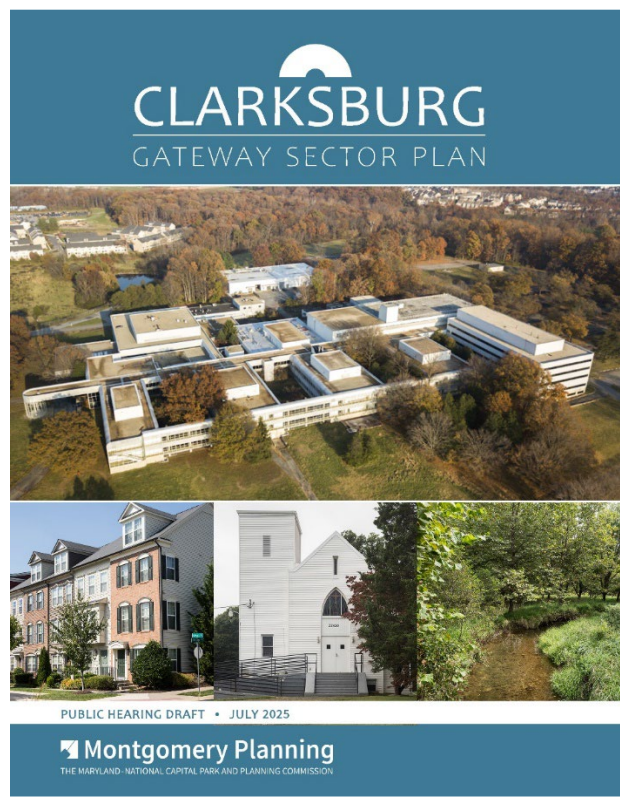


PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT OF THE CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION #3 – LAND USE, HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS



Description

A work session to review testimony to the Planning Board related to land use, housing, and neighborhood recommendations in the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan.

Planning Staff



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SUMMARY

- This report highlights the major topics raised by testimony submitted to the Planning Board related to the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan's Land Use, Housing, and Neighborhood recommendations.
- The Planning Board received 19 comments from 13 individuals on Land Use recommendations, 6 comments from 5 individuals on Housing recommendations, and 11 comments from 5 individuals on Neighborhood recommendations.
- Land Use recommendations are in Chapter 3, Section A, pp. 25-33, Housing recommendations are in Chapter 3, Section C, pp. 54-55, and Neighborhood recommendations are in Chapter 4, pp. 92-97.
- For a summary of all related testimony for these work session topics, see "Attachment A – Testimony Summary," which includes a sequential comment number, alphabetic letter assigned to original testimony exhibits, commenter name, draft plan section and page (if applicable), a comment summary and brief description, and staff response.
- Original testimony identified in the Testimony Summary by alphabetical letter is included with this report as "Attachment B – Testimony".

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

Plan Phase

Public Hearing Draft Work Session #3

Report Date

October 23, 2025

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Planning Board Information

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CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

WORK SESSION #3: LAND USE, HOUSING, AND NEIGHBORHOODS

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan area covers approximately 969 acres in northern Montgomery County, Maryland, near the crossroads of Interstate 270 (I-270) and Clarksburg Road. The Sector Plan establishes a new vision for a more complete, connected, and sustainable Clarksburg community with recommendations to shape future development and transportation networks, provide additional recreational opportunities for area residents, advance the county's housing and economic goals, and preserve and protect the natural environment.

The Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan ("Draft Plan") contains the text and supporting maps and figures for a comprehensive amendment to a portion of the Approved and Adopted 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area* (the 1994 Plan) and a portion of the 2014 *Ten Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment* (the 2014 Plan). It also amends *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, as amended; the 2025 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*, as amended; the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*, as amended; the 2022 *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan*; the 2023 *Pedestrian Master Plan*; and the 1979 *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, as amended.

The Planning Board held two Public Hearings for the Draft Plan on September 25, 2025, the first in the Montgomery County Planning Board auditorium at 2425 Reedy Drive in Wheaton and the second at the Upcounty Regional Services Center at 12900 Middlebrook Lane in Germantown. The public record remained open for written testimony through October 3, 2025. The Planning Board advertised the Public Hearings in the *Washington Times* on August 25, 2025, and a supplemental public hearing advertisement was published in the *Washington Times* on August 29, 2025.

