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Attachments: [CGSP Worksession 2 - Transportation Comments 10 22 2025 RF.pdf](#)

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Dear Chair Harris and Members of the Planning Board,

Attached is an outline of the matters that River Falls Investments LLC believes are most important for the Planning Board's attention during Worksession #2 for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. The topic is transportation. In addition to the outline, we are also submitting certain exhibits that address the Interchange, pedestrian and wildlife crossings as well as Observation Drive. One of the exhibits we attached is a "hot off the press" article published in the Washington Business Journal announcing that Merck will be investing \$3B in a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant that will generate 500+ jobs. This highlights what we have been saying is possible for the Comsat property.

We appreciate your consideration of our positions. We will attend the work session and be available to answer questions or discuss our positions. As you will see, the transportation-related issues are quite complex and, we believe, would benefit from significant revisions and discussions at a number of work sessions. Please keep this in mind as you work through the issues.

Thank you,

Bob

Bob Elliott

Chief Executive Officer

Please note that effective August 29, 2025, Lantian Development is now River Falls.

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Comsat Property Issues for Decision: Transportation Worksession

River Falls asks the Planning Board to decide the following issues related to the Comsat property:

1. REVISE the Interchange Recommendation to OPTION B for the inclusion of the Interchange in the Sector Plan for the following reasons:

- Unlocks economic development potential for the County.
- Attracts the mix of uses recommended by the plan.
- Important tool for the effective marketing of the Comsat site to major commercial tenants.
- Detailed analysis shows that without an interchange, traffic on local streets is likely to overload a number of key intersections.
- Requires additional turn lanes and channelized right turns undermining pedestrian safety.
- Without it, traffic on Observation Drive is likely to preclude dedicating lanes to BRT.
- The overpass, and potential interchange ramps, could be staged or phased.
 - The interchange can be deferred and evaluated based on facts, such as the cost of adding the ramps, tenant demand for direct access or emerging traffic patterns.
- MCDOT strongly supports retaining the interchange in the plan.

2. NEW CONCEPT: Create a dedicated Bike/Ped/Wildlife Underpass under I-270.

- Rather than designing a multimodal Little Seneca overpass (and potential interchange), reduce conflicts and lower costs by:
 - Closing West Old Baltimore to auto traffic between Lake Ridge Drive (west) and Observation Drive (east) through the existing underpass (See attached map)
 - Narrowing the bridge footprint
- Closing the existing West Old Baltimore underpass to vehicle traffic would result in a high-quality bike, pedestrian and wildlife crossing under I-270. (See rendering)
 - Create a “front door”, “Constellation Park” for Black Hill Regional Park east of I-270.

3. REVISE Observation Drive Alignment

- The Staff’s recommended alignment of Observation Drive between West Old Baltimore Road and Little Seneca suffers from significant engineering problems, reduces the net amount of developable land in the plan area, and increases the cost of constructing the road while placing a disproportionate share of the burden on River Falls.
- River Falls has proposed an alignment that – in combination with closing the West Old Baltimore underpass to auto traffic – would reduce tree impacts and produce a more equitable result (See attached exhibit comparing proposed alignments).



THE TEXT OF THE PLAN SHOULD RETAIN FLEXIBILITY TO IMPLEMENT THESE PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS.

IF THE BOARD FINDS MERIT IN THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE WEST OLD BALTIMORE UNDERPASS AND/OR SHIFT THE ALIGNMENT OF OBSERVATION DRIVE IT SHOULD DIRECT THE STAFF TO BRING THESE IDEAS BACK AT THE FINAL WORKSESSION.

4. INCLUDE ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE FOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY in Street Sections

