

Montgomery Planning

CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REPORT



A report on community feedback received in the initial stages of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan.

Completed: 2-7-2024

MCPB
Item No. 9
2-15-2024

Montgomery County
Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive, Floor 14
Wheaton, MD 20902

[Montgomeryplanning.org](https://montgomeryplanning.org)

Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Community Feedback Report


Planning Staff



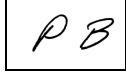
Jamey Pratt, Planner III, Jamey.Pratt@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4588



Roberto Duke, Planner III, Roberto.Duke@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-2168



Don Zeigler, Supervisor, Upcounty Planning Division, Donnell.Zeigler@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4583



Patrick Butler, Chief, Upcounty Planning Division, Patrick.Butler@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4561

LOCATION

Clarksburg

MASTER PLAN

Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

Summary:

- The Community Feedback Report for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan contains a summary of the comments Planning Staff has received from Clarksburg residents who live in and near the sector plan area from multiple sources from July through December 2023.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan (CGSP) is an update to the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area*, which was last amended with the 2014 *10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment*. The Sector Plan focuses on the major employment area located in the 1994 Plan’s “Transit Corridor District” on the east side of I-270 in Clarksburg south of Clarksburg Road.

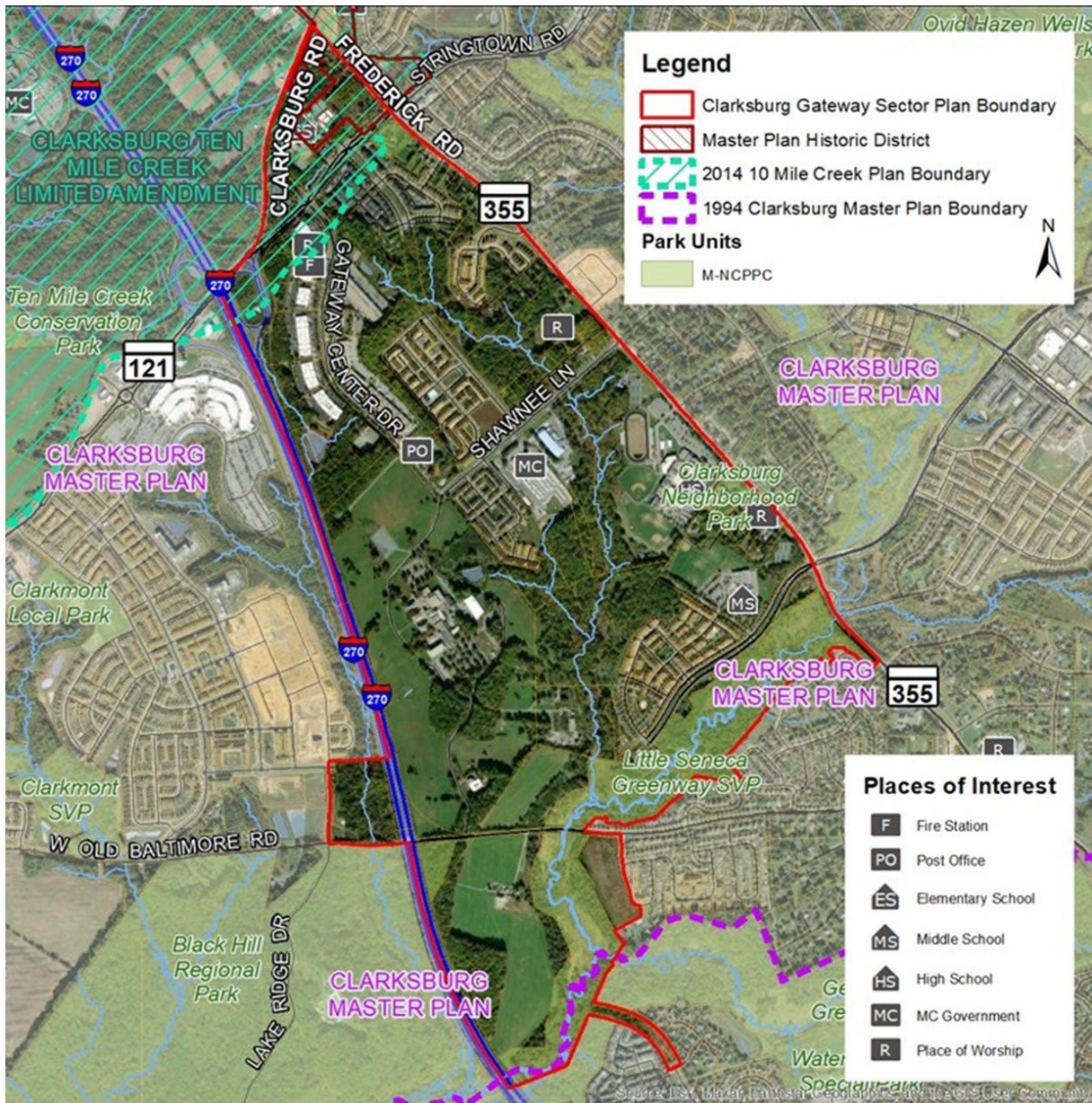


Figure 1. Sector plan boundary

The Sector Plan will evaluate the trends and conditions in the plan area 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 provide recommendations for land use, zoning, urban design, transportation, the environment, historic preservation, and community facilities and will incorporate countywide initiatives into the plan area.

The Scope of Work and boundary for the Sector Plan were approved by the Planning Board on June 22, 2023. This was followed by a community kickoff meeting on July 26, 2023, door-to-door canvassing (with contracted vendor Everyday Canvassing), a series of four listening sessions, and an online survey. Staff presented the Existing Conditions Report to the Board on November 30, 2023. The Existing Conditions Report showed a racially and ethnically diverse area that has experienced explosive growth since 2000 but lacks adequate transportation infrastructure, public facilities, and employment opportunities. The report also showed that median incomes in the area are higher than the county average, the region is well-served by parks but that many park and recreational facilities are locally unavailable, and that there are several opportunities to preserve historic resources, especially with the Cesar Pelli-designed COMSAT building.

The community feedback received by the Planning team to date has been analyzed and organized into categories to better understand the most frequent comments and concerns. The goal is for this analysis of the feedback to inform the recommendations in the plan.

This feedback report represents the "Listen" phase of the plan, where plan participants share what they like and don't like about the plan area and suggest ways it can be improved. This phase included reaching residents through door-to-door canvassing, four listening sessions, and online engagement through an eLetter, survey, and social media.

At a glance, the feedback we received includes:

- **Transportation:** Residents would like to see a completed road network, better pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, and more public transportation options.
- **Public facilities:** Residents want a library, a community center with recreation options and meeting rooms, and a public swimming pool open year-round.
- **Quality of life:** Residents for the most part consider Clarksburg to be peaceful and appreciate its small-town feel and the diversity of the population. But they desire a "complete community," with local restaurants, additional stores, and convenient public facilities. Many are worried about overdevelopment, especially if more houses are built without providing amenities the community currently lacks.
- **Environment and parks:** Residents appreciate the natural environment and frequently expressed a fondness for the forested areas, open spaces, and other green spaces, especially the regional parks in the area. But many are concerned that not enough will be done to protect water quality and forests as development continues. And many residents would like to see more local parks with active recreation opportunities for people of all ages.

SOURCE OF COMMENTS

The community engagement efforts for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan began in the summer of 2023. Between the various engagement strategies, we recorded 755 comments, which vary in format based on their source, as described below.

Community Kickoff Meeting

On July 26, 2023, the CGSP team hosted a community “kickoff” meeting and open house at the Clarksburg Neighborhood Park. This meeting allowed us to start our communication with the Clarksburg community and to let them know we would be seeking their feedback and inviting their collaboration throughout the planning process. We asked attendees to post sticky notes on topic-specific boards set up around the room, and we also took notes to capture the oral comments. We recorded 139 comments from over 75 attendees at this meeting.

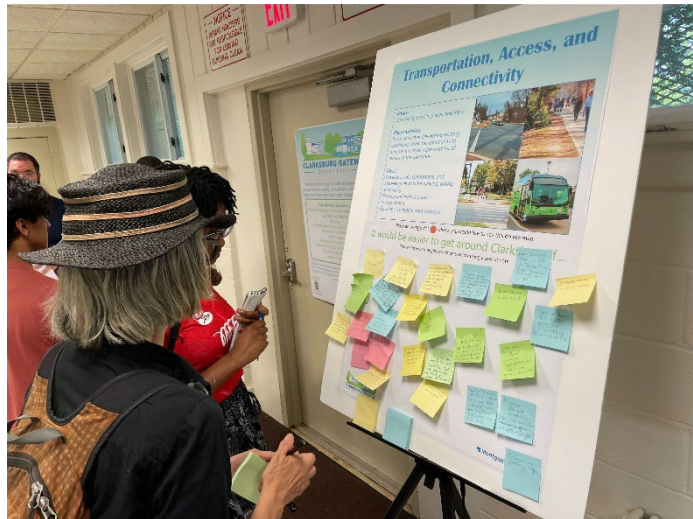


Figure 2. Community kickoff meeting attendees added sticky notes to topic boards.

Survey

At the kickoff meeting, we launched a survey with questions regarding the character of Clarksburg, what amenities the community felt were missing, what type of engagement would work best for them, and what would make this a successful new plan. This survey was open on the [plan’s website](#) until mid-December and resulted in 126 surveys completed digitally; an additional four were completed by hand at the kickoff meeting. Survey responses vary from single-word answers to short paragraphs or bulleted lists. The survey included the following questions:

1. What do you like most about living in Clarksburg? Or what do you want to make sure is preserved?
2. What facilities and or amenities are lacking in Clarksburg (i.e. educational, bikeways and walkways, public transportation, government, medical, parks, recreation, retail, etc)?
3. What do you think needs improvement in Clarksburg?
4. The former COMSAT facility located along I-270 is one of the focus areas of this plan. What do you want to see happen at COMSAT facility site in the future and why?

5. What is your biggest concern about the future of Clarksburg?
6. This plan will be a success if...
7. Any additional thoughts or comments?

[In-person Interviews by Everyday Canvassing](#)

Between late June and late August, we collaborated with the non-profit organization Everyday Canvassing to interview the community to get a better understanding of what the people of Clarksburg think about their community’s current state and what they would like to see in the future. Everyday Canvassing attempted to knock on every door within the five large residential neighborhoods within the plan area and a random sampling of residences surrounding the plan boundary. Their efforts resulted in 177 conversations which were transcribed in real-time. Several of the interview conversations are extensive, filling over a page of text, while others are brief at only a sentence or two.