Planning Staff identified about 220 unique comments submitted to the Planning Board from 68 individuals or organizations, either as written testimony or as oral testimony during the two public hearings. These comments include both support and opposition for various Draft Plan goals and recommendations, including topics on community design, community facilities, the environment, historic preservation, housing, land use, parks, plan implementation, and transportation.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

This work session will focus on testimony to the Planning Board on the land use, housing, and neighborhood recommendations of the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan.

LAND USE

After reviewing testimony submitted to the Planning Board on the land use recommendations of the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan ("Draft Plan"), Planning Staff has identified the following major topics for discussion at this work session. A summary of this testimony is provided below, along with a brief Planning Staff response for the Board's consideration. The Planning Board is welcome to raise additional comments and questions during the work session, as well.

A Plan for Market-Ready Development Types

The Planning Board received testimony suggesting that the Sector Plan create a strategy for market-ready development types. Testimony is related to the Draft Plan's concept framework, as well as its land use and community design recommendations.

- Comment #101: Testimony requests that the Sector Plan create a strategy for market-ready development types that includes surface parking (rather than structured parking) and horizontal formats (rather than vertical, mixed-use construction) that can succeed and enable a more vertical typology to develop over time. Written testimony Exhibit AA includes a memorandum from RCLCO to Lantian Development LLC, dated September 23, 2025, discussing the infeasibility of a high-density development scenario on the Comsat property.

Staff Response: The Draft Plan establishes a vision for community development over its 20-year planning horizon. Any plan assumes that development will be realized incrementally over time and may not achieve its ultimate vision all at once or in full. Nevertheless, in response to this testimony, Planning Staff suggests that this be stated clearly in the Draft Plan's Vision and Framework chapter, as well as in the Implementation chapter.

'Mixed Use' Designation in Planned Land Use Map

The Planning Board received the following testimony on the Draft Plan's Planned Land Use Map.

- Comment #183: Testimony requests a "Mixed Use" designation (instead of "Institutional / Community Facility") in the Planned Land Use Map (Draft Plan Figure 7, p. 30) for a property at 22820 Frederick Road and four adjacent lots to the southeast along Frederick Road to not limit the ability to utilize a portion of the properties for single-family attached development or commercial use consistent with the Draft Plan's recommended CRT zoning.

Staff Response: Planning Staff supports applying the "Mixed Use" designation in the Planned Land Use Map (See Figures 1 and 2, below) to the properties identified by the testimony. While the Upper Coolbrook Neighborhood, in which these properties are located, is envisioned by the Draft Plan for primarily residential development in this neighborhood, with a mix of

housing types and densities, it also supports opportunities for neighborhood-scale commercial development. These characteristics are supported by the recommended CRT (Commercial Residential Town) zone, as well.

Figure 1: Draft Planned Land Use Map

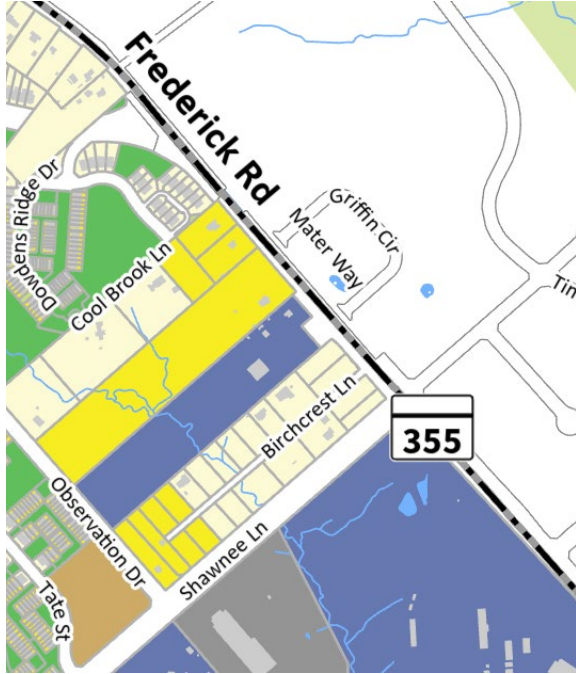
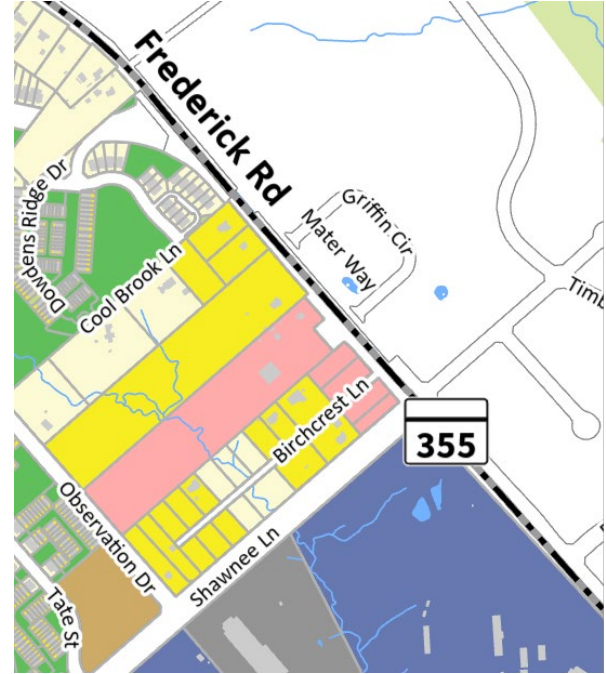


