

Montgomery Planning

# CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

## SCOPE OF WORK



# CLARKSBURG GATEWAY

## Sector Plan

### Description

Scope of Work and proposed plan boundary for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

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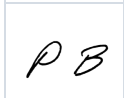
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## SUMMARY

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan is an update to the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area*, which was last revised with the 2014 *10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment*. The Sector Plan focuses on the major employment area located in the Transit District Corridor as envisioned in the 1994 Plan. The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan will evaluate the Plan area's trends and conditions and develop strategies to align the vision, recommendations, and overall staging requirements for the plan area with the county's adopted plans, policies, and priorities. The Sector Plan will also provide recommendations for land use, zoning, urban design, transportation, environment, historic preservation, and community facilities and will incorporate countywide initiatives into the plan area. Specifically, the Sector Plan will look at predominantly undeveloped portions of the Clarksburg employment area on the east side of I-270. This memorandum presents the Scope of Work for the Sector Plan, including the proposed boundary, purpose, context, background of the plan area, overall planning framework, elements to explore, public engagement strategy, and the plan schedule.

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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

The purpose of this document is to define the Scope of Work and boundary for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan (“the Plan”), an amendment to the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area* (“1994 Plan”). The 1994 Plan was previously amended by the 2011 *Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area Limited Amendment* (“2011 Limited Plan Amendment”) and the 2014 *10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment* (“2014 10 Mile Creek Plan”).

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan will evaluate land use, zoning, transportation, environmental, and historic preservation recommendations for the Plan area to determine if a new mix of land uses and zoning would be more appropriate. Additionally, this Plan may require adjustments to other recommendations in the 1994 Plan or the 2011 or 2014 amendments, including interchange design, recommended street alignments, staging of retail development, transportation corridors, and environmental recommendations.

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan will also evaluate the Plan area’s market trends and conditions and develop strategies to align the vision and recommendations for the Plan area with the county’s adopted plans, policies, and priorities. Specifically, the Plan will look at predominantly undeveloped and partially developed portions of the Clarksburg area located on the east side of I-270 south of Clarksburg Road. This area has remained largely unchanged since the 1994 Plan was approved due to the lack of employment demand and inadequate transportation options.

### PLAN AREA

The Plan area consists of approximately 969 acres and is generally bounded by I-270 to the west, West Old Baltimore Road and the Little Seneca Greenway to the south, Clarksburg Road to the north, and Frederick Road (MD 355) to the east (see Figure 1). This area is largely within the Upper Little Seneca South subwatershed of Little Seneca Creek—part of the Clarksburg Special Protection Area. The Plan area also includes two small extensions to reevaluate transportation recommendations from the 1994 Plan: a small area that crosses I-270 where there is a planned interchange and an extension south of the 1994 Plan area to reach the current northern terminus of Observation Drive when heading north from the Germantown area.

The boundary includes most of the properties located within the Transit Corridor District (a planned neighborhood from the 1994 Plan described below) west of Frederick Road (MD 355). Major properties in the Plan area include the Gateway 270 office park, the former Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT) property, Clarksburg High School, Rocky Hill Middle School, and the residential neighborhoods of Gateway Commons, Gallery Park (formerly Eastside), Hurley Ridge, Clarksburg Square (formerly Garnkirk Farms), and Dowden’s Station. Other parts of the 1994 Plan have largely been developed according to the 1994 Plan or have been evaluated as part of the 2014 *10 Mile Creek*

Area Limited Amendment and, therefore, don't need to be evaluated at this time, although a small part of the 2014 plan's area is included in the Plan boundary near Stringtown and Clarksburg roads.

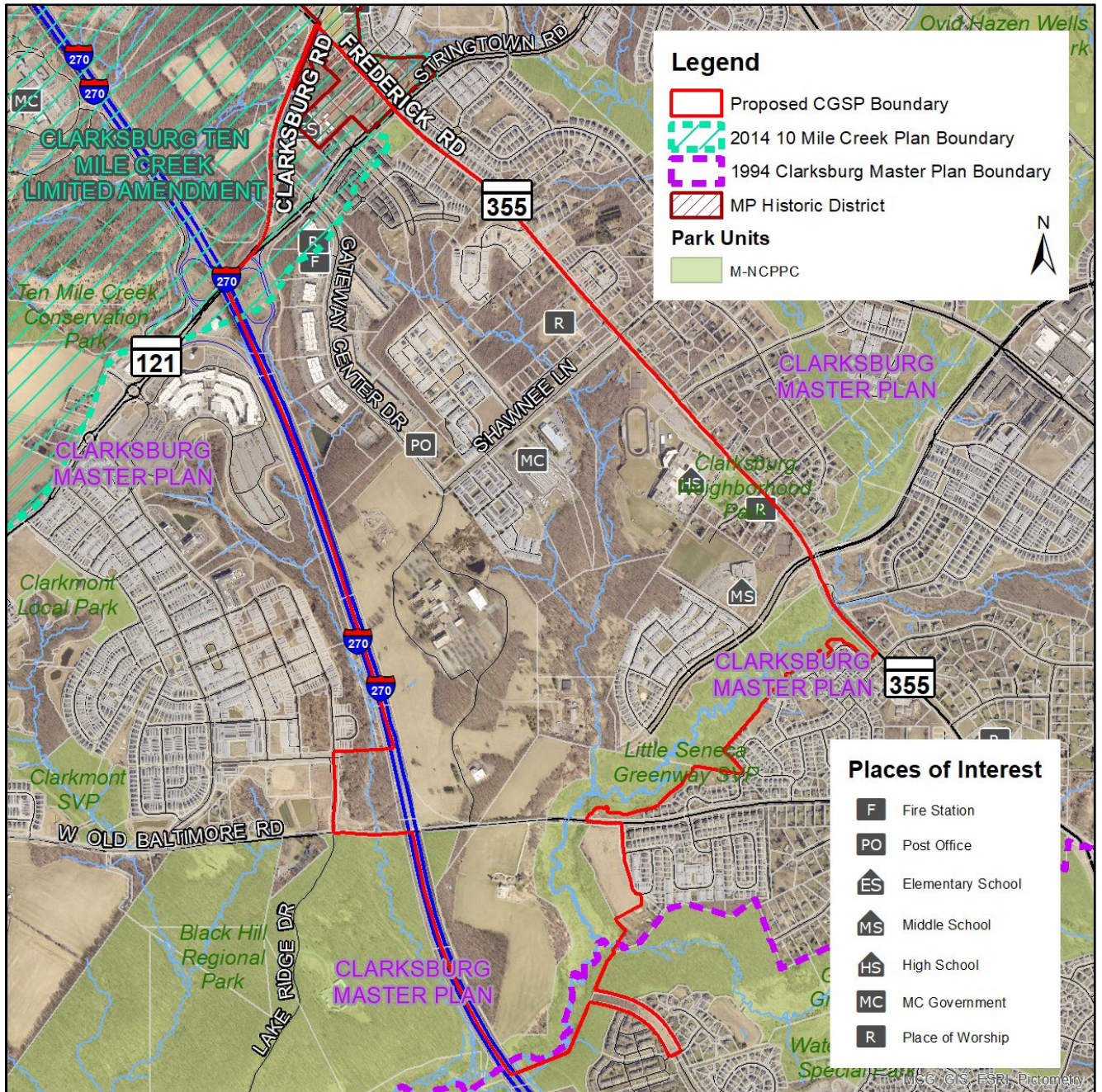


Figure 1. Proposed Plan area for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. A small part of the Plan area intersects the 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan's area, which is to the north and west. The proposed Sector Plan boundary extends slightly to the south of the 1994 Plan's boundary to reach the current terminus of Observation Drive.

According to the 2020 Decennial Census, there are 2,768 people living in the Plan area. The racial and ethnic breakdown of the population is shown in Table 1. Two new housing developments have added around 300 new dwelling units since the 2020 census was conducted, so the current population is likely approximately 10 to 15% higher. There are 1,140 dwelling units within the Plan boundary based on property records as of May 2023.

Table 1. Racial and Ethnic Population in Plan Area

<b>Racial or Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Population in Plan Area</b>	<b>Percentage of Total in Plan Area</b>	<b>Percentage for Overall Montgomery County</b>
Hispanic or Latino	416	15%	20%
White alone	615	22%	41%
Black or African American alone	679	25%	18%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0	0%	0%
Asian alone	913	33%	15%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0	0%	0%
Some Other Race alone	11	0%	1%
Population of two or more races	134	5%	5%

As shown in Table 1, the largest single group by racial or ethnic group in the Plan area is the Asian population, whereas Asians are only the fourth largest ethnic or racial group in the county overall. The second largest racial and ethnic group is the Black or African American population, followed by the White population.

Household income data is not available for small areas such as the proposed Plan area, but the median household income for the Census Bureau’s Census Designated Place (CDP) of Clarksburg (estimated population of 29,051) was \$152,917 in 2021 versus \$117,345 for Montgomery County as a whole. Nearly 36% of the people in the CDP are foreign born, and a language other than English is spoken at home in over 45% of the households. These percentages are only slightly higher than the county overall. The average household size is about 20% higher in the CDP, with 3.28 persons per household versus 2.74 in the county. More detailed demographic data will be drawn from Census Tract 7003.16 (see Figure 2)—also called the “study area” for the Plan—and included in an upcoming existing conditions report.

