



Montgomery County Planning | Hatcher

# Glenmont Corridors Opportunity Study

## Focus Group Insights

July 24, 2024





# Methodology

Approach Overview, Participant  
Recruitment, Participant Selection,  
and Equitable Engagement Practices



- Focus groups allow interviewers to hear multiple points of view from participants in a similar living environment at one time.
- The discussions explored a wide variety of topics related to the Glenmont corridor and aligned with the three E's of Thrive Montgomery 2050: equity and social justice, environmental resilience, and economic competitiveness.
- Hatcher conducted **six hour-long focus groups** with Glenmont Corridor residents. The purpose of the focus groups was to hear about:
  - Lived experiences in the community.
  - Opportunities and challenges of the Glenmont metro area.
  - Overall opinions to inform future development.

- Participants for the focus group session were recruited through a combination of tactics, including:
  - Geofenced digital advertisements for the Study Area (in English and Spanish).
  - The Glenmont e-Letter (an email communication about Glenmont news and information).
  - Postcards sent out to 948 residential addresses.
  - Outreach from Planning Department staff.

<b>Geofenced Ad Campaign (Glenmont Corridor Opportunity Study)</b>				
<b>Campaign</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Impressions</b>	<b>Clicks</b>	<b>Click-Through rate (CTR)</b>
English	\$700.00	213,884	3,542	1.66%
Spanish	\$300.00	83,688	1,425	1.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>	<b>297,572</b>	<b>4,967</b>	<b>1.67%</b>



## Methodology: Equitable Engagement Practices

- Glenallan Elementary School was selected as the venue because it offered:
  - Accessibility for all levels of physical ability.
  - Proximity to public transportation.
  - A sense of safety provided by a public school setting.
- Sessions were planned during the evening to avoid scheduling conflicts. Additionally, drinks and snacks were provided to help participants avoid hunger and stay focused.
- Recognizing that some participants may be more comfortable engaging in Spanish, a professional interpreter was secured and the presentation was translated.
- Every participant who attended both an in-person and a virtual session received a \$100 gift card.



## Methodology: Participant Selection

- Respondents to ads and outreach were asked to complete a brief questionnaire with demographic information and provide their availability to participate in a two-session focus group.
- With a focus on demographic representation (age, gender, and racial/ethnic background) reflecting the 2020 U.S. census data for Glenmont, and aligned with participant availability, we identified **26 participants**.



# Methodology : Participant Selection (Demographic Breakdown)

Methodology

Demographic Breakdown of Respondents	
Stakeholder Characteristic	Count
Female	39
Male	21
Nonbinary	0
Not Disclosed	5
Black/African American	11
White/Caucasian	37
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3
Hispanic/Latino	9
American Indian	0
Other	2
Not Disclosed	3
18–24 years old	1
25–34 years old	9
35–44 years old	18
45–54 years old	11
55–64 years old	14
65 years and older	11
Not Disclosed	1
Total	65

Demographic Breakdown of Participants	
Stakeholder Characteristic	Count
Female	16
Male	9
Nonbinary	0
Not Disclosed	1
Black/African American	6
White/Caucasian	13
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1
Hispanic/Latino	2
American Indian	0
Other	1
Not Disclosed	3
18–24 years old	1
25–34 years old	4
35–44 years old	7
45–54 years old	4
55–64 years old	7
65 years and older	2
Not Disclosed	1
Total	26



# Focus Groups

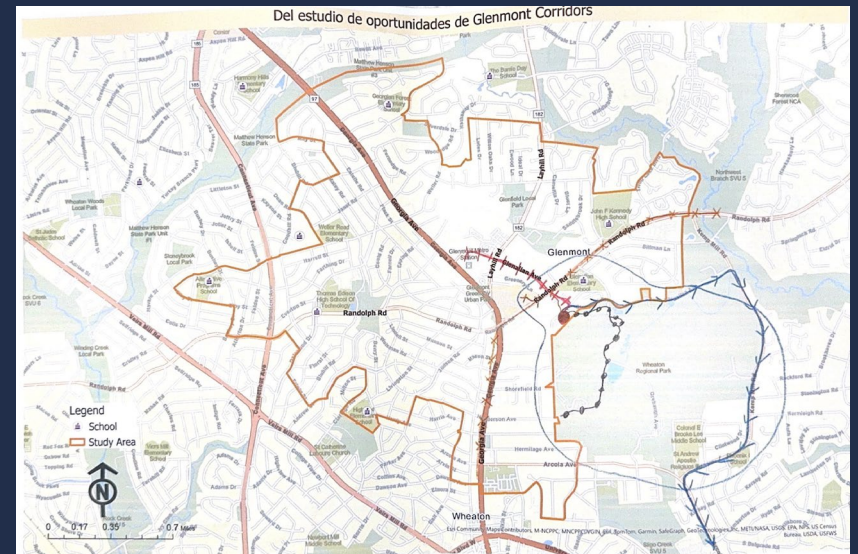
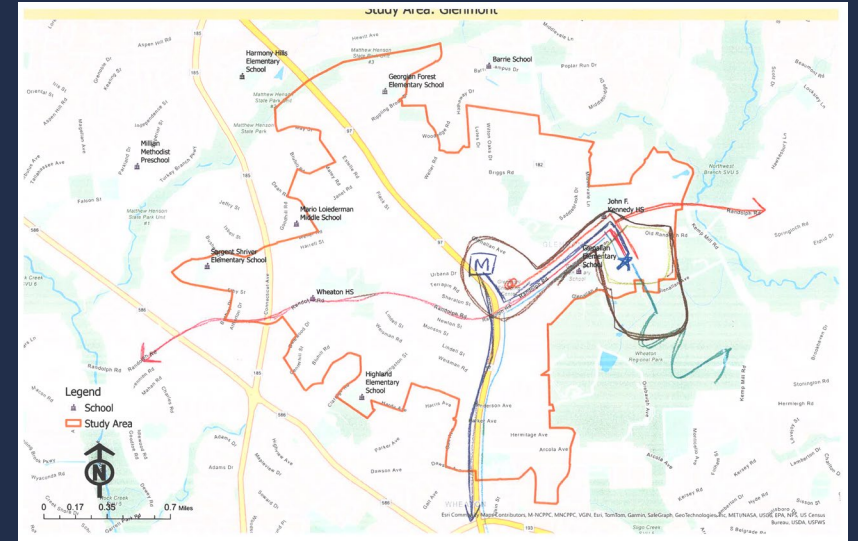
Focus Group Themes and Insights





## In-Person Focus Groups: Mapping Exercise

- Each participant was provided a map of the Glenmont Corridor Opportunity Study area and colored pencils to mark where and how they navigate their community.





## In-Person Focus Groups: Key Themes

- **Strong attachment to their neighborhood and community.**
- Schools, supermarkets, and health care facilities exist within walking distance, but some participants are not happy with all of the existing options.
- **Residents feel unsafe walking or biking in the Study Area.**
- Access to public transportation is an asset, but there are safety concerns.
- **There is an abundance of parks and greenery, but there are real concerns about the county's commitment to environmental sustainability in the area.**
- The area feels like a passthrough with no distinct brand or character.
- **Growth is both a challenge and an opportunity.**



# Strong attachment to the neighborhood and community.



I lived here for 10 years in the '90s. Moved to Urbana for 10 years. I've been back since 2015.”



[Developments] are needed while keeping the spirit of the place. 'Cause I like this area. One of the amazing things is that there are so many small businesses. There is a lot of 'what is here is only here,' and that's really cool. And I think there are things that need to happen here, but I also don't want it to lose any of the spirit that it has.”



**Schools, supermarkets, and health care facilities exist within walking distance, but some are not happy with the existing options.**



I was hoping Whole Foods would come.”



[I use] the Lidl a lot. And then sometimes, when Lidl is a little scarce, like if I have [to go to the] store at end of the day, I'll go down to the Safeway.”



That's my issue, that I want to live in a nice neighborhood area. I want [Mom's Organic Market] ... We can't get that because they're saying that we don't have the disposable income.”



## Residents feel unsafe walking or biking in the Study Area.



I feel very unsafe walking on the sidewalks. There's not enough time to cross. And I don't even feel safe walking to the train station.”



The sidewalks are very narrow. You have garbage cans and everything [taking up space]. You have the overgrowth, and I'm afraid I'm gonna get hit [by] cars jumping the curb. It's very, very frightening.”



Cars switch into that right turn from Georgia to Randolph, the fact that there's a bike lane there ... it's just the way that I, myself, have to drive in [that bike lane] to make that right turn. I would never consider biking.”



# Access to public transportation is an asset, but there are safety concerns.



I'm very unsafe on the train. I have to take it either to the Takoma stop or Silver Spring. Um, I don't take it at night... I have pepper spray with me.”



I'm so glad we have it, that, near a metro station, it's miraculous to have this much green around. It's a key part of the value of being [in Glenmont].”