- Many proposed cross sections are wider than necessary to accommodate pedestrian facilities and other features.
 - We share Staff's goal of creating a safe and appealing pedestrian realm, but the development intensity and building heights do not match the cross section widths.
 - Sidewalks, shared use paths, and the like should not occupy 20-30 feet of ROW in places where development will not generate large volumes of foot traffic. When street cross sections (including space for pedestrians) are out of proportion to adjoining building heights the result is compromised urban design as well as additional impervious surface that must be managed with stormwater practices that make development less efficient without an offsetting public benefit.
 - The plan should recognize that recommended cross sections will be modified at the time of development review in light of proposed uses, development intensities, building heights, and then-current Road Code guidance.
 - Road sections shown should "targets" with FLEXIBILITY to adjust within the parameters of the Complete Streets menu. Depending on land uses for Comsat (still TBD), road sections may need to be adjusted at time of subdivision.
 - Transitions and coordination will be needed between plan roads and existing conditions, such as shared use paths and open section roads, depending on number of lanes, future transit, and bike lane connections.
- The existing Gateway Center Section should work within and maintain the existing curb-to-curb configuration to protect existing mature trees.
 - The current curb-to-curb width is sufficient to support the desired level of service for autos, bikes, and pedestrians while avoiding the need for difficult and complex widening to achieve marginal benefits.
 - By retaining the existing cross section, it ensures a faster and less expensive implementation for this important roadway that becomes Observation Drive.
- New Street "A" – Curbless Town Center Street – has not been implemented on any public (non-private) street in the County (even in urban centers). Curbless Streets are low speed, low volume and low throughput, and contradictory to the higher volumes expected as an extension of Shawnee Lane into the heart of the site. Consideration of this design should be deferred until the pattern of redevelopment achieves a corresponding level of intensity and community maturity to support it. (See MCDOT's Comment Letter).

Item 1

Interchange Exhibits

From the Washington Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2025/10/20/merck-virginia-pharma-manufacturing-az-lilly-gsk.html>

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:

Health Care

Merck investing \$3B in Virginia pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, adding 500 jobs



Merck is building a \$3 billion pharmaceutical manufacturing plant and adding about 500 jobs in Elkton, Virginia.
MERCK & CO.



By [Sara Gilgore](#) – Staff Reporter, Washington Business Journal
Oct 20, 2025 **Updated** Oct 20, 2025 3:46pm EDT

Listen to this article 5 min

Story Highlights

- Merck announces \$3 billion pharmaceutical facility in Virginia, creating 500 jobs.
- Virginia has secured \$12.5 billion investment from three pharma giants, adding 1,750 jobs.
- Merck's project strengthens Virginia's position in biopharmaceutical advanced manufacturing.

Virginia just secured another life sciences project that'll mean billions of dollars and hundreds of new jobs, the state's third massive biopharma sector win

within the past month.

[Merck & Co. Inc.](#) (NYSE: MRK) announced Monday that it is building a \$3 billion pharmaceutical manufacturing facility and adding about 500 jobs in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley region, where it already has a significant presence.

The announcement comes less than two weeks after [AstraZeneca PLC](#) (NASDAQ: AZN) [disclosed its plans to build two production plants in Albemarle County](#) – which it [telegraphed over the summer](#) – and about a month after Eli Lilly and Co. (NYSE: LLY) [revealed its intention to build a \\$5 billion hub in Goochland County](#). Taken together, the three pharma giants are investing a combined \$12.5 billion and pledging to create 1,750 jobs in Virginia in the coming years.

Merck's Virginia project in the Rockingham County community of Elkton "strengthens the commonwealth's position as the emerging national leader in biopharmaceutical advanced manufacturing and life sciences," Gov. Glenn Youngkin said in a statement Monday.

The New Jersey firm said it has kicked off construction on the 400,000-square-foot building, to serve as its Center of Excellence for Pharmaceutical Ingredients and Small Molecule Manufacturing. Merck has a vaccines manufacturing facility nearby, at 2778 South Eastside Highway, that spans about 1.2 million square feet and was last expanded a few years ago to beef up production for human papillomavirus vaccine Gardasil.

The plan for the new facility represents an increase from Merck's earlier intention to invest \$2 billion and create 300 positions, according to the company. It's also part of a total \$70 billion commitment to U.S. research and development, and manufacturing, starting this year, "not including any future business development transactions in R&D," it said in its announcement.



Merck is expanding its Shenandoah Valley campus, pictured here.

DC AERIAL PHOTOS INC

It's a big deal for the biopharma sector in Virginia, which is establishing itself as a hub for these companies' new sites, as the Trump administration pushes to increase domestic manufacturing and threatens tariffs on pharmaceuticals.

Across the Potomac River, suburban Maryland has seen some similar wins, including GSK PLC's (NYSE: GSK) [investment in its manufacturing complex](#), AstraZeneca's [expectation to bolster its cell therapies facility](#), and

MilliporeSigma's [opening last October of a \\$286 million biosafety testing facility](#), all in Rockville. (MilliporeSigma is the U.S. and Canada life sciences arm of Germany's Merck KGaA, a different company from New Jersey's Merck & Co.)

But Montgomery County, which has built its identity largely around its biotech and life sciences corridor, has also seen an increase in [lab space vacancies](#) amid some high-level corporate exits – including GSK's decision [to vacate its vaccines R&D campus](#) and Amgen Inc.'s (NASDAQ: AMGN) move [to rent out a building it inherited nearby](#).

