Comments Regarding the

Clarksville Pike Draft Design Guidelines

November 16, 2015 Public Hearing

Testimony of David Ager
5044 Jericho Road
Columbia, MD 21044

One page 24 of the Design Guidelines a 'main street' vision is described:

"Clarksville Pike will evolve into a *vibrant main street* by incorporating unique design aesthetics and innovative improvements that will tie the corridor together and make it accessible and functional for all modes of travel."

"The vision of Clarksville-River Hill is to ensure and maintain a consistent, high quality built environment along Clarksville Pike that respects the surrounding context, is accessible and convenient for all users, and *exemplifies the character and experiences of the best main streets in the region.*"

"...transform the corridor into a sustainable and *dynamic main street.*"

On page 93...
"As the *main street* environment envisioned for Clarksville Pike evolves, proper attention should be paid to the commercial storefronts which play a critical role in the social and economic life of the community."

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening on CR169-2015.

My name is David Ager and I am a 20-year resident of the Clarksville area.
I am a planner and landscape architect with a small consulting firm located in Clarksville.

I'm speaking today as a concerned citizen, respectfully offering suggestions that I believe will improve Clarksville and the Pike, and which need consideration BEFORE adopting these guidelines.

My Concern:

The draft guidelines don't recognize, nor appropriately respond to, the existing nature of the Pike. The vision is not aligned with reality.

What is that vision? The terms 'main street', 'pedestrian', and 'pedestrian-orientation' are mentioned in the guidelines more than 100 times ... this is the vision.

However, the reality is that Clarksville Pike is a commercial corridor with random and unorganized frontages, access and building placements...in other words, it's a highway dedicated exclusively to the vehicle.

The latest draft of the design guidelines ignores this existing road character and attempts to create a streetscape that is incompatible with this character while at the same time not recommending alterations to the road.

Suggested Remedy:

Either recognize that, without change, the Pike will continue to be a 'high-speed' highway corridor and NOT a Main Street and adjust the draft guidelines accordingly,

OR

Fix the area between the curbs so it is consistent with the vision and function outside the curbs.

Let me say at the beginning that I agree with the stated vision. I believe a real Main Street can be implemented, but alterations to the current plan and guidelines are needed.

The Opportunity:

This is an opportunity to fix the 'omissions' and 'errors' of the past.

Master plans, or in this case, design guidelines, are typically a once in a generation opportunity that allow us to take 'corrective steps'...

...moving toward a more rational civic realm that creates a sense of place, something people can take pride in.

What's missing?

I believe the design guidelines ignore a basic principle of town planning:

...the principle of town-less highways and the highway-less towns...

The design guidelines as currently written, mixes the two, attempting to create:

...A town with a highway running through it, trying to function as a main street.

...This essentially continues, and possibly increases, the current problem well into the future.
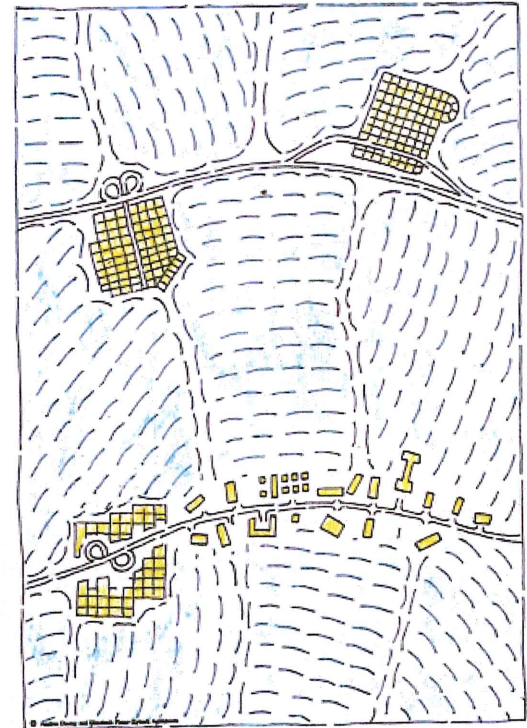
Precedents and Examples

But some say: "We can't do that, the traffic volumes are too great."

Not true, this problem can be fixed. "But how?" Look at how others have solved this problem?

Here are four quick examples, there are multiple others...

THE TOWNLESS HIGHWAY & THE HIGHWAYLESS TOWN

THE TOWN GUTTED & THE STRIP

...town-less highways and the highway-less towns...

vs.