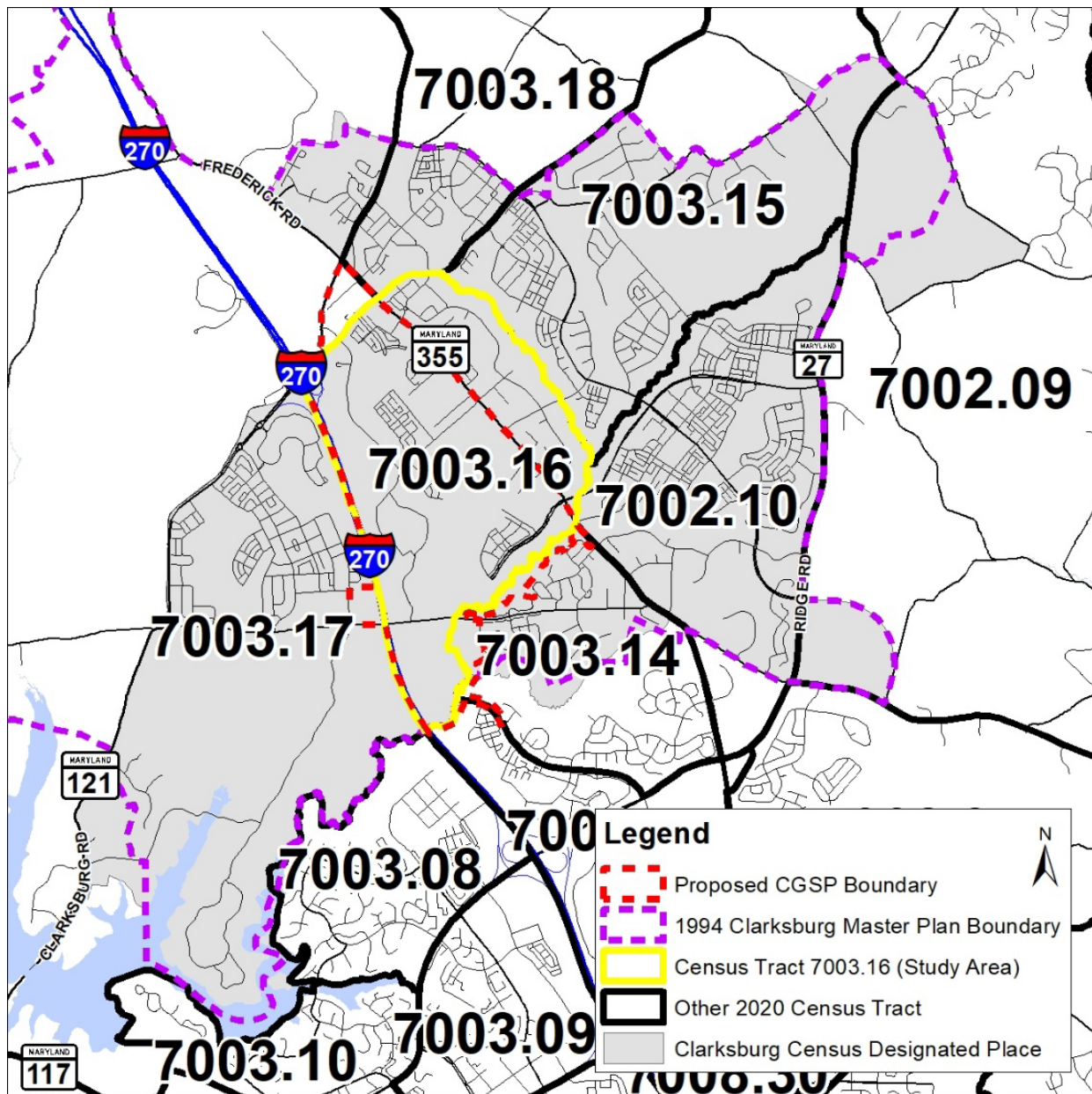


Figure 2. The Plan’s study area, which is used for detailed demographic analysis, will be Census Tract 7003.16 (in yellow), which roughly aligns with the Plan area. Some data may also come from the larger Clarksburg Census Designated Place.

## PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

### The General Plan: 1964-1993

The county’s 1964 General Plan, *On Wedges and Corridors*, envisioned corridor cities, such as Rockville and Gaithersburg, for high-density, clustered development supported by an efficient transportation system, including high-quality transit. In between the major transportation corridors, the land was



reserved mostly for low-density residential development and open space. Clarksburg was included as a potential corridor city along the I-270 corridor if growth in the area warranted one more city north of Germantown.

Clarksburg was affirmed as a slightly smaller corridor town in the 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County*, which recognized the I-270 corridor as an economic engine for the county, where knowledge and information-based businesses have grown, while noting that the corridor was still evolving.

### **1994 Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area**

The 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area* is based on a vision for town-scale development with an emphasis on farmland and open space preservation and transit-oriented neighborhoods. The 1994 Plan establishes a concept plan for Clarksburg that features a town center, a regional transitway, two new neighborhoods, continuation of the residential character along MD 355, a greenway network, and an employment area along I-270.

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan area is primarily focused on the “Transit Corridor District” analysis area from the 1994 Plan (see Figure 3). The Sector Plan area also includes a small part of the Brink Road Transition Area along I-270 primarily zoned for light industrial uses, a small portion of the Town Center District that is bounded by Stringtown, Frederick and Clarksburg Roads, and a very small area west of I-270 in the Cabin Branch Neighborhood where the 1994 Plan recommends a new interchange.

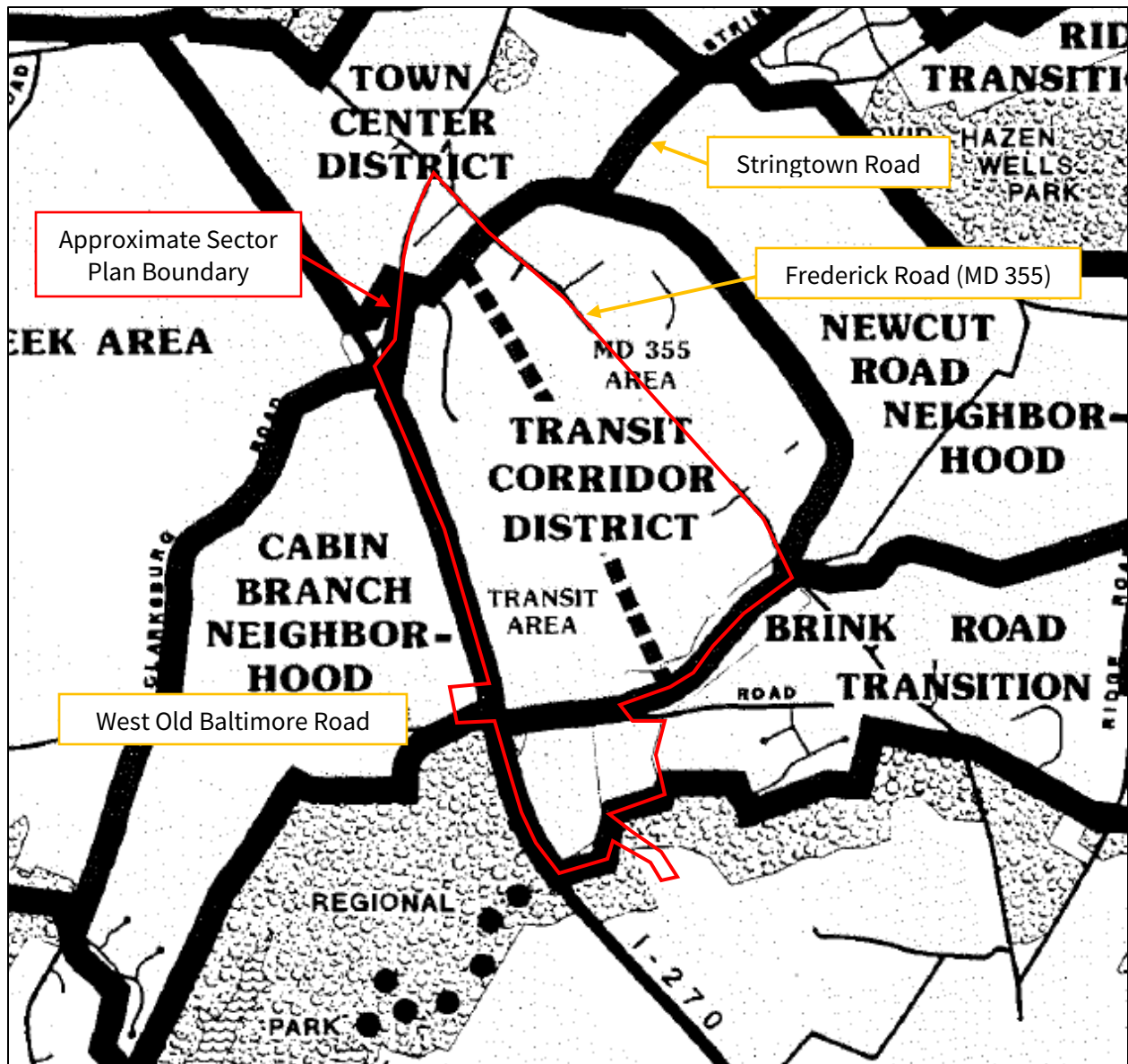


Figure 3. Detail from the 1994 Plan showing the proposed plan boundary in relation to the Transit Corridor District from the 1994 Plan (Figure 18, p. 41). The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan area includes the Transit Corridor District east of MD 355 and small portions of three other 1994 Plan neighborhoods: the Brink Road Transition Area, the Town Center District, and the Cabin Branch Neighborhood.

The 1994 Plan highlights the importance of I-270 as a high-technology corridor for Montgomery County and the region and identified the Transit Corridor District near I-270 as the major employment center for the Clarksburg area (Figure 4) but proposes a scale and intensity of land uses that are consistent with town-scale development. The 1994 Plan highlighted two significant employment campuses in the Transit Corridor District: The Gateway 270 office park and COMSAT, which at the time was the only major employer in the area. The 1994 Plan projected that the two campuses "... could

ultimately generate more than 20,000 jobs” and that “the two campuses are likely to meet employment needs for years to come” (1994 Plan, p. 30). The 1994 Plan recommended a mix of multi-family, attached, and detached housing in the Transit Corridor District, with up to 2,790 housing units and 3,300,000 to 5,000,000 square feet of employment and retail space in a transit-oriented development (1994 Plan, p. 40). The highest residential densities were planned near transit stops, while the area along MD 355 was to remain primarily residential.

