

Testimony of Gary Unterberg, 1/21/26 Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

Good evening. My name is Gary Unterberg with Rodgers Consulting, testifying in support of the draft Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. I've worked on the Comsat property with LCOR and River Falls for 25 years, collaborating with the community and other property owners to make Clarksburg a great place to live and work.

It's time to move forward with the draft plan as recommended by the Planning Board. This well-crafted plan encourages economic growth with flexibility while protecting the area's environmental and neighborhood assets. It builds on the 1994 plan while looking toward to the future.

Green Cover: An Ambitious Yet Flexible Approach

A central strength of the Planning Board's draft is its approach to green cover on the Comsat site. The Board recommended 35 percent green cover on developed portions of the property - an ambitious standard matching or exceeding requirements applied elsewhere in Montgomery County.

The Board made a thoughtful decision about how green cover should be measured and delivered. Trees within conservation easements, parks, and along streets count toward the 35 percent requirement. This ensures trees aren't pushed to property margins or isolated in inaccessible areas, but instead integrated where people live, work, and walk every day.

The result: substantial tree canopy and green infrastructure throughout developed areas, plus extensive forest already protected within stream valleys and along property edges. This plan delivers green cover where it matters most - within the heart of the neighborhood - while preserving 40 acres of existing stream valley forest and buffer.

Strong Environmental Standards

These environmental recommendations supplement strict requirements already in place for Clarksburg. By law, Clarksburg is a Special Protection Area (SPA) requiring additional water quality and stormwater management standards. Forest conservation requirements also apply by law.

Key Plan Benefits

- Observation Drive relocated out of the stream valley, saving approximately 3-5 acres of forest and reducing stream valley impacts
- Net increase in forest coverage: Most upland forest outside stream valley buffers will be either saved or replanted per forest conservation law. Most scenarios show future on-site forest (existing plus planted) exceeding the current 50 acres
- Customized Water Quality Plan required as part of SPA designation, tailored to future uses, layout, impervious areas, and green spaces
- 50-foot buffer along I-270 providing an additional 4+ acres of forest planting
- 35% green cover requirement supplements other environmental protections: This requirement is in addition to—or overlaps with—forest, open space, and park requirements, promoting shade trees and green areas within the development itself

This plan protects the environment while accommodating new housing, jobs and amenities to deliver badly needed economic growth. I urge the Council to approve it.

Thank You.