrated around transit, a
3 wider range of housing options throughout the
4 county, transportation that focuses on moving
5 people, not cars, and eradication of greenhouse
6 gas emissions. Equally important is the vision
7 of complete communities connected also by green
8 corridors.

9 These corridors serve as critical
10 natural infrastructure because they increase
11 resilience to the impacts of climate change and
12 protect water quality. Sierra Club believes that
13 America's most critical environmental issue is
14 climate change and our most critical social issue
15 is racial justice and equity. We also understand
16 that we cannot address one without addressing the
17 other.

18 So Sierra Club fully understands that
19 the way these policies are applied are intimately
20 interconnected. For instance, enabling more kids
21 to walk or bike to equitable and diverse
22 neighborhood schools is only going to work when

1 we have created across the county neighborhoods
2 with the right variety of housing types and
3 costs. This plan can and should be consulted
4 often over the coming decades.

5 We do not want a good document that
6 just sits on the shelf. Thus, we advocate for a
7 shorter, punchier Thrive that will truly inspire
8 elected officials and a wide range of key
9 stakeholders in the public, private, and
10 nonprofit sectors. The reader of this plan
11 should walk away excited about what a great place
12 Montgomery County is going to become to live and
13 work over the next 30 years and be energized to
14 roll up their sleeves to get to work on achieving
15 the plan's vision. Again, thank you for the
16 opportunity to present Sierra Club's strong
17 support for Thrive.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
19 Is Alain Norman there?

20 MR. NORMAN: Hello, yes. Chairman,
21 can you hear me?

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

1 MR. NORMAN: Thank you very much.
2 Good evening, Chairman Anderson, ladies and
3 gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to
4 provide some brief remarks in favor of the new
5 draft plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050. My name is
6 Alain Norman. I currently reside in Silver
7 Spring, and I grew up in Montgomery County.

8 I would like to point to three key
9 pillars to the future success of this county and
10 to which I'm happy to note is covered by the
11 draft plan, although they are mentioned across
12 more than one of the plan's numerous plan
13 elements. First, having attended public schools
14 in the county, I know that maintaining an
15 excellent public school system is crucial to
16 ensuring that people can thrive in this county,
17 in this country, and in the fact of global
18 competition. So I applaud the plan for
19 repeatedly emphasizing the need to facilitate
20 access to schools at all levels.

21 I might urge the county to ensure that
22 funding goes to build as many schools as possible

1 to avoid overcrowding and given the current
2 trends, to take all the relevant steps necessary
3 to ensure students have access to computers and
4 the internet to be able to receive excellent
5 education virtually. Second, let me touch on the
6 intertwined issues of economic well-being and
7 environmental sustainability. I'm thrilled that
8 the draft plan repeatedly notes the need to
9 facilitate access by foot or on bicycle to places
10 of work, shops, parks, and other points of
11 interest.

12 I want the county to have a multi-use
13 path installed on what remains a sidewalkless but
14 important roadway. And so I know firsthand how
15 important it will be for the county to
16 incorporate such facilities more frequently
17 throughout the county. Moreover, helping people
18 move around without resorting to cars will
19 enhance safety, improve quality of life,
20 encourage consumers to shop at local businesses,
21 and help Maryland meet its greenhouse gas
22 reduction goals.

1 Similarly, ensuring that people have
2 access to green spaces and/or opportunities to
3 engage in, say, community gardening throughout
4 the county will help improve quality of life,
5 sustainability, and the sort of community
6 cohesion likely to support local small and medium
7 businesses. In short, I agree with the thrust of
8 the plan to improve everyone's quality of life to
9 efforts to improve access to education
10 opportunities generally and by planning for
11 sustainability, notably in the form more bike
12 lanes and/or ensuring walkability in future
13 developments.