Figure 3 . Members of the Everyday Canvassing team at Gateway Commons

[Listening Sessions](#)

We held four “listening sessions” throughout October, each with different topics of discussion. The first listening session was the only virtual meeting and covered Transportation and Environment. The other three listening sessions were held in person at Rocky Hill Middle School in Clarksburg. The second listening session was on Housing, Economic Development, and



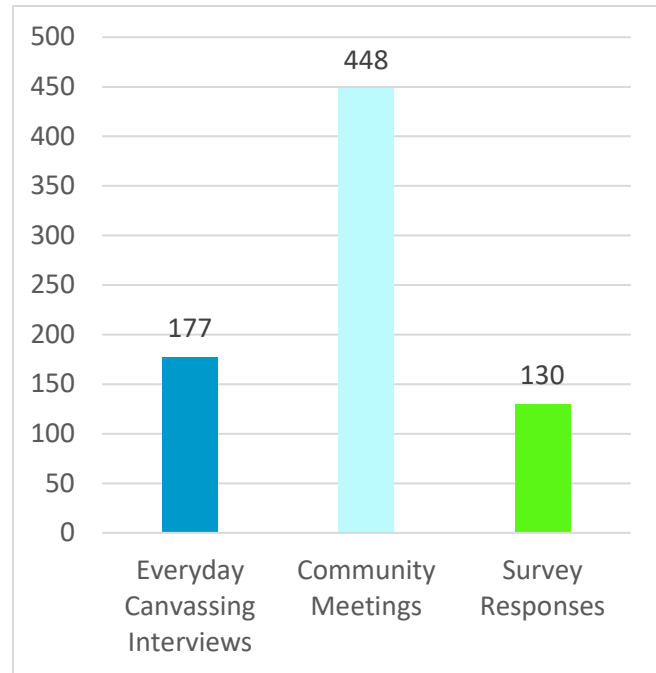
Figure 4. Title slide for online listening session presentation



Figure 5. Members of the community and planning team at the third listening session

Employment; the third listening session was on Parks and Trails, Historic Resources, Community Facilities, Community Identity, and Urban Design; and the fourth listening session was a catch-all meeting that included all of the topics from the three previous sessions. Between the four listening sessions, we were able to collect 309 comments. Most of these comments are short sentences, sentence fragments, and even single words captured by the note takers.

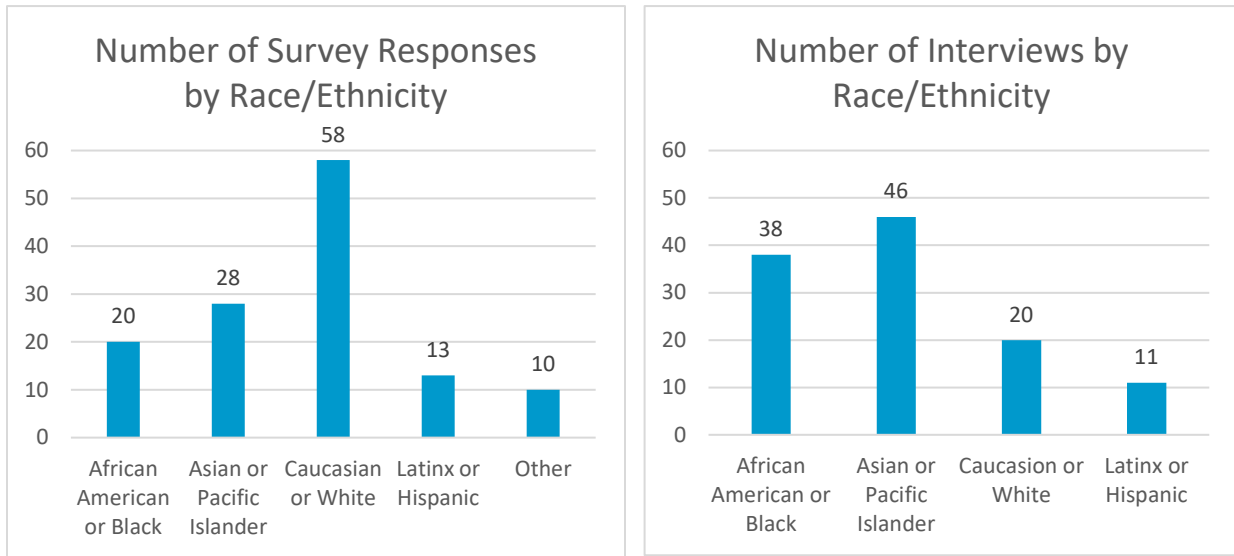
Chart 1. Comments by source. The community meetings include our kickoff meeting and four listening sessions.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Our online survey included questions on race and age, and Everyday Canvassing asked their interviewees similar questions in their data gathering tool. Only one survey respondent did not include responses to the demographic questions; for the Everyday Canvassing interviews, 62 of the 177 interviewees (35%) did not answer the question on race/ethnicity, and 61 of the interviewees did not answer the age range question.

Chart 2. Survey and interview responses by race and ethnicity, where provided



The total population of the study area used for the plan’s demographic analysis is 3,851. Compare the charts above with the one below, which shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of the population according to the 2020 Census. For the most parts, the race and ethnicity of the respondents tracks fairly closely with the population, although whites were far more likely to respond by survey than those of other races.

Chart 3. Race and ethnicity of the plan’s study area from the 2020 Census

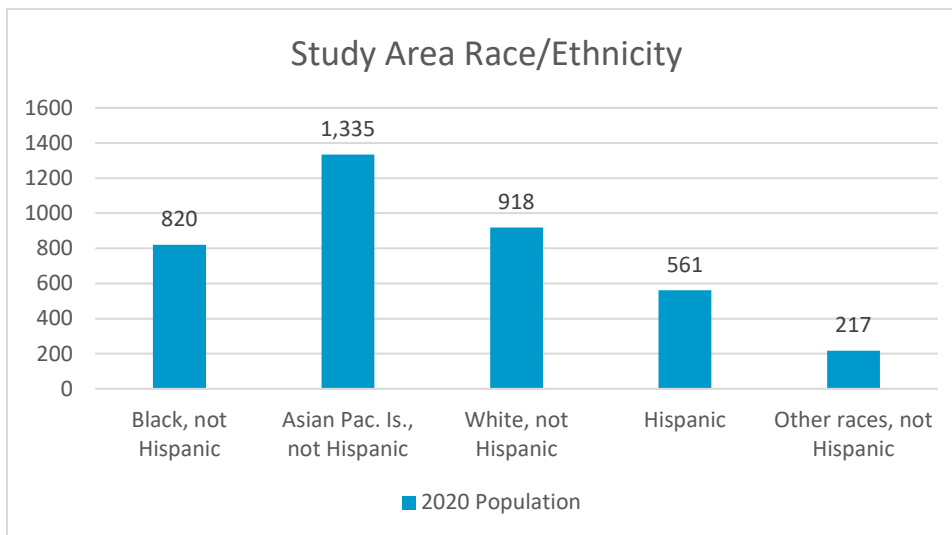
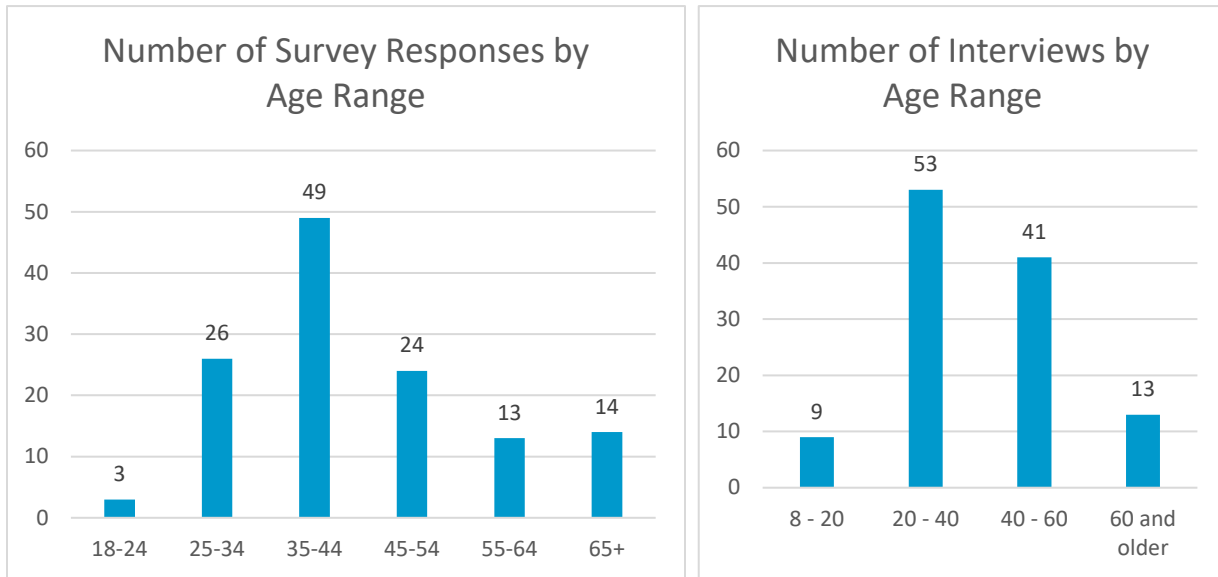
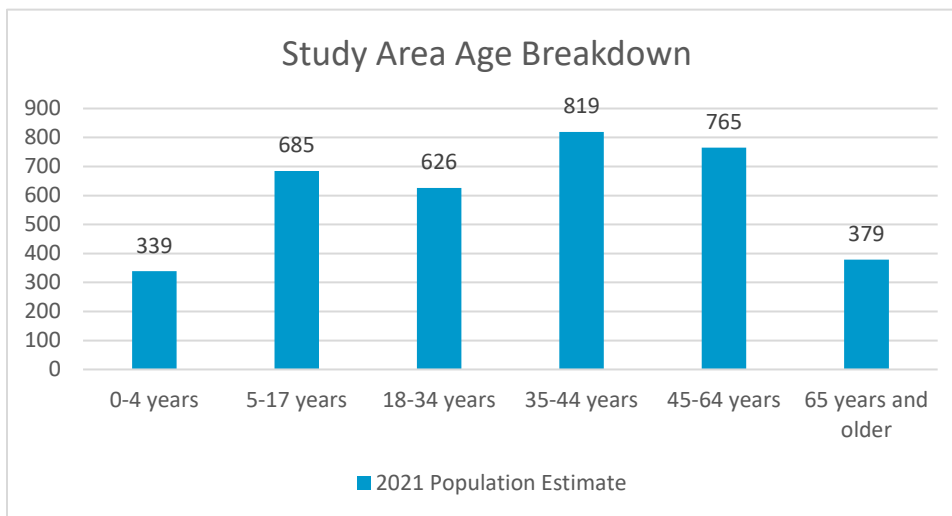


Chart 4. Survey and interview responses by age group, where provided



While the two data sources tracked ages in different categories, the respondent’s ages tracked well with the age breakdown of the study area’s population, shown below. Given that the most common household type in the study area is a family with children under 18, we would expect most respondents to be in the middle age categories.

