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
3:04 p.m.

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

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

MS. WRIGHT: Thank you. We're very
pleased to be here at the public hearing for
Thrive Montgomery 2050. This effort is the
result of nearly two years of staff work and
literally hundreds of meetings with the community
and a great deal of work by the entire Planning
Department staff.
This plan is unusual in that we actually developed it from the ground up. Many other folks who do updates to their general or comp plans hire an outside consultant and essentially have that consultant just write the plan and then take it out to hearing. We decided to take a different approach and to really start with hearing our community.

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

And we definitely see this as not in any way an end but really a beginning of getting additional thoughts and making sure as we go through the planning board work sessions we work to include that input and reframe our
recommendations appropriate. With that, I'll turn it over to Khalid Afzal who will do the technical introduction to the plan.

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

Thrive Montgomery 2050 public hearing draft plan is a comprehensive amendment to Wedges and Corridors, Updated General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, 1969 as amended; the General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County, 1993 as amended; the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan as amended; Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, as amended; Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, as amended; the Purple Line Functional Plan, as amended; the Master Plan of
I would like to enter into the public record the following documents: On Wedges and Corridors, a General Plan for the Physical Department of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, 1964; On Wedges and Corridors, Updated General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, 1969; General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County, 1993; the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, as amended; The Purple Line Functional Plan, as amended; the Master Plan of Historic Preservation, as amended; the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, as amended; and the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan, as amended; the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Public Hearing Draft Plan dated October 20, including Appendices A, B, C, and D, and Appendix COMMISSIONER VERMA: the Outreach and Engagement Appendix published as a separate document; Thrive

The following supporting studies and reports are also entered into the public record:

the draft Montgomery County Preservation of Affordable Housing Study, 2020; Housing Needs Assessment Study, Spring 2020; A Strategic Framework for the Montgomery County General Plan Update, 2019; Agritourism Study, December 1919; Thrive Montgomery 2050 Strategic Framework, June 2019; Montgomery County Trends, A Look at People, Housing, and Jobs Since 1990, January 2019; Missing Middle Housing Study, September 2018; Meeting the Housing Needs of Older Adults in Montgomery County, May 2018; Montgomery County Retail Strategy, September 2018; Montgomery County Rental Housing Study, June 2017; Office Market Assessment, Montgomery County, Maryland,
June 2015. All of these documents are listed with a hyperlink in the reference section of the public hearing draft on pages 160 to 164.

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

And finally, staff recommends that the public hearing record remain open until December 10, 2020 at the close of business. And that completes my statement for the record. Thank you.
CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. So just to be clear, everybody gets three minutes. We have about 30 folks teed up for the first group before we take a break. So we're going to move right through it. First, I have Meredith Wellington representing the County Executive, and I see Meredith there. Whenever you're ready.

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

Thrive Montgomery recommends rezoning single family neighborhoods and corridors over the next 30 years to allow new housing types in the single family zones starting with neighborhoods near transit. Thrive Montgomery, however, does not restrict the rezoning to neighborhoods near transit and it takes no position on when the rezoning would occur. As a result, if this plan is adopted, the Council may
through a single zoning text amendment rezone the
single family zones in the entire county to allow
market rate townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and
apartment buildings by right throughout the
single family neighborhoods requiring only a
building permit to move forward.

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

Thrive Montgomery 2050 will best serve
current and future county residents by
identifying their needs, amenities in our east
county communities, affordable housing and cost
prohibitive communities, and improved transportation to bring our residents closer to jobs and closer to each other and then lay out a plan to accomplish these goals. This focus would give more assurance that the county is able to maintain the quality of life that county residents have come to expect. Finally, the County Executive asks for a six-month delay in this process.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

And next up, we have the Honorable Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor of Somerset.
MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay. Can you hear me?

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

MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay. Can you hear --

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

MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay. Can you hear --

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

MAYOR SLAVIN: Yeah, so I --

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: It's tricky, yes.

MAYOR SLAVIN: Okay, cool.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Go right ahead.

MAYOR SLAVIN: Yes. Chair Anderson and members of the Planning Board, thank you for
this opportunity. I am Jeffrey Slavin, seven-term mayor of the town of Somerset and a 65-year resident of Council District 1. I'm speaking today in my individual capacity.

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

To conclude, I want to read into the record the last paragraph of the coordinating committee's letter. Jobs creation and affordable housing should be the county's primary goals for the future rather than providing missing middle housing for which the priority and policy basis
have not yet been established. Montgomery Thrive 2050 should focus on those goals and the Planning Board should rework the draft plan accordingly.

Thank you very much, sir.

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

MS. LANE: Good afternoon.

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

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

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

MS. LANE: Okay.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Go ahead.

MS. LANE: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Irene Lane. And as a town council member, I speak on behalf of the town of Chevy
We very much appreciate the hard work that the Planning Board and staff have put into the development of this transformational plan with its laudable goals. The town along with 26 other communities representing over 33,000 residents has already submitted a unified set of detail written comments. Today, I would like to discuss or focus on four suggestions for improvement, first, the definition of community.

The plan should specify the parameters for the diverse urban, suburban, and rural complete communities that exist throughout the county. And in order to meet the county's affordable and attainable housing goals, we encourage you to increase and diversify the areas for missing middle housing as affordable housing is more realistically achievable in areas outside the one-half mile zones around rail and BRT. Also, the plan should leverage naturally occurring affordable housing options, including adaptive reuse of malls and other retail office
buildings which post-COVID may no longer be viable for their original and intended use.

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

Third, the strategy for finance and investment. We strongly recommend that Thrive Montgomery provide equal weight to the importance
of job creation, transit and housing, and
including strategies for how public revenue will
substantially increase in order to fund a
complete community concept with its decentralized
public facilities, small local schools, and
transit infrastructure projects. Essentially,
there needs to be a plan for how the county will
thrive economically by attracting new industries,
companies, and small businesses to the county.

Fourth, the economic and lifestyle
impact of COVID-19. As this plan will impact all residents, business
owners, employees, regional commuters, and
visitors for decades to come, we feel it
important to factor the changing realities of
living and working as a result of the pandemic.
Let us not forget that only two weeks ago, the
chairman of the Federal Reserve stated that while
recent progress toward a vaccine was welcome
news, it was, quote, just too soon to assess with
any confidence the implications of the news for
the path of the economy and that the post-
pandemic economy was going to be different in some fundamental ways, unquote.

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

   CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Andy Leon Harney from Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase.

   MS. HARNEY: Members of the Planning Board, I'm the Village Manager of Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today on the draft Thrive 2050 plan. We in Section 3 also feel that the plans are laudable but that it needs further fleshing out with some additional thought before the county adopts such an expansive change.
Like the Great Depression, this pandemic is going to have a long-term impact on the way we live and the way we work. Deficits are already piling up, and this plan requires massive investment in infrastructure and mass transit. It seems premature to develop such a comprehensive plan as many of the assumptions may not be correct.

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

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

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

The alteration of single family zone
is, of course, our greatest concern. Single
family zones are and will remain an appropriate
land use strategies in many areas. Multi-family
dwellings in formerly single family zones will
significantly increase densities. But the plan
doesn't include any metric to define ideal
densities for urban, suburban, or rural complete
communities. And the rationale for these changes
is to provide housing diversity and affordable
housing. But down county, it's hard to
understand given the cost of land how that would work.

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

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

MS. HARNEY: I have one sentence more.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay, very good.
MS. HARNEY: We think this plan needs more work and respectfully ask that the questions we've raised here and in our letter to the Board be answered before proceeding.

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

MS. HARNEY: Right.

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

MR. HELMS: Can you hear me, sir?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

MR. HELMS: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, I hear you.

MR. HELMS: Very good. Good afternoon, Chair Anderson and Board. My name is David Helms, and I'm a resident of Four Corners and a bicycle and pedestrian advocate. In the county, I'm the Pedestrian, Bicycle, Transportation Safety Advisory Committee.
I support the General Plan's direction, especially connectivity, safety efficient travel, complete communities. And I am a Boomer who will wait in the rain for the BRT and support that. My points are that -- I'm not going to talk about what's in the plan. I'm going to talk about what's not in it, especially kind of measures of effectiveness, how do we understand what success is, and how do we know how we're going to get there. And perhaps there's some missing measure of effectiveness that we ought to have.

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

    So a lack of focus may make capital investments more difficult to attract political and public support. It's not unusual for general
plans to have public health elements. The General Plan out of Richmond, California indeed does.

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

The plan does not -- and this is an opportunity to highlight the value of realized action. I encourage the Planning Board to include vignettes on value that are going to support the policies. This would include clean water, value of clean air, value of parks and
healthy living and the value less road miles to
maintain and certainly the value of human life.
So --

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

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

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

MR. WEINSTEIN: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Good afternoon. My
name is Zach Weinstein, and I rent in Downtown
Silver Spring. I strongly support Vision 2050,
especially its commitment to expanding housing
and transport options. I moved to Downtown
Silver Spring as a recent graduate because Silver Spring offered plentiful housing choices and easy access to D.C.

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

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

I also admire the plan's commitment to sustainable transport. The plan rightly
emphasizes buses, biking, and walking as critical to the county's prosperity and health. Vision 2050 is truly visionary in its call to build no new highways and cease widening roads.

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

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

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

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: You might need to hit *6. Oh, there we go. Can you hear us?
MS. RANGWALA: Yes, can you hear me?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In short, we must make room for people
of all incomes and means to live in existing communities and that includes all our existing communities. When revising the General Plan, please make sure that you're mapping out a future where housing is a right and is legal everywhere. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Stephen Craft, are you there?

(No audible response.)

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

MR. KRAFT: Yes, can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, whenever you're ready.

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

As a county resident, I am aware of the special position and influence Montgomery County in influencing not just the region but the
United States as a whole. I am excited for
Thrive 2050, the promises it will deliver, in
particular, its mention for walkable communities,
varied housing types, connected by mass transit
in attempt to reach net zero carbon emissions.
As we continue in the 21st century, we must
permit Montgomery County to get to net zero
carbon emissions. I believe 2050 provides an
outline to achieve these goals.

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

Right now, the county is commenting
about single family homes. But in order to meet
our housing and climate goals, we must change to
allow for more housing types and mass transit. Housing should be a right, but transportation and access to basic needs such as groceries should be considered a right on its own. In particular, climate change poses a grave and dangerous threat to our communities and is another reason why I'm a big proponent of walkable communities to reduce our carbon footprint.

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

In addition, walkable communities lined with rain gardens, greenery, power by solar, wind, and geothermal will help water runoff, provide shade, and reduce overall pollution, and of course, our CO2 footprint. In conclusion, I am for Thrive 2050. I want to make sure we build a wide array of housing types,
focus on walkable communities, community
integration, connect by mass transit, and
providing green space for all residents. Thank
you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Is Andrew Saundry there?

(No audible response.)

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

MR. SAUNDRY: Hi, can you hear me?

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

MR. SAUNDRY: Wonderful. Good
afternoon, Chair Anderson and members of the
Planning Board. Thanks for the opportunity to
speak today. My name is Andrew Saundry. I am
here today as a nearly lifelong resident of
Germantown to show my support for some of the
positives in the Thrive 2050 General Plan and to
recognize the two areas where I think the Board
could make some adjustments to promote an even
more just and environmentally friendly future.
First, I just want to thank you for your emphasis on racial and economic justice as the backbone of this decision. Second, many of the 200,000 new residents that the county is projected to add by 2050 are going to be low to moderate income and will struggle with the rising cost of living here. I know I am.

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

Many parts of the county, particularly across the north and east county and unincorporated areas like my hometown of Germantown, have felt excluded from these conversations in years past. If we want to preserve historic sites and green spaces, foster
a sense of place and community identity, prevent
gentrification displacement while at the same
time creating affordable housing necessary to
accommodate the projected growth, I think more
needs to be done to engage directly. It would be
very easy to reach out to more community groups,
advertise opportunities to testify more broadly,
and create local offices where residents can go
to get more information and make their voices
heard.

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

Speaking of 15-minute living, I
believe that the key to both that goal and your
push towards better schools is the construction
of more new schools, particularly in rapidly
growing and historically disadvantages parts of
the county. Please add an action on building new
schools. I would also be remiss if I didn't
underscore the absolute necessity of protecting
the Ag Reserve and green space of the county. To
that end, protecting the TDR program, expanding
rural broadband, and increasing the tree canopy
are all welcome parts of the Thrive 2050 plan.

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

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

MS. SLATER: Me?
CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

MS. SLATER: Is this Chair Anderson?

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

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

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

The 15-minute living also supports our growing senior population who may no longer be able to drive. It reduces auto use to lower greenhouse gas emission. And, excuse me, town center concept can be developed in all areas, whether urban, suburban, or rural.
Secondly, the idea of inclusion. Our older neighborhoods reflect our history of racial and ethnic covenants. Racially and socioeconomically integrated neighborhoods and schools promote equity. We should aim for a broad range of housing types that are accessible to all races, all incomes in every part of our county, and this would be in support of missing middle duplex, triplex, small multifamily apartments.

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

She chose a small New England liberal arts college to go to based on the courses offered but decided before the end of the first semester that she wanted to transfer. Why?
Because the college enrollment was 90 percent White.

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

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Seth Grimes, are you there?
MR. GRIMES: Am I good?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

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

The document discusses missing middle housing, the desirability of changing zoning to enable wider creation of smaller multi-unit buildings. That's cool. However, Action 1148 calls for housing, particularly in the areas located within 15-minute walk or bike ride of rail and Bus Rapid Transit. I think we should develop a robust action plan that will bring us housing diversity benefits to all areas, including areas governed by homeowner associations, prioritizing high promise areas as you're doing now with the Silver Spring downtown
and adjacent community plan. I think that maybe some of the Chevy Chases and Somersets would be great candidates to prioritize.

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

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

Number ten under trends and challenges is we need to look for regional solutions. In our state, we have strong ties to the Baltimore region. We must consider how to take advantage of our proximity to economic opportunities
available on neighboring jurisdictions, job
centers, colleges, and universities, culture and
recreational attractions. We should consider
regional solutions.

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

Think what we might've gained if
Montgomery County had worked with Prince George's
purse East County corridor development over the
last half century. Those benefits would've
included lessened development pressure on
Bethesda and American Legion Bridge congestion.
The ingredients are in place or soon will be with
the Intercounty Connector, with the Purple Line,
Bus Rapid Transit on Route 29.
And these will help us connect the routes of the corridor at the southern end in Silver Spring and Langley Park, yet corridor areas in cities such as Hillandale, Burtonsville, and Fairland remain in sore need of attention. So please do add in more than the very small mention in the current draft of focusing on East County and specific strategies that can be done to enhance the development within East County. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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

MS. COOK: Hi.

CHAIR ANDERSON: We can hear you.

MS. COOK: Hello. Can you hear me?

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

MS. COOK: Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Cook, and I live in Downtown Silver Spring. I strongly support the direction of Thrive Montgomery 2050, especially the focus on public spaces as a central element of the
community where neighbors can come together and to encourage active lifestyles.

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

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

This is a much bigger problem for residents with disabilities and parents using strollers since there are uneven sidewalks and wide intersections can make it impossible for
residents to get to public spaces. In conclusion, I hope that the plan considers the acceptability of both new and existing public spaces for all residents in Thrive Montgomery 2050. Thank you for your time.

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

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

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

We also believe the process for reviewing the plan must take into greater account the COVID-19 pandemic which has changed the way
we live, work, and travel, likely with long-term consequences. It is also clear the review process needs to be slowed down. The plan must return to the original intentions which consider the environment as the true third leg of a foundational stool.

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

This integrity is needed countywide for the treasure that is our Agricultural Reserve as well as for urbanizing down county areas.
Access to nature should be a human right and available to every community. In our urban care areas, quality green space has been sliced and diced over the decades.

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

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

We had hoped given the initial emphasis on preserving our natural systems that
the General Plan would set a bold new standard
for our county where the environment was given
equal footing. We must do better than this
current plan or else there will not be a question
of thriving in 2050 but surviving. Let's slow
this process and involve stakeholders fully. Our
county deserves for natural resources to be more
integral to thrive 2050. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Is Michael Dutka there?

