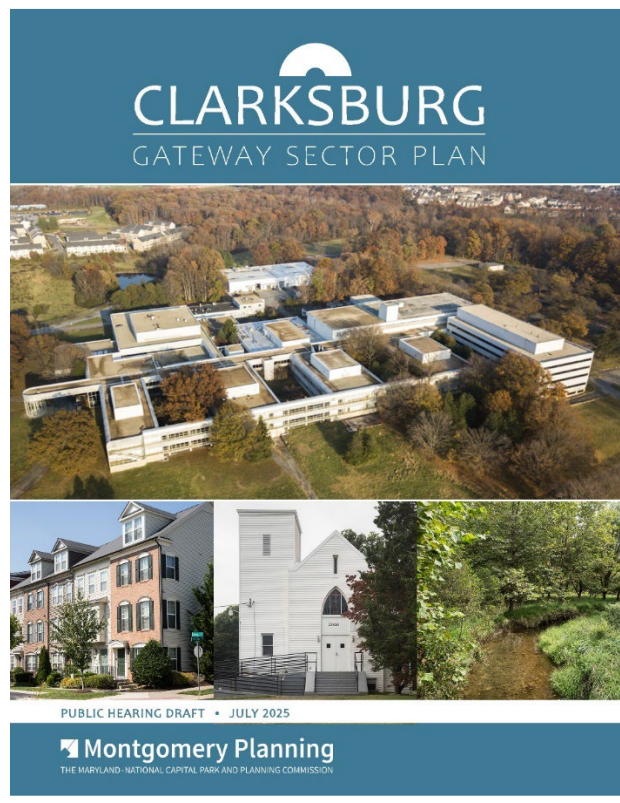


PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT OF THE CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION #7



Description

A work session to consider approval of the Planning Board Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan for transmittal to the Montgomery County Council.

Planning Staff

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SUMMARY

- The Planning Board approved the publication of the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan for public review and comment on July 31, 2025, and held two duly noticed Public Hearings on September 25, 2025, the first in the Montgomery County Planning Board auditorium at 2425 Reddie Drive in Wheaton and the second at the Upcounty Regional Services Center at 12900 Middlebrook Lane in Germantown.
- The Planning Board held six (6) work sessions to review public testimony and direct Planning Staff to revise the Public Hearing Draft on the following dates: October 16, October 23, October 30 (two work sessions), November 6, and November 20, 2025. This seventh work session is scheduled for the Planning Board to review plan revisions and consider approval of the Planning Board Draft for review by the County Council.
- In addition to reviewing all revisions to the Public Hearing Draft requested by the Planning Board from all previous work sessions, Planning Staff will prepare to discuss two additional topics that are carried over from a previous work session: (1) the minimum 35% green cover recommendation and (2) a prospective closure of West Old Baltimore Road to vehicles once Little Seneca Parkway Extended is completed across I-270.

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

Plan Phase

Public Hearing Draft Work Session #7

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Report Date

November 26, 2025

Planning Divisions

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Planning Board Information

MCPB Item No. 7
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CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

WORK SESSION #7: CONSIDERATION OF PLANNING BOARD DRAFT APPROVAL

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 Reddie 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.

The Planning Board held six (6) previous work sessions to review public testimony on the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. These work sessions and their discussion topics are listed below:

- October 16 – Historic Preservation
- October 23 – Transportation
- October 30 – (1) Land Use, Housing, Neighborhoods and (2) Community Design
- November 6 – Environment, Parks, Open Spaces, & Recreation, and Community Facilities
- November 20 – Follow up and direction on previous topics discussed

At the conclusion of the November 20 work session, the Planning Board directed staff to return for a final work session at the next available meeting date to review all revisions requested by the Planning Board to the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Planning Board will also consider approval of the Planning Board Draft Plan for transmittal to the Montgomery County Council at this work session.

DISCUSSION

NOVEMBER 20 WORK SESSION PLAN REVISIONS

The following is a listing of plan revisions to the Public Hearing Draft Plan as directed by the Planning Board during their November 20 work session. The Public Hearing Draft is included with this report as Attachment A with redlined revisions to the Public Hearing Draft directed by the Planning Board during each of the previous work sessions. The topics below are highlighted in Attachment A in yellow for the Board's reference.

Please Note: All page numbers below refer to the redlined version of the Public Hearing Draft, included as Attachment A.