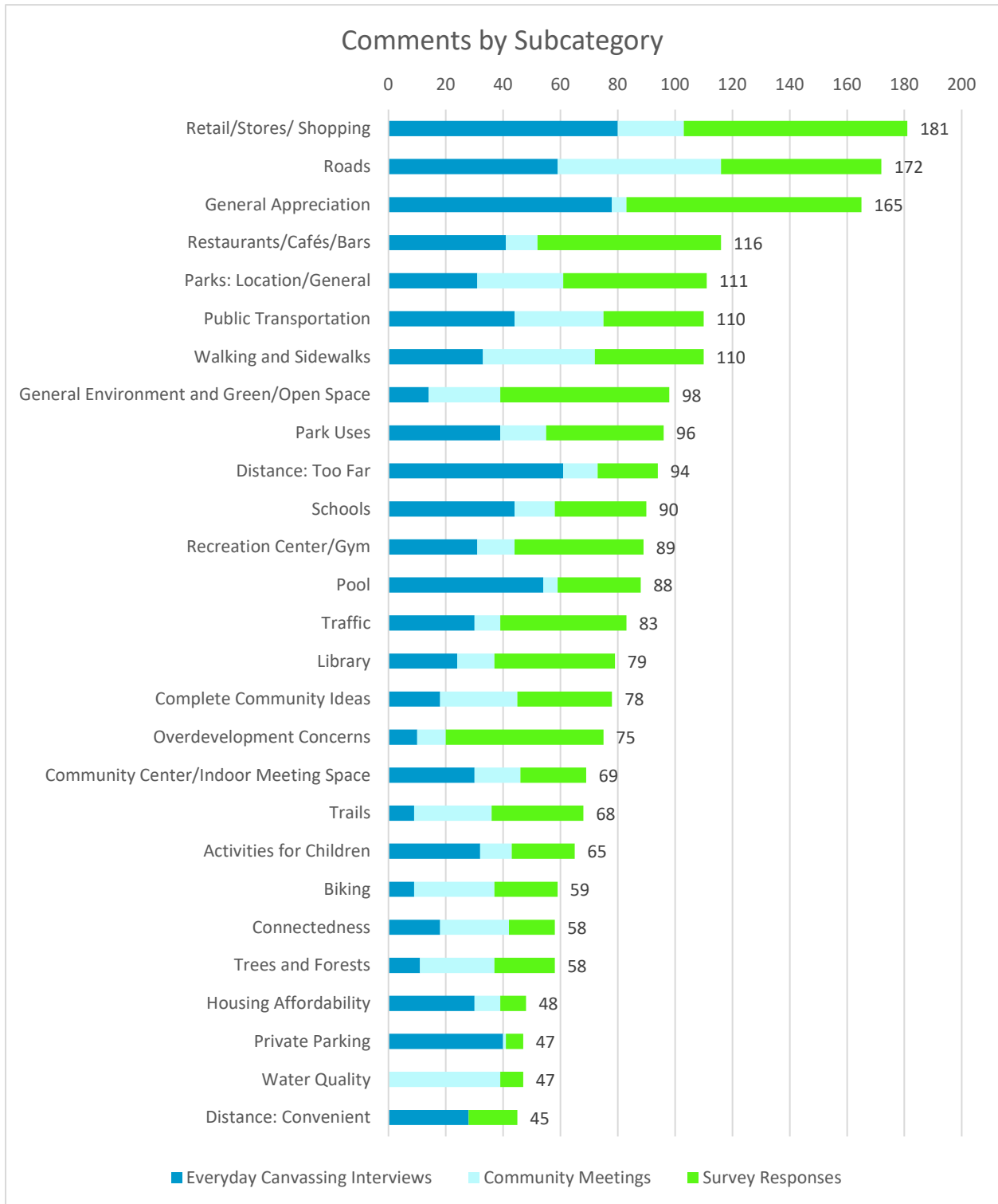
Chart 5. Age groups in the plan’s study area according to the 2021 American Community Survey



COMMENTS BY SUBCATEGORY

Planners assigned each comment to one or more subcategories grouped into nine topic areas. We had 54 subcategories. Many of the comments covered numerous topics, and frequently several subcategories within a topic area. The chart on the next page shows the subcategories that received the most comments. In total, there were 3,036 subcategory entries from the 755 comments.

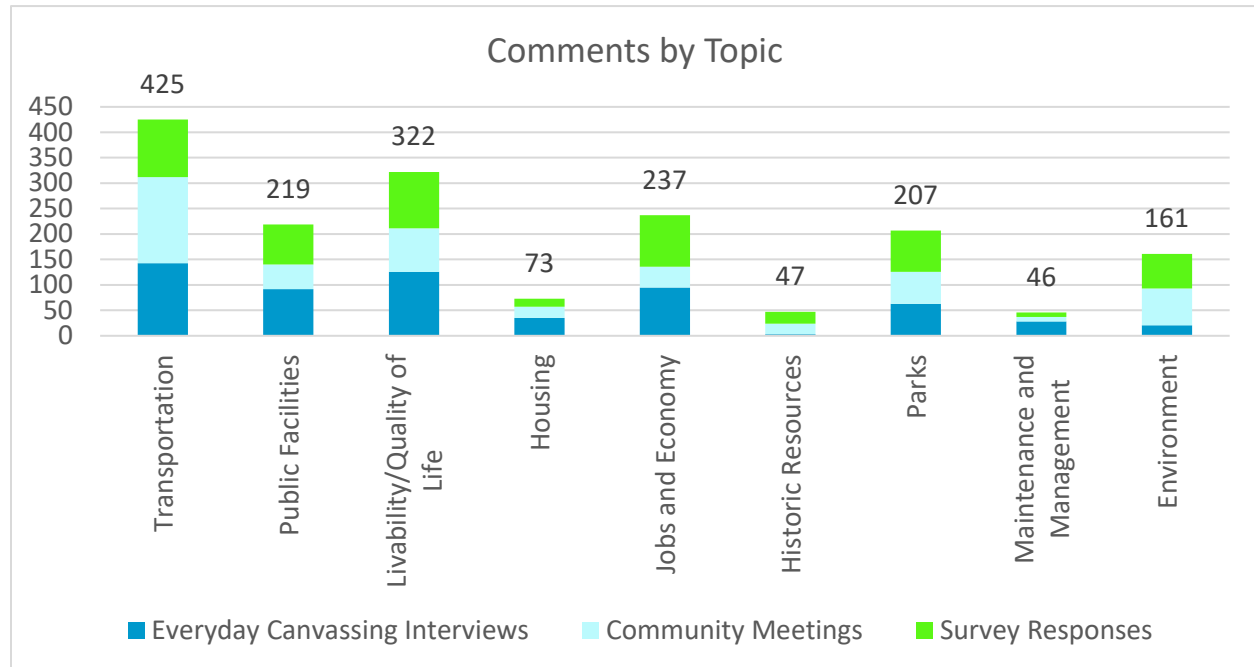
Chart 6. Subcategories receiving the most comments



COMMENTS BY TOPIC

The chart below indicates if any part of a comment fell into one of the broader topic areas. Because many comments touch on multiple issues, the 755 comments were assigned to 1,737 topic areas.

Chart 7. Comments received by topic area



The largest number of comments relate to transportation issues, followed by livability and jobs/economy issues. We also received many comments related to public facilities, parks, and the environment. These topic areas are described in the following sections.

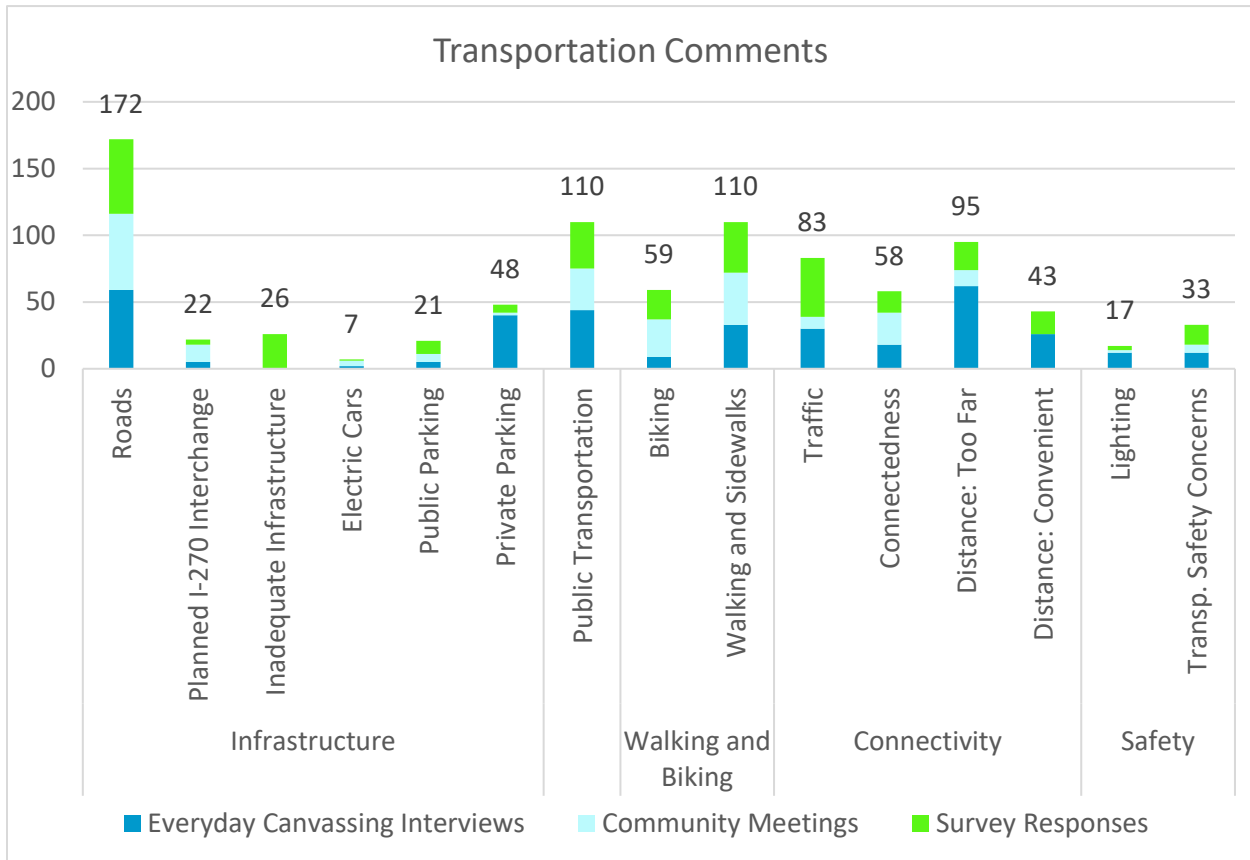
WHAT WE HEARD

TRANSPORTATION

Comments related to transportation issues (425) accounted for the largest number of comments we received. The transportation comments were tracked in fifteen subcategories, which were combined into five groupings of related subcategories: Infrastructure, Public Transportation, Walking and Biking, Connectivity, and Safety. Most comments revolved around roads, the lack of public transportation options, mobility and accessibility issues, parking, and the distance to common destinations. Observation Drive was among the most noteworthy discussions topics, with residents divided on the road being built or being left unfinished.