Figure 2: Proposed Planned Land Use Map



- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan | Institutional/Community Facility |
| Single Family Detached | Research and Development |
| Single Family Attached | Warehouse |
| Residential Multi-Family | Public Parkland or Open Space |
| Commercial (Office and/or Retail) | Private Open Space |
| Mixed Use (Residential and/or Commercial) | Public Parkland (beyond Plan Area) |

Zoning Recommendations

The Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan seeks to support a complete, compact, and connected community in the Sector Plan Area and, in turn, within the greater Clarksburg area. The Draft Plan recommends new zoning to implement its vision by allowing a greater mix of commercial, residential, and recreational uses to serve immediate and surrounding communities (See Figures 3 and 4, below).

The Planning Board received the following testimony on the Draft Plan zoning recommendations.

- Comment #2: Testimony states that shifting large areas from employment-focused zoning to commercial-residential (CR/CRT) raises questions about balance; Clarksburg already struggles with traffic congestion, limited infrastructure, and overcrowded schools. Allowing higher-density residential development without guaranteed transportation and school capacity improvements, the testimony explains, could worsen these problems and reduce quality of life for current residents. The commenter recommends tying any new residential zoning to firm commitments for infrastructure, including road upgrades, public transit expansion, and school capacity.

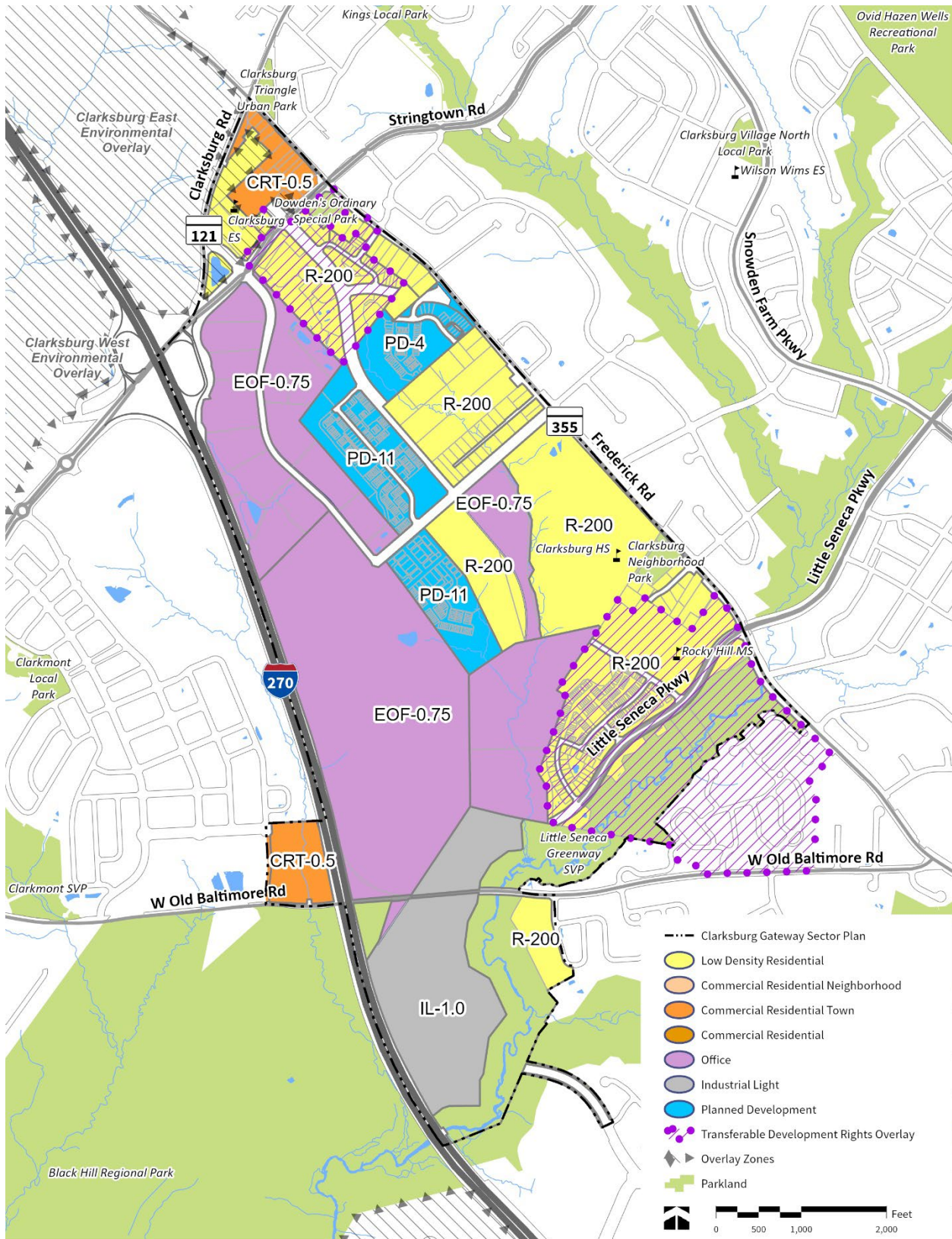
Staff Comment: The Public Hearing Draft recommends transportation infrastructure, roadways, transit service, and bike/pedestrian facilities, that Planning Staff believe will adequately serve the transportation needs of the Clarksburg community as growth occurs. This infrastructure will be provided either by public investment and/or private contributions as development is proposed. Furthermore, the Sector Plan is not expected to require dedication of a new school site at the elementary, middle, or high school level to accommodate estimated enrollment impacts from new development projected at a maximum build-out of the Sector Plan's land use vision or zoning recommendations. See School Adequacy Test Section in the Draft Plan.

