

September 18, 2024

Jason Sartori, Planning Director  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
2425 Reedie Drive, Floor 14  
Wheaton, MD 20902

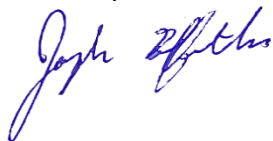
Re: Public Hearing Draft Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan  
Amendment to Thrive 2050

Dear Director Sartori:

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) received the above referenced public hearing Draft Plan as part of the distribution in an email dated August 28, 2025, from Clark Larson (on your behalf) to Secretary Rebecca L. Flora. MDP recognizes the significant and thoughtful effort that Montgomery County Planning Department, the Montgomery County Planning Board, and stakeholders applied to the development of the Draft Plan. We understand that a public hearing is scheduled for September 25, 2025.

MDP sent this Draft Plan to the Maryland Department of Transportation. Attached is their analysis as well as our check list of the elements required under the Land Use Article for your use as a self assessment integrated into our analysis of the Draft Plan.

Sincerely,



Joe Griffiths, AICP  
Director, Planning Best Practices

cc: Marin Hill, Montgomery County Planning Department  
Clark Larson, Montgomery County Planning Department  
Susan Llareus, Planning Supervisor, Maryland Department of Planning



**Maryland Department of Planning**  
**Public Hearing Draft Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan**  
**Amendment to Thrive Montgomery County 2050**  
**September 2025**

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) offers the following as suggestions to improve the Draft Plan and better address the statutory requirements of the Land Use Article. The Maryland Department of Transportation, as noted below, has contributed comments.

**2025 Legislation Impacting Local Planning**

MDP identified the following bills, adopted by the General Assembly during the 2025 session, that may impact local planning, implementation, and reporting. MDP cannot determine at this time how they may impact your jurisdiction. In partnership with other state agencies, MDP is analyzing the bills and will be developing guidance. Other bills have been noted in reference to the required elements of the plan

**Local Land Use Reporting**

- [HB 1193](#) - Maryland Housing Data Transparency Act

**Energy**

- [SB 931/HB 1036](#) - Renewable Energy Certainty Act
- Natural Resources and Comp Plans, effective July 1, 2025

**Housing**

- [HB 1466/SB 891](#) Accessory Dwelling Units - Requirements and Prohibitions, effective October 1, 2025

**Plan Analysis**

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MDP commends Montgomery County Department of Planning for effectively incorporating the new Sustainable Growth Planning Principles, adopted by the General Assembly with 2025's HB 286, signed by Governor Moore into law on April 8, 2026, and effective October 1, 2025. The Draft Plan addresses the 8 Planning Principles. MDP intends to share this draft as an example with other jurisdictions desiring to similarly address these new planning principles.

Maryland's Land Use Article Sections 1-406(a) and (b) require the inclusion of certain elements within the general plan. The following checklist provides for each required plan elements for a Charter County and the Maryland Code reference. This check list is intended to help the county determine consistency with the Land Use Article.

<b>Checklist of Maryland Code (Land Use Article)-Charter County</b> <b>Division I, Title 1, Subtitle 4 Required Elements</b> <b>Division II, Section 21-104(a) Required elements.</b>		
<b>State Comprehensive Plan Requirements</b>	MD Code Reference and Additional MD Code Reference	
(1) The planning commission for a charter county <b>shall</b> include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a)</a>	
(i) a development regulations element	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (i)</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-407 -- Development Regulations Element</a>	
(ii) a housing element	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (ii)</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-407.1 -- Housing Element</a>	
(iii) a sensitive areas element	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iii)</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-408 -- Sensitive Areas Element</a>	
(iv) a transportation element	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iv)</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-409 -- Transportation Element</a>	
(v) a water resources element	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (v)</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-410 -- Water Resources Element</a>	
(2) a mineral resources element, IF current geological information is available	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (a) (2)</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-411 -- Mineral Resources Element</a>	
(b) A comprehensive plan for a charter county <b>MAY</b> include a priority preservation area (PPA) element	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-406 (b)</a> <a href="#">For PPA Requirements, see § 2-518 of the Agriculture Article</a>	
(4) Visions -- A county <b>SHALL</b> through the comprehensive plan implement the 12 planning visions established in L.U. § 1-201*	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-414</a> <a href="#">L.U. § 1-201 -- Visions</a>	
(5) Growth Tiers -- If a county has adopted growth tiers in accordance with L.U. § 1-502, the growth tiers must be incorporated into the county's comprehensive plan	<a href="#">L.U. § 1-509</a>	