MR. DUTKA: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MR. DUTKA: Hello?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

Whenever you're ready.

MR. DUTKA: Okay. I'm Michael Dutka.

I live in Rockville, and I'm testifying as an
individual. What I want to say is I do support
all the goals outlined in Thrive 2050. I think
it's great that we're contemplating rezoning
single family areas to allow more missing middle
housing types.
I think we need to really, really, really boost the production of housing within the county. And we need to pursue a number of different avenues that are outlined in this current draft of the plan. So I support all those goals.

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

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

This county is not broadly accessible
to a diverse group of people and is getting increasingly less and less accessible as time goes on. Therefore, drastic changes are needed to how we think about land use in this county. Thrive touches on this, but I really do think it needs to go further and really, really, really attack the whole concept of single family zoning countywide. That's all for me. Thank you very much.

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

(No audible response.)


MR. KIRWAN: Can you hear me now?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

MR. KIRWAN: Thank you. My name is William Kirwan, and I am testifying as an individual. I'm an architect, a product of Montgomery County public schools, and a lifelong
resident of Silver Spring. I have raised two children here who have enjoyed the rich social and ethnic diversity of Downtown Silver Spring area and at the local public schools that they have attended.

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

This quote is from Daniel Burnham, an American architect and urban designer who lived from 1846 to 1912. I was introduced to that quote by Daniel Burnham during my studies in architecture school at the University of Maryland. To this day, I use those words for inspiration before every endeavor I undertake, professionally and personally. I believe Thrive 2050 should be similarly inspired by those words and should aim high. If there is no magic in the Thrive 2050 plan to stir our blood, it will
likely never be realized.

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

As Thrive 2050 points out, there is insufficient undeveloped land in our county to meet the demands of our projected growth in housing units. The largest areas of developable land in our county are currently restricted by single family zoning. Elsewhere across the United States, communities facing similar issues are recognizing this and reforming their single
family zoning to enable a diversity of housing
types that can comfortably coexist in single
family neighborhoods, such as duplexes,
triplexes, quads, and courtyard apartments.

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

Thrive 2050 recognizes this, and it is
paramount that we address this issue and aim high
to create more equitable and diverse communities
in our county. For Thrive 2050 to ultimately
become the success in visionary planning, it must
address many issues to advance Montgomery County
into the second half of the 21st century.
However, without single family zoning reform,
Thrive 2050 will lack the magic needed for it to
transcend from being a small plan to becoming a
big plan and a true roadmap towards our best
future. Thank you.

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

MR. KIRWAN: It should've been.

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

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

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

MS. LYONS: Oh, great. Well, thank
you. My name is Jane Lyons. And I'm testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the D.C. region to grow. Please see our written testimony for our full, very detailed comments.

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

However, we'd argue that Montgomery needs to welcome as many new residents as possible near transit and jobs in order to
jumpstart the economy and meet climate goals. Montgomery is uniquely positioned to help meet state and regional climate goals given its existing transit infrastructure, job centers, proximity to D.C. Also given our values of diversity inclusion, Montgomery is well positioned to be a national leader in equitable growth, breaking down traditional barriers to integration.

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

However, we should not limit zoning reform to these areas only. This has the potential to spark opposition to new transit as single family homeowners know that new transit goes hand in hand with zoning reform. This also has the potential to leave out areas of the county that are predominately White and wealthy, the kinds of places that are still exclusive
today due to racist policies of the past which will not be undone without intentional planning otherwise.

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

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

Four, emphasize racial justice. We commend including a section about the history of
red lining and discriminatory housing practices.

However, we believe that the plan can better tell
the story of segregation identifying both past
mistakes and successes so that we can better
identify future solutions. Therefore, we also
believe the goal of integration could be woven
into the plan's vision and goals much more.

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

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

MR. REED: I am.

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

MR. REED: All right. Hi, my name is
Dan Reed, and I'm testifying as an individual. I
grew up in Montgomery County, graduated from
MCPS, and my partner and I both live and work in Silver Spring. I'm here to support the draft Thrive 2050 plan.

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

Why does that happen? It's hard to say. I know that my mother, a first generation immigrant, putting herself through the University of Maryland could afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment for us to share. I know that I could go to good, diverse schools or visit my grandparents who lived nearby. I know there was a big park next to our building where I could play with my friends.
As an adult, I realized how many people in this community take that experience for granted. My partner and I spent years saving up and searching for a home we could afford. And the only reason we could buy a home near Downtown Silver Spring is because it's a townhouse.

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

In some ways, it also contributed to the issues we face now, an east-west divide, segregated schools and neighborhoods, sedentary lifestyles, stagnant incomes, and a chronic housing shortage driving prices. I was impressed when I saw all of those things mentioned in
Thrive 2050. I've never seen a planning document Montgomery County talk about racial justice.

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

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

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

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

MR. HEDRICK: I'm back.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, very good.

You're up.

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

It's hard to add more to some of the
great stuff that we've heard from the last couple
of folks that have talked, Dan and Jane and the
rest. I do want to say that we support broadly
the vision and the approach of Thrive 2050. I
think it's got a great focus on transit-oriented
development.

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

So we've identified the three major
outcomes that we want: economic health, equity,
environmental resilience. Each of those is
dependent on more housing. We said diversity,
the Thrive 2050 plan says diversity, inclusion
are our strength. It's essential for future.
Each one of those things is dependent upon us
having more housing.
And we say that we want to accommodate
and I think make room for 200,000 people. I
think we can do better. I think we can do more
than that. I think we can welcome folks in. I
think Montgomery County can be a leader in
equitable and sustainable growth.

I think to do that, we've got to start
with more housing, more housing everywhere.
Housing, we don't have enough of it and we need
more of it. So along that, I want you to broadly
consider a couple of things. I want us to
broadly reconsider the nature of single family
neighborhoods in general and expand what we mean
by near transit which we use frequently in the
Thrive 2050 draft here.

I represent the Action Committee for
transit. We're big fans of transit. We always
should focus on developed density near high
capacity transit. But we also need more housing
options and better and more -- more housing
options, better land use in communities that
might not now be considered near transit.
As I said, right now, my home is in Twinbrook. I live about a mile and a half away from the Metro station, probably really a little far to be considered near transit under many proposals. But I spend a lot of my time biking, busing, walking to different places.

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

Not to put too fine a point on it, but to increase the options, increase housing options in neighborhoods like that, what's often called the missing middle housing as mentioned a couple of times in the plan, duplexes, triplexes, cottages, what have you, we need improve the housing options and increase housing options across as many different neighborhoods as
possible. That's going to go a long way to meeting our goals, so the increased equity, the increased growth, transit ridership. Ignoring the possibilities of broadening housing options in a lot of different down county and mid-county communities is going to hurt us when we try to meet the goals of the plan and not give us the scale that we need to really get the outcomes that we want from Thrive 2050.

So to conclude, I don't want to run over my time, the Thrive 2050 draft provides a really good vision for focusing on redevelop, reuse, and infill right now. We absolutely could and should prioritize density around high capacity transit. But as the plan further develops and as we move toward implementation, I want to urge you to think more broadly, more boldly about providing all the housing that we'll need to meet this goal. That includes housing zoning a lot of single family areas in places that are currently exclusively single family -- includes single family zoning right now.
So again, the Thrive 2050 plan is good. It offers a lot of potential for
Montgomery County to become a leader in sustainable growth. It is an example of how to plan and build and conserve. So like I said, I just want to encourage -- I and Act want to encourage you guys to think about land use in communities otherwise not near transit.

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

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

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

MS. GUITARRA: Awesome. Thank you.

Good afternoon, Planning Board. For the record, I am Denisse Guitarra, Maryland conservation advocate for Audubon Naturalist Society. For 123 years, ANS has inspired people to enjoy, learn about, and protect nature.

We thank Montgomery Planning Department for the opportunity to comment on...
Thrive Montgomery 2050 working draft plan. ANS appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with planning staff on the plan's outreach efforts to both environmental and Latinx communities. We have submitted a full copy of our written comments before today's public hearing.

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

We applaud that the plan looks at every policy with an equity injustice lense and support the creation of civic led community engagement groups that include individuals who
have been historically underrepresented in land
use and planning decision making processes. We
support a 15-minute living policy recommendation
to increase the access to green spaces for all
people while simultaneously working to eliminate
structural barriers that prevent individuals from
accessing nature. ANS recommends the following
five policy areas to be amended.

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

Two, we recommend the addition of a
net zero buildings policy in the General Plan.
The plan does an excellent job in emphasizing the
need to plan for people and not for cars but
lacks a strong policy recommendation around buildings which are the second largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the county.

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

Four, the Agriculture Reserve, we recommend that the General Plan includes a complete analysis and set of policy recommendations of where and what to the Ag Reserve going forward while trying to find a balance between food accessibility, sustainability, equity injustice. And fifth, metrics and implementation, we recommend that the plan incorporates clear and more specific metric requirements to ensure that the policies and
actions stated in the plan are enforced. Thank you, Montgomery Planning Board and staff for considering our comments and suggestions.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

And next up we have Michael English.

MR. ENGLISH: Hello. My name is --

CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi.

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

First and foremost, Montgomery County is in the midst of a severe affordable housing crisis. Unless it applies to all shapes and sizes and in great number, MPDUs and other affordable housing support are continued and expanded and existing affordable housing stock
preserved to the greatest extent possible, the
county will continue to become unaffordable for
good. There's been talk
about the pandemic. Prices have not gone down.
The price of my condo has gone up in the time
I've bought it. We have to act now.

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

If you take only thing away from my
testimony, let it be that the final draft of this
plan absolutely must maintain the strong focus
and expand upon it. That said, I understand the
concern my fellow homeowners have about protecting their investment with increased property values. However, to me, owning a home is meant to provide some sense of financial and residential stability and the ability to build savings through equity is not meant to be an entitlement to an ever growing return on investment.

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

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

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

This is also, at best, a classist
viewpoint and, at worst, a racist one.

Historical districts and other types of single
family home exclusive zoning and simply the
current manifestation of explicitly racist
policies such as red lining in the past.
Character of the community is another way of
saying we don't want those kind of people living
here. It's fearmongering and it has no place
here.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Is Alan Bowser there?

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you. We
don't see you. Are you coming on in Teams or
you're on the phone?
MR. BOWSER: Well, I will try through that.

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

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

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to the proposed draft General Plan. We appreciate the work and time with the Planning Department on this document so far, and we thank them for participating in some of our meetings during the last year. While we understand those work on the plan feel that they
have done much more outreach than usual, we think
more is needed, especially since residents are
focused on many other things right now than the
General Plan and these draft recommendations
which were just released in October.

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

Some of these communities have
submitted comments directly to you. Our members
have been unanimous in their comments to us that
this transformative plan needs much more
community input and discussion if it is to
address the county's current and future needs and
improve the quality of life for all. Our
September 14th meeting of MCCF, the federation
adopted a resolution calling on the Planning
Board to extend the public engagement process in
light of the current pandemic crisis.

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

The current announced timetable for
the design finalization and approval of the
proposed General Plan without adequate public
consultation input is unreasonable and unsuited
for a legitimate community process in which residents can take ownership of the final plan. In order to continue planning for the future with confidence and accuracy and sensitivity to the needs of the county's communities, the Planning Board should extend the public engagement process until after the current health crisis is over. We appreciate full consideration with these concerns.

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

MR. KIMBROUGH: Yes, I am.

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

MR. KIMBROUGH: Okay, great. So I would like to echo a lot of the comments that have been made already that I do really -- there's really -- there's a lot to like about the Thrive 2050 plan. I do want to talk at sort of a high level about some of the issues that are just major undercurrents here. So as I've said before at such meetings as this, exclusionary zoning is
racist, and we need to deal with it. Is my
screen showing?

CHAIR ANDERSON: We can see it, yes.

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

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

I also want to add that exclusionary
zoning is also classist and ageist, that 35
percent of Montgomery County households rent and
they are not well served by this emphasis of
building single family homes. Eight percent of
households have zero vehicles, again, not well
served by these single family homes. And the zoning restrictions fall harder on younger people.

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

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

But what I want to point out is that not only is there a racist covenant down there at the bottom, there's also minimum home sales prices. There are minimum setbacks. Number three is that it has to be exclusively single family. Number four, again, more setbacks. And
number five is there's the racial covenant, right? So it says it's not to be sold, rented, or otherwise placed in possession of any of the African race.

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

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

E. Brook Lee attached these racial covenants to properties throughout Silver Spring. He also proposed the creation of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission which you probably know since that's you. So we
I need to grapple with the racist origins of all of these restrictions including zoning. And so what I want to argue is while it's not just zoning today either --

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

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

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

MR. KIMBROUGH: Okay.

CHAIR ANDERSON: -- time.

MR. KIMBROUGH: I'm going to wrap it up. We have a setback. We have height limits. We have parking minimums. And I'm going to wrap it up to say that Thrive 2050 should include concrete actions to address zoning and other exclusionary practices countywide consistent with the urgency of these issues that we have: climate change, demographic challenges, and the housing crisis. Thank you for your time.
CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. I really appreciate you moving through that last part quickly. Wendy Calhoun, are you there?

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we see you.

MS. CALHOUN: Excellent. Okay.

CHAIR ANDERSON: How have you been?

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

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

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

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

From the goal, connectedness, provide
equitable access for all Montgomery County
residents to housing, jobs, services, educational
opportunities, and parks and open spaces at the
local, countywide, and regional level. From the
goal, safe and efficient travel, transform
Montgomery County into a community where public
transit, walking, and bicycling account for the
majority of daily trips. From the goal, diverse
and adaptable growth, redevelop key corridors across the county to accommodate future population growth in attractive, walkable, mixed-use communities around transit stations with a mix of housing, commercial uses, and public amenities.

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

For example, when discussing the SSP, the Subdivision Staging Policy, now the GIP, the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, the Planning Board at MCPS needs to consider moving children from their nearby walkable schools to other schools in their cluster or even schools in neighboring clusters up to ten miles away for capacity reasons. Need I point out that schools ten miles away from where one lives is likely not
walkable, let along walkable in 15 minutes. I hope the Planning Board intends to work towards Thrive 2050 with MCPS and also by their own actions to make the dream of walkable schools for all county students in K through 12 a reality. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much. And the last person on this group is Herb Simmens.

MR. SIMMENS: Well, hi, and appreciate your patience. I'm Herb Simmens of Silver Spring testifying on behalf of the Climate Mobilization Montgomery County Chapter. And we're the group that got the County Council to unanimously adopt the first U.S. declaration of a climate emergency in 2017 as well as the most ambitious climate and emission target set by any government in the country. And we'll be presenting a handful of recommendations today and others in writing. We appreciate that climate is integrated into this document in quite a few places, 53 to be exact. However, it's apparent
that Thrive still has not recognized that the climate crisis is more than a significant inconvenience nor does Thrive say even one word about the critical importance that the county can and must play as a world model for emergency climate action. Climate impacts, direct and indirect, are an existential threat to most all life on the planet and are likely to become unstoppable unless emergency action is taken this decade.

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

You only mention that the county even declared the first climate emergency in the U.S. buried in the middle of a paragraph, in the middle of a section on page 97. And you chose to exclude the target in the emergency resolution
to, quote, initiate large scale efforts to remove carbon dioxide. It's just not in your document. Indeed, many would say it's even of greater importance than to eliminate emissions.

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

So we implore you to rectify these and the many other climate-related deficiencies through the following actions. Establish a Thrive climate workgroup right away by December 1st made up of county, Planning Board staff, and public to review this document and the county's climate action plan when it's released in early December to align each document with the other
and with the goals of the county Emergency
Climate Mobilization Resolution. Two, convene a
joint public meeting, public hearing with the
county after the CARP is released that focuses on
the connections and interrelationships between
these two efforts.

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: I have to -- I've
already given you some leeway here, but you got
to wrap it up. You're over your --
CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, one more sentence. Your initial reaction may be that these actions, however desirable, are not possible within your specified time frame. Please remember that we're in a declared emergency and act accordingly. Thank you.

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. We're ready to kick of Session 2 of the Thrive 2050 public hearing starting with -- and I should just say if
you haven't been following along, everybody gets three minutes. And I have to enforce that even though I hate to cut people off. So please help me out. And we'll, of course, include your written testimony if you have other things to say. Is Katie Nolan there?