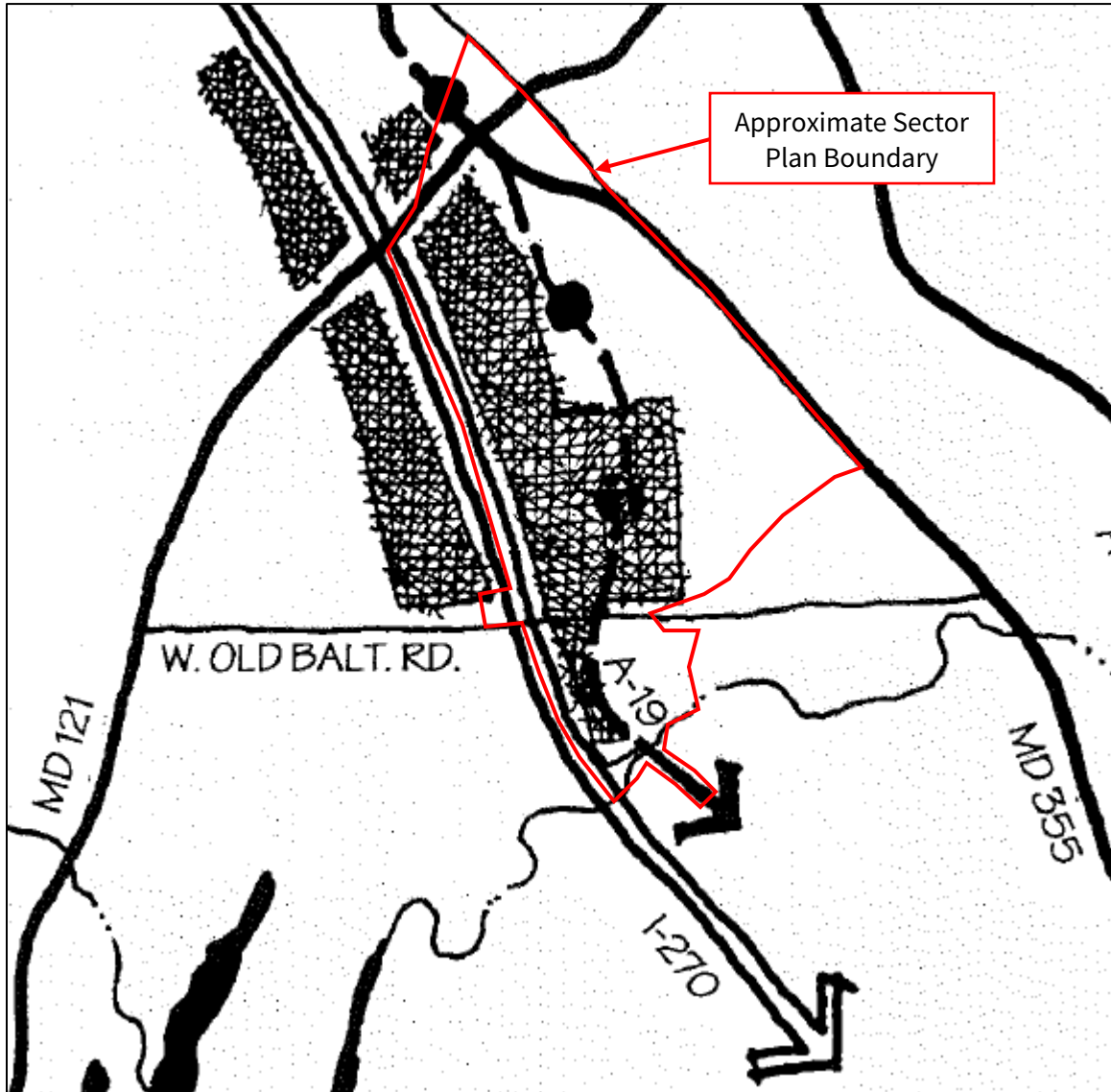


Figure 4. Detail of Employment map (Figure 14, p. 31) from the 1994 Plan showing the proposed Plan boundary. The employment areas shown on the east side of I-270 include the Gateway 270 office park and the COMSAT property plus a small area zoned for light industrial straddling West Old Baltimore Road.

The aerial image in Figure 5 shows the Clarksburg vicinity in 1998. There were very few residential neighborhoods in the area and almost no businesses.

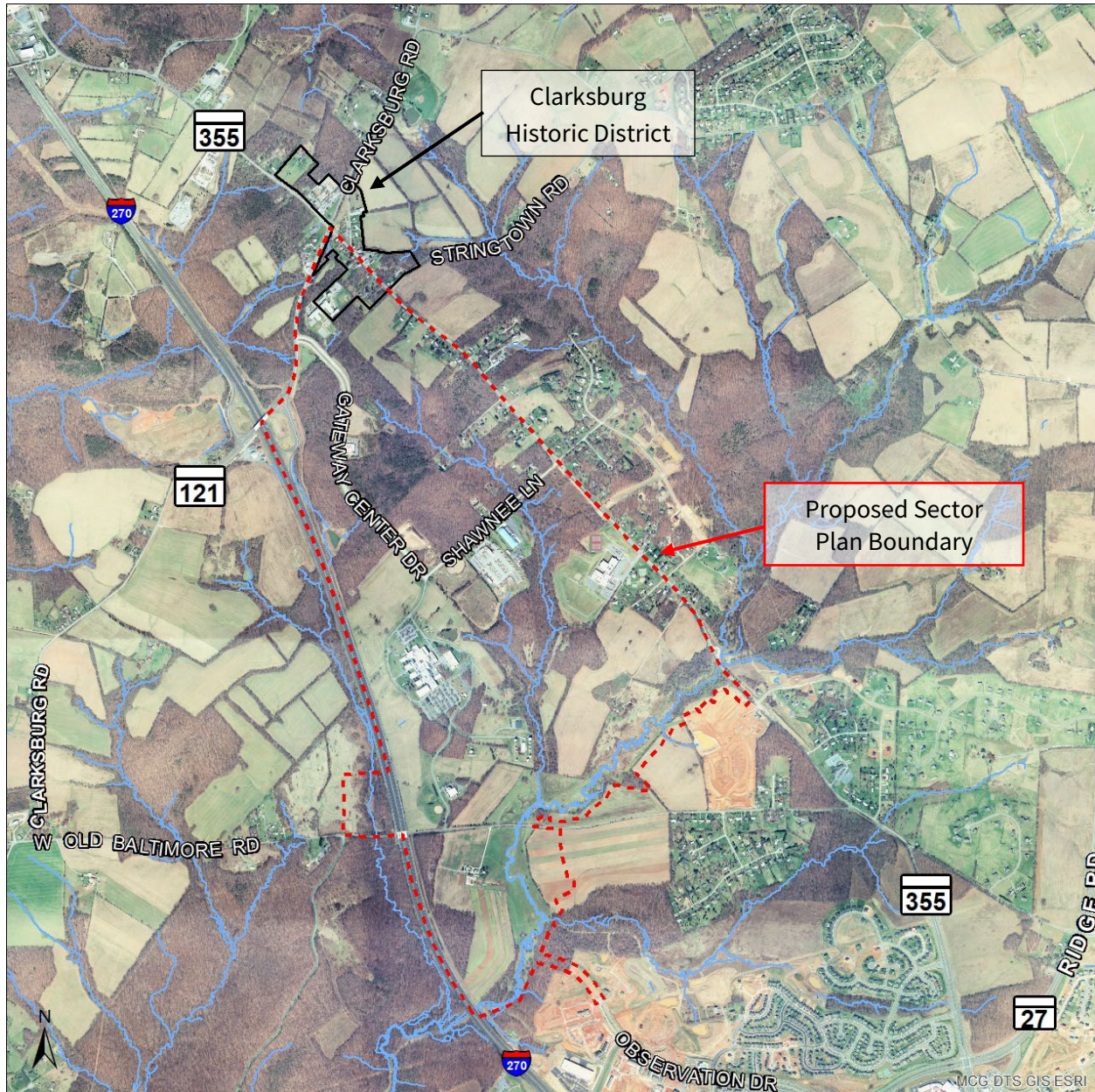


Figure 5. 1998 Aerial image of Clarksburg. The COMSAT building is visible near I-270 south of Shawnee Lane. Gateway Center Drive had been built, but only had one completed building. The proposed Plan area is indicated by the dashed red line. Contrast with Figure 1 above.

The Gateway 270 project was completed by the early 2000s and consists of one- to two-story office buildings based on its original plans as an office park with approximately 500,000 square feet of development. COMSAT, originally opened in 1969 and expanded over time to approximately a half

million square feet, has stood largely vacant since the company was acquired by Lockheed Martin in 2000 before it slowly dismantled the former company.

Another important element of the 1994 Plan was the Greenway Network as shown in Figure 6. This network of trails, primarily following stream valleys, connects regional and local parks, schools, and other open spaces.

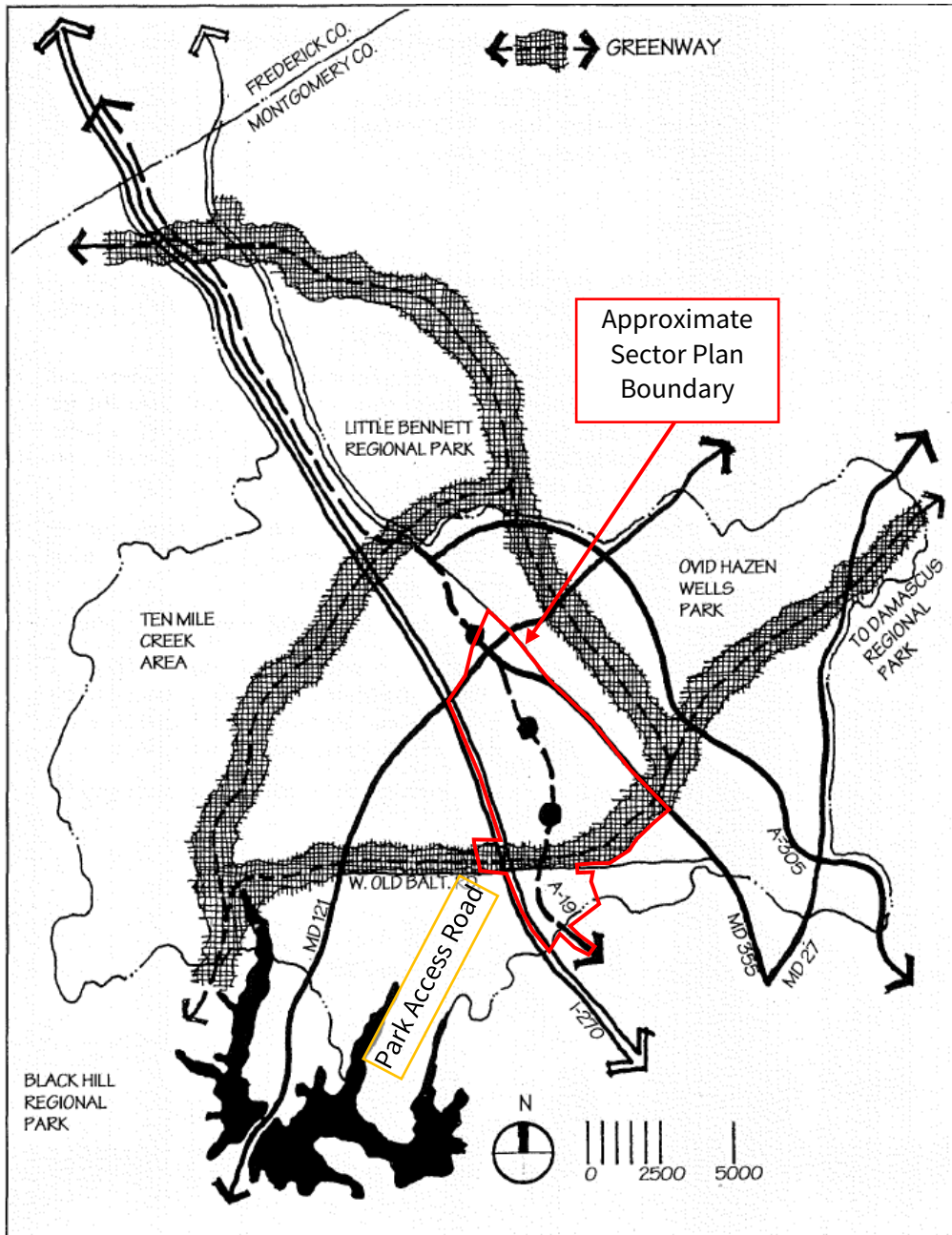


Figure 6. Greenway Network from 1994 Plan (Figure 9, p. 21). Part of the Greenway Network runs along the north side of West Old Baltimore Road, which carries the trail under I-270 and provides access to Black Hill Regional Park and Little Seneca Lake.