The following word cloud highlights the terms we heard in comments related to transportation issues.

Chart 8. Transportation comments by subcategory



Infrastructure

The street network in Clarksburg is challenged by the community’s topography and hydrologic features. Many residential communities in Clarksburg are separated by sensitive stream valleys from tributaries of Little Seneca Creek. Below are comments on specific existing and planned infrastructure.

Interstate 270 Interchange

Little Seneca Parkway exists in two discontinuous segments, one on the west side of I-270 and the other on the east side, with a gap in the middle. Included within this unbuilt portion of the road is a planned interchange at I-270, which, if built, would be designated “Exit 17.” Some comments were in favor of completing the interchange, while others thought it unnecessary or environmentally problematic.

- *“I would also like to see Little Seneca Parkway on the east side of 270 be linked to Little Seneca Parkway on the west side. (I understand that would be a big project requiring a bridge over or under 270).”*

- *“The connections between the two parts of Little Seneca Parkway, and the Little Seneca Parkway/I-270 interchange, should be removed from all of the master and sector plans.”*

Observation Drive

Observation Drive is a proposed roadway first mentioned in the 1994 master plan. The existing northern terminus of Observation Drive heading north from Germantown is at Waters Discovery Lane, which marks the southern boundary of the sector plan. Observation Drive’s planned alignment is north-south through the center of the sector plan area, but to date only a few stretches have been built. Some comments desired that the road be built as planned to create an alternate north-south route to I-270 and Frederick Road. Others felt that other roads could be widened instead.

- *“Create alternate route North-South along Gateway or Observation.”*
- *“Optimize Gateway Center Drive rather than build Observation Drive through 2-3 existing neighborhood communities.”*
- *“Protect Little Seneca Creek and Little Seneca Lake by not building more highways and maintaining forest cover.”*
- *“Don’t build Observation Drive – there are enough roads in the area.”*

Frederick Road and I-270

I-270 and Frederick Road (MD 355) are the only two practical options for north-south traffic in the area. Exit 18 (Clarksburg Road/Stringtown Road) is where I-270 narrows from three lanes in each direction (north/south) to two, creating regular bottlenecks during the evening commute. Most of the comments about these roads supported widening them.

- *“Both I-270 & 355 are congested, please improve.”*
- *“Only n/s routes are I-270 and 355.”*
- *“I-270, 3 lanes to 2 lanes each at exit 18 is a big problem.”*
- *“I think route 355 should be a 4 lane road. During school time, it gets really busy.”*

Inadequate Infrastructure

Many people spoke more generally about the infrastructure in the area, finding that it does not adequately meet current demands and that it will only get worse as the area grows.

- *“The fact that an additional 1000 homes are planned with little change in the roads & transportation infrastructure here is abominable.”*
- *“Only house are built and not improving other infrastructure and balance is required.”*
- *“Too much high-density housing without open recreational space or good infrastructure to support traffic congestion.”*

Parking Issues

Many comments we received also mentioned issues with parking. Some of these comments were about public parking, but even more were about private parking issues. The majority of the private

parking comments lamented the lack of parking spaces for both residents and guests of individual housing developments. Most of the public parking comments were about commercial vehicles continuously parked along both sides of Gateway Center Drive.

- *“Parking is an issue in the community, so I'd like to see more parking.”*
- *“The parking is truly another issue. Sometimes we have to go to other communities for parking.”*
- *“It is almost impossible to travel down Gateway Center Drive now due to all of the commercial vehicles parked all along the side...”*
- *“[Clarksburg Elementary School] does not have enough parking, and the school is not big enough to host events.”*

Public Transportation

The greater community area is served by three bus routes, but two of these routes only operate during the morning and evening rush, and there are 30-40 minutes between buses on all the routes. Numerous comments stated a desire for more public transportation options in generally, especially given how infrequently buses run in the area.

- *“Bedroom community + little public transportation options = huge environmental impact of gas-powered vehicles & bad parking situations.”*
- *“Need a local bus route just for Clarksburg, east and west of I-270.”*
- *“Very slow public transit – every 45 minutes or so.”*
- *“...the transportation would be better if the buses and metros came more frequently...”*
- *“If you don't have a car, transportation is hard...”*

Walking and Biking

There is a lot of overlap within the pedestrian and bicycling comments between sidewalk and bike lane concerns and the desire for paths and trails through or between parkland; the latter comments are covered in the Parks section of this report when it seemed more apt. 110 comments favored better walking and sidewalk infrastructure; 59 comments indicated a desire for better bicycling facilities.

- *“More bike paths.”*
- *“Prioritize walking and bicycling – not just add these as an afterthought.”*
- *“Always feels like pedestrians/cyclists are second priority.”*
- *“Clarksburg area lacks walking infrastructure (hard surface trails/paths), especially along major roads.”*
- *[We] need sidewalks. The least you can do is make it accessible. Give us a sidewalk. We will get there by bike or by walking.”*

Connectivity

Connectivity issues are those that speak of how difficult or easy it is to get around the area and to reach the places residents want to go.

Traffic

Closely related to the idea of inadequate infrastructure summarized above were comments about traffic, a major concern to many in Clarksburg. Residents are also worried that additional development will make things worse. Traffic on Frederick Road (MD 355) near Rocky Hill Middle School, where the road only has two lanes, was the most common example of bad traffic cited by residents. A small number do not think traffic is a problem.

- *“Both I-270 & 355 are getting congested, please improve.”*
- *“There is rush hour seven days a week – more traffic on the weekends as a result of work from home.”*
- *“With development, traffic will become worse.”*
- *“There's lots of traffic in the morning around the middle school.”*
- *“There's not much traffic so I don't think we need another lane added.”*

Connectedness

Many residents commented on how connected their neighborhood or Clarksburg in general felt to them. Some remarks indicate people are happy with the current situation and feel that it is easy to get everything they need relatively close by. Many, on the other hand, complained of having to travel long distances for basic needs, entertainment options, or to work. Comments here spoke more generally about connectivity than specific infrastructure comments captured above.

- [Notes from listening session] *“Younger person mentioned how long it takes to get from Milestone to Black Hill Regional Park because there's no connectivity.”*
- *“Easy drive to a lot of different cities.”*
- *“We want our own little hub, our own little oasis, but we really need the infrastructure and the connections to brand ourselves as a community.”*
- *“Easy access to roads for better flow of traffic.”*
- *“Multi-use path connections from the middle school and high school areas through Comsat and down to Black Hill Regional Park (along the stream) and to Observation Drive for linkage to Milestone, and over or under 270 at north end of Comsat to the outlet mall and Cabin Branch neighborhood.”*

Distance: Too Far

One of the subcategories with the most responses were the 95 comments expressing dissatisfaction with how far away everything is. Shopping options are limited in Clarksburg, so most residents drive to other communities, such as Germantown, Rockville, and Urbana, for shopping, restaurants, recreation, entertainment, and employment.

- *“Nice sit down restaurants are definitely a need! Now we have to go to Germantown, Urbana, Frederick, Mt Airy.”*

- *“Most importantly, No proper shopping center for groceries available. Will always have to drive to other city (Germantown) to shop.”*
- *“Family with children generally drive long way to other cities to join the outside school activities, which is inconvenient.”*
- *“Create Clarksburg as sustaining community without residents needing to go to Damascus as Germantown for practically everything.”*
- *“Shopping is a bit far. We need to drive about 16 - 20 minutes. We need more stores nearby.”*

Distance: Convenient

On the other hand, 43 comments from people who find stores and other destinations to be convenient provide a counterbalance to those unhappy about the distance. A fair number of people described some destinations as convenient and others as far away, showing it depends strongly on individuals and their everyday needs.

- *“Enjoy the easy access to the shopping at 355 and Ridge.”*
- *“There's great access to the freeway. Here to Shady Grove is about 15 minutes. Commute is fine by car.”*
- *“I don't mind driving 5 -7 minutes to get any food that I want.”*
- *“I feel good about distance of shopping and schools.”*
- *“The stores are convenient, and the urgent care is close.”*
- *“With a 20-minute drive, I can get to anything from here: I'm satisfied.”*

Safety

The 33 comments we received about safety, as it relates to modes of transportation, are about unsafe drivers, unsafe sidewalks, lack of crosswalks, and unsafe bicycling conditions. We also received 17 comments specifically about inadequate street lighting.

- *“Increase safe walking conditions for students; more crosswalks.”*
- *“Biking to stores is unsafe, particularly on West Old Baltimore Road.”*
- *“Very dangerous to walk/bike on Clarksburg Road.”*
- *“Walking gets dangerous in the few poorly lit areas and the exit ramp.”*
- *“Especially in the night, it's too dark and unsafe. I wish there were more streetlights right outside of the community on this road that connects to 355.”*

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Public facilities are entities that serve the greater public, such as police stations, fire stations, schools, and community centers. The word cloud below is based on the 219 comments we received about public facilities. The comments were more or less evenly distributed across the five subcategories, with comments about schools just edging out comments about a rec center or gym, a pool, a library, or a community center.

Schools

The 90 comments we received about schools can be divided into the following issues.

School Capacity Adequacy

The main concern expressed about schools by the community overall was the longstanding capacity overutilization of their schools. While some acknowledged the relief provided at the elementary school level by the opening of a new school, there were still lingering concerns over the status of the middle and high schools.

- *“Had kids at Clarksburg Elementary School when it was overutilized, school overcrowding not as bad with opening of Cabin Branch Elementary School – school had portables.”*
- *“I don’t know why it took so long to build more schools. They still need another middle school and another high school.”*
- *“The biggest concern about the future of Clarksburg is... that it’ll fall on deaf ears. That overcrowding will continue without needed infrastructure in place. That our schools will again be allowed to be packed, with no near-term future solutions. As is, Clarksburg HS is overcrowded, even with the Cabin Branch community districted to Seneca Valley.”*

Getting to and from School

A number of people also shared their thoughts on the way students in their community are able to get to school, albeit with contrasting views. While some wanted to see sidewalks and crosswalks provided so that students can walk or bike to school, others, especially in communities where safer routes were already provided, lamented the fact that their students were not being served by school buses.