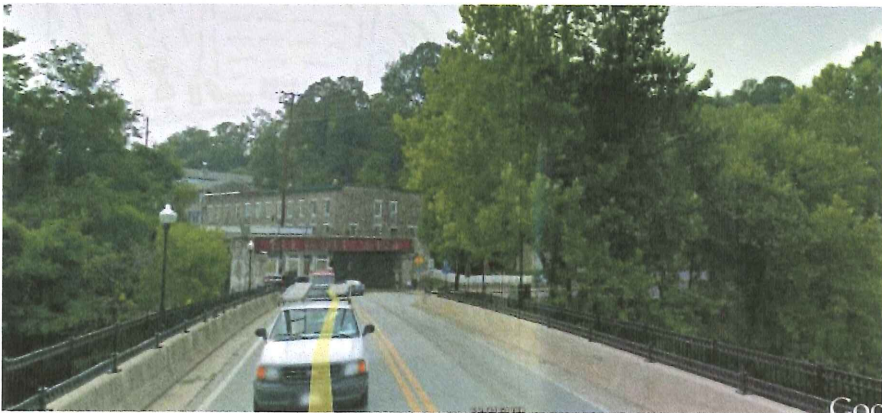*...a suburb with a highway running through it, trying to function as a town with a main street...*

Outside Town

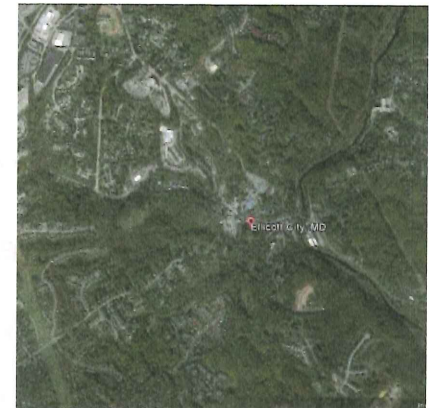Entering Town

In Town

Main Street

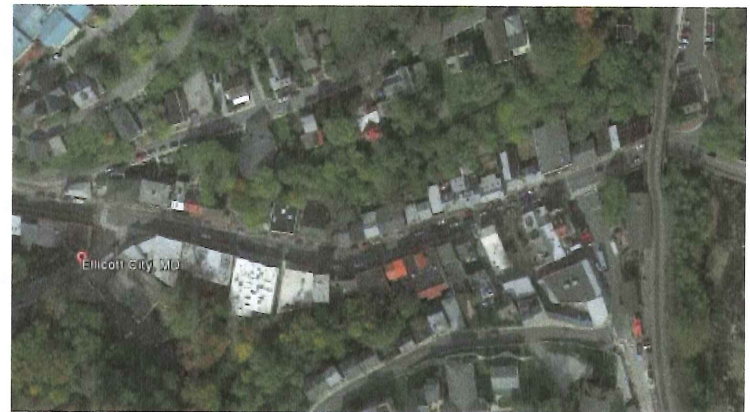## Ellicott City, Maryland

AADT: Approx. 18,000+

Posted Speed: 25 mph

Lanes: 2
Parking: Yes

4
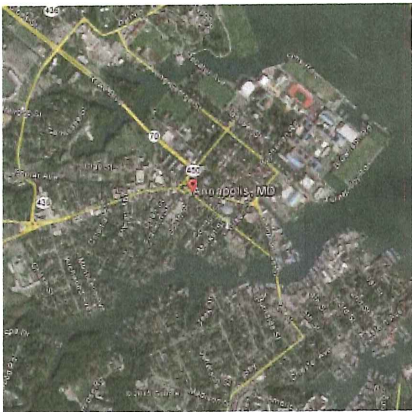
West Street

Annapolis, Maryland

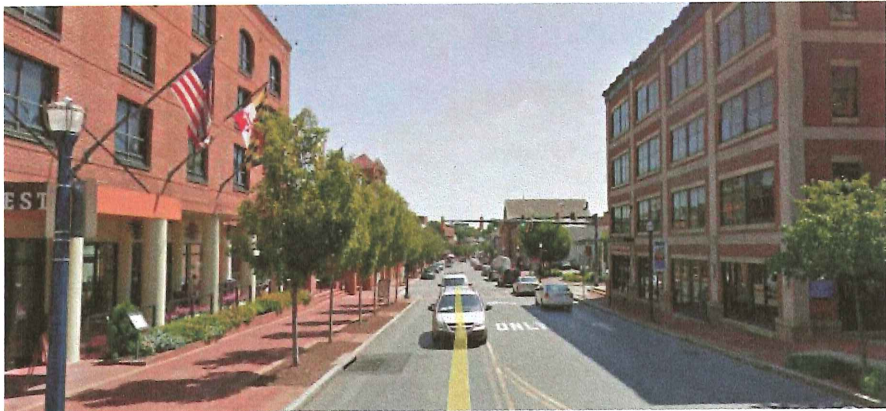AADT: Approx. 15,000+

Posted Speed: 25 mph
