



EASTERN SILVER SPRING COMMUNITIES PLAN

COMMUNITY VISIONING PHASE, SEPTEMBER 2024-SEPTEMBER 2025

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

November 2025
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KEY FINDINGS

OVER 1,000 DIRECT ENGAGEMENT TOUCHPOINTS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS FROM SEPTEMBER 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2025



159 participants at 6 community events

- 2 Visioning Open Houses (Fall 2024)
- 3 Community Conversations
- 1 Community Open House



600+ interactions at 8 pop-up events



243 Visioning Questionnaire responses
 110 Online Questionnaire responses
 133 Condensed Paper Questionnaire responses



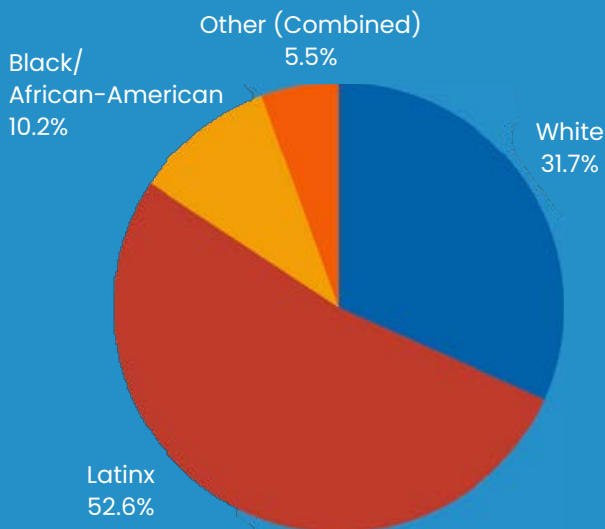
27 focus group participants



70+ Touchpoints with Local Businesses
 21 Business Questionnaire responses

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT:

RACE/ETHNICITY (TOTAL=578)



HOUSING TENURE (TOTAL=427)



Languages Spoken at Home (Total=357):

- English (51%)
- Spanish (41%)
- Amharic (3%)
- other (5%)

Note: Demographic information was collected whenever possible at engagement events. The reach above reflects the sampling of data collected across all events, as conditions permitted.

KEY FINDINGS

COMMUNITY NEEDS



Residents love and want to preserve the diverse ethnic and socio-economic mix of residents who call Eastern Silver Spring home.



People want to preserve the unique features, makeup, and character of their neighborhood but be able to access and enjoy amenities both close to home and in other districts in the plan area.



Renters and those who advocate for housing justice are concerned about the current conditions of multifamily rental housing in the area, including issues such as poor maintenance, health concerns, overcrowding and increasing rent.



Long Branch Library, Community Recreation Center, and Pool are valued community assets. However, they are hard to access for some residents. Neighbors would like additional community services, especially in the New Hampshire Avenue District and the southern portion of Long Branch, specifically the New Hampshire Estates neighborhood.

HOUSING



People value this area's diverse types of housing, and want to maintain this mix as development occurs.



Affordability is a priority for many residents of all demographic backgrounds.



Single family home neighborhoods are most hesitant to increase density on their blocks, although not all homeowners are against adding density.



Many people, specifically residential renters and business owners, fear displacement due to the Purple Line and future development in the area.

KEY FINDINGS

GETTING AROUND



People need better pedestrian safety, especially along the three main corridors that pass through the area with high-speed traffic.



Long Branch is an important asset to the plan area as a main retail corridor and community center. However, many neighborhoods would like better access by improving sidewalk and bike path networks to get in and out of Long Branch.



Purple Line construction has been a big challenge for residents and businesses in this area. However, people are hopeful for the improved access and opportunities that this line will offer this community.

IMPORTANT PLACES



People love and want to preserve Long Branch's local businesses.



While people value Long Branch, many residents of the plan area travel outside the plan area to access basic necessities and spend their free time. Downtown Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and Langley Park are the most frequented places.

PARKS & ENVIRONMENT



The plan area boasts beautiful, abundant green spaces to enjoy nature and recreate. It is home to two regional trails that stretch beyond the plan area. People love and hope to preserve the area's greenery, open spaces, and easy access to nature.

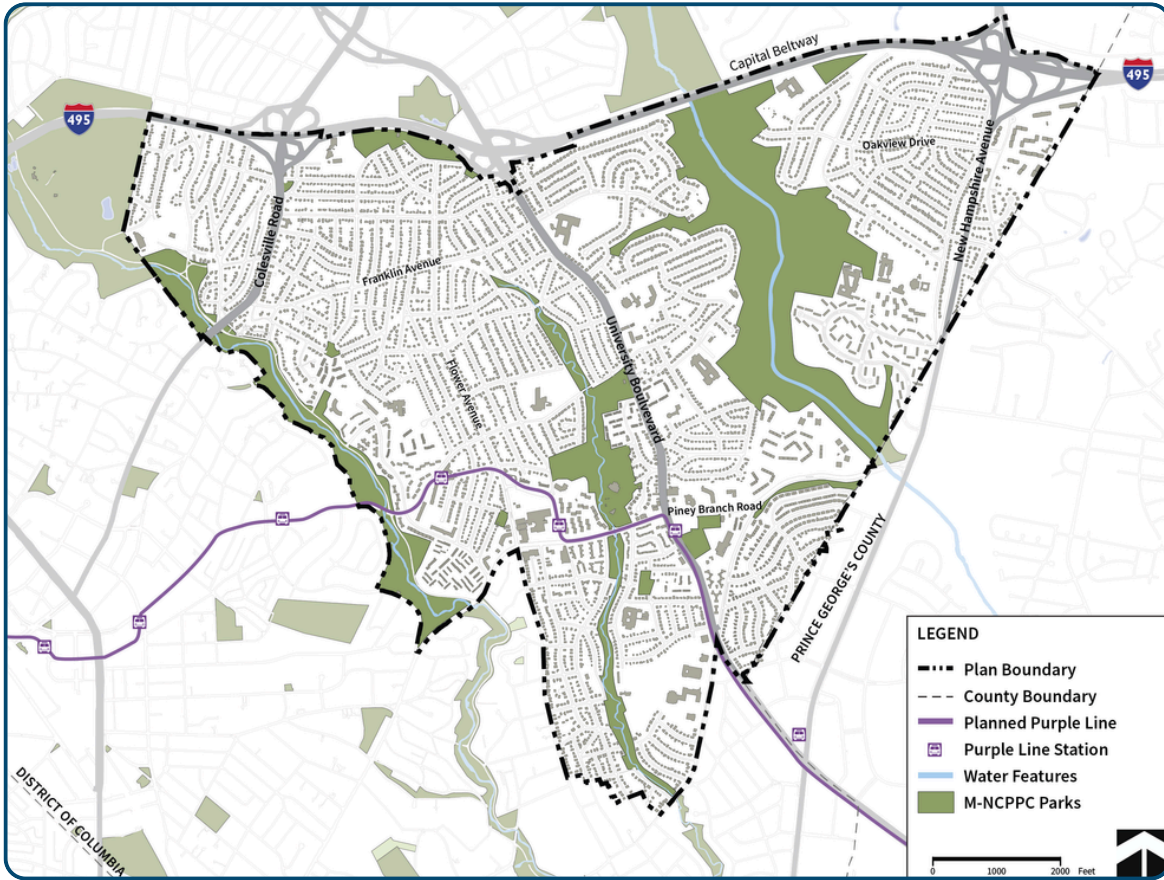


Flower Avenue Urban Park is a key community space for gathering, recreation, and events. This park needs amenity improvements and maintenance work.

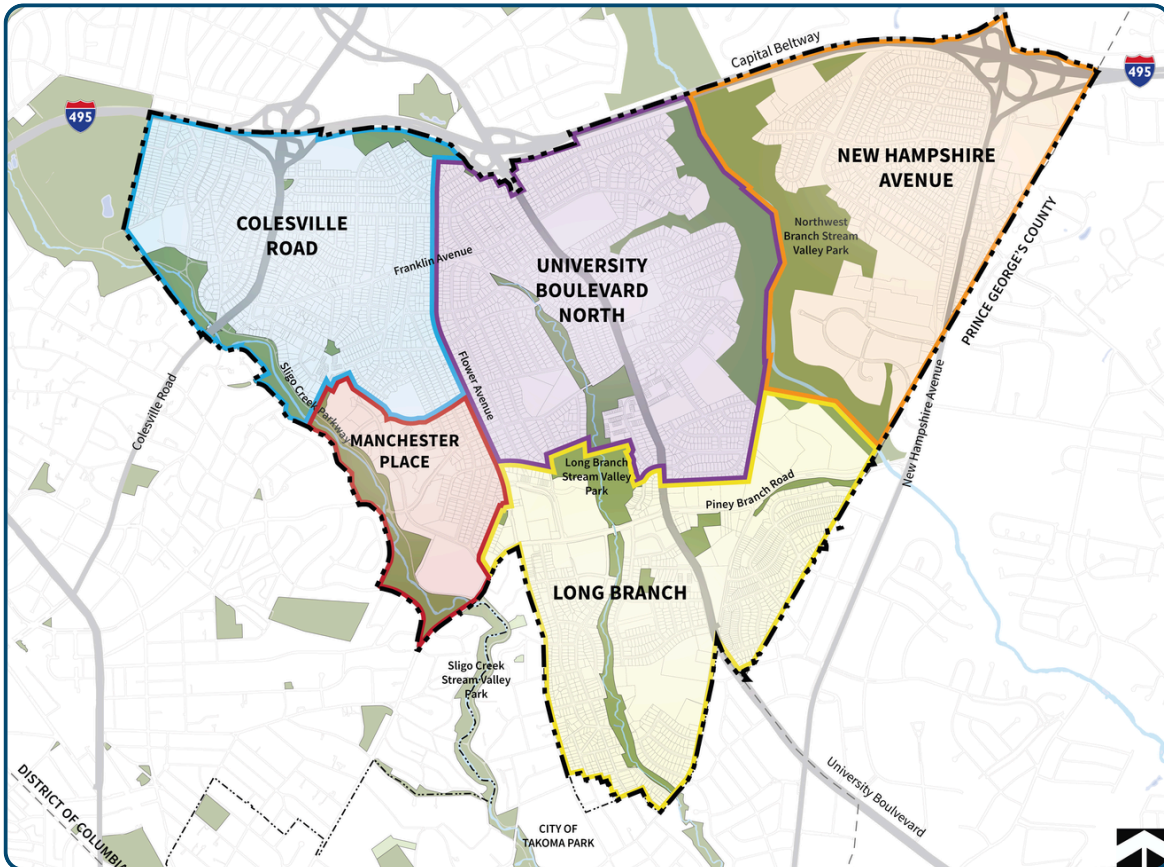


Stormwater management is an issue, specifically for the Manchester Place District near Sligo Creek.

EASTERN SILVER SPRING COMMUNITIES PLAN AREA



PLAN AREA DISTRICTS



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Fall 2024

In September 2024, Montgomery Planning staff launched its Community Visioning Phase for the Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan (ESSCP). After gathering valuable input from hundreds of community members in the pre-scope phase of engagement from Fall 2023 to Spring 2024 (read more about the pre-scope phase on the [plan website](#)), the team used the first several months of the Community Visioning Phase (September through December 2024) to further refine its understanding of the community’s overall interests, concerns, and vision for the future of the area. This included engagement through an online visioning questionnaire (“online questionnaire”), community pop-up events throughout the plan area (gathering feedback through both a condensed paper version of the visioning questionnaire (“paper questionnaire”) and interactive boards), two open houses with interactive boards and discussions, and extensive engagement with the business community through meetings, door-to-door outreach, and phone calls. The team also deepened its connections with community-based organizations and key partners to further enhance ongoing engagement with historically underrepresented communities throughout the planning process.

The team reached over 700 community members and stakeholders through these efforts in Fall 2024.

Spring 2025 through Fall 2025

After a careful analysis of the engagement process and feedback received in Fall 2024, the ESSCP team crafted an updated approach for 2025. Engagement in this part of the Community Visioning Phase invited the community to zoom in both geographically and thematically to build upon the feedback received in 2023 and 2024 through the use of various tools including Community Conversations, focus groups, pop-ups, and an open house. Engagement in 2025 (February through September 2025) was organized geographically with a focus on corridors and future transit. The team also worked to leverage partnerships built during previous phases to ensure equitable representation of the community during engagement and learn from local experts working in and with the community.

The team reached over 250 community members and stakeholders through these efforts in 2025.

A list of all public engagement events, outreach efforts, and the team’s reach are summarized on the following pages.



Neighbors discuss solutions to difficult intersections at the University Boulevard Community Conversation on June 3, 2025.

SUMMARY OF VISIONING ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Engagement Activity	Date	Type & Feedback Collection Method
Online Visioning Questionnaire	Sep. - Dec. 2024	Online Questionnaire
CHEER Tenant's Rights Panel Meeting	Sep. 9, 2024	Informational table
Long Branch Festival	Sep. 14, 2024	Pop-Up with Boards
Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board Meeting	Sep. 23, 2024	Presentation with Q&A
Crossroads Farmers Market	Oct. 9, 2024	Pop-Up with Boards
Long Branch Business League Meeting	Oct. 15, 2024	Meeting with Business Owners
Giant Supermarket Pop-Up	Oct. 16, 2024	Pop-Up with Boards
Clifton Park Baptist Church Health Fair	Oct. 19, 2024	Pop-Up with Boards
Open House 1 at Eastern Middle School	Oct. 23, 2024	Open House
Takoma Park Ward 5 / Kilmarock Meeting	Oct. 29, 2024	Presentation with Q&A
Open House 2 at New Hampshire Estates Elementary School	Nov. 2, 2024	Open House
Long Branch Business League Meeting	Nov. 12, 2024	Meeting with Business Owners
St. Camillus Food Distribution	Nov. 15, 2024	Pop-Up with Paper Questionnaire
Business Door Knocking & Phone Calls	Nov. - Dec. 2024	Door Knocking & Phone Calls with Business Questionnaire
Clifton Park Baptist Church Food Distribution	Dec. 5, 2024	Pop-Up with Paper Questionnaire
Northwest Park Apartments Community Meeting	Feb. 19, 2025	Pop-Up with Boards
Northwest Park Apartments Resident Focus Group	April 3, 2025	Focus Group
New Hampshire Ave. Community Conversation	April 30, 2025	Community Conversation
Colesville Rd. Community Conversation	May 14, 2025	Community Conversation
New Hampshire Estates Elementary School Parents' Focus Group	May 20, 2025	Focus Group
University Blvd. Community Conversation	June 3, 2025	Community Conversation

Engagement Activity	Date	Type & Feedback Collection Method
Manchester Place / Flower Avenue Neighbors' Walk	June 4, 2025	Community Walk & Conversation
Long Branch Housing Action Team (LBHAT) Meeting	July 21, 2025	Meeting with Community Organization
Neighbors of Northwest Branch Meeting	Sep. 2, 2025	Meeting with Community Organization
Long Branch Festival Pop-up	Sep. 12, 2025	Pop-Up with Boards
Manchester Place Community Open House	Sep. 25, 2025	Community Open House

Additional engagement efforts:

The ESSCP team engaged with local agencies, key stakeholders, and partner organizations through a number of smaller meetings not reflected in this table throughout the Community Visioning Phase. Some key stakeholders and partners include: The Purple Line Corridor Coalition, Action In Montgomery (AIM), Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board, Silver Spring Regional Services Center, affordable housing providers, faith groups, and more. The team also participated in various community and partner meetings related to the CHEER ENOUGH Grant, the majority of which served as additional listening sessions to hear from community members about their priorities for the community.

OUTREACH EFFORTS AND COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The ESSCP team worked diligently to try to bring as many voices as possible into the planning process throughout the Community Visioning Phase from September 2024 through September 2025. Outreach efforts expanded a wide range of activities and tools to engage the diverse audience of stakeholders who live in and frequent the plan area. Our key outreach tools are outlined below:



Plan-wide bilingual mailer sent in October 2024.

A Robust Project Website: This project offers a detailed website where regular updates and information about the project are shared. The website hosted virtual tools for feedback gathering, while also reporting out key findings after core engagement events.

Project E-letter: As of September 2025, there are 447 subscribers to the ESSCP project e-letter. Throughout the Community Visioning Phase, the team sent 12 e-letters to all subscribers to promote engagement events and share updates about the planning process.

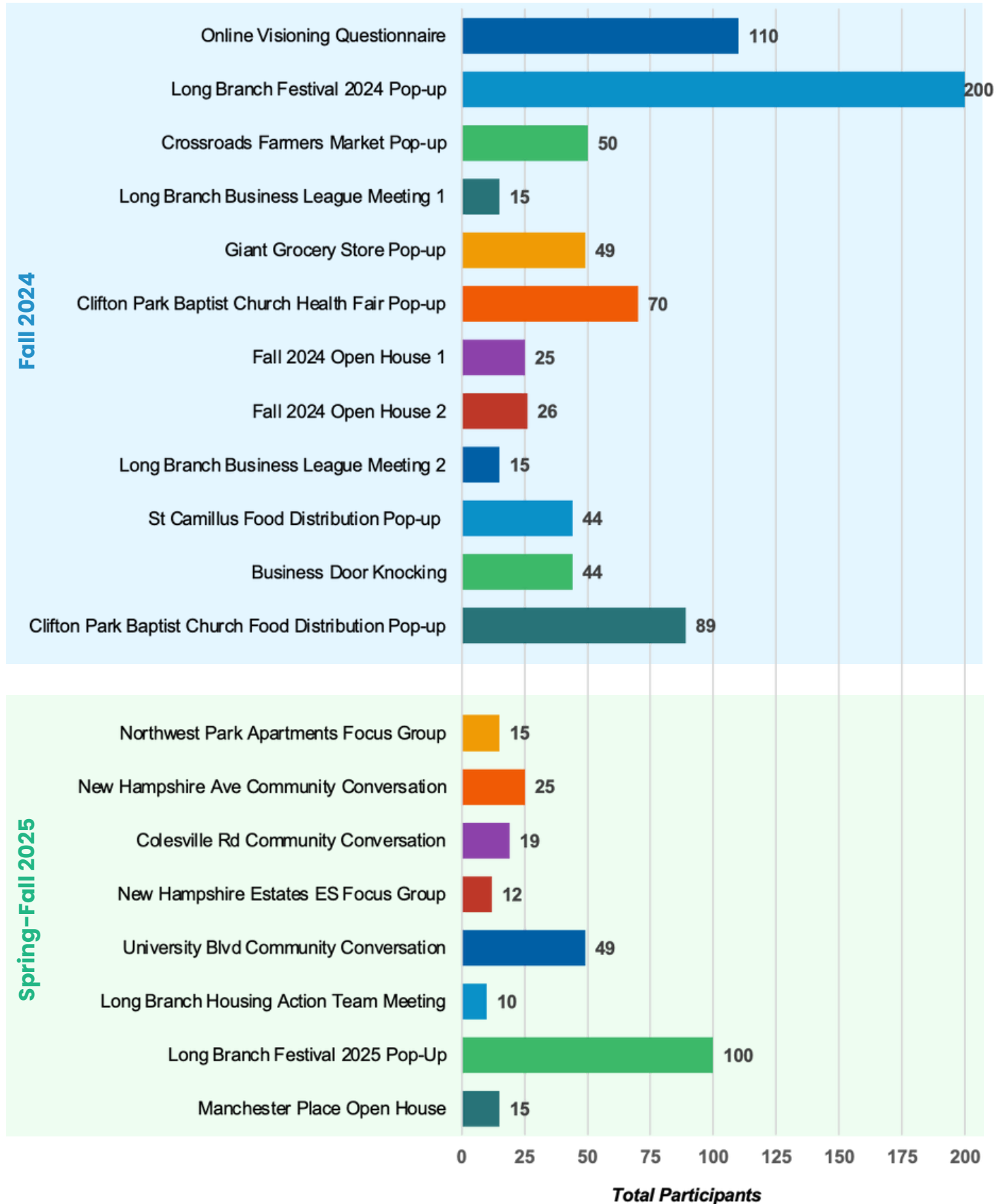
Plan-Wide Mailing: In October 2024, the team sent a plan-wide bilingual mailer in English and Spanish to all households in the plan area. This plan-wide mailer both informed the community about the project and promoted the Fall 2024 open houses.

Flying: The team created flyers to promote each public event in both English and Spanish, and in some cases in Amharic. On the ground flying efforts were a precursor to all public engagement events. The team attended important community events to distribute flyers while also gathering feedback from local residents. They also worked alongside civic associations to distribute flyers door to door.

Outreach Partners: Community partners also helped promote public engagement events by circulating flyers and promotional materials to their networks. Neighborhood and civic associations, schools, non-profit organizations, and multifamily housing providers were key partners in boosting the ESSCP team’s outreach efforts for public events and in convening residents for smaller conversations.

OUR REACH

ENGAGEMENT REACH BY MAJOR EVENT, COMMUNITY VISIONING PHASE



Source: All public engagements, September 2024 through September 2025

OUR REACH

OUR APPROACH TO EQUITY

To increase access and ensure an equitable engagement process, the team's strategy included:

- **Pop-up engagements** at strategic community spaces and events: Long Branch Festival, community food distributions, health resource fair, grocery store, and farmers market. These were used to both promote upcoming engagement events and gather feedback from community members.
- **Open houses and neighborhood conversations** at accessible local public schools
- **Translation** of all communications into Spanish, and when relevant into Amharic
- **Spanish interpretation** services for all public events, and Amharic interpretation available in areas with higher Ethiopian populations
- **Focus groups conducted in multiple languages:** Two conversations facilitated solely in Spanish and a third bilingual conversation in Spanish-English
- **Meeting business owners where they are** through door-knocking and phone calls to local business owners to gather their feedback through the business questionnaire; these efforts were supported by the local Long Branch Business League and Montgomery County Business Center staff; Amharic interpretation was available as needed during business visits
- **Strategic partnerships** with affordable housing providers, schools, and non-profit organizations to increase our reach within the Latinx and Ethiopian communities. These partners helped us promote engagement opportunities, distribute flyers, and convene community members.