MS. NOLAN: I am.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Go ahead.

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

We need better public transportation. Before my roommate lost her job, she sometimes spent more time in transit than she did at work, despite the fact that her job was a mere seven-minute drive from our apartment. People can't just spend their lives like that. We ultimately want affordable housing and better support systems for the disabled. My friend, Sebastian,
and his wife should be able to live in an actual home instead of planning every day for an AirBnB in someone's basement because they can't get work.

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

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

I worried that gentrification would drive out my neighbors, many of whom were Spanish speaking immigrants. Historically, growth without racial equity has led to the destruction of Black and Brown communities. In the 1950s and 1960s, growth along River Road in Bethesda meant the annihilation of River Road's African American communities.
My friend Harvey's childhood home is now a Whole Foods. Another friend's home is now a Bank of America. Because of growth, County Executive Elrich ignored Macedonia Baptist Church's cry for justice and allowed Bethesda Self Storage to continue the desecration of a cemetery that predates the Civil War.

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Do we
have Jenna Bauer logged in? Jenna Bauer?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: *6 maybe, one time.

Oh, there you go. Can you hear us?

MS. BAUER: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

We're ready when you are.

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

I would also like to emphasize my support for Montgomery for All's platform. I believe that there's a lot to be excited about in the Thrive Montgomery plan. But I think there are also opportunities to push forward, especially in transit and housing policy to ensure that we're building an inclusive, sustainable, and affordable community.
First, I will highlight my support for the idea of 15-minute living and not having to drive for my daily needs. I love living in Downtown Silver Spring. I lived in Bethesda, and my husband is a graduate student at the University of Maryland.

On many days, before the pandemic, of course, we took public transit to get to work and school. Some days when we had important meetings or events, we wouldn't take public transit because it was faster or efficient to drive. On long days when I have work complications that keep me in the office late or student meetings that run long, traveling home on public transit can add significant time on peak hours. I would love to see the county to make an effort to emphasize public transit as the highest priority mode of transportation in addition to walking and biking. I think this is essential not only for environmental stability but also economic and social equity. I think COVID-19 has taught us all a lot and has forced
many people to reprioritize and reflect.

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

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

While I'm happy that the county's approach has been affordability and attainability in order to protect truly housing as a human right, I would urge the county to take bolder steps to setting rent stabilization and a right
to legal counsel for evictions. Protecting the
right to housing requires a multifaceted approach
and these could be valuable tools for us to use.

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

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

            (No audible response.)

            CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Weiss?

            MR. WEISS: Hello.

            CHAIR ANDERSON: You're on.

            MR. WEISS: Hello, yes. My name is
Walter Weiss, and I am representing the
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate
Solutions. We are a group of people from 50
congregations of many faiths spread throughout
the county who are very concerned about climate
change.

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

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

The second thing is that I think as we
all know the CARP, the climate plan, is about to
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
to say all the buildings that we're talking
about, the new homes and the new building, they
need to be radically rethought. We need to be
getting away from using natural gas in buildings.
All our buildings should be net zero energy
within a fairly short time frame and as well as
being affordable for everybody. So thank you
very much.

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

MS. FOUSE: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MS. FOUSE: Okay.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Whenever you're
ready.

MS. FOUSE: Yes. So thank you. My
name is Siena Fouse, and I live in Silver Spring.
I support Montgomery for All's platform,
especially prioritizing mass transit in addition
to walking and biking and providing more housing
options including multifamily homes around
transit.
I'm in my last semester as a student at University of Maryland and will be entering the job market soon in Montgomery County. And it's important to me that Montgomery County provides affordable housing options at all income levels for folks who are looking to live in Montgomery County for the future and will make sure to provide protection for current vulnerable populations or communities that may be at risk of being priced out with the introduction of improved access to amenities. As someone beginning a career in Montgomery County, it's important to me that we have public and active transit to efficiently connect folks to jobs.

As a young person and student of environmental science and policy, I believe that it's critical that Montgomery County incentivize smart growth around transit and provide safe and convenient options to walk or bike to amenities. We need to focus on ways to reduce driving in our county, not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change, but also
to protect local environmental health and safety. I would love to see a mixed-use walkable community where 15-minute living without a car becomes a reality.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much, and congratulations on your upcoming graduation —

MS. FOUSE: Thank you.

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

MS. FOUSE: Thank you so much.

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

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Can you hear us, Jill?

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good.

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

I've often spoken publicly about how segregation in our schools built on a history of restrictive zoning and housing policies impact our kids as well as how our dearth of affordable housing and lack of access to transit throughout the county contribute to high mobility rates at our schools that are already the most impacted by
poverty. My children attended a Title I school where almost half the children were impacted by poverty. In my role as the PTA president, I saw the torment caused to families who could no longer stay in their apartments due to rent increases, unaffordability, or job location.

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

The schools with our highest mobility rates are most often our schools with majority of students of color. Restrictive zoning has contributed to segregated communities where children grow up in areas with little opportunity
to learn and grow with the amazing diversity we have in our town. From their inception, zoning laws have perpetuated segregation of class and race.

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

As a school board member who was part of boundary changes made, what I heard too often from some members of our community was, I'm not racist. I just want my kids to go to the best school. We paid a lot of money for our house, and I don't want my home to lose value when other kids come into my kid's school or my child having to go to a school with different kids. For too long, the wealth gap that starts with barriers to homeownership has fallen on the backs of our
black families who historically have been
precluded from owning homes and still dictates
who gets to live where today, explaining why
schools are less than five percent Black in some
areas but a majority of Black in others,
mirroring school poverty rates.

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

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

MR. MAGILL: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, I can hear you
now.

MR. MAGILL: Hello.

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

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

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

Support active recreation. This is probably a really important point in the sense that in the past, there was a very high emphasis put on treating our parks as essentially forest conservation areas and encouraging other than
ball fields only passive or contemplative uses of trails. But there's really a big demand for longer hikes, trail running, mountain biking, horseback riding. And these uses really are fully compatible with good park stewardship. Really often only a thin ribbon of dirt or a paved trail is needed along with exercise features like skills parks and outdoor exercise equipment. So having a mindset that the parks can be good stewards of the land and strongly support active recreation is really a key element of the plan. I think an area that didn't come across as strongly is that we have an opportunity to build a really strong regional trail network. Cyclists in particular but also walkers and runners like to go long distances. And that means not only connecting Montgomery County trails internally but with surrounding counties as well as D.C. and even Virginia. So make sure to think really regionally about the opportunities that are being offered to our
citizens, at the same time, beyond regionally, create lots of local options.

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

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

(No audible response.)

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

MS. TAYLOR: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MS. TAYLOR: All right. Good evening, hello, and thank you. My name is Rachel Taylor, and I live in Clarksburg. I think it's good to be ambitious with this plan. While there are some portions of the county that are closer to
fulfilling the goals described in Thrive 2050, there are others that have further to go. So that's why I consider this plan to be ambitious. I like the parts in this plan that mention wanting to have complete communities with varied types of housing and overall developing in a way that is conducive to safer and more sustainable transportation like transit, walking, and biking. Where I currently live, there aren't really a lot of places that are convenient to reach via transit, walking, and biking because development is rather car-centric and I wish it were different. Overall, there are still plenty places in the county that are just not very walkable, bikeable, or well served by transit and that is something that I'd like to see change. So I like that Thrive 2050's goals are towards a county that is easier to get around by modes others than driving. It also really is important that the county is able to create more and varied types of housing in the future due to how the situation is forecasted to grow. All
these people will need places to live and so that needs to be accommodated. And I'm young. I grew up in the county and I would like to continue living here in the future. So I like that Thrive 2050 has a section that mentions creating more housing and more types of housing that are suitable and attainable for younger and less wealthy residents.

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

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

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

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

MS. KUTISHCHEVA: Am I --

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

Go ahead.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, you're all set.

MS. KUTISHCHEVA: All right. All right. Wonderful. Thank you so much. My name is Nadiya Kutishcheva, and I am testifying on behalf of myself and my close friend, Rebecca
Mann, who can't make it today. We both grew up in Gaithersburg and now work for Montgomery County based companies. She is a homeowner in Silver Spring.

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

This sad fact was made extremely clear when three years ago Rebecca was hit by a car while cycling in Downtown Silver Spring resulting in a severe concussion and fractured skill.

Neither of us have stopped cycling, and Rebecca regularly rides her bike to her Downtown Silver Spring office. But it showed us how much has yet to change.
Beyond the direct benefits of safer cycling, we believe that strategically combining cycling and transit is an effective way to solve the last mile problem. Adding bike racks to the fronts of buses, allowing bikes on the Metro during peak times, and the increasing number of protected bike lanes are all important steps. But the county needs to go further in making a comprehensive interwoven network of protected bike lanes and transit so both high- and low-income residents can easily connect to the rail and Bus Rapid Transit.

We worry that connectivity and safety issues are particularly strong in lower income and higher minority areas. The Bethelwood and New Hampshire Estates, a dense, moderate income, majority Hispanic neighborhood, the neighborhood has good bus access and will be on the Purple Line route but is very disconnected from the rest of Montgomery County in terms of safe cycling routes or transit to the closest Metro stops. We would love to see communities like New Hampshire
Estates maintain their current residents and affordability while increasing their safe access to transit.

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

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

(No audible response.)

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

(No audible response.)

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

MR. BOLTON: Okay. Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, now we hear you.
Very good. Go ahead whenever you're ready.

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

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

And with all these plans coming up, I fear that gentrification is going to become a reality for East County. With the FDA consolidation coming there, the White Oak Master Plan, the Science Gateway Master Plan coming up, I feel that East County is going to become
unaffordable. Right now, the AMI is 70,000 dollars. When all this is said and done and all these construction projects are completed, I feel the AMI will be somewhere around 120,000 dollars.

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

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

Is Danny Chu there?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Danny Chu is next.

(No audible response.)

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

(No audible response.)

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

(No audible response.)

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

MR. GRAY: Yes, yes.

CHAIR ANDERSON: There you are. Okay.

MR. GRAY: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MR. GRAY: My name is Peter Gray.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. ROSS: Thank you --

CHAIR ANDERSON: -- are you there?

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

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

But our successes are due to departures from the 1964 Wedges and Corridors plan as much as they're due to following it. And there are failures which we must acknowledge in order to correct them. The great success of the '64 plan is the wedge, the Agricultural Reserve.
But the corridors have succeeded by growing differently from how that plan foresaw them. In the 1964 plan, the high density urbanized centers were built on empty land or farmland outside the beltway. Downtown in Bethesda and Silver Spring were supposed to remain low density commercial districts serving only the surrounding neighborhoods. And also while the plan talked a lot about transit, it really foresaw a county designed around automobile travel.

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

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

The promise of the 1964 plan was your neighborhood will never change. That's a concept that we must explicitly reject. We need to change and evolve toward a future of greater variety, greater interconnectedness, and great sustainability. We need bridges, not buffers, change in place of stasis, walkability rather than high speed traffic, mixing of people and activities instead of single use zones. Thank you very much. And in my written testimony, I have a bunch of specific comments on individual items.
CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much for that testimony. Liz Brent who I see right there. You're up.

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

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

The lack of market rate housing has reached a crisis point in Silver Spring. This is a problem that has been building for many years. We know from the report that the share of householders living alone has increased, and the traditional family type, married couples with children under the age of 18, has decreased.
People simply do not want to leave. I see that in both my work life and personal life. Fifteen fellow moms that were in the trenches with me raising kids, all empty nesters, all in single family detached homes, all walkable to Downtown Silver Spring, not one has plans to move.

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

Small homes in poor condition are torn down and replaced with homes that cost 1.3 million and above. And we forever lose the opportunity to provide multifamily homes on that same lot. It's a vicious circle, and the circle keeps tightening. A cottage for sale recently garnered 22 offers. So that means there were 21
extra buyers in the price point range of 850,000 to 925,000 dollars.

Another recent listing had 16 offers.

There were 15 extra buyers that lost out on a simple 1940s red brick colonial. Those buyers were willing to pay between 700,000 dollars and 775,000 dollars.

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

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

Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: I'm having a problem
unmuting myself. Thank you very much for that testimony, though. It was great. Dan Wilhelm, are you there? I see you.

MR. WILHELM: I'm on mute.

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

MR. WILHELM: Can you hear me?

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

MR. WILHELM: I can see you too.

Anyway, for the record, I'm Dan Wilhelm, President of the Greater Colesville Citizens Association. The SSP and the impact legislation that was passed on Monday forms a major step towards addressing the implementation of the challenges found in the document being addressed today.

We thank the Planning Board and the staff for making the far reaching proposals you provide to the council and actively supporting them through 19 work sessions. I didn't realize it was that many. Various council members
indicated at multiple times that these two legislative actions were the most important for the entire year except dealing with the pandemic. We strongly support that. We thank you and the Planning Board for all your support on that.

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

The 12 trends and challenges topic is generally good and they should form the basis of
the goals and policies provided later in the
document. However, the seven trends need to be
separated from the five challenges. The most
important challenges should be identified first.

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

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

One vehicle for starting addressing
all five challenges is the complete communities
which we would -- which should be applied to the
desired growth community centers. We don't agree
that there should be a lot of development between
the centers along the corridors. Existing single
family housing between these centers will largely
remain unchanged since large numbers of
individual homeowners will not be converting
them. The redevelopment will largely occur in
existing retail centers and older multifamily
houses. For the themes --

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

MR. WILHELM: Okay. I --

CHAIR ANDERSON: You're over three
minutes.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you very
much. I appreciate that, and I'm sorry to have
to cut you short a little bit. James Olson from
AIM, how have you been?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON:  Oops, you're muted.

Mr. Olson, you're muted.

MR. OLSON:  Can you hear me now?

CHAIR ANDERSON:  There you go, yeah.

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

While this is a region-wide problem,
Montgomery County consistently lags most other jurisdictions in the rate of new residential construction with a substantial drop in the rate of addition of housing units over the past decade. Partially due to the lack of production, number of cost burden renters in the county reached slightly over 40 percent by 2016. The draft plan generally heads in the right direction that more should be done given this situation.

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

One step among many toward remedying the situation would be to amend the zoning code to allow more missing middle housing to be built throughout the county. As mentioned, the draft proposes policies and actions that AIM supports.
We agree that the MPDU program should be strengthened, including to incentivize the creation of more large units.

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

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

Finally, the county should develop mechanisms to encourage and support the development of affordable housing by faith-based
institutions and other nonprofits. The affordable housing crisis is such that all of the steps listed above and many more are necessary to reverse the current trend and help create a situation where all residents of the county are able to enjoy decent and affordable housing.

Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Is Salim Furth there?

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes. Whenever you're ready.

MR. FURTH: Thank you so much. My name is Salim Furth. I'm a Takoma Park resident and an urban economist. And I want to first note that my remarks do not necessarily represent the views of my employer. Thank you for the excellent and thorough work you've done in preparing this comprehensive plan. Complete communities is an attractive and attainable organizing principle and strikes a reasonable
balance among several important priorities. I'm
sure you know my neighborhood in Takoma Park.
It's the site of a 15-year battle over the fate
of a small surface parking lot. And I want to
make three quick suggestions which are related to
that, though not driven by it.

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

Community input should be primarily at
the planning phase as we're doing today and
should not be required for projects that fit into
the planning vision for an area. And for
adaptive reuse especially processes most of the ball game. The building is there and the question is whether that process can move fast enough to make it worthwhile.

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

Third and finally, I think the county should reconsider its enthusiasm for reserving land for production distribution and repair. Functionally, right, this keeps land cheaper for those favored land uses. In theory, those could include light manufacturing. In reality, it's going to be warehouses, serve and delivery, and big box retail. And although I'm very grateful for Amazon, especially this year, I don't think it should have preferential access to land. Small businesses have a hard enough time competing without a tilted playing field via a
land use regulation. So thank you so much for
your excellent work and for your time this
evening.

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

MR. MOSLEY: Yes.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, there you are.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Nice to see you.