The 1994 Plan also recommended several new and realigned roads, as shown in Figure 7.

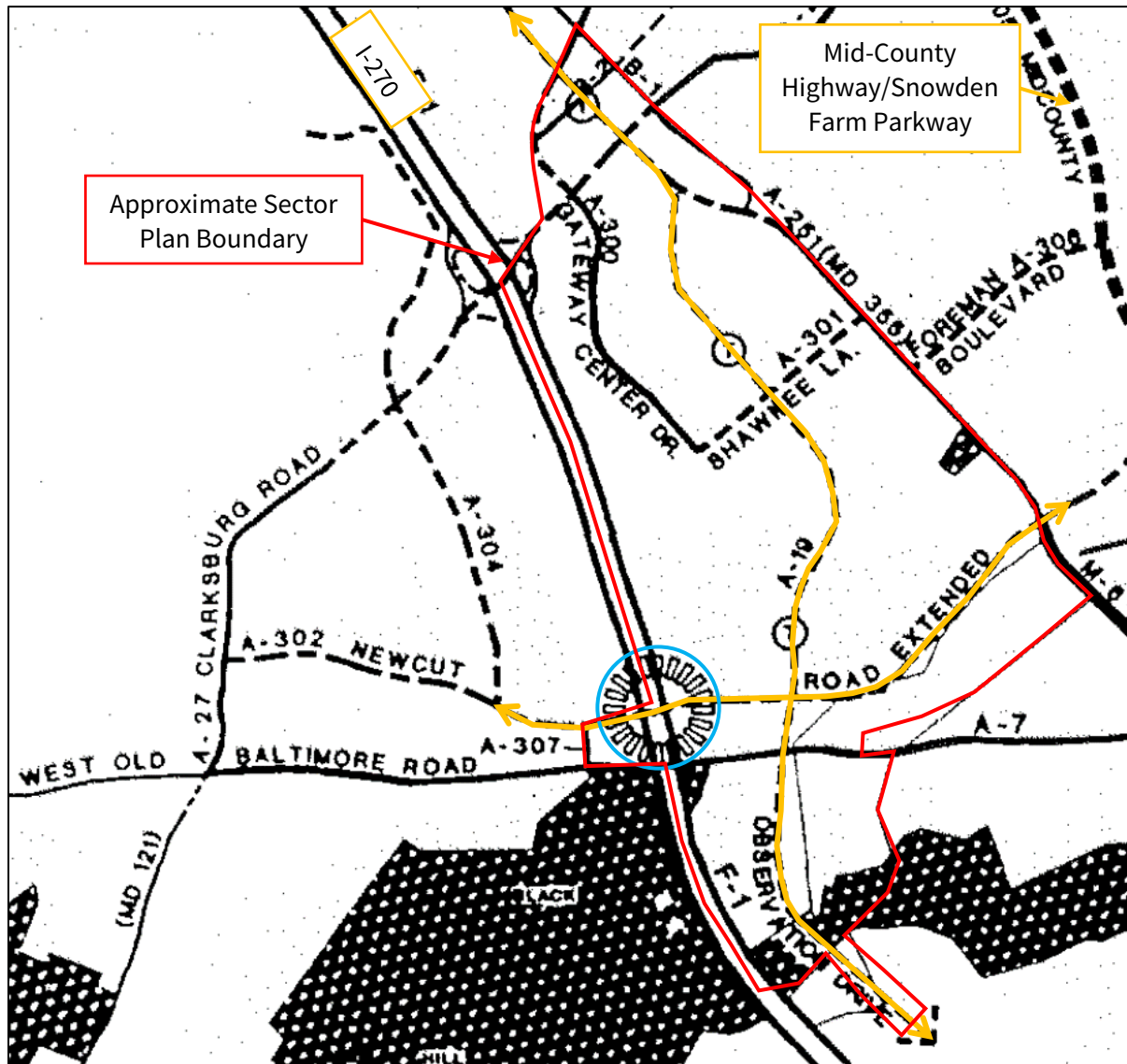


Figure 7. Detail from the Highway and Transit Plan from the 1994 Plan (Figure 40, p. 113) with proposed Observation Drive (A-19) and Newcut Road Extended (A-302) highlighted (orange), as well as the proposed I-270 interchange (blue circle).

Several important connections recommended in the 1994 Plan remain unbuilt, most significantly the portion of Newcut Road Extended (now Little Seneca Parkway) over I-270 and Observation Drive from its current terminus north of Germantown through the Plan area. Other important unrealized recommendations from the 1994 Plan are the proposed new interchange at I-270 and Newcut Road Extended and the transitway running along Observation Drive, with proposed stops indicated by the circled Ts in Figure 7.

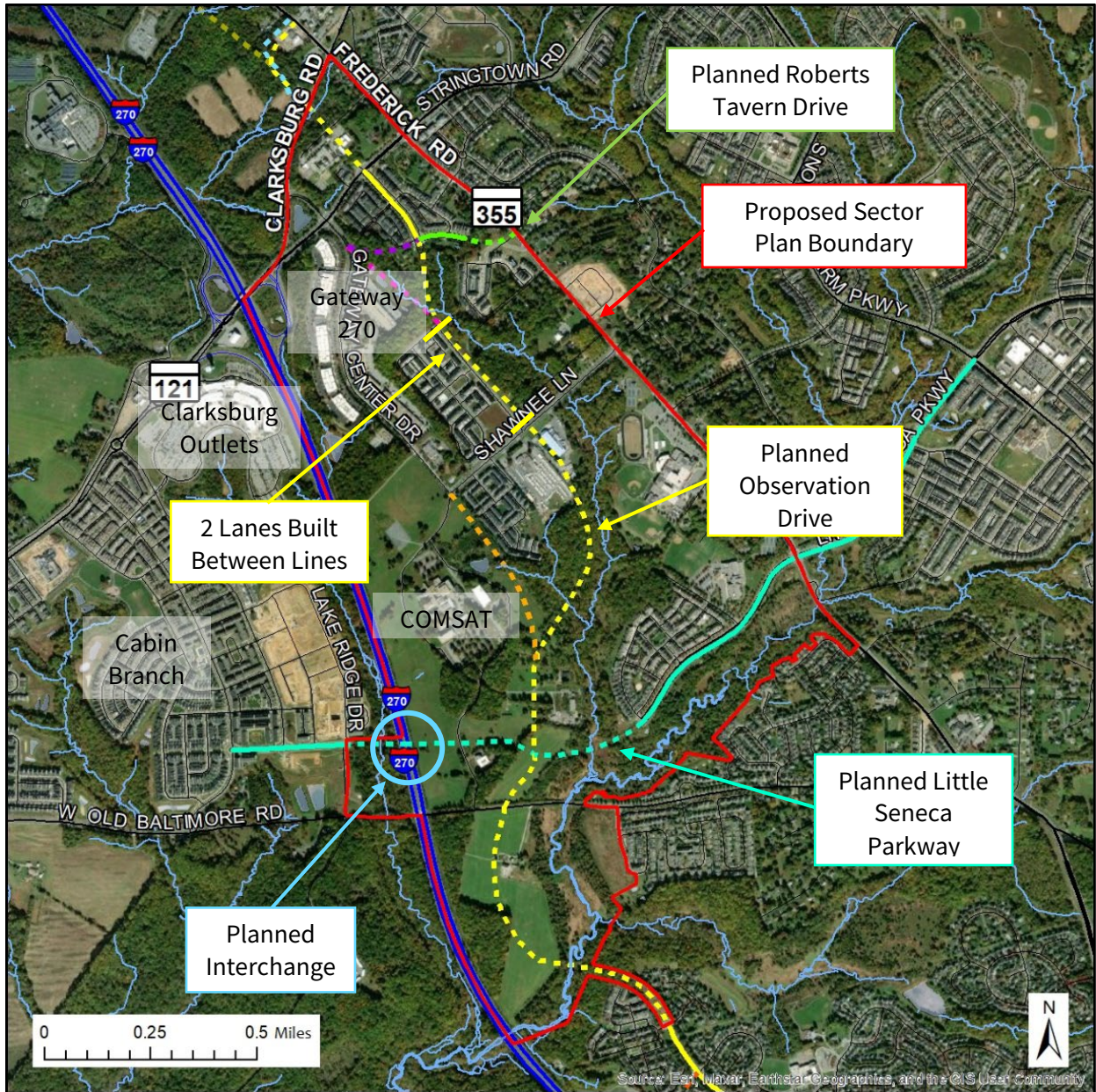


Figure 8. Recent aerial image showing unbuilt transportation projects in the Plan area.

Figure 8 shows the major planned but unbuilt transportation projects in the Plan area. No housing or retail uses were ever added to Gateway 270, but 256 townhouse units were built on a small part of a former COMSAT property southeast of the Shawnee Lane/Gateway Center Drive intersection. Both inside and outside the employment area, residential communities have dominated the recent development trends in Clarksburg, including the Gateway Commons, Gallery Park, Hurley Ridge, Clarksburg Square (formerly Garnkirk Farms), and Dowden’s Station projects.

### 2011 Limited Plan Amendment

The 2011 Limited Plan Amendment followed a narrow scope focused on changing the 1994 Plan's retail staging provisions to allow retail development in the Cabin Branch and Newcut Road/Clarksburg Village Center neighborhoods to proceed before the completion of retail development with the Clarksburg Town Center (Figure 9).