- *“Lacking school crossing signs for the student crossing the road from Gateway Commons to Clarksburg ES.”*
- *“Something the county did is they created a sidewalk that goes to Clarksburg HS, which is a mile walk to school. Now that there’s a walkway, there’s no school bus!”*
- *“My son can’t get a school bus. He’s in middle school and we drive him to school every day with a neighbor.”*

School Site/Facility Conditions

There was also a desire to see the facility conditions of some existing schools improved.

- *“Clarksburg Elementary school needs renovations, very dated facility.”*
- *“Clarksburg Elementary School is old and cramped and uses portables. It’s an 100 year old building.”*

School Perception

Several people mentioned that they or their neighbors moved to Clarksburg because of the schools, but there were also many who were concerned of the perceived diminishing quality of schools serving the area.

- *“We moved here because of the school district.”*
- *“I think everything is good in general and this area is good for me. What I don’t like is that the public schools are not good so I have to send my kids to private school.”*
- *“I think the school ratings here are better.”*

Other Public Facilities

This section highlights comments we received about other public facilities. We did not receive many comments about fire stations or police departments, indicating most people are satisfied with these public safety services, but we heard loudly and clearly that residents want the other facilities discussed here.

Library

One of the things we have heard the most since the outset of this planning effort is that the residents of Clarksburg want a library in their community. Seventy-nine of the comments we received stated a desire for a library in Clarksburg, and many people believe they should have gotten one a long time ago. They would appreciate it if the library came with a variety of programs for the children and the greater community, and it needs to be conveniently located. The county is planning a library in the town center not too far from the sector plan area, but the project is still in the planning stages.

- *“We definitely need a library.”*
- *“I want a library and playground closer than going to Germantown.”*
- *“I’m generally happy here but I want a library!”*

Community Center/Indoor Meeting Space

Sixty-nine comments mentioned a need for a “community center,” but it was not always clear from context whether they they were looking for an indoor meeting space for classes, group activities, and events, or if they were more interested in a recreation center with fitness equipment; sometimes they probably meant both. Some communities in Clarksburg have a clubhouse available for residents’ use, while others do not, and some residents seemed to be referring to this type of building as a “community center.” When context made it clear they were looking for something like a fitness center, the comment was assigned to the “recreation center/gym” category, but if they wanted an indoor meeting space or if it was difficult to tell which was meant, the comment was categorized under “Community Center/Indoor Meeting Space.”

Typical comments in this category indicate a desire for a space that the community can rent out for birthdays and similar events, that allow for socialization and educational programs, or that provide a formal space to hold community meetings.

- *"When you think about a community center, you have to consider all that's in a community. Would be nice to have different classes like cooking classes, and dance like salsa."*
- *"When I want to go to a community center, pool, or library, I have to drive to Germantown or Frederick since there are none here."*
- *"A community center would be good too so we can rent it out sometime for family functions and events."*

Pool

Eighty-eight comments mentioned a swimming pool. While some communities have a private pool for residents, most developments within the plan area do not. And private pools are only available for use during the warmer months, so do not provide a yearlong opportunity for exercise. Those who currently use a public pool would like one closer to where they live. Numerous residents also expressed a desire for a splash park, which can be part of a pool complex or included in a park or other public space. The "splash park" comments were categorized under park uses.

- *"I would like a public pool in the area -- some communities have private pools, but I need to go to Germantown or Gaithersburg."*
- *"I would like a pool close to here --I have to go to Montgomery Village for the pool."*
- *"[T]here's nowhere for kids to play, no pool, nothing; I don't want to have to leave Clarksburg for recreation."*

Recreation Center/Gym

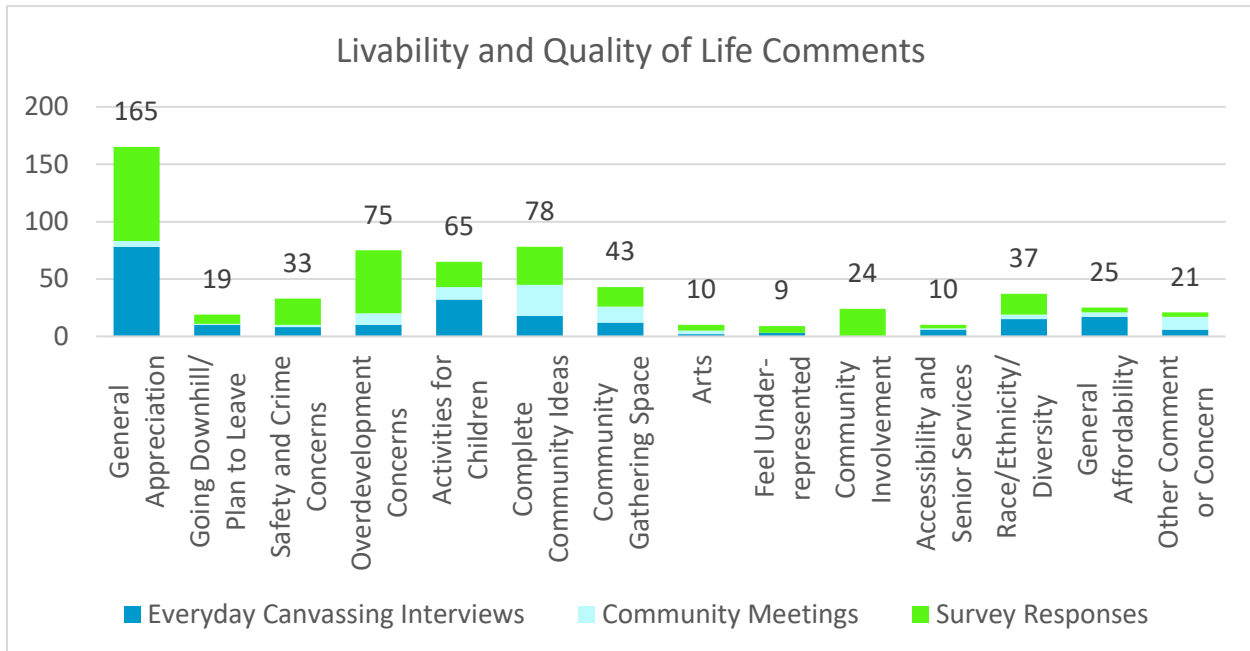
Eighty-nine of the comments specified a desire for a fitness center, either as part of a larger public community center or a commercial gym. Several also provided the YMCA in Urbana as an example of what they would like. Some want workout equipment, while others would like to be able to play indoor basketball. Outdoor fields and courts for basketball, soccer, tennis, etc. are included in the park uses category.

- *"If I saw the YMCA and a library come to Clarksburg I would say "yes this is home!"; I would be so proud of my community."*
- *"It would be nice to have an open gym, programs going on there, like basketball, sports, any things for kids to do."*
- *"With an unlimited budget, I'd create a town center and recreational facility for all ages that are walking distance."*

LIVABILITY/QUALITY OF LIFE

The 322 comments classified under Livability/Quality of Life cover a broad range of topics but are united in the sense that they provide a glimpse into the way people feel about living in the area or

Chart 10. Livability and quality of life comments by subcategory



General Appreciation

As can be seen in the chart above, we received 165 comments that expressed a general appreciation for the area. Some of the qualities we heard most often show that people value the peace, quiet, a feeling of safety, and small-town feel of Clarksburg or their neighborhood. On the other hand, we received 19 comments from people who feel like Clarksburg is “going downhill,” in some cases because it doesn’t have the infrastructure and amenities that they were expecting, and at others, because they feel it is becoming overcrowded.

- *“The small-town feeling, quiet streets and lots of outdoor space.”*
- *“The wide-open spaces, walking trails, being surrounded by beautiful landscape, the cleanliness of streets.”*
- *“I like the diversity, the scenery, the peace & quiet the access to major roadways, the schools. I love that there are so many kids in the area and there is space for them to play. I love the historical places, parks, and nature trails.”*
- *“What makes this a great community is that it's calm and peaceful-- we see no fights or arguments.”*
- *“I liked the fact Clarksburg wasn't developed. Too much development and it is ruining Clarksburg. We do not have the roads, retail, or a high school to have more development. Leave Clarksburg alone.”*
- *“Lack of retail and restaurants makes it unappealing. I think the trend is walkable communities, close to retail, restaurants, coffee shops, fitness centers, dog parks, grocery stores, etc.*

Clarksburg is seriously lacking in that department, making people move on. I've known 5 people who have moved out of Clarksburg for this reason."

Safety and Crime Concerns

Thirty-three comments indicated a concern that criminal activity is increasing in the area, and they don't feel safe or are worried that they won't feel safe as the population grows.

- *"Crime rates increasing. Educational school rankings go down."*
- *"[Completing Observation Drive] will also create a bridge to a lot of the criminals that live in Germantown to come into Clarksburg. Clarksburg is one of the last places that hasn't been victim to crime. Gaithersburg has fallen victim to this then it happened to Germantown. Now Clarksburg will fall victim."*

Overdevelopment Concerns

Seventy-five comments were from people who either believe Clarksburg is already overdeveloped or that it will become overdeveloped soon, perhaps because of the sector plan.

- *"Used to be a quiet town. Modern and well planned. Recently there has been too many constructions, over-populated high school, added traffic. We need to preserve green spaces, parks, avoid overpopulation of neighborhoods and schools."*
- *"Biggest concern is that it would be over-developed like Gaithersburg without many recreational options for families. Also, better public transportation would be beneficial to prevent traffic in the future."*
- *"As a resident of Clarksburg, my biggest concern is overdevelopment and the potential impact it might have on our natural atmosphere. While growth and progress are essential, we must be mindful of maintaining the unique charm and beauty that drew us to this town in the first place."*
- *"We grow our population faster than our roads and infrastructure. We need to provide the current tenants and homeowners a better quality of life before we allow more housing built."*

Activities for Children

We received 65 comments that indicated a desire for more activities for children from toddlers all the way through teenagers. This is a reflection of the large percentage of households in the area with school-age children at home. Residents want more after-school programs, outside-of-school activities, recreation centers, and better parks and playground for children.

