



CLARKSBURG GATEWAY

S e c t o r P l a n

Montgomery Planning Upcounty Division



Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

Community Feedback Report

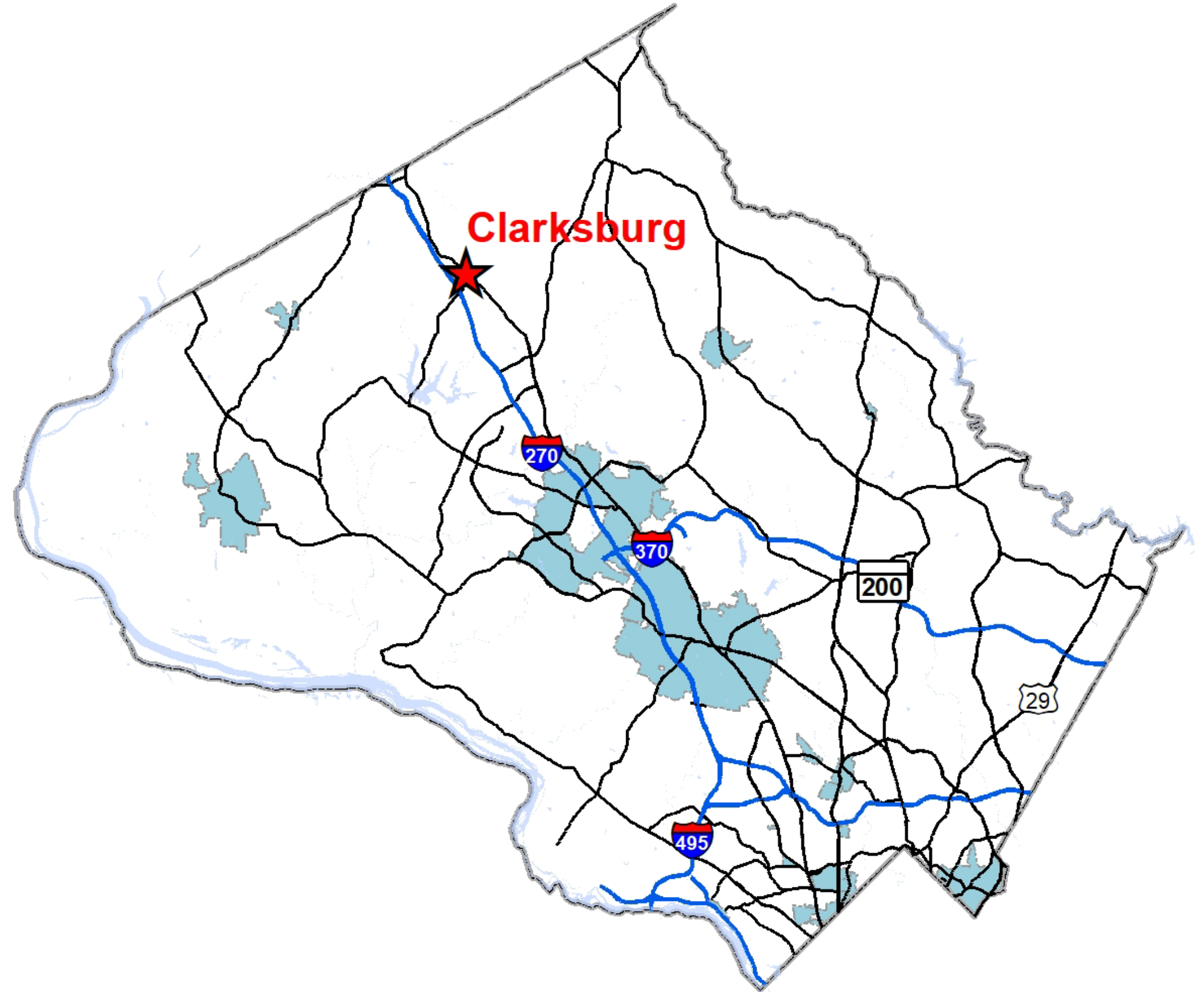
2/15/2024

Agenda item 09



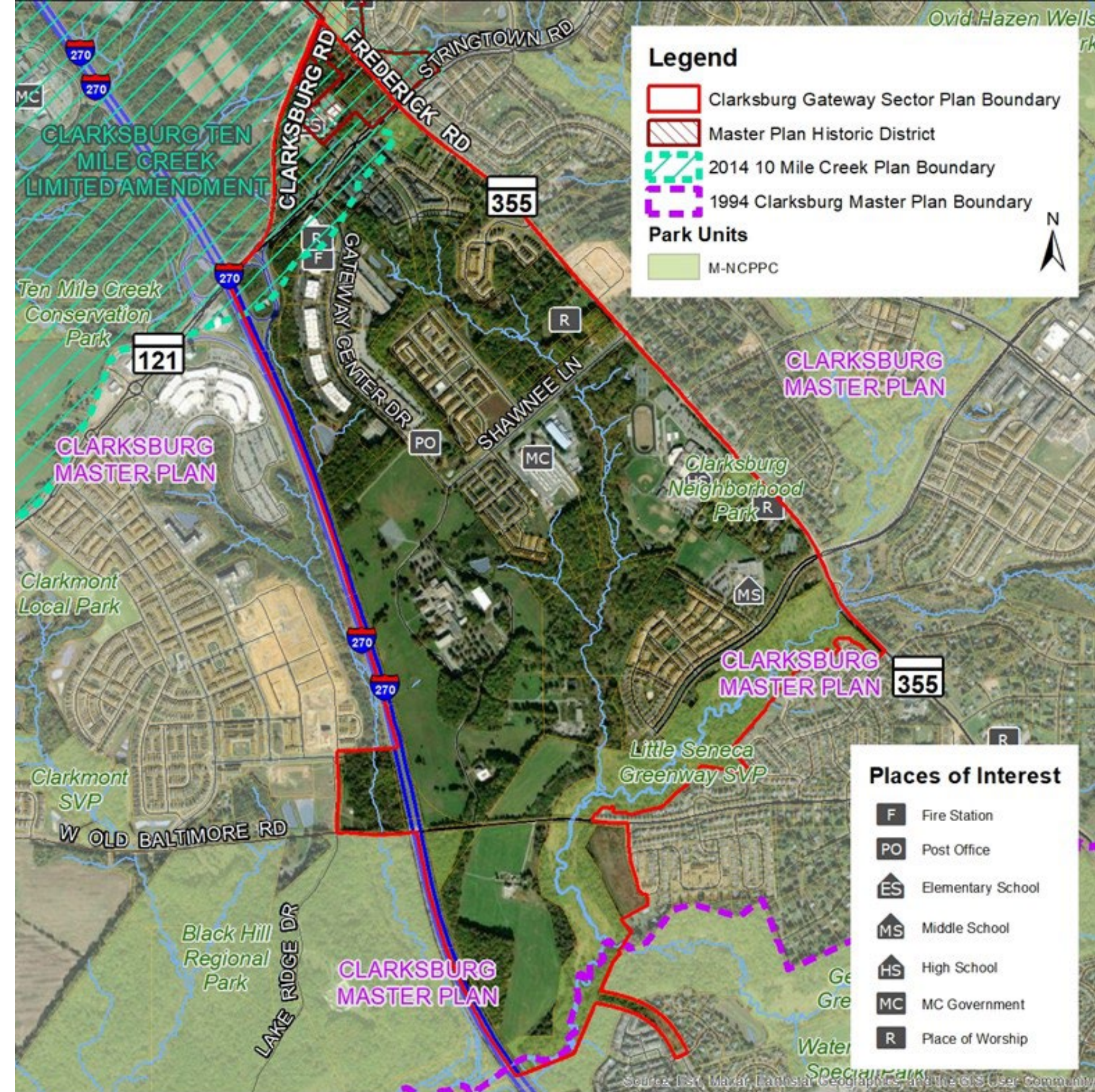
Overview

- Background
- Source of Comments
- Demographics
- What We Heard
 - Transportation
 - Public Facilities
 - Livability/Quality of Life
 - Environment
 - Housing
 - Jobs and Economy
 - Historic Preservation
 - Parks
 - Maintenance or Property Maintenance
- Conclusion and Next Steps



Plan Boundary

- Consists of major employment centers planned in Clarksburg.
- Includes several residential developments, public schools, parks, and vacant or underdeveloped properties.
- 969 acres.
- First update to most of Plan area since 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area*.
- Small area of overlap with 2014 *10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment*.

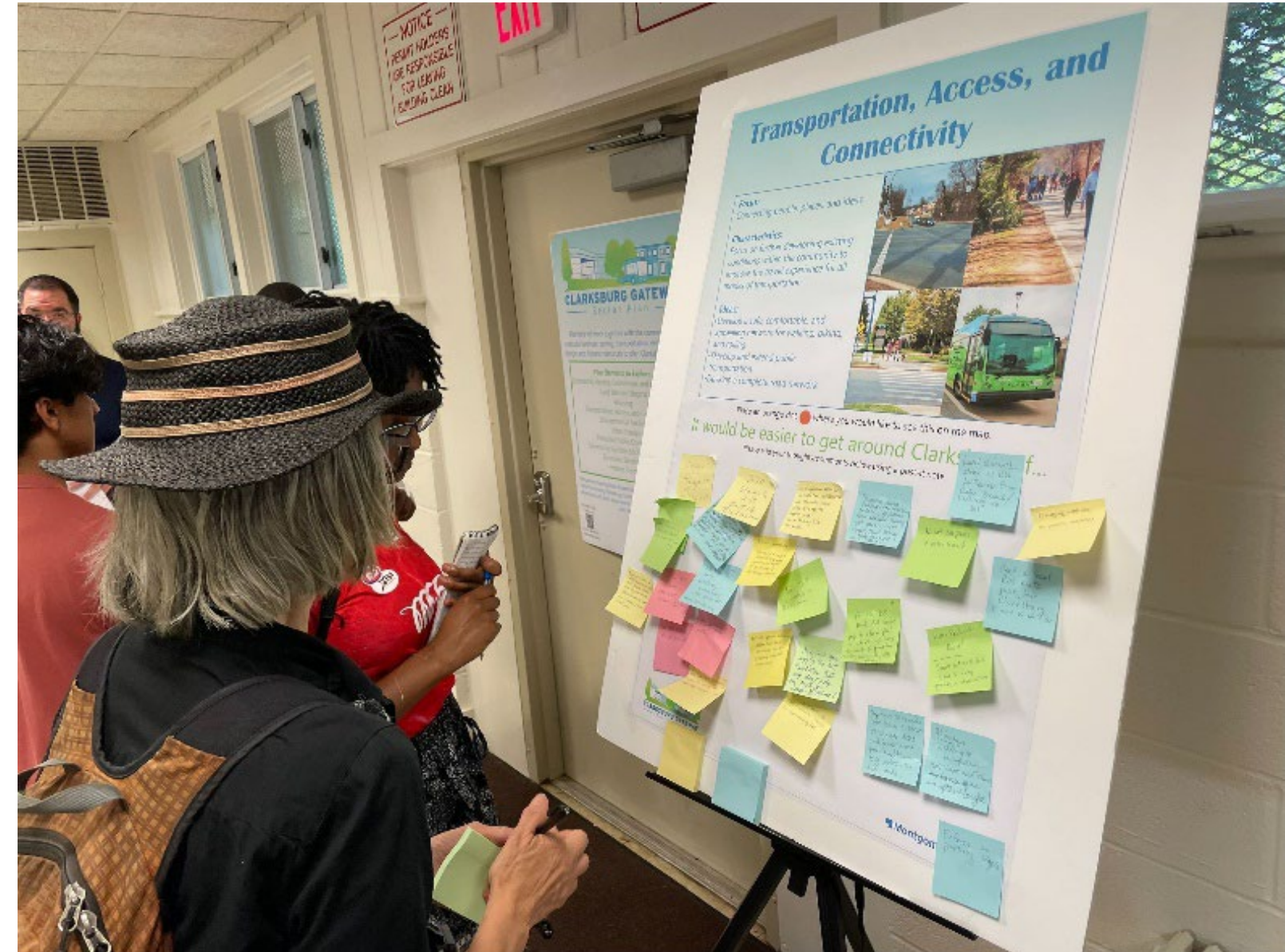


Timeline

Scope of Work	June 22, 2023
Outreach	Summer/Fall 2023
Community Kickoff	July 26, 2023
Listening Sessions by Topic	October 2023
Community Feedback	Today
Visioning and Analysis	Spring 2024
Preliminary Recommendations	Summer 2024
Working Draft	Fall 2024
Planning Board Work Sessions	Fall 2024
County Council Actions	Winter/Spring 2025

