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I have six minutes of background material and then we'll open discussion.

### A. The Approach

Urban planners have for over fifty years been telling us in our general plans that the best form of human settlement is highly dense population centers.

Urban planners promote a gradient of population densities from the natural, lightly visited areas, to areas lightly inhabited, and then on to dense and highly dense areas. Maintaining proper density gradients is essential. Market pressures to sprawl are intense. It is not enough to do the good things and encourage focused growth, in order to stop sprawl, you must stop it where it is mostly like to occur – on the edges.

Controlling the density gradient becomes a primary land use and adequate public facilities objective. Every general plan has talked about it and tried to make it happen. Yet the seepage of density continues.

## B. The Plans

While Thrive is intensely focused on high density growth it is much weaker than its predecessors in preventing sprawl. The case can be made that Thrive enables, encourages, promotes, and in some cases, requires sprawl.

Like all good general plans Thrive questions existing policies. It finds fault in previous plans, identifies emerging trends, and the next plan will do the same. What is not being asked is the question of; is there anything obvious about Thrive that future plans will regard as reasons why it failed to deliver its desired outcomes.

We see at least one item, and it jumps out at us when we look at three or four maps in particular. We see this so clearly because of our location in the county; wedged between an unmatched amount of natural and heritage areas and our position at the edge of multiple corridor cities and suburban elements.

Our area was continuous in the 1964 plan, chopped into three parts in the 1993 Plan Refinement, and now Thrive proposes to cut us in half.

The Thrive growth footprint map is more informative in its detail than the 1993 Refinement map, as it shows interconnected growth corridors, yet it still has a similar growth footprint and in fact moves in reverse and enables more sprawl than indicated in the Transportation Policy Areas map in the adopted 2020 Growth and Infrastructure Policy.

### C. What We've Got

There are many great ideas in Thrive. Please don't mistake our focus on concerns as a lack of recognition of the advancements made by Thrive.

Our suggested adjustments to Thrive address what we see as existential harm to our area and to varying extents to all rural areas outside the Agricultural Reserve. These adjustments not only promote and protect our way of life, but prevent sprawl and guide the pattern of development in the direction desired for decades but marginally achieved to date.

Our testimony will include the following:

- Key quotes from previous general plans, thrive drafts, and the planning board final version along with
- Our multiple Thrive testimonies with an overlay summary
- A map progression and plan progression recap
- And three very specific, essential, non-disruptive, straightforward big picture changes to two Thrive maps

Additionally, we have joined with four other civic organizations to create a Coalition Accord on Rural Communities. The Accord was submitted to the Planning Board as Thrive public hearing testimony and will submit again to the County Council. The Accord is a one page document with three objectives. The Coalition for Smarter Growth endorses two of the three objectives.

One process note before I wrap up. It would be useful for the submission deadline to remain open. We would like to provide more input. We are ready with our most essential items. Keeping the process open for input would allow for a collaborative public policy process to continue.

#### D. [Wrap Up](#)

In conclusion sprawl reduces our capability to Thrive. Thrive enables more sprawl than its predecessors. A straightforward, non-disruptive Thrive adjustment in concert with current policy can solve sprawl.

Our purpose today is not to present our suggested specific adjustments to Thrive ahead of our detailed testimony, but to develop an understanding of how we move forward post testimony.

Our main message today is Protected Lands. Defining protected lands forces growth to happen where it is most desired and prevents sprawl. Thrive's smaller rural areas and large limited growth area invites sprawl and detracts from focused growth.

The 1980 Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan had three areas: The Agricultural Reserve, Rural Open Space, and Rural Residential. These Agricultural, Rural, Heritage and Ecosystem stewardship lands should stay unified and have a far different set of form based code and pattern book than the rest of the county.

These protected lands should not be included in broad density initiatives. Disruptively adding density to these areas invites sprawl and eventually makes it imperative.

A reinforcement, renaming, reaffirmation, refinement, redefinition, and recommitment to protected lands is required to make Thrive work.

In closing, the Potomac and Patuxent Protected Lands secure our future. Protected Lands are a key element of our strategic vision's alignment with county goals.

I would now like to open discussion.