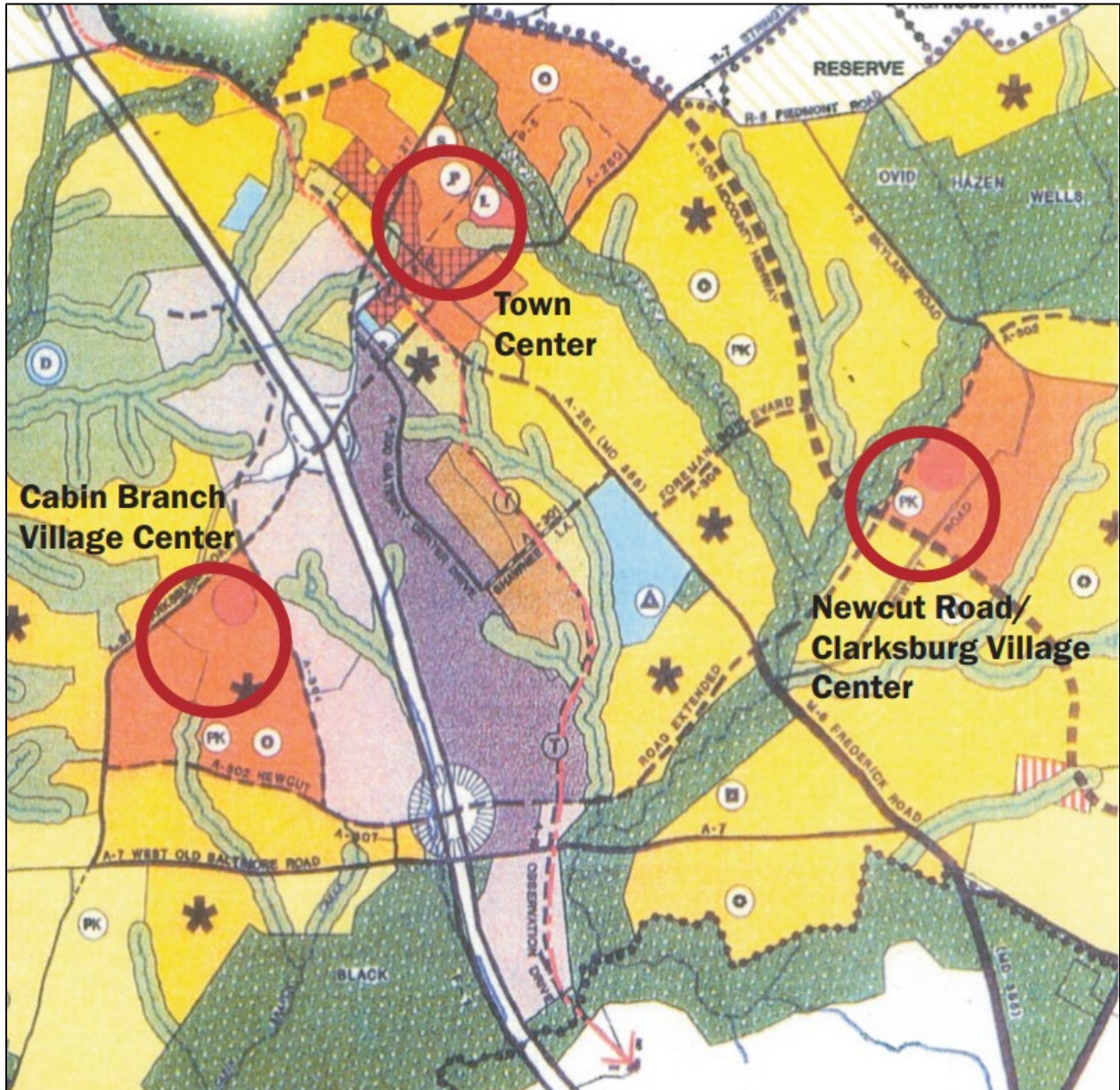


Figure 9. Map from the 2011 Limited Plan Amendment showing the location of the Town Center and two village centers (p. 12).

The 2011 Limited Plan Amendment allowed development in the two village centers once a development plan for retail uses in the Town Center was approved instead of requiring that those



retail uses actually be built. A grocery store and other shops were built in the Clarksburg Village neighborhood soon thereafter.

**2014 10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment**

The 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan is an amendment to the 1994 Plan that focuses on areas located within the Ten Mile Creek Watershed, primarily west of Clarksburg Road (Figure 10).

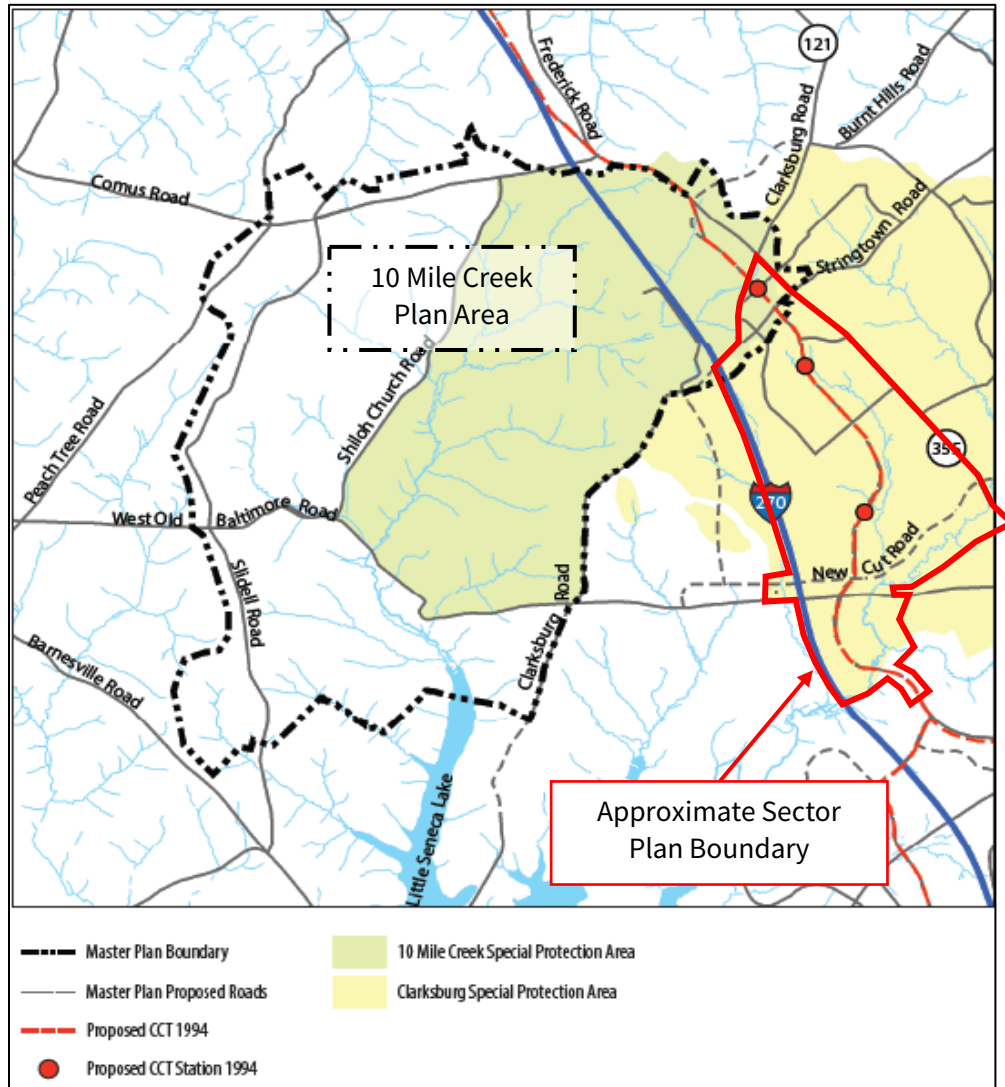


Figure 10. 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan area (Map 5, p. 20) showing location of the Sector Plan and the Special Protection Areas in the vicinity and the Sector Plan’s location in relation to the 2014 plan’s area.

The 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan retains the 1994 Plan’s vision but refines the 1994 Plan’s recommendations to better achieve two important objectives: the creation of a well-defined corridor

town that provides jobs, homes, and commercial activities; and the preservation of natural resources critical to the county's wellbeing, especially within the 10 Mile Creek Special Protection Area (SPA).

However, the 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan contains a few important changes to the transportation network in the Plan area (Figure 11) and described below.

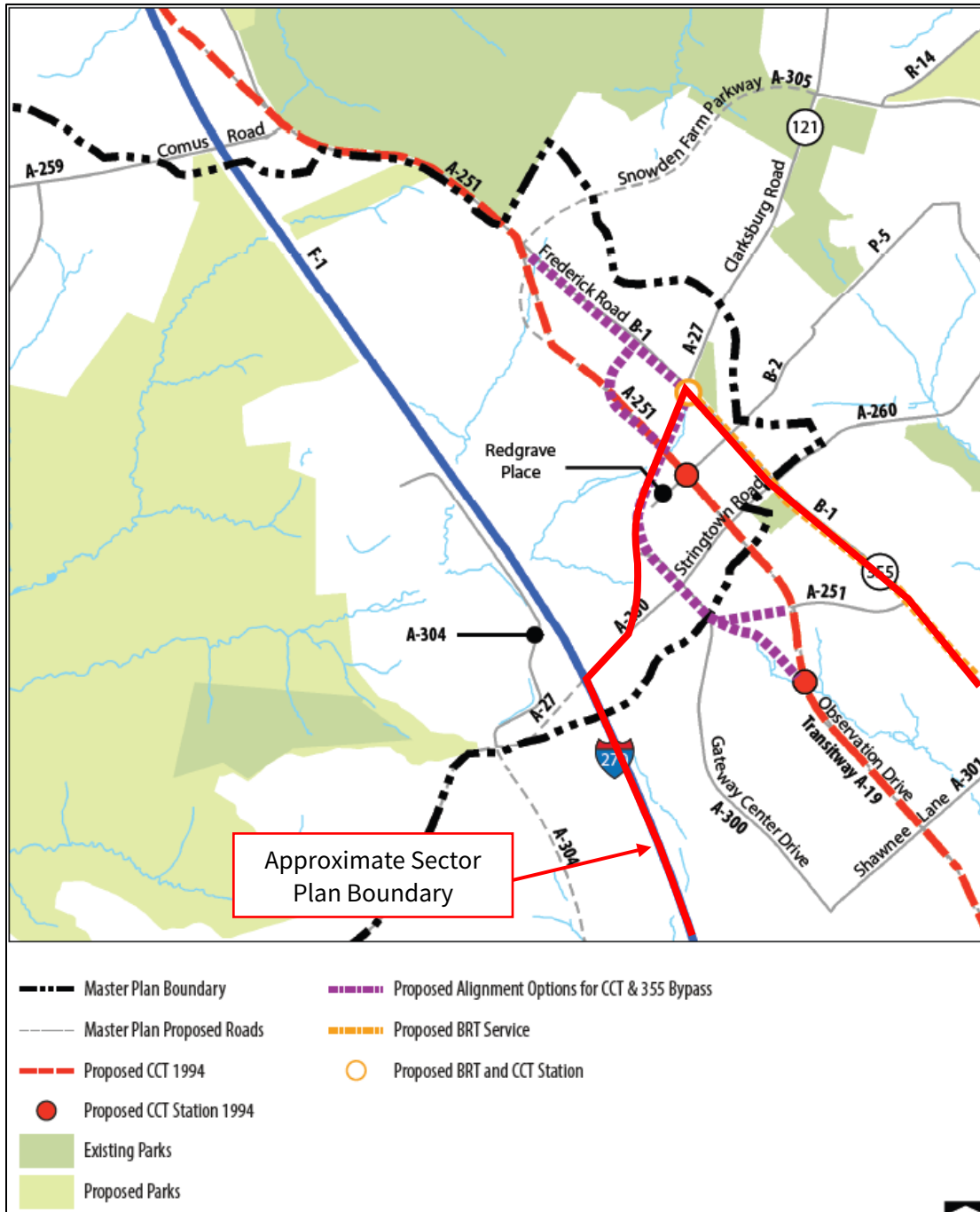


Figure 11. Proposed roads and transit network from the 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan (Map 6, p. 27). Part of the proposed Plan boundary has been added to the map.