ADAPTING OUR APPROACH WITH A RESPONSIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY IN 2025

In Fall 2024, the team began engagement for visioning using a plan-wide approach. Engagement focused on themes and understanding perceptions, needs, and hopes for the plan area at large. However, the team recognized that needs and hopes varied across different neighborhoods in a such a diverse and geographically extensive plan area.

While the Fall 2024 engagement provided key findings relevant to the plan area, 2025 engagement focused on understanding the differences across each diverse sub-area in the plan and ensuring the plan considered representation of residents from each of these sub-areas. For example, the geographical approach in 2025 allowed the team to connect with residents from neighborhoods in the New Hampshire Avenue corridor, an area with limited feedback in 2024.

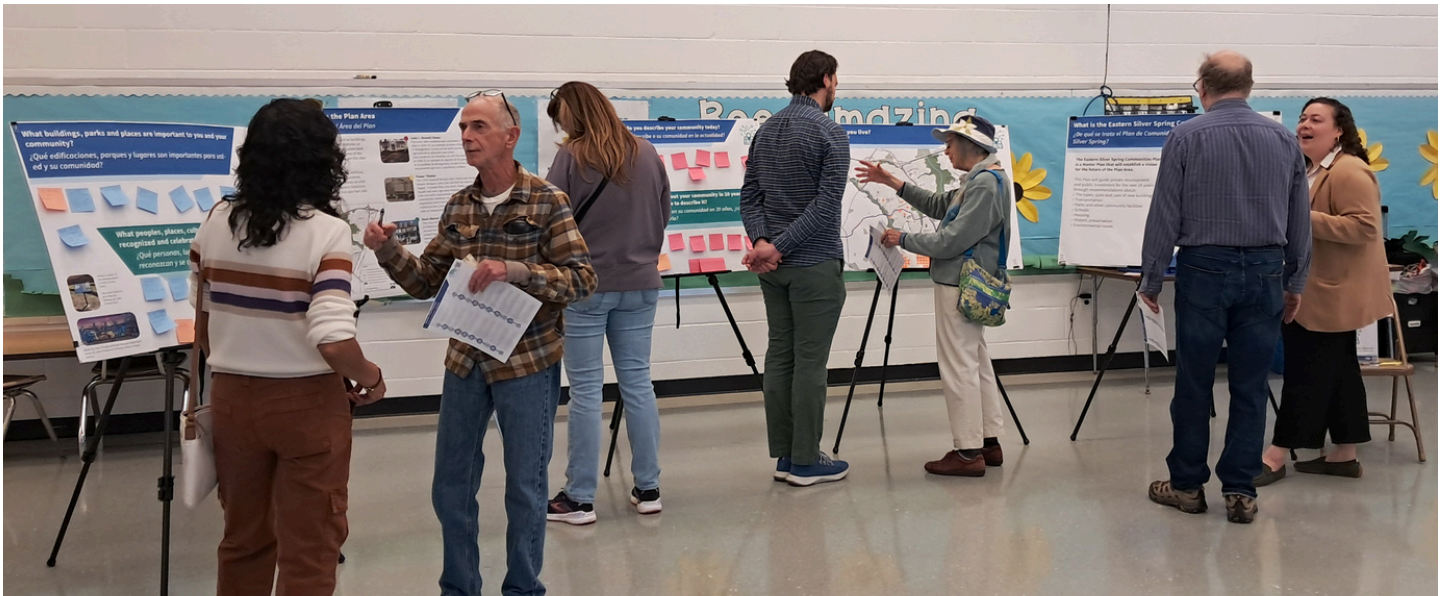
The nuanced approach in 2025 was also designed to educate the community on county-wide goals around change and growth in [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#). Montgomery County has identified key corridors and transit stations as priority areas for growth. In this Plan, there are three county-identified corridors and three future Purple Line Stations. The ESSCP team wanted to create spaces to educate the community around why the County is prioritizing these key thoroughfares and transit hubs as areas for growth. Engagement prioritized offering transparency around how change and growth happen and their tradeoffs and inviting community feedback on how they can shape the kind of growth as new amenities and residential units come to the area.

Finally, by hosting focused conversations at both large and small group gatherings in 2025, the team was able to test ideas from feedback received in previous engagements and explore key topics at a deeper, conversational level. The format of 2025 engagement meetings was designed with this purpose in mind.

OUR REACH

BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

In 2024, the team engaged directly with over 700 community members in Fall 2024 during the first part of engagement for the Community Visioning Phase, including residents, business owners, community-based organizations, and other community stakeholders. The Latinx community was the most represented race/ethnicity (about 59%) in Fall 2024 engagement followed by White (about 29%) and then Black or African (about 9%) community members. The team also engaged with several Asian, Eastern European, and Middle Eastern community members and business owners.



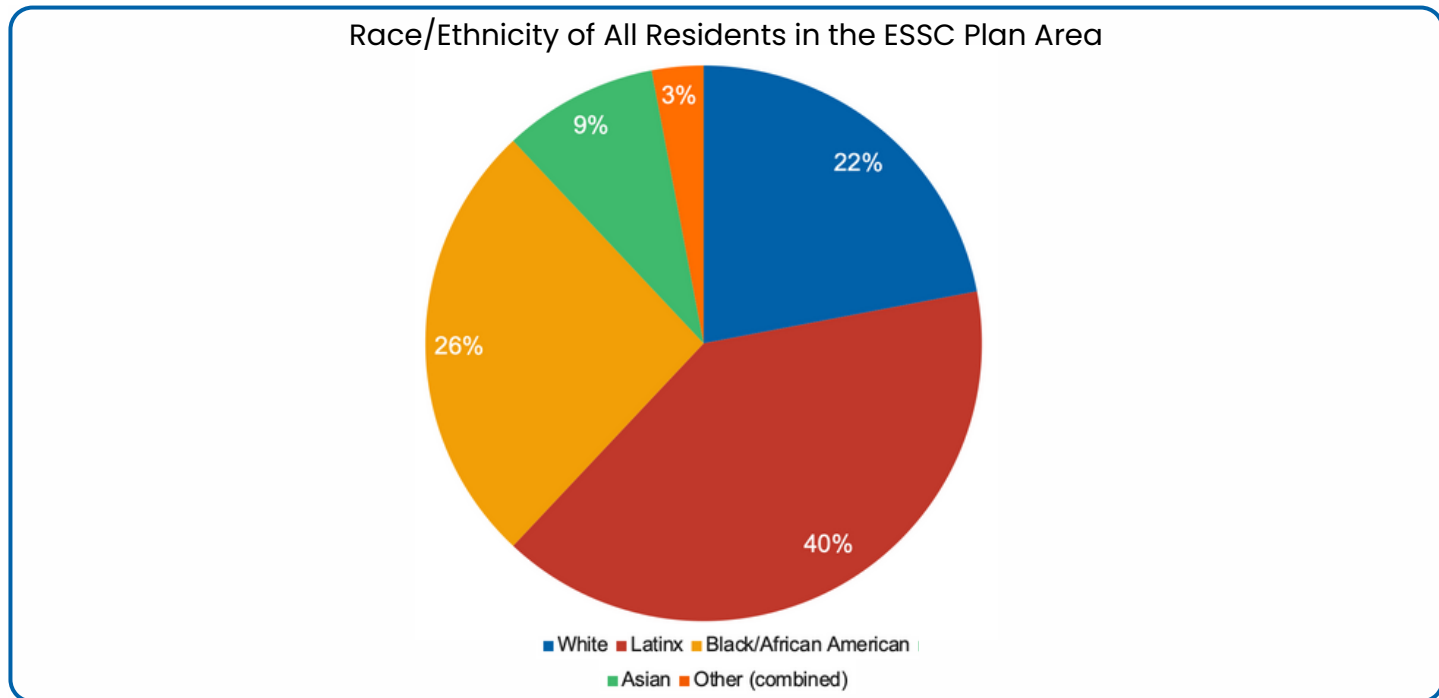
Fall 2024 Open House at New Hampshire Estates Elementary School on November 2, 2024

During focused engagement in 2025, these demographic trends shifted, with the updated approach to engagement through geographically-focused smaller conversations. In the Community Conversations, focus groups, and open house in April through September of 2025, White community members were the most frequent participants (52%), followed by Latinx (23%) and Black or African (16%) residents. Asian, Native American, European, and other races/ethnicities made up about 9% of remaining community members engaged in 2025. However, we did not collect demographic data from participants at the Long Branch Festival pop-up, where we estimate having spoken to at least 100 community members of diverse backgrounds.

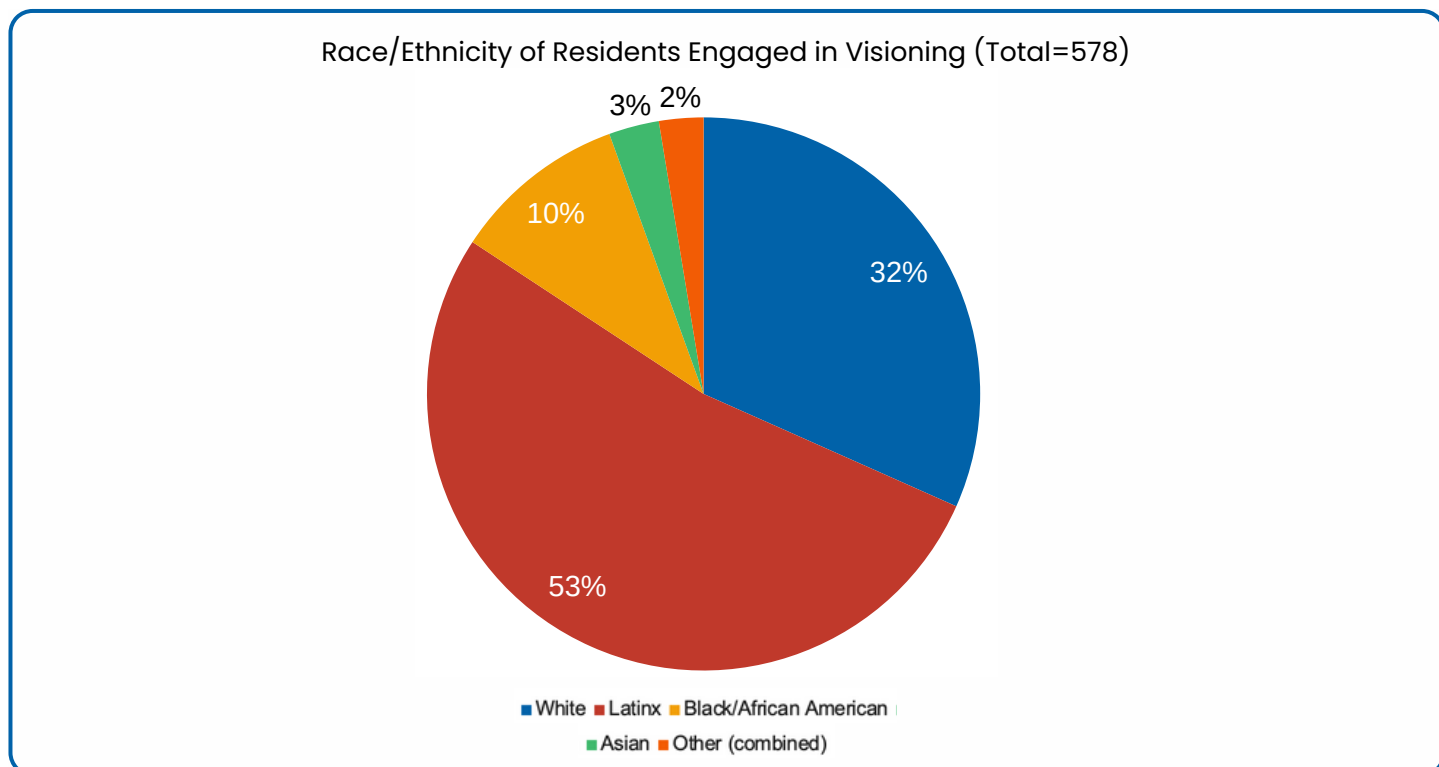
In addition to racial/ethnic diversity, the team also gave special attention to the mix of housing types currently in the area. By engaging with residents from both homeowner and renter communities, the team also increased its reach to the socioeconomically diverse populations that live in the area. Homeowners were the overwhelming majority of online questionnaire respondents (88%) and open house and Community Conversation attendees (95%). However, with the support of local community partners, the team reached hundreds of renters through focus groups and community pop-ups (where we received feedback through the paper questionnaires and interactive boards). Although the team was limited in its ability to collect demographic data at all engagement events during the Community Visioning Phase, based on 427 people who self-reported their housing tenure, 54% were renters and 46% were homeowners. Given the context of each engagement effort, the team estimates that about two thirds of all community members engaged were renters and one third were homeowners.

DEMOGRAPHIC REACH VS. PLAN AREA POPULATION: RACE/ETHNICITY

During the entire Community Visioning Phase, the team worked to reach the diverse ethnic and racial populations that represent Eastern Silver Spring's current resident and business community. The results of the team's reach, in comparison to census data for the entire plan area, are shared below and on the following pages:



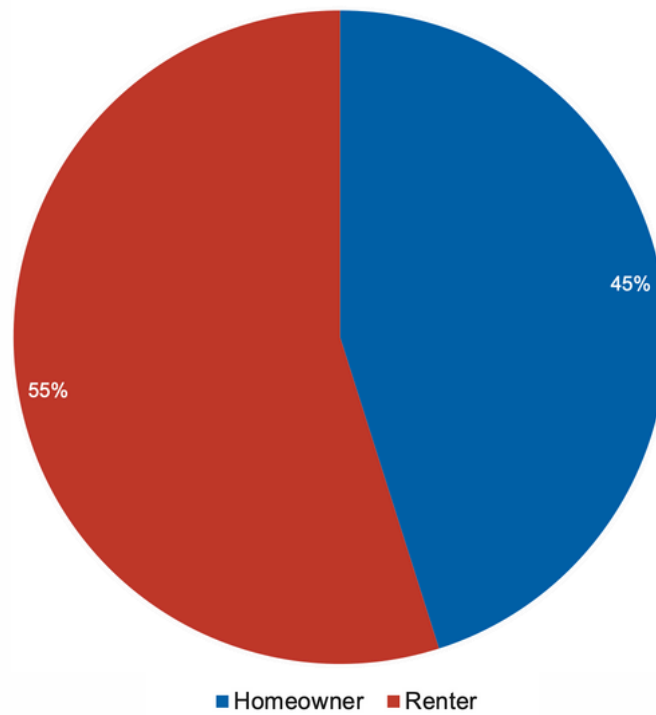
Source: Demographics of all residents in the ESSC Plan Area (American Communities Survey and Montgomery County 2020 Census)



Source: Demographics of residents reached through engagement during ESSCP Community Visioning Phase

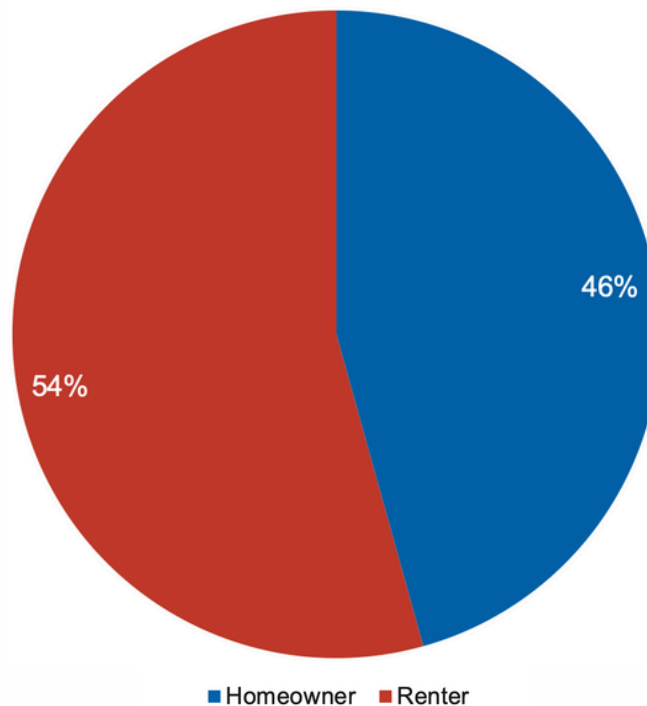
DEMOGRAPHIC REACH VS. PLAN AREA POPULATION: HOUSING TENURE

Housing Tenure of All Residents in the ESSC Plan Area



Source: Demographics of all residents in the ESSC Plan Area (American Communities Survey and Montgomery County 2020 Census)

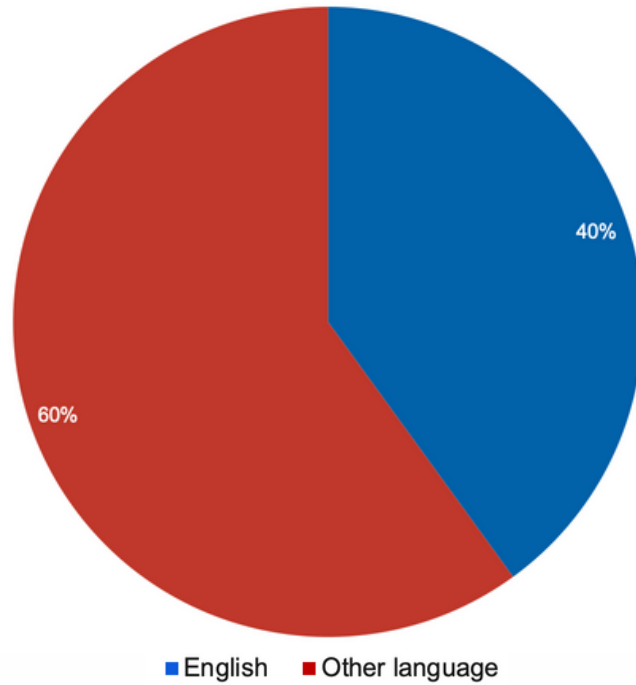
Housing Tenure of Residents Engaged in Visioning (Total=427)



Source: Demographics of residents reached through engagement during ESSCP Community Visioning Phase

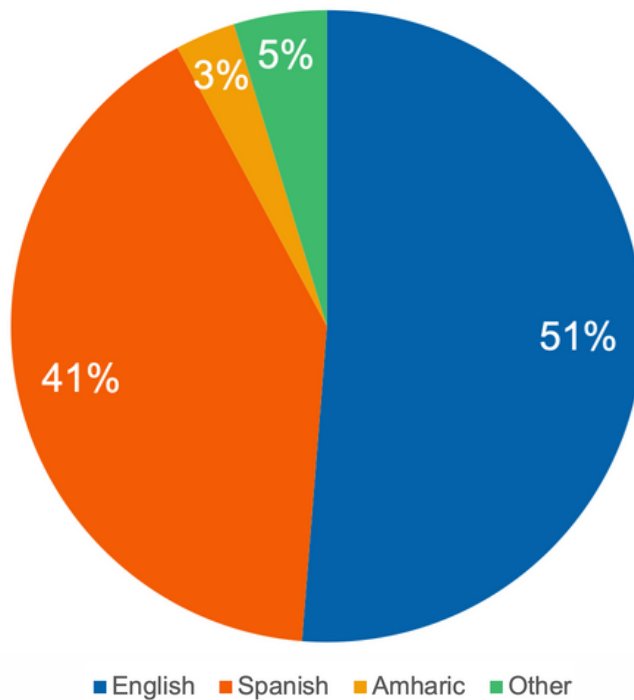
DEMOGRAPHIC REACH VS. PLAN AREA POPULATION: LANGUAGES SPOKEN

Languages Spoken at Home by All Residents in the ESSC Plan Area



Source: Demographics of all residents in the ESSC Plan Area (American Communities Survey and Montgomery County 2020 Census)

Languages Spoken by Residents Engaged in Visioning (Total=357)



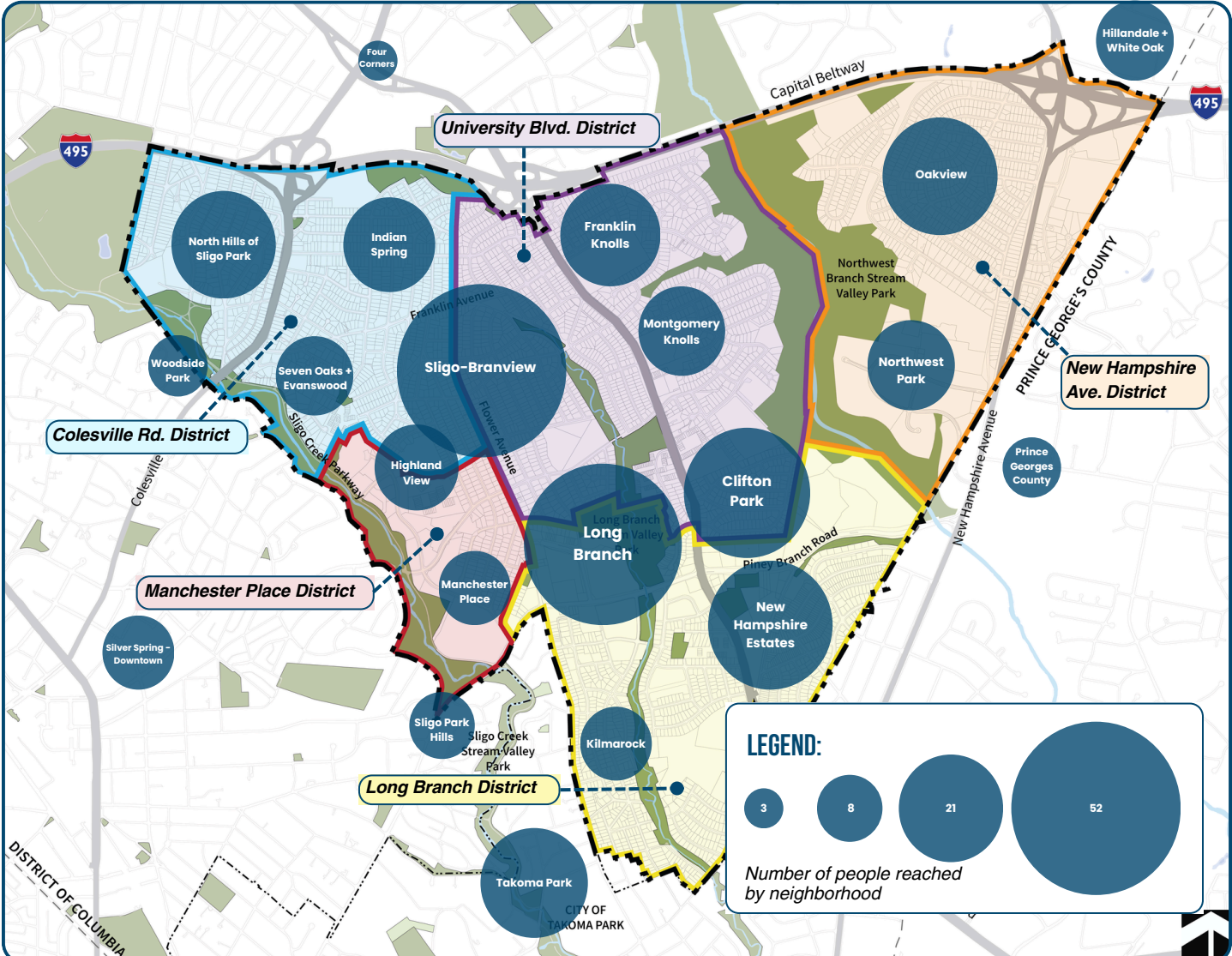
Source: Demographics of residents reached through engagement during ESSCP Community Visioning Phase

OUR REACH

BY NEIGHBORHOOD

As noted above, the ESSCP team gave special attention to reaching residents across the many diverse neighborhoods of the plan area. Through engagement in the Fall of 2024, the team successfully reached people living in Long Branch, Takoma Park, Sligo-Branview, North Hills of Sligo Creek, Indian Spring, and Clifton Park (as identified in the online and paper questionnaires and open houses). There was a clear gap in reach specific to residents who live in the New Hampshire Avenue district of the plan area. The pivot to a geographic approach to engagement in 2025 helped address some of the gaps from engagement in the Fall of 2024, while also providing opportunities for residents to engage in neighborhood-specific conversations addressing the locational challenges and vision associated with their specific district of the plan area.