14 I might simply suggest that the plan,
15 which is quite ambitious and often aspirational,
16 be pruned of works like ideally which appears
17 every so often so as to make its tone a bit more
18 forceful so that as that might later help with
19 getting funding for implementation of a plan win
20 battles over budget to take place during the next
21 30 years. Thank you very much, Chairman.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. And I

1 think Sebastian Smoot is our last speaker.

2 MR. SMOOT: Thank you very much. My
3 name is Sebastian Smoot. I'm a resident of
4 Burtonsville. And I'll start off by saying I
5 live in Burtonsville and work in Fulton.

6 I know a lot of people accuse the plan
7 of being anti-car, but I love my car. It's the
8 only way I can get around. I work in Fulton
9 which is five miles away. It's a seven-minute
10 drive to get to my work. But if I were to take
11 transit, it would take three hours. And if I
12 were to take a bike, it would take one hour.

13 I am not anti-car by any means. I
14 drive everywhere. But I want to have other
15 options. And I want to have other options
16 because I think just as one example,
17 Burtonsville, for example, is very car-centric.
18 I mean, it's just strip malls and drive-thrus.

19 And you talk to anyone here in
20 Burtonsville, we're sick of that. And the only
21 way to really have a robust, vibrant community
22 space and retail and amenities is if we are not

1 designing everything around people driving to and
2 from places. And so I really hope that the -- I
3 really support the 15-minute idea of having
4 amenities and opportunities within 15 minutes.

5 I do want to also mention there's some
6 people that were complaining that low income
7 people need cars to get to work. Well, maybe
8 this 15-minute concept needs to also include
9 housing for our essential employees. I think
10 every community, we've talked a lot about
11 exclusionary zoning and the dangers of it, the
12 harms that it causes. But I really think that
13 15-minute communities should go beyond just
14 amenities and also making sure there's a variety
15 of housing options in every neighborhood so that
16 our essential workers can be able to have quality
17 neighborhoods and access to quality jobs.

18 The last and ultimate -- the second to
19 last thing I'll mention is I'd like to just talk
20 a little bit about active recreation and place
21 making because that hasn't been discussed too
22 much tonight. The county does a great job with

1 parks and playgrounds. But I think we need to
2 really think beyond that.

3 Someone earlier was -- in their
4 testimony was talking about the human connection
5 that's built when people interact with each
6 other. And I think that the county can continue
7 to work more. There's already been some efforts
8 towards it in the -- what's it called, the active
9 parks plan.

10 But I think we really need to rethink
11 public spaces. It's not just a place where
12 parents take their kids, although that's what I
13 do all the time but to be where young people go
14 to hang out and should go where teenagers hang
15 out or where young adults hang out or elderly
16 retirees hang out. And a way to do that is just
17 to provide a lot of opportunities for a very
18 small scale for communities, neighborhoods to do
19 their own little placemaking events without
20 having to require a ton of resources.

21 I think there's a previous testimony
22 talked about community gardens. I like community

1 gardens. I also like beer gardens and food
2 trucks, stages for performances, outdoor movie
3 nights, and things like that.

4 So I really would like to see Thrive
5 benefit the intent of having neighbors really get
6 to connect with each other because in this really
7 divided, intense world that we're living in right
8 now, I think nothing is worse than when neighbors
9 that live in the same neighborhood don't even
10 know each other. And I think that really creates
11 a serious social and mental health issue for a
12 lot of residents, especially when everyone is
13 blocked at home. And I'll just close by saying
14 buses deserve bus lanes, and BRT is not BRT
15 without dedicated lanes. Thank you for letting
16 me share.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much for
18 that testimony. I appreciate it. And that
19 concludes our hearing, but the record is open
20 through December 10th. So send me an email at
21 mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org.

22 That email address for the chair is on

1 our website if you missed that. And we will be
2 looking forward to your additional input. And
3 thanks, everybody, who came to testify. And I
4 think that we're adjourned. Bye, everybody.

5 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
6 went off the record at 8:55 p.m.)

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Hearing Draft Plan

Before: MNCPPC

Date: 11-19-20

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