A Maryland Department of Commerce spokesperson did not respond directly when asked if Maryland competed for the Merck, AstraZeneca or Eli Lilly projects. "Maryland is a leading hub for the life sciences and pharmaceutical development and manufacturing," the spokesperson said, pointing to the MilliporeSigma and AstraZeneca expansions in Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Economic Development Corp. did not immediately return a request for comment.

Merck's new facility will house small-molecule manufacturing and testing for active pharmaceutical ingredients as well as drug products. The project itself could also create 8,000 construction jobs, Merck said.

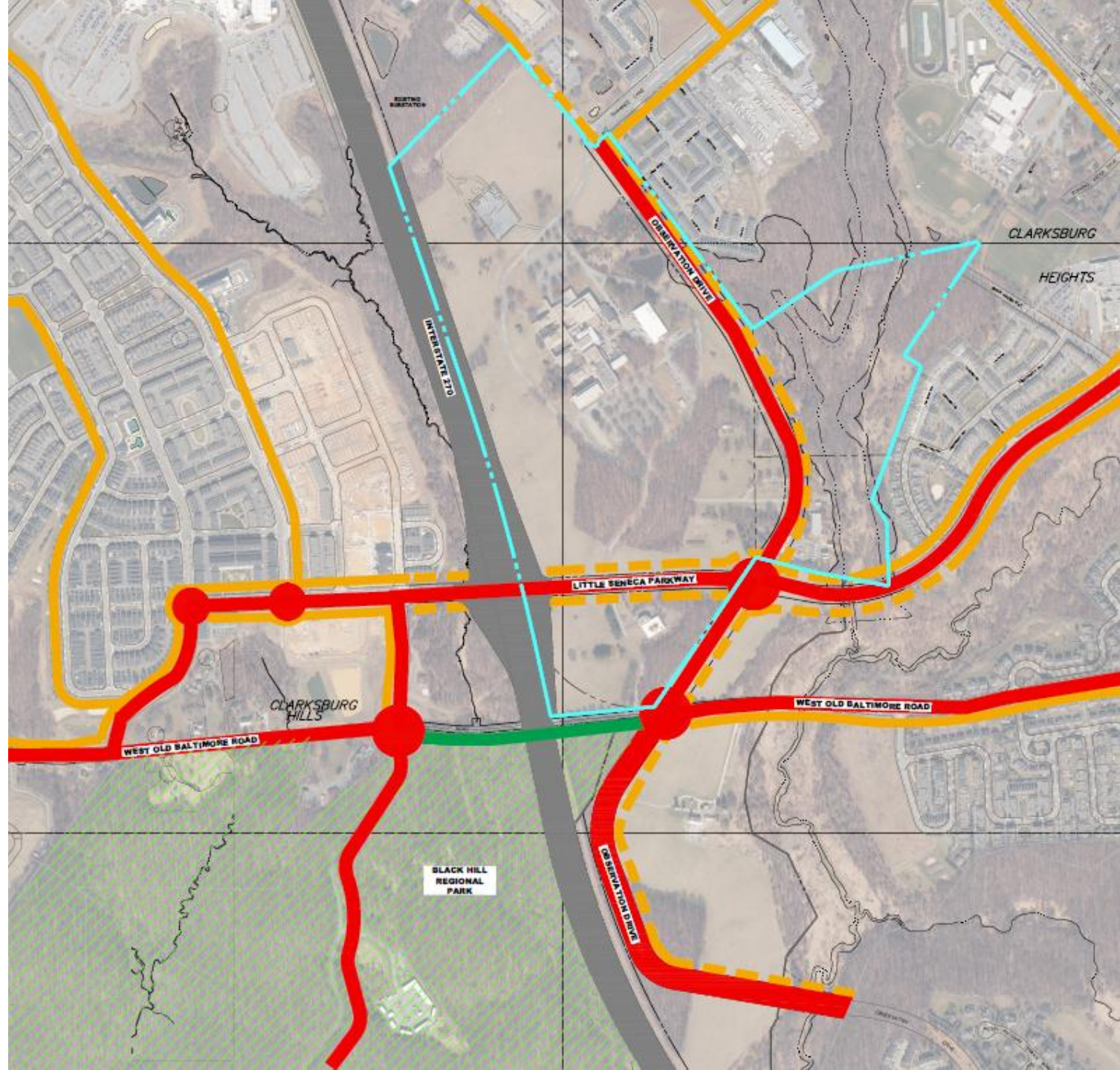
Merck secured a \$5 million Virginia Investment Performance grant, which incentivizes capital investments by resident companies, and a separate \$4 million grant from the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund, according to Youngkin's office.