Through the updated engagement approach, the team achieved a more complete reach across all five of the plan districts by the end of the Community Visioning Phase. The map below summarizes the reach by neighborhood for the entire Community Visioning Phase from September 2024 through September 2025, pulled from self-reported data about neighborhoods of residents from the online and paper questionnaires, open houses, Community Conversations, and focus groups.



Map of Community Visioning Phase engagement reach by neighborhood

KEY FINDINGS: PLAN-WIDE THEMES

Participants across engagement events had opportunities to respond to a range of questions in varied formats depending on the event. The following summarizes key findings by theme, with sub-themes as applicable. These themes are applicable across the plan area, and help frame the District-specific engagement in 2025.

COMMUNITY NEEDS



HOUSING



GETTING AROUND



IMPORTANT PLACES



PARKS & ENVIRONMENT



BUSINESS OWNER ENGAGEMENT



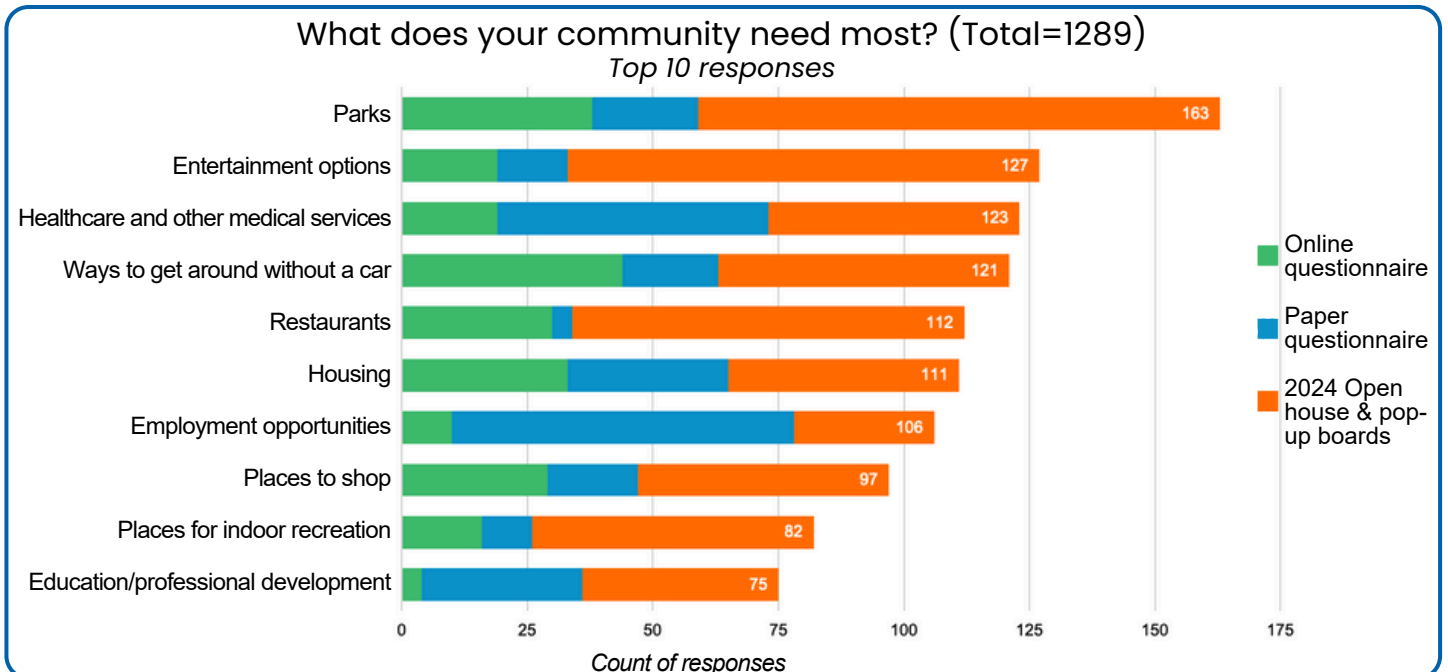
KEY FINDINGS: COMMUNITY NEEDS

During Fall 2024 engagement, open house, pop-up, and visioning questionnaire (online and paper) participants were invited to select a wide variety of community amenities and services from a list of options to answer the question “What does your community need most?” The most common response from community members across all engagement activities was “parks.” However, when looking at the data broken down by different engagement activities, the most common response for online questionnaire respondents was “ways to get around without a car,” (15% of all responses) followed by “parks,” (13%) “housing,” (11%) “places to shop,” (10%) and “restaurants” (10%). Paper questionnaire respondents (at the November and December food distribution pop-ups) selected “employment opportunities” as most needed (25% of all responses), followed by “healthcare and other medical services” (20%); “housing” and “education/professional development opportunities” (12% each) tied as the third biggest need for the community. For all other 2024 Fall pop-ups and the two Fall 2024 open houses, “parks” was the greatest need identified (14% of all comments), followed by “entertainment options” (13%) and “restaurants” (11%).



Crossroads Farmers Market Pop-up Oct. 9, 2024

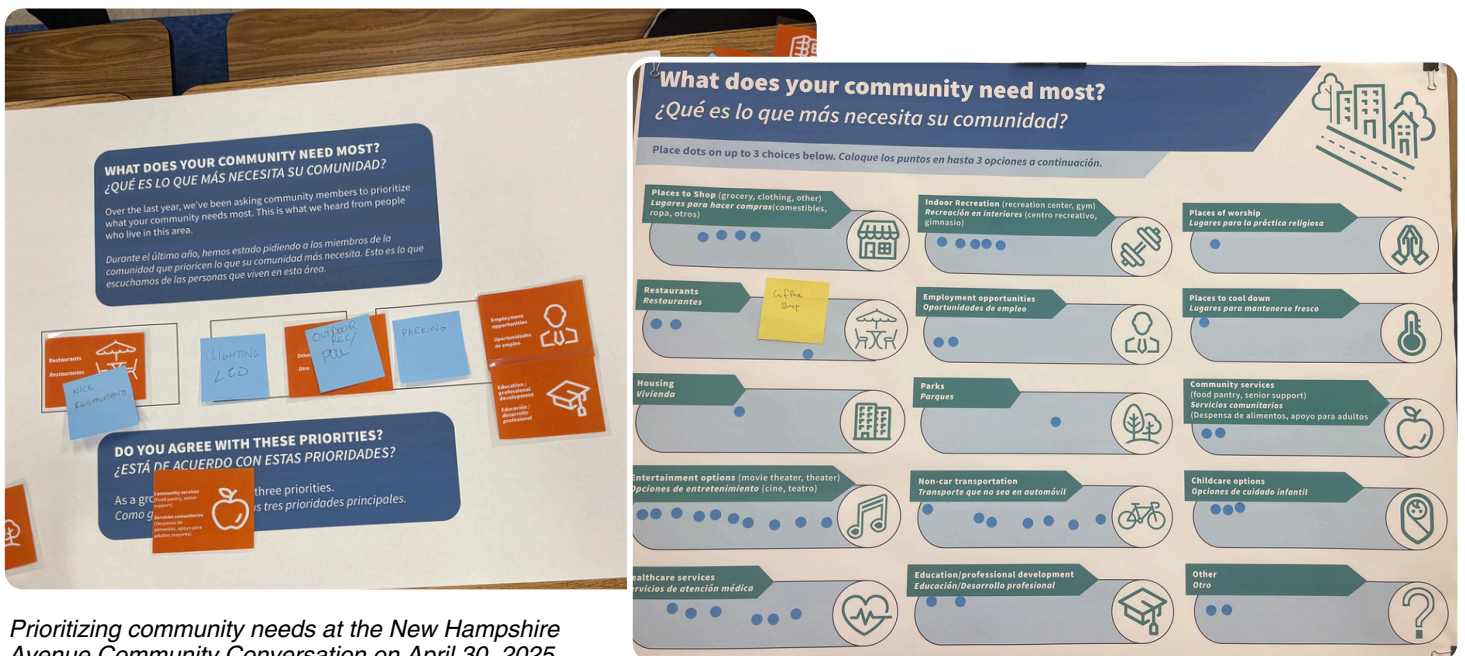
The needs for employment opportunities and healthcare services were highlighted by participants of two food distributions in the plan area, suggesting that people who seek support services are looking for more holistic community support. Housing, restaurants, shopping, and entertainment were all highlighted by various groups in addition to the common interest in parks.



Source: Fall 2024 Open Houses and Pop-ups, Online and Paper Questionnaires

At focus groups with majority Spanish-speaking renter families in Spring 2025, the needs identified in the paper and online questionnaires were confirmed. New Hampshire Estates neighbors emphasized safety, employment opportunities, community and medical services, adult education, and childcare as top needs. Residents of Northwest Park Apartments expressed interest in more outdoor recreation options, including a pool and parks, places to shop, and community services. Focus group participants specifically mentioned interest in a gym or fitness center, recreational spaces for children (sports fields and courts), daycare centers, and a small market or mini-mart. Healthcare services accessible via public transit or within walking distance were also highlighted.

Additional comments when asked about community needs emphasized the need for more diverse and quality retail. Overall, respondents expressed strong support for existing small businesses to stay while balancing opportunities for new businesses to fill current and future needs. People specifically mentioned grocery stores, coffee shops, cafes, and ice cream shops. Comments to this question also showed support for affordable housing and interest in more soccer fields. Finally, people highlighted that they need a safer community. They referenced safer sidewalks, traffic calming, and bike lanes. Others mentioned safe places to be after dark, reducing crime, and increased policing.



Prioritizing community needs at the New Hampshire Avenue Community Conversation on April 30, 2025

What does your community need most? Open House on October 23, 2024

During neighborhood specific engagement in 2025, the team worked to confirm the identified community needs within each of the plan area districts. At each Community Conversation, the team invited residents to identify community priorities they would like to see in the future as a follow up to previous engagement around this topic. Participants highlighted ways to get around without a car as a core priority for all areas of the plan. Details about community needs for each district can be found in the corresponding district-specific findings sections. Overall, residents across the plan area are looking for more amenities within walking distance. Additionally, residents of all groups highlighted ways to get around without a car as a key priority, while the renter population specified that crucial amenities like healthcare services and places of employment should be more accessible by public transit.



Community member engages in the Build your Block exercise at the Change & Growth Station at the University Boulevard Community Conversation on June 3, 2025.

KEY FINDINGS: HOUSING

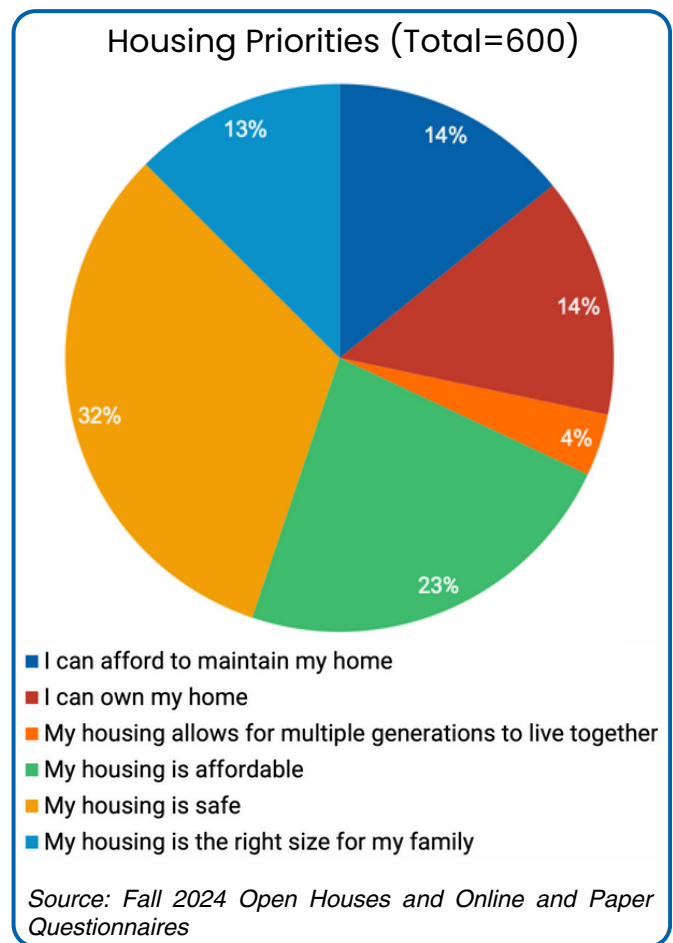
Respondents from all Fall 2024 engagement activities agreed that safety and affordability are the two most important priorities for housing for their families. The following chart shows housing priorities of respondents from the 2024 open houses and the online and paper questionnaires.

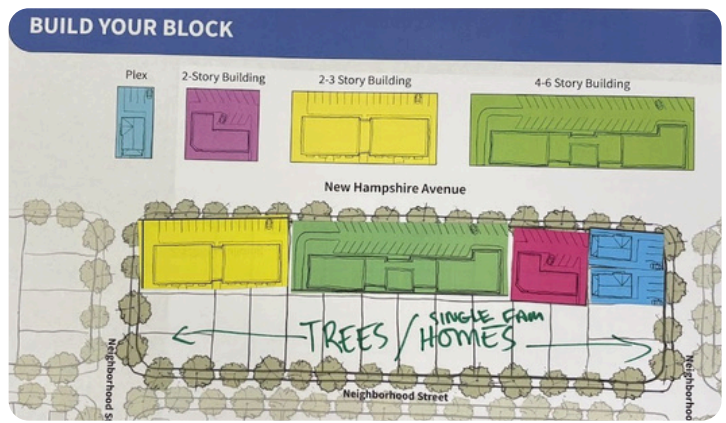
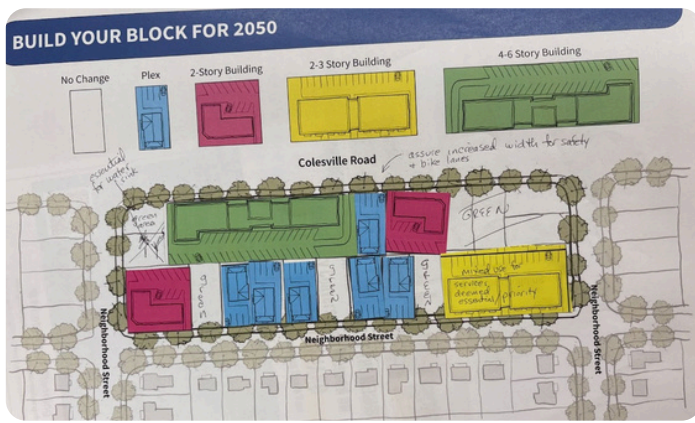
When broken down by demographic groups, safety and affordability remain the top two housing priorities across all groups. Affordability was more important for younger (under 35) and senior (65+) respondents. Home ownership was the priority that differed the most between demographic groups. Only 17.3% of paper questionnaire respondents (who we assume to be majority low-income renters and Spanish-speakers) indicated that home ownership is a priority, while 41.7% of all online questionnaire respondents who self-identified as renters (and identified as a mix of White, Latinx, Asian, Black, and “other” race/ethnicities) prioritized being able to own their own home.

Opportunities for Change and Growth

A key part of the 2025 engagement focused on change and growth within each district of the plan area, encompassing conversations about future housing needs and development.

Focus group participants from Northwest Park Apartments and New Hampshire Estates Elementary School spoke to their experiences with housing in the plan area and shared reflections around future housing needs. Community Conversation participants from the New Hampshire Avenue, Colesville Road, and University Boulevard North communities learned about different possible building types for future development in the area, and the tradeoff that larger buildings may be necessary in order to bring new retail into neighborhoods. They subsequently engaged in an activity where they imaged and built a future residential block using different building sizes, which facilitated discussion around people’s preferences for change and growth specific to housing density and community amenities. In the Fall, residents were engaged at the Long Branch Festival and Manchester Place Open House around possible building types, housing needs, and opportunities for mixed use and commercial buildings in residential neighborhoods.





Homeowners, who were the majority of participants at the three Community Conversations, revealed a wide array of opinions and preferences around future growth and development. At the New Hampshire Avenue conversation, most participants were open to some additional density in single family home neighborhoods - only 1 of 25 participants clearly noted they want to preserve purely single family home blocks. In contrast, 42% of participants at the Colesville Road conversation and 34% of participants at the University Boulevard conversation selected to preserve only single family homes on their blocks. While sample sizes are too low to draw statistically significant conclusions from the Community Conversations, the variations between the three groups invites further exploration of which districts in the plan area may be more open to increased housing density.

Participants open to additional housing density on their blocks differed widely on what change and growth could look like. Some residents preferred duplexes or smaller buildings while others were open to adding larger multifamily buildings to single-family home blocks. Most people explored adding a mix of building types and sizes to the same block with some intentionally noting a need to carefully transition between densities. Many participants noted that keeping (and sometimes even expanding) green spaces and trees was a non-negotiable element for future development plans. Some residents also explored the possibilities of bringing new amenities into neighborhoods through mixed-used development. People added amenities like corner stores, childcare centers, community center space, and restaurants to their residential blocks.

Many sentiments were repeated at the Manchester Place Open House despite the smaller turnout and variation on the feedback exercise around change and growth. People’s biggest priorities were adding more affordable housing and keeping current single family home neighborhoods as they are. They also recommended considering how to better balance new affordable housing throughout the county, rather than concentrating it in certain areas like Eastern Silver Spring. Overall, people want to see more housing and are open to the idea of mixed-use buildings as a way to incorporate more retail at a neighborhood level.

HOUSING NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY RESIDENTS OF APARTMENTS:

- HIGH QUALITY AFFORDABLE APARTMENTS
- REDUCE DISPLACEMENT
- ENCOURAGE LARGER APARTMENT SQUARE FOOTAGE IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

HOUSING NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY OWNERS OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES:

- PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS
- ALLOW HOMEOWNERS TO TURN THEIR HOMES INTO DUPLEXES AND OTHER USES



Some notable concerns from these district-specific conversations around residential growth included displacement, parking and traffic, lighting at the ground level, and market impacts of changing the makeup of the neighborhood. While people want better maintenance of current multifamily buildings and more housing added to the area, they are afraid that rising rent costs could change the diverse demographic fabric that so many value about this area. In response to the expected population growth, some participants requested more parking to accommodate additional vehicles, while others requested limited parking spaces to encourage transit-oriented housing and limit car influx that would cause more traffic. People also raised concerns around lighting and neighborhood feel changing with taller buildings coming into the neighborhoods. A few residents expressed concerns that single family homes would be harder to sell or less desirable if close in proximity to multifamily housing. Some people also strongly rejected the idea of introducing duplexes, triplexes, or quads into single family neighborhoods.



Change & Growth Station at the Colesville Road Community Conversation on May 14, 2025.

MORE HOUSING AT INSTITUTIONAL PROPERTIES
The opportunity for religious institutions, county-owned facilities, and non-profit organizations to build more on their properties.

MÁS VIVIENDAS EN PROPIEDADES INSTITUCIONALES
La oportunidad para que instituciones religiosas, institucionales municipales y organizaciones sin fines de lucro construyan viviendas en sus propiedades.

DUPLEXES, TRIPLEXES AND QUADPLEXES
The opportunity for properties that currently have single family homes to have 2, 3 or 4 units.

DÚPLEX, TRÍPLEX Y CUÁDRUPLES
La oportunidad para propiedades que actualmente cuentan con viviendas unifamiliares de tener 2, 3 o 4 unidades.

SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL
The opportunity for properties that currently have single family homes to have small neighborhood retail or other commercial or community use.

PEQUEÑOS LOCALES COMERCIALES DE BARRIO
La oportunidad para que propiedades que actualmente cuentan con viviendas unifamiliares tengan pequeños locales comerciales de barrio u otros usos comerciales o comunitarios.

Long Branch Festival: What types of changes are you willing to accept in Long Branch to create opportunities for more housing and new amenities?

