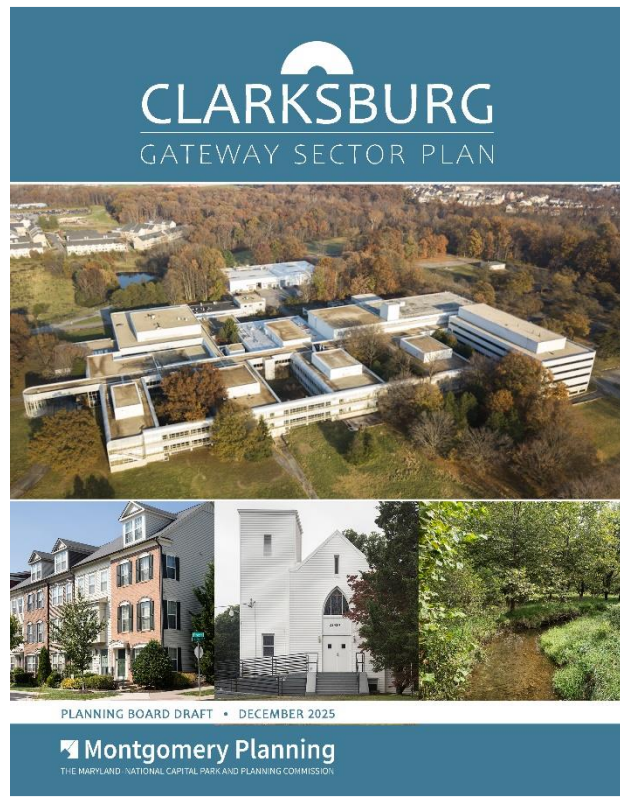


PLANNING BOARD DRAFT OF THE CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

CLIMATE ASSESSMENT REPORT



Description

A presentation of the Climate Assessment Report to accompany the Planning Board Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan for transmittal to the Montgomery County Council.

Planning Staff

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SUMMARY

- Climate assessments evaluate the anticipated impact of master plans and zoning text amendments (ZTAs) on the county's contribution to addressing climate change and provide the Montgomery County Council with an understanding of their potential to reduce climate impacts and increase climate resilience and adaptability.
- The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan is projected to have a negative (increased) impact on GHG emissions and a moderately positive (increased) impact on ensuring resilience and adaptive capacity for our communities than if the Sector Plan were not adopted. The impact of the plan on carbon sequestration is indeterminate. Plan recommendations include increasing forest in stream buffers and along I-270, but the amount of existing forest lost will not be known until the development review process when the plans go through review under the Forest Conservation Law.
- The Planning Board is required to submit an assessment to the Montgomery County Council, sitting as the District Council, describing the climate impacts, if any, of each zoning text amendment, master plan, and master plan amendment under consideration by the District Council. The assessment must be transmitted no less than seven days prior to the County Council Public Hearing on the plan under consideration.

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

Plan Phase

Planning Board Draft

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Report Date

January 2, 2026

Planning Divisions

Upcounty Planning Division
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Planning Board Information

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DISCUSSION

PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

Climate assessments evaluate the anticipated impact of master plans and zoning text amendments (ZTAs) on the county's contribution to addressing climate change and provide the Montgomery County Council with an understanding of their potential to reduce climate impacts and increase climate resilience and adaptability. The scope of Climate Assessments is limited to addressing climate change, specifically the effects of land use and transportation recommendations in master plans and ZTAs on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, sequestration, community resilience and adaptive capacity, and the county's Climate Action Plan (CAP) actions. While co-benefits, such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed master plans and ZTAs may impact the climate-related considerations mentioned above.

ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

This Climate Assessment differs from previous Master Plan Climate Assessments reviewed by the Board and the Council with respect to the existing conditions of the proposed development areas. Previous Master Plan Climate Assessments have evaluated changes to land uses in areas that are already largely developed. In the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan, the two largest properties are largely undeveloped. The former COMSAT Laboratories property contains a small area of non-residential development with buildings, parking and road access, but the vast majority is covered by open fields and forests and the now vacant COMSAT Laboratories building. The Linthicum property was a working farm, with a house and a few outbuildings, but it is still largely covered with open fields and forests. Both properties include sensitive streams and their stream valleys and floodplains. Any significant development that occurs on these two properties will result in impacts to the existing environment that will be obvious and dramatic.

Although the quantitative assessments done as part of the Master Plan Climate Assessments do estimate the greenhouse gas emissions associated with master plan related development, the overall assessment does not compare the impacts of development with existing conditions. Instead, the assessment compares the impacts of a proposed new or amended master plan against land use

changes that may occur based on the recommendations of the existing approved master plan for the area. This is because, despite the existing conditions on any given site, new development consistent with the existing master plan recommendations could be approved and constructed at any time. Ever since the original *Wedges and Corridors* general plan was approved in 1964, Clarksburg has been identified as an area where development will be focused to meet various County objectives for housing and economic development, and master plans have been previously approved to guide development here.

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan is projected to have a **negative** (increased) impact on GHG emissions and a **moderately positive** (increased) impact on ensuring resilience and adaptive capacity for our communities than if the Sector Plan were not adopted. The impact of the plan on carbon sequestration is **indeterminate**. Plan recommendations include increasing forest in stream buffers and along I-270, but the amount of existing forest lost will not be known until the development review process when the plans go through review under the Forest Conservation Law.

While potential development in the Sector Plan Area, enabled by recommended zoning changes and new roadway construction allowing a greater degree of development than current zoning and master plan policy, is projected to increase greenhouse gas emissions, the Planning Board Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan recommends that new development achieve a more sustainable and resilient community that emphasizes conservation and enhancement of the Little Seneca Creek and Ten Mile Creek Watersheds, their tributaries, and surrounding natural resources, while promoting sustainable site and building design.

Based on analysis by the Greenhouse Gas Quantification Tool (“GHG Quant Tool”), if the Sector Plan is adopted as approved by the Planning Board, there is an estimated increase in GHG emissions by the year 2045 of approximately eighty (80) percent than if the Sector Plan were not adopted and existing master plan policies remain in place. This estimated increase is due in large part to an expected higher level of residential development by 2045 because of Sector Plan recommendations, and the significantly higher associated emissions from total lifetime residential building energy and waste emissions, than the expected lower growth rate and more employment-oriented development under current master plan and zoning rules. Within Clarksburg’s planned growth area, there is also expected to be a greater estimated number of transportation-related emissions by 2045 (approximately 148 percent higher) than would be generated by future Sector Plan Area residents and employees if the Sector Plan were not adopted.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board receive a presentation on the Climate Assessment for the Planning Board Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan and approve it for transmittal to the Montgomery County Council as an appendix to the Planning Board Draft.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Climate Assessment for the Planning Board Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan