

## **Item 6 - Correspondence**

**From:** [scott.plumer@verizon.net](mailto:scott.plumer@verizon.net)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Thrive Montgomery 2050  
**Date:** Monday, January 9, 2023 8:59:58 AM  
**Attachments:** [Thrive big picture 7.pdf](#)

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Dear Chair,

I have invested a great deal of time and effort doing research and analysis on Thrive and its predecessors over the last three plus years. Or course, no one, including me, wants to hear The Emperor's New Clothes are made of anything but the finest materials.

As a huge fan of Montgomery Planning and concerned Montgomery County, Maryland resident and landowner I cannot stand by while we allow the most fundamental elements of our general plan to falter.

The attached one page statement is my plea to the general public.

I am available to work with people who are ready to perform the difficult diligence related to the matter of Thrive's rural pattern. Some say I'm the naïve child in the story and everyone knows the emperor has no clothes.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

- Scott Plumer  
Resident and landowner - Montgomery County, Maryland

## Thrive Montgomery – Missing the Forest for the Trees

Montgomery County, MD has approved a new comprehensive plan called Thrive Montgomery 2050. The essence of a Comprehensive Plan is a layout of where people live, school, work and play. Designating areas intended for higher populations per square mile guides developers and allows the county to effectively invest in services like transportation, schools, water and sewer service, parks, community centers, arts, recreation, and to protect the environment. The Comprehensive Plan creates a framework for decision making about future development and placemaking.

Thrive starts as a winning combination of population density gradients and a web of connected complete communities. The goal, simply stated, is the desire to create an equitably prosperous and wholly healthy county.

Thrive describes a dynamic called the “political economy of sprawl”. Together with a lack of “tighter limits”, **Thrive cites these two factors as being the primary limiting factor in the success of previous plans.**

Thrive describes in detail the need for a strong rural pattern. The layout of the rural pattern is one of the critical steps taken at the time of the comprehensive plan. The rural pattern is a foundational element, not the subject of follow on decisions or next steps. The rural pattern creates tighter limits by being the area intended to be sparsely populated to help protect the environment and focus investment.

Thrive’s rural pattern is called the Rural Area and Agriculture Reserve area. The prior (1993) comprehensive plan’s rural pattern was called The Wedge and was composed of an Agricultural Wedge and a Residential Wedge. Thrive cites the Residential Wedge as a mistake. Now to amplify the mistake, Thrive removes the Residential Wedge from the rural pattern. **Thrive’s Rural Areas and Agricultural Reserve area needs to be bigger. We cannot focus investment if we widen the development footprint.**

Thrive encourages and allows Complete Communities to be developed in all areas. Complete Communities are defined by Thrive to require Compact Growth. Islands of Compact Growth will, over time, necessarily connect. Most people know sprawl as suburbs. Islands of Compact Growth also catalyze sprawl.

Thrive makes an unrealistic claim about Compact **Growth** in sparsely populated areas being done commensurate with location and context. Sparsely populated areas with under 1000 people per square mile are not appropriate for Compact **Growth**. The impacts of even slight compact growth in sparsely populated areas are significant as they have very low starting base levels. Many sparsely populated areas have limited infrastructure and major green corridors. Landowner stewardship should be the hallmark planning objective in sparsely populated areas. Compact **Growth** is not appropriate for these areas.

Areas with between 1000 and 1920 people per square mile (1920 = three people per acre) need a carefully crafted restrictive growth policy. Compact Growth in these areas induces sprawl and detracts from focused investment.

Thrive is clear on the need for “tighter limits” and avoiding the dynamic of the “political economy of sprawl” and has failed to deliver. A Thrive amendment with an enlarged rural pattern void of Compact Growth is necessary for Thrive’s success.