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

The Montgomery County Coalition for
the Homeless provides solutions in the county to
ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and
nonreoccurring. This mission is underscored by a
vision to build a community where everyone has a
safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. Coalition Home's mission is to expand the supply of permanent supportive housing.

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

Last year, MCCH served almost 890 single adults operating in the men's shelter program. Ninety-eight percent of those households in the permanent supportive housing programs last year did not return to homelessness, increasing our annual housing stability rate, showing the promise and need for support in this area. Coalition Homes itself
operates 181 units of permanent supportive
housing for individuals and families struggling
with homelessness.

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

For permanent support of housing and
rental assistance, permanent supportive housing
is a critical element of the housing continuum
needed to reliably support residents with no to
very low incomes. Currently, the county
estimates that there's a need for 80 additional
permanent supportive housing units. We need to
ensure that there is sufficient stock for these
residents. We rely on and expect that the 
Department of Housing and Community Affairs 
financing program such as the HIF will help 
increase that portfolio.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much 
for that testimony. Oh, I also want to mention 
that you're not required to turn off your camera.
But if you're done speaking and you don't turn off your camera, there's going to be a lot of people who can see you while you're watching the rest of the testimony. So just heads up on that. I mean, it's the same thing as if you came here in person, right? If you were sitting in the front row, you'd probably still be on camera. But just sometimes people forget that, so I just wanted to remind everybody. Who have we got next? John Paukstis from Habitat from Humanity, I believe he's here.

MR. MOSLEY: He was here.

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

MR. PAUKSTIS: I lost my --

CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, now --

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

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

MR. PAUKSTIS: Great. My name is John Paukstis. I'm the President and CEO of Habitat
for Humanity Metro Maryland. We are a nonprofit providing affordable housing, working to provide equitable access to homeownership in Montgomery County since 1982.

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

It is critical that as a county we implement policies that ensure housing affordability at all income levels in all communities. We must also ensure that affordable housing includes both rental and ownership opportunities. Habitat is particularly concerned that the homeownership gap between White and
Black households and between White and Latinx households, a gap of 36 points and 22 points respectively.

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

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

All families should have the opportunity to live near their jobs, public transit, and high quality schools and amenities. Through its work with older adults, individuals with disabilities, Habitat has seen a significant need for accessible housing across the county. Nonprofits often play a critical role in providing accessibility modifications but are
unable to access tax credit incentives.

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

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

MS. TAYLOR: I am. Hi, I'm here. For the record, Caroline Taylor. I'm here on behalf
of Montgomery Countryside Alliance. And in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I'd like to start by offering sincere appreciation for Planning Director Wright and the Thrive 2050 staff who took the time to visit us in the Agricultural Reserve to learn more about the diverse landscape, our community, and our pursuits.

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

Moreover, the pandemic has brought an amazing uptick in participation in Land Link Montgomery. We've added 19 farmers and support organizations such as AFRA Thrive to the program alone this year. The Reserve will play a central role to our future resilience. We are grateful for solid recommendations from colleagues such as
Conservation Montgomery, West Montgomery Citizens Association, Montgomery for All, TAME Coalition, Darnestown, and the Audubon Naturalist Society. We'll send further comments in by the December 10th deadline.

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

We've set big important goals for our future, including carbon emission reduction, zero waste, equity, affordability so that we might truly thrive. The only way that we'll be able to meet these goals is by building and maintaining a strong relationship between our government and citizens. We have to do this together. This will demand open communication, mutual respect,
and civility. Sadly, we are in a number of ways a microcosm of what we see at the national level where the disintegration of mutual respect and its adversarial posturing overshadows and disturbs or working relationship. Those of us who come before this Board are not your adversaries. We're residents, organizations, businesses that care deeply.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Katherine Lucas McKay, are you there?
MS. LUCAS MCKAY: I am.

CHAIR ANDERSON: We hear you, I think.

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

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

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

My main point for you is that while this plan uses the right set of objectives, specifically becoming more racially equitable, planning for people instead of vehicles, identifying and growing compactly, prioritizing
housing affordability, and adapting to climate change, it lacks key milestones for the next 30 years. How long is too long to wait for progress? And it also lacks success metrics. It leaves out a number of critical specifics.

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

We moved here in 2013. We bought in 2019. And we make the median income. More accessible to first time home buyers, less car-centric and more safety walkable everywhere, greener climate resilience, stable -- home to stable and thriving businesses and dynamic large
businesses, a place with thousands more good
quality jobs than today, and an appropriate
amount of new houses at all price levels
everywhere that they're needed, and that the
county that will be an easier place to grow old
and live independently for disabled folks.

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

The plan does prioritize
identification of residential neighborhoods which
is great. But it did not do enough to prioritize
adding housing in existing higher income
residential areas which is really key to socioeconomic integration or consider what changes to current residential development regulation could help achieve the plan's objectives. That phrase appears once while zoning changes are mentioned 78 times.

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

That is a really critical thing for the future affordability and inclusiveness of our communities and should be central to part of the
-- to the Thrive plan. So just to wrap up here, I have lived in 11 cities in 36 years, and this is the first and only place I just fell in love with. I'm invested here in Silver Spring and in Montgomery County for the long term, and that's why I want to see the plan tweaked a bit to be more specific and address those issues. But overall, it's great and I look forward to living in the county that it envisions. I also cosign everything that Ms. Brent said earlier. Thank you again. It was wonderful to have this opportunity to speak.

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

MS. O'NEILL: Hi there.

CHAIR ANDERSON: There we go.

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

I am Maureen O'Neill. I'm speaking at the encouragement of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. I moved with my family to Montgomery County after living many years in Hong Kong. We did not own a car in Hong Kong and hoped to live
in the U.S. without a car, partially for economic reasons and partially for environmental reasons. We decided to live in Downtown Bethesda as it seemed like a place you could live without a car. It has proven to be very convenient indeed to live here. And other than work, we have very few reasons to leave Bethesda to meet our daily needs.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
Is Ray Heinsman there? We can hear you, but you're a little soft. Can you hear us, Ray?

(No audible response.)

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

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

But I'm here today to discuss the concept that the county should, quote, plan for people and not cars, which sounds catchy. But people actually drive cars, and the plan goes too far in the false belief that by limiting roads
and parking, people will stop wanting or needing
to use cars. Cars are a necessary tool for many
people and purposes, and the county needs to
recognize that and plan accordingly.

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

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

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

We also object to the idea that left turn lanes should be eliminated. Certainly it's important to allow pedestrians and bikes to cross roads safely but also important to eliminate the traffic congestion that at least before COVID hit was choking the county's economy and family life. The concept that everyone can move around the county without cars is a pretty vision but it is illusory and a dangerous way to plan for the county as a whole.
Because the statements in the Thrive plan will be used to design the master plans for the next 30 days, eliminating parking and roads but never adding enough transit will cause just frustration. We are not New York City. We live in a largely suburban and spread out area difficult to manage, and we hope you will plan it more realistically. I know that's not too popular, but I believe that we have to just be more pragmatic in our planning. Thank you so much for my time.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Oh, we have somebody who skipped earlier because she was not on, Rosie Alger. And after that, we will take a break from Session 2 for about half an hour to have dinner before Session 3. But let's hear from Rosie Alger. Are you there?

MS. ALGER: I am. Thanks so much for having me. Good afternoon -- evening, and thank you. My name is Rosie Alger, and I live in Downtown Silver Spring. I support the direct of Thrive 2050, especially in diversifying housing
and creating equitable house and transportation opportunities. I move to Silver -- or to Montgomery County in 2018 so that I could work in the theater industry and education in Bethesda. I've loved living here, but I certainly was able to make that happen because of my family support and privilege.

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

Again, I've been able to get some support from my family during particularly rough patches such as during the pandemic. But many who do not have my level of privilege would not have been able to do the same thing. In addition, the lack of reliable transit between
Silver Spring and Bethesda means that I either had to ride the Red Line down and around for over an hour to get to work or drive. I am very fortunate to have a car that was given to me by my grandmother, but I certainly would not have been able to afford a car on my own. The Purple Line is a great step in the right direction. But additional transit is needed around Montgomery County if we want to encourage people of all economic backgrounds and racial or ethnic backgrounds to live and work here.

I also have coworkers making the same amount of money as me but were part of minority groups and did not have the same safety net that I have. They were often forced to commute much longer distances from out of the county in order to find housing that they could afford. I also have a few friends who grew up in Montgomery County and live in the suburbs of Silver Spring. The difference in the structure of communities even from downtown to a friend's house in the suburbs is striking. Not only is there no public
transportation at all, but houses that are there
are suddenly single family, very large, and very
expensive. Not surprisingly, these communities
are almost all exclusively White.

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

In conclusion, I would like to see
more housing options and efforts to desegregate
communities within Montgomery County. More needs
to be done to ensure equitable opportunities for
all residents and citizens. And I support Thrive
2050's plan for making the county more affordable
and diverse. Thank you for your time.
CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. So as I said, that wraps up Session 2. We'll come back for Session 3. And if we could get Board members to please log in by say 6:15 or so, we'll try to get that going as quickly as possible. That will leave a little less than half an hour for dinner. We have 40 people in the last section signed up. So give or take, that'll be a couple hours. So get some dinner and get recharged. And we'll see you at 6:15.

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

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

(No audible response.)

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. You're in.

Yes, we can hear you.

MR. SCULL: Mr. Chairman and members,

thank you very much. I'm Dave Scull, a lawyer in
Bethesda, a regular volunteer on County Trails,
and an enthusiastic biker and hiker. But most
important, I'm the son of Elizabeth Scull who
during her years on the County Council in the
'70s sponsored the massive down zoning that
created the Ag Reserve of which we're all very
proud.

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

And so I would urge the Commission to
tilt its budget in the direction of more
recreational use of the Reserve, especially
trails. And I'm sure there are plenty of
volunteers who would be happy to help that cause.
Thank you very much.

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

MR. QUINTERO-AVILES: Hello?

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

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

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

It is impossible to promote a diverse
county when our county is segregated by expensive
single home, predominately white areas, and
diverse urban areas. Affordable housing is
something that should be available in all parts
of our county. Commute times are one of the most
prominent examples of how this segregation
affects largely people of color.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Benjamin Keel, are you there?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Benjamin Keel?

MR. KEEL: Hello?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.
MR. KEEL: All right. Good evening to the Planning Board, and thank you for your time tonight. I'm Ben. I work in Downtown Silver Spring. I got a job there first time out of college, and I have been renting a room in a group home in Silver Spring for about four years now.

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

However, it's expensive and neither I nor my roommates currently see a good path for growth in Montgomery County, I mean at least without moving further up the highway corridor or away from the Metro, getting a car, changing my career to a more lucrative field, or I could find
probably in other counties or a state at a more efficient rate. But I mean my Maryland driver’s license doesn't expire for another six years. So I would like to stick around.

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

Duplexes and other ways of introducing density in single family neighborhoods close to transit would increase the supply of what the county needs and hopefully better maintain or reduce costs of even older places, the ones that I'd be more than fine with renting. These
changes would open up opportunities for a variety of professionals like me who would want to live close to transit and stay for their future -- more new employees somewhere to live.

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

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

MS. TOTH: Yes.

CHAIR ANDERSON: We can hear you.

MS. TOTH: Do you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, you can go ahead --

MS. TOTH: Okay.

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

The initial master plans for MoCo were written with great care as the county was built out, taking 40 to 50 years to slowly build out the county, creating housing options, providing community amenities, and a variety of transportation options, all while trying to protect the important watersheds that are so crucial to the success of this area. In fact, the obvious care that was taken in creating the
master plan was one of the reasons why my husband
and I chose to live in this county.

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

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

Most people now work from home, thus
proving that their job is capable of continuing
from a home office situation. This will likely
encourage businesses to consolidate office space
and allow more workers to work from home even
once the pandemic is over. Thus less automobiles
on the road mean less harmful emissions, and the
goals of environmental sustainability are
furthered.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Is Scott
Plumer there? I think you just muted yourself
but looks like you're back. Can you hear us?
MR. PLUMER: I'm here.
CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, okay. We can
hear you. Very good.

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, he's --

MR. PLUMER: Thank you all. Hello everyone.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Dominique is working on that right now.

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

(Simultaneous speaking.)

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

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

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: By the way, your slide --

MR. PLUMER: -- best practices --
CHAIR ANDERSON: I just want to let you know your slide is up.

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

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

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

The 16 square mile area of Darnestown where I live represents around 3 percent of the
county's total land area. Darnestown is surrounded by critical watersheds, heritage areas, and green corridors. We need strong increases in protections regarding infrastructure expansion.

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

The 1993 refinement recognized these same areas as being unique and vital, and were named The Wedge, part agricultural, part rural residential. Rural residential is an important transition zone and buffer between widely divergent density gradients. We look forward to working with staff to develop language and maps aimed at tight control over development and
traffic outside the sewer envelope to protect the environment and reduce sprawl.

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

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

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

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

We are pleased to see increased support for existing housing programs included in Thrive. But in order to effectively meet growing housing need, the county cannot simply continue what it has been doing. We need a bolder vision which goes beyond existing programs. We feel it is critical for Thrive to include more explicit messaging around subsidized housing and around
meeting the housing need of those with the lowest incomes, including through expansion of shelter space, permanent supportive housing, and rental assistance programs.

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

As affordable housing providers and advocates, MHA members recognize the way zoning decisions crucially impact low income residents in communities of color. In particular, single family zoning has historically impacted housing outcomes and contributed to segregated neighborhoods. Residential segregation results
in inequitable access to many important aspects
of residential life, including health care,
transportation, schools, healthy food options,
and parks and recreation facilities.

By expanding reform of single family
zoning throughout the county, Thrive can play an
instrumental role in helping to institute
inclusive policies that foster development of
high quality affordable units across the entire
continuum of housing in all communities. Again,
we are pleased to see the attention Thrive gives
to housing development and affordability and feel
that with an expanded focus on subsidized housing
and reform single family zoning, there will be an
even stronger blueprint for the county's future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

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

(No audible response.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Can you hear us?

(No audible response.)
CHAIR ANDERSON: We think you're unmuted, so --

MS. MURALI: Can you hear me? Sorry.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

Very good. Whenever you're ready.

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

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

In contrast, areas along I-270 and I-495, such as Prince George's County, Gaithersburg, and Silver Spring, are primary
composed of residents with lower income levels and multifamily housing. Communities in these areas also tend to be less affluent and endure longer commutes to work due to their financial status restricting them from moving to communities with expensive living costs and shorter commutes. But incorporating multifamily housing types, we will be able to inhibit the separation of higher income communities from communities with lower incomes.

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

These communities are concentrated in areas such as Gaithersburg and Germantown which are previously mentioned to be less affluent. In
contrast, white and Asian households are likely to have incomes above $100,000. These communities are primarily in areas such as Bethesda and Potomac which are previously mentioned to be more affluent. If we are able to create affordable multifamily housing to those of even the lowest of incomes and incorporate that housing into communities which are previous composed of primarily single family homes, we will be able to prevent unintended segregation in our county and create neighborhoods which are racially diverse.

Furthermore, diverse neighborhoods will lead to Montgomery County schools being more economically and racially diverse to benefit students of all backgrounds. This allows students across our county, no matter their ethnicity, race, or socioeconomic status, to have access to an equal education. In conclusion, I would like to see Thrive 2050 provide a better explanation of incorporating housing affordable to all socioeconomic backgrounds into our
community and would like to see Thrive 2050
guarantee affordable housing to those with even
the lowest of incomes. Thank you.

               CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Danny

Chu. Is Danny Chu there?

              MR. CHU: Hello. Can you hear me?

               CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

              MR. CHU: Great. My name is Danny

Chu. I'm a longtime resident of Montgomery

County. I'm also a supervisor at the visual arts
center at Rockville Town Center.

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

               My only fear is that pretty much for
businesses if there's any protections against
businesses being overcharged for things like
brands or even just people coming into the area,
if there's going to be charges on parking.

Because there's so much money invested in these
new dwellings and constructions, if they're going
to be -- if a lot of people are going to be
priced out of it. Because in Rockville Town
Center, I've seen dozens of businesses come --
they go in and out of all these stores.

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

But yeah, that's it. Thank you.

   CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

Alison Gillespie is next. Alison Gillespie, are
you there?