Community Kickoff Meeting

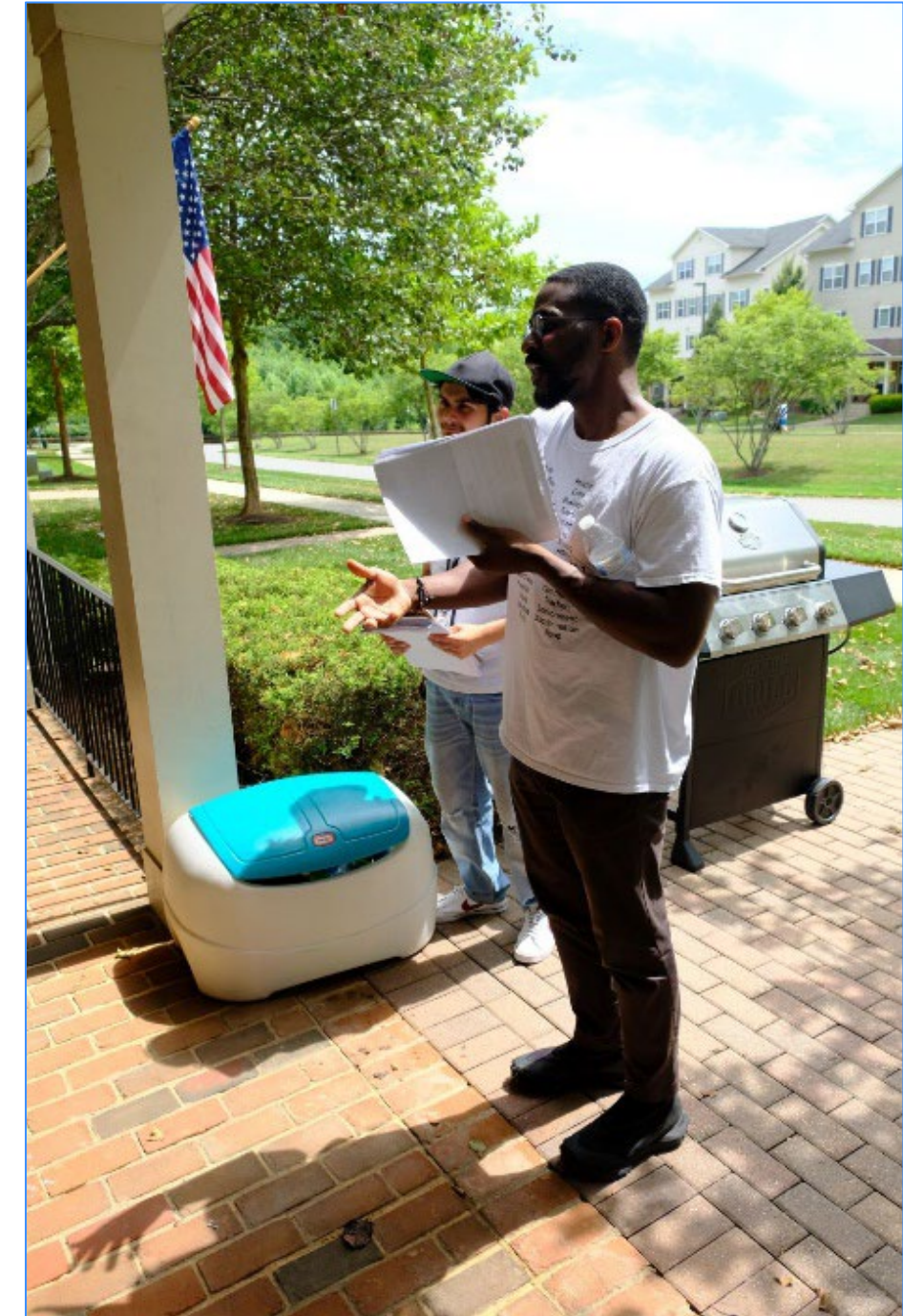
- Topic specific boards placed around the meeting room. Stakeholders provided comments on post it notes.
- Brief presentation followed by questions and answers.
- There were over 75 attendees at the meeting.
- 139 comments were recorded regarding the various topics.



Community members contemplate a topic board at the community kickoff meeting

Everyday Canvassing

- Between June and August 2023, worked with Everyday Canvassing to knock on every door within the five residential neighborhoods in the plan area.
- Knocked on doors in the communities outside the plan boundary, including area businesses.
- Interviewed community members to gain a better understanding of what people currently think about Clarksburg and how they would like to see the future of the area.
- Had 177 conversations with residents.



*Members of the Everyday Canvassing team
at Gateway Commons*

Listening Sessions

- Held four listening sessions during October 2023: one online, three in person.
- The first three sessions covered specific topics. The final session, covered all the topics typically found in a master plan.
- With each listening session, staff provided the community with the existing conditions for a topic and then solicited their opinions.
- Collected 309 comments.



Members of the community and planning team at the third listening session

Online Surveys

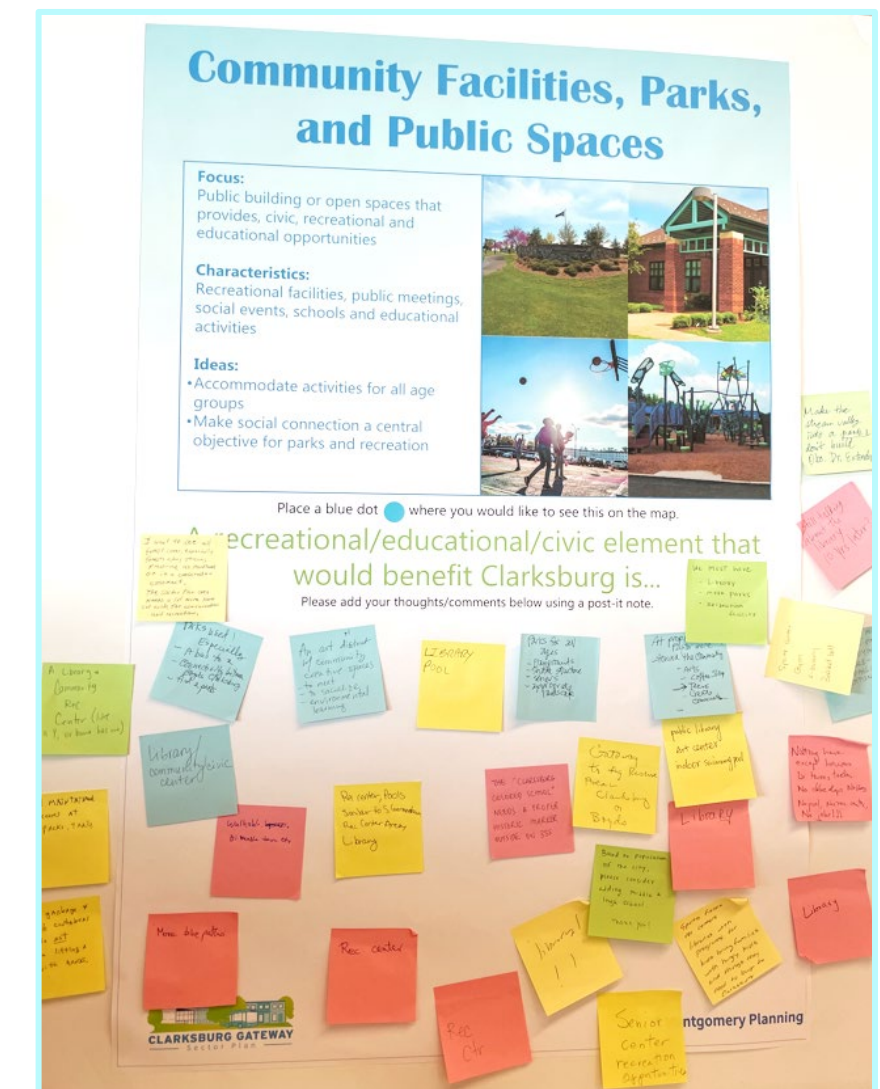
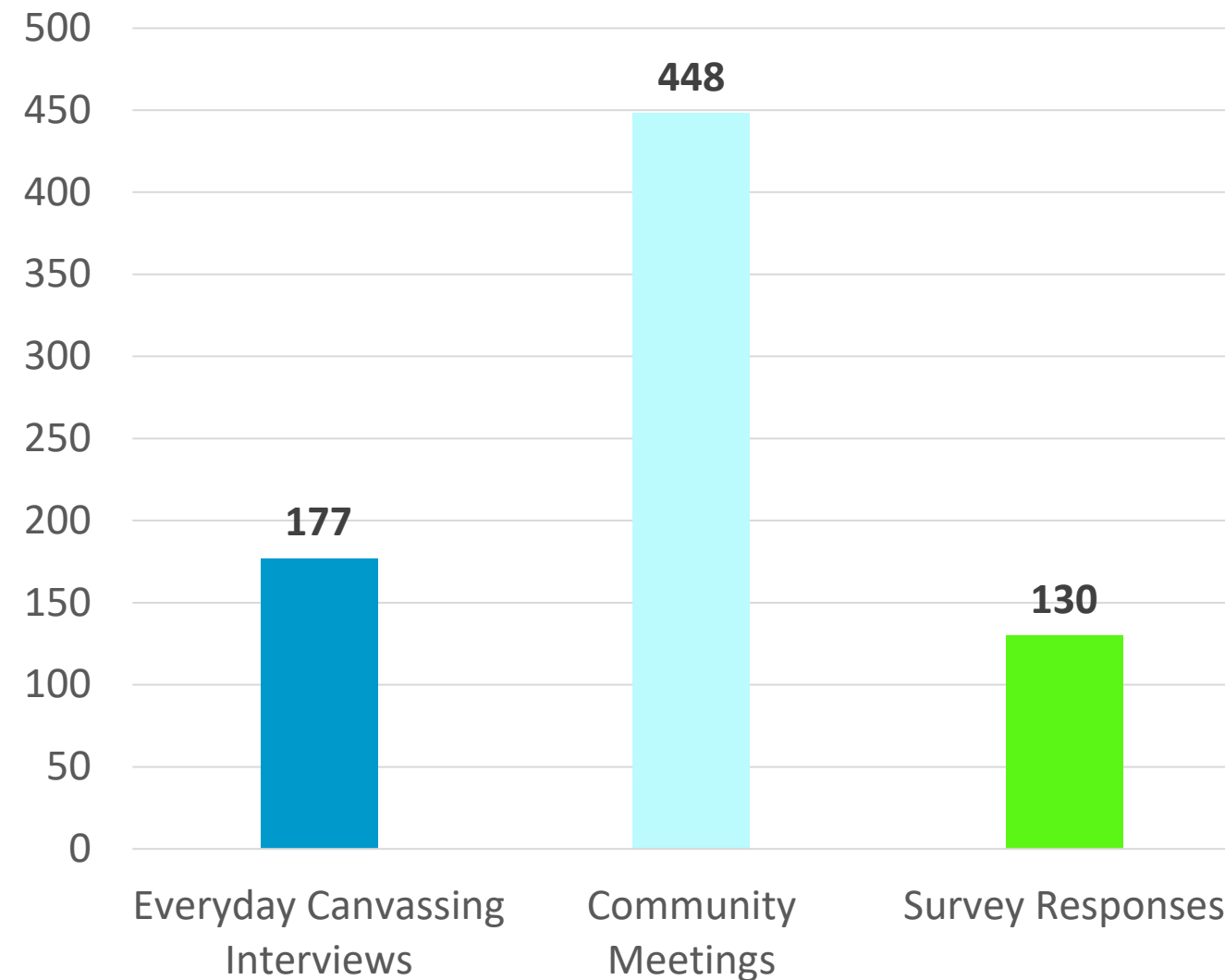
- Received 126 responses digitally and 4 in person.
- Included the following questions:
 1. What do you like most about living in Clarksburg? Or what do you want to make sure is preserved?
 2. What facilities and or amenities are lacking in Clarksburg (i.e. educational, bikeways and walkways, public transportation, government, medical, parks, recreation, retail, etc.)?
 3. What do you think needs improvement in Clarksburg?
 4. The former COMSAT facility located along I-270 is one of the focus areas of this plan. What do you want to see happen at COMSAT facility site in the future and why?
 5. What is your biggest concern about the future of Clarksburg?
 6. The plan is a success if...
 7. Any additional thoughts?

Community Comments

Through the four methods of interaction with the community, we received a total of 755 comments.

I think we need a sense of community. We are kind of a displaced city or town because we don't have a lot of the other amenities that growing communities have. A lot of our residents find yet to be involved in activities. We don't have a public library yet, so our sense of community and identity is a bit weakened by that. The community as a whole needs a rec center, a community center, a library, places for teens and children to go and be themselves. If I saw the YMCA and a library come to Clarksburg I would say "yes this is home!"; I would be so proud of my community. I've been a resident of Clarksburg for 10 years and they have been saying we are gonna have plans for transportation but I haven't seen improvement or change. I love the community and need to know about our things happening in it. We had to push to get another elementary school built for Cabin Branch. I try to be involved with elementary and middle school. I like the mix of the population and diversity here. Clarksburg straddles the bounds of Montgomery County but we aren't quite Frederick County either. A lot of the resources get funneled down-county and not upcounty. We aren't loud enough up here. A lot of immigrants and historically-minority communities don't get the best of the government because we don't make as much noise. We need more of a voice. We are struggling to get a library. They remodeled the libraries in Bethesda and Chevy Chase yet our school still needs remodeling and we need sidewalks. The least you can do is make it accessible. Give us a sidewalk. We will get there by bike or by walking. They have plans for Clarksburg town center but I think it was done before the population really boomed, so SQFT wise, I think it's gonna be smaller than what we need. The school my children attend is supposed to attend 350 children vs the actual 800. Needs more in portables than in the building. And community advocacy is one part of it but more people in the right places. The Y in Urbana I love it it is great. You have all of your typical things— subsidized swim lessons, and a really affordable price because it's a nonprofit. It has a state of the art gym and fitness classes, and they have kids summer camps there all summer. What an easy thing to do, just drop off your kids and pick them up there. That Y has spaces to gather as a community, too; they have large and small conference rooms. Just things for all ages and classes. I need this in my backyard. This is basically a hotel because you eat sleep work here, but nobody works in Clarksburg, we all commute elsewhere.

Some of the Everyday Canvassing interviews are quite lengthy



One of the topic boards from the Community Kickoff meeting

What do you like most about living in Clarksburg? Or what do you want to make sure is preserved?
 We like the access to green areas like trails and parks. We would love to have access to more parks and trails.

What facilities and amenities are lacking in Clarksburg (i.e. educational, bikeways and walkways, public transportation, government, medical, parks, recreation, retail, etc).
 We need a library, more frequent buses, better traffic control along 355, and more recreational options such as parks for families for picnics.