Figure 11 shows alternative alignments for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) and the Clarksburg Bypass and adds a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route along MD 355. The dashed purple lines in the drawing show several different alignments to reroute the CCT and bypass to avoid potential wetland impacts and Clarksburg Elementary School. Also note the alternative connections from Observation Drive to Gateway Center Drive.

### ***Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan***

The Corridor Cities Transitway had been a fixture in a variety of master plans starting with the 1994 Plan and continuing with the 2013 *Countywide Corridors Plan* and the 2014 10 Mile Creek Plan until its replacement in the 2022 *Corridor Forward: the I-270 Transit Plan* (“Corridor Forward”). Each iteration of the CCT had included dedicated transit lanes to connect the Clarksburg/Germantown corridor with the I-270 Life Sciences Corridor and the Metrorail system. The 1994 Plan also envisioned the CCT as a direct connection between Frederick and Clarksburg with a southern terminus at the Shady Grove Metro station. Due to changing projected land uses and fluctuating demands for the service, subsequent iterations of the CCT failed to push it beyond the preliminary design phase.

Corridor Forward was initiated in spring 2020 to evaluate transit projects that best support the travel needs of communities and employment centers along the I-270 corridor, including those located within the proposed Plan area. Corridor Forward assessed a multitude of countywide transit projects ranging from light rail to BRT to prioritize equitable and sustainable projects to accommodate the county’s projected growth.

Corridor Forward recommendations for the former CCT alignment, now envisioned primarily in the proposed Master Plan area as the “Milestone/COMSAT East Clarksburg Corridor Connector,” rest heavily on future land use projections within the proposed right-of-way for the transitway. The proposed Corridor Connectors in the Clarksburg and Germantown area are shown in Figure 12. Corridor Forward also proposes an alternative alignment of the Milestone/COMSAT East Clarksburg Connector that would use Gateway Center Drive instead of Observation Drive between Stringtown and West Old Baltimore roads, although this alignment is not shown on the map. Corridor Forward additionally removed BRT alignments running to the north of Clarksburg Road.

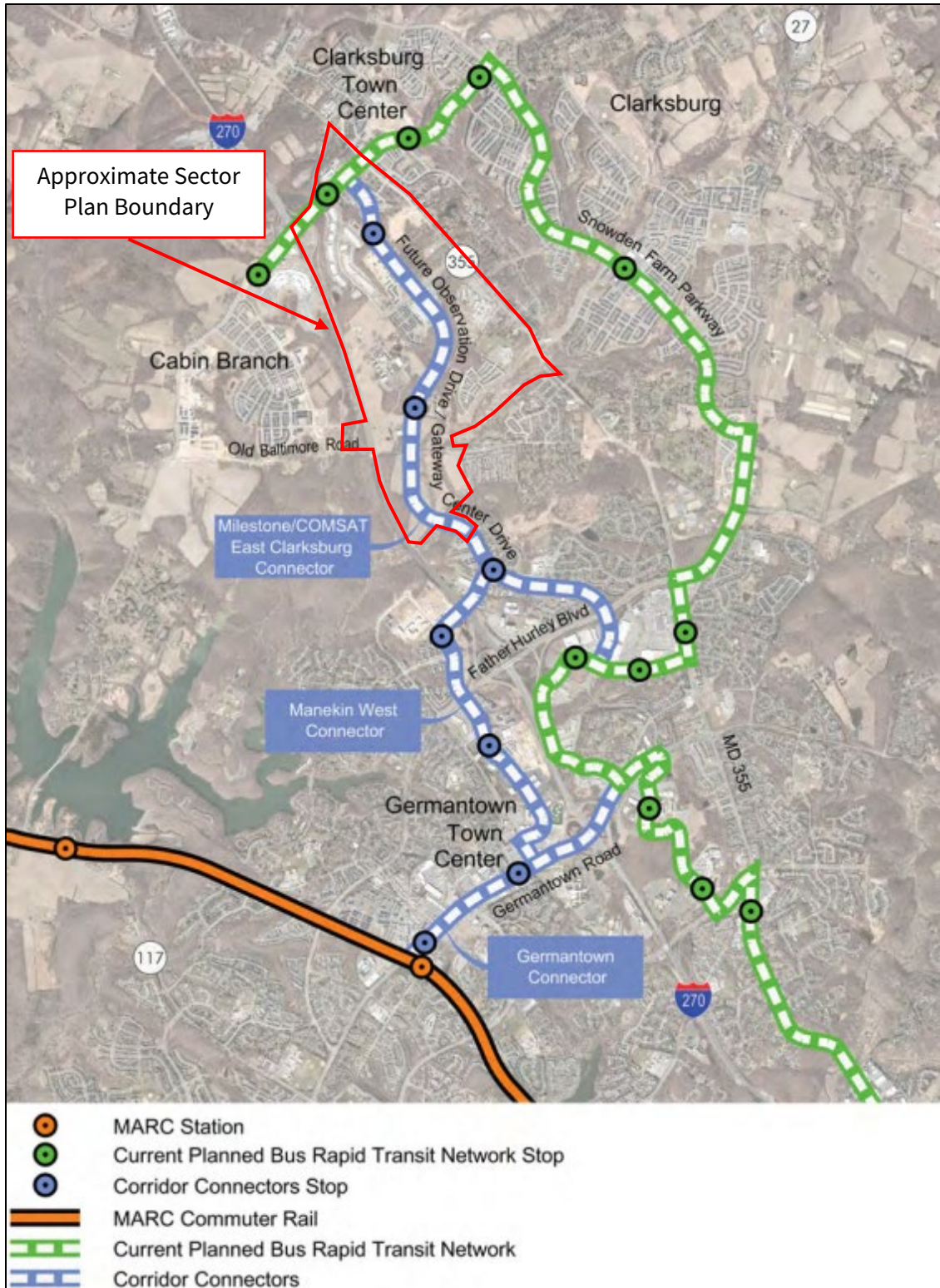


Figure 12. Detail of map from Corridor Forward showing planned Germantown and Clarksburg dedicated bus lanes, Corridor Connectors, and transit stops (Figure 4, p. 38).

## The New General Plan: *Thrive Montgomery 2050*

*Thrive Montgomery 2050*, an update to the county’s General Plan, was adopted and approved by the County Council on October 25, 2022. The ideas and the recommendations in the update are organized to achieve three overarching goals: economic competitiveness, racial and social equity, and environmental sustainability. While the web of corridors and centers has grown since the 1960s, *Thrive Montgomery 2050* continues to champion growth along corridors in defined centers. It recognizes the crucial role of transit, vibrant mixed-use development, and attainable housing in supporting our economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and equity initiatives.

*Thrive Montgomery 2050* identifies Clarksburg as a Medium Center, a term used to describe areas in the county with the second highest level of intensity of development. Medium Centers typically include significant clusters of existing or planned residential density and clusters of commercial density, such as large shopping centers and office campuses. Medium Centers are likely to be close to transit.

*Thrive Montgomery 2050* also identifies MD 355 as a Growth Corridor and the Plan area as a Corridor-Focused Growth area. According to the plan, development of new or substantially expanded centers of activity should be focused along the growth corridors to avoid sprawl and achieve the critical mass required for each center to be economically sustainable.

## PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Several countywide efforts will inform and guide the planning process and the development of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan recommendations.

### RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

In 2019, the Montgomery County Council passed the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act (Bill 27-19), which requires the Planning Board to consider racial equity and social justice impacts when preparing a master or sector plan. Montgomery Planning’s Equity Agenda for Planning is an ongoing commitment to systemically dismantle the institutional and structural racism that exists in and has long influenced planning and zoning processes and to prevent that influence in the future. We are committed to confronting the legacy of racism and its ongoing effects and to using this equity lens in all our plans, policies, practices, and other work—including to ensure that staff understand and practice social justice in their hiring practices and work to dismantle their own internalized biases. Through these commitments—and with the community’s help—we will learn and begin to advance our efforts to create a Montgomery County where all people can thrive.

### CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The county’s [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP), completed in June 2021, is Montgomery County’s strategic plan to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 100% by 2035. The CAP includes strategies to reduce GHG emissions and climate-related risks to the county’s residents, businesses, and the built and natural

environment. It provides guidance on building resilient communities through clean energy, resilient and efficient buildings, a sustainable transportation system, integrated nature-based strategies for sequestration, and necessary resources and infrastructure to withstand the impacts of climate change. The various strategies in the CAP stress the importance of focusing on those in the community who are most vulnerable to climate impacts. The CAP advocates for the development of a more efficient transportation network. It outlines specific strategies for increasing investment in public transit systems, encouraging more walkable communities, and promoting bike-friendly infrastructure. Like *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, the CAP is centered around racial equity and social justice. Where appropriate, staff will incorporate guidance from the *Climate Action Plan* into the Plan and develop recommendations to assist the county in achieving these goals.

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### VISION ZERO

In the fall of 2016, the County Council formally adopted a resolution that delineated countywide the *Vision Zero* approach to transportation planning and policy efforts. *Vision Zero's* primary tenet is the elimination of all preventable transportation-related deaths and serious injuries countywide, with a goal of zero traffic fatalities and severe injuries by 2030. Consistent with the guidelines presented in the county's adopted *Vision Zero* initiative, the Plan will prioritize safety and equity in its recommendations to improve accessibility and multimodality within the Plan area, allowing the county to invest in safety measures along specific corridors.