... When I'm traveling by myself downtown to meet with clients once in a while, I am scared when I'm on the Glenmont Metro....”



**There is an abundance of parks and greenery, but there are real concerns about the county's commitment to environmental sustainability in the area.**



The more pavement that we have, the faster the water runs off it. And it has been really great to see those basins that capture the stormwater. But I hang out in the parks all the time and I see the erosion happening at an accelerated rate [during] the five years that I've been living in the neighborhood, [and] it's being torn up.”



I think a big thing [with environmental protection] will be depending on where the neighborhood goes in the future, because, as density changes, which, unfortunately, is happening whether we like it or not ... some of [the infrastructures] that we have now are gonna change....”



**The area feels like a passthrough with no distinct brand or character.**



We have a unique cultural diversity and needs of people in the Wheaton-Glenmont area, and we need to keep that character, but find a way to make it ... not just a pathway between Olney or Silver Spring or Rockville.”



How do we put ‘Glenmont’ on the water tower and have an identity and make it artful? I’m sure there are tons of artists we can employ to make that an icon. I think it [would] really bring an identity.”





# Growth is both a challenge and an opportunity.



So you see how traffic is now with just the ... 482 garden-style apartments. Now you're talking almost 3,000 apartments, minus 102 trees, and over a thousand parking spaces.”



[Vision for the area is] like, higher density. More retail, more entertainment, I mean. And I think that necessarily also means there's going to be a loss in, like, greenery and things like that.”



The housing density isn't where it needs to be. We definitely lack a lot of housing for individuals ... where there are several apartment complexes where there's just too many people in those units and they're seeing it spill out into other neighborhoods.”



## Virtual Focus Groups: Key Themes

- **There is not enough housing variety.**
- There is major concern that an increase in housing density could lead to an increase in foot and vehicle traffic.
- **Residents need a space where the community can gather.**
- Residents worry that residential growth and market rate housing can lead to displacement of current families and businesses.
- **Residents are looking for a mixture of chain retail and local independent shops with a priority on mom-and-pop businesses. There is also agreement to bring in a Glenmont farmers market.**



# There is not enough housing variety.



If they're going to do housing, it needs to be, you know, **mixed-dwelling townhomes, condos, townhomes**. But to just build five-fold apartment complexes on top of apartment complexes—I think that's just really bad energy for the environment to have that [much] apartment housing going up versus mixed dwelling. **It needs to be a variety.**”



There's no way to get that higher density and more development and all the rest of it, without also accepting that there are going to be some things that have to change, and some of those things are things that we love dearly.”



**There is major concern that an increase in housing density could lead to an increase in foot and vehicle traffic.**



[The nearby apartment complex] is talking about changing [their] density from basically five-fold, and not only would it be, like, an environmental impact, but they would also open up more roads to come through there. Which means you're actually increasing the amount of traffic, increasing the amount of infrastructure to have cars drive around.”



If you're gonna build something, you gotta build the infrastructure to support it. And one of it is definitely parking.”



# Residents need a space where the community can gather.



... Having outdoor space that that doubles as an area where kids could play, people could gather, you could sit and eat a meal. But then also they could have an acoustic guitar guy on Friday nights, or something like that, or a community meeting. Not, maybe not a full amphitheater, but just space.”



# Residents worry that residential growth and market rate housing can lead to displacement of current families and businesses.



The housing density component is a threat to us ... the more people you bring in, the more you need for provide for them.”



If they're all market rate, they're not affordable, even though our area is more affordable than other areas in the in the county.”



The density is going to be market rate apartments. So that means whatever the market can withstand. And right now, things are going for \$600,000 here in the Wheaton area. These are not affordable housing for everyone, so I think displacement [is a threat].”



**Residents look for a mixture of chain retail and local independent shops with a priority on mom-and-pop businesses. There is unanimous agreement to bring in a Glenmont farmers market.**



These don't need to be large places, but places that, you know, you can stop by quickly to pick up the basics. I mean having a full-on, like, Wegman's would be great as well. But as long as you know a grocery option is not that far away.”



Maybe a farmers market! The Bethesda and Olney farmers markets are a good model in terms of family-friendly meet-up spaces.”



## Focus Groups: Opportunities

- Increase recruitment time to allow for more diverse respondents and participants.
- Build a greater foundation of knowledge by sending pre-reading to participants ahead of focus groups.
- Gather additional quantitative feedback through a pre-survey.
- Consolidate sessions for fewer, but longer focus groups.



# Thank You

Any Questions?