What do you think needs improvement in Clarksburg?
 Most roadways are not maintained for the growing traffic due to more people living in the area. If there are more housing projects, then we need more public transportation.

The former COMSAT facility located along I-270 is one of the focus areas of this plan. What do you want to see happen at COMSAT facility site in the future and why?
 It would be nice if the building is preserved and repurposed for commercial use. The surrounding land would be great for a recreational area if possible.

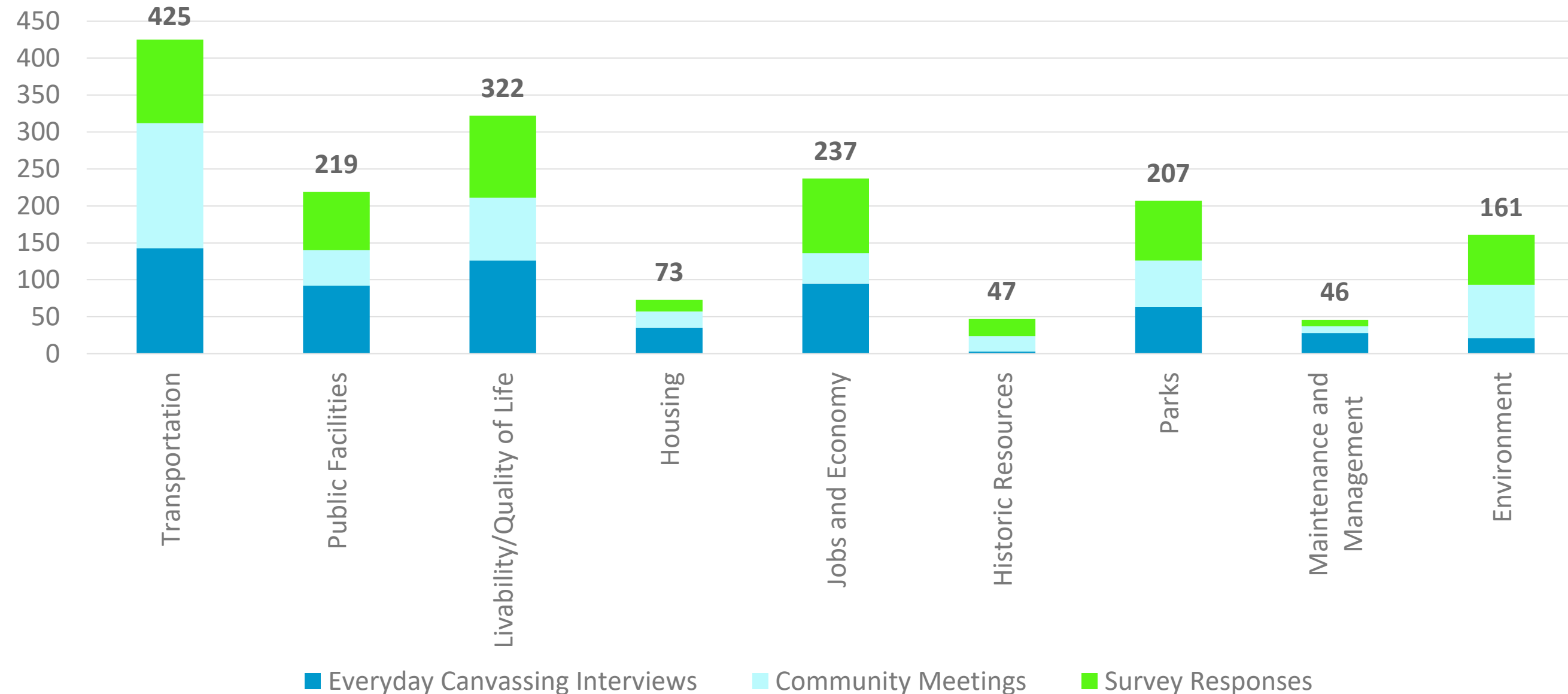
What is your biggest concern about the future of Clarksburg?
 Biggest concern is that it would be over-developed like Gaithersburg without many recreational options for families. Also, better public transportation would be beneficial to prevent traffic in the future.

This plan will be a success if ...
 There is a balance between housing, public recreational areas, and commercial facilities.

An example survey response

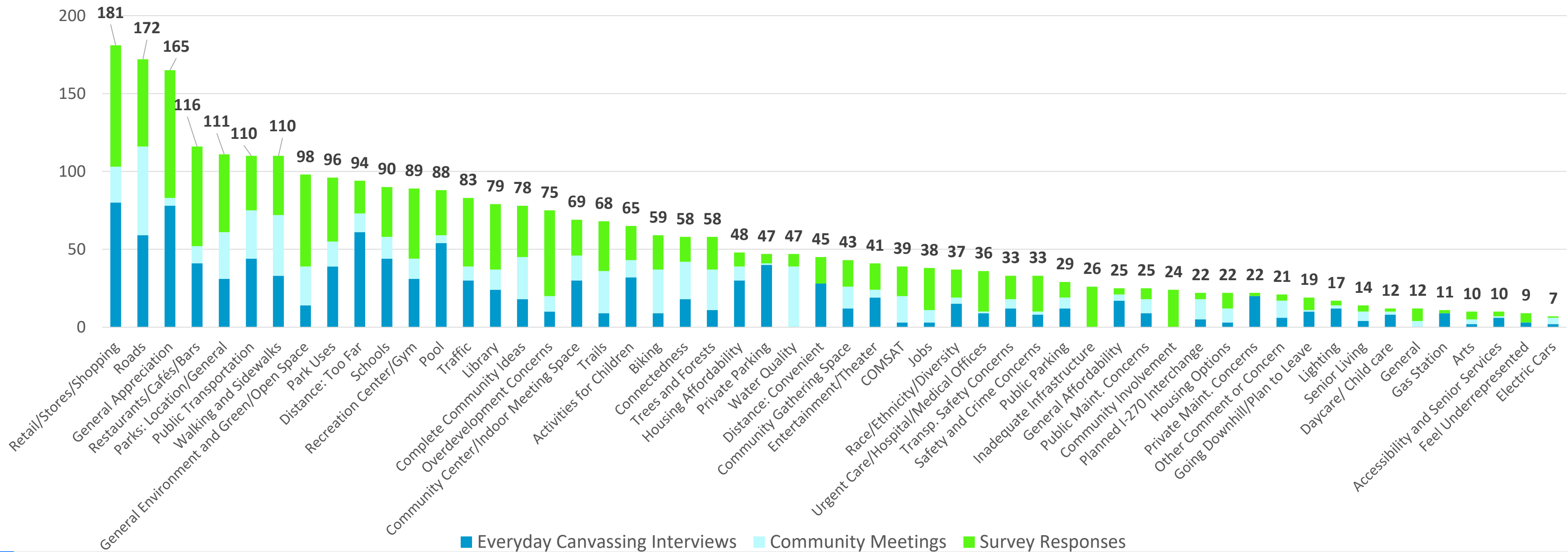
Comments by Topic Area

- The 755 comments we received were distributed into nine topics areas.
- Many comments fell into one or more topics. In total, there were 1,737 entries to the topic areas.

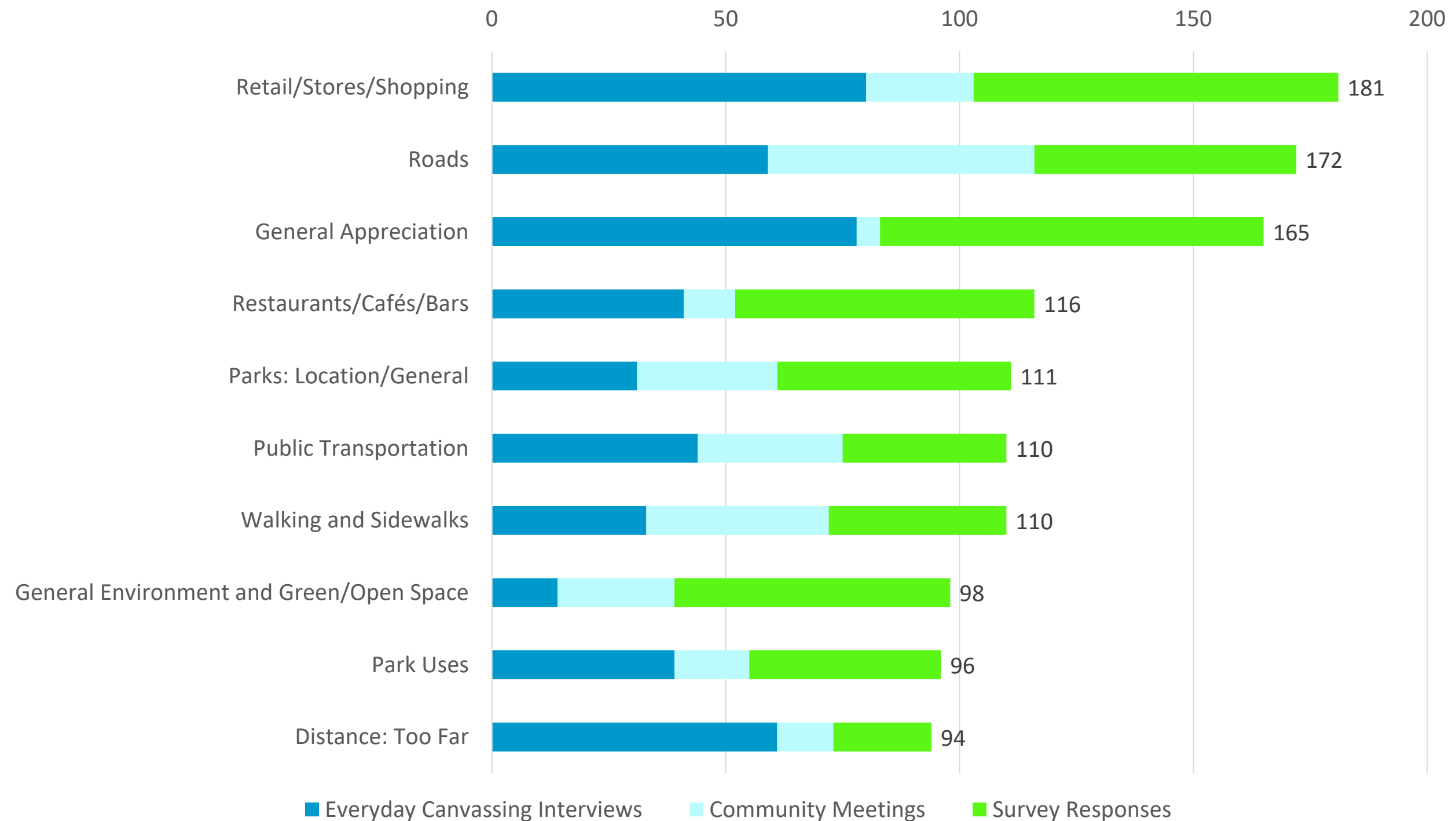


Comments by Subcategory

- To gain a better understanding of the comments received, we assigned the 755 comments into 54 subcategories.
- This resulted in 3,036 subcategory assignments.

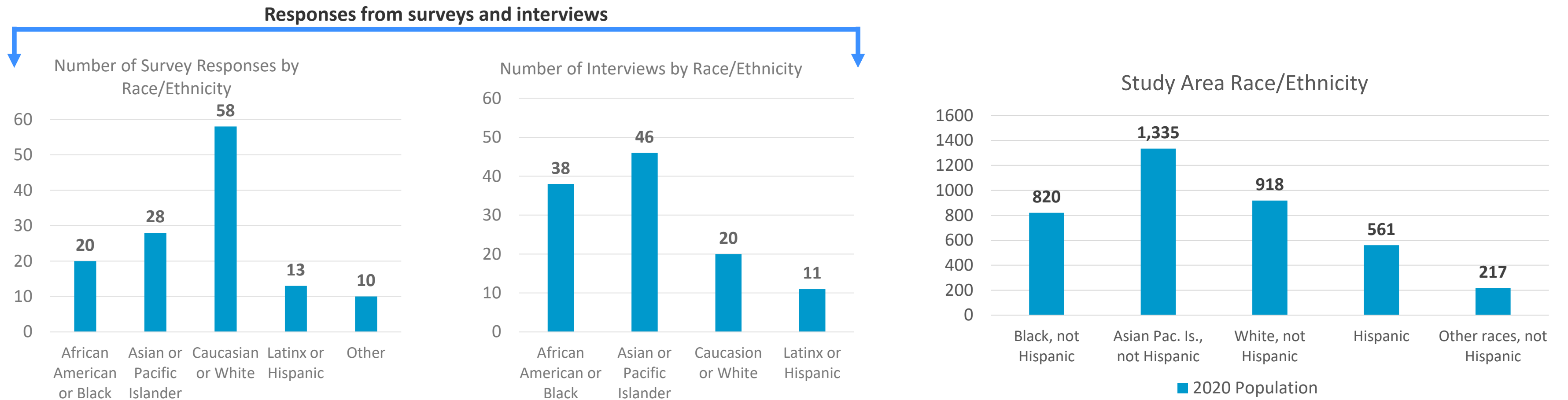


Top 10 Subcategories



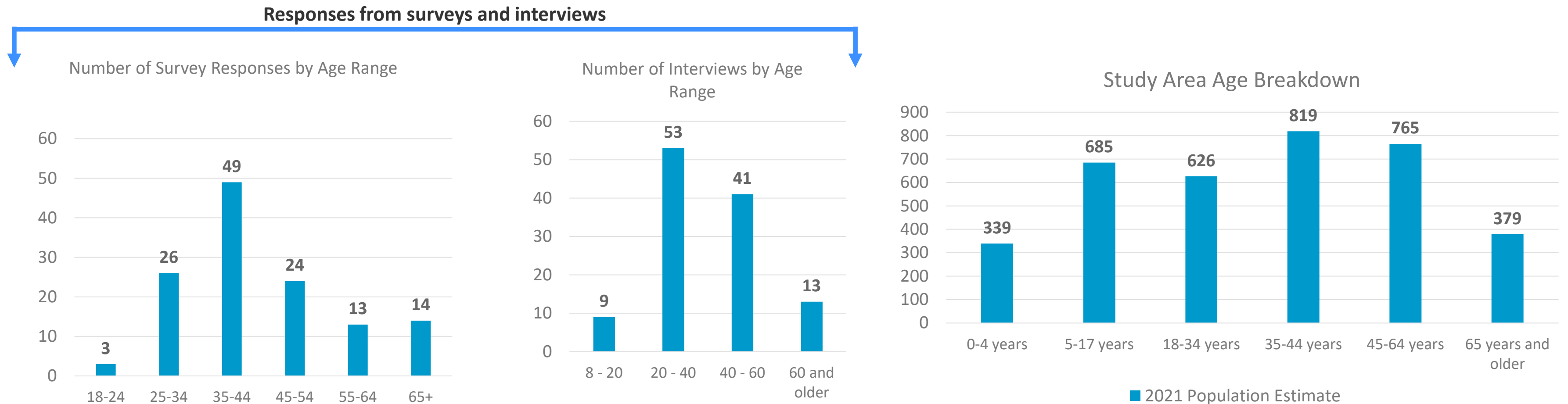
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

- The online surveys and Everyday Canvassing interviews included questions regarding race/ethnicity and age.
- Generally, the race and ethnicity of respondents tracked closely with the population for the plan’s study area.