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### COMPLETE STREETS DESIGN GUIDE

The *Complete Streets Design Guide* provides a framework for countywide roadway design that prioritizes safety, accessibility, mobility, and sustainability for individuals walking, rolling, biking, riding transit, and driving. Complete Streets are highly context sensitive, and Planning Staff will work to ensure that roads are given the proper roadway designations based on the guide. The street types from the Complete Streets Design Guide were recently adopted into County Code. Montgomery Planning will be initiating an effort to update the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* later in 2023 to incorporate the Complete Streets Design Guide street types.

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### BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

The *Bicycle Master Plan* stipulates four goals for improving the county's current bicycle network: increasing cycling rates countywide, creating a low-stress and connected bike network, providing equitable access to bicycle infrastructure, and improving bike safety. The *Bicycle Master Plan* also includes a bikeway classification system for varying types of bike infrastructure and a data-driven approach that examines levels of bicycle stress on roads.

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### PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

The *Pedestrian Master Plan* is an important element in the county's *Vision Zero 2030 Action Plan* and 2021 *Climate Action Plan*. It supports the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* goal to "develop a safe, comfortable, and appealing network for walking, biking, and rolling". The plan documents the pedestrian

experience in Montgomery County today and makes recommendations in line with national and international best practices to make the experience even better. These recommendations include but are not limited to identifying opportunities to be more proactive in sidewalk construction and maintenance, providing more and better places to cross the street, prioritizing data-driven approaches to future pedestrian/bicycle investments, and ensuring state highways can be rebuilt in line with local master plan visions.

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### 2022 PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE (PROS) PLAN

The Montgomery County Parks Department updated the *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan* (PROS Plan) in 2022 to guide the future development and management of our park system. Parks, recreation, and open spaces provide active, social, and leisure opportunities that are essential for a high quality of life for Montgomery County residents. The focus of the 2022 PROS Plan was to provide equitably activated, central community spaces that meet recreational needs and protect and manage natural and cultural resources for future generations. The PROS Plan update was coordinated with the then-developing *Thrive Montgomery 2050* general plan update for Montgomery County that showcases how great places with equitable access to opportunities produce strong communities and people.

The 2022 PROS Plan serves as the planning policy for parks and recreation in Montgomery County to the year 2027 and beyond.

## ELEMENTS TO EXPLORE

Below is a list of elements that will be explored through the planning process for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. It is anticipated that additional elements will be added as the engagement effort and existing conditions analysis begin. All Plan recommendations will be considered as part of a holistic approach to shaping the future of the Plan area.

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### COMMUNITY IDENTITY, CONNECTION, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The Plan area is located in the south-central portion of the 1994 Plan area, which is north of Germantown. The people who live, learn, work, and play in the Plan area are incredibly diverse—with unique needs and interests. However, the area lacks a sense of place—a unifying identity. Planning Staff will engage community members to understand the cultures and elements unique to the area. Planning Staff will work to incorporate and to highlight the various cultures that comprise the community through urban design, history, environment, and open space planning.

The Plan will also examine the relationship between the built environment, physical activity, and social capital, a term which describes the network of community relationships that contribute to a shared sense of purpose that can help build a foundation for greater trust and support an effectively functioning and inclusive community.

The built environment is the human-made space where people visit, pass through, recreate, work, and play daily. Although the built environment is a physical space, it can have impacts on many aspects of our lives, including our health and our social connections. Places that encourage opportunities for people to have informal encounters can create social capital, enabling neighbors or workers to recognize each other as part of a community. The Plan will examine how to support these encounters by creating places where people want to be out in the public realm: walking, biking, shopping, and recreating.

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## LAND USE AND STAGING

The 1994 Plan emphasized the importance of I-270 as a high-technology corridor for Montgomery County and the region. Specifically, COMSAT and Gateway 270 were identified as the two significant employment campuses/office parks in the 1994 Plan. Despite the anticipated growth, development applications over the past 30 years have not delivered the building forms or residential or employment densities envisioned in the 1994 Plan. Since the approval and adoption of the 1994 Plan, a large majority of the employment area east of I-270 has remained undeveloped or is only partially developed. Planning Staff will evaluate the current zoning designations in the Plan area. Together, Planning Staff and Plan stakeholders will explore right-sizing zoning—examining if the zoning allocated assumes too much, too little, or just enough height and density. Planning Staff will also assess 1994 staging requirements by reviewing the anticipated and actual impacts of development and evaluating the original objectives and unintended effects.

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## HOUSING

The county and the region have not produced enough housing to meet the growing demand, creating a housing supply mismatch with negative, secondary effects on our neighborhoods, schools, environment, transportation infrastructure, and economic health. The county's economic health is dependent on an adequate and attainable supply of housing for workers. The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan will look for ways to encourage the production of more housing to better match supply with demand, plan for a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet diverse needs, and promote racial and economic diversity in housing in every neighborhood. Efforts to achieve racial and social equity in housing will include exploring ways to make housing attainable for residents at all income levels, including the creation of more income-restricted affordable housing.

The Montgomery County Council adopted a resolution in 2019 to support a regional housing target, including the need for Montgomery County specifically to add an additional 10,000 housing units over the forecasted amount of 31,000 by 2030. To help get there, Planning Staff will examine existing zoning and land uses in the Plan area and work with housing partners to determine how, where, and what types of new residential development should be pursued.

Additionally, the Plan will operate under the guidance of the adopted *Thrive Montgomery 2050* housing goals, which include policies that promote a range of housing types (including income-



restricted affordable housing) located near major transit, along corridors, near employment centers, all within the framework of creating Complete Communities.

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## TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS, AND CONNECTIVITY

Transportation and land use are closely linked, and a successful master plan allows for a combination of development patterns that support various transportation options. The Plan will promote a multimodal, socially equitable, environmentally sustainable framework for future development. With the backing of existing countywide transportation strategies, the Plan will seek to build upon the goals outlined in previous plans. These include:

- **Multimodal Access:** Several master plans since the original 1994 Plan have set the stage for transportation initiatives both within the Plan area and countywide, emphasizing multimodal access and mobility for walking, rolling, biking, and transit. In addition to the plans listed above, Planning Staff will also revisit recommendations from the 2018 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* and the 2022 *Corridor Forward Plan*.
- **Vehicular Capacity:** The Plan will reconsider any master-planned but unbuilt highway interchanges and roadway extensions or widenings recommended in previous area master plans or countywide transportation plans within and around the Plan area. The ultimate goal is to determine whether these linkages support the general land use and transportation goals of the county and Clarksburg and identify any alternatives if necessary.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks:** The bicycling and pedestrian networks will be evaluated, and any necessary changes will be recommended.
- **Emerging Issues:** The Plan will consider the role of technology in the future of mobility in the community, such as teleworking, micro-mobility, last-mile shipping, rideshare services, and other emerging trends.

Integral to this assessment is the utilization of Montgomery Planning’s Predictive Safety Analysis, a data-driven methodology that examines crash rates for walking, biking, and driving along particular roadway segments. The Plan will also evaluate transportation adequacy for auto and transit accessibility, auto and transit travel times, and vehicle miles traveled per service population, consistent with the County Council’s guidance for measuring transportation adequacy in master plans.

Specific transportation projects to be considered as part of the Plan:

- Corridor Connectors and BRT projects on MD 355, Observation Drive, and Gateway Center Drive
- The alignment and number of lanes for Observation Drive, Gateway Center Drive, Little Seneca Parkway, the Clarksburg Bypass, and Frederick Road
- The planned interchange at Little Seneca Parkway and I-270

The current alignment of “Phase 1” of the Observation Drive Extended project would extend the road from its current terminus at Waters Discovery Lane north of Ridge Road to the planned extension of

Little Seneca Parkway. The Plan will study the feasibility of the extension against the potential transportation needs of this section of the corridor as part of the Clarksburg area with consideration for a more incremental approach to construction. The extension will be analyzed by Planning Staff concerning impacts on the environment, current and future land use/transportation needs, and the overall size and scope of Observation Drive.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

One of the key policies of the 1994 Plan was to ensure “that Clarksburg’s natural features, particularly stream valleys, be protected” and “that Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Creek be afforded special protection as development proceeds” (1994 Plan, pg. 6). Research over the last several decades has demonstrated that climate change and its impacts are growing worse. This has resulted in new commitments to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, supported by actions recommended by Montgomery County’s *Climate Action Plan* and complementary planning actions recommended in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.

Environmental resilience has become a cornerstone of our planning work. In addition to the continued focus on improving air and water quality, conserving forests, and protecting and promoting biological diversity, the desired outcomes of environmental resilience now include addressing climate change, protecting and improving human health, and promoting environmental justice.

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan will respond to policies, environmental challenges, and desired outcomes by examining current conditions and making recommendations that will contribute to the county’s goals for environmental resilience and eliminating greenhouse gas emissions. Further, the Plan will incorporate measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change and create resilience in the face of anticipated future impacts and disruptions.

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan will also examine ways that land use and development can improve human health and well-being and promote biological diversity. The Plan area will be assessed to determine if there are disparities in the distribution of environmental benefits or negative environmental impacts and make recommendations to ensure that desired environmental outcomes benefit all community members equitably.

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## URBAN DESIGN

The 1994 Plan prioritized town-scale development. Planning Staff will examine the pattern of development of the Plan area and explore alternatives to better align the Plan recommendations with current development trends and future growth projections. Planning Staff will explore strategies for attracting a broader mix of uses to individual developments and districts and enhancing building and sustainable site design. Planning Staff will assess existing pedestrian connections and open spaces and explore strategies to create a seamless network of parks, trails, and public spaces.

Planning Staff will work with Plan stakeholders to develop broad design guidance within the Plan area that will ensure future developments are located near planned transit stops. Additionally, Planning

Staff will confirm or suggest modifications to the transit stop locations and will also determine if there is a need to develop urban design guidelines for future development in the Plan area.

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## **PARKS AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

Community parks and public open space serve as critical places for recreation and civic engagement and are essential to quality of life. The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan area offers public and private spaces, including parks, recreation, trails, and open space. However, these essential resources are limited in the Plan area. Informed by a data-driven approach, the team will assess any deficits and work with the community to develop recommendations for improvements and explore sites to enhance park amenities. A key element of the methodology evaluates walkable access to all public spaces. Park design, maintenance, and safety are also considered, as well as measures of social equity. The Plan effort will identify specific needs, anticipate trends, and promote important goals such as health and social equity for the community's future.