At the Long Branch Festival in September 2025, the team invited participants to respond to possible changes that could bring more housing to this area. While the engagement happened in Long Branch, we believe that the estimated 100 participants came from a wider radius than this specific district. Their responses followed the major trends we observed at prior engagements. More people than not were open to change, with general support for increasing density in already-dense areas. Most people hesitant toward growth expressed hopes that single family home neighborhoods would be preserved. However, many people highlighted the importance of preserving and/or building affordable, high quality housing for low income families (including deeply affordable units, not just middle income and tax-credit). Issues of code enforcement and maintenance of current properties were raised by participants, who pointed out that renovations are needed in parallel to any new or re-developments. Participants also emphasized the need to build units large enough to comfortably house low income families and supported the idea of mixed use development to provide retail spaces and additional residential units.



New Hampshire Estates Elementary School parent focus group. Parents discussed community needs, future growth, getting around, and local parks in both Spanish and English.

While focus group participants did not engage in the same “build your block” activity, they did share about their current reality and lived experiences, as well as their concerns around future growth. For current renters, poor conditions of apartment buildings was a key concern; participants from both focus groups hoped that future development would encourage current multifamily building owners to increase maintenance efforts and address housing quality issues. Renovations to improve mold and insulation issues that pose health threats, especially to children, was an example of improvements they hope to see in their buildings.

Sentiment around increased housing truly is mixed among stakeholders:

“Let people build more and more density.”

“We have enough housing--we are crowded already--current housing needs improvement, opportunities for home ownership needed.”

“...Build Triplexes/duplexes, multifamily options within .25 miles of Purple Line stops.”

Comments from Fall 2024 Open Houses

Similar to what we saw in the paper questionnaire, renters also emphasized the need for more affordable and spacious units. Many families live in overcrowded units due to budget restraints. Participants suggested that current and new developments consider rent control¹ to ensure affordability at various income levels. Northwest Park Apartment residents specifically noted that new amenities or development could increase their rent; they indicated they would welcome newer apartment buildings but not at the expense of higher rents.

Additionally, focus group participants highlighted the importance of safer housing environments, suggesting features such as gated communities and secure parks for children. Finally, homeownership options were of interest and an aspiration for many--either through smaller single-family homes or smaller units like condos, duplexes, or townhomes. Overall, affordable quality housing to accommodate different family sizes and socioeconomic classes are important in the future growth of this area.

Footnote 1: Montgomery County has existing policies that regulate rent increases in rent-stabilized properties, and the county’s [Office of Rent Stabilization](#) is responsible for implementing and enforcing all aspects of these laws and regulations. By law, current and future development must comply with these existing rent-stabilization laws and regulations.

AN EXPERT VOICE ON HOUSING: LONG BRANCH HOUSING ACTION TEAM

In efforts to understand the complexities of housing needs and opportunities in Eastern Silver Spring, the ESSCP team met with the Long Branch Housing Action Team (LBHAT) on July 21, 2025 to learn more about housing issues in the plan area, primarily in multifamily housing communities in Long Branch, Manchester Place, and along New Hampshire Avenue. LBHAT is a group under the umbrella of the organization CHEER that is committed to ensuring tenant protections and working for housing justice for renters in the Long Branch area. LBHAT is just one of several organizations working to protect tenant rights in Eastern Silver Spring and around the county. While theirs is just one perspective, it represents the needs and voices of thousands of renters in the plan area.

During their meeting on July 21, the LBHAT team shared with the ESSCP team a number of resident challenges, concerns, and hopes. This conversation explored the needs of the community's most vulnerable residents and implementation strategies to help keep the racial/ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the area, a sentiment we heard throughout engagement around what people love about Eastern Silver Spring. Key highlights are summarized below:

AFFORDABILITY & DISPLACEMENT

LBHAT reiterated resident fears around rising rent costs with future development in the area eventually leading to displacement. Local residents want to stay in Long Branch, but are unsure they will be able to afford to remain in this area in the future. They also mentioned that residents who are local business owners are concerned about their commercial space rental costs increasing, making it difficult to keep their business in this area. Today, many low-to-moderate income residents already share a rental unit with another family to reduce costs.

QUALITY OF LIVING CONDITIONS

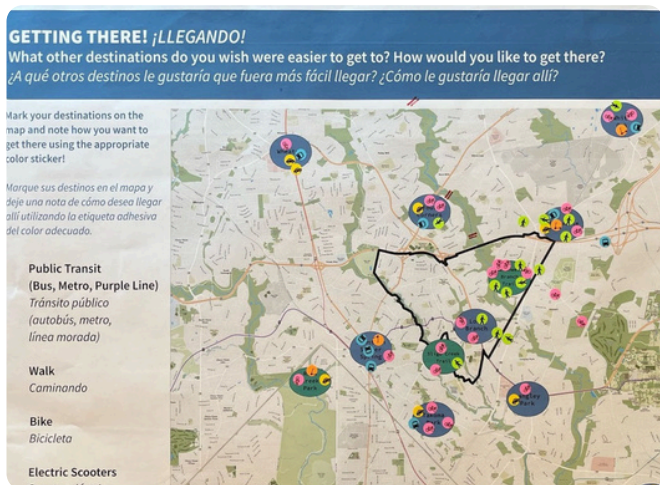
As shared by residents during the focus groups, many renters in the area complain of low quality living conditions from things like mold, pests, and inadequate maintenance of apartment units.

In addition to unhealthy conditions of units, safety and delinquency are other common concerns. LBHAT reported that many residents emphasized that housing challenges affect both their mental and physical health and overall well-being.

"What if Long Branch became the pilot for a new model of a radical approach to housing?"

OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE PLAN

The ESSCP team also highlighted opportunities for the plan to serve as an advocacy tool. They shared hopes that the plan can help document and present community members' concerns and priorities to decision-makers and implementing agencies. This could lead to actions like the county revising the criteria to qualify for workforce housing and creating alternatives to the income certification process. The ESSCP team emphasized to LBHAT that this plan, along with the coming Purple Line, is an opportunity to consider new paths towards affordability and to connect people to opportunities.



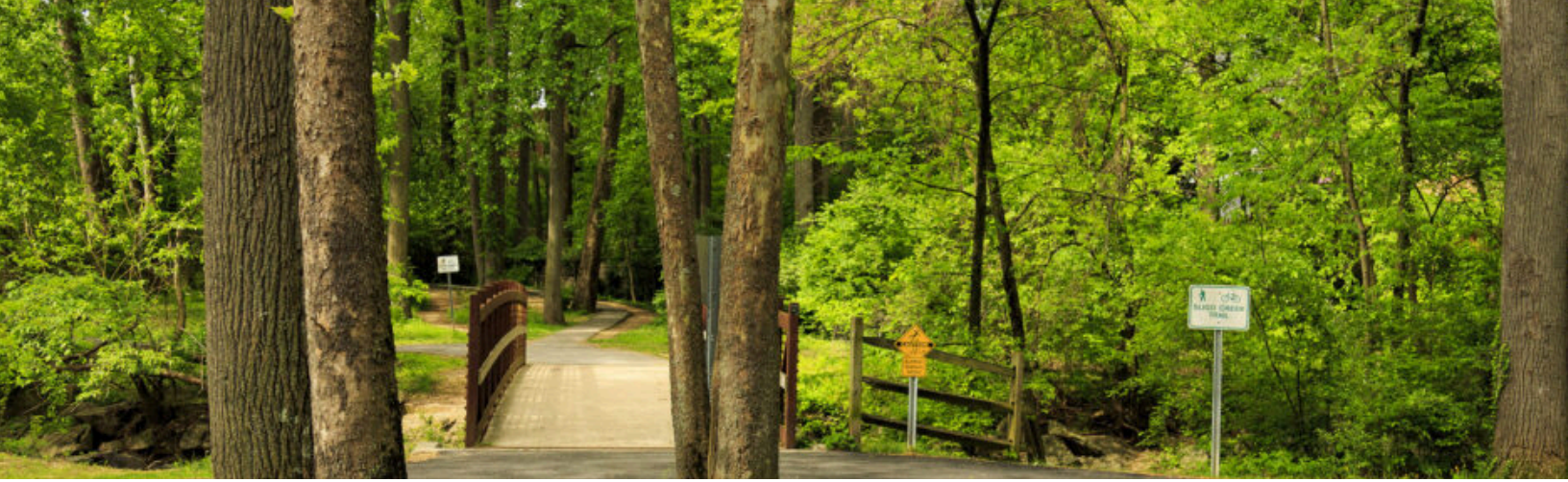
Community Conversation participants used stickers with transportation mode icons to identify destinations where they hope for better access by mode. Left: Map shows data collected at the New Hampshire Avenue Community Conversation; Right: Image of participants of the Colesville Road Community Conversation engaging around intersection improvements.

KEY FINDINGS: GETTING AROUND

In the pre-scope of work engagement in Fall 2023 through Spring 2024, the ESSCP team learned a lot from the community about their experiences getting around the plan area. We learned that most people rely on cars some or all of the time and that public transportation is often perceived as inconvenient. Community members also shared details around pedestrian safety issues, specific intersections that are most troubling, and concerns around parking. While this engagement occurred prior to the start of the Community Visioning Phase of work, these findings helped support the design of engagement specific to transit and getting around during the Community Visioning Phase. More details about what we learned in the pre-scope of work engagement specific to getting around can be read in the [Pre-Scope of Work Engagement Report](#) (Fall 2023 through Spring 2024) published on the plan website.

Moving into the Community Visioning Phase, residents emphasized the need to get around safely without a car as a top priority across all engagement efforts, focusing on the needs of both public transportation users and pedestrians. When asked about what was most important to residents when considering the future of the Growth Corridors in this area (New Hampshire Avenue, Colesville Road, and University Boulevard), open house participants selected “the ability to walk or roll safely” as their top priority. One participant wrote “Maintaining sidewalks and adding protected bike lanes with bike signals would help protect everyone on their commutes.”

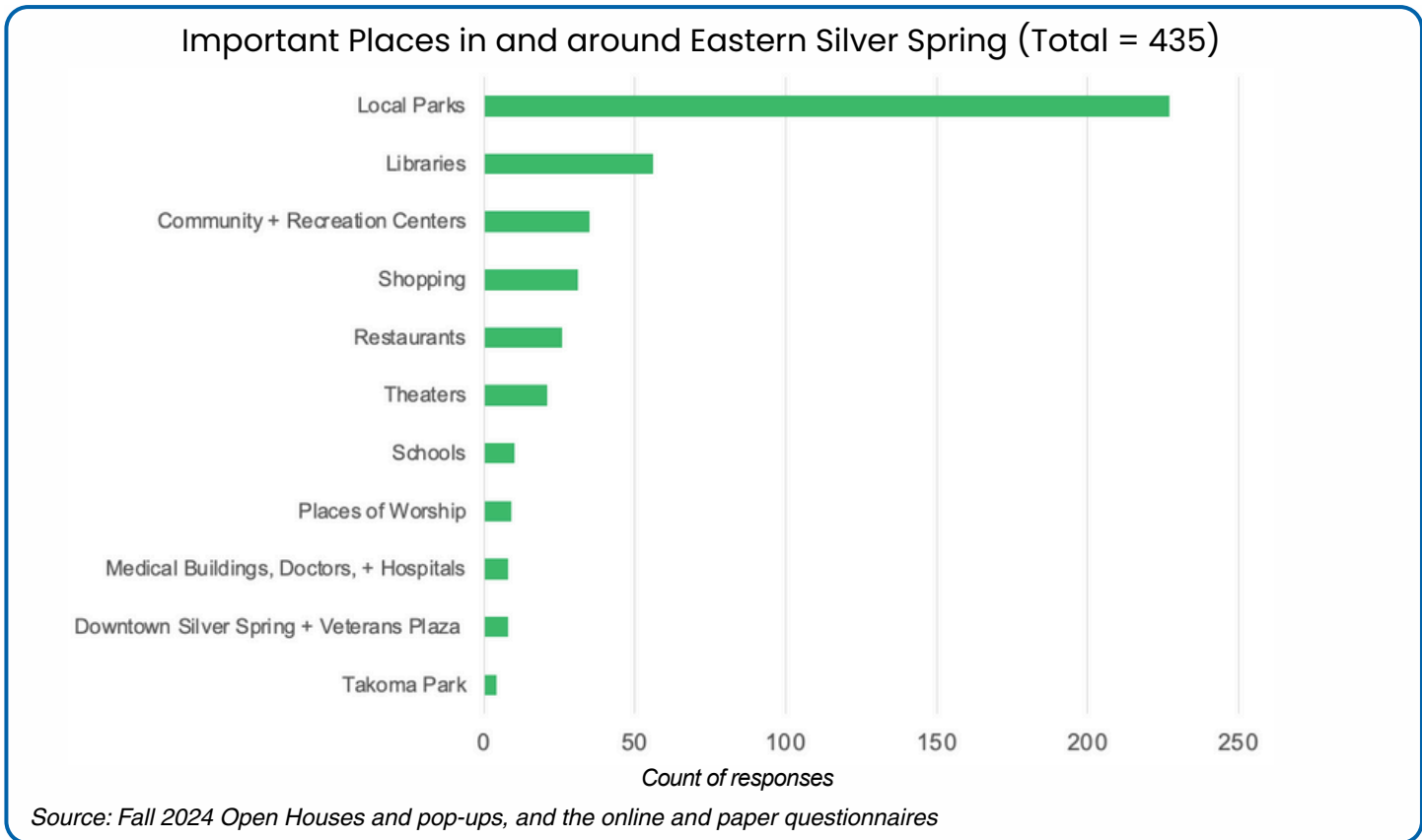
When asked to define the greatest needs for their communities, some groups were more likely to select ways to get around without a car than others. For example, online questionnaire respondents (majority white homeowners) ranked ways to get around without a car as the top need for their community. However, paper questionnaire respondents (majority Latinx and Black/African renters) from two pop-ups at food distribution events ranked ways to get around without a car as number six of 14 in their list of community needs. Although renters are more likely to use public transportation, they listed other priorities above the need for improved ways to get around without a car. In comments and conversations, homeowners are also concerned about pedestrian and bike access in their community. There could be additional engagement to better understand if homeowners’ prioritization of ways to get around without a car is focused mainly on better pedestrian and bike access, or if they are also hoping for improved buses and other public transportation options in their communities.



Online questionnaire respondents most frequently cited parks among the important places in their community, most often naming Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park.

KEY FINDINGS: IMPORTANT PLACES & KEY DESTINATIONS

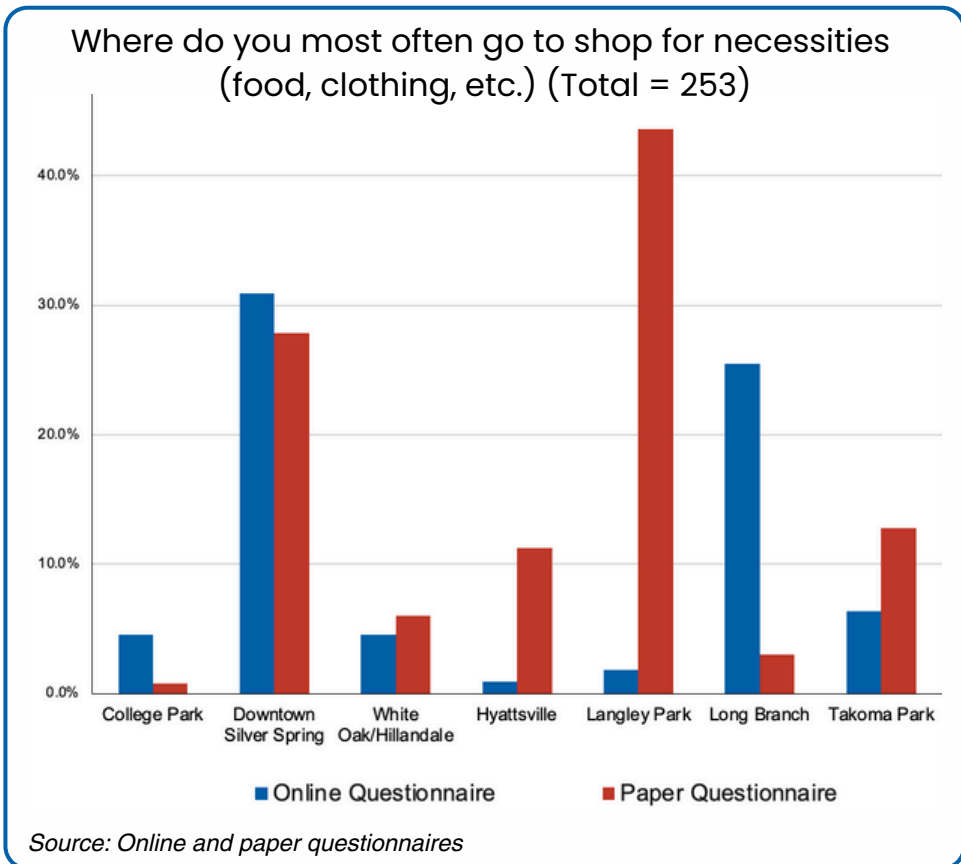
Participants of Fall 2024 pop-ups, open houses, and the online and paper questionnaires were invited to share buildings, parks, and/or places that are important to them and their community. Parks were by far the most common response. These responses mostly referenced local parks in the plan area but also some parks outside of the plan area. The most common park mentioned was Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park. After parks, the next most commonly cited important place in the community was the library. The majority of people referred to the Long Branch Library, though a handful of people mentioned the Downtown Silver Spring library or others. Restaurants (including El Golfo and Koma Cafe), Long Branch, and Theaters (including the Flower Theater and theaters in Downtown Silver Spring) were each referenced by over 20 respondents. Other important places that were mentioned include community and recreation centers (including Long Branch Community Center, the YMCA, the Senior Center, and MLK Recreation Center), grocery stores (most commonly Giant), and shopping centers or areas.



The most important places outside of the plan area that were mentioned by people across engagement efforts were Downtown Silver Spring (including specific references to Veterans Plaza) and Takoma Park. People referenced Takoma Park for its small businesses and restaurants, walkability, and the feel of the area.

Online questionnaire respondents selected Downtown Silver Spring as the most common place they go to shop for necessities, followed by Long Branch. Paper questionnaire respondents, on the other hand, selected Langley Park as their top destination to shop for necessities, followed by Downtown Silver Spring. Other places people referenced included Takoma Park, Hyattsville, White Oak/Hillandale, College Park, and DC. The online questionnaire also asked participants to share where they spend their free time. Respondents most frequently highlighted Downtown Silver Spring, followed by Takoma Park, Long Branch, DC, and Bethesda.

As noted above, the places where people shop for necessities varied based on race/ethnicity and housing tenure. Online questionnaire respondents, who were mostly white homeowners, were much more likely to shop in Long Branch or College Park than paper questionnaire respondents. The latter were mostly Latinx renters, and were more likely to shop in Langley Park, Hyattsville, or Takoma Park. This highlights the diverse needs of different populations in the plan area and the different functions that local shopping destinations serve based on their offerings.



Where people spend their free time also varied by demographic group.

- In their free time, White online questionnaire respondents selected a wider variety of destinations than other races/ethnicities, and respondents were almost evenly split between Downtown Silver Spring and Takoma Park as the two main places they spend their free time.
- Senior respondents over the age of 65 were more likely to spend their free time and shop for necessities in Long Branch than any other destination. This may be due to both the proximity of Long Branch, as well as the county-run Long Branch Senior Center.

An additional note about important spaces

Though not a specific place, cultural celebrations and events were also repeatedly mentioned as important to the community. Numerous people mentioned the desirability of safe and welcoming gathering spaces. Engagement participants also expressed that additional cafes and restaurants, as well as spaces for small meetings and gatherings, could become important places for the community.

The most common park mentioned in the online questionnaire was Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park. Other repeatedly referenced parks include Flower Avenue Urban, Long Branch Local, Sligo-Bennington, Seven Oaks, Long Branch-Arliss, and “Fire Engine” Parks. Northwest Branch Trail and “trails” in general were also mentioned by a limited number of participants. Specific parks and various recommendations were also discussed during district-specific Community Conversations in 2025.

In addition to public engagement events and conversations, the ESSCP team also met with several groups to discuss specific parks and environmental issues. These groups included the Friends of Sligo Creek and the Neighbors of Northwest Branch. The team also discussed Sligo Creek, Flower Avenue Urban Park, and related environmental issues during the Flower Avenue/Manchester Place Neighbors’ Walking Tour.



Residents and staff visit Flower Avenue Urban Park as part of their neighborhood walking tour on June 4, 2025



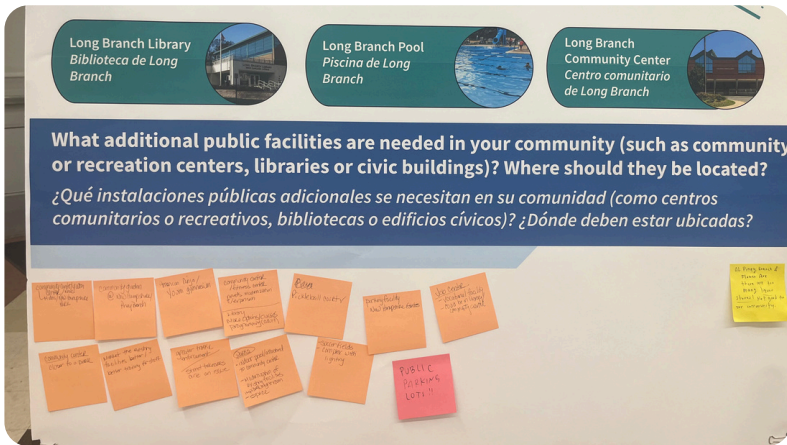
Walking tour with members of the Friends of Sligo Creek, June 30, 2025



Public Spaces

At the Fall 2024 open houses, participants were asked to name public facilities that are needed in their community in addition to the current library, pool, and community center in Long Branch. Responses ranged from community centers and soccer fields to shared working spaces and community service centers. New Hampshire Estates was one of the most commonly mentioned areas where people would like new facilities, specifically a community center. An indoor pool was also mentioned, as well as a soccer complex with lighting and a gym with adult fitness classes. Specific attention to youth programming and services was also noted. Several people mentioned co-located community services in public spaces as a way to centralize these resources.