Age of Respondents

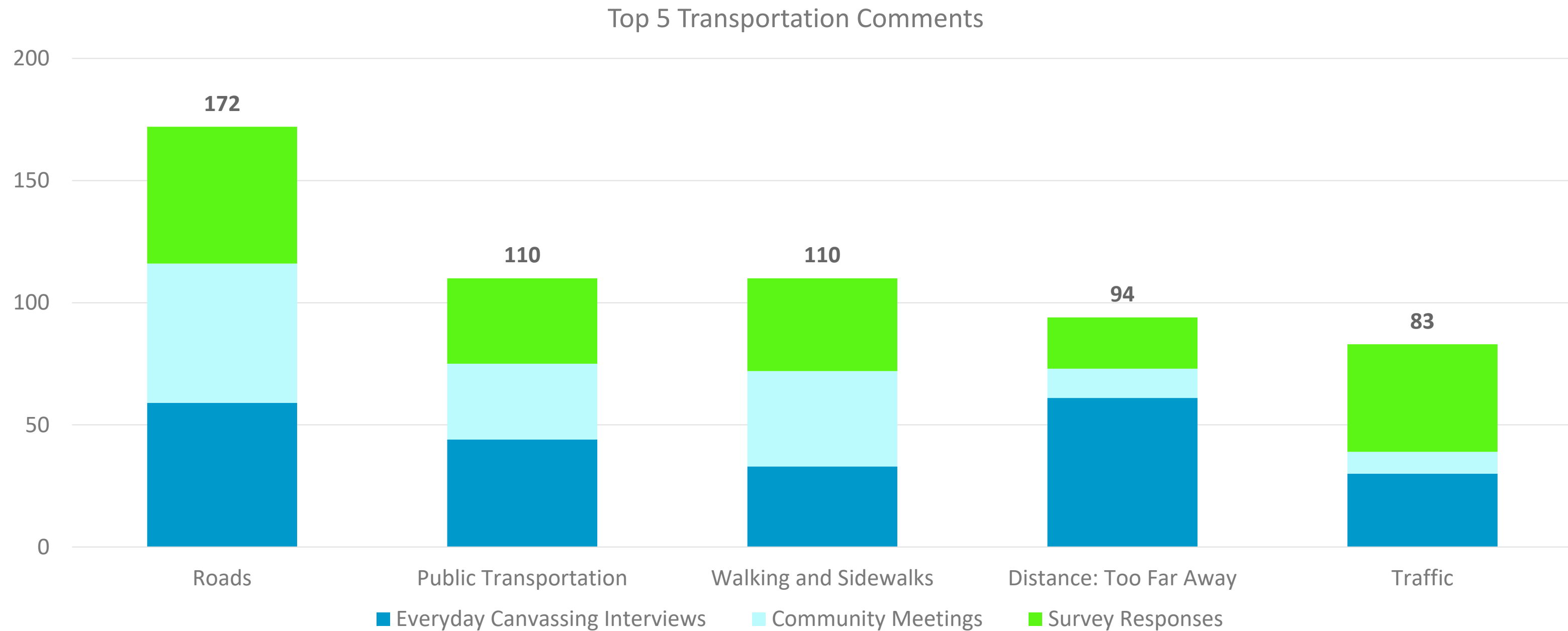
- The most common household type in the study area is families with children under 18.
- The age of the respondents to the surveys and interviews generally follows the age breakdown from the plan's study area.



What We Heard

Transportation Feedback

- Transportation issues accounted for 425 comments with 912 subcategory assignments.



Road Comments

Incomplete street network with challenging topography.

Little Seneca Parkway

“I would also like to see Little Seneca Parkway on the east side of 270 be linked to Little Seneca Parkway on the west side.”

“The connections between the two parts of Little Seneca Parkway, and the Little Seneca Parkway/I-270 interchange, should be removed from all of the master and sector plans.”

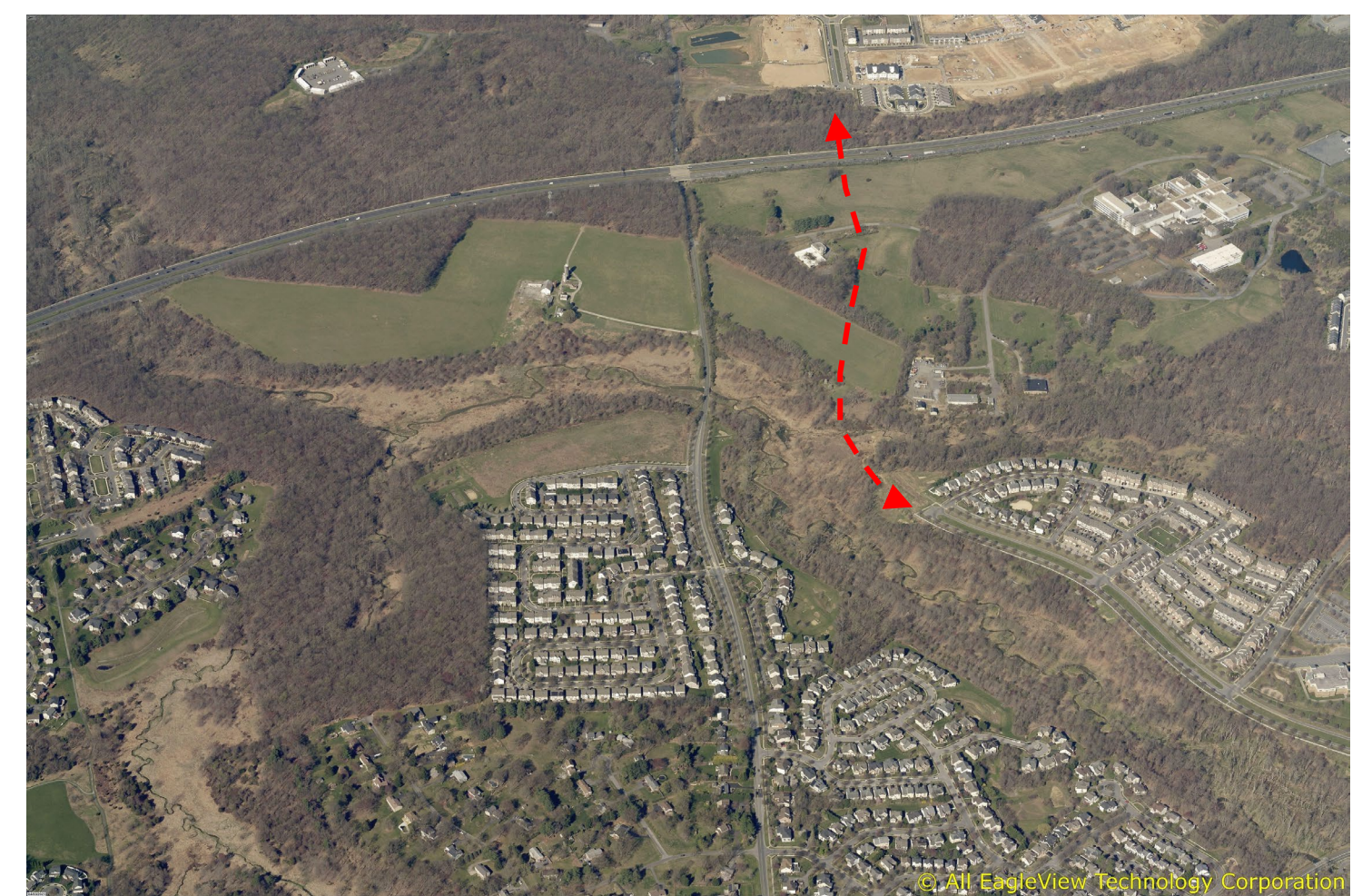
Observation Drive

“Create alternate route North-South along Gateway or Observation.”

“Don’t build Observation Drive – there are enough roads in the area.”

Frederick Road and I-270

“Both I-270 & 355 are congested, please improve.”



Public Transportation Comments

Only three bus routes serve the area, and the times are limited. The buses come at long intervals.

“Bedroom community + little public transportation options = huge environmental impact of gas-powered vehicles & bad parking situations.”

“Very slow public transit – every 45 minutes or so.”

“If you don’t have a car, transportation is hard...”



Walking and Biking Comments

Many comments favored better walking and biking infrastructure.

“More bike paths.”

“Prioritize walking and bicycling – not just add these as an afterthought.”

“Clarksburg area lacks walking infrastructure (hard surface trails/paths), especially along major roads.”



Biking and walking along the Capital Crescent Trail

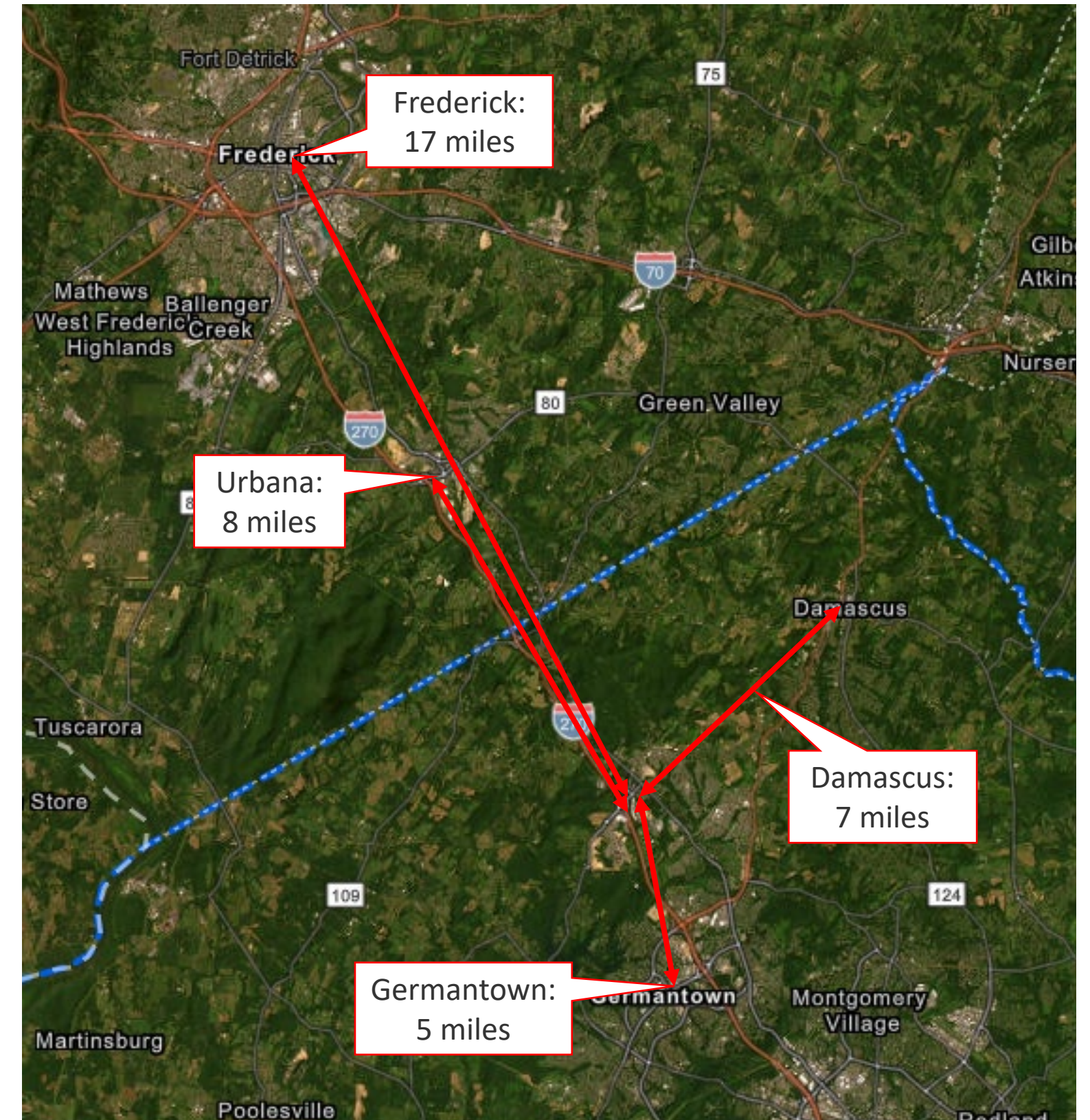
Distance Traveled Comments

2/3 were dissatisfied with how far away everything is.
1/3 were satisfied with distances to places.