- Comment #144: Testimony claims that a major challenge in the county is the availability of employment-zoned land that allows the county to compete for economic development opportunities. Advance Manufacturing sites are hard to come by, though the industry is a growing area. COMSAT is a priority site for MCEDC and the County Executive due to its potential to serve as a campus-like commercial setting for a life sciences or advanced manufacturing user. The Sector Plan should retain the ability for the site to be developed for primarily industrial or employment uses.

Staff Response: The Draft Plan's zoning recommendations to change existing EOF (Employment Office) and IL (Light Industrial) zoning to the CR (Commercial Residential) and CRT (Commercial Residential Town) zones will retain the ability for these properties to be developed for industrial and employment uses. Recommendation 4.B.3 supports life sciences uses for a campus mixed-use development at the former COMSAT property. In Section 4.A, the Draft Plan states the continuation of Light Industrial land uses in addition with a mixed-use development.

- Comment #173, 174, 182: Testimony supports draft recommended zoning for the Linthicum Property at 13100 West Old Baltimore Road (#173 and #174) and the Clarksburg Church property at 22820 Frederick Road (#182).

Figure 3: Existing Sector Plan Area Zoning Districts



200-foot Residential Building Setback from I-270

The Planning Board received the following testimony on the Draft Plan's recommended 200-foot setback from I-270 for residential uses (Land Use recommendation 3.A.3, p. 31).

- Comment #112, 140: Testimony supports the Draft Plan's recommendation for a minimum 200-foot building setback from I-270 for residential uses, including a minimum 50-foot native tree buffer, to help minimize noise and air pollution impacts on residents from the highway. Testimony also encourages a greater setback based on studies that show harmful effects of air pollution at much greater distances.
- Comment #130, 137, 163, 176: Testimony expresses concern for a loss of developable land for housing due to the Draft Plan's recommended minimum 200-foot building setback from I-270 for residential uses. One commenter stated that a 200-foot buffer from I-270 was specifically intended for the I-3 zone that no longer exists but is not appropriate for proposed CR zone, which includes flexibility in benefits, incentives, mix of uses.