Parks Staff will examine the number and quality of these parks and open spaces. Parks Staff will compare the facilities to the Energized Public Spaces (EPS) analysis to determine service levels for active, social gathering, and contemplative experiences and will review the *2022 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan* recommendations and forecasts for facilities that may be needed in this area of the county.

Parks and Planning Staff will work with the community and Plan stakeholders to develop a vision for future community gathering and play spaces, consistent with existing and proposed land uses, community characteristics, and trends in recreation. Parks and Planning Staff will also work with the community to identify ways to improve bicycling, walking, and transit access to parks, trails, and open spaces.

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## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Community facilities, in concert with parks and open spaces, contribute to quality of life and cohesion. The 1994 Plan identified a new high school, two middle schools, and several elementary schools in the Clarksburg area. A new library, community center, and fire station are recommended near the Town Center and, if needed, the 1994 Plan recommended a police station in Clarksburg.

The high school and middle schools have been built; the high school and one of the middle schools are within the proposed Plan area. One existing and one potential elementary school site are also within the Plan area. The site for the potential elementary school is south of West Old Baltimore Road east of the proposed alignment for Observation Drive and is one of several sites to consider when a new school is determined to be necessary in the Clarksburg area. The current fire station is in a temporary location within the Gateway 270 office park, but a new facility is nearing completion on MD 355 north of Clarksburg Road. The Clarksburg post office is at the south end of Gateway Center Drive near Shawnee Lane, near the center of the Plan area. Planning Staff will examine the existing and

recommended community facilities and make recommendations for additional community facilities if necessary.

The 1994 Plan intended that this Plan area be served by public sewer service. However, there are a number of challenges to the extension of the necessary infrastructure to this area. The Plan will explore options to serve this area comprehensively.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Montgomery County has a large, robust, and competitive economy: well-paying jobs, a highly educated workforce, a world-class life sciences and biotechnology industry, and several major federal government agency headquarters and satellite agency locations. The Plan area contains a mix of small businesses and life sciences and technology businesses. Different skill and education levels and linguistic, racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds infuse the local economy with a diversity of perspectives. The team will examine ways to capitalize on current strengths to support existing businesses and cultivate new ones.

To continue to foster a competitive 21st century high-technology cluster, planners will study market trends to ensure that the Plan's recommendations are grounded in current market conditions and future demand scenarios. Planning Staff will work with stakeholders and community members to inform decisions and outcomes for this area and will examine ways to meet the needs of existing and future demand to ensure a resilient economy for everyone.

The high-tech industry also provides an opportunity for expanding employment and wages for communities with traditionally less access to jobs and who may have been harder hit by the recent economic changes due to the pandemic. The industry offers many opportunities for people with less educational attainment and for people with limited experience in the life sciences industry. Planning Staff will examine ways to further reduce barriers to this important employment sector.

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## HISTORIC RESOURCES

Historic preservation is the work of identifying, protecting, and exploring historically significant places, ultimately preserving the past to enrich the future. Historical research and inquiry help ensure that master plans are informed by a thorough, critical appreciation of what came before.

The Plan area includes a small portion of the Clarksburg Master Plan Historic District just north of Stringtown Road that includes the Clarksburg School, which is designated as a master plan historic structure. The structure was built in 1909 and is one of the oldest intact schoolhouses remaining in the county. The recommendations in the 1994 Plan for the alignment of Observation Drive and a transit stop along Redgrave Place would have required relocating the Clarksburg School and will need to be evaluated as part of this Plan. Additional inquiry into the history of school desegregation and the history of Clarksburg's African American community could also be incorporated into the Plan history.

South of Stringtown Road, there are no properties designated as historic in the Plan area. To help shape a better future, the team will work to document any sites that may be considered and determined to be historic. This includes the COMSAT laboratories building along Gateway Center Drive. This site is an early work of Cesar Pelli, who was an Argentine American architect who designed some of the world's tallest buildings and other major urban landmarks. COMSAT is an architectural landmark along the I-270 corridor and a significant building in Montgomery County. As part of the Plan, the team will produce updated information for the COMSAT property, along with other properties, in preparation for work to consider designation in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The team will also continue historical investigations into the Plan area's cultural contexts and heritage, cemeteries and archaeological sites, and planning history, and explore opportunities for historic interpretation and signage.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

### OVERVIEW

A central element of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan process will be a robust, equitable engagement strategy to gather input of community members, business owners, nonprofit and other organizations, experts, and county government departments and commissions. Most significantly, as Planning Staff engages community members, our approach will adapt and consider how best to gather meaningful input and interpret it to shape the Plan.

Parks and Planning Staff will begin by collecting data about the people who live and work in the area and information about the area itself—its homes and businesses, its growth patterns and environmental needs, and its economic and physical relationships to the surrounding county. Through questionnaires, meetings, and events with community organizations, local business owners, government entities, and other stakeholders, we will determine what the future of the area may look like and how we can best enable a version that is equitable and viable and reflects what people love about their community.

Ultimately, we aim to gather the input that explores and characterizes life in the Plan area to consider its future character. Throughout our various phases of Plan development and outreach, we will create significant, substantive opportunities for community input and subsequent engagement on its more technical aspects, and Planning Staff will continue using information from previous engagement activities to ensure that location selection and session formats are equitable and accessible.

### GOALS

The communications and engagement strategy will support the overarching master plan process and emphasize the importance of building in-depth, effective community relationships and support for our work. Stated goals include:

- Equitable Public Engagement: Spark sufficient interest and input from various and diverse organizations and community members who live and/or work in the Plan area to ensure that the resulting Plan represents community interests, perspectives, and visions
- Explore New Outreach Activities: Employ and measure the success of external-facing activities, particularly in reaching more diverse stakeholders meaningfully and developing a baseline for what inclusive community engagement by Montgomery Planning can look like
- Effective Community Partnerships: Build new and deepen existing relationships with and respectfully leverage community partners to become advocates for this Plan and its vision
- Generate Support for the Plan’s Recommendations: Gain support through transparent, engaging interactions with community members, partners, life sciences and technology industry leaders, and other key stakeholders to successfully implement the recommendations of the Plan.

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## ENGAGEMENT PLAN

We envision the engagement effort to be implemented in six phases over the course of the planning process:

### Phase I: Prepare

To build awareness of Montgomery Planning, Montgomery Parks, the master planning process, and the current planning initiative, the first phase will focus on building connections with diverse community groups, institutions, residents, and businesses, and on establishing channels for future collaboration. We will share information, encourage participants to stay in touch, and begin collecting information about their lived experiences. Proposed engagement tools include web-based tools, including the Plan’s webpage, social media, e-newsletters, online surveys, and email.

### Phase II: Listen

The second phase will consist of listening sessions where Plan participants will be able to share what they like and don’t like about the Plan area and how it can be improved. The planning team will follow up with leaders and stakeholders to collaborate on meetings and other events. We will directly reach out to our audience by phone, email, in-person canvassing, and mailed communication, as needed. Planning Staff further anticipates a hybrid engagement method including both in-person and virtual events, such as pop-up meetings, small listening sessions, and online town halls. Proposed listening opportunities may include:

- Door-to-door canvassing to distribute informational flyers and in-person interviews of hard-to reach residents and populations.
- Attendance at regular meetings of established community, business, and civic organizations.
- Participatory in-person events such as farmers’ markets, festivals, and other community events, as well as virtual events, as feasible.
- Other initiatives that may arise throughout the process.

### **Phase III: Explore**

The third phase gives the planning team the opportunity to take what we heard in the listening sessions and begin to explore ideas and solutions. It will include a series of stakeholder workshops focused on collaborative, interactive discussions regarding a comprehensive, long-term vision for the Plan area. Planning Staff will use information from previous engagement activities to ensure that location selection and session formats are equitable and accessible.

### **Phase IV: Consult**

The fourth phase will be concurrent with the finalization of the preliminary recommendations and their presentation to the Planning Board. This will allow the planning team to refine the recommendations prior to the formal presentation of the draft Plan to the Planning Board and the public. The methods to present recommendations to the community for feedback will necessarily vary based on audiences and their interests. Planning Staff will use the information gained from previous engagement activities to determine the best methods of disseminating information.

### **Phase V: Endorse**

The fifth phase will be the presentation of the Public Hearing Draft, the approval of the Planning Board Draft, and the County Council work sessions. In this phase, stakeholders will see and be able to comprehensively respond on the record to the draft Plan. Planning Staff will need to educate and inform the residents on how best to engage with the public hearing processes. This phase prioritizes showing the community how its input was used to develop the draft Plan and address community concerns. Outreach is focused on motivating and equipping community members to advocate for the various draft plans to the Planning Board and the County Council. This may be accomplished via a combination of emails to the Plan's distribution list, community meetings, pop-ups, and/or presentations to community organizations. We will also continue to clarify for participants how their initial thoughts and ideas contributed to this larger, more final document.

At the conclusion of County Council's work sessions, the Council will vote to approve the Plan with revisions and the Plan will be sent back to Montgomery Planning and the full M-NCPPC Commission for final approval and adoption.

### **Phase VI: Implement**

After approval and adoption, as the final phase, the Plan will move to partner agencies and the development community to implement. Montgomery Planning, Montgomery Parks, and the Planning Board will review any development proposals or public sector projects in the Plan area and engage with members of the community as recommendations in the Plan are implemented.

## PLAN SCHEDULE

Staff initiated work on the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan in February 2023. Significant milestones are outlined below.

February – June 2023	Sector Plan Preparation
June 2023	Pre-Scope Outreach
June 2023	Scope of Work & Plan Area Boundary Presentation to Planning Board
June 2023 – January 2024	Outreach, Visioning, and Analysis
February – March 2024	Preliminary Recommendations
April – June 2024	Working Draft
July 2024	Planning Board Public Hearing
September – October 2024	Planning Board Work Sessions
January 2025	County Council Public Hearing
February – April 2025	County Council Work Sessions
May 2025	Sector Plan Approved & Adopted

## CONCLUSION

The proposed Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan presents an exciting opportunity to respond to new realities and create communities where all residents have equal access to attainable housing, employment, transportation, education, and more. Importantly, an equitable community engagement strategy will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and shape the Plan area's future.

The Plan's team requests approval of the Scope of Work contained herein. Planning Staff has already begun preliminary community outreach and engagement and anticipates that other major milestones will be completed as indicated in the previous section of the report. Staff intends to return in the fall to present an existing conditions report to the Planning Board.



## STAY CONNECTED

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### Stay Connected

#### **Project Webpage:**

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/upcounty/clarksburg/clarksburg-gateway-sector-plan/>

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