“Create Clarksburg as sustaining community without residents needing to go to Damascus as Germantown for practically everything.”

“Shopping is a bit far. We need to drive about 16 - 20 minutes. We need more stores nearby.”

“With a 20-minute drive, I can get to anything from here: I'm satisfied.”



Traffic Comments

Residents expressed that traffic congestion has been caused by overdevelopment and the lack of infrastructure improvements.

They also worry that more development will make things worse.

“Both I-270 & 355 are getting congested, please improve.”

“There is rush hour seven days a week...”

“There's lots of traffic in the morning around the middle school.”

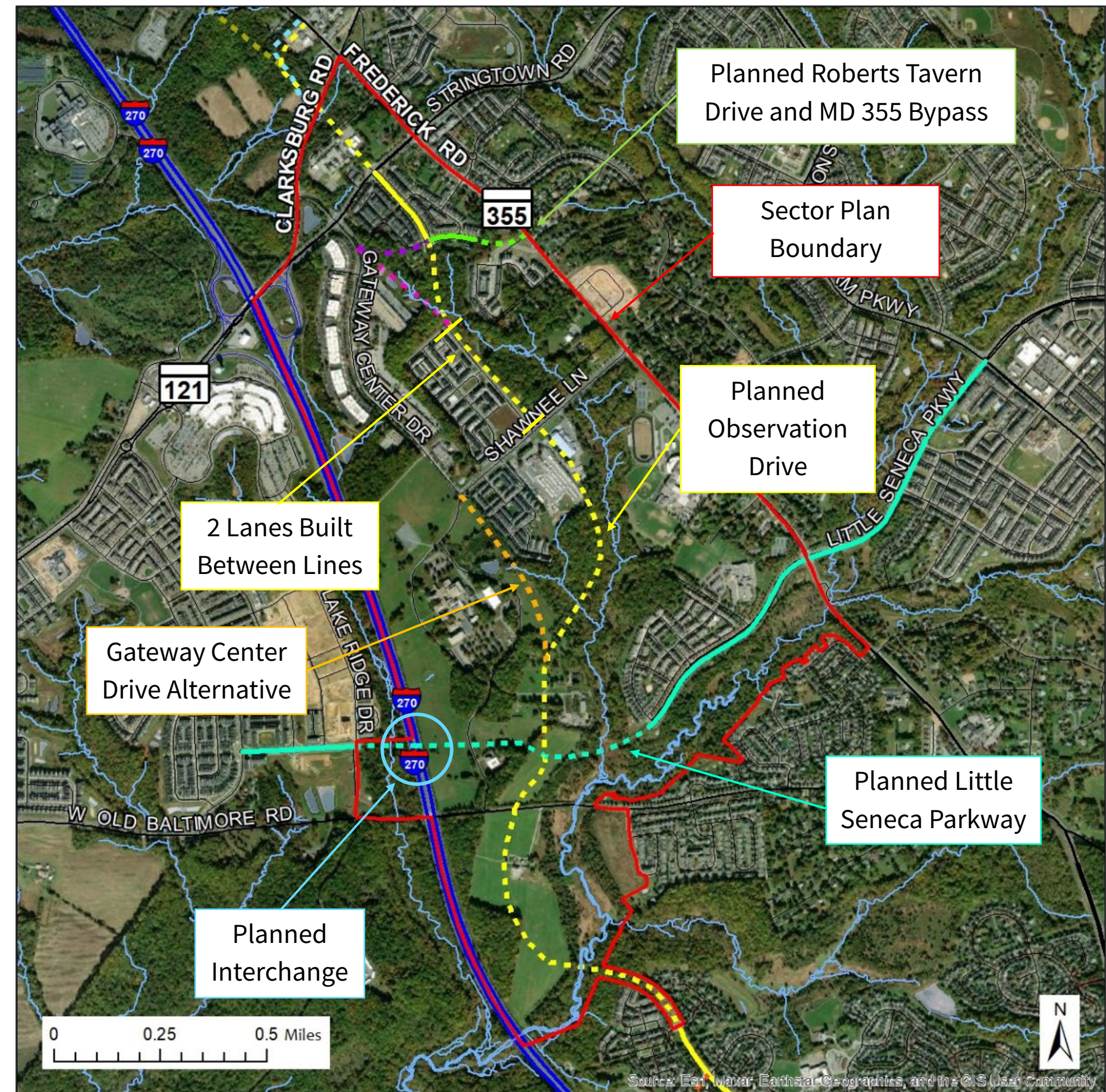
“With development, traffic will become worse.”



Traffic congestion on I-495

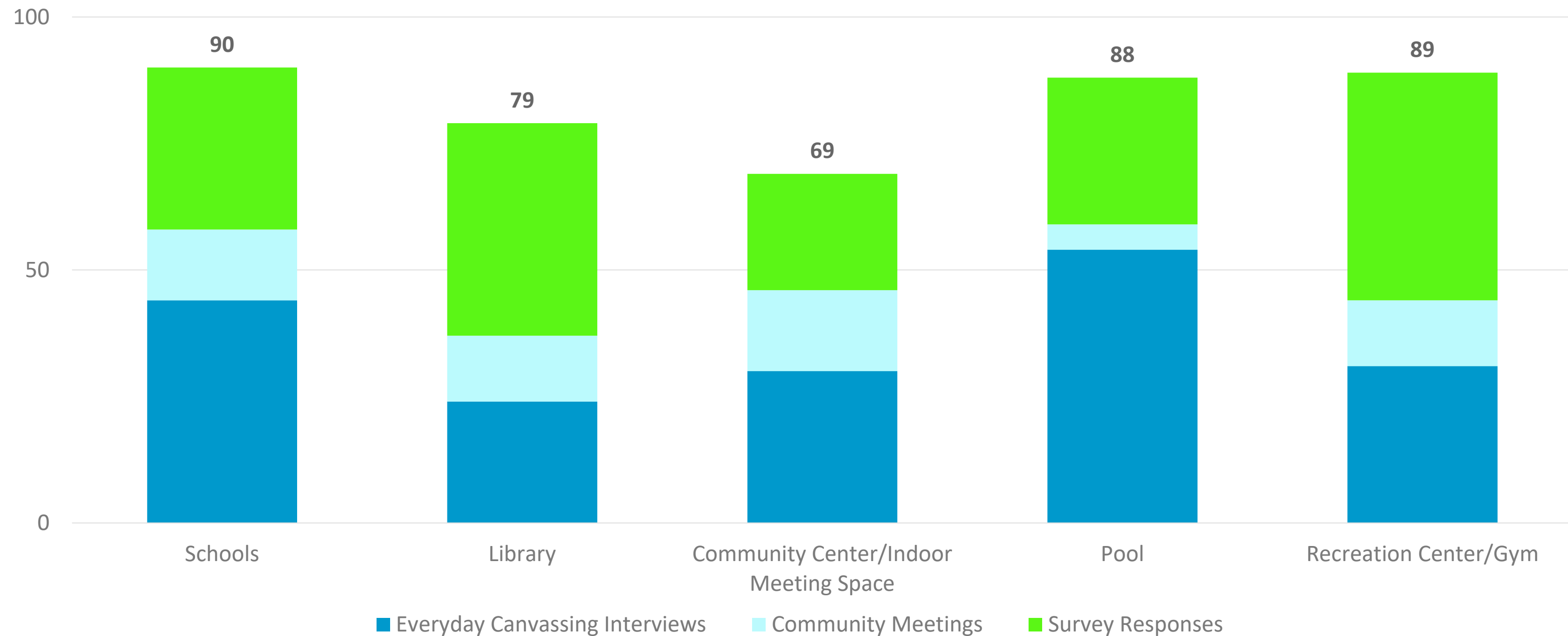
Transportation Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- Limited points of connectivity within and outside of the sector plan area. Major planned road connects are unbuilt.
- Only three bus routes in the Clarksburg area; service is limited.
- More sidepaths, sidewalks, and park trails will need to be built to create complete pedestrian and bicycle networks.
- Some places that provide for everyday needs, such as the Milestone Shopping Center and Clarksburg Village Center are two to four miles away.



Public Facilities Feedback

- There were 219 comments regarding public facilities with 415 subcategory assignments.



School Comments

Residents provided comments regarding school capacity, how students get to and from school, and the condition of the school buildings.

“Clarksburg HS is overcrowded, even with the Cabin Branch community districted to Seneca Valley.”

“Lacking school crossing signs for the students crossing the road from Gateway Commons to Clarksburg ES.”

“My son can’t get a school bus. He’s in middle school and we drive him to school every day with a neighbor.”

“Clarksburg Elementary school needs renovations, very dated facility.”



Google- MD 355 and Running Brook Drive intersection midway between Clarksburg High School and Rocky Hill Middle School



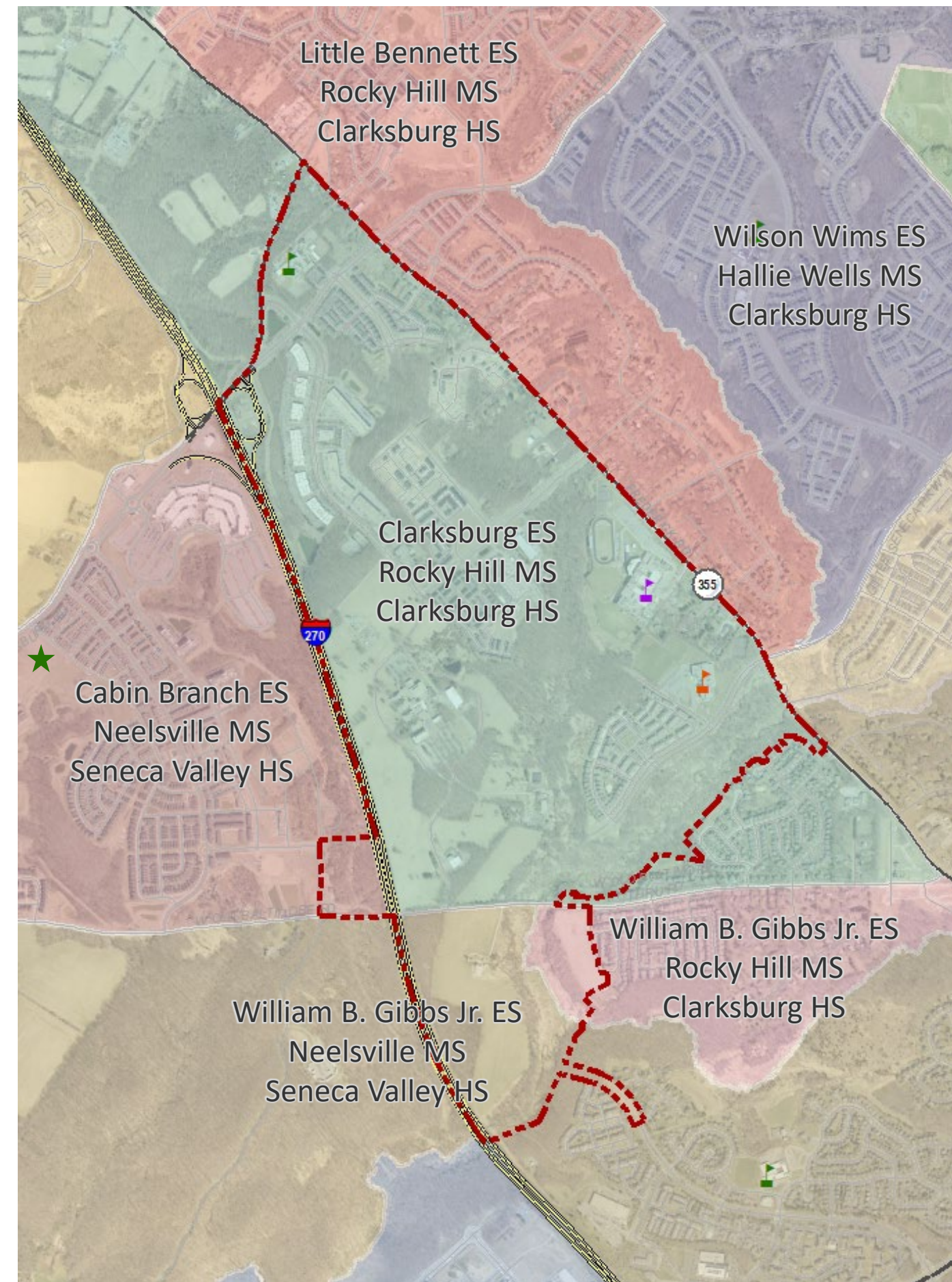
Clarksburg Elementary School



Portables at Clarksburg Elementary School

School Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- Enrollment at all levels has experienced dramatic growth over the last two decades.
- Elementary school enrollment peaked around 2019.
- Enrollment will continue to increase for a few more years at the middle school and high school levels.
- A major capital project at Damascus High School will provide relief from overutilization at Clarksburg High School.



Library Comments

There is no library in the Clarksburg community.

“We definitely need a library.”

“I’m generally happy here but I want a library!”

- The county is planning a library just outside the sector plan area.



Gaithersburg Public Library

Community Center/Pool/ Recreation Center Feedback

Many respondents requested indoor spaces for meetings and events, year-round pool facilities, a splash park, and a fitness center.

"When I want to go to a community center, pool, or library, I have to drive to Germantown or Frederick since there are none here."

"There's nowhere for kids to play, no pool, nothing; I don't want to have to leave Clarksburg for recreation."

