



THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050 - WHO WINS? WHO LOSES?

Thrive Montgomery 2050—as we noted last week—will provide the legal foundation for “upzoning” the entire county. Once Thrive eliminates the 1964 and 1993 “Wedges and Corridors” zoning regulations, the Council can pass the Planning Board’s Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative (AHSI) through a zoning text amendment (ZTA), effectively wiping out single-family zoning and allowing developers to build multi-family units on single-family lots. The likely results include: overcrowded streets and schools, increased need for public services including police and fire and rescue, and overburdened infrastructure throughout the County.

Advocates justify such “densification” as the only path to housing equity and greater affordability. But recent studies show these policies consistently decrease affordability, increase property taxes, increase average rents, and reduce the number of affordable housing units.

So, who wins if Thrive Montgomery 2050 and AHSI become law? First, developers who will need no permission to build multi-family units on one lot. Then, instead of building McMansions to sell for more than \$1.5 million each, they can sell three or four units for \$700,000 or more. Other winners include those upper-income homeowners who can afford these new homes.

And, who loses? Everybody else, especially populations where the new zoning changes will supposedly help, an unintended consequence of the increased value of upzoned property. A study

by the Churches United for Fair Housing documented "drastic decreases' in Black and Latino populations in upzoned neighborhoods in New York City after a decade of zoning changes. And while White populations have generally decreased in New York City, the White population increased in neighborhoods where upzoning occurred. So, instead of fostering equity and inclusiveness, upzoning can lead to gentrification and displacement of targeted groups. See below what happened recently near the Rhode Island Metro in DC:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/local-opinions/there-can-be-no-racial-equity-in-dc-when-black-and-brown-families-are-being-displaced/2021/03/04/a5add56e-7b6e-11eb-a976-c028a4215c78_story.html

Who else loses? Single-family property taxpayers, whose property taxes will rise with the value of the land in their neighborhoods- - as developers see greater opportunities for profits from duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes, and drive up prices on sales of single-family properties. And prospective home buyers looking for single-family homes, who will find prices inflated as speculators in search of greater profits seek to corner the market. Plus, any homeowners who want to park near their homes, because the AHSI may not require on-site parking for these new multiple-unit buildings.

Most Montgomery County residents want fairness for everyone, but these proposed changes will increase inequity, as well as density and stress on neighborhoods not designed for increased density.. The available evidence does not support what the Planning Board is proposing: These likely outcomes will not serve the majority of current or future county residents.



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