\*SB266, Local Comprehensive Planning and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy - Planning Principles passed with an effective date of October 1st, 2025. This bill overhauls the State's Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy (Policy) by consolidating the Policy's 12 Visions into 8 Planning Principles that will guide and inform state and local planning practices. The new Planning Principles are Land, Transportation, Housing, Economy, Equity, Resilience, Place, and Ecology, and collectively they are intended to foster a high quality of life for all residents by creating sustainable communities and protecting the environment. As noted above, MDP is please to see that this Draft Plan includes a discussion of the new 8 Planning Principles.

### **Conformance with Section 3-102 of the Land Use Article**

The following analyzes how the Draft Plan meets the requirements of municipal comprehensive plan elements, in accordance with the Land Use Article.

#### **1. Development Regulations Element – Synopsis**

The element is required to include the planning commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the plan. Regulations are required to be flexible to promote innovative and cost saving site design, protect the environment and identify areas of growth. The areas identified for growth are required to encourage flexible regulations, which should further promote economic development using innovative techniques, streamlining the review of applications, including permit review and subdivision processing.

#### **Plan Analysis**

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HB538, Housing Expansion and Affordability Act passed in 2024 with an effective date of January 1, 2025. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development drafted [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to help local governments understand and implement the Act. This state mandate may override local zoning density for multifamily, and unit types where single-family detached dwellings are permitted, in certain circumstances and only for qualified projects.

#### **Housing Element - Synopsis**

The housing element is required to address the need for housing within the jurisdiction that is affordable to low-income and workforce households. The housing element is also required to assess fair housing and ensure that a jurisdiction is affirmatively furthering fair housing through its housing and urban development programs.

#### **Plan Analysis**

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MDP reminds Montgomery County about [HB 1466's](#) requirement that all jurisdictions adopt a local law meeting accessory dwelling unit provisions by October 1, 2026. MDP is aware of the county's ADU legislation but has not analyzed the current local ADU legislation to determine if it is consistent with HB 1466. MDP suggests that the planning department complete such an analysis.

#### **Sensitive Areas Element – Synopsis**

The sensitive areas element is required to include the goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards designed to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development (more recently referred to as climate change impacts). The Land Use Article also assigns sensitive areas element data

provision and review responsibilities to the Maryland Departments of the Environment (MDE) and Natural Resources (DNR).

## **Plan Analysis**

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MDP notes that there may be an opportunity to address this new legislation: [HB 731](#) - Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings, effective July 1, 2025.

## **Transportation Element - Synopsis**

The transportation element is required to reasonably project into the future the most appropriate and desirable location, character, and extent of transportation facilities to move individuals and goods, provide for bicycle and pedestrian access and travelways, and estimate the use of proposed improvements.

## **Plan Analysis**

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MDP is pleased to note that Montgomery County plans to create “a more complete, connected, and sustainable” community (page 19) for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Area. The Draft Plan supports a complete, connected, and sustainable land use pattern, prioritizing “higher-capacity transit services over single-occupancy vehicle infrastructure” (page 34) and including a planned Complete Streets network, which will promote alternative transportation, e.g., taking transit, walking, biking, and rolling, to travel by single-occupancy vehicle. These policies are consistent with the Maryland Transportation Planning Principle.

With the proposed land use and zoning changes to the area east of I-270, from employment/office/industrial oriented uses to mixed commercial and residential uses, the county recommends removing a formally planned interchange with I-270 and replacing it with an east-west Little Seneca Parkway over I-270 to help form a connected local roadway network. MDP supports this recommendation. We recognize that this aligns with the sector plan’s vision and the transportation goals, as discussed above.

MDP provides the following suggestions relating to the Draft Plan

- If feasible, it would be helpful to provide a map to illustrate the proposed public transportation recommendations (pages 37 and 38) if feasible.
- The Draft Plan promotes “safe routes to school” and includes recommendations for improving pedestrian and bicycle crossing at several intersections near Rocky Hill Middle School and Clarksburg High School. MDP staff suggests the county consider the following to further enhance walking and biking to schools
  - Include an additional illustrative map (see page 49) that depicts a potential publicly accessible trail(s)/connection(s) to Rocky Hill Middle School and Clarksburg High School from the area west of the schools.