In addition to advocating for new public spaces and facilities, people emphasized the need to maintain and improve current parks and facilities. Some participants expressed that the community center is too small, and that it should either be expanded or additional smaller centers should be built throughout the plan area.



Participants share ideas for new public facilities needed in their community at the Open House on October 23, 2024

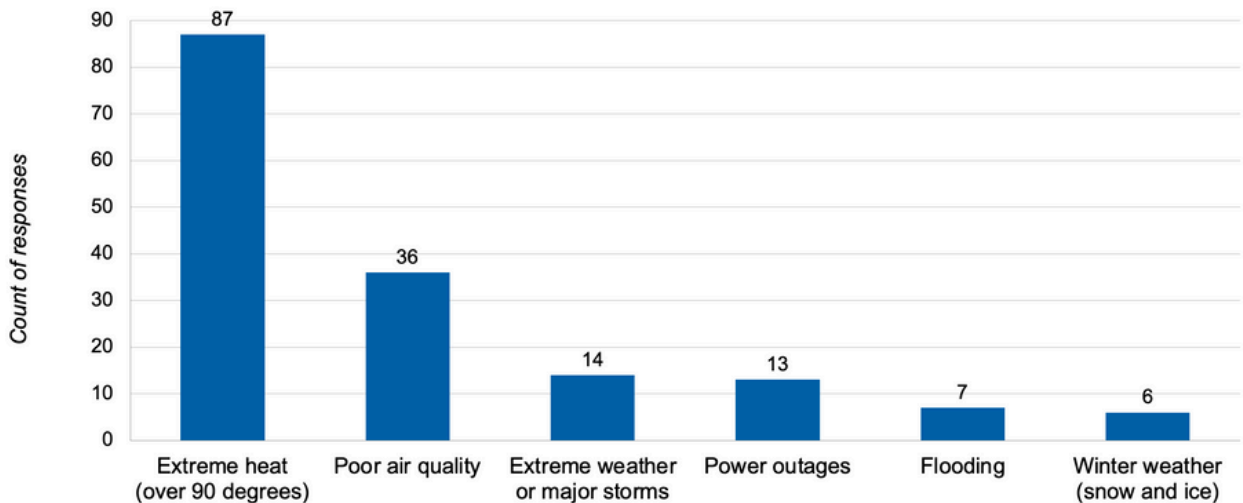


Long Branch Community Recreation Center

Environment

At both open houses and through the online questionnaire, participants had the opportunity to comment on their environmental concerns and climate-related issues that have affected their community. In the online questionnaire, 87 respondents said that extreme heat (over 90 degrees) and 36 respondents said that poor air quality are the issues that have most affected their community over the past five years. At the open houses, participants listed tree loss and neighborhood shade as their top environmental concerns, with others noting concerns around energy demands and consumption, extreme heat, water quality, loss of animal and plant diversity and habitat, and air quality.

Which of the following climate-related issues have most affected your community in the last 5 years?
(Total=173)

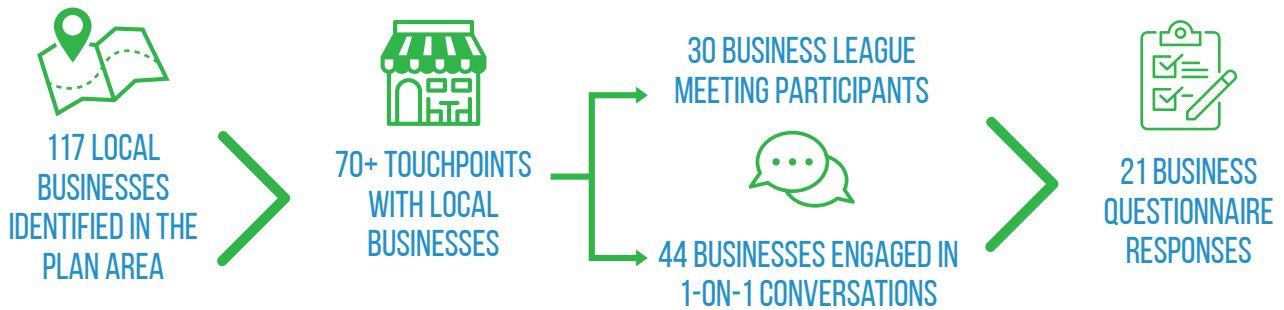


Source: Fall 2024 Open Houses and online questionnaire

In conversations with Neighbors of Northwest Branch and Friends of Sligo Creek, the team heard additional environmental concerns. Stormwater management was one of the biggest issues expressed, with residents mentioning it causing flooding, erosion, and street and sidewalk maintenance issues. Invasive plants were also a cause of concern for both groups. Improving infrastructure to better handle increasing rainfall and extreme heat are priorities for these groups, with the goal of protecting and preserving the natural environment in Eastern Silver Spring.

REACHING BUSINESSES THROUGH TARGETED ENGAGEMENT

The business community of Eastern Silver Spring is an important community stakeholder in this process, with unique needs and interests related to future change and growth. Recognizing the need to engage this community, in November and December, consultants from Brick & Story directly engaged with 44 business owners and representatives in person and by phone. The team received feedback via a business questionnaire from 21 of those business owners about the strengths and weaknesses of the area for businesses along with their hopes and concerns regarding the future of the business community in Eastern Silver Spring. Members of the ESSCP team also met with business owners during two of the Long Branch Business League’s monthly meetings.



Services & Sectors interviewed:

- Accounting Services
- Bakery
- Computer/IT Services
- Education (Technical School & Educational Consultancy)
- Florist
- Gas stations
- Hair & Nail salon
- Restaurants
- Wine & Spirits stores
- Wireless mobile store

Who we interviewed:

- Only one (of the 21) interviewed business owner lived in the plan area
- 50% middle-aged men and women (ages 45-64)
 - 30% were slightly younger (ages 35-44)
- 62% of respondents were Latinx
- 19% of respondents were Black/African/African American
- The majority of businesses have operated in their current location for over 5 years
 - 1/3 have operated in their current locations for 6-10 years
 - 1/3 have operated in their current locations 20+ years
- 19 businesses rent their retail space
- Only 2 businesses own their retail space



Conversations with over 20 business owners in the plan area, mainly in Long Branch and along University Boulevard, included many comments about the Purple Line construction, the strengths and challenges of the neighborhood, and hopes for the future. Business owners recognize the potential growth in customers through the increased accessibility with the incoming Purple Line, but are concerned about potential future rent increases and displacement. Both worry and hope were expressed around the Purple Line project. Most business owners expressed wanting to stay in the plan area for the long-term, but those in Long Branch in particular voiced concerns about (1) Purple Line construction, (2) vagrancy, and (3) uninviting and unsafe streetscapes.

The majority of business owners surveyed (75%) feel that their square footage of retail space is “just right” but expressed concerns around purple line construction, high rent costs, and accessibility issues for both pedestrians and drivers.

The team learned valuable information from business owners through the business questionnaire that guided conversations. For example, the majority of business owners (75%) feel their square footage (retail) is “just right” and that, while parking is plentiful, customers also walk, bike, and arrive on various bus lines. Respondents felt that their businesses were negatively impacted by traffic, vagrancy in front of their service and retail establishments, and sidewalks that are not conducive or attractive to pedestrians (especially parents with strollers and young children). Current rent costs were a concern for some (several business owners shared that they rely on grant funding to remain open), and limited vacant spaces also present a barrier to new businesses looking to come to the area. Highlights from the responses to the business questionnaires are shared below:

How do people get to your business?

- Drive
- Walk
- Bus
- Purple Line construction is a barrier

“Clean up the area and especially the street.”
Business Questionnaire

“The roof has been fixed three or four times by the land lord and it still leaks. Buildings need to be updated in the area.”

Business Questionnaire

“The street is very dangerous, people get hit all the time, several hit and runs per year.”

Business Questionnaire

What are your concerns as a business owner about current or future development projects in this area?

- Development is essential to ensure that the area continues to grow.
- Concerns about delays in the construction of the Purple Line (echoed by many).
- Need to consider parking.
- We don't own so we don't know if we'll be able to stay. Rent may increase.
- Could this area be made into an arts district?
- Hope to expand my business using the Purple Line station and take advantage of increased foot traffic.
- I am concerned about the shopping center being sold to make a new building.
- I hope for an area with more security and fewer gangs.

KEY FINDINGS: THEMES BY DISTRICT

A GEOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MANY UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOODS IN EASTERN SILVER SPRING

“More than access, we need more community spaces dispersed to every neighborhood. All neighborhoods need meeting rooms, classrooms, for gathering, arts, education.”

Long Branch Festival Pop-Up, Sept. 12, 2025

“We need to treat each neighborhood like a village, with its own character and facilities.”

ESSCP Open House, Nov. 2, 2024

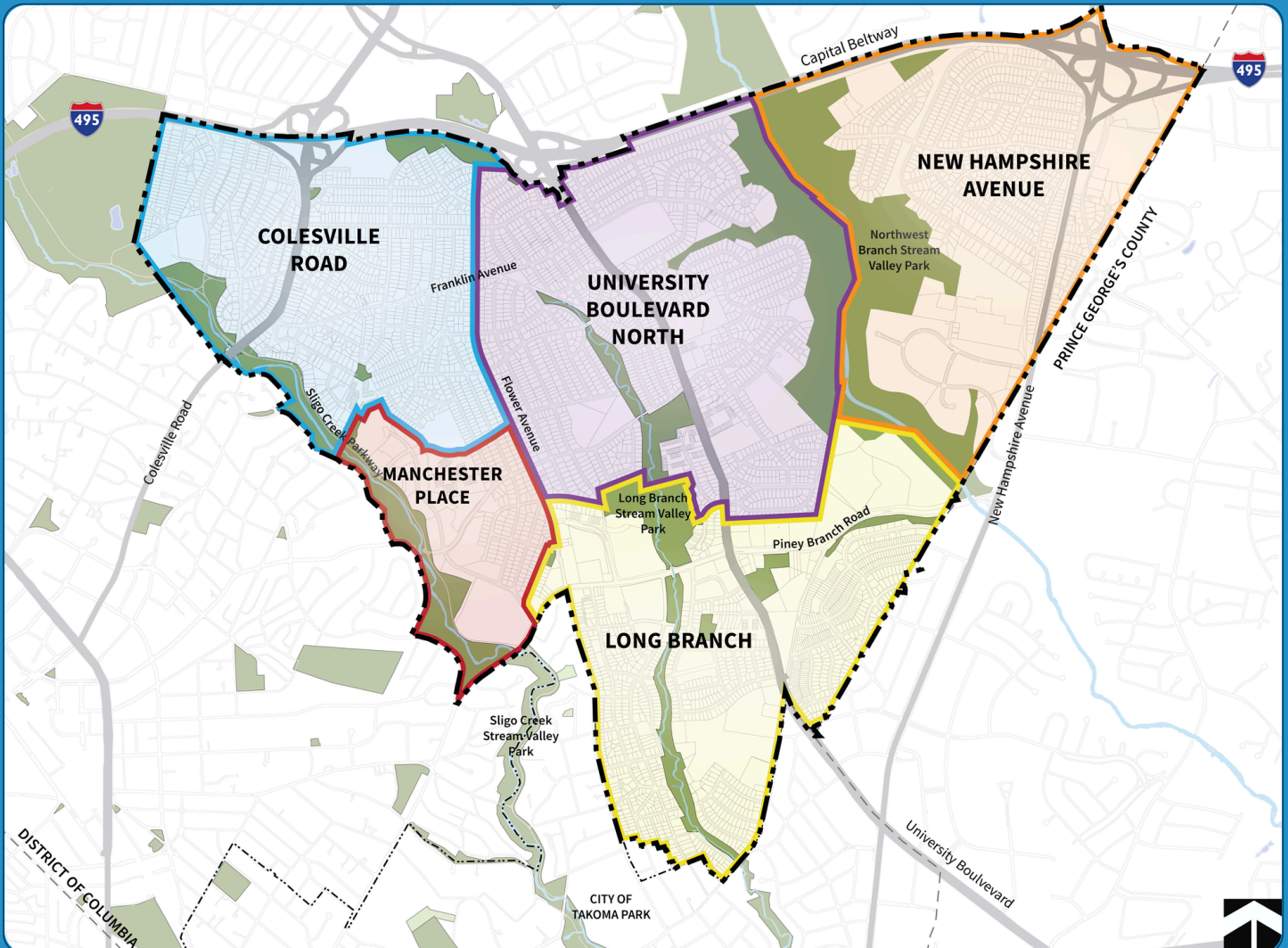
COLESVILLE ROAD

UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD

NEW HAMPSHIRE AVENUE

MANCHESTER PLACE

LONG BRANCH



KEY FINDINGS: COLESVILLE ROAD



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS & HOPES

A safe, community-focused neighborhood



Preserve greenery and park spaces



Housing

- Significant hesitancy around increasing density
- If redevelopment occurs, use new housing as a way to bring retail to the district

Transportation & Connections

- Improve connections to local commercial corridors
- Ensure pedestrian and bike safety along Colesville Rd and at key intersections
- Hope for wider and more complete sidewalk networks

Community Needs

- Ways to get around without a car
- Commercial spaces

Parks & Public Spaces

- Parks are a key gathering space in this community
- Preserve parks and green spaces with any future development efforts

Colesville Road

The Colesville Road District is situated in the northwest corner of the plan area. It includes parts of several neighborhoods, including the North Hills of Sligo Creek, Indian Spring, Seven Oaks/Evanswood, and Sligo-Branview neighborhoods. It includes both access to Sligo Creek Park and I-495. This district is situated between several commercial areas, including Long Branch, Downtown Silver Spring, and Four Corners.

The team engaged with this district through the Colesville Road Community Conversation in May of 2025.



Community Needs




Through the limited number (18) of online questionnaire responses from this district, the top three community needs identified were:

- Ways to get around without a car
- Restaurants
- Childcare options

These learnings from Fall 2024 were further refined during the Colesville Road Community Conversation, where residents (19) worked together to agree on their top priorities, which included:

- Ways to get around without a car
- Parks
- Mixed use development with diverse commercial spaces
- Moderate and affordable housing

Clearly there is a need to explore non-car transportation options, along with local amenities and services, and future housing development opportunities for more affordable units in this area.

<p>Ways to get around without a car</p> <p><i>Transporte que no sea en automóvil</i></p> 	<p>Restaurants</p> <p><i>Restaurantes</i></p> 	<p>Places to shop (Grocery, clothing, other)</p> <p><i>Lugares para hacer compras (Comestibles, ropa, otros)</i></p> 
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Community Conversation participants used community amenity cards like these to work together to identify their top needs or priorities for the future of their neighborhoods.

Housing and Development near Colesville Road

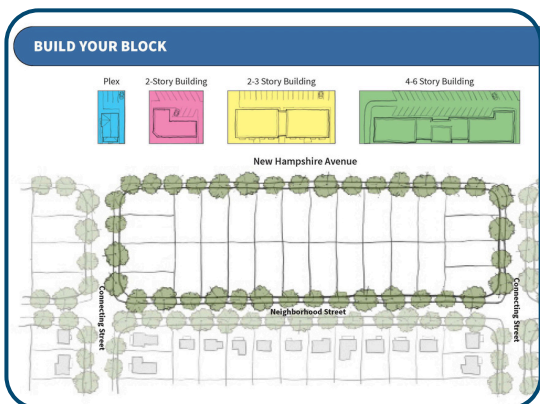
The neighborhoods that make up the Colesville Road District are mostly single family homes. 93% of households in this district own their home, while only 7% rent. There are no multiunit housing structures currently in the Colesville Road District, only single family detached and single family attached (townhomes).

At the Community Conversation, 47% of Colesville neighbors did not want to see any change to their hypothetical single family home block through the Build your Block exercise. Of the 12 participants who completed the exercise, 5 stated they want no change of housing types, while only 2 were open to adding a 4-6 story building to the block. Half of participants were open to adding 2-3 story, 2 story, and/or plexes to the block, with plexes as the most common new housing type people were willing to introduce to the neighborhood.

People who did not want to see change expressed concerns about things like traffic and the size of current housing in these neighborhoods. One participant felt that adding any kind of multifamily dwelling into the neighborhood would “significantly negatively impact the neighborhoods and the walking trails and amenities already here.”

On the other hand, people who were open to denser housing types (2-3 story and/or plexes) wanted to prioritize mixed use development and opportunities to bring new services and amenities into the area through small multifamily development. Those in support of these denser housing types shared mixed views on whether to add or cut back on neighborhood parking. One neighbor commented on the importance of preserving green areas between buildings to eliminate flooding.

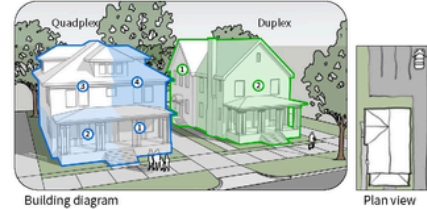
While some people recognized the benefits that multifamily development could bring to the Colesville Road District, a strong percentage of Community Conversation participants were against introducing multiunit properties into their neighborhoods.



During 2025 engagement events, the team educated participants about possible types of housing that could be added to the area. Participants of Community Conversations used the four building types shown here to “build their blocks” at the Change & Growth station.

BUILDING TYPES

Duplex, triplex and quadplex housing



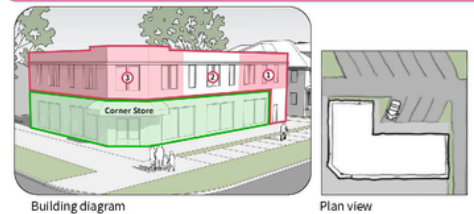
What could fit in this type of building?

Duplex (shown above right) 2 residential units

Triplex 3 residential units

Quadplex (shown above left) 4 residential units

2 Story Building



What could fit in this type of building?

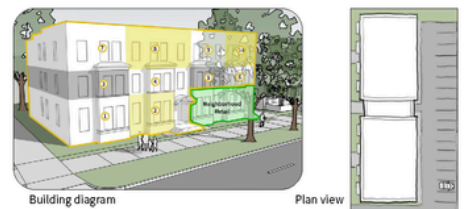
Mixed-use (shown above) Corner store or neighborhood-serving retail on ground floor, 2-4 residential units above

Residential 4-6 residential units

Neighborhood-serving retail could include:

- Dry-cleaner
- Nail salon
- Coffee shop
- Daycare

2-3 Story Building



What could fit in this type of building?

Mixed-use (shown above) Neighborhood retail on the ground floor, 10 apartment units above

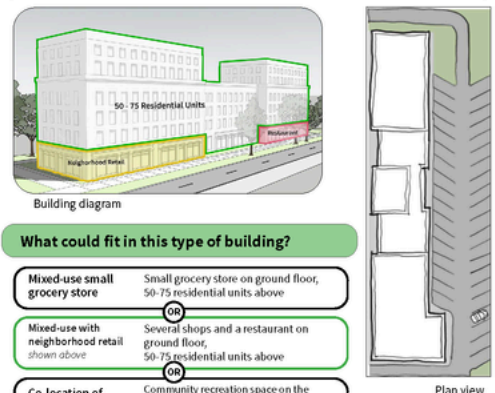
Residential

Residential 20 apartment units

Neighborhood-serving retail could include:

- Dry-cleaner
- Nail salon
- Coffee shop
- Daycare

4-6 Story Building



What could fit in this type of building?

Mixed-use small grocery store Small grocery store on ground floor, 50-75 residential units above

Mixed-use with neighborhood retail (shown above) Several shops and a restaurant on ground floor, 50-75 residential units above

Co-location of public facility Community recreation space on the first two floors, 50-60 residential units above

Getting to, from, and around the Colesville Road District

The Pedestrian Experience:

Walking around Colesville Road raises concerns from neighbors around people crossing and/or walking near a high speed, heavy traffic road. Community Conversation participants requested wider sidewalks, traffic calming measures, better lighting, and safer street crossings. Participants also highlighted specific roads lacking sidewalks in the area, making it difficult to safely walk to local amenities.

Colesville Road neighbors hope for improved walkability and bike access to and from their neighborhood. In the future, residents are most interested in being able to more easily walk to Four Corners and Downtown Silver Spring. Additionally, there is a strong interest in improved bike access to local destinations including Four Corners, Sligo Creek Trail, Takoma Park, Wheaton, Northwest Branch Trail, and Rock Creek Park.

At the Community Conversation, participants worked together to prioritize specific improvements for three different intersections. The intersection and suggested improvements are listed below:

Colesville Rd + I-495	Colesville Rd + Franklin Ave	Colesville Rd + Sligo Creek Pkwy
Lighting Protected sidewalks Wider sidewalks Protected crossings Speed/red light cameras	Street trees Protected sidewalks Traffic calming measures Crossing island	Wider sidewalks Traffic calming measures Protected bike lanes Protected crossing island

Overall, Colesville Road neighbors are looking for safer pedestrian experiences through wider protected sidewalks, traffic calming measures, and protected street crossings. Pedestrians and cyclists would benefit from thoughtful protection measures along Colesville and at key intersections.

Getting Around by Car:

Many residents of this district rely on cars to get around. However, the main challenge for drivers is traffic. Heavy congestion due to the connections to I-495, Downtown Silver Spring, and White Oak make Colesville Road a key corridor for many drivers.

Additionally, speeding was the main issue raised by residents along the Colesville Road corridor, an issue that affects both pedestrians and drivers in the area.

GETTING THERE! ¡LLEGANDO!
 What other destinations do you wish were easier to get to? How would you like to get there?
 ¿A qué otros destinos le gustaría que fuera más fácil llegar? ¿Cómo le gustaría llegar allí?

Mark your destinations on the map and note how you want to get there using the appropriate color sticker!
 Marque sus destinos en el mapa y deje una nota de cómo desea llegar allí utilizando la etiqueta adhesiva del color adecuado.