- *"Family with children generally drive long way to other cities to join the outside school activities, which is inconvenient. Clarksburg should have built complex for education, groceries, and restaurants all together so that parents can do something while waiting for their children to finish the activities."*

- *“I am also concerned that youth do not have enough to do around here to keep out of trouble. I think they would benefit from places like skate park, and nature centers. Places where they can hang out and work/intern in the summers.”*
- *“There's a lot of kids in this area so a big park with swings and slides is needed.”*
- *“A community center where you can, kind of, just hang out. Something skewed towards younger people because there are a lot of families in Clarksburg.”*
- *“There needs to be more after-school programs for little kids.”*

[Complete Community Ideas](#)

Compact growth, 15-minute living, and complete communities are concepts critical to the success of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, and 78 comments touch on what makes such communities. According to *Thrive Montgomery 2050*:

Complete Communities are places that include the range of land uses, infrastructure, services and amenities that allow them to meet a wide range of needs for a variety of people. They include housing suitable for different household types, income levels, and preferences, helping to support racial and socioeconomic integration.

...

The related concept of 15-minute living has emerged as a way of reimagining existing communities to maximize their attractiveness and efficiency by mixing housing, offices, and retail uses so services, infrastructure, facilities, and amenities to serve the daily needs of people who live or work there are within walking distance.

Additionally, the COMSAT site at the center of the sector plan is called out in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*:

Existing suburban office parks in locations such as Rock Spring or Clarksburg’s COMSAT site have large existing buildings that can accommodate employment but lack the integration of uses, services, and amenities necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive office market. Complete Communities strategies can help reposition these employment centers through infill and redevelopment to incorporate a variety of housing, restaurants, retail, public facilities, and parks and public spaces along with better transit service, making them more attractive to both residents and employers.

Several residents provided examples of places they think of as more complete than Clarksburg: Downtown Crown, Rio, Pike and Rose, Kentlands, and Rockville Town Center were all mentioned, in addition to others.

- *“I would like to see the COMSAT facility be redeveloped into a mix-use development that has some shops, restaurants, and homes. It should also link to the current neighborhoods and build off what we have now.”*

- *“I fear the only thing that will get built is more houses. It's turning into a commuter city where you only sleep here because you have to do everything else in a different area (work, shop, eat, play).”*
- *“The closest place to visit with my family and hang out is RIO. Would like to see the town center concept completed at the Crown in Clarksburg.”*
- *“It would be great if we could have something like Kentlands, Pike and Rose or Rockville town center, so it's not like here where we have to shop at different plazas.”*
- *“I'm not saying turn it into Pike and Rose, but have more opportunity for boutiques. We want our own little hub, our own little oasis, but we really need the infrastructure and the connections to brand ourselves as a community.”*

Community Gathering Space

Many comments (43) spoke to the idea that they would like to have a community space, either for community events or just a place where people can gather. Some said they want a place where they are likely to run into someone they know, which typically does not happen when you have to travel outside the community to take care of everyday needs.

- *“Community hang out area like in Urbana. The community needs a place to come together... Comsat has an abundance of space. Maybe a splash pad for the summer?”*
- *“Create a park, pool and a greenery for the community come together and enjoy what Clarksburg has to offer.”*
- *“More focus on community and places to gather.”*
- *“My friends come here and hang out but there is nothing close by to do with them. Maybe having a small-town center with restaurants and nice bars for us to go out to eat and hang out.”*
- *“If we wanted to hold a cultural event it just doesn't happen around here. There's nowhere to do it!”*

Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity

Thirty-seven responses mentioned the diversity of the population as one of the most positive aspects of living in Clarksburg, most frequently in response to the survey question asking what they like most about living in Clarksburg. Several respondents specifically mentioned their country of origin and the language they speak when talking to Everyday Canvassing. Many people specifically stated a desire for more ethnic grocery stores and restaurants.

Several of the Everyday Canvassing interviewees mentioned where they were from (the Caribbean, Guyana, Dubai, Philippines, Cameroon, Brazil, Iran, Romania) or what language they speak (Tamil, Swahili, Tagalog, Portuguese, Farsi).

- Survey prompt: What do you like most about living in Clarksburg?
 - *“The diversity of the neighborhoods.”*

- *“Diversity and people.”*
- *“The diversity in Clarksburg is amazing!”*
- *“I love the diversity of the area. We have so many nations in one place. It is as if the world has come to Clarksburg.”*

General Affordability

This subcategory captures the twenty-five comments about the affordability of various things (other than housing) according to residents. Comments about housing costs are covered under the housing topic in the following section; comments here are about other expenses.

- *“Clarksburg is struggling for the very poor, few community assets.”*
- *“Taxes are so high, including property taxes. Instead of buying food for my family, I am caught paying high tax prices.”*
- *“I’m on a fixed income so I can barely afford to live here. I’m trying to spend as little of my savings as possible because that’s gotta last me until I die and social security can’t keep up with inflation. It’s frustrating.”*
- *“Living in this area is very expensive and I can’t afford to shop here because of the prices.”*
- *“Before and After School programs are expensive. Daycare is also so expensive.”*
- *“I moved here from Arlington because medical services were affordable.”*

Additional Comments

This section summarizes some of the other comments we heard from community members.

Arts

Ten comments mentioned wanting opportunities to enjoy the arts in their community.

- *“There is no option for community to enjoy cultural events - an art complex with library would be a valued addition.”*
- *“Mixed use community, small business, science space that address sustainability, art, and community. Example: Rotating exhibitions, walking/meditation gardens, boys and girls club, rental space for events, community education spaces (healthy cooking, wellness, etc.)”*
- *“An art district with community creative spaces to meet, to socialize, and provide environmental learning.”*

Feeling Underrepresented

Nine responses expressed a feeling that Clarksburg and the rest of the Upcounty area “do not get a lot of love” from elected representatives and government agencies.

- *“A lot of the resources get funneled down-county and not upcounty.”*
- *“Clarksburg feels like it is the stepchild of the county at times.”*
- *“By size and location, upper Montgomery County is left out of a lot of decision making.”*

Community Involvement

In answer to the prompt “This plan will be a success if...”, twenty-four comments implored planners to really listen to what the residents have to say. A few also wanted to make sure we keep them informed and involved in the planning process.

- *“It focuses on what the community needs not what some business needs.”*
- *“Individuals within local communities feel heard and included in the future decisions.”*
- *“Community considerations are taken seriously and community is treated as important stakeholder.”*
- *“The community is involved and political leaders listen to the community and not just to developers that may have financial interests in mind.”*

Accessibility and Services for the Elderly

Ten comments spoke of creating more opportunities and services for seniors or making things accessible.

- *“Transportation for elderly people would be great, too.”*
- *“There's also no activities for old people, or jobs for old people.”*
- [The plan will be a success if...] *“Universal pedestrian access.”*

HOUSING

There were 73 comments that touched on housing and residential development, although several other subcategories contain elements related to housing. The primary comments touched on the following issues:

- Housing Affordability
- Diversity of Housing Options and Types (including issues specific to senior housing)
- Housing Quality, Property Management, and Homeowners Association (HOA) Concerns
- Disproportionate Residential Development

Housing-related comments reviewed in this report under other topic areas include such things as the balance of residential development and accompanying infrastructure, public services, and commercial facilities (see Overdevelopment Concerns). Most of the comments noted that there is too much residential development, and they would like to a reduction in housing development. There were also several comments that expressed concern about the lack of accompanying development of public services and facilities as well as infrastructure such as roads. The lack of retail and commercial services in the area in comparison to housing was also noted frequently throughout the comments. See the Transportation, Public Facilities, and Jobs and Economy sections of this report for more details.

[Housing Affordability](#)

There were 48 comments related to housing affordability. Most of these comments emphasized the lack of affordable housing and the high cost of housing in the area, while some of the comments highlighted the relative affordability of the area compared to other places in Montgomery County. Some of the affordability concerns were specific to senior housing, covered in the next subtopic.

- *“I've been here for 5 years because it's the most affordable place in this area.”*
- *“My biggest concern about the future of Clarksburg is that residents will be priced out of housing.”*
- *“Rent is killing me; I pay \$3,000 a month. I will leave if the rent increases.”*

[Housing Options and Types and Senior Housing Issues](#)

Varieties of housing options and types in the area came up in 22 comments. While some people highlighted the large number of single-family homes and the need for more dense housing types, there were also a few comments that indicated the need to preserve single-family housing with larger lot sizes. Fourteen additional comments were specific to the housing needs of seniors, such as the need for more housing without stairs and opportunities to age in place. Five residents commented on the need for more affordable senior housing in particular. Other comments expressed frustration with zoning and the process for development of missing middle housing and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

- *“Difficult to build rental units on own property, difficult to provide ADUs”*
- *“We need bigger yards and more space between housing.”*
- *“In the short term, the council needs to approve amendments to the zoning code to allow for greater density for affordable housing.”*
- *“I would like to see units with fewer stairs.”*
- *“Would like to see more 55+ community so I can retire where I spent most time of my adulthood.”*

[Disproportionate Residential Development](#)

The balance of residential development and accompanying infrastructure, public services, and commercial facilities was a prominent theme among residents, with 29 comments. Most of the comments noted that there is too much residential development, and they would like to a reduction in housing development. There were also several comments that expressed concern about the lack of accompanying development of public services and facilities as well as infrastructure such as roads. The lack of retail and commercial services in the area in comparison to housing was also noted frequently throughout the comments.