- Consider improving the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities connecting to the high and middle schools along Frederick Road, since Figure 9 (page 36) shows either “Undesirable” or “Uncomfortable” for the pedestrian level of comfort on the segment of Frederick Road.

### **Water Resources Element – Synopsis**

The water resource element is required to consider available data provided by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to identify drinking water that will be adequate for the needs of existing and future development proposed in the plan, as well as suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs. MDE and MDP are available to provide technical assistance to prepare the water resources element, ensuring consistency with MDE programs and goals. MDE and MDP jointly developed WRE guidance to demonstrate how local governments can ensure compliance with the WRE requirements. Local jurisdictions are expected to implement the most important aspects of the [MDE/MDP WRE guidance](#).

### **Plan Analysis**

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The County Council approved the [Water Resources Plan](#) (WRP) in July 2010, which was adopted by the full Commission in September 2010, and states the following:

“The Plan provides information on County water and sewer service capacity in light of planned growth to 2030, summarizes an estimate of nutrient loadings on watersheds for existing and future conditions, and identifies the policies and recommendations to amend the General Plan that are needed to maintain adequate drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to 2030, and meet water quality regulatory requirements as the County continues to grow. It is meant to satisfy the requirements of House Bill 1141.” (Abstract of the Approved and Adopted Water Resources Functional Plan)

This suggests that an amendment to the general plan would address policies and recommendations relating to maintaining an adequate drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to 2030, continuing to meet the needs of the county. Thrive did not include the policies suggested in the 2010 WRP but instead adopted it by reference. The WRP used pre-2010 data to examine Montgomery County’s land use, growth, and stormwater management capabilities, as related to adequate drinking water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity, water quality regulatory requirements, and inter-jurisdictional commitments. As redevelopment occurs, the increases in density proposed in this Draft Plan, and in other master plans, will likely impact the waters of the state and existing water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure capacities.

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) should review the WRP and determine if it accounts for the Draft Plan’s revised development capacities. This analysis should consider stormwater infrastructure, water and sewer capacity analysis, and finally, upgrading old systems that may be failing or improperly sized for increased development. MDP encourages updating the WRP since it impacts all master plans and the Montgomery County Ten-Year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan.

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments  
Draft Plan**

**STATE AGENCY COMMENTS**

The following are state agency comments in support of MDP's review of the draft plan. Comments not included here may be submitted under separate cover, or via the State Clearinghouse. If comments from other agencies are received by MDP, the department will forward them to [Name of jurisdiction] as soon as possible.

**Attachments**

Page #7:        Maryland Department of Transportation

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September 17, 2025

Ms. Susan Llareus  
c/o Rita Pritchett  
Maryland Department of Planning  
120 E. Baltimore Street, Suite 2000  
Baltimore MD 21202

Dear Ms. Llareus:

Thank you for coordinating the State of Maryland's comments on the 2025 Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan (the Plan) in Montgomery County, Maryland. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following comments on the Plan for consistency with the State of Maryland and MDOT's goals and objectives:

**General Comments**

- In general, the Plan is consistent with MDOT plans and programs. The MDOT supports the goals of the Plan, including the vision of a multi-modal transportation future for Clarksburg that is characterized by safe streets and human-centered design that serves a Complete and Compact Community and supports environmentally responsible growth.
- Shifting transportation mode choice towards transit and active transportation, shortening automobile trips, and increasing carpooling and vanpooling, are critical components to building efficient, equitable, and sustainable places, and is also essential to accommodating Maryland's changing demographic composition. The MDOT manages several active transportation programs:
  - Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program: a reimbursable, federally funded program for local sponsors to complete community projects designed to strengthen the intermodal transportation system. The program provides funding for projects that enhance the cultural, aesthetic, historic, and intermodal transportation system. The program can assist with projects that create bicycle and pedestrian facilities, restore historic transportation buildings, convert abandoned railway corridors to pedestrian trails, mitigate highway runoff, and other transportation-related enhancements. Project sponsors are required to provide a minimum 20 percent of the total project as a match.