- Remove a minimum residential setback from I-270
 - See Land Use Recommendation 3.A.3 (p. 31)
- Add references to available economic development incentive programs
 - See new Land Use Recommendation 3.A.5 (p. 33) and new Implementation Chapter section (p. 111)
- Retain a master plan recommendation for a new I-270 interchange at Little Seneca Parkway Extended
 - See new Transportation Recommendation 3.B.8 (p. 42)
- Remove 'Activity Center' cross-sections for Observation Drive Extended and Street A
 - See Figure 11 (p. 44), Table 1 (p. 45), and Cross-Section Exhibit (B) (p. 47)
- Modify the typical cross-section for Observation Drive Extended
 - See 'Complete Streets' section introduction (p. 46) and Cross-Section Exhibit (A) and its underlying note (p. 46)
- Remove the interim cross-section for Observation Drive Extended
 - See Cross-Section A/B (p. 52) and Transportation Recommendation 3.B.16 (p. 52)

- Revise the on-street parking priority recommendation
 - See Community Design Recommendation S4 (p. 63)
- Revise the Clarksburg Gateway Local Park (now “Constellation Park”) recommendation for a new park as either a single public park or a network of connected public parks
 - See Parks, Open Spaces, and Recreation Recommendations 3.F.12 (p. 82-84) and 3.F.16 (p. 89), Community Facilities Recommendation 3.H.9, (p. 104), and COMSAT Neighborhood Recommendation 4.B.10 (p. 109)
- Revise several forest preservation recommendations
 - See Environment Recommendation 3.E.2.c (p. 74), 3.E.6 (pp. 75), 3.E.7 (p. 75), COMSAT Neighborhood Recommendation 4.B.12 (p. 109), and Linthicum Neighborhood Recommendation 4.C.7 (p. 110)
- Revise a recommendation for tree canopy on surface parking lots
 - See Environment Recommendation 3.E.4 (p. 74)
- Revise a recommendation for minimum green cover
 - [see *Additional Topics for Discussion* section, below]

ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Green Cover

At the November 20 work session, the Planning Board directed Planning Staff to revise a Draft Plan recommendation for minimum green cover of a new development site (3.E.10), requesting changes to revised text proposed by Planning Staff to the Public Hearing Draft version per an earlier work session discussion on November 6. However, after consideration of the Planning Board’s direction on November 20, Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board consider either reverting to the Public Hearing Draft version of this recommendation or striking it from the Draft Plan.

Planning Staff believe the Planning Board’s latest revisions have become overly complicated, will present difficulties and inconsistencies in its implementation during future regulatory reviews, and is no longer consistent with green cover in existing master plans or the draft plan’s original intent. The Planning Board’s direction to include forest conservation easement areas and land dedicated to public parkland in the calculation of a property’s minimum 35% green coverage, and to allow tree canopy within forest conservation easements and public parkland to qualify as green cover, has altered the original intent of the recommendation to the extent that Planning Staff no longer believes it is an effective master plan policy. Additionally, calculation of what areas are “in” and “out” for the purposes of determining a property’s “total developed area” and which areas qualify as green coverage has become increasingly complicated and confusing and is likely to cause inconsistent review of regulatory applications. Planning Staff believes it is best to avoid these issues by either reverting to original Public Hearing Draft version for this recommendation or removing it from the plan to instead rely on other related plan recommendations and development regulations that achieve similar tree canopy and green cover goals.

Planning Staff offers the following options for the Planning Board's consideration of this plan recommendation.

Option 1: Revert to the Public Hearing Draft version of Environment Recommendation

3.E.10, p. 69:

"New development should provide a minimum of 35% green cover over a property's developable area, calculated on a net tract area basis, excluding forest conservation easement areas. This minimum green cover area is intended to ensure adequate green and/or shaded areas within the built environment for the health and enjoyment of people. Green coverage may include the following areas, either individually or in combination:

- a. Intensive green roof (6 inches or deeper; must be built in place—tray systems are not allowed).
- b. Shade tree canopy cover, including street trees.
- c. Vegetative cover or landscaped areas deeper than 6 inches.
- d. Rain gardens, bioswales, and other stormwater management areas.
- e. Open space and recreation areas.

Note: Solar energy generation areas on rooftops may satisfy a portion of green cover requirements if it can be demonstrated that the minimum 35% cannot be met by the techniques listed above."

Option 2: Remove Green Cover from the Planning Board Draft

Green cover recommendations in master plans are intended to provide guidance for new development to provide green cover over a property's developable area, calculated on a net tract area basis, excluding forest conservation easement areas and areas dedicated to parkland. Recently adopted master plans also exclude street rights-of-way from green cover calculations. The level of inclusions and changes the Planning Board has contemplated go far beyond what all existing master plans have included for green cover recommendations, and in doing so will no longer meet the intent of green cover. Therefore, if the Planning Board is not comfortable including green cover as recommended by staff, staff instead recommends that the Planning Board remove green cover from the Planning Board Draft.

Option 3: Latest Planning Board Revisions

"New development should provide a minimum of 35% green cover over a property's total developed developable area, calculated on a net tract area basis, excluding roadway dedication areas and environmental buffers ~~forest conservation easement areas~~. This minimum green cover area is intended to ensure adequate green and/or shaded areas within the built environment for the health and enjoyment of people.

Green coverage may include the following areas, either individually or in combination. These areas may be located on private property or on land dedicated to public rights-of-way or parkland:

- Intensive green roof (6 inches or deeper; must be built in place—tray systems are not allowed).
- ~~Shade Tree~~ tree canopy cover, ~~including street trees (excluding environmental buffers).~~
- Vegetative cover or landscaped areas deeper than 6 inches.
- Rain gardens, bioswales, and other aboveground stormwater management areas.
- Landscaped parkland, Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS), and other open space and recreation areas.