   MS. GILLESPIE: Yes, can you hear me?

   CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. Yes, we
can hear you. Whenever you're ready.
MS. GILLESPIE: My name is Alison Gillespie, and I often testify as a Board member for MCCPTA. And I'm the president of Forest Estates Community Association. But tonight, I'm making comments as an individual.

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

I'm heartened that this document clearly addresses the need to see our urbanization as something that can be positive if it is addressed honestly and thoughtfully. I support the need to undo so many of the past exclusionary zoning policies, many of which divided our community along racial lines. Although we'd like to think of Montgomery County as a very progressive place, there are many ways we codified racism through housing policies during the 20th century.
So I support changing that through better housing policy and zoning changes that will include a lot more multifamily options. And really anything that goes beyond single family homes will be of great benefit to everyone who lives here because we need more places for people to live. But we can't just create boxes for people to live in. We have to create livable communities, and this plan embraces that idea in a big way.

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

I'm a big parks advocate, and I'm grateful to know that open space and green space will be a big part of the entire scheme of this plan. High quality parks are important for people to enjoy and also for the ecosystem.
services they provide through things like increased air and water quality and habitat for wildlife. But mostly, I want to underscore my confidence in MNCPPC tonight.

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

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

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

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

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

If COVID has taught us anything, it's
the need to remain flexible and nimble. So I would urge you not to chain yourself to a long list of prescriptions. Trust the sector plan process. It is an excellent process, and it is well carried out by this staff.

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

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

There's no sense in waiting until some perfect moment arrives and we have an
encyclopedia-like document. And we've completed it and everybody has weighed in completely 100 percent rewritten every paragraph. My kids, both of whom are on the precipice of adulthood, need us to get started on this. And we owe it to them and the next generation to get working on a better future right now. So let's dig in. Let's begin to thrive right now. Thanks.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Maria Salmeron Melendez, are you there?

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

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

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

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

By supporting diverse and adaptable growth, you impact young student leaders like me, young student leaders that immigrated from their native country in Latin America to pursue the American Dream, young students with a vision like mine, specifically handpicked, BCC and Westland Middle School at the schools that my brother and I would attend before even landing in the United States and moving to Maryland. Yet cognizant students like me quickly became stunted by the detrimental effects of de facto segregation secretly affecting MCPS schools and neighborhoods today. We're all made to attend the most understaffed schools at the expense of inequity.
Vulnerable students like me who live in unsuitable and unaffordable living parameters pushed my family towards pursuing other options which one of them spoke to moving out of Bethesda and landing upon the great Silver Spring, Maryland, which is something every day I'm thankful and grateful for. Nonetheless, I still question to this day as I grow older, every day I continue my college education. I wish to continue to challenge ourselves and the current status quo. Let's do this together, so we realize Montgomery County should be for all, Thrive 2050 should be for all. And with that being said, thank you and have a blessed night.

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

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

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

MR. BAWER: Okay, great. Thank you, Chair Anderson and members of the Planning Board.
My name is Kenneth Bawer. I'm representing the West Montgomery County Citizens Association. We acknowledge the efforts of those who have contributed to this very important document. Clearly a lot of time and thought went into this draft document, and we thank you.

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

Our vision for 2050 is a county where we don't compare our growth to other jurisdictions. And while our main goal and indicator of success is not growth but as being at the top of the happiness ratings, having a high quality life, and above all, respecting and enhancing the environment. Our vision as a county which is not developer-centric but rather
as resident-centric and environment-centric,
where the focus is on sustainable growth, not
simply population, business, and job growth.

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

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

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

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

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

    Our vision is for emergency alerts for sewer overflows similar to air quality alerts.
Our vision balances any up zoning with down zoning in other areas. Our vision does not include flexible regulations, zoning controls, and zoning initiatives. We don't have flexible speed limits for a reasons. Regulations and zoning controls should be fixed and enforced, not flexible. We appreciate this opportunity to make our comments to improve this plan. Thank you very much.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Is Mark Pierzchala there?

MR. PIERZCHALA: Yes, I'm here.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. And we see you.

MR. PIERZCHALA: Thank you. Good evening, Chair Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board. My name is Mark Pierzchala, testifying as an individual. However, my opinions are formed from nine total years as a Rockville council member. Rarely do so many policy areas come together so nicely as in this plan. It well
documents the terrible economic stagnation and an acute shortage of housing on which I will focus. The provision of housing units far lags population growth, resulting in high housing costs.

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

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

So what is the problem? There's a
political problem and it has been around for years. There's a visceral reaction from many homeowners whenever and wherever high density projects are proposed. Many anticipate more traffic, congestion, and overcrowded schools.

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

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

Increasingly, that is not in Montgomery County. We have loaded so much baggage on our younger generation, including a crushing national debt, the huge and increasing burden of supporting baby boomer retirees, and an
aging infrastructure that is not being replaced 
or maintained fast enough, if at all. Our 
children will need all the economic opportunity 
they can get.

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

Thank you.

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

MS. BRONSON: Great. Hi, good evening 
and thank you for the opportunity to comment. My
My name is Jessica Bronson and I live in Gaithersburg. I support the direction of Thrive 2050, including the idea of encouraging transportation by means other than cars.

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

So we as individuals can take steps to try to address climate change. But really, our government can and should be doing more. And this can include developing communities that are not so reliant on cars, one of the primary drivers of climate change.
So I moved to Montgomery County about nine years ago to attend law school in D.C. And at the time, I was a young single mother with a three-year-old toddler. And for several years, we lived in an apartment complex close to a Metro station, which I was pretty excited about when we moved in.

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

I vividly remember times when I'd be sitting on the bus with my toddler next to me trying to study my books, keep him occupied, and also keep track of the bus stops. So as environmentally conscious as I thought of myself, of course I rushed back to using my car as soon
as I could. So it left me wondering how can we
address climate change and build communities
where better methods of transportation are easy,
accessible, safe, and affordable.

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

I'd also like to see greater emphasis
on tackling food deserts and bringing important
necessities like grocery stores, healthcare
services, and good jobs closer to people where
they live. So in conclusion, I'd like to see
Thrive 2050 and promote communities where
residents can access most of the things they need
without setting foot inside a car which is so
important to address the crisis of climate change. Thank you for your time.

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

MS. DAPHNIS: How about now?

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

MS. DAPHNIS: Can you hear me now?

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Got you.

MS. DAPHNIS: Thank you so much, Chairman Anderson and the rest of the Planning Board, for allowing me to testify tonight. I'm testifying on behalf of the Montgomery County Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. The Montgomery County PBTSAC commends
the planning staff on the comprehensive revision
to the Montgomery County Master Plan.

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

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

I do have a few observations to share.
First -- sorry, lost my place here. First, we'd
like to request that the safe and efficient
travel section, you consider assigning a higher
priority to safety and equity. While these principles are covered in the draft, they are pretty far down on the list of specific goals and priorities listed in the chapter.

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

Second, while connectivity and efficiency is mentioned in this section, we would ask that you consider including a separate and specific goal and measure to gauge efficiency. For example, comparing the cost of the transit to car travel per trip and comparing transit travel times to car travel times between communities and points of interest within a community.

Currently, there's no real discussion about the
routing and frequency of public transportation.

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

Third, while Montgomery County's Vision Zero program might be considered the transportation safety program du jour, there's no recognition of these framework in the Thrive master plan. We would recommend adding additional context setting to connect this master plan to the county's Vision Zero plan, as well as additional context on the county and state's joint complete streets program and guidance.

While these programs may not endure over the 30-year span of the master plan, a brief discussion
in this document on both Vision Zero and complete streets would help to connect where we are now to where we need to continue in the future. And it would also help contextualize these concepts within the broader realm of complete communities.

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

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

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

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

MS. SWANSON: Yes, one is on the couch and one is in my lap. But we are here. Good evening, Chair Anderson, Planning Board members, and planning staff. My name is Tricia Swanson, and I am vice president of government relations.
for the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight
on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan.

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

    In tackling these topics, the county
should look at market-oriented approaches to
solve our problems. As such, the Thrive plan
must explicitly recognize the role of
redevelopment and achieving our environmental and
equity goals in addition to improving our
economic competitiveness. This economic
competitiveness should directly tie into the top issue that is keeping employers up at night which is talent.

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

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

Another unique component of a county is the Ag Reserve. A stronger economic vision for the future of the Ag Reserve is needed.
Beyond just a narrow definition of agriculture, we must preserve the economic vitality of farming but also shape the Ag Reserve to serve our entire county.

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Peter Rizik?

DR. RIZIK: Hi.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Hello.
DR. RIZIK: Hi, can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you

and see you.

DR. RIZIK: Great. Thank you. I just

have a few comments on the Thrive Montgomery 2050

plan. I lived here 20-some years ago and have

since moved back. And I'm very excited to be

here in the county. And I think this plan and at

least the legacy plans that preceded it have been

very informative in terms of shaping how the

county moves into the future.

So I'm very excited about it. I think

it's a great first draft, it's got some good

artwork. I'd like to urge you and others on the

Board to rethink some of the elements of the plan

and rewrite some pieces of it, hold it before its

final release. And I'll give you a couple of

reasons.

The plan itself is unclear in some

areas. It's got -- it repeats itself. It's got

these kind of three central ideas that are

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

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

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

A sidewalk that we don't build, a bikeway that we don't build, a sidewalk that isn't safe and therefore people do not use, these are opportunities we have lost to reduce car traffic. These are climate issues. We need to start looking at our sidewalks and our bikeways the same way we look at trees.
I have seen any number of folks who will put signs up in their yard telling me how much carbon is embedded in their tree. Well, we need to start thinking about our sidewalks and our bikeways the very same way. They are just -- they are critical to making sure that we can survive on this planet.

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

And he didn't understand why I wanted to walk whenever we needed to pick something up, whether it was from Snider's or from the grocery store. And I said to him, by the time we find the car, park the car, and get there, we may as well have walked. But what really got to him was
after the second or third or fifth time that we
ran into someone that I knew.

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

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

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Avery Smedley, are you there?

MS. SMEDLEY: Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MS. SMEDLEY: Can you all hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.

MS. SMEDLEY: Okay, great. Good
evening, Board members and thank you so much for
your time. My name is Avery Smedley. I'm a high
schooler and a resident of Silver Spring. I
thank you all for the great work that you've done around Thrive 2050, especially as it concerns with affordable housing.

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

I lived in a virtually all White neighborhood and went to a virtually all White elementary school. A few weeks prior, a White friend had told me that she wouldn't play with me if I got any darker because she didn't want to catch it. If my neighborhood had been less segregated, I would've been around more kids that look like me and I wouldn't have felt so bothered.
The girl would understand that people of color aren't any different and you can't catch our skin color. Exposure to people of different cultures and races as Mauricio said earlier is so important to omitting racism and xenophobia. My neighborhood hasn't changed much since when I was in first grade.

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

A few months prior to that, a White neighbor emailed the whole neighborhood to alert them that they saw Black sister and brother
walking around the neighborhood. I wondered if it was my brother and I. I look forward to a future that Thrive 2050 describes, a future in which people of different races, backgrounds, and incomes can live together where it's not a threat or a surprise to see Black people in a White neighborhood, and a future where we can truly benefit from the unique diversity of Montgomery County. Thank you so much for your time.

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

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

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

MS. BRUSKIN: Excellent. Well, my name is Heather Bruskin and I'm the executive director with the Montgomery County Food Council as well as a county resident because I'm here this evening testifying on behalf of our nonprofit organization, the Food Council. Thank
you very much to Chairman Anderson, the Planning
Board, and your entire department for the
continued opportunities to provide feedback on
Thrive 2050 and for the time and careful thought
that has been dedicated to this process.

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

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it's
estimated that the number of Montgomery County
residents experiencing food insecurity has risen
to more than 100,000 people with food assistance
providers reporting up to five times increased
demand for services. We applaud the report's
efforts to address root causes of food insecurity but see a gap in addressing key food access issues. The complete communities element should ensure that multiple food access points offering culturally appropriate, affordable, and nutritious food options are available within each community and accessible through public transportation.

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

As climate and health emergencies continue to impact global food production and
distribution beyond COVID-19, strengthening and supporting our local food production capacity is increasingly important. To support our local growing food and beverage sector, shared use kitchens, cut and wash facilities, and processing equipment for farm produce, meat, and grains and aggregation and distribution infrastructure as well as long-term access to affordable farmland and protected land leases are needed for local small businesses to accommodate expanding local procurement opportunities and to address future crises. Support for urban and community gardening as well as residential agriculture will similarly bolster a sustainable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate local food supply.

We also encourage the inclusion of plans to explore and implement a food waste composting infrastructure within the county's borders to bring us closer to meeting the county's zero waste goals. The Food Council welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the Department of Planning to envision a roadmap to
end food insecurity as a component of the General
Plan, an extension of our county's food security
plan.

We must also intentionally integrate
the voices of our community, including farmers,
food producers, food assistance providers and
recipients and the residents to address these
issues and develop solutions. Thank you for the
opportunity to speak tonight. And we look
forward to continuing to serve as a resource and
partner to the Planning Board throughout this
process. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
for that testimony. We're going to go a little
bit out of order because we're having a little
bit of trouble maintaining a connection with Josh
Silverstein. Is he on the line now? Can you --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

MR. SILVERSTEIN: I'm sorry. Can you
have me be next, please, because I'm still trying
to bring my testimony up? Sorry. I was bringing
(Simultaneous speaking.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, okay. Yes, could we get --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

CHAIR ANDERSON: Sure. You'll be up next. And I'm hoping I'm not going to mispronounce this, but I'm not optimistic. Eyal Li, is that right?

MR. LI: Pretty good. Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Every once in a while, I get lucky and get it right. Thank you. Go right ahead.

MR. LI: Sure. Thanks. Good evening, Chair Anderson and County Planning Board members. And thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Eyal Li, and I live in Takoma Park, Maryland.

I'm excited about the general direction of the Thrive 2050 draft plan and especially about the goal to prioritize planning
for walking, biking, and transit use. I'd like to reiterate what others have stated in this hearing. We are in a climate crisis, and any project to expand roadways and increase driving is climate denial, plain and simple.

My family has recently gotten rid of our car and taken to bicycling to go do grocery shopping in Downtown Silver Spring. But my mom has been hesitate to bike downtown ever since she was hit by a car on Fenton Street near Ellsworth Drive last April. She was okay, thankfully. But if we are serious about getting people out of cars, the county must take bold action to make it easier to take alternate modes of transport and harder and more expensive to drive. This means slower traffic, protected bike lanes, and more frequent buses.

I'm also concerned about the rising costs of housing in MoCo and would like to see action to preserve and create more affordable housing for residents with low and extremely low incomes. The racial and ethnic diversity in
Montgomery County was a special part of growing up and attending schools here. And increasing affordable and attainable housing is crucial to retaining and nurturing this diversity.

In this regard, the county should create policies to limit displacement in redeveloping areas. We can lead the way in providing more access to opportunity for all by addressing socioeconomic integration more explicitly in the plan and developing programs to build more affordable housing in wealthy areas that have traditionally opposed new construction in their neighborhoods. Tying affordability back to the climate crisis, we cannot afford to build out more sprawling exurbs that require long, hard commutes.

A promising strategy to accelerate housing growth and limit new vehicle miles traveled would be to eliminate single family zoning countywide and locate the majority of new housing near transit. The corridors of opportunity project located along the Metro Green
Line between St. Paul and Minneapolis in Minnesota is a good example of equitable transit-oriented development that Montgomery should model for future development along the Red and Purple Line corridors. In addition to building out affordable housing near transit, we need to remove barriers to create more housing elsewhere such as regulations that prevent the construction of so-called missing middle housing and archaic minimum parking requirements.

In conclusion, Montgomery County be a leader in addressing the two most pressing challenges of the 21st century: climate change and social inequity. We need bold action on many fronts to make driving the least convenient option to get around and make living in the county affordable for all. I would very much like to see bolder goals and tactics in the final plan. Thank you very much and have a good evening.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that testimony. So now we're going to try Josh
Silverstein -- or is Silverstein? I'm sorry. I didn't quite catch it.

MR. SILVERSTEIN: Silverstein. Thank you very much.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good. Are you ready?