- Recreational Trails Program: a federally funded program that the State Highway Administration (SHA) administers on a reimbursement basis. Like the TA Program, the Recreational Trails Program may reimburse a local project sponsor up to 80 percent of the project's total eligible costs to develop community-based, motorized, and non-motorized recreational trail projects.
- The MDOT's Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program: a program that allocates State transportation funds administered by the MDOT Secretary's Office to promote biking as an alternative transportation mode.
- For more information on MDOT's active transportation planning and programming efforts, please see our Maryland's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans and Programs web page:  
<https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=24>.
- Commuter Choice Maryland is MDOT's Travel Demand Management (TDM) program, and it could be incorporated into the Plan as a strategy to support the Plan. The program offers an extensive menu of commuter transportation services, such as ridesharing and incentives. Please visit the Commuter Choice Maryland web site at <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=29> for more information.
- The MDOT supports continued improvements to expand and enhance transit options. Please coordinate with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Office of Statewide Planning for any coordination regarding regional transit and the coordination of MDOT supported locally-operated transit services (LOTS). The MTA also supports park and ride (with SHA), demand response services, paratransit, medical services, and senior-center transportation options. For regional transit planning, please contact Mr. Stephen Miller, Chief of Strategic Planning, via email at [SMiller6@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:SMiller6@mdot.maryland.gov) or phone at 410-767-3869. For local transit service planning, please contact Mr. Jason Kepple, MTA Regional Planner, via email at [Jkepple@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:Jkepple@mdot.maryland.gov).
- A Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Program was established within MDOT to provide services including identifying potential TOD opportunities and evaluating existing and future needs of public transportation facilities. For TOD related data resources please visit the Transit-Oriented Development in Maryland web page: <https://data-maryland.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/tod>
- Relative to MDOT implementing resilience strategies and initiatives to withstand the impacts of climate change on transportation infrastructure, please review the MDOT SHA Climate Change Vulnerability Viewer online ArcGIS web application map: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=86b5933d2d3e45ee8b9d8a5f03a7030c>. The map showcases geospatial data products related to climate change and the potential impacts on State transportation infrastructure. The purpose of this application is to support efforts to avert and mitigate potential impacts of sea-level rise that result from global climate change on State roadway and bridge infrastructure. To review other MDOT Climate Change programs and to access this information please visit: <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=169>.

## **Chapter 2: Plan Vision and Framework**

- p. 19-21. Consider bike-ability for both short- and long-term trips in the concept framework plan. Consider walking, biking, and rolling needs on connectors that prioritize travel through the Plan Area.

## **Chapter 3 B: Transportation Comments**

- p. 48, 19. The MDOT supports the County's vision to pursue complete streets design that encourages the efficient use of land and transportation resources. Such planning is in line with MDOT's emphasis on improving connectivity, access, and mobility for all users as emphasized by SHA's Context Driven initiative, which focuses transportation practitioners on implementing context-appropriate improvements to emphasize safety, access, and mobility for all users, especially those more vulnerable such as pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Consider incorporating bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to and pedestrian-friendly amenities at local bus stops, in addition to major transit stations.
- Use MDOT's Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress typology to support the Plan's data-driven approach to active transportation improvements and complement the County's Pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis.
- Clarify the County's policy or approach to improving walking conditions on existing roadways. If the County anticipates certain right-of-way needs, MDOT encourages the County to discuss this in the recommendations.
- Consider future context-sensitive countermeasures, particularly at intersections and crossings, to expand on the Plan's typical sections.
- Upon implementation, please share any new sidewalk or shared-use path data with MDOT.
- Consider the ongoing maintenance needs of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the Plan area. Coordinate maintenance needs with the planned MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor.
- Continue to prioritize Safe Routes to School (SRTS) engineering improvements to the three schools located in the Plan area in the Plan's implementation and through the County's SRTS program.
- The MDOT recommends coordinating with Luis Gonzalez, Chief of the SHA Active Transportation Division for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along MD 355 (Frederick Road).

Ms. Susan Llareus  
Page Four

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Plan. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Nicole Condol, Transportation Planner, MDOT Office of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery (OPPPD) at 410-230-6614, or via email at [ncondol@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:ncondol@mdot.maryland.gov). Ms. Condol will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Geoff" and last name "Anderson" clearly distinguishable.

Geoff Anderson  
Chief, OPPPD, MDOT

cc: Ms. Nicole Condol, Transportation Planner, OPPPD, MDOT  
Mr. Luis Gonzalez, Division Chief, SHA  
Mr. Jason Kepple, Regional Planner, MTA  
Mr. Stephen Miller, Chief of Strategic Planning, MTA  
Ms. Kari Snyder, Regional Planner, OPPPD, MDOT