Note: Solar installations or other green energy options ~~energy-generation areas on rooftops~~ may satisfy a portion of the green cover ~~age requirements~~ if it can be demonstrated that it the minimum 35% cannot be met by the techniques listed above at the discretion of the Planning Board. The Planning Board may also approve alternatives consistent with these green cover goals.

The following table compares green cover under Options 1 and 3, above, and is provided for the Planning Board's consideration.

Table 1: Green Cover Options Comparison

	Public Hearing Draft (Option 1)	Planning Board Revision (Option 3)
Calculated Green Cover Area (the 'denominator')		
Private Property (the 'developable area')	✓	✓
Public Rights-of-Way dedication areas (i.e., public streets or utility corridors)	--	--
Public Parkland dedication areas	--	✓
Forest Conservation Easements	--	✓
Environmental Buffers (i.e., stream buffers)	--	✓
Accepted Green Cover Elements (the 'numerator')		
Intensive Green Roofs	✓	✓
Shade Tree Canopy (on private property)	✓	✓
Shade Tree Canopy (on land dedicated to the public road right-of-way)	✓	✓
Tree Canopy (in forest conservation easements or on land dedicated to public parkland)	--	✓
Vegetative Cover or Landscaped Areas (on private property)	✓	✓
Vegetative Cover or Landscaped Areas (on land dedicated to the public road right-of-way)	--	✓
Rain gardens, bioswales, and other stormwater management areas (on private property)	✓	✓
Rain gardens, bioswales, and other stormwater management areas (on land dedicated to the public road right-of-way)	--	✓
Open space and recreation areas (on private property)	✓	✓
Landscaped open space and recreation areas (on land dedicated to public parkland)	--	✓
Rooftop solar photovoltaic or other green energy generation (if needed)	✓	✓

Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board either revert to the original Public Hearing Draft version of Environment Recommendation 3.E.10 or remove it from the plan. Staff strongly recommends that the Planning Board not adopt the modified version of Green Cover.

West Old Baltimore Road Closure for Cyclists, Pedestrians, and Wildlife

At its October 23 work session, the Planning Board requested that Planning Staff return for a discussion of the potential closure of West Old Baltimore Road to create an underpass dedicated for pedestrians, cyclist and wildlife, proposed by the owner of the former COMSAT Laboratories property, River Falls LLC. The closure was proposed as an alternative to designing the planned Little Seneca Parkway overpass as a multi-modal overpass and potential interchange. Due to time constraints, the Planning Board did not discuss this topic at their November 20 work session and Planning Staff is prepared to discuss it on December 4.

West Old Baltimore Road has connected the historic communities of Neelsville and Barnesville since at least 1893, and was a common route for the shipment of goods from the Shenandoah Valley to the Chesapeake Bay since the early 1700's. The road has been improved to varying degrees over the years, but it retains much of its rustic, rural character west of the Cabin Branch neighborhood and its river ford of Ten Mile Creek remains today.

Closing West Old Baltimore Road to vehicular traffic relies on the construction of the Little Seneca Parkway overpass, across which traffic would need to travel as a bypass to the closed segment of West Old Baltimore Road between Observation Drive Extended (whose construction would also be required) and Lake Ridge Drive in the Cabin Branch neighborhood. River Falls has suggested that the closure of West Old Baltimore Road to vehicular traffic could allow the creation of a 'front door' for Black Hill Regional Park east of I-270. However, closing West Old Baltimore Road could negatively impact access to the park; reaching the park by car via the planned Observation Drive Extended and West Old Baltimore Road/I-270 underpass is a critical route since a southern vehicular entrance to the park from Germantown is infeasible.

In consideration of this proposal, Planning Staff does not support a Sector Plan recommendation for the closure of West Old Baltimore Road proposed by River Falls. Nor does Planning Staff support a Sector Plan recommendation for MCDOT to study its feasibility. The Sector Plan's travel modeling analysis did not consider the closure of this long-time roadway and I-270 underpass, and forecasts show that this connection could carry between 7,000 and 11,000 daily vehicles by 2045. Removing this existing link in the Clarksburg transportation network would push this traffic volume to adjacent roadways and add yet more traffic through the new or existing interchanges to the north and south.

Additionally, closing West Old Baltimore would reduce the redundancy of the transportation network and would be counter to *Thrive Montgomery 2050* policy recommendation of expanding the street grid for people traveling through Clarksburg now and in the future.

Planning Staff does not support a Sector Plan recommendation for the closure of West Old Baltimore Road, nor its study for future feasibility.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board direct staff to make any final revisions to the Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan and approve the revised draft plan for transmittal to the Montgomery County Council.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Redlined Revised Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

Note: Revisions discussed at the November 20 work session highlighted in yellow.