MR. SILVERSTEIN: Yes. I really appreciate the flexibility, and I apologize for the connection issues.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, no problem. Whenever you're ready.

MR. SILVERSTEIN: First of all, thank you, Chairman Anderson. We really appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My name is Josh Silverstein. I've been a resident of Montgomery County for 35 years, and I'm currently the president of the Randolph Civic Association or the RCA.

The RCA represents over 1,340 households in the North Bethesda area. That is the triangle that's roughly bounded by Randolph Road, Nicholson Lane, or the CSX tracks and Rock
Creek.

The RCA has remained an engaged stakeholder and collaborator with Montgomery County Planning through the development of the White Flint Sector Plans 1 and 2. We also regularly communicate with our residents through our Echo print newsletter which has been delivered free of charge to all of our residents since 1956. The RCA held a meeting in the box -- a meeting in a box, excuse me, in January of 2020 and submitted online comments to the County Planning Board.

And our comments primarily focused on the following: number one, east-west equity and connections within the county; number two preservation and connection of green spaces; number three, reduction of barriers to starting and expanding businesses; number four, expansion of mixed-use development along with a comprehensive focus on public transportation, walkability, and bikeability. And we are very pleased to see many of the same issues addressed
conceptually and practically in the public
hearing draft for Thrive Montgomery 2050.

The RCA agrees with the overarching
desired outcomes related to the economic health,
equity, and environmental resilience. And we're
also in agreement with the main principles of
complete communities, connectedness, resiliency,
safe and efficient travel, affordability and
attainability, environment, diverse and adaptable
growth, and also an emphasis on design, arts, and
culture. We'd like to highlight a few areas for
further emphasis, clarification, or consideration
in any subsequent General Plan under Thrive
Montgomery 2050.

Regarding complete communities, we
were excited to see the concepts within 15
minutes of living in the public hearing draft,
including an emphasis on walking and biking for
communities in areas like the RCA's. A
consideration mentioned throughout the public
hearing draft but not reemphasized in the
complete community's section is the importance of
accessibility for those who are unable to walk or bike. The RCA also agrees with the concept of connectedness and supports the Planning Department's objectives to increase accessibility, transparency, and plain language effort so that the public can better participate in and understand the planning process.

We also support the expansion of communications IP infrastructure such as free public network access in critically underserved parts of the county. In terms of resilience, we do agree that the county will require a diverse base of industries and workers with connections between employment centers and transit hubs as well as well-paying jobs that don't require an advanced degree. We support the goal of making public transit, walking, and cycling the preferred travel mode, including increasing rail capacity and stations along the MARC Brunswick Line.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Silverstein --

(Simultaneous speaking.)
CHAIR ANDERSON: -- I don't want to
cut you short, but you're a little bit over time.
So if you could kind of wrap it up, that would be
great.

MR. SILVERSTEIN: I'm sorry. I
thought I had three minutes.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yeah, I think you're
over three at this point.

MR. SILVERSTEIN: Okay, okay.

CHAIR ANDERSON: I'm not trying to cut
you short. Just if you could kind of wrap it up.

MR. SILVERSTEIN: Thank you. I
appreciate that. I will cut to the end. We
understand that we're in the early stages of
Thrive Montgomery 2050. We are excited that
you've also engaged with many different segments,
and we encourage direct dialogue and
collaboration with civic associations like the
RCA. So with that, we appreciate a thoughtful
public hearing draft and look forward to working
with the Planning Department in the future.

Thank you.
CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you so much.

Yeah, Randolph Civic, former home of Dan Hoffman and still home of Chad Salganik, right? So you're the latest in a long line. Okay. Berk Ehrmantraut?

MR. EHRMANTRAUT: Hello.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi there.

MR. EHRMANTRAUT: All right. Hi, my name is Berk Ehrmantraut, and I live in Silver Spring. Thank you for taking the time to listen to testimony today. I'd like to express my support for Thrive Montgomery 2050 and ask you to lean in to create a more diverse mixed income communities and a county that is affordable for everyone.

I didn't grow up in Montgomery County. But I love it here and it has become my home. I love the ten-minute walk to Metro from my apartment. I love being a quick walk away from a thriving, diverse downtown. I love the protected bike lanes and great parks right outside my building. And I really love ordering pupusas
from La Casita.

I want to put down roots here, hopefully buy a home, and eventually raise a family. But when the average home price is over half a million dollars in the county, it's not exactly affordable. That's why I'm excited this plan calls for more diverse housing types, building new projects near transit, and distributing affordable housing across the county, including in wealthy areas. That said, I'd like to see more emphasis on socioeconomic integration and addressing barriers to missing middle housing. Additionally, there should be bolder action on rent stabilization, eviction protection, and affordable housing for low income folks.

Montgomery County is a great place to live, and a lot of people want to live here. So we need the housing stock to make that possible. That means lots of types of housing for many types of people. One of our county's greatest strengths is its diversity. That's why Thrive
Montgomery 2050 should be focused on ensuring our county is affordable, accessible, and welcoming to all.

I have one quick note about COVID-19 and density. I grew up in South Dakota. My parents now live in North Dakota. These are not dense places but they're the worst hit places in our country right now by a long shot. We get through this with effective public health measures, not less density.

As we draw up the plan for the next 30 years, we have to take climate change and our environmental impact into consideration as well. I'm excited the plan talks about reducing sprawl, developing a carbon tax, and developing the infrastructure to prevent and adapt to climate change. However, I'd like to see more integration with the county's climate action plan and more green building capacity. In addition, this plan should take on important local environmental issues that really affect quality of life like tackling food deserts.
I am so excited to see what these next 30 years bring for our county and for my life here. I hope in 2050 we can sit down together in La Casita, chow down on some pupusas, and I can tell you how this General Plan made it possible for me to buy a home near the Metro, start a family, and send my kids to great public schools as diverse as Montgomery County. And I hope that thousands of other people from all socioeconomic backgrounds can do the same. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: See you at La Casita in 30 years, yes. Sounds good. Is Quentin Remein there?

MR. REMEIN: I'm here.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Whenever you're ready, go right ahead.

MR. REMEIN: Thank you very much, Casey Anderson and the Board. My name is Quentin Remein. I'm the president of the Cloverly Civic Association. I was on a citizens advisory committee for the Cloverly master plan.

The plan could better support the
environment. As Lauren Brown and the Audubon Society, Caroline Taylor, Scott Plumer, Kenneth Bawer, people I don't really know that well but has just presented, the environment has been neglected by this plan. There are 10 million people in -- over 10 million people in Montgomery County but trillions of other living plants and animals.

The development proposed needs to not put them at risk. All living creatures depend on clean water and streams. People driving cars is another issue that the plan speaks out on. As Susan Spock spoke, we agree with what she presented.

Service workers, many who are immigrants, need cars to do their jobs as electricians, plumbers, home repair, home healthcare workers, elder care, office and cleaning people. They need to get to their jobs quickly. They need to find parking places. Right now, this is a big problem for them to do their jobs and they're not able to adequately do
their jobs to make a living if they have to spend
their time looking for parking and driving in
urban areas. Also, families need cars to get
their children to after-school activities.

In addition, somebody just brought up
the food pantries. Our church supports 800 to
900 people who use their cars to pick up food
from our food pantry every Tuesday. Without
those cars, they wouldn't be picking up their
food. And the people who are bringing those food
items to the church for distribution also need
their cars to do that. This plan serves as an
urban lifestyle primarily but it neglects the
suburban and rural community. The plan also
doesn't support children and the elderly as much
as it could.

Single family homes support more than
just single families, and it's sort of a
misnomer. Many single family homes have multiple
homes in it. They have multiple generations
living in the same home. And so just to say that
only single family homes are supported by this is
unfortunate.

I'm sorry that many people have suffered from racism, segregation, and lack of inclusion. But plans cannot change these problems. These are matters of the heart of individual residents. I hope residents can work together to make real changes using love and respect of others and look forward to -- our community looks forward to continuing to serve others in our community. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

David Sears, are you there?

MR. SEARS: Yes.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Ah, very good. We can hear you.

MR. SEARS: You should be able to see me in a second.

CHAIR ANDERSON: There you are. It looks like you're in the attic.

MR. SEARS: I am. I am. Starting at the top, right?

CHAIR ANDERSON: That's right.
MR. SEARS: Lead us to the top. Good evening, Chairman Anderson and Planning Board members. My name is Dave Sears. I live in Bethesda in an attic as you see. I'm testifying tonight as an individual. Thanks to both the Planning Board and Planning Department staff for working hard and smart on preparing this document.

My overall view is this is a very good document. I hope that the County Council will embrace its vision. It's an important document. It creates a strong portrait of the county we want to see in 2050. Without this plan, too many decisions made during the next 30 years will be ad hoc decisions rather than thoughtfully placed in the context of what kind of county we want to be.

Let me enumerate some of the plan's key principles that I applaud. First, change the mindset from preserve the world as it now exists to create a new world which gives folks a higher quality of life. Second, (Audio interference.)
Interest to honor countywide interest.

In short, don't let parochial neighborhood interests outweigh the interests of the county as a whole. For instance, increasing density in existing neighborhoods via missing middle housing is good for the county. And locating solar in the Ag Reserve is good for the county as a whole.

Third, change the mindset from moving cars efficiently and safety to moving people efficiently and safety. Fourth, change the mindset from equity and inclusion in the schools to equity and inclusion in the community which of course will then include the schools. Fifth, change the mindset from some folks live in single family homes, the rest live in high rises to folks have a wide range of housing options throughout the county.

In spite of the plan's substantive strengths, the presentation, I think, needs some work. Here's a couple of suggestions. To help grab the reader's attention, I suggest the plan
should include in a prominent position three to five short vignettes, each describing a specific person going about her/his daily life in 2050 enjoying the benefits of the great future, Montgomery County.

To help the reader understand that Thrive is not just a laundry list of good ideas, present several compelling examples of how the various key components and principles interact. For instance, providing substantially more affordable housing will simultaneously address equity, economic development, and climate change. After reading the plan or skimming it for 15 minutes, the reader should be able to verbalize with passion the three to five major ways in which Montgomery County in 2050 will be a great place to live. In conclusion, I strongly support this plan. My children and grandchildren will enjoy the benefits of the great Montgomery County of 2050.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much for that testimony. Marilyn Balcombe, are you
there?

MS. BALCOMBE: I am. Can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, nice to see you.

MS. BALCOMBE: Nice to see you too.

Chairman Anderson, Planning Board, thank you for the opportunity to share my feedback. My name is Marilyn Balcombe. I'm the president and CEO of the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce and a resident of Germantown for over 25 years.

In general, the Chamber supports the vision of compact development and complete communities. We see a great benefit to having robust and dynamic walkable communities with the balance of jobs, housing, and recreational opportunities. The 1964 Wedges & Corridors plan had a profound effect on the growth of Gaithersburg and Germantown.

The '64 plan and subsequent area master plans envisioned a strong commercial corridor along I-270 with the balance of residential and retail land use. While the residential and retail components have come to
fruition, the balance of commercial enterprise is still lacking. Given the new direction of the Thrive General Plan to focus on urban areas with ready access to transit, the question remains as to how the suburban communities in the upper areas of Montgomery County will thrive.

In reading through the plan, I can see the communities of Silver Spring, Wheaton, Bethesda, Rockville all represented in the plan. And I can envision how they will evolve into 15-minute living communities. I can even see it in Germantown town center and pockets of Gaithersburg. But I don't see the rest of the county represented in this draft plan.

Goal 1.1 makes reference to a broad array of complete communities throughout the county with an urban, suburban, and rural context. The draft does an excellent job of laying out the vision for the urban context. However, the vision and details of the plan need to be extended for both suburban and rural communities.
In terms of transportation, we certainly need to focus on walkability and transit, and the Chamber has advocated for both. However, we need an all-of-the-above approach. There are areas of the county that cannot meet our current transportation needs without increased road capacity.

One major solution for the housing, transportation, jobs conundrum throughout the county is to bring more jobs to the upcounty. If we had more jobs in Germantown, we'd have shorter commute times, less traffic congestion, and much less greenhouse gas emissions. This plan needs to explicitly support that goal.

I want to be clear. I'm not saying, not in my backyard. Quite the opposite, I'm saying, yes, bring it on. As the draft Thrive 2050 plan moves forward, we're asking for more explicit inclusion of the upper Montgomery County communities.

The draft plan creates an exciting vision for Montgomery County. We want to see our
communities represented in this vision. And I
thank you all for your hard work, for staying
with us this late into the evening, and for your
dedication to our community. My written
testimony goes into a lot more detail. Thank
you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
for that testimony. Pam Lindstrom, are you
there?

MS. LINDSTROM: Am I here?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, now we hear you.

MS. LINDSTROM: My statement urges
people to look at the document, what the document
actually says rather than perceptions. And the
statement is inspired by Casey Anderson's
statements to the Planning Board's discussion of
Thrive. The draft reflects an enormous amount of
work by the staff, but it does not show
inspiration nor does it inspire the readers,
other than the ones who are testifying right here
and now, the readers in the future to meet the
goals and take the vast number of actions it
prescribes.

I'm sure the planners and the Board have read On Wedges & Corridors repeatedly, and they will have noticed the differences between its beginnings and the beginnings of this draft. On Wedges & Corridors paints a vision for the readers of green suburbs, forests, farms, livable corridor cities whereas Thrive starts with 40-some pages of recitations of problems and prescriptions for actions but no rewards for taking the actions.

In my terms, the document -- the Thrive document desperately needs to be visionary. That is, it needs to portray a vision of the county in which the future that inspires officials, residents, and businesses to implement. The draft Thrive document has many pages of visions, but that is no substitute for a single, clear, compelling vision.

Casey did not use the term, but I think that's what you meant with your request for the next draft. He showed that a vision can be
spun from one of the plan elements, in your case, urbanism. It affects not just compact communities but it also affects connectedness, social capital, health, and I would add climate protection.

I would ground the vision on social housing, that is, urban affordable housing. And I am writing down and submitting in writing how complete communities -- sorry, urban affordable housing affects complete communities and all the other elements too, including better priced retail in the urban centers benefits businesses and store owners and people -- residents from low income to high income. Most of the growth will take place in transit served complete communities. Thus, encounters among diverse people, racially and economically -- diverse people will increase naturally without deliberate -- without having to take action to make it happen.

Lower income residents also use public transport. More riders of public transport
justifies more service and thus yet more riders
and less car travel in positive spirals. And
everyone involved minimizes their impact on
climate change. Thank you. Bye-bye.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.
Deborah Chalfie, are you there?

MS. CHALFIE: Yes, I'm here. Can you
hear me?

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

MS. CHALFIE: Wonderful. Well, good
evening, Chair Anderson and members of the
Planning Board. I'm Deborah Chalfie. I'm a 40-
year resident of Montgomery County and a Board
member of the Art Deco Society of Washington.
ADSW appreciates the opportunity to participate
in this process, and we've also submitted a
letter for the record.

Founded in 1982, the Deco Society is
a nonprofit membership organization covering the
Washington, D.C. region. Our mission is to
foster awareness of, to celebrate and preserve
the architectural, decorative, industrial, and cultural arts of the art deco era and adjacent modern movements of the 20th century. Architectural preservation is a strong element of our mission, and we've had many successes including right here in Montgomery County.

ADSW was excited by many aspects of the draft Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan. Its recognition that historic resources (Audio interference.) commitment and prioritization of adaptive (Audio interference.) And the fact that it appears to create (Audio interference.) creation of incentives for projects that adaptively at least (Audio interference.) of an existing structure and existing building materials.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Ms. Chalfie, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but you're kind of getting a little bit of breaking up. I think it's because of the bandwidth and you're limitations. If you turn off your video, sometimes that helps to conserve bandwidth so the
audio will be more clear.

MS. CHALFIE: Let's try this. Is that

---

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

MS. CHALFIE: -- sound any better?

CHAIR ANDERSON: That does sound

better, yes.

MS. CHALFIE: I'm sorry.

CHAIR ANDERSON: I'm sorry to

interrupt you, but I want to make sure we can

understand you.

MS. CHALFIE: No problem. I was about

to say it was our primary concern about the

(Audio interference.) the location atlas index.