- Public Transit (Bus, Metro, Purple Line)
Tránsito público (autobús, metro, línea morada)
- Walk
Caminando
- Bike
Bicicleta
- Electric Scooters
Scooter eléctrico

What destinations do you wish were easier to access, and how would you like to get there?

Using Public Transportation to Get Around:

Across engagement efforts with residents in this area, “ways to get around without a car” was a top priority for both online questionnaire respondents and Community Conversation participants.

When asked where people want to go by bus more easily in the future, participants selected a range of destinations including Four Corners, DC, Hillandale, White Oak, College Park, and Hyattsville. A few people also noted where they would like to see added or improved bus stops, highlighting the intersection of Colesville Road and Franklin Ave and the Sligo-Bennington Neighborhood.

With the Bus Rapid Transit services already functioning along Colesville Road, access to and from the main corridor may be further explored, along with transit options to access other local destinations.

One final note on Getting Around

Of the 19 participants at the Community Conversation, it is worth noting that no one tagged Long Branch as a destination they wish was easier to access (by any mode of transportation). This might suggest that people from this district already feel content with their ability to access Long Branch by walking, biking, bus, and/or car. However, based on the 2024 online questionnaire, respondents from this district were most likely to shop for necessities in Downtown Silver Spring, followed by Four Corners and Burnt Mills Shopping Center. Only 2 of 18 respondents said that they usually shop for necessities in Long Branch. Similarly, over half of the respondents said they spend their free time in Downtown Silver Spring. No respondents from Colesville Road District neighborhoods indicated that they spend their free time in Long Branch. Based on the location of this district, and its easy access to other central locations by going both north and south on Colesville Road, residents from these neighborhoods are less likely to prioritize getting to Long Branch as a key destination for necessities or pleasure.



Participants discuss getting around and specific intersection improvements at the Colesville Road Community Conversation in May 2025

Parks and Public Spaces in the Colesville Road District

When asked about parks and public spaces, many residents strongly favor preserving current parks and greenery, even with possible increased density in the future. Similar to other districts, people prioritized places to gather with friends and family as a key park priority, followed by places to experience nature and places to play. There was also an interest in using park spaces to honor and celebrate neighborhood history.

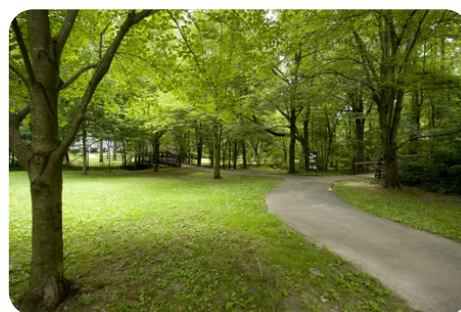
During the Colesville Road Community Conversation, participants explored three key parks in this district: Indian Spring Terrace Local Park, Seven Oaks Neighborhood Park, and Sligo-Bennington Neighborhood Park. Residents value all three parks for the opportunities they offer for exercise and recreation, and for their function as a community gathering or meetup space. The parks feel safe and protected, with good amenities for children and adults.



Indian Spring Terrace Local Park is valued for its sports courts, but people would like the basketball court to be improved. While they appreciate the barrier it offers to I-495, it could use some sort of sound wall. Neighbors also would like more convenient and accessible parking.



Seven Oaks Neighborhood Park offers a quiet slightly hidden green haven with nice trees and natural shade. However, residents hope for more benches, updated equipment, and improved drainage. They would also like to see an expanded nature area and/or playground.



Sligo-Bennington Neighborhood Park is spacious and provides a variety of age appropriate playgrounds and nice walking paths. Residents hope for better integration with trails, wider trails and bridges for walkers and bikes, and bike parking. Improved signage was also requested.

Some other park amenities mentioned as potential improvements in this area included a dog park, sculptures, miniature libraries, and activities for toddlers.

Overall, parks in this district are highly valued community spaces for people to gather, exercise or recreate, and spend time with family.

At the Colesville Community Conversation, participants also spoke about the Hastings Neighborhood Conservation Area. When asked about their current experience with Hastings, several people noted that it is not a practical or good place to gather because it is surrounded by roads. One participant detailed that you have to cross two streets to get to the conservation area. One of the few participants that seemed to use the space goes there for political activism or protesting.

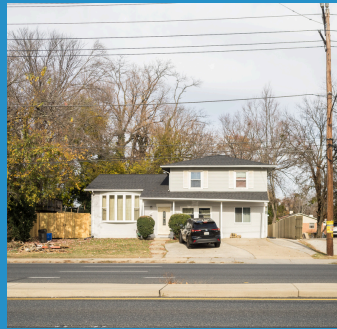
Neighbors then shared possible ideas of how to better use and activate the space. From an infrastructure standpoint, people mentioned consideration of how to adjust the road network to make the area more accessible. Stormwater management also needs improvements, as it commonly floods. People mentioned wanting more trees and benches. One neighbor recommended additional planting as a way to mitigate noise in area.



Additionally, people would like to see art, including sculptures. They also envision this as a space to celebrate history, provide wayfinding, and create a gateway experience.

Others envision new natural uses, such as a butterfly park or a Miyawaki urban forest. It was also noted that the space is currently used for gatherings and festivals by the Indian Springs Civic Association. One participant was interested in improvements that could enhance the conservation area as a gathering space.

KEY FINDINGS: UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS & HOPES

Better access to Long Branch



Improve Pedestrian Safety

More connections to Northwest Branch



Housing

- Mixed sentiments around increasing density
- Welcome mixed-use housing to bring retail

Transportation & Connections

- Residents frequent Long Branch and Downtown Silver Spring
- Prioritize pedestrian safety along the corridor and at crossings
- Ensure students have safe ways to access Eastern Middle School

Community Needs

- Parks
- Ways to get around without a car (pedestrian safety)
- Housing
- Places to shop

Parks & Public Spaces

- Improve access to Northwest Branch from this district
- Neighbors value green, open spaces and parks
- Maintain and expand places to gather

University Boulevard: I-495 interchange to Piney Branch Road²

University Boulevard is a key corridor both in and beyond the Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan area. Specifically, this district of the plan stretches from the I-495 interchange down to Piney Branch Road, and from Flower Avenue in the west to Northwest Branch in the east. It includes a number of neighborhoods, including some or all of the Indian Spring, Sligo-Branview, Montgomery Knolls, Franklin Knolls, and Clifton Park neighborhoods. This district is also home to Eastern Middle School, which serves about 60% of middle school aged students in the Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan area.

The team engaged with this district through the University Boulevard Community Conversation in June of 2025.



Change and Growth station at the University Boulevard Community Conversation in June 2025

Community Needs

Through the limited number (28) of online questionnaire respondents from this district, the top three community needs identified were:

- Parks
- Ways to get around without a car
- Restaurants

These learnings from Fall 2024 were further refined during the University Boulevard Community Conversation where residents (49) worked together to agree on their top priorities, which included:

- Ways to get around without a car
- Housing
- Places to shop



Parks are a priority community need for this district.

Other priorities identified by at least one of the groups at this meeting were:

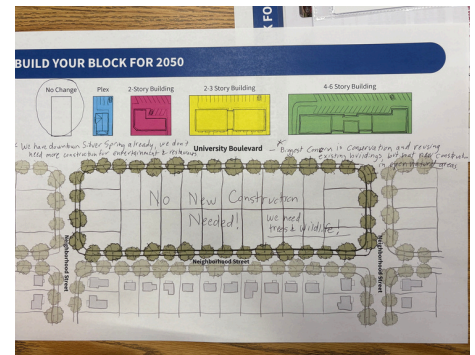
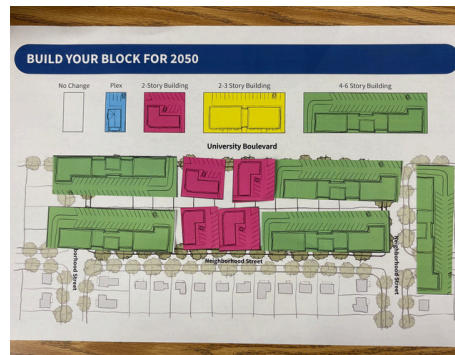
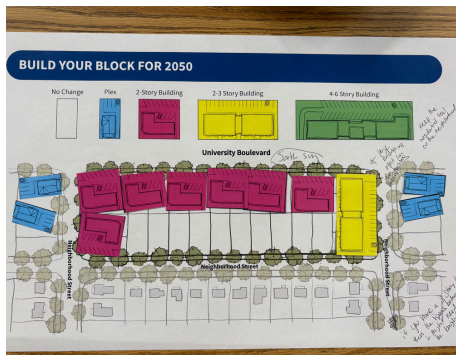
- Community services
- Pedestrian Safety
- Parks
- Drivable roads
- Diners/restaurants
- Third spaces



Eastern Middle School is an important community asset; neighbors expressed concerns around pedestrian safety for students.

Footnote 2: During public engagement, the University Boulevard District was described as extending south to Piney Branch Road. However, the southern boundary for the district actually ends at Langley Drive, as shown on the map on page 35.

Housing and Development near University Boulevard



Diverse opinions about future growth during the Build your Block exercise at the University Boulevard Community Conversation.

The neighborhoods that make up the University Boulevard North District are mostly single family homes. It includes a majority of owner-occupied households (75%), but also a number of multifamily buildings, with renters making up 25% of the district's households. 19% of all housing units in this district are in mid-sized multifamily buildings with 20 or more units, while 64% of all housing units are single family detached homes.

At the Community Conversation, 35% of neighbors did not want to see any change to their hypothetical single family home block through the Build your Block exercise. On the other hand, over 50% of participants added 2-3 story and/or 2 story buildings to their block, 32% of participants included 4-6 story buildings in their block, and 27% added plexes to their block. More people than not were open to increasing density, and many people expressed interest in adding small retail along with additional residential units. Participants also prioritized incorporating parks or green spaces into the redevelopment of a block.

Those who supported more density argued that building up helps conserve green space. Others advocated for a variety of housing types in the district. Specifically, residents noted the need for housing that accommodates multigenerational families. Accessibility measures, including handicapped parking, should be considered with future development. In order to support additional density, some participants flagged the need to improve public transit infrastructure. Others advocated for additional parking to accommodate more residents.

Affordability was also raised as an important consideration for any future development. Residents shared their fear that rent costs will continue to rise with development in the area, making it unaffordable for some. People noted the existing issues with many plexes and other multifamily buildings in the area that are not well maintained by occupants or owners. Ensuring current buildings are maintained should be prioritized along with any re- or new development. Some participants also wanted to see more affordable home ownership options in the area.

Community members also expressed interest in bringing more retail to the area through development. Residents demonstrated excitement when discussing the ability to walk to coffee shops and other neighborhood retail in the future. Markets, restaurants, and corner stores were all mentioned as desirable retail for this area. People also noted community health and social services, most specifically childcare, as valuable services that could benefit this district. One group, however, noted their desire for the community to stay residential, and not become a mixed use center like Downtown Silver Spring.

Those who were hesitant about new development were concerned about reduced natural lighting if taller buildings were introduced to the neighborhood. Some participants believed that 4-6 story buildings are too high for this area. Parking and current traffic patterns were also mentioned as issues that should be addressed as part of any new development plans. Even with the current single family home nature of the area, people expressed that there are too many cars and not enough parking.

Getting to, from, and around the University Boulevard District

The Pedestrian Experience:

Along University Boulevard, participants highlighted the need for improved site lines for both pedestrians and drivers. Speeding was a primary concern; participants requested traffic calming and traffic signals as two key solutions to the challenges of walking along University Boulevard. People noted that sidewalks feel unsafe and uncomfortable with fast-moving traffic. They also shared that many of the intersections of University Boulevard with neighborhood streets do not offer safe pedestrian crossings. As this road is home to Eastern Middle School, neighbors agreed that specific considerations should be made to ensure that students have safe and easy ways to walk to school. This includes better connectivity between neighborhoods and Eastern Middle School.

Participants also recommended speed cameras, protected crossings, and better timed lights. In addition, they called out the need for better stormwater management along University Boulevard. The use of tree panels or other sidewalk separators, as well as widened sidewalks, were also desired. People also recommended bike lanes.

University Boulevard District residents sought improved walking access to the Northwest Branch Trail and Long Branch. They also hope for better bike access to the Northwest Branch Trail, as well as destinations like Downtown Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Four Corners, and Wheaton.

Getting Around by Car:

For those who live along University Boulevard, traffic and speeding remain top concerns. Some intersections along this corridor experience high traffic and congestion regardless of the time of day. Residents recommended finding ways to improve sight lines and control the speeding issues that make this corridor, specifically around Piney Branch, feel unsafe to drivers and pedestrians alike.

Specific Intersection Improvements:

In general, left turns from neighborhoods onto University Boulevard are tricky for drivers due to heavy traffic. People also called out specific intersections that need attention to improve driver and/or pedestrian safety.



- **Buckingham Dr and University Blvd:** People complained of the traffic at this intersection due to parked cars and bus stops, as well as poor visibility for drivers and the need for a left-turn lane.



- **Langley Dr and University Blvd:** People recommend adding a traffic light or pedestrian signal, as the intersection is very difficult for pedestrians to cross with poor pedestrian visibility. Speed cameras and protected bike lanes were also suggested.



- **Piney Branch Rd and University Blvd:** Pedestrians and bikers could benefit from protected lanes and sidewalks as well as traffic calming measures.



- **Franklin Ave and University Blvd:** Enforce speeding and add red-light cameras. Ensure crosswalk is clear and safe for pedestrians.

Using Public Transportation to Get Around:

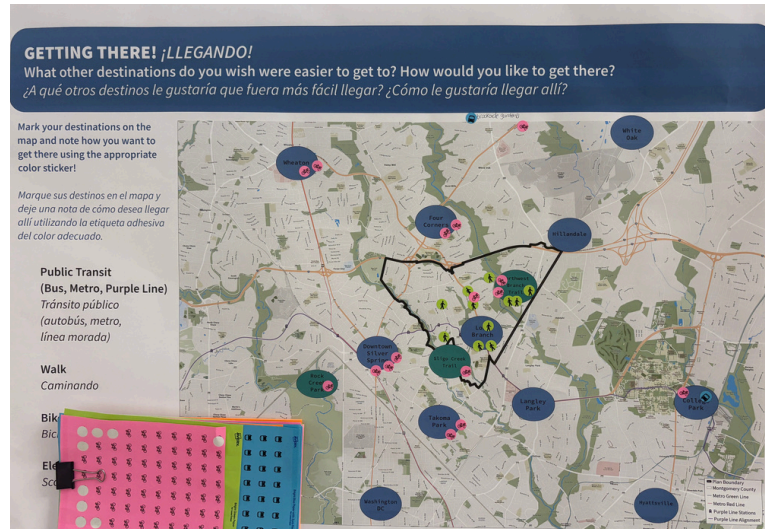
Although “ways to get around without a car” was a top priority for both online questionnaire respondents and Community Conversation participants from this district, there were a limited number of comments about improvements to public transit. This might suggest that people in this area are looking more for improved pedestrian and bike access, and less for public transit improvements. However, we did gather some data around how people would like to improve public transit in the future.

When asked about where people hope to better access by bus, College Park and Brookside Gardens were the two destinations called out by participants.

We also heard specific feedback from a variety of individuals related to public transportation improvements including: improve the reliability of the Route 14 Bus; add a bus stop to the intersection of East Melbourne Avenue and University Boulevard; build more seating at the bus stops at the intersection of Langley Drive and University Boulevard. One stakeholder noted that bus access must be improved if the area hopes to support increased residential growth in the future. Several people also mentioned that school bus stops need to incorporate safety measures to protect students gathering at and moving through these hubs, especially given the closeness to high speed traffic.

One final note on Getting Around

From the 28 online questionnaire respondents who live in a neighborhood in the University Boulevard District, people were most likely to shop for necessities in Long Branch (33%) and visit Downtown Silver Spring in their free time (33%). Perhaps most residents of this area either travel by car to these destinations or are comfortable with their current walk, bike, and bus options. Though the sample size is limited, the online questionnaire suggests that residents from the University Boulevard District enjoy better access to Long Branch than residents of other districts in the plan area.



Participants mapped how they hope to access local destinations with more ease in the future.



At the getting around station, neighbors identified possible solutions to tricky intersections along University Boulevard. One group’s recommendations for the Langley Dr and University Blvd intersection are shown below.





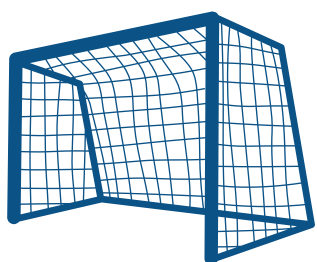
Parks and Community Facilities station at the University Boulevard Community Conversation.

Parks and Public Spaces in the University Boulevard District

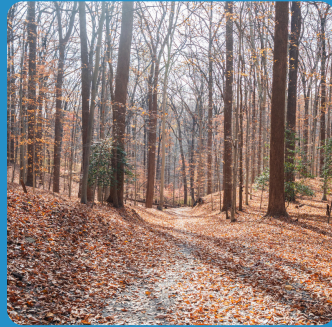
Along University Boulevard, residents provided additional feedback around parks and green spaces. The ESSCP team presented participants with four possible locations for new green spaces in this district; the four proposed locations included sites on E. Melbourne Avenue, McAlpine Road, Weaver Street, and Linton Street. Overall, residents emphasized the integral need to prioritize conservation and protect natural resources. They were open to creating small parks that assist in tree coverage and shade as well as provide spaces for smaller neighborhood amenities. Of the proposed locations for a possible new park in this district, the McAlpine Road location was the most desirable. However, participants held mixed views about adding a new park. Many would rather have smaller, informal green or recreational spaces as opposed to a formal new park.

In addition, residents expressed concerns regarding the lack of current connectivity between green spaces and hopes for improved access to Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park from their neighborhoods. People want a bridge across Northwest Branch to reach the park and trail from their neighborhoods. Trail safety and upkeep was also a concern, specifically on Wayne Stub Trail and Long Branch Trail. People also want to see better access to Long Branch along with safer ways to cross University Boulevard to get to the Long Branch Library and Long Branch Recreation Center.

Participants highlighted several amenities and activities that they would like to see in new park spaces, including more covered areas and places to gather, events and programming, more play opportunities for children, more athletic fields (specifically soccer), more attractive places to walk, and more seating in green spaces.



KEY FINDINGS: NEW HAMPSHIRE AVENUE



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS & HOPES

Places to gather



Improved walkability

Improved traffic safety



Housing

- Openness to redevelopment & increased density
- Affordable, family-sized units
- Rent protection as market increases with development

Transportation & Connections

- Safety around New Hampshire Avenue
- Improved public transit user experience and safety
- Better walking and biking connections to local amenities and destinations

Community Needs

- Ways to get around without a car
- Shopping/Restaurants
- Access to employment and healthcare services

Parks & Public Spaces

- People love Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park
- Safety and connection improvements

New Hampshire Avenue

The New Hampshire Avenue District is mainly made up of the Oakview neighborhood, Northwest Park Apartments, and a small area southeast of the I-495 interchange at New Hampshire Avenue. In some ways, this District is the most disconnected to Long Branch and the least commercial in nature. It was also the area with the least representation of residents in the 2024 visioning engagement.

The team engaged with this district through a focus group for Northwest Park Apartment Residents and a Community Conversation, both held in April of 2025.



The first of three Community Conversations was focused on New Hampshire Avenue, held on April 30, 2025.

Community Needs

Through the limited number of online questionnaire respondents from this district, the top three community needs identified were:

- Places to shop
- Restaurants
- Ways to get around without a car

However, paper questionnaire respondents at the St. Camillus Church pop-up in this district revealed a different set of community needs. Their top three priorities were:

- Employment opportunities
- Healthcare services
- Housing

These learnings from Fall 2024 were further refined during the New Hampshire Avenue Community Conversation, where residents worked together to agree on their top priorities, which included:

- Parks
- Outdoor recreation (specifically calling out the pool)
- Ways to get around without a car

Other priorities identified by at least one of the groups at this meeting were:

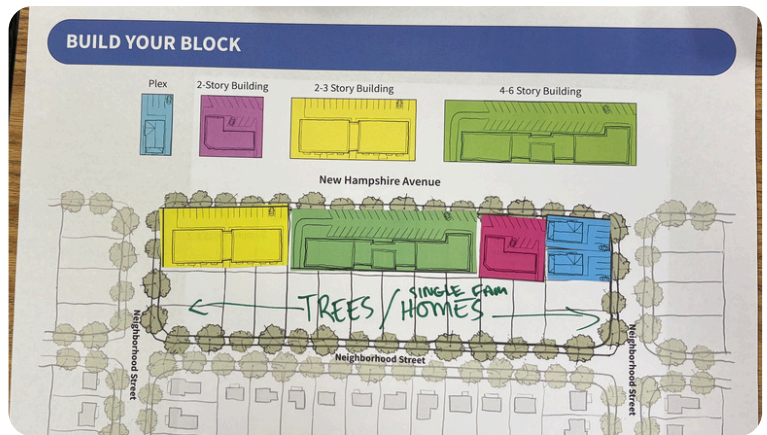
- Community services
- Housing
- Places to shop
- Places to cool down

Additionally, focus group participants, all renters living in Northwest Park Apartments, highlighted housing and affordability as well as safety and security as top needs. They also raised questions about possible future amenities in their neighborhood such as a gym or fitness center, youth spaces, daycare centers, and a small market. Access issues for employment and healthcare services were also raised along with the issues of the current public transportation options.

Housing and Development along New Hampshire Avenue

The New Hampshire Avenue District is split between Oakview (a single family home neighborhood), the southern portion of the district that includes the large multifamily community of Northwest Park Apartments and several additional multifamily buildings, and the area southeast of the I-495 interchange at New Hampshire Avenue that includes several multifamily buildings and single family homes. 75% of households rent their homes in this district while only 25% of households own their home. Just over 30% of units are single family homes, 42% of units are in small multifamily buildings (2 to 19 units per building), while the other 25.5% of units are housed in mid-sized multifamily buildings with 20 or more units per building.

