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Thrive 2050 Plan Testimony – 11/19/2020

For the record, I am Caroline Taylor. I am here this evening on behalf of Montgomery Countryside Alliance. 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 time to visit us in the Agricultural reserve to learn more about the diverse landscape, our community and our pursuits.

And 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 are grateful that 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 Afri-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 Civic Association, and Audubon Naturalist Society. We will send our written comments in by the December 10 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 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 have set big important goals for our future- including carbon emission reductions, zero waste, equity, affordability -so that we might truly thrive. The only way that we will 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 a disintegration of mutual respect and adversarial posturing overshadow and disturb our working relationship.

Those of us who come before this board are not your adversaries. We are residents, organizations, businesses that care deeply. We do not ask that you agree with us but we should be afforded civility and respect. Know this- We see comments on decision makers Social media that level name calling such as NIMBYs or worse. And we have been witness to conduct in your hearings and elsewhere that create a chilling effect inhibiting public participation. And Planning Staff should be afforded consistent professional regard and respect. I trust we will strive to do better.