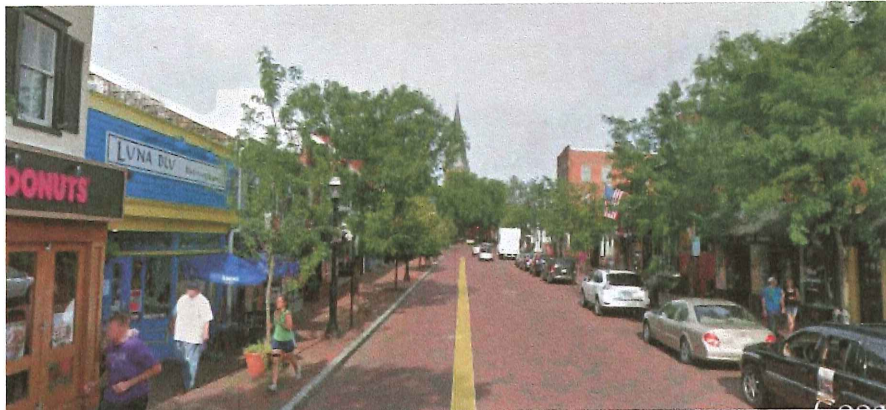
Lanes: 2
Parking: Yes

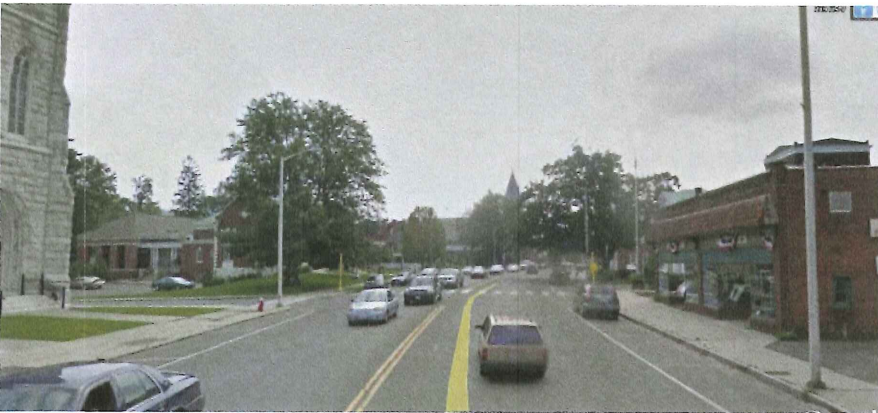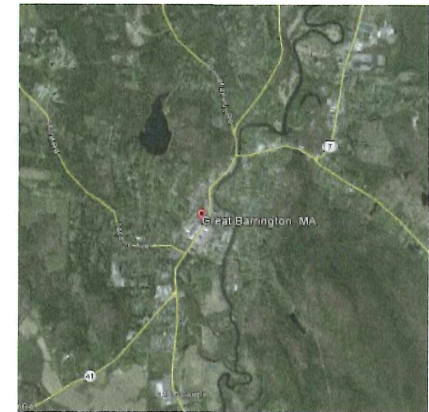Outside Town

Entering Town

In Town

Outside
Town

Entering
Town

In
Town

Main Street
Great Barrington, Massachusetts

AADT: Approx. 22,000+

Posted Speed: 30 mph?

Lanes: 4
Parking: Yes

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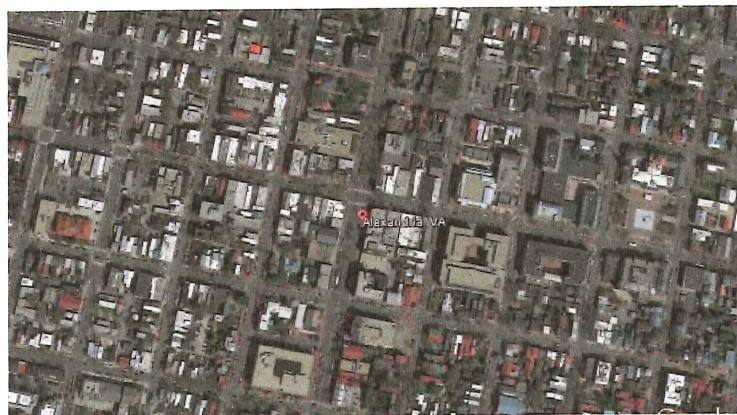Columbia, MD 21044

Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia
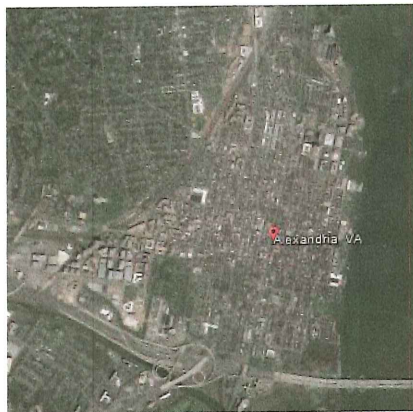