"It would be nice to have an open gym, programs going on there, like basketball, sports, any things for kids to do."



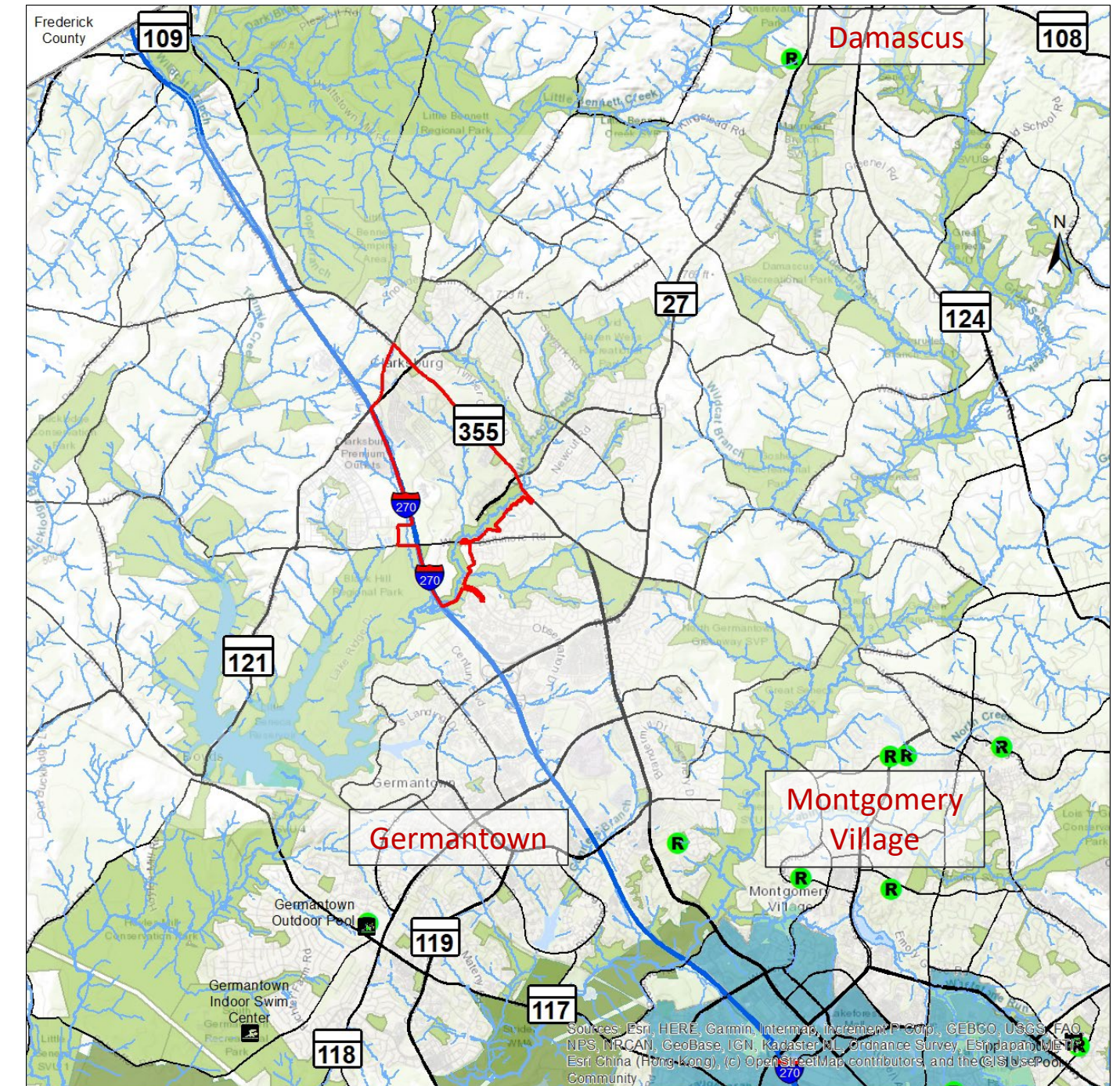
Wheaton Recreation Center and Library



South Germantown Splash Park

Community Center/Pool/Recreation Center Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

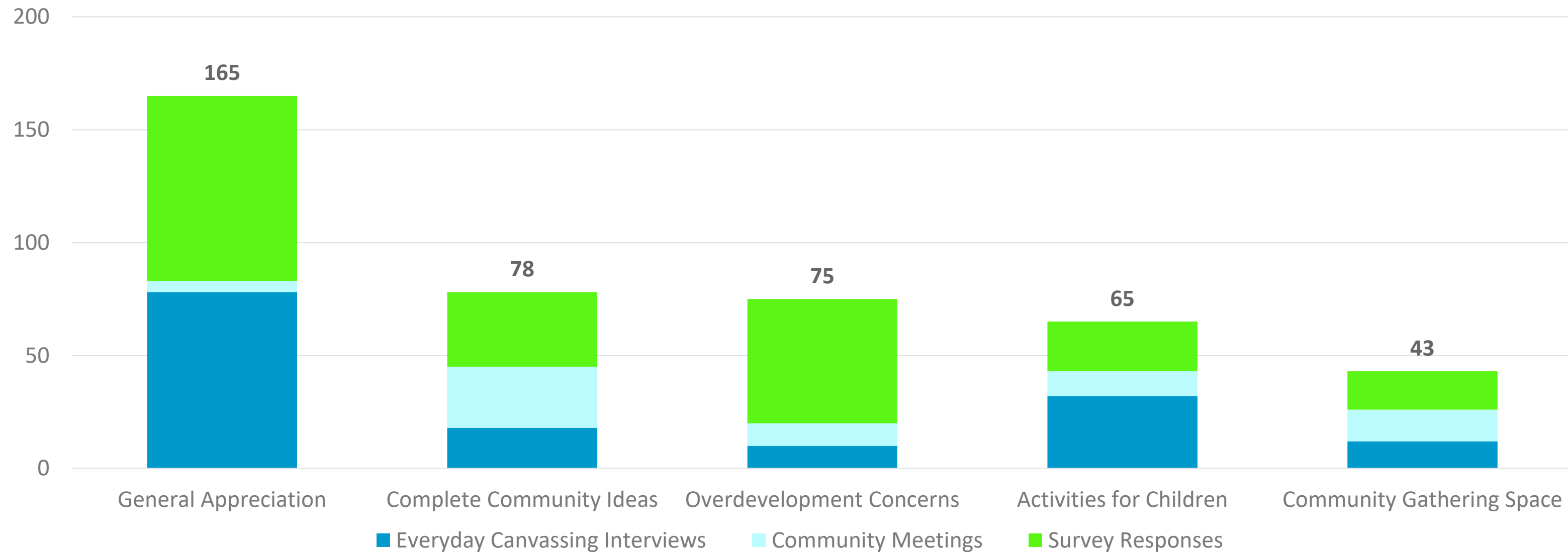
- There are no community centers within the Clarksburg area.
- The closest pool to the Plan area is in Germantown.
- The closest recreation centers are in Germantown, Damascus, and Montgomery Village.



Livability/Quality of Life Feedback

- In total, there were 322 comments regarding livability/quality of life with 614 subcategory assignments.

Top 5 Livability/Quality of Life Comments



Livability Comments

Many expressed that they valued the peace and quiet of Clarksburg, but some people wanted places where they could also work and play, gather with friends, and have activities for children.

Some residents were also concerned about overdevelopment.

“The small-town feeling, quiet streets and lots of outdoor space.”

“More focus on community and places to gather.”

“There needs to be more after-school programs for little kids.”



Columbia Heights Civic Plaza, Washington DC



Dinosaur Dig for Children in Laurel



Sidewalk Café and Shopping, Charlottesville



Marian Fryer Town Plaza, Wheaton

Livability Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- The two main land uses in the plan area are single-family attached residential and “flex” commercial space (of which a large portion is vacant).
- There are no true gathering spaces within the overall plan area.
- Community members want a place.



Community space for gathering at the Kentlands



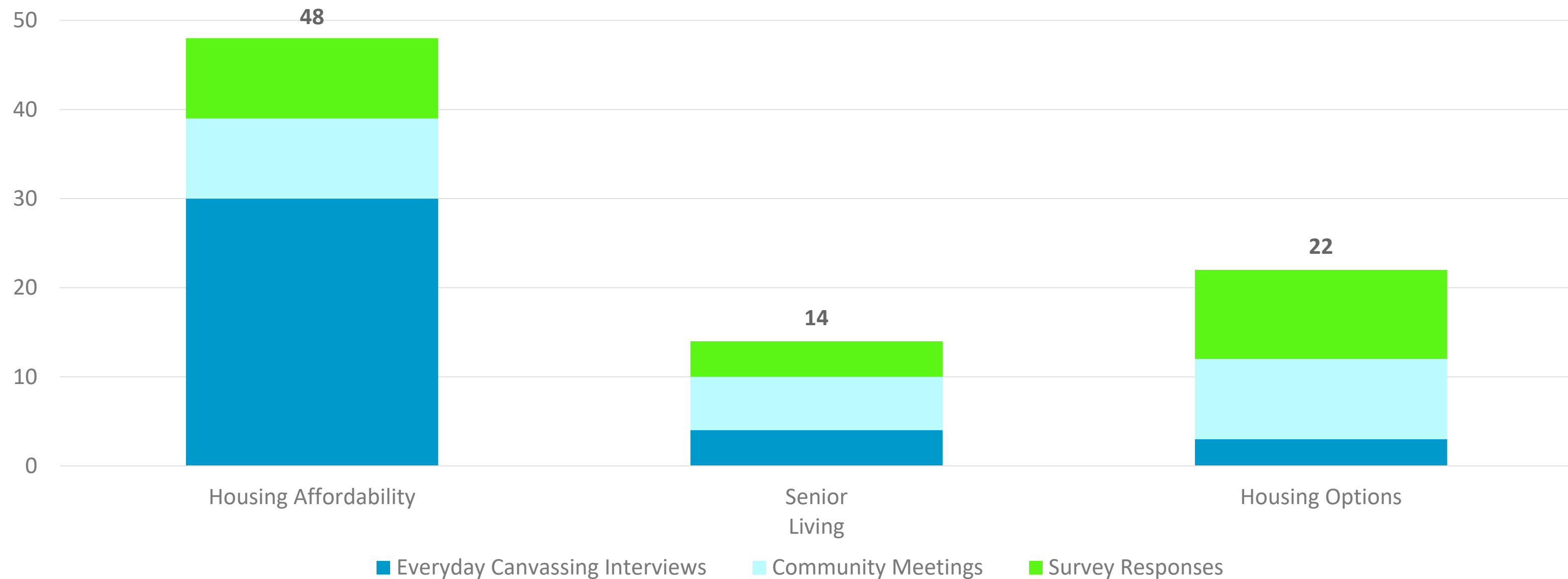
Ellington Boulevard, Downtown Crown



Restaurants and shops in Old Town Alexandria

Housing Feedback

- 73 comments touched on housing and residential development with 84 subcategory assignments.



Housing Comments

Some residents feel that they are being priced out of Clarksburg while others feel the area is affordable.

Other residents want the opportunity to have different housing types or age in place. Many felt that Clarksburg gets is housing and nothing else.

“I've been here for 5 years because it's the most affordable place in this area.”

“Rent is killing me; I pay \$3,000 a month. I will leave if the rent increases.”

“Difficult to build rental units on own property, difficult to provide ADUs”

“In the short term, the council needs to approve amendments to the zoning code to allow for greater density for affordable housing.”



ADU behind single-family home, Bethesda



Four-plex apartment building, Richmond



Stacked flat at corner



Small cottage housing

Housing Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- 74% of the housing units are single-family attached.
- There are no multi-family rental units in the Plan area.
- 15% of the housing units in the Plan area are MPDUs.
- The median single family home sales price in the Plan area \$756,000 compared with \$800,000 countywide. For townhouses, the median price in the Plan area is \$545,000 compared with \$470,000 countywide.