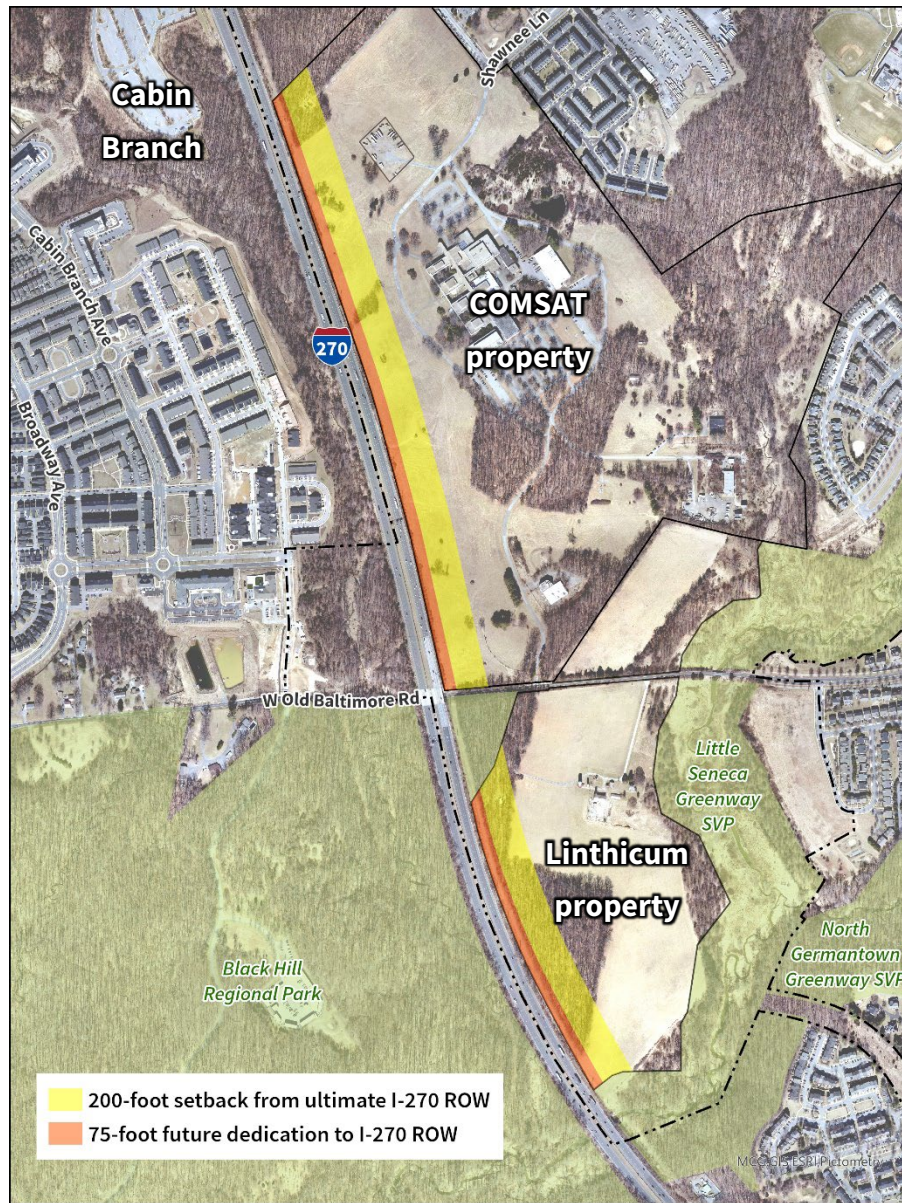
Staff Response: The Draft Plan recommends a residential building setback of 200 feet from the I-270 right-of-way to separate residential occupants from noise and air pollution generated by traffic on I-270 (Recommendation 3.A.3, p. 31). This setback is considered by Planning Staff to be a substandard, but minimum acceptable setback to avoid these quality-of-life impacts in proximity to this busy highway. Research indicates that people living, working, and learning within about 500 to 1,000 feet of highways are disproportionately subject to air pollution and loud ambient noise. This, in turn, causes health problems, including lung disease, stroke, and premature birth. Roadways also tend to reduce the property values of nearby residences¹. There is precedent for such a setback in the 1989 *Germantown Master Plan* and subsequent 2009 *Germantown Employment Area Sector Plan*, which established a recommended 200-foot setback for residential development.