Montgomery County's (Audio interference.)

preserving the county's (Audio interference.)

record on preserving our 20th century

architectural heritage is unsatisfactory. Many

of our county's cities have seen a great deal of

change over the last generation, yet the county's

locational atlas for historic resources has only

included piecemeal updates since its creation in
1976.

There needs to be a systematic review and updated survey of the county's historic and potentially historic resources. Importantly, during this interim period, buildings erected in the 1950s and '60s are now 60 to 70 years old and warrant historic protection. Mid-century modern architecture is the next frontier of historic preservation, not only as unique examples of modernist design and architecture but also because of the stories these buildings tell about our history.

ADSW believes it's absolutely critical for the Planning Board to add an action step under Goal 8 that would require more regular and systemic maintenance of the locational atlas and index. And the atlas must include the addition of mid-century buildings. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for that testimony. We appreciate it very much. Is Kathleen Mihm there?

MS. MIHM: Yes, I'm here. Thank you.
Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments on and during this testimony. I'm encouraged by the county's long range planning and incorporation of economic growth and environmental concerns over the long run and to make these opportunities available to all communities across Montgomery County, including both diverse and less diverse communities.

I've lived in Montgomery County for over 60 years. And during the COVID pandemic, I was amazed and thrilled to see people from all walks of life flocking onto the network of natural surface trails that canvas the county. The available trail systems provided a very much needed escape from the confines of COVID and for people to get out and hike and bike or just sit and enjoy the scenery often close to their own backyard.

So as part of Thrive 2050, I encourage the county to continue development and expansion of the natural surface trails, providing off road connections between these trails, and expanding
the network to enable more residents in diverse communities to enjoy the trail system. The trail system adds high value to county residents in that it offers opportunities for outdoor recreation that are close to home, encourages a healthy lifestyle for people of all backgrounds and ages, and provides an added bonus to attract companies and residents alike to make Montgomery County their home which contributes to the economic health of the county.

As an occasional bike commuter to the Rockville area, I would also like to add that natural surface trails also provide an alternative transportation route across the county that can avoid some of the busy roadways, increasing cyclist safety. And also to note as the county population grows, a strong and vibrant network of neighborhood connected trails can also help to alleviate overcrowding and overuse at the more established and very popular natural park system -- or natural parks and trails in the county. And that's all. Thank you for your
time.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that testimony. Is Misha Clive there?

MS. CLIVE: Hi. Yes, I'm here. Can you see me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes. Hi there.

MS. CLIVE: All right, great. Thank you. Hi, I'm Misha. My pronouns are they/them. I grew up right outside Downtown Silver Spring. I've lived here my whole childhood, and I've been here as an adult since 2008. And thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I support the general direction of Thrive to build a more equitable county. And I'm chiming in with testimony here, calling for MoCo to create livable communities and to directly address the ongoing impacts of systemic racism and housing. This plan should be integrated with our climate action and resiliency plan as well. That's vital to its success.

I want to live in a thriving,
inclusive community, and I see the effort from
the creators of this plan to center this plan on
equity. But I also see a lot of references to
affordable housing in the plan without much
detail on what does that mean. What is
affordable? Like, literally, what do you mean?
There are lots of ideas, but what's affordable?

So I want to take a moment to address
an example of this that I've engaged with,
specifically with our concept of moderate
household income. So I used to live in
California where I could only afford to live by
renting in a group house where one person slept
in the kitchen. So I moved back to Silver Spring
in 2008 for family help support, and I was able
to land a full-time nonprofit job in D.C. paying
me about 1,700 dollars a month after taxes.

So even back then, most D.C.
neighborhoods were already asking for 1,000
dollars a month for rent for a room in a five-
person house. I couldn't swing over 50 percent
of my income. So I moved back home with mom for
four years.

Then I finally found a shared house in Downtown Silver Spring where I could manage 700 dollars to rent a room. It wasn't a great situation, and I wanted to move into an apartment with a friend. So I looked into the MoCo housing program that helps people of moderate income.

At the time, there was a rental program that allowed up to 52,000 in income for an individual. But for two people, the max was 60,000. So if you have two people in a family, you could only make 8,000 more jointly above an individual. And I had worked extremely hard to get my salary a little bit above 30k and so had my friend. And so we were maxed out of the program.

Now I've looked at the homeownership program right now, and these numbers are up a bit. But the max is still 70,000 dollars. And 35,000 dollars a person in MoCo does not go far, especially if you have a disability.

So today I'm chronically ill. I spend
a whole rent payment worth of income on out-of-pocket healthcare costs, and my partner and I are struggling. She's on minimum wage, and it's very difficult. I'm spending a lot of money living in a luxury loft to be able to access the walkable community that I rely on for my independence. When I grew up with a middle class family whose house cost 125,000 in the 1980s and now would cost 700,000 dollars to live in my own neighborhood.

So to wrap up, these are some of the struggles that I've had as a White person, born here, raised middle class, benefitting from generational wealth, and despite all that privilege, struggling to get ahead in housing at a moderate income level and hitting a wall with county support. I love living in MoCo, but I don't know if I can afford to stay here. And if I can't make it, I wonder about my neighbors. How many people of color, especially Black and Brown people, immigrants, and working class families can have a future here.
So I hope that the Thrive 2050 plan can drive concrete solutions for affordability and pathways to financial security and prioritize our underserved communities, our Black and Brown families, our immigrant families, and our working class families. And I hope that my family can find a way to stay here and get to be a part of building a better MoCo where everyone can thrive. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much for that testimony. We really appreciate it. Ethan Goffman, are you there?

MR. GOFFMAN: Yes, I am. Hello.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Very good.

MR. GOFFMAN: You can hear me. Okay.

Thank you --

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes.

MR. GOFFMAN: -- Planning Board, for all of your hard work, this thoughtful, groundbreaking plan. I just have a few suggestions that maybe could make it better. So it's a little bit of a grab bag.
So first of all, economic growth is often given priority above everything else. And so think about equity and environmental sustainability as actually more important objectives than economic growth. That's kind of a big umbrella one.

Just improving conditions in low income and vulnerable communities is not enough. So I just want to add to what people are saying. And actually, we need to completely end racial, economic, and ethnic segregation if we ever want full equity.

We also -- you have something about this in the plan but just emphasize working aggressively with the state to build schools in transit-oriented areas because that has been kind of a roadblock to smart growth. Let's see. The east-west imbalance, a lot has been said about that. So bring jobs to the east where there's more housing. And Silver Spring were I lived for about three years, you know, it's a hub. There's Metrorail, MARC, many different buses, and then
the Purple Line, if it ever gets built, will also be there. I actually thought we should've tried to get Amazon to move to Silver Spring. I thought that that can compete with Arlington and maybe even outdo it for just transit-oriented walkability, especially if we keep working on developing it.

Let's see. And then as far as car use, I would like to see the county finding ways to charge for people who use their cars because cars cause congestion, accidents, air pollution. So drivers should pay maybe through a congested charge or possibly some kind of countywide parking fee.

SUVs, there's reports out actually for several years. They kill pedestrians at twice the rate of ordinary cars, and they also have a disproportionate environmental impact. So I think a health impact fee or an educational campaign or even both for SUVs and oversized cars.

And overall, I think we need four
transportation networks but each are connected
and safe, one for public transit, one for cars,
one for pedestrians, and one for bicycles and
small vehicles like scooters. And since cars
have by far the greatest environmental and health
impact, they should stop receiving priority.
Okay. Thank you very much.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Jenny Sue
Dunner?

MS. DUNNER: Good evening.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Are you there? Hi
there. Long time, no talk to.

MS. DUNNER: Right. My name is Jenny
Sue Dunner, and I'm testifying tonight on behalf
of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on
Friendship Heights. We appreciate the amount of
hard work that the planning staff and the Board
have put into the draft plan's development as
well as its goals regarding policies for the
county for future years. However, we also agree
with Chairman Anderson's numerous comments at the
October 1st Planning Board meeting when he
referred to the draft plan as confusing, too
specific, yet not developed enough to define why
anyone would want to read it.

We agree that the draft does need to
be reworked. We request when the draft is final
that the Planning Board conduct another public
hearing. You might not what to hear that after
tonight. If this is not feasible, then we would
urge the Planning Board to establish a process
for citizens to participate during the work
session.

Due to time limits, I'm only going to
mention two items of concern. The Thrive
Montgomery plan is anti-automobile. That is a
noble goal given the need to adopt strategies to
thwart climate change. However, implementation
would necessarily discriminate against large
numbers of county residents for whom vehicular
travel is a necessity in circumstances in which
walking and biking are not practical.

For tonight, it is enough to say
relying almost exclusively on non-automobile
modes of transportation is obviously not realistic, yet it is the heart of the draft plan. What are the goals and priorities that people are talking about and want? Many believe it should be economic growth, job creation, and affordable housing. What are the plans for infrastructure? How will it be funded?

Under the current plans, zoning will take place before infrastructure. This is the cart before the horse. Perhaps most significantly, the draft plan fails to recognize that the county is suffering from severe constraints on its operating and capital budget likely for many years to come.

According to the county exec's office, a one billion dollar deficit in the county budget is projected by the end of the next six years. The county has also had sluggish job growth over the last 15 years which has stood at five percent annually. By comparison, job growth in similar counties has grown by 21 percent.

With these fiscal facts in mind, we
question how Thrive Montgomery can assume that
the county will be able to provide reliable and
efficient transit, schools, utilities, healthcare
facilities, parks, libraries, athletic fields,
and community centers among other facilities that
would be necessary to support new, complete
communities featuring 15-minute living. We also
question how the county will be able to afford
retrofitting existing established neighborhoods
with the infrastructure and amenities that they
currently lack to turn them into complete
communities. The draft Thrive Montgomery plan
will require a great deal of capital investment
in new or existing county communities to achieve
the plan's goal.

Finally, we note that the draft plan
assumes that if you build it, they will come.
This assumption won't work, however, unless a
significant number of new jobs are created.
Simply putting it, adding housing does not
necessarily lead to job growth or a healthy
business climate. In closing, job creation and
affordable housing should be the county's primary goals for the future rather than providing missing middle housing for which the priority and policy basis have not yet been established. Montgomery Thrive 2050 should focus on those goals, and the Planning Board should rework the draft plan accordingly. Thank you.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much.

Nice to see you.

MS. DUNNER: Nice to see you, Chairman.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Nanci Wilkinson, are you there?

MS. WILKINSON: Can you hear me fine?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we can hear you.

MS. WILKINSON: All right, good. Thank you. And thank you for allowing me to testify, Mr. Anderson and Planning Board. Thank you.

My name is Nanci Wilkinson, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Cedar Lane Ecosystem Study Group which is a collective of
approximately 30 scientists, engineers,
sociologists, and concerned citizens primarily residing in Montgomery County who came together when the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gave its most dire warning yet, that the world faces an existential threat to civilization as we know it unless we implement, quote, rapid, far reaching, and unprecedented change in all aspects of society.

We do applaud your statement of purpose that Thrive Montgomery 2050 isn't about reinvention. It's about adapting to new realities, addressing historic inequities, and shifting the way we think about how the county should grow. This statement is very much similar to our group's perspective.

We are aware that there are other realities in addition to climate change that we think are important to the county's 30-year plan, including the assumption that we have an almost endless supply of fossil fuels and other natural resources on the planet for our own use. Thrive
Montgomery appears to have been developed and
assumed this same assumption of unlimited supply.

The supply of oil is finite. Our remaining oil is mostly in shale formations which is source rock. That means there's no oil remaining after that. If we stop drilling, the underlying annual decline rate in major oil producing regions will drop approximately 42 percent a year and yet renewables are not at the time at which they can completely fill in the gap.

Fossil fuels are literally what fuel our economy at the moment. And they are diminishing and our economy and communities are affected. And they will be continually impacted significantly with this dominion. We are also rapidly depleting the earth's supply of other non-renewables, including metals and nonmetallic minerals.

We have designed our lives to depend on these resources which we use almost every point in our industrialized lives. We are, in
addition, to the increasing in greenhouse gas emissions we are producing, and there are subsequent threats to human existence due to climate change. This makes us very vulnerable in the future.

As a result, we think the plan should include two more scenarios, one in which our current economy and lifestyle remains level to what it is currently and another scenario in which our economy declines at say six to eight percent per year. And our lifestyles and policy options become much more increasingly constrained. We will provide with more -- you with more extensive information and references in our written testimony before the comment time closes.

Additionally, we request that you extend the deadline for submission of public comments on this plan to coincide with the timing of the public release of the county CARP in December. And then allow the public a reasonable period of time to review and comment on both
documents together since it will be important for
two county documents to match one another
in their plans and recommendations. In
conclusion, many communities around the world are
suffering from extreme financial strain and
resource scarcity due to the impacts from our
lifestyle choices here in the U.S.

Most of us in Montgomery County are
not currently experiencing these consequences of
our lifestyle choices. We are also, however,
facing some tough decisions on how to allocate
our remaining resources wisely as we transition
to a much lower impact form of living. We
encourage the Planning Board to confront these
realities and update the plan accordingly. Thank
you so much for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much
for your testimony? Is Betsy Mendelsohn there?
Oh, apparently she's not logged on. So I'm going
to go to Stacy Silber. Is Stacy Silber there?

MS. SILBER: Yes. Hi there. Can you
hear me?
CHAIR ANDERSON: Hi there. You're a little soft. You might want to get closer to wherever the mic is.

MS. SILBER: Good evening. My name is Stacy Silber, an attorney with Lerch, Early, and Brewer. I'm testifying today on behalf of myself as a Bethesda resident and my (Audio interference.) land use group colleagues. I'm also testifying today as a board member and legislative committee chair for AFDC Maryland, as association representing many of the mixed-use developers in the region.

We'd like to commend the efforts of your staff and particularly Khalid Afzal. We know this is a significant undertaking, and the draft plan provides an excellent framework for the next 30 years. Furthermore, we appreciate staff's recognition that to ensure a vibrant, strong, and competitive economy.

We need to attract and maintain major employers, support small business and innovation, and attract a diverse workforce. Of great
importance, the plan stresses the notion of
equity, creating a place for residents to have
equal access to affordable housing, employment,
transportation, and education. In reviewing the
Thrive plan, it's clear that there's an
understanding that economic health and economic
disruption need to be drivers to affect change.

The plan identifies many issues and
challenges that should be solved over the years.
But we submit that without the influx of private
economic investment and public investment
infrastructure, the county will not be able to
fully solve and address these issues. As such,
the Thrive plan must prioritize economic health
for such will serve as a catalyst for attracting
investment and in turn provide the necessary
ingredients for the county to achieve its goals.

With that in mind, as staff and the
Board work through the draft, we ask that you
consider the following. Again, the plan
acknowledges that in promoting long-term economic
health of the county, there needs to be policies
envisioned that incentivize investment. With
construction costs continuing to increase and
reents remaining flat, developers and investors no
longer just evaluate whether to invest in
Montgomery, Fairfax, and D.C. as they had in the
past.

Rather, they consider places like
Charlotte and Atlanta that also have great need
for housing and the policies that are in place to
attract businesses. Thus, to ensure economic
investment in the county, the plan needs to set a
hierarchy of priorities so that policies which
encourage investment in housing are not offset by
those that inadvertently negate those same
policies because of costly factors. By way of
example, an executive with the Montgomery County
based advanced immunology and life science
company was asked at a business roundtable
discussion yesterday, what would be helpful to
stay and expand in Montgomery County?

He answered that his company needed
more real estate to accommodate lab space and the
ingredients to attract in-house talent in the county. To that end, we commend staff in its creative thinking on increasing housing and promoting diverse housing types in the county. While encouraging diverse housing along the corridor, it's very important and near transit is key, there also needs to be policies that allow missing middle housing throughout the county.

In order for supplying this housing demand over the next 30 years, multiple tools and approaches are needed. We appreciate the plan's clear advocacy that tax abatements, pilots, and TIFs should be used to encourage diverse housing types and high density housing near transit. We recommend this type of advocacy throughout the plan.

Furthermore, the plan rightfully focuses on identifying and removing regulatory barriers that slow down delivery of development. Finally, we suggest you consider distilling the draft's primary goals and actions and shortening the overall content. Thank you very much for the
opportunity to testifying today, and we look
forward to working with you.