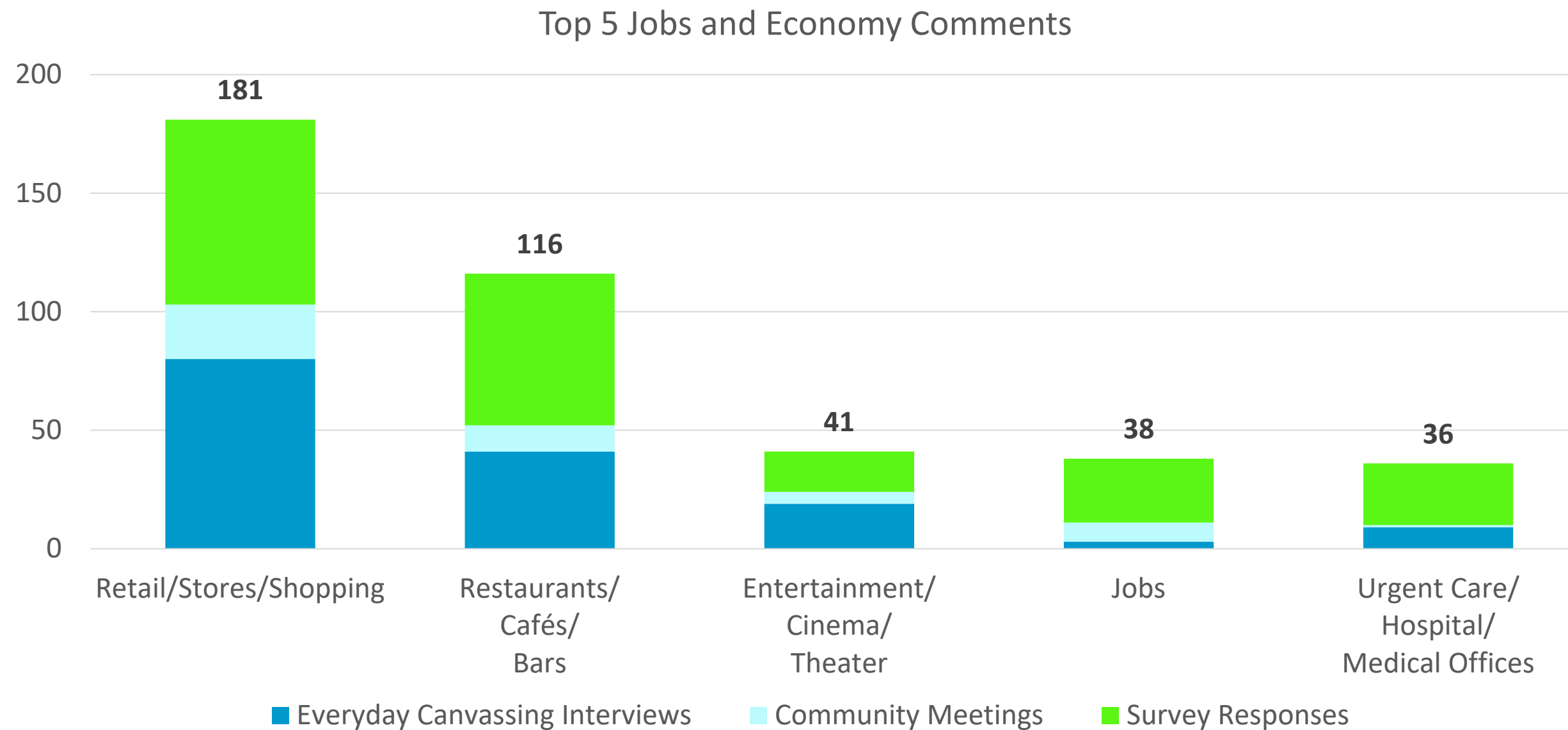
Clarksburg Square



Dowden's Station

Jobs and Economy Feedback

- 237 comments were received regarding jobs and the economy with 435 subcategory assignments.



Jobs and Economy Comments

Many people said that there is a lack of retail, places to eat, and entertainment venues in Clarksburg.

Additionally, they travel great distances for work.

“A shopping center we can walk to would also be great; one that serves the residents' immediate needs.”

“Definitely grocery stores!!! I’m hoping to see more grocery stores like Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, etc. in Clarksburg.”

“I'm looking for more restaurants, all kinds too. If I want to go to a restaurant, I have to drive down to Germantown .

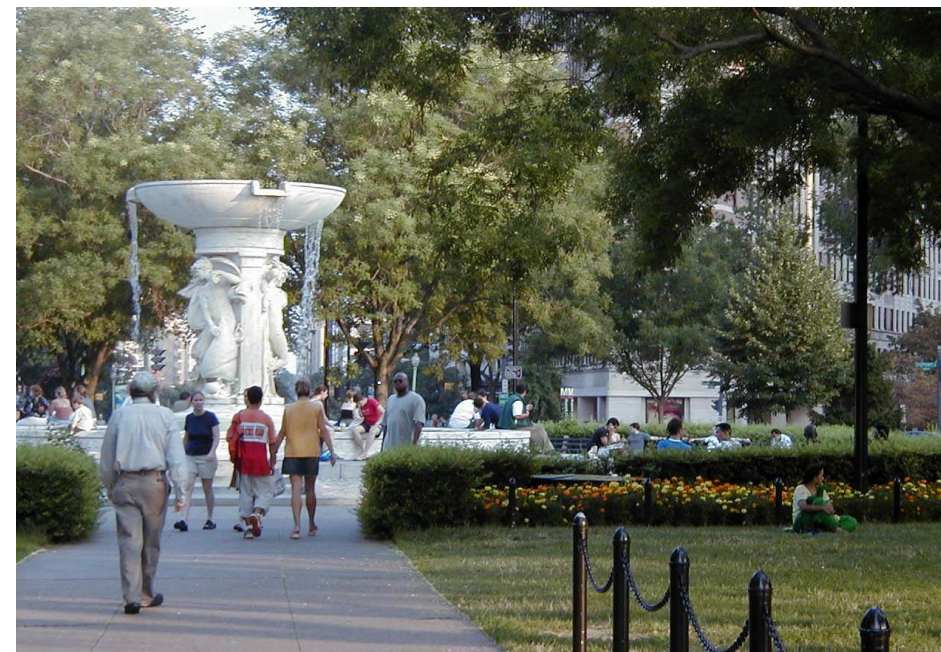
“I would love to have more entertainment like restaurants, a movie theater, and gathering spaces.



Retail with housing above, Clarendon



Whole Foods, Riverdale Park



Dupont Circle



Cafes and restaurants on Bethesda Row

Jobs and Economy Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

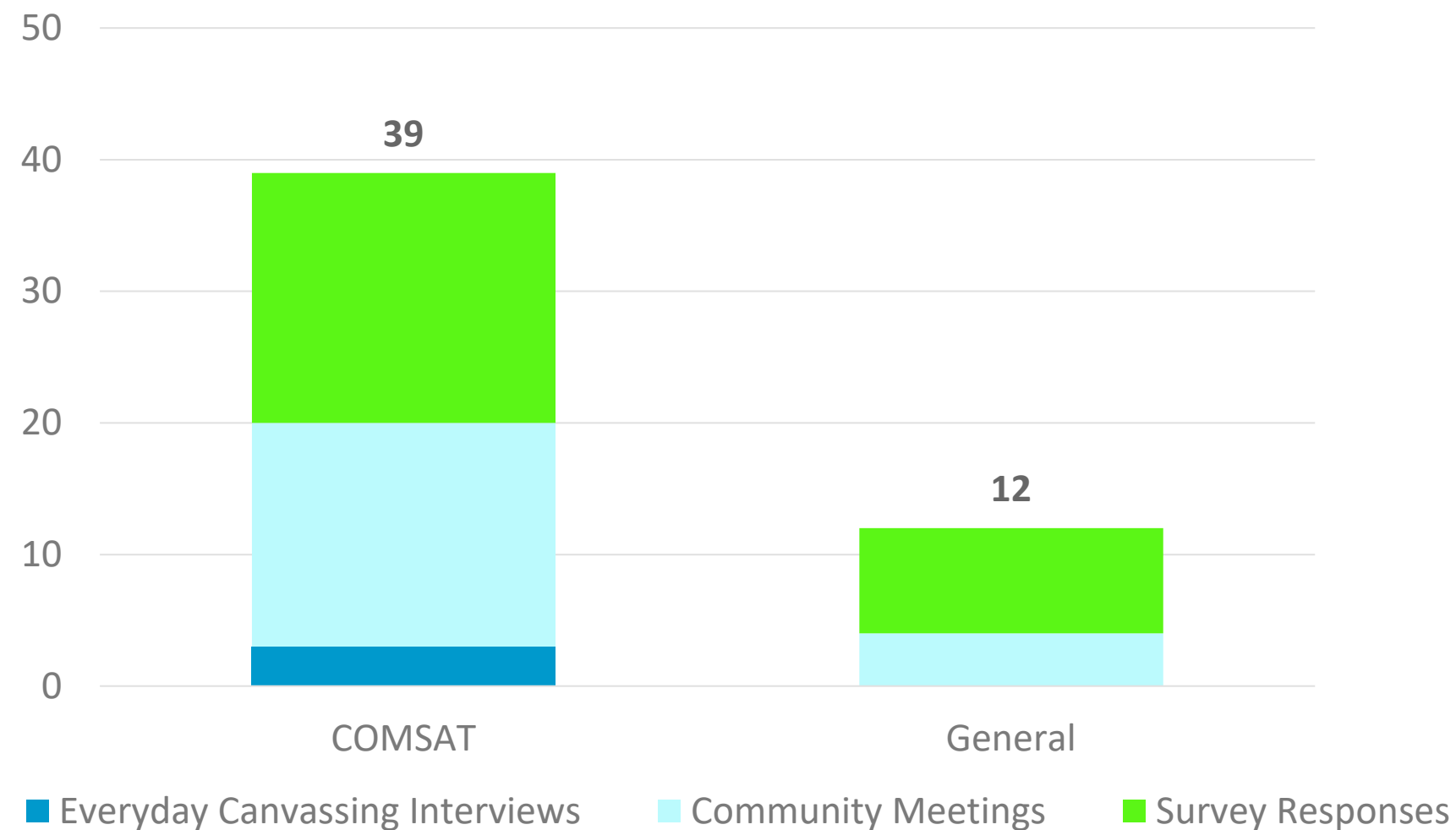
- There is little retail or restaurant presence in the sector plan area.
- There are currently about 1,350 jobs in the plan area.
- Flex buildings account for 1.1 million square feet.
- The surrounding area includes a few small shopping centers and gas stations with convenience stores.
- The Clarksburg area also includes the 390,000-square-foot Clarksburg Premium Outlets.



Flex buildings along Gateway Center Drive

Historic Resources Feedback

- 48 comments were provided regarding historic resources or potential resources with 51 subcategory assignments.
- 100 people responded to the survey question about COMSAT with suggestions on reusing the land not necessarily related to historic preservation.



Historic Resources Comments

Most of those who provided comments on the COMSAT building supported its designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* or adaptive reuse. Several people expressly opposed designation of the property.

Opinions included ideas for preservation, adaptive reuse, parks, athletic fields, and demolition.

Community members supported increased interpretation of historic resources.

“Comsat is a great opportunity for a mixed-use, high density-plan. Don’t miss the opportunity!”

“Historic designation of COMSAT must go away so the property will be more business-friendly.”

“Create a historical trail (walking) interpreting landmarks in Clarksburg’s neighborhoods.”



Comsat

Historic Resources Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- A section of the Clarksburg Master Plan Historic District is in the Plan area.
- There are several designated resources with architectural and historical significance within the plan boundary.
- Several resources will be evaluated for inclusion in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.



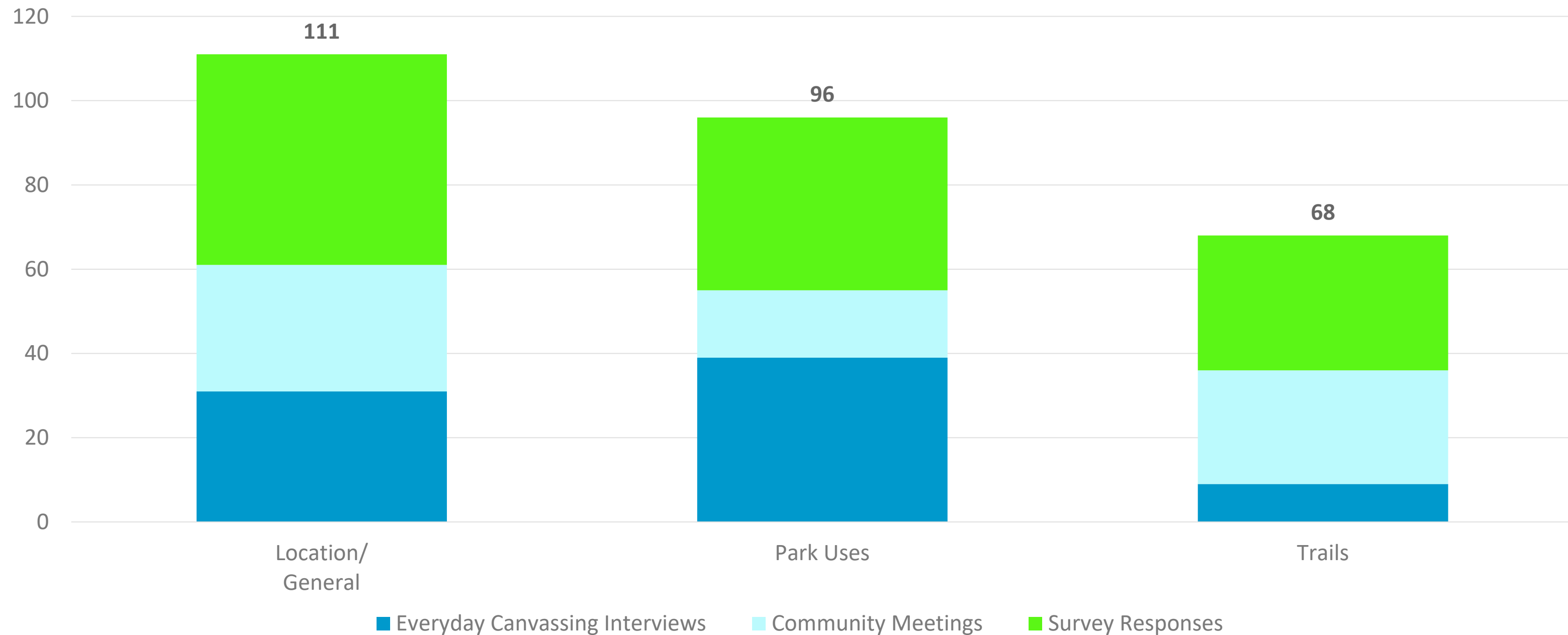
*View of the Clarksburg School ca. 1912.
Source: A Rural Survey in Maryland (1912), Montgomery History,
Clarksburg Historical Society, and Montgomery Planning.*



Gothic Revival John Wesley United Methodist Church ca. 1925

Parks Feedback

- 207 comments were provided regarding parks with 275 subcategory assignments.



Parks Comments

Many people commented that they want more parks with more playgrounds, a splash park, dog parks, and community gardens.

There should be more trail for walking and biking.

“Regional parks have much to offer.”

“The park in Cabin Branch is the best park ever! There’s usually about 200 people, food trucks on Fridays, events, great playground equipment.”

“People in the community don’t always have access to the track at Clarksburg High School.”