As currently drafted, the 200-foot residential building setback would be measured from the ultimate I-270 right-of-way. While the existing overall I-270 right-of-way is approximately 200 feet in the vicinity of the Sector Plan Area, the full master planned highway right-of-way width is 350 feet, which would require an approximately 75-foot dedication from properties in the Sector Plan Area with highway frontage. If retained as a Sector Plan recommendation, this 200-foot residential building setback would include the Draft Plan-recommended native tree and landscape buffer of at least 50 feet in width between new development and I-270, irrespective of any screening or noise barriers provided (Recommendation 3.E.9, p. 68). The remainder 150 feet within the recommended setback could be occupied by any other non-residential uses, open spaces, planting, and/or roadways. See Figure 5, below, for an illustration of the proposed setback and future dedication area.

¹ U.S. EPA, Office of Transportation and Air Quality (August 2014). *Near Roadway Air Pollution and Health: Frequently Asked Questions*. <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/P100NFFD.PDF?Dockkey=P100NFFD.PDF>

Samuels, Gabe and Yonah Freemark (November 2022). *The Polluted Life Near the Highway: A Review of National Scholarship and a Louisville Case Study*. Urban Institute, Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/The_Polluted_Life_Near_the_Highway.pdf

Figure 5: 200-foot setback from future I-270 right-of-way



Development Constraints from Draft Plan Recommendations

The Planning Board received the following testimony on the Draft Plan's recommendations related to accumulating development restrictions on the former COMSAT Laboratories property.

- Comment #97, 164: Testimony expresses concern about excessive land constraints on the COMSAT property that would reduce “viable, market-ready uses,” stating that the Draft Plan’s proposed recommendations (i.e., environmental, transportation, urban design, and recreational) result in land constraints that significantly reduce available land for development to less than one-quarter of the property, or just under 50 acres. Without more land, states the testimony, there will be limited opportunities to meet the desired levels of

development and economic growth that the Draft Plan aims for and needs to achieve. Testimony requests that the Sector Plan reduces the amount of constrained land since it may result in housing that does not get built, priority economic development that goes elsewhere, transit riders who forego riding public transportation, and jobs that are not created.

Staff Response: Staff disagrees with the assertion that the remaining ‘buildable’ acreage of the COMSAT property is 50 acres or less. While the Draft Plan does recommend establishing a public park, environmental buffers, and protected forest areas, some of the areas identified by the testimony as ‘unbuildable’ would be constrained regardless of the Sector Plan’s adoption (e.g., forest and stream buffer protection within and adjacent to the Cool Brook Tributary, internal street rights-of-way to access proposed development, I-270 right-of-way dedication, and publicly accessible open space). Staff finds that the actual area of ‘buildable’ acreage on the COMSAT property, or the area remaining after accounting for property constraints, would be approximately 94 acres (see Table 1, below).

While the Draft Plan’s recommended street alignments for Observation Drive Extended and Little Seneca Parkway Extended is expected to occupy approximately 13.1 acres of right-of-way (based on their lengths and recommended widths within the COMSAT property), this is only about 2.1 acres more than the area of these road alignments as proposed by the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan*. The difference is mainly attributed to a longer portion of the Draft Plan-recommended alignment for Observation Drive Extended on the COMSAT property than that proposed by the 1994 Plan, which planned for an alignment along the Cool Brook Tributary farther to the east. The Draft Plan recommends a narrower typical right-of-way cross-section for both Observation Drive Extended and Little Seneca Parkway Extended than does the 1994 Plan.

Planning Staff asks the Planning Board to consider the Draft Plan’s impacts on the ‘buildable’ area of the COMSAT property by reviewing Table 1, below. Staff has estimated that the Draft Plan recommendations account for about 59.9 acres of potentially constrained land, out of the property’s 203.8-acre total tract area, with approximately 18.3 acres of this area limited to non-residential uses because of the Draft Plan’s recommended 200-foot residential building setback from I-270. An additional approximately 49.6 acres would be constrained from development regardless of the Draft Plan’s approval and adoption.