- *“Community feels stuck in housing; sense that all money goes into housing” (Listening Session Participant)*

- “Pubs and restaurants are lacking given the explosive growth of Clarksburg.” (Survey Respondent)
- “Outside of houses, Clarksburg has no amenities. There are limited long distance sidewalks and trails. Limited to no shopping centers and restaurants. There are no county facilities (libraries, community centers, gyms).” (Survey Respondent)
- “This plan will be a success if housing is limited to less than 5% of the plan.” (Survey Respondent)

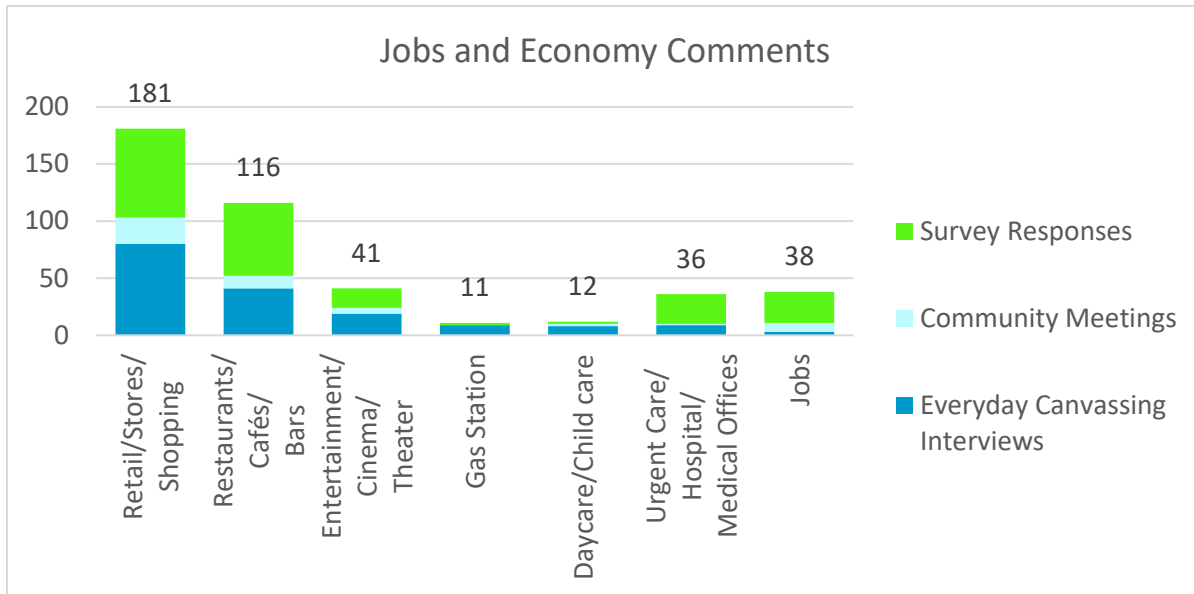
JOB'S AND ECONOMY

The third highest number of comments (237) from Clarksburg area residents fall under the Jobs and Economy topic, or economic development in general. Most comments indicated a desire for more stores (181) and restaurants (116). We received a small number of comments (11) indicating satisfaction with gas stations. Twelve comments (12) felt childcare options were missing or unaffordable in the Clarksburg area. The word cloud below provides a hint about what is on people’s minds.



Figure 10. Word cloud highlighting the terms we heard in comments related to jobs and the economy

Chart 12. Jobs and economy comments by subcategory



[Retail/Stores/Shopping](#)

The greatest number of comments received (181) refer to the lack of stores in the Clarksburg area. Residents stated a need for more retail in the area, in particular grocery stores and more convenient stores in general. In conversations with residents, there were very few people who did not wish for closer stores and restaurants.

- “A shopping center we can walk to would also be great; one that serves the residents' immediate needs.”
- “We need grocery stores, more places to eat, having to keep driving to Germantown to go to Target and get essentials.”
- “There needs to be more international stores; they just closed down a Lotte. We don't have a dollar store either. We have to go further into Germantown, like the Montgomery Village area.”
- “Definitely grocery stores!!! I'm hoping to see more grocery stores like Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, etc. in Clarksburg.”

[Restaurants/Cafés/Bars](#)

The economic development category with the second highest number of comments (116) was for restaurants, cafés, and bars. Residents articulated their desires for more local establishments to eat out given that many travel to Germantown and Urbana for restaurants. There was a lot of overlap between those asking for more stores in general and those asking for more restaurants.

- “I'm looking for more restaurants, all kinds too. If I want to go to a restaurant, I have to drive down to Germantown... It would be great if we could have something like Kentlands, Pike and Rose or Rockville town center, so it's not like here where we have to shop at different plazas.”

- *“It would be so great to get a franchise restaurant like Subway or Taco Bell here—just something that many people like and can give us some variety.”*
- *“Nice sit-down restaurants are definitely a need! Now we have to go to Germantown, Urbana, Frederick, Mt Airy.”*

Entertainment/Cinema/Theater

Many residents in Clarksburg (41) expressed interest in having more entertainment spaces in their community, most often a movie theater specifically. Several travel to Germantown and Urbana to access these recreational needs.

- *“I would love to have more entertainment like restaurants, a movie theater, and gathering spaces. The closest place to visit with my family and hang out is RIO.”*
- *“I would love a movie theater nearby, too– I travel to Germantown for this.”*
- *“Would be nice to have a movie theatre here actually. Also adding some place to do activities because Rockville town center has ice skating in winter, for example.”*

Urgent Care/Hospital/Medical

We received 36 comments related to medical needs from the community. As with retail, restaurant, and entertainment amenities, residents reported traveling far to access healthcare.

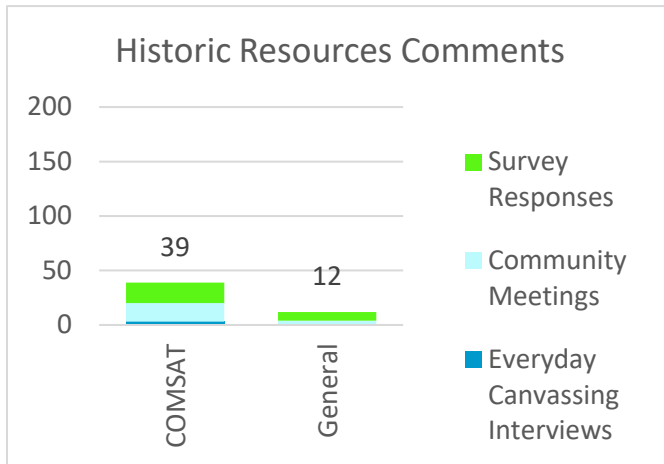
- *“The closest medical facility is in Germantown. There are no urgent care facilities, hospitals, clinics or the such in this area when you have an emergency it's tough. It's a struggle.”*
- *“There are no hospitals either. The nearest one is Germantown too.”*
- *“Right now with Covid, we have to drive to Germantown for the flu vaccine too. This is a big neighborhood, so it would help us to have a health center or a community center.”*

Jobs

There were 38 comments that directly referenced jobs and employment in the Clarksburg area. Residents noted a lack of current employment opportunities in Clarksburg with many commuting in the direction of D.C. for work. However, several saw the potential for future economic growth in the area.

- *“Clarksburg is essentially a bedroom community. The plan has little related to economic development – it’s all about housing. That will need to change.”*
- *“Maximize economic potential of I-270 Corridor! Especially COMSAT, Linthicum, and new interchange.”*
- *“We need more stores and economic development, though. Every time we go out, we go all the way to Frederick. I love Clarksburg Village, but we need to have economic development here. There needs to be shopping, drinks, restaurants. We just wanna have options here like in Columbia, PG, and Frederick. As well as some family businesses that are cheap.”*

Chart 13. Historic resources comments by subcategory



COMSAT Property

Property owners, residents, and interested parties who attended the kick-off meeting and listening sessions or responded to our survey provided an array of opinions for the COMSAT site, from preservation of the building and landscape and its adaptive reuse as a mixed-use complex to demolition of the building. Most of those who provided comments on the COMSAT building supported its designation as a Master Plan Historic Site or its adaptive reuse, and several individuals expressly opposed designation of the property. Several comments recognized the opportunity for economic development that the property offered, but neither supported nor opposed the preservation or reuse of the building as part of a development scheme.

- “General agreement among attendees that the COMSAT building “absolutely” deserves historic designation.” (Listening Session #4)
- “COMSAT should be saved and the main building used as an adaptive reuse. There is a lot of room for housing and businesses on the site too. All can happen in a compatible way!”
- “Don’t make COMSAT historic site.”
- “Comsat is a great opportunity for a mixed-use, high density-plan. Don’t miss the opportunity!”
- “Historic designation of COMSAT must go away so the property will be more business-friendly.”
- “Save the Pelli [COMSAT] building! Part of the Clarksburg legacy and identity.”

The online survey included a prompt directly related to the COMSAT site:

The former COMSAT facility located along I-270 is one of the focus areas of this plan. What do you want to see happen at COMSAT facility site in the future and why?

One hundred of the survey respondents answered this question related to the future of the COMSAT property. The 39 responses indicated by the chart above include only the responses from the various

sources that had specific comments on the building itself, versus the majority of survey respondents who were speaking more generally of what could be done with the land.

Over thirty-five (35) participants noted the need for a recreational facility, library, park, athletic fields, and other public amenities or retail opportunities at the site. Approximately thirty (30) participants expressed desire for new shopping, restaurants, and other retail. Fourteen (14) responders supported the preservation or adaptive re-use of the COMSAT building and six (6) recommended demolition of the building. Note that responders listed their suggested use of the site absent an explicit opinion on the retention or demolition of all or parts of the building.

- *“Optimally, the main parts of the building and the open meadow should and deserve to be protected, whether via historic designation or some other method. Positioning new development beside and behind it will allow its potentially multiple uses to be a hub of the community.”*
- *“Instead of housing, there should be recreation centers for the community or even better shopping experiences other than outlets.”*
- *“I had heard the facility was going to become a recreational building, like the Germantown Rec Center. That would fit nicely, along with a library. Leave a lot of that open space at COMSAT open for a park. Black Hills and Ovid Hazen are very congested.”*
- *“Library, Open Park, Ball fields for local sports, Job Center/Trade Schools for students that are not interested in college (trades pay 6-figure incomes & are in high demand) with no loans at the end of their training.”*
- *“Build technology sector or center, along with hotels and restaurants.”*
- *“It would be nice is the building is preserved and repurposed for commercial use. The surrounding land would be great for a recreational area if possible.”*
- *“I want the main building as seen from I-270 to be preserved, perhaps as an adaptive reuse of the building. An environmental setting should also be maintained around the building especially the groves of trees at the south end of the main building. The meadow between I-270 and the building should also be preserved.”*

[Other Historic Preservation and Equity Issues](#)

The evaluation of the COMSAT property dominated discussions related to historic preservation, but there are a few other sites that will be evaluated for historic preservation as part of the sector plan. We received 12 comments overall about non-COMSAT historic preservation issues. Comments included concerns related to property maintenance for the existing historic resources and inadequate public awareness regarding historic preservation tax credits and financial incentives within the Clarksburg Master Plan Historic District. Residents also noted the lack of interpretation of the district, public art derived from cultural and environmental resources, and other engaging mediums that could enhance heritage tourism and community identity for downtown Clarksburg.

- *“Create a historical trail (walking) interpreting landmarks in Clarksburg’s neighborhoods.”*

- *“The ‘Clarksburg Colored School’ needs a proper historic marker outside on 355.”*
- *“Community sees the historic district as ‘dumpy old houses’”*
- *“Historic significance: The town has a rich history, and there is a desire to preserve its historical landmarks and architecture to maintain the town's unique character.”*
- *“Historic preservation is also important to me. COMSAT and other historic buildings and sites should be preserved because of their importance to the identity of Clarksburg.”*

PARKS

We received 207 comments that we coded as park related. Some comments didn't specifically mention parks, but mentioned activities that often happen in parks, even though some of these could also be accommodated on common HOA land within individual residential communities.