Oakview Neighbors at the Community Conversation were open to increased density through redevelopment; only one person at the meeting indicated they do not want any change to their hypothetical single family home block through the Build your Block exercise. Of the 15 participants who completed the exercise, 14 envisioned denser buildings on their block, with a mix of 4-6 story buildings, 2-3 story buildings, 2 story buildings, and plexes. Participants ranged from building a block full of townhomes to building a 4-6 story building with multi-purpose use space on the ground floor. Parks, trees, and green spaces were highlighted by many participants as things to either preserve or create in a redevelopment scenario. A community center was also requested by one participant.



The Build your Block exercise for New Hampshire Avenue residents revealed a general willingness to explore options to increase density in this neighborhood.

One main takeaway from the Build your Block exercise at the New Hampshire Avenue Community Conversation was that there was an overwhelming openness to development and change.

Through the focus group conversation at Northwest Park Apartments, renters also emphasized the need for more affordable and spacious units. As noted earlier, many families live in overcrowded units due to budget restraints. Participants suggested that current and new developments consider rent control³ to ensure affordability at various income levels. Northwest Park Apartment residents specifically noted that new amenities or development could increase their rent; they indicated they would welcome newer apartment buildings but not at the expense of higher rents.

Possibilities for future development in this area include introducing more units through increased density while also considering community amenities that may become possible through mixed use development. As we explore more below, in addition to preserving green spaces, ensuring that residents can safely access neighborhood amenities by improving paths, sidewalks, lighting, etc. is an important consideration when considering where and how future growth might occur in the New Hampshire Avenue District.

Footnote 3: Montgomery County has existing policies that regulate rent increases in rent-stabilized properties, and the county's [Office of Rent Stabilization](#) is responsible for implementing and enforcing all aspects of these laws and regulations. By law, current and future development must comply with these existing rent-stabilization laws and regulations.

Getting to, from, and around the New Hampshire Avenue District

The Pedestrian Experience:

Community Conversation participants from New Hampshire Avenue want easier ways to get around by walking, biking, and scooting. People hope for easier walking access to Northwest Branch Trail, Hillandale, and Long Branch. They also hope to be able to bike to these destinations, in addition to Takoma Park, Four Corners, Sligo Creek Trail, White Oak, and College Park. The most desired mode of transportation for accessing local destinations in the future is by bike (followed by walking).

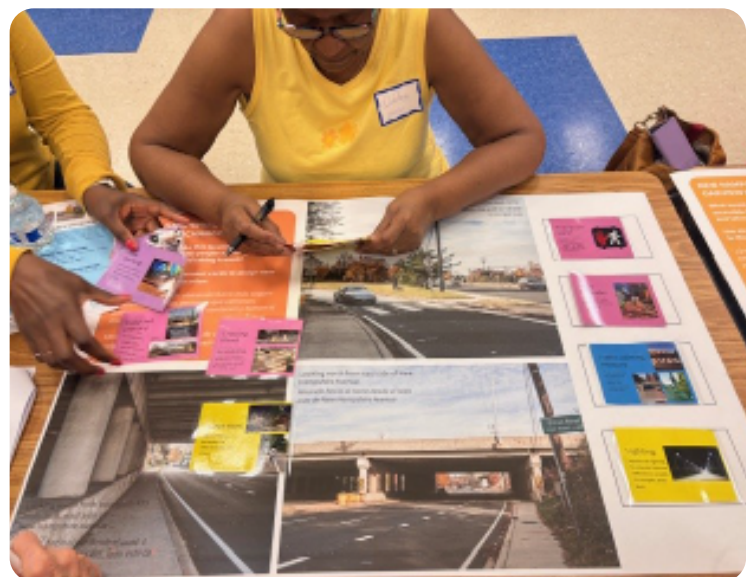
For community facilities, people currently walk to Northwest Branch Trail, Broadacres Local Park, and Sligo Creek Trail. They did not report walking to any indoor recreation centers, the Long Branch Pool, or local libraries. Of those present at the meeting, no one reported using a bike or scooter to access any community facilities. However, participants were most interested in better pedestrian and bike access to Northwest Branch Trail, along with other local parks, in the future. They also expressed hope for easier walking and bike access to local indoor recreation centers, including the YMCA, and local libraries. People hope to drive less and walk and bike more to local amenities in the future.

New Hampshire Avenue neighbors expressed concerns about crossing such a wide road and needing more time than the walk signals offer to safely cross New Hampshire Avenue. The sidewalks are also too narrow and close to the high-speed road for pedestrians to feel safe walking along New Hampshire Avenue. In addition, people complained that frequent flooding compromises pedestrian safety. In particular, walking under the 495-interchange feels uncomfortable and unsafe to pedestrians. Northwest Park Apartment focus group participants also raised concerns about pedestrian safety in parks and neighborhoods, calling for increased police presence, security cameras, and better lighting to address recent incidents of attacks and muggings in the area.

When asked to consider possible solutions to specific intersection issues, participants leaned heavily on increased lighting, traffic calming measures, and protected bike lanes at the intersections of both Oakview Drive and the 495-interchanges with New Hampshire Avenue.

Getting Around by Car:

Along and around New Hampshire Avenue, residents noted that regular traffic backups from the 495-interchange make it hard to enter or leave neighborhoods, especially during rush hour. Some intersections warrant a protected left turn lane, to improve driver safety. Many people in this area get around by car, although they are interested in more ways to get around by bike or on foot. During the Northwest Park Apartments focus group, participants highlighted that cars improve access to local amenities including medical services, places of employment, and Long Branch. However, issues of car thefts in the area pose a risk for those who own cars here.



*New Hampshire Avenue Community Conversation,
intersection solutions station*



Discussing future access to local destinations by different modes of transit, New Hampshire Avenue Community Conversation

Using Public Transportation to Get Around:

Residents generally agreed that better and safer public transportation near New Hampshire Avenue is vital to increase equitable access to jobs, services, and amenities for local residents, particularly those who rely on buses. Although few people at the Community Conversation currently use public transit (this could have been due to the demographics engaged at the event, mainly homeowners), they reported accessing the following places by bus: libraries (White Oak, Long Branch, Silver Spring, and Wheaton), recreation centers (Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center and Wheaton Community Recreation Center), and the Long Branch Pool. In the future, participants hoped for easier bus access to libraries (particularly White Oak) and recreation centers (particularly the Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center). Neighbors at the Community Conversation expressed a clear interest in more opportunities to access community facilities by bus in the future.

Residents also noted how they hope to access key destinations in and around the plan area by placing stickers on a map. 22% of the stickers noted using the bus. Downtown Silver Spring, Washington, DC, Hillandale, and College Park were identified as the destinations people most wanted to access by bus in the future.

Participants of the Northwest Park Apartments focus group raised concerns about bus stops “where people can’t see buses and where bus drivers can’t see waiting passengers.” Additionally, residents along the New Hampshire Avenue corridor expressed that accessing jobs and employment opportunities without a car can be a challenge. New Hampshire Avenue residents noted that they do not feel safe walking to and from bus stops due to the wide, high traffic road, and the short crossing times at intersections.



Intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and Oak Drive.

Parks and Public Spaces in the New Hampshire Avenue District



Broadacres Local Park

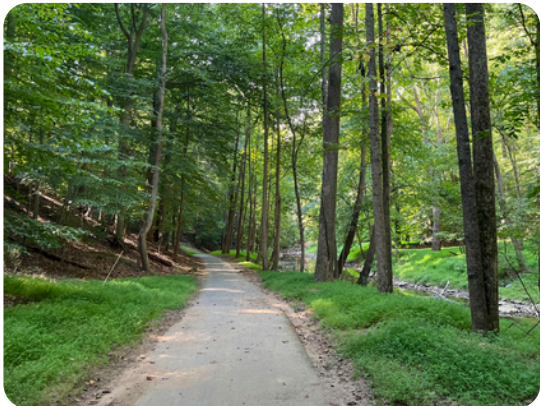
The New Hampshire Avenue District boasts several key park spaces: Brookview Local Park, Broadacres Local Park, and Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park. People love these parks for their amenities, pathways, and opportunities to connect with nature. At the same time, they would like to see better equipment and play areas for children, maintenance of sports fields, better trash collection/disposal, improved accessibility, and more safety measures implemented at these parks.



Brookview Local Park

When asked about ways to improve the parks in the future, residents prioritized places to gather with friends and family, places to play, and places to experience nature as the top three placemaking interventions they hope to see in future park and public spaces.

For residents of the New Hampshire Avenue corridor, safety needs were a top priority for increasing quality of the current parks. People also mentioned a need for cleanliness and better trash disposal at the two local parks in the area. In Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park, residents wanted to see improved paths, accessibility, and connectivity.



Northwest Branch Park

During their meeting with Neighbors of Northwest Branch (NNWB), the ESSCP team discussed problem areas along the stream and offered ideas for protecting vulnerable places. NNWB stressed the careful planning required to protect parks from misuse and abuse of the natural environment. They expressed concerns about increasing park users, and the accompanying litter, graffiti and other negative impacts. Invasive plants represent another concern already affecting the park, an issue that NNWB is worried will increase without careful intervention. The group was open to collaboration and continued conversations to explore how the master plan might help protect and preserve the natural spaces of the Northwest Branch Stream that run through the plan area.

While none of the local community facilities are located within the New Hampshire Avenue District, residents reported using a handful of them regularly, mostly the Silver Spring, White Oak, and Long Branch Libraries and the Wheaton Library and Community Recreation Center. Residents of Oakview were hopeful that their neighborhood pool could reopen in the future. Other neighbors noted a need for facilities to house youth programming in this area. Some New Hampshire Avenue neighbors raised the question about possibly expanding the Long Branch Community Center's facilities to provide services locally in their neighborhood.

KEY FINDINGS: MANCHESTER PLACE



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS & HOPES

Neighbors love the diverse mix of housing



Improve pedestrian experience

Mixed feelings about adding neighborhood retail



Housing

- People love the housing diversity
- Mixed sentiments about adding density on single family home blocks
- Preserve and increase affordable housing

Transportation & Connections

- Improve pedestrian access, sidewalks, and street crossings
- Neighbors liked the neighborhood greenway proposed for Hartwell Road
- Excited for possibilities of Purple Line; ensure pedestrian and bike access to the station

Community Needs

- Better pedestrian access to local amenities
- Stronger connections between neighborhoods
- Mixed feelings about adding commercial here vs. improving access to Long Branch

Parks & Public Spaces

- Sligo Creek is a valued asset
- Improvements needed at Flower Avenue Urban Park
- Stormwater management needs attention to prevent flooding

Manchester Place

Manchester Place District will soon be home to a new Purple Line station, Manchester Place. This area also has a strong mix of housing types, including single family homes, condominiums, and multifamily rental units, but has limited retail. Residents in this area identify as living in the Highland View, Manchester Place, and the Sligo-Branview neighborhoods. Some also refer to parts of this area as belonging to the Takoma Park or Long Branch neighborhoods.

The team engaged with this district through the Manchester Place/Flower Avenue Neighbors Walk in June of 2025 and the Community Open House held in September of 2025.

Community Needs

Less than 10 respondents of the online questionnaire identified as living in Highland View or the adjacent Sligo Park Hills neighborhood within the Manchester Place district. From this limited number of respondents, the top community needs identified were:

- Ways to get around without a car
- Places to shop

A walk, organized by community members along Flower Avenue, was held with the ESSCP team on June 4, 2025, during which 7 neighbors from the Manchester Place district shared their concerns and hopes for this district's future with the project team. Community needs and priorities that emerged from this conversation included:

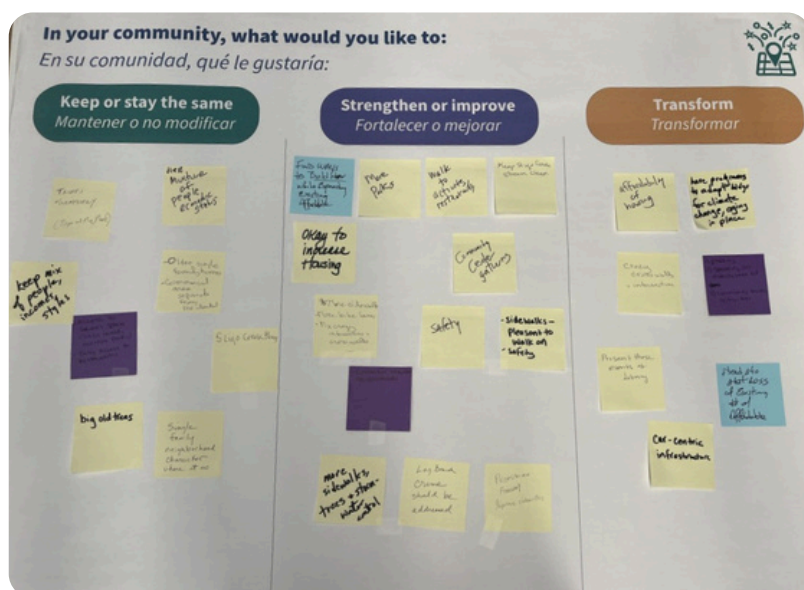
- Maintain the diversity of housing and residents in this area
- Improve pedestrian access to schools, businesses, bus stops, and the Long Branch Library and Long Branch Recreation Center
- Improve sidewalks and crosswalks, and consider traffic calming measures
- Add stormwater infrastructure, specifically at Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park and Flower Avenue Urban Park

At the Manchester Place Community Open House in September of 2025, the team invited participants to identify things they hope to “strengthen or improve” and “transform” in their community in the future. The most common themes that emerged included:

- Improved pedestrian safety and increased walkability
 - More and safer sidewalks
 - Improved connections between neighborhoods
 - Safer street crossings
- More housing and improved housing affordability
- More parks, trees, and green spaces

At another station of the open house, participants voted on the amenities they would most like to have in this area in the future. Results included:

- Restaurants
 - Most specifically, a coffee shop
- Places to shop
 - Including a grocery store or small mart
- Parking
- Indoor recreation
 - Including a fitness center
- Community Services
 - Including a senior center



Community members shared what the hope will “stay,” “improve,” and “transform” at the Manchester Place Open House

Housing and Development around Manchester Place District

Manchester Place is a unique area that already houses a variety of residential buildings. Many residents in this area highly value its diverse types of housing, and its proximity to businesses and services. Currently this district is split with 57% renter households and 43% homeowners. This district includes several condominiums providing homeownership options in multifamily buildings. 41.3% of units are in buildings with 2 to 19 units per building, and 25% of units are in buildings with 20 or more units. Detached single family homes make up 22% of units in the district, and attached single family units make up 12% of all units in the district.

Engagement in 2025 helped the team learn more about housing priorities for the Manchester Place District through several small group meetings and the Community Open House. As an area with little room for new development, one of the big questions the team sought to answer was, *how open are residents to increasing density through redevelopment of single family home neighborhoods?* The team was also interested in understanding people's hopes for the future Purple Line station, specifically seeking to understand: *would residents like to see more commercial uses introduced around the future Purple Line station?* Similar to the Build your Block activity at Community Conversations earlier this year, participants were presented with three possible strategies to increase residential and/or introduce more commercial mixes to this area and asked to vote on their openness to each strategy.

Open house participants were open to both increasing units of current apartment buildings in the district and adding retail, commercial, or community uses on the first floor of current apartment buildings. However, there were mixed sentiments around redeveloping single family homes into plexes with 2, 3, or 4 residential units; of the 8 participants, 2 voted "yes" to this strategy, 3 voted "maybe", and 3 voted "no." It is worth noting that all of the open house participants who self-reported housing tenure were homeowners. We might presume that renters would be more open to this third strategy. Despite the limited data, we can expect that this mixed view around allowing additional housing types in single family homes is accurate based on other conversations and similar trends with other homeowner populations in the plan area.

When asked what people hope to preserve in this district, residents wrote things like:

- "Keep older-style family homes"
- "Keep commercial area separate from residential"
- "Keep single family neighborhood character where it is"

At the same time, others hoped to strengthen or improve the area by:

- "Adding more housing. I'm good with duplexes, triplexes, and quads"
- "Finding ways to build new while expanding existing affordable"
- "Transforming the affordability of housing"

There are clearly mixed sentiments around future development, what people feel is important to preserve in their immediate or expanded neighborhood, and how it connects to availability and affordability of housing.



The Park Bradford Condominiums in the Manchester Place District

"I'm concerned that too much "fill in" and "build out" housing zoning could significantly change the ethnic diversity of this Long Branch/East Silver Spring area. This ethnic diversity is the most important reason I've loved living here since the late 1960s." - White senior homeowner in Highland View

For those who emphasized affordable housing, they hope to both preserve what already exists and increase affordability (deeply affordable) of current and future housing. One participant recommended that the county leverage taxes for very low income housing. This responds to the fear of displacement raised by other stakeholders. Properties near Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard were specifically mentioned as potential properties where redevelopment presents a risk of displacement given its impact on affordability.

New homeownership opportunities through condominium developments were also recommended as a way to increase residents' investment and sense of ownership in the community.

At the same time, others pointed to the concentration of affordable housing that already exists in this area, and suggested opening other parts of the county to lower income housing.

When considering future development in this area, some residents expressed concern about taller buildings blocking light or negatively affecting the privacy of current residents. Specifically, at the Manchester Place/Flower Avenue Neighbors Walk, residents shared concerns about how building placement, height, and mass could negatively impact residents of the Geren Road homes and Manchester Manor apartments. A worst case scenario elevated was that if the homes backing up to the commercial properties along Flower Avenue and Piney Branch Road become uncomfortable, they will get converted into offices or not be maintained, and that could cause problems for others on Geren Road. The parts of the Manchester Place District that border current commercial spaces hope the plan will ensure that residents and businesses can comfortably co-exist in this area in the future.



Manchester Place Open House on September 25, 2025

While some community members welcomed the idea of reinvesting in the area to help maintain a strong mix, others noted the division of diversity within this district. One participant described the community as “disjointed by street, by racial/economic factors.” People emphasized the role that physical buildings play in connectedness across residents.

Safety has also been elevated in conversations about housing in this area. From the online questionnaire, the most common priority related to housing for residents of this district was safety, selected by 89% of respondents from the Manchester Place District.

When questioned about introducing new commercial space, there was also a mix of opinions.

For those who supported the idea of adding commercial spaces around the future Purple Line station, restaurants were the most desired amenity. Coffee shops, pubs, and sit-down restaurants were all mentioned. People also called out opportunities for a grocery store or smaller market, an indoor fitness center, and a senior center. Some supported the idea of adding retail in and around the intersection of Manchester Road and Wayne Avenue. People noted their desire to walk to activities and restaurants with more ease in the future.

Among those who did not support commercial uses around the Purple Line station, one person wrote “we need the residential zoning and our current business area does not need the competition.” Those against adding commercial to the center of the Manchester Place district pointed out the proximity of the Flower Avenue commercial corridor. They suggested adding desired community amenities to areas already zoned as commercial, instead of adding commercial to currently residential blocks. Others raised concerns about office spaces coming into their residential neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: Apartment buildings
Estrategia 1: edificios de apartamentos

Let us know what you think about these different strategies. Add a green, yellow or red dot to each strategy below to vote yes, maybe or no. Digamos que opina de estos diferentes estrategias. Agregue un punto verde, amarillo o rojo a cada una de las siguientes estrategias para votar si, tal vez o no.

The opportunity for properties that have apartment buildings today to be larger and include more amenities.

Potential impact of this strategy: More housing options (Apartment buildings, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes)

Remember: Master plans create the opportunity for these changes to happen by recommending a zoning change. In order for these changes to happen, property owners must decide to build or redevelop their property.

Additional comments: Otros comentarios: [Handwritten notes]

Strategy 2: Mixed-use buildings
Estrategia 2: edificios de uso mixto

Let us know what you think about these different strategies. Add a green, yellow or red dot to each strategy below to vote yes, maybe or no. Digamos que opina de estos diferentes estrategias. Agregue un punto verde, amarillo o rojo a cada una de las siguientes estrategias para votar si, tal vez o no.

The opportunity for properties that have apartment buildings today to be larger, include more apartments, along with retail or other commercial or community uses on the first floor.

Potential impact of this strategy: More residential amenities (Retail, offices, community uses), More housing options (Apartment buildings, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes)

Remember: Master plans create the opportunity for these changes to happen by recommending a zoning change. In order for these changes to happen, property owners must decide to build or redevelop their property.

Additional comments: Otros comentarios:

Strategy 3: Duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes
Estrategia 3: dúplex, triplex y cuádruplex

Let us know what you think about these different strategies. Add a green, yellow or red dot to each strategy below to vote yes, maybe or no. Digamos que opina de estos diferentes estrategias. Agregue un punto verde, amarillo o rojo a cada una de las siguientes estrategias para votar si, tal vez o no.

The opportunity for properties that currently have single family homes to have 2, 3 or 4 residential units.

Potential impact of this strategy: More housing options (Duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes)

Remember: Master plans create the opportunity for these changes to happen by recommending a zoning change. In order for these changes to happen, property owners must decide to build or redevelop their property.

Additional comments: Otros comentarios:

Getting to, from, and around the Manchester Place District

The Pedestrian Experience:

Manchester Place residents hope for better road crossings and connections to key destinations, like Long Branch's library and recreation center, local schools, and businesses. Within the Manchester Place neighborhood, residents are concerned by the lack of sidewalks and crosswalks. They also mentioned that there are few traffic controls to keep pedestrians safe from drivers. Flooding and stormwater management is also a major concern for residents.

Some stakeholders suggested a careful look at how the pedestrian and bike networks through their neighborhood help residents safely access amenities, transit stops, and regional trails and roads like Sligo Creek and Flower Avenue. They recommended pedestrian improvements along Hartwell Road, Geren Road, and at the intersections of Manchester Avenue. They also sought improvements to the pedestrian experience at and around Flower Avenue Urban Park.



Observing a street crossing during the Flower Avenue/Manchester Neighbors Walk on June 4, 2025

Lighting needs were flagged along Sligo Creek Parkway and at the intersections of Manchester Avenue and Piney Branch Road. People also hope to see more trees and shade for pedestrians.