Table 1: COMSAT Development Constraints Analysis

COMSAT Property Total Tract Area	203.8 acres
COMSAT Property ‘Buildable’ Area	94.3 acres
Buildable area includes areas for buildings and associated parking, vehicle and non-vehicular circulation, green cover, amenities required as part of development, etc.	
COMSAT Property Potentially Constrained (‘Unbuildable’) Area	109.5 acres
Potentially constrained regardless of Sector Plan adoption	49.6 acres
I-270 interchange (Exit 17) dedication (estimated by River Falls, LLC if interchange remains as a master planned transportation facility, assuming a compact design)	1.6 acres
Additional I-270 ROW dedication (75 feet wide along approx. 3,900-foot I-270 frontage)	6.7 acres
Cool Brook Tributary Stream Buffer (estimated regulatory stream buffer along approx. 3,450 linear feet of stream)	22.5 acres
Stream Valley-Adjacent Open Space (not in estimated stream buffer, but existing forest, slopes, or otherwise inaccessible)	18.8 acres
Potentially constrained due to Draft Plan recommendations	59.9 acres
Clarksburg Gateway Local Park (10 acres of single or series of smaller park spaces)	10 acres
200-foot residential building setback from I-270 (approx. 3,900-foot I-270 frontage)	18.3 acres
Observation Drive Extended and Little Seneca Parkway Extended rights-of-way (estimated by Planning Staff based on the Draft Plan-recommended length and typical rights-of-way on the COMSAT property. <u>Note:</u> This area is approximately 2.1 acres more than their alignments and rights-of-way as proposed by the 1994 <i>Clarksburg Master Plan</i> .)	13.1 acres
Upland forest preservation (all existing forest stands are assumed to be retained and unavailable for development by River Falls, LLC. <u>Note:</u> The Draft Plan does not identify specific upland forest stands/area for retention.)	18.5 acres

HOUSING

After reviewing testimony submitted to the Planning Board on the housing recommendations of the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan (“Draft Plan”), Planning Staff has identified the following major topics for discussion at this work session. A summary of this testimony is provided below, along with a brief Planning Staff response for the Board’s consideration. The Planning Board is welcome to raise additional comments and questions during the work session.

High-density Housing Near Established Neighborhoods

The Planning Board received the following testimony on the Draft Plan’s housing recommendations related to the minimum required percentage of Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) housing for a new housing development.

- Comment #3: Testimony states that, while supporting the goals of affordable housing generally, the Draft Plan’s general requirement for 15% MPDUs and incentives for larger family units could lead to significantly denser projects than our infrastructure can handle. These

changes may also affect property values in existing communities, especially townhome neighborhoods like mine, by introducing large-scale developments that alter the character of our area. Testimony recommends limiting the scale of high-density housing near established neighborhoods to prevent incompatibility and property devaluation.

Staff Response: The Public Hearing Draft aims to foster vibrant, inclusive communities and promote a range of housing options, not just large-scale high-density housing. The 15% MPDU requirement is aligned with best practices in previous master plans and responsive to the need for more affordable housing countywide.

Establishing a minimum expected level of affordable housing units as part of a proposed housing development and prioritizing larger family units as a Public Benefit for new housing developments seeking approval under the Optional Method of Development will not necessarily lead to, nor be concentrated in, higher density development. Larger family units are less dense than smaller residential units in terms of dwelling units per acre. There is also no evidence that introducing large-scale developments causes property values to decline.

NEIGHBORHOODS

After reviewing testimony submitted to the Planning Board on the neighborhood recommendations of the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan (“Draft Plan”), Planning Staff determined that all major testimony related to the Neighborhoods chapter can be discussed as a part of other topical work sessions. The Planning Board is welcome to raise additional comments and questions during the work session, as well.

WORK SESSION SCHEDULE

A schedule of remaining Planning Board work sessions by topic is provided below. This schedule is subject to change at the Planning Board’s discretion.

October 16	Historic Preservation (<i>completed</i>)
October 23	Transportation (<i>completed</i>)
October 30	Land Use, Housing, Neighborhoods, and Community Design
November 6	Environment, Parks, and Community Facilities
November 20	Follow-up on any remaining discussion items and possible consideration of approval of the Planning Board Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan for transmittal to the County Council

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Testimony Summary

(an extract of testimony summaries for these topics)

Attachment B: Written Testimony

(Original testimony submitted to the Planning Board for these topics, identified in the Testimony Summary attachment by alphabetical letter. Individual items are bookmarked in the Adobe PDF for quick reference.)