    CHAIR ANDERSON:  Thanks very much.

I'm sorry.  Your background is blurred.  We want
to see what you're reading.  Maybe you can fill
us in on that some other time.  Harold Pfohl, are
you there?

    MR. PFOHL:  Can you hear me?

    CHAIR ANDERSON:  Yes.

    MR. PFOHL:  And you see me?

    CHAIR ANDERSON:  And we see you.

    MR. PFOHL:  Okay, great.  Chairman
Anderson and Commissioners, thank you very much
for the opportunity to testify.  My name is
Harold Pfohl, and I live on Summer Village.  And
I'm testifying as an individual this evening.

    The concept of complete communities is
a case of deja vu for me.  In 1976, I came down
to Washington as part of a team to analyze the
HUD New Communities program.  In the midst of all
the civil rights strife and social upheaval of
the 1960s, the Johnson Administration listened to
urban planners who were convinced that they had a solution to the social distress which was new communities.

As a result, Congress passed legislation that enabled HUD to issue bond guarantees facilitating the private development of 13 new cities on raw land in various parts of the country. These developments incorporated avant-garde concepts of urban planning for bike paths, walkability, commercial centers, trails, architectural covenants, et cetera. The idea was build it and they will come, Black and White, rich and poor. We'll live in peace and harmony.

In the excitement of getting these dream communities created, HUD had little interest in financial feasibility. The projects were incredibly complex, the front end costs were enormous, and HUD loaded them with social conditions. They were all failures unfortunately.

From that perspective, I look at the Thrive Montgomery 2050 concept of complete
communities which is a result of a great deal of hard work by many good people. I see a utopian plan that is vast and unbelievably expensive. It doesn't have a prayer of being implemented at any meaningful level over the course of the next 30 years when you consider the plan in its totality.

The four cornerstones to any strategy are people, assets, time, and money. The county is suffering severe revenue shortfall, net new business formation is stagnant, and needs of social programs are increasing. The plan gives no consideration to cost, simply assuring the reader that resources will be found in the future. But the costs are enormous.

Matters of money cannot be ignored in any plan. All of the elements are interrelated and interdependent. Priorities cannot be set without considering cost.

Dense development with ready access to Metro stops makes a great deal of sense and will be pursued. But how do you create parks, trails, and open space there? Complete communities
within areas that are fully built out requires
the acquisition, demolition, and redevelopment of
numerous residences. The cost of that is huge.

Will it be feasible, and the
acquisition of land for trails and parks? The
county most certainly needs much more affordable
housing. But insofar as attracting business and
employment is concerned, transportation is far
and away the most important consideration.

Finish the Purple Line and radically
improve bus service, where's the money to do
this? This plan is full of dreams and
aspirations that are beyond reach, admirable but
beyond reach. The authors state the plan must be
implemented now in order to deal with the
unprecedented chaos and economic collapse we're
confronting.

If so, any plan that purports to deal
with our distressed condition must offer guidance
for the possibility that recovery may be very
prolonged. This plan ignores that altogether.
It simply sticks with what is wishful. Wait a
couple of years until things settle down and we
can get a better view of the future and then
let's revisit this. Thank you very much for your
time.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Is David
Blockstein there?

MR. BLOCKSTEIN: Yes, good evening.
I'm David Blockstein, and thank you for your time
tonight. I think we've all learned a lot. I'm a
Takoma Park resident for 25 years. I have a
doctorate in ecology.

I'm a member of the Clean Energy
Working Group that's involved in preparing the
county's climate action and resilience plan. And
I am also a member of the Takoma Park
Mobilization Environment Committee that will be
submitting written testimony. First, I want to
associate myself with the comments from the other
environmentalists who testified tonight and
previously the Audubon Naturalist Society, the
Takoma Park Mobilization -- or the Climate
Mobilization Montgomery County, Montgomery
Countryside Alliance, Western Montgomery Association, and also the comments of the county executive in the Department of Environmental Protection.

The top line of this plan, economic health, equity, and environmental resilience, is unassailable. However, the draft plan segregates these activities rather than integrates them. I recommend that you put in a new top line, something like the health, the wealth, and equity of life for all Montgomery County residents supported by a nurturing biodiverse natural environment.

There are lots of good policy ideas and recommendations in the draft. But there are a few shortcomings that I'd like to highlight. So there are three concerns that I'm going to mention.

First of all, nature seems like a sidebar. There's good language, but it's thin on substantive recommendations. Section 6.5 has more study than specific actions. Biodiversity,
the foundation of all life on the planet and economic well-being is only mentioned three times.

Forest protection is identified as something to be studied. I associate myself with the recommendations by the Audubon Naturalist Society. For a no net loss of forest, I would actually go further and say a net increase of native forests.

Secondly, climate change. Climate change needs to be central to this document, not just stuck away in Section 6.2. The climate emergency that is recognized by the county in the 2017 climate emergency resolution is not an overstatement. We need to rethink everything in the context of climate change.

And so we need to think about things like the impact of storms and more variable precipitation on our goals for stormwater management and the impacts on low income people. A couple of people have mentioned already this plan is out of sync, but not too much out of
sync, with the climate action and resilience plan. The draft is going to be released in a couple of weeks. Section 6.2.2 says to take that into account. But I think to do that, you need to delay your next phase, extend the deadline a bit, and really look at that climate action and resilience plan to make sure that these two central documents for the county really are in sync.

Finally, I want to talk about density briefly. Density is not panacea. Montgomery County is urban. It's suburban. It's rural. Density by itself does not decrease stormwater runoff or mitigate climate change.

For example, the illustration on page 107 of a dense urban environment has more impervious surface, and I don't see anything there to mitigate climate change. The plan needs to not only tag people that mitigate the impacts of urbanism. For example, generation of solar and renewable energy in the urban zone, great potential there. Great opportunity for creating
jobs and wealth to the county residents.

I think there should be a goal of net zero urban areas for the county and to look at other recommendations in the climate and action and resilience plan as it's unveiled in the next couple weeks. So I thank you all. I know that there's been a lot of work that's gone into this, and there's a lot there that we can build on. So thank you very much for your time tonight.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you for testifying. Is Frank Fritz there?

MR. FRITZ: Yes, here I am. Should I start?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, please.

Whenever you're ready.

MR. FRITZ: Thank you. My name is Frank Santos Fritz. As you see with the pronouns, I'm an activist and organizer from Downtown Silver Spring. I've worked in the labor movement representing public sector workers here in Montgomery County, and I've also worked as a climate justice activist as well. As someone
who's moved to the DMV area from suburban New Jersey, I deeply appreciate the thought Thrive 2050's plan and focus on improving transit connection in between -- in and between our communities as well as its focus on promoting walkable mixed-use development.

Silver Spring is an incredible community that has allowed me to access the best that Montgomery County and the District of Columbia have to offer, all without needing a car. I want to congratulate the work of the Montgomery for All coalition on its efforts to organize robust public engagement on the master plan process. I'm not someone that normally weighs in on zoning, but they have asked a lot of people and I appreciate their efforts.

I want to emphasize Montgomery for All's emphasis on their platform planks, stressing the need for quality housing for all and protecting vulnerable communities. In my testimony tonight, I urge county leadership to expand its focus in the plan on affordability
with real concrete measures to truly build affordable housing in our communities while protecting low and middle income communities that already live in our county. The Metropolitan Council Government Resolution 27-2019 sets targets that we need an additional 10,000 units of housing above the current projected construction.

Something that has gone underreported is that they also found that at least 75 percent of new construction in the region should be affordable to low and middle income households. Montgomery County being such an expensive jurisdiction probably has a larger responsibility than other jurisdictions in making sure that it supports our lower income and middle income neighbors. Our working families, many of whom I've worked with in the labor movement, pay a premium to access the world class services here in Montgomery County.

Unfortunately, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, our county
led the state of Maryland with an estimated 52,806 households facing a severe housing cost burden. That is 50,000 households paid more than 50 percent of their income on housing between 2014 and 2018. Many more pay for unaffordable housing through longer commutes from neighboring jurisdictions, making a larger climate equity issue for the county as well.

To achieve a truly inclusive housing policy that aligns with our stated goals of social justice and racial equity, there must be a clearer intention in policy and planning when building affordable housing for every income level. Truly affordable housing at every level is an economic justice issue, a racial justice issue, and an environmental justice issue. And integrated approach that combines smart planning with state and local policy such as the Stable Homes Act introduced by Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins which would set a just cause standard for tenancy, a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, robust funding for the Social Housing
Act introduced by Delegate Vaughn Stewart to
construct income diverse housing for not for
profit and public means, your transit and rent
stabilization as seen in Takoma Park, and
currently as a sector in the pandemic as a relief
measure.

While my ideal vision for housing was
one that posits quality housing as a basic human
right. I think in the short run, we can all
agree that every member of our community
including every person who works here should have
the economic ability to live here without cost
burden. That is a prerequisite of a county where
we can all thrive now and into the future. Thank
you for your time and consideration of my
testimony, and good luck with your continued work
on the master plan.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much for
testifying. Shruti Bhatnagar? Are you there
Shruti?

MS. BHATNAGAR: Yes, I'm here. Thank
you.
Good evening, Chairman Anderson and members of the Planning Board. My name is Shruti Bhatnagar. I'm chair of Sierra Club Montgomery County Group, and I'm testifying on behalf of the group.

I'm very pleased that the Planning Board is preparing this major planning document and support the draft plan for Thrive 2050. We believe that this will set a strong foundation for the county over the next 30 years as we move forward to address our many challenges and fully embrace some great opportunities. Together we can create a more vibrant, equitable, and liveable community.

We believe the major themes of Thrive are accurate descriptors of where the county needs to move over the coming decades. Thrive advocates for a robust feature that includes compact development, creation of diverse
neighborhoods to promote racial justice and
equity, roads concentrated around transit, a
wider range of housing options throughout the
county, transportation that focuses on moving
people, not cars, and eradication of greenhouse
gas emissions. Equally important is the vision
of complete communities connected also by green
corridors.

These corridors serve as critical
natural infrastructure because they increase
resilience to the impacts of climate change and
protect water quality. Sierra Club believes that
America's most critical environmental issue is
climate change and our most critical social issue
is racial justice and equity. We also understand
that we cannot address one without addressing the
other.

So Sierra Club fully understands that
the way these policies are applied are intimately
interconnected. For instance, enabling more kids
to walk or bike to equitable and diverse
neighborhood schools is only going to work when
we have created across the county neighborhoods with the right variety of housing types and costs. This plan can and should be consulted often over the coming decades.

We do not want a good document that just sits on the shelf. Thus, we advocate for a shorter, punchier Thrive that will truly inspire elected officials and a wide range of key stakeholders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The reader of this plan should walk away excited about what a great place Montgomery County is going to become to live and work over the next 30 years and be energized to roll up their sleeves to get to work on achieving the plan's vision. Again, thank you for the opportunity to present Sierra Club's strong support for Thrive.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you very much. Is Alain Norman there?

MR. NORMAN: Hello, yes. Chairman, can you hear me?

CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes, we hear you.
Good evening, Chairman Anderson, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to provide some brief remarks in favor of the new draft plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050. My name is Alain Norman. I currently reside in Silver Spring, and I grew up in Montgomery County.

I would like to point to three key pillars to the future success of this county and to which I'm happy to note is covered by the draft plan, although they are mentioned across more than one of the plan's numerous plan elements. First, having attended public schools in the county, I know that maintaining an excellent public school system is crucial to ensuring that people can thrive in this county, in this country, and in the fact of global competition. So I applaud the plan for repeatedly emphasizing the need to facilitate access to schools at all levels.

I might urge the county to ensure that funding goes to build as many schools as possible
to avoid overcrowding and given the current
trends, to take all the relevant steps necessary
to ensure students have access to computers and
the internet to be able to receive excellent
education virtually. Second, let me touch on the
intertwined issues of economic well-being and
environmental sustainability. I'm thrilled that
the draft plan repeatedly notes the need to
facilitate access by foot or on bicycle to places
of work, shops, parks, and other points of
interest.

I want the county to have a multi-use
path installed on what remains a sidewalkless but
important roadway. And so I know firsthand how
important it will be for the county to
incorporate such facilities more frequently
throughout the county. Moreover, helping people
move around without resorting to cars will
enhance safety, improve quality of life,
encourage consumers to shop at local businesses,
and help Maryland meet its greenhouse gas
reduction goals.
Similarly, ensuring that people have access to green spaces and/or opportunities to engage in, say, community gardening throughout the county will help improve quality of life, sustainability, and the sort of community cohesion likely to support local small and medium businesses. In short, I agree with the thrust of the plan to improve everyone's quality of life to efforts to improve access to education opportunities generally and by planning for sustainability, notably in the form more bike lanes and/or ensuring walkability in future developments.

I might simply suggest that the plan, which is quite ambitious and often aspirational, be pruned of works like ideally which appears every so often so as to make its tone a bit more forceful so that as that might later help with getting funding for implementation of a plan win battles over budget to take place during the next 30 years. Thank you very much, Chairman.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. And I
think Sebastian Smoot is our last speaker.

MR. SMOOT: Thank you very much. My name is Sebastian Smoot. I'm a resident of Burtonsville. And I'll start off by saying I live in Burtonsville and work in Fulton.

I know a lot of people accuse the plan of being anti-car, but I love my car. It's the only way I can get around. I work in Fulton which is five miles away. It's a seven-minute drive to get to my work. But if I were to take transit, it would take three hours. And if I were to take a bike, it would take one hour.

I am not anti-car by any means. I drive everywhere. But I want to have other options. And I want to have other options because I think just as one example, Burtonsville, for example, is very car-centric. I mean, it's just strip malls and drive-thrus.

And you talk to anyone here in Burtonsville, we're sick of that. And the only way to really have a robust, vibrant community space and retail and amenities is if we are not
designing everything around people driving to and from places. And so I really hope that the -- I really support the 15-minute idea of having amenities and opportunities within 15 minutes.

I do want to also mention there's some people that were complaining that low income people need cars to get to work. Well, maybe this 15-minute concept needs to also include housing for our essential employees. I think every community, we've talked a lot about exclusionary zoning and the dangers of it, the harms that it causes. But I really think that 15-minute communities should go beyond just amenities and also making sure there's a variety of housing options in every neighborhood so that our essential workers can be able to have quality neighborhoods and access to quality jobs.

The last and ultimate -- the second to last thing I'll mention is I'd like to just talk a little bit about active recreation and place making because that hasn't been discussed too much tonight. The county does a great job with
parks and playgrounds. But I think we need to really think beyond that.

Someone earlier was -- in their testimony was talking about the human connection that's built when people interact with each other. And I think that the county can continue to work more. There's already been some efforts towards it in the -- what's it called, the active parks plan.

But I think we really need to rethink public spaces. It's not just a place where parents take their kids, although that's what I do all the time but to be where young people go to hang out and should go where teenagers hang out or where young adults hang out or elderly retirees hang out. And a way to do that is just to provide a lot of opportunities for a very small scale for communities, neighborhoods to do their own little placemaking events without having to require a ton of resources.

I think there's a previous testimony talked about community gardens. I like community
gardens. I also like beer gardens and food trucks, stages for performances, outdoor movie nights, and things like that.

So I really would like to see Thrive benefit the intent of having neighbors really get to connect with each other because in this really divided, intense world that we're living in right now, I think nothing is worse than when neighbors that live in the same neighborhood don't even know each other. And I think that really creates a serious social and mental health issue for a lot of residents, especially when everyone is blocked at home. And I'll just close by saying buses deserve bus lanes, and BRT is not BRT without dedicated lanes. Thank you for letting me share.

CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much for that testimony. I appreciate it. And that concludes our hearing, but the record is open through December 10th. So send me an email at mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org.

That email address for the chair is on
our website if you missed that. And we will be
looking forward to your additional input. And
thanks, everybody, who came to testify. And I
think that we're adjourned. Bye, everybody.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
went off the record at 8:55 p.m.)
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Hearing Draft Plan

Before: MNCPPC

Date: 11-19-20

Place: teleconference

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[Signature]

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