“There isn't a lot of space to play games and sports here.”



Capital Crescent Trail



Open lawn at a square in Boston



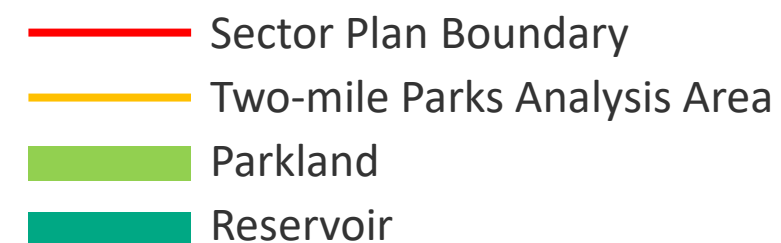
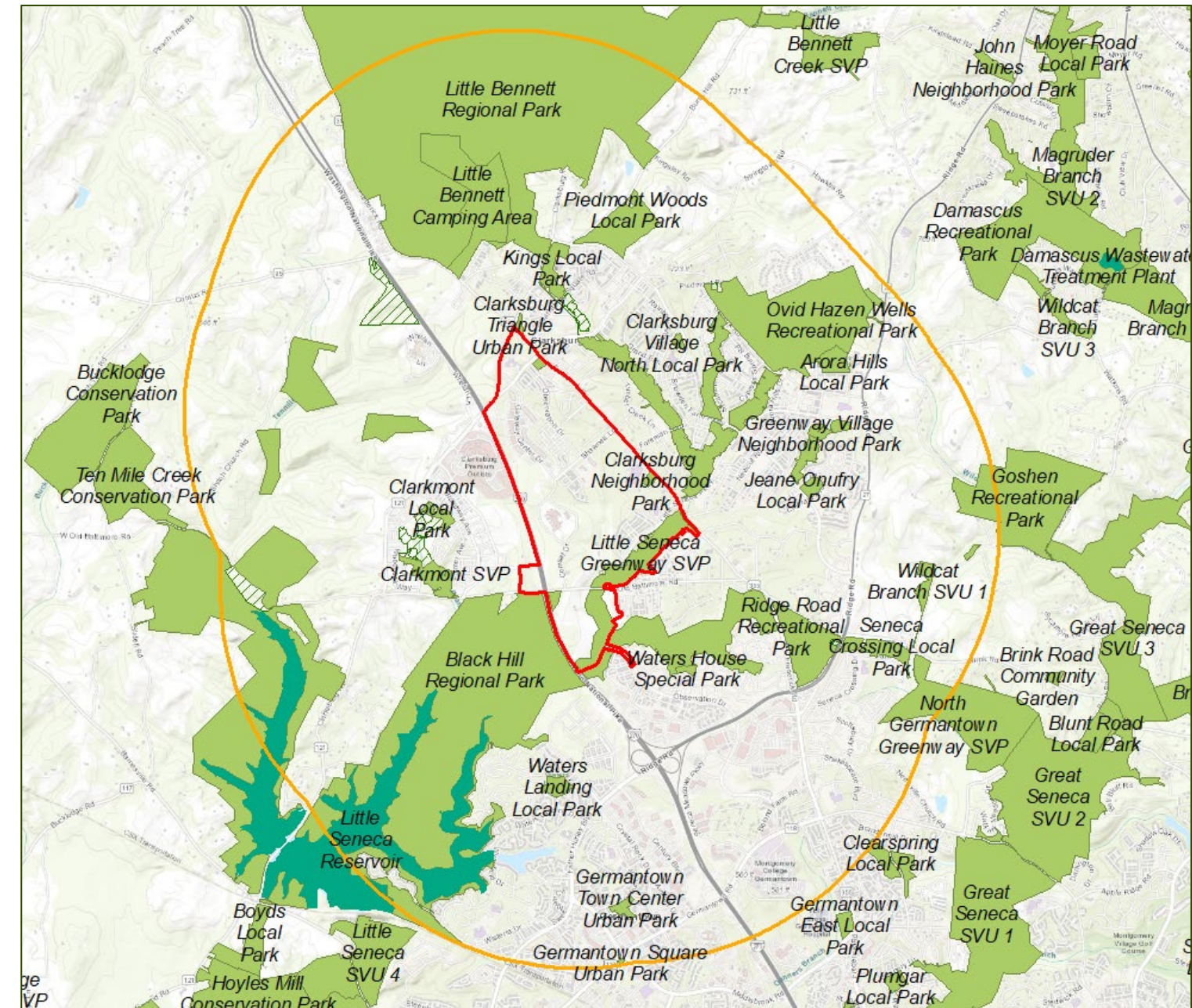
Urban park in Philadelphia



Mid-rise residences adjacent to park in Northgate, Washington

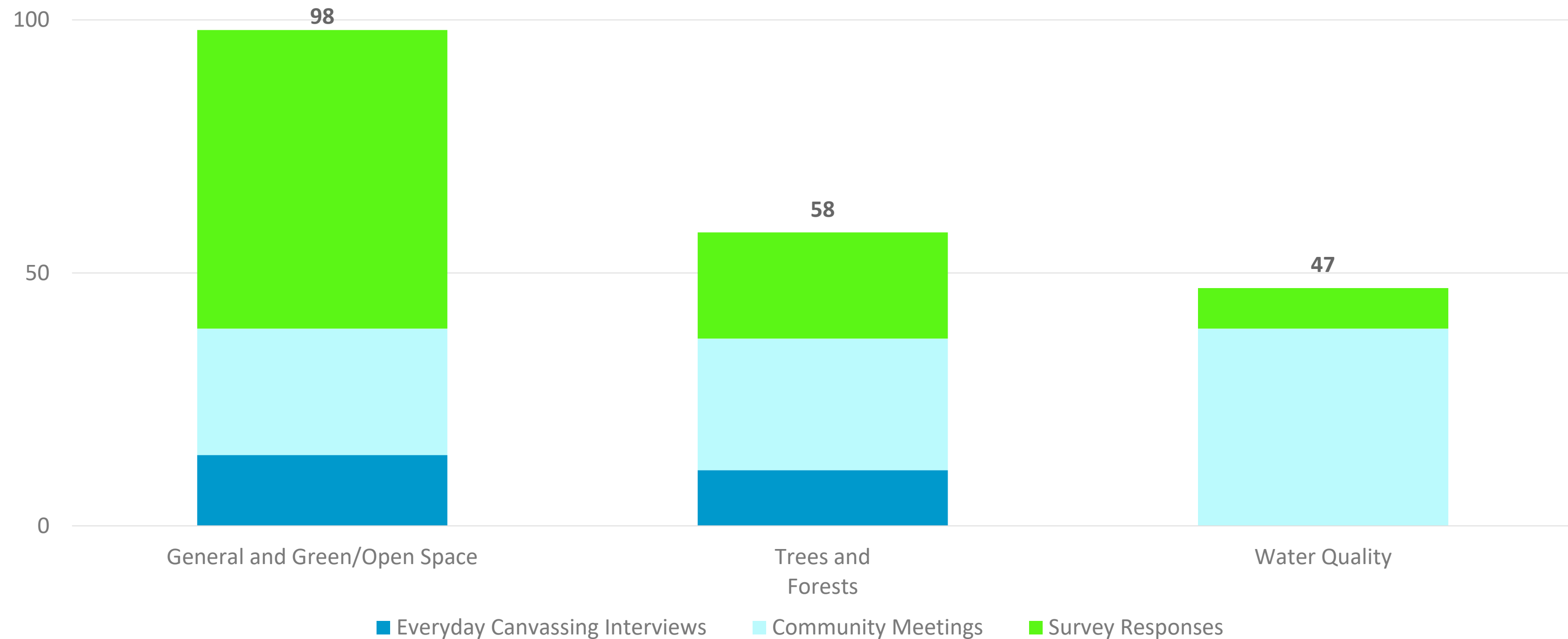
Parks Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- Access to some athletic facilities is relatively high, while for others it is limited. Many of these facilities are on school properties.
- Residents of the sector plan area are served by numerous parks and park facilities within two miles of the Plan area, but not as well served in easy walking distance.
- There is less than a half-mile of park trails within the Plan area, but there are over 46 miles of park trails within two miles of the Plan area.



Environmental Feedback

- 161 comments were provided regarding the environment with 203 subcategory assignments.



Environment Comments

Residents expressed a general appreciation for the stream valleys and forested areas that have been preserved.

However, some residents also expressed concerns with how potential infrastructure improvements to the area may adversely impact the environment.

“Protect the natural spaces, keep them beautiful.”

“I wish there was more shaded area and trees along the sidewalks and places around, though.”



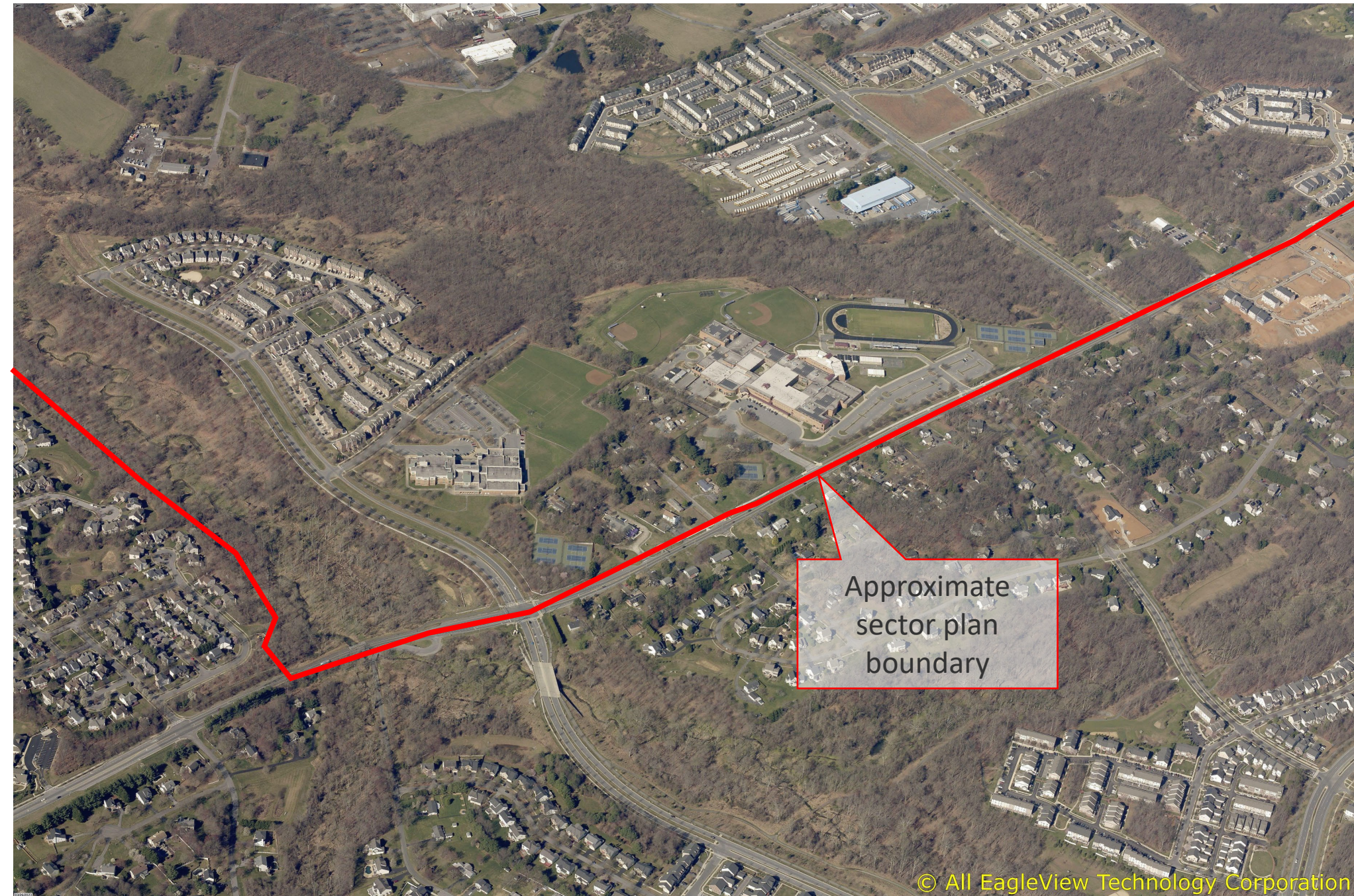
Ten Mile Creek



Mature shade trees along street

Environment Comments Compared to Existing Conditions

- The sector plan area drains to Little Seneca Creek and Ten Mile Creek; both flow into Little Seneca Lake, one of the region's backup water supplies.
- There are many areas of mature forest in the sector plan area.



Stream valleys and forested areas within the sector plan boundary

Main Takeaways

- **Transportation:** Residents would like to see a [completed road network](#), [better pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure](#), and [more public transportation options](#).
- **Public facilities:** Residents want a [library](#), [a community center with recreation options](#) and meeting rooms, and a public swimming pool open year-round.
- **Quality of life:** Residents for the most part [consider Clarksburg to be peaceful and appreciate its small-town feel](#) and the [diversity](#) of the population. But they desire a “[complete community](#),” with local [restaurants](#), [additional stores](#), and [convenient public facilities](#). Many are [worried about overdevelopment](#), especially if more houses are built without providing amenities the community currently lacks.
- **Environment and parks:** Residents [appreciate the natural environment](#) and frequently expressed a fondness for the [forested areas](#), [open spaces](#), and other [green spaces](#), especially the [regional parks](#) in the area. But many are [concerned that not enough will be done to protect water quality and forests](#) as development continues. And many residents would like to see [more local parks with active recreation opportunities for people of all ages](#).
- **People want a place!**



Comments & Questions