In addition, the VEDP's Virginia Talent Accelerator Program will provide Merck recruitment, training and other support in establishing the new jobs. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Shenandoah Valley Partnership and Rockingham County worked together to land the project.

Merck has also recently committed to broaden its manufacturing footprints [in North Carolina, Delaware and Kansas](#) as part of a multi-billion-dollar expansion of its domestic biologics and small-molecule manufacturing sites, as well as its own headquarters.

Item 2

Pedestrian and Bike Passage / Wildlife Crossing



Non-Auto Connectivity Solutions

- New bridge should include I-270 ramps, which will complicate moving pedestrians, bikes and other users east-west across I-270
- Sector Plan proposes a wildlife crossing on the bridge
- West Old Baltimore Road is low volume, and all vehicle traffic could be handled by the new bridge
 - Convert roadway between Lake Ridge Drive and Observation Drive to a hiker/biker trail with adjacent wildlife pathway strip under I-270.
 - Significantly cheaper and safer
 - Better connectivity to parks



CURRENT CONDITION - WEST OLD BALTIMORE RD UNDER I-270

MULTI-USE / WILDLIFE TRAIL
ILLUSTRATIVE SECTION



Existing West Old Baltimore Underpass

Item 3

**Observation Drive
Realignment**



Underpass Section



- Road alignment works with topography and existing grades
- No impact on existing trees
- Creates access point and dedicated trail for pedestrian/wildlife to Black Hills East of I-270
- Equitable responsibility for Observation Drive changes
- Maintains control of road with existing owners as contemplated since 1993 and as recently as 2022 (MCDOT)

Image © 2025 Airbus

Aerial View Looking West

1994 Alignment

AREA C8:
878 LF2, 8.54 ACS

LITTLE SENECA PARKWAY
AREA C5
1,272 LF2, 2.92 ACS

AREA C4
288 LF2, 1.09 ACS

AREA L1
694 LF2, 2.22 ACS

AREA L3
729 LF2, 1.06 ACS

AREA L4
808 LF2, 1.24 ACS

AREA C3
1,481 LF2, 4.10 ACS

WEST OLD BALTIMORE ROAD

OBSERVATION DRIVE RD

Eastern Proposed

AREA C6:
878 LFA, 8.54 AC

AREA L1:
889 LFA, 1.41 AC

LITTLE SENECA PARKWAY
AREA C4:
1,272 LFA, 3.50 AC

AREA L3:
841 LFA, 2.1 AC

AREA L4:
374 LFA, 1.01 AC

AREA C5:
6 LFA, 9.18 AC

AREA L6:
889 LFA, 1.34 AC

WEST OLD BALTIMORE ROAD

AREA 313 LFA

Linthicum Proposed

Map showing proposed development areas in Linthicum, Maryland, with the following details:

- AREA C8:** 878 LPS, 0.54 ACs
- AREA C4:** 394 LPS, 0.83 ACs
- AREA C7:** 219 LPS, 1.31 ACs
- AREA C6:** 1,339 LPS, 3.69 ACs
- AREA L4:** 634 LPS, 0.59 ACs
- AREA L1:** 100 LPS, 0.27 ACs
- AREA L2:** 761 LPS, 1.87 ACs
- AREA C5:** 487 LPS, 2.37 ACs
- AREA L6:** 800 LPS, 1.38 ACs
- ARE:** 377 LPS

Key roads shown include **WEST OLD BALTIMORE ROAD** and **LITTLE SENECA PARKWAY**.

River Falls Proposed

The map displays the River Falls area with several proposed zones. A red line, likely a river, flows from the top right towards the center. A pink horizontal band represents Little Seneca Parkway. A light blue diagonal band represents West Old Baltimore Road. The zones are color-coded and labeled as follows:

- AREA C8: 878 LFS, 8.54 ACRES (purple)
- AREA C4: 86 LFS, 0.32 ACRES (red)
- AREA C6: 1,200 LFS, 3.37 ACRES (pink)
- AREA L4: 401 LFS, 1.32 ACRES (blue)
- AREA L1: 234 LFS, 1.31 ACRES (light blue)
- AREA L2: 906 LFS, 2.97 ACRES (light blue)
- AREA C5: 143 LFS, 0.23 ACRES (dark red)
- AREA L6: 809 LFS, 1.24 ACRES (light blue)

Other labels include "LITTLE SENECA PARKWAY" and "WEST OLD BALTIMORE ROAD".



Aerial View looking North