Overall, we heard that nearby large parks (Black Hill and Little Bennett Regional Parks) and forested “green” open spaces are popular and there is a strong general sentiment that they should be protected. However, many people would like to have better connectivity and access to those large parks and better connections among the trails/sidewalks and open spaces and other existing parks within the plan area and nearby. Many people would like there to be more activities in the parks within the plan area—especially for children.

The few parks maintenance concerns we heard from residents are included in the Maintenance section of this report.

[Location/General](#)

We received 111 comments that were very generally about parks—commenting on the distance or location of parks or simply stating they wanted more parks.

- *“Regional parks have much to offer.”*
- *“The park in Cabin Branch is the best park ever! There’s usually about 200 people, food trucks on Fridays, events, great playground equipment.”*
- *“I don’t think there are any nearby parks in walking distance around here either. Sometimes our team does community service days and we would love to help clean up a park, but there is nothing really around here. A park seems needed!” [Outlet mall employee]*

[Park Uses](#)

A lot of comments (96) mentioned activities that frequently, though not always, take place in parks. Some of these facilities could alternatively exist on school properties, within private communities, or as part of commercial developments. Besides the typical athletic fields there were a number of park uses people cited they wanted to see in Clarksburg that ranged from more playgrounds, dog parks and a community garden.

[Athletic Fields](#)

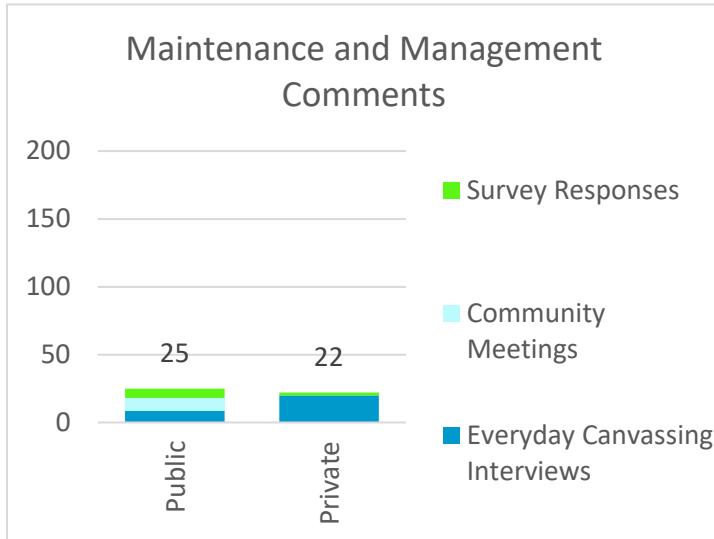
- *“Baseball fields & Tennis court.”*
- *“Basketball court & Multipurpose fields.”*
- *“People in the community don’t always have access to the track at Clarksburg High School – the school prioritizes high school students. We use space at the Clarksburg Church for our preschool soccer league sometimes because other leagues book up recreational spaces in nearby areas.”*
- *“My dream city would have more courts and fields. There isn’t a lot of space to play games and sports here; most of the time we gotta be in the street– we’ll go down into the townhomes areas of the community to play sports.”*
- *“More functional fields would be nice, except for little Bennett and Aurora Hills which are fine. We need somewhere open to the community where people can play soccer and baseball.”*

[Splash Park and Other Amenities](#)

We received seven comments indicating a desire for something like a splash park. This could be part of a town center development, such as the one found in Silver Spring, or could be part of a public pool, which wouldn’t necessarily need to be on parkland. We also received comments requesting a skatepark, ice skating rink similar to Rockville Town Center and parks with rock climbing features.

- *“Maybe a splash pad for the summer?”*
- *“Maybe a water fountain for the kids to play in the summer.”*
- *“The pool is perfect how it is but maybe add more fountains to it and stuff like that.”*

Chart 15. Public and private maintenance, management, and HOA concerns by subcategory



Public Maintenance Issues

Public maintenance comments (25), which relate to areas and facilities maintained by public entities, fall under the following categories:

- Road conditions
 - *“Roads are often poorly maintained.”*
 - *“Some streetlights don't work.”*
 - *“The water [collects] in the road and the drains are not good. When a tree fell, it was some nice neighbors who helped to remove the tree, which fell in the road.”*
- Vegetation
 - *“Please water the trees and county plants. Clean up the weeds on the medians.”*
 - *“Being new to the area we rely on road signs, but they are often obscured by trees and brush. The county and state agencies responsible should be sure to make sure these signs are visible.”*
- Park facilities
 - *“Well maintained restrooms at parks, trails, etc.”*
 - *“More garbage and recycle containers that do not require lifting a lid with hands.”*
 - *“In this area, there is just one basketball court, and all of it is cracked.”*
- Schools
 - *“The middle schools nearby are not clean; they need to do a better job on maintenance.”*

Public Maintenance Praise

- [What do you like most about living in Clarksburg? Or what do you want to make sure is preserved?]

- *“The cleanliness and organization of the area.”*
- *“The wide open spaces, walking trails, being surrounded by beautiful landscape, the cleanliness of streets.”*
- *“I like about Clarksburg that is a nice community, safe and clean.”*

Private Maintenance Issues

Nineteen residents noted frustration over quality issues with their newly developed homes as well as lack of transparency from developers. Multiple residents commented on the high cost of HOAs and difficulty in communicating with HOAs and property managers. Residents also cited property management issues related to lack of adequate maintenance and sanitation issues. Specifically, residents mentioned issues with inadequate trash and sanitation services. A couple comments relate to problems with a single home. Private maintenance issues fall under several categories:

- *“The roads and lighting should be fixed here too because the community promised to fix those things and they never fulfilled their promises.”*
- *“Basically, there is a dumpster that's filling up. ... Now it's to the point where there are rats and mice and I'm not expecting to see that.”*
- *“The management company is not taking care of our properties. There is trash and the property looks bad because it's not being maintained.”*
- *“With excessive number of houses and condos here why do we still have condo fees increasing every year? ... Condo fees should have a limit on its max hike for residents occupying the place for 5 or more years.”*
- *“[My] HOA is not receptive; they are deceptive about meetings; they're unreceptive at office; they're over aggressive and punitive in their use of towing for cars slightly in street-- I've been wrongly towed. I know this isn't on the county level, but I want to record this. I really feel like the towing situation is exploitive.”*

ENVIRONMENT

Residents within the plan boundary and surrounding area provided 161 comments regarding the environment and nature.

[General Environmental Comments, Green Space, and Open Space](#)

This subcategory was used to capture general statements about nature and the environment, or specific statements about green space and open space. We received 98 comments that fall into this subcategory.

General appreciation of the environment and the green and open spaces

Residents expressed a general appreciation for the stream valleys that have been preserved in the Clarksburg plan area.

- *“Protect the natural spaces, keep them beautiful.”*
- *“[The developers] can't do anything with natural reservation in the middle of the community and it's so cool. We see deer and foxes and buck.”* (Dowden’s Station resident)
- *“I love the peaceful and nature-filled communities. ... The area around Clarksburg boasts picturesque landscapes, including lush greenery, scenic mountains, and tranquil lakes, which appeals to nature lovers.”*
- *“Preserve as much open green space as possible.”*
- *“Preserve the greenery and the land for kids to play and people to hang out.”*

Environmental protection

While appreciating the natural environment in Clarksburg, some residents also expressed concerns with how potential infrastructure improvements to the area may adversely impact the environment.

- *“Don't think all natural areas are adequately protected. Stream valleys cannot have roadways paralleling them, like on Observation Drive.”*
- *“Westward expansion of Little Seneca Parkway may impact easements if they are compensated/traded for in other areas. How good are the easements if this can happen?”*
- *“Whatever we do we shouldn't damage the environment. Not cutting the trees. Whatever we construct, as possible, we should keep in mind to not cut this greenery. It's for future generations.”*
- *“By implementing thoughtful planning and sustainable practices, we can strike a balance between development and preservation, ensuring Clarksburg remains a place we all love to live in and appreciate.”*
- *“[This plan will be a success if...] We can get more stores and fast food restaurants while preserving the nature/forest areas.”*

[Trees and Forests](#)

We received 58 comments that expressed an appreciation for trees and forests in the Clarksburg area.

[General appreciation of trees, forests, and street trees](#)

In conjunction with comments on environmental protection, many stakeholders felt that the best way to preserve the environment would be to preserve forested areas and plant street trees. Also, forested areas should not be fragmented by new development.

- *“Clarksburg is good, keep the greenery, trees are nice... Keep it green, it what makes MC valuable. People want to be here for that.”*
- *“Best land use in terms of climate and water quality is forest cover. Maintaining the forest is extremely important. Tree canopy helps cool the environment.”*
- *“Important to have access to forest areas, biodiversity, and streams for well-being of people and community.”*
- *“I wish there was more shaded area and trees along the sidewalks and places around, though.”*
- *“Observation Drive extension would devastate forests and degrade streams and fragment forests. It should not be built as currently planned, if at all.”*
- *“I want to preserve the remaining forest cover and find opportunities to increase forest cover whenever possible.”*

[Imperviousness, Stormwater, Streams, and Special Protection Areas \(SPAs\)](#)

For many residents, protection of water quality in the area is paramount. There are two Special Protection Areas within and surrounding the plan boundary: Clarksburg SPA and Ten Mile Creek SPA. All of the water in the plan area eventually flows into Little Seneca Reservoir, which is one of the back-up drinking water supplies in the region. We received 47 comments that fall into this subcategory.

[Water Quality](#)

The streams and tributaries in the Plan area drain into Little Seneca Lake, which serves as the one of the backup water supplies for the region.

- *“Protecting streams and water quality is very important to me, especially to protect water flowing to Little Seneca Lake Reservoir, the backup water supply for millions of people.”*
- *“Protect Little Seneca Creek and Little Seneca Lake by not building more highways and maintaining forest cover.”*
- *“This area was a special protection area in water quality. In 1997, the quality was good to excellent – 2015-2011 it fell to fair. Very concerning with declining water quality.”*
- *“Development is affecting the water quality of streams in the area, see them degraded over a period of time.”*
- *“Lower the intensity of Observation Drive to reduce its impact on the stream valley and environmental features.”*
- *“Preserving the [COMSAT] building would help protect stream quality on the property.”*

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

CONCLUSION

As the above comments show, residents of Clarksburg care deeply about the community and want to make it better. Some love it as it is, some want to see more amenities, while others feel that it is already overcrowded. Our challenge is to find a balance between what we have heard from community members, the concepts in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, the desires of major landowners in the plan area, and mandates from the county for more housing, more equity, safer streets, and continued environmental protection.

NEXT STEPS

The planning team is developing a series of “visioning sessions” to take to the community in the next couple of months to work together with the community on how best to achieve this balance and build a better community for all.