Bike facilities and infrastructure improvements were recommended along Sligo Creek Parkway, at the Manchester Purple Line station, at the Flower Avenue Urban Park, at Manchester Manor Apartments, and at the corner of Piney Branch Road and Flower Avenue.

The open house participants liked the idea of creating a greenway on Hartwell Road. One resident supported preserving the street parking with the addition of the greenway.

Getting Around by Car:

There were limited comments specific to the driving experience in and around Manchester Place. While the Purple Line will present additional public transit options to residents, some stakeholders emphasized the need to preserve residential parking. One individual called out Manchester Road, near Wayne Manchester Towers, as a place where more parking is needed. Another person called out the need for parking for work vehicles and for an increase in handicap parking in the neighborhood. If commercial uses are added to the area, parking for these amenities should also be considered.

Using Public Transportation to Get Around:

Residents expressed excitement around the future Purple Line station in their community. With the completion of the Purple Line, community members expect to have more pedestrian and bike/scooter traffic around and through their neighborhood. People hope for less car-centric infrastructure and better pedestrian and bike access to encourage public transit use.

To supplement the feedback gathered during 2025 engagement, the team might consider additional engagement with community members on how to improve pedestrian and public transit user experiences in the future. Insight from the Purple Line Corridor Coalition is also relevant in building out the plan's recommendations related to getting around, specifically in and around the Manchester Place District.

Parks and Public Spaces in the Manchester Place District

Manchester Place District residents highly value being situated between Sligo Creek Park and the Long Branch commercial corridor. People love Sligo Creek's trails and parks.

During the open house, residents reflected on Flower Avenue Urban Park. They currently walk through the park to get to Long Branch, visit for concerts, and take their kids to its playground. However, they see much room for improvement of this park. Some who participated in the Flower Avenue/Manchester Place Neighbors Walk expressed frustrations around the lack of improvements made to Flower Avenue Urban Park. They referenced the lack of decorative landscaping and new trees, and that the recent small improvements to the park are insufficient. They are hopeful that the ESSCP can help move forward improvement plans for this park.

Community members at the open house were invited to share things they hope to see in the future (at Flower Avenue Urban Park or in other local green spaces). Their reflections are summarized below:

- safety
- better seating for seniors
- public art
- flowers, landscaping, and community gardens
- places to gather, including picnic and seating areas
- play areas for older kids
- trees and shade structures
- improved sidewalks to access parks
- better wayfinding in the greater plan area



Flower Avenue Urban Park; photo credit: Montgomery Parks

The ESSCP team met with four members of the Friends of Sligo Creek in late June 2025 to learn more about their hopes for the future as they relate to the master plan process and their interests specific to Sligo Creek. This group named three core challenges: 1) lack of stormwater management infrastructure on properties surrounding Sligo Creek, 2) growth of invasive plants, and 3) a major e. coli problem. Stormwater management was also a major concern of residents who participated in the Flower Avenue/Manchester Neighbors Walk in relation to both Sligo Creek and Flower Avenue Urban Park. The Friends of Sligo Creek team suggested multiple considerations for the ESSCP team to help mitigate the current challenges as well as plan for the future of Sligo Creek and the surrounding community. They recommended that the plan incorporate forest conservation to mitigate the impacts of transportation and development, daylighting streams in several locations, resilient trees, and measures to improve air quality and increasing temperatures.

It is worth noting that while the Manchester Place District is not home to many gathering spaces beyond parks, people seemed content with their ability to access stores, restaurants, and community services in Long Branch due to its proximity.

KEY FINDINGS: LONG BRANCH



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS & HOPES

Support local businesses



Celebrate & maintain the diversity of neighbors

Improve walkability



Housing

- Current housing needs better maintenance and upkeep
- Fear of displacement for renters and businesses
- Generally open to increased density

Transportation & Connections

- Improve pedestrian, bus, and bike connections from Long Branch to other districts
- Need traffic calming and pedestrian safety improvements
- Purple Line construction is a major challenge but promises future opportunities

Community Needs

- Safe, affordable housing
- Attractive and safe third spaces
- Preserve local businesses

Parks & Public Spaces

- People want safer parks with better lighting
- Opportunities to improve connections between public spaces



Long Branch

In many ways, Long Branch is the heart of the Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan area. It includes the plan area's most vibrant commercial corridor, a myriad of multifamily housing, and single family homes and condominiums. It is home to various parks, schools, the library, community center, senior center, and pool. Several houses of worship and local non-profit organizations also have a strong presence in this district. The Long Branch District is made up of several neighborhoods, including Long Branch, New Hampshire Estates, Kilmarock, and part of Takoma Park. It also includes two future Purple Line Stations: Long Branch and Piney Branch Road.

Much of the area in the Long Branch district was included in the 2013 Long Branch Sector Plan, which focused on the areas closest to the future Purple Line stations: Long Branch and Piney Branch Road. Due to this relatively recent planning effort, the team decided to engage around Long Branch from a slightly different angle. Engagement in this area focused more on reviewing possible changes to the recent sector plan, and gathering resident feedback on these possible changes. Due to its unique nature within the ESSCP area, the team utilized pop-ups and questionnaires (online and paper) to engage residents about the future of Long Branch. The team also engaged business owners in Long Branch, as noted earlier, about their specific needs and vision. Additionally, the team leveraged partnerships with local organizations to gather expert insight and glean findings from other work being done simultaneously in this area.

In late 2024, CHEER, a local non-profit organization with a strong presence in the community, received a grant for an engagement project in the Long Branch area. CHEER's scope of work included engagement around several future planning topics included in the ESSCP process, and as an organization, CHEER has successfully engaged a diverse group of residents from Long Branch around these topics. Rather than double the work, the ESSCP team engaged with CHEER leadership and participated in their community meetings as active listeners, gathering additional insight into community needs and hopes for the future of Long Branch.

The team engaged residents around the Long Branch District through the online and paper visioning questionnaires, the pop-ups at the Long Branch Festival in September of both 2024 and 2025, and through the Fall 2024 open houses. They also met with multiple partners and stakeholders who work specifically with residents in this area and offered additional insight into lived experiences, needs, and possible solutions.

Community Needs

The most cited needs from Long Branch residents who completed the online questionnaire were:

- Ways to get around without a car
- Healthcare and other medical services
- Community support services (food pantries, senior support services, etc.)
- Parks

During the New Hampshire Estates focus group, participants who mainly live in the Long Branch district highlighted the following needs for their community:

- Employment opportunities
- Community support services
- Medical services
- Education and professional development
- Daycare



Elementary school parents discuss priority needs for their community at the New Hampshire Estates Focus Group.

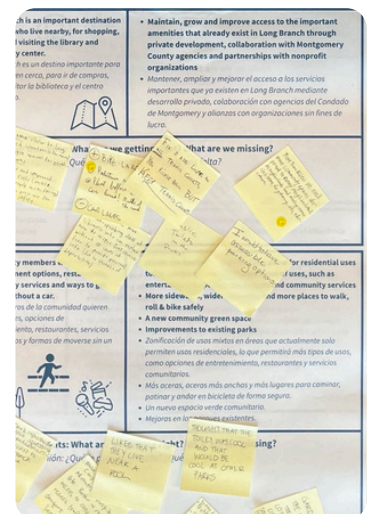
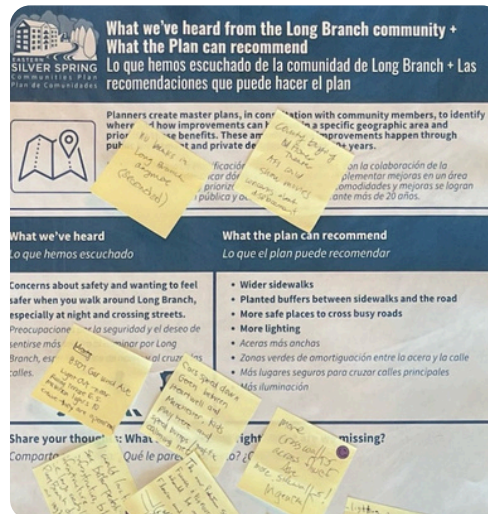
At the 2024 Long Branch Festival Pop-up, the team also collected responses around what the community needs most. While not all respondents were residents of the Long Branch District, their responses show some similarities and differences from respondents of the online and paper questionnaires. The focus on third spaces as top priorities for respondents at this event, including parks, entertainment options, and restaurants, might be attributed to the type of person attending Long Branch Festival, as the largest annual festival held in the plan area.

Focus group participants mentioned that they would like to see adult education classes like sewing/clothing making, computer skills, tax support, employment services, etc. They also sought better access to more immigration legal services. In terms of services, including both daycare and medical services, the groups highlighted the need for care to be affordable and accessible.

Stakeholders across the board also raised safety concerns, recommending solutions including better lighting, safer pedestrian paths, traffic calming measures, policing, and safer street crossings.



Residents engage around community priorities at the Long Branch Festival on Sept. 12, 2025



Housing and Development in Long Branch

Long Branch is home to a mix of single family and multifamily residential options, in addition to the plan area's largest commercial center. 70% of households rent, while 30% own their homes. The majority of households (60%) live in small multifamily buildings with 2 to 19 units, while another 6% of households live in mid-sized multifamily buildings with 20 units or more. 21% of households live in detached single family homes, and 10% live in attached single family units.

In Long Branch, residents acknowledged that the biggest housing needs are:

- affordability
- upkeep and maintenance
- availability/stock

Some stakeholders pointed to townhomes and duplexes as a path to providing additional home ownership opportunities in the area. Others at Community Conversations were open to the idea of introducing mid and high rises into single family home neighborhoods as a way to provide more housing units. At the same time, a significant number of residents (mostly in single family home neighborhoods) were hesitant to accept changes on their blocks. While they agree that the housing supply should increase in the area, many did not want these changes in their immediate neighborhood.

Others advocated for more density through the redevelopment of multifamily buildings. Additionally, housing experts and local residents all pointed to the maintenance and code enforcement issues that many renters in this area face, along with increasing rent rates. Truly affordable housing is not easy to find in this area, and quality of living space is a concern for many renters. However, many residents expressed concerns that redevelopment would cause increased rents, and most likely displace a significant portion of the current population.



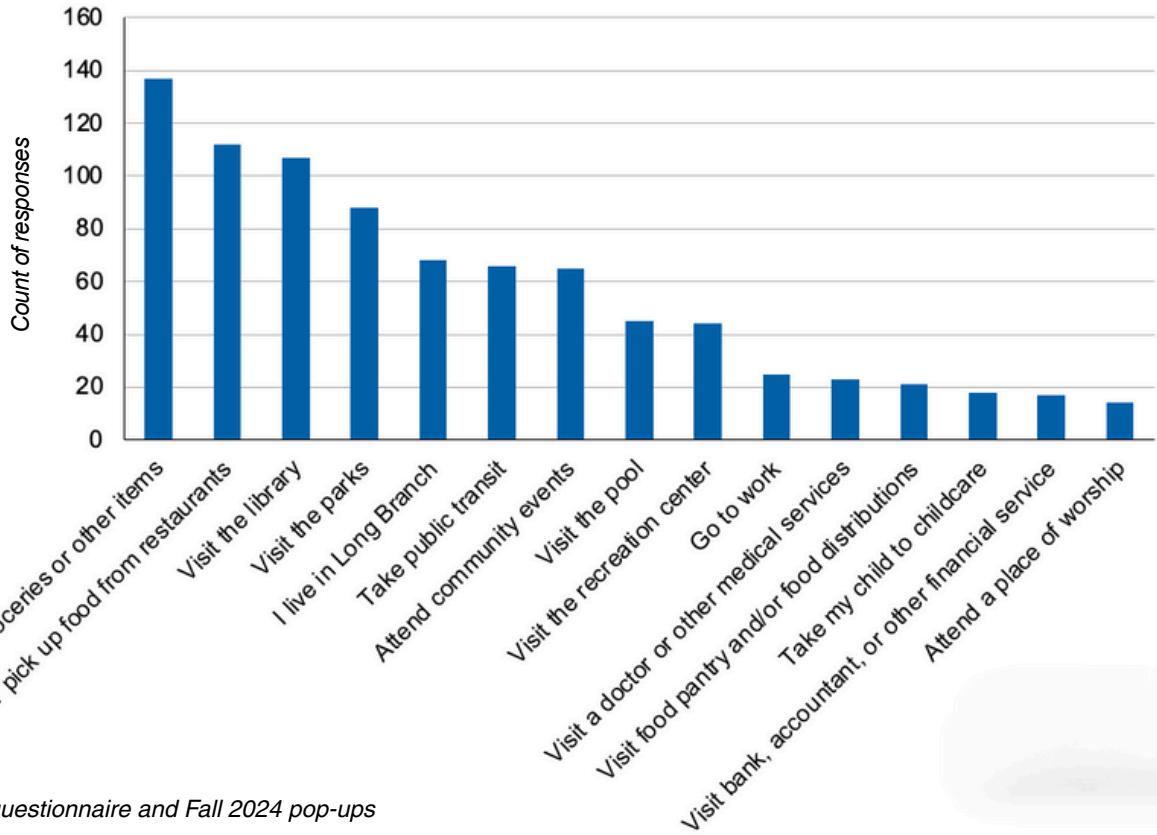
Mural on Flower Avenue in Long Branch; photo credit: Discover Long Branch

“I don't think there is a central walkable area like there is in Main Street Takoma Park at Long Branch, I do wish there was more of that, but unfortunately the construction and traffic have hampered that.” - Young (age 25-34) Latin Homeowner with Children living in Highland View

What do you do in Long Branch?

As part of its efforts in Fall 2024, the team sought to learn more about Long Branch and how people relate to this area as a core commercial area with the most non-residential uses in the plan area. Both online questionnaire respondents and select pop-up participants answered questions about what they do in Long Branch and how frequently they visit. While there were no unexpected patterns about how often people visit Long Branch, there was significant data on what people do when they are in Long Branch. Shopping, eating or picking up food at restaurants, and visiting the library were the top three most common activities. Parks also received a considerable number of votes, as well as attending community events and taking public transit. The details of all responses are shown in the graph below.

What do you do in Long Branch? (Total = 850)



Source: Online questionnaire and Fall 2024 pop-ups

It is also worth noting that a significant number of important places that people referenced in the Fall 2024 engagement are located in Long Branch. The Long Branch library, the Long Branch Recreation Center, Flower Theater, and the Long Branch Senior Center were all noted by community members. Some of the most cited parks are also in Long Branch, including Flower Avenue Urban Park and Long Branch-Arliss Neighborhood Park.

When asked how often they visit Long Branch, nearly 50% of pop-up participants reported living in Long Branch, and an additional 40% reported that they visit Long Branch at least once a month. This highlights the importance of Long Branch as a center for residents living in Eastern Silver Spring.

Getting to, from, and around Long Branch

People living in and accessing Long Branch want ways to get around without a car.

During Community Conversations, people were invited to map how they get to key destinations in and around the plan area, and how they hope to be able to access these areas in the future. The results revealed that residents around the plan area want better walking and biking access to Long Branch.

At the Long Branch Festival in 2025, people also commented on challenges for getting around the area. They highlighted the following issues:

- Speeding (need for traffic calming measures)
- Safety at night (need better street lighting)
- Street crossings (need more crosswalks)
- Limited bike infrastructure

We also heard specific requests to improve the paths between the library and the park as key community centers, and to improve the pedestrian network throughout Long Branch. In general, stakeholders agreed that better connections in and around Long Branch would increase the area’s vibrancy and ease of use, especially with the forthcoming Purple Line.

Long Branch Parks & Public Spaces

Flower Avenue Urban Park is considered one of the most important central gathering spaces by many stakeholders, as a place where festivals, community gatherings, and celebrations occur. Residents want to see better connections and access to parks. People mentioned both improved pedestrian access to parks, and better parking/car access. They also would like to see more community gardens in the area. Some community members noted that they enjoy using the Long Branch Pool, but would like to see improvements made. Some people also hoped the county would consider an indoor pool option for the community. The Long Branch Library and Long Branch Community Center are also core community services that residents throughout the plan area access regularly. However, some stakeholders noted that there should be more funding for public facilities and the upkeep of these important community spaces. In this area, residents specifically noted interest in improvements to Flower Avenue Urban Park and their hope for a more pedestrian friendly network between restaurants, transit, and services without losing Long Branch's unique look and feel.



ESSCP team engages at the 2025 Long Branch Festival

Stakeholders imagined how improvements to Long Branch's parks and public spaces could increase its walkability and make Long Branch feel more welcoming. Some ideas shared by neighbors included adding more public plazas, increasing safe and well-lit pedestrian connections, adding more small parks, and creating additional public gathering spaces. People mentioned the possibility of partnerships with affordable housing developers that could increase access to quality public spaces in Long Branch and activate the area as a destination for local residents.

Many residents complained of delinquency, substance abuse in public spaces, poor lighting, and homelessness as concerns that impact their ability to access and enjoy public spaces. In order to ensure these spaces are welcoming and attractive, public safety must be enhanced.



Long Branch Festival 2024; photo credit: Discover Long Branch

REFLECTIONS ON THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT IN EASTERN SILVER SPRING

The Eastern Silver Spring Communities team has participated in extensive efforts to engage diverse community members in meaningful ways for nearly two years. Throughout these two years, the team learned, adapted, and expanded its engagement approach and toolkit to deepen understanding and connect in meaningful ways with the diverse population of Eastern Silver Spring.

LANGUAGE ACCESS IS KEY, BUT CULTURAL AWARENESS IS ALSO VITAL

The team worked diligently to ensure materials were available in Spanish and Amharic when appropriate, and that interpreters could support in person facilitation in these languages. However, most public meetings did not successfully attract people who spoke languages other than English. This may be due to a number of factors, including the political climate, availability, and personal priorities. Focus groups and pop-ups in collaboration with trusted community partners were the best tools to reach these groups. Future engagement should continue to explore creative ways to engage the immigrant community, noting that maintaining flexibility in how to engage and communicate with these populations is critical to ensuring their voices are included in these types of processes in the future.

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

The pop-up events hosted in popular public areas and events had significantly higher levels of participation than open houses. Long Branch Festival alone helped the team reach nearly 200 stakeholders in 2024. Multifamily door knocking in the pre-scope of work phase and pop-ups at community service events helped the team engage with hundreds of non-white renters in the plan area. This confirms what we know to be true: engagement is best when it meets the members of the community where they naturally gather and in spaces where they feel welcome and comfortable. Bringing engagement efforts to places where the community works, lives, and plays ensures greater turnout and representation. In the future, continuing to find creative ways to collect feedback at pop-up events, collaborate with community partners like CHEER to gather feedback at partner-hosted community meetings, and leveraging tools like door knocking will help balance the demographic reach and decrease barriers to participation.

ASK THE HARD QUESTIONS

As the team planned for district-specific engagement in 2025, we knew that talking about change in people's actual neighborhoods and homes could be uncomfortable. We worked to design engagement activities that offered ways for people to discuss their fears and concerns related to change and growth but also clearly communicated the strong likelihood that this plan will recommend zoning updates for increased density. *Are you open to adding duplexes to your single family block? Could you see a taller apartment building across the street from your home in the future?* These are uncomfortable questions, but it is important to provide spaces for people to share their feelings openly with all the crucial information in their hands. We must continue asking the hard questions and not shy away from transparency. This report notes several areas where additional feedback around these hard questions would provide a stronger basis to argue for recommendations in specific districts. It is important to prepare people for the changes to come, explain why they are happening, and give them the opportunity to weigh in on the areas that their opinions can truly have an impact. This transparency and willingness to engage around hard questions should accompany the team in all future engagement.

LEVERAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community partners are an important tool for equitable community engagement. Community organizations were key conveners for pop-up events, where the team reached hundreds of residents, specifically the immigrant and renter populations. They also provided insight into how to best reach the community and shared their knowledge of the needs and priorities for important topics of underrepresented populations to help inform both engagement and the plan itself. Schools also served an important role as outreach support, safe spaces to gather in the community, and connections to parents for the New Hampshire Estates focus group. Finally, civic and neighborhood associations also supported outreach, especially for district conversations.

Many key relationships are already in place to continue the support of future engagement efforts for ESSCP. Partners we have worked with and believe are important to continue leveraging in future engagement efforts include: CHEER, AIM, Clifton Park Baptist Church, St. Camillus Church, MCPS (parent coordinators and principals), MHP, HOC, LBHAT, Friends of Sligo Creek, Neighbors of Northwest Branch, Long Branch Business League, and the Silver Spring Regional Services Center.

ENSURE PLANNING MEANS ‘PLANNING FOR ALL’

Eastern Silver Spring is a complicated community, with challenges and needs specific to growth that current tools and traditional recommendations do not address. The team has already engaged a number of partners to help better understand the complexities of the problem and the implications this plan could have on the most vulnerable population living in Eastern Silver Spring.

It is important to continue to ask questions, seek creative solutions, invite thought-partners, and challenge the traditional ways that planning does not adequately meet the needs of this community. The team has already made it clear that they will not be tied to solutions that do not address the complexities of the needs of this community. This is an opportunity to be pioneers, modeling how planning can become an advocacy tool that helps protect the most vulnerable individuals in our communities and builds future neighborhoods that remain accessible to these valued members of the community.

FEEDBACK LOOPS HELP CLARIFY AND IMPROVE THE PLAN

The team has already shown the benefits of using feedback loops to share back to the community what we have heard, ask the community if we got it right, and then invite the community to provide additional feedback with more depth and specificity. The shift from engagement in 2024 to the district model in 2025 happened with the purpose of using feedback loops in this way. At the 2025 Long Branch Festival pop-up, the team also invited the community to respond to what we have heard and provide additional detail around these key topics. Feedback loops help the community feel heard, see how their ideas are considered in decision-making, and feel confident and interested in continuing to engage in the process. As the team works towards drafting the plan, it is important to continue to find ways to share proposed recommendations with the community, invite their feedback, and ask any clarifying questions. Using a mix of tools to share out information and invite feedback will help encourage different populations of the community to stay engaged moving forward. Considering ways to share “bite-sized” information with simple invitations to reflect and respond will also increase the community’s ability to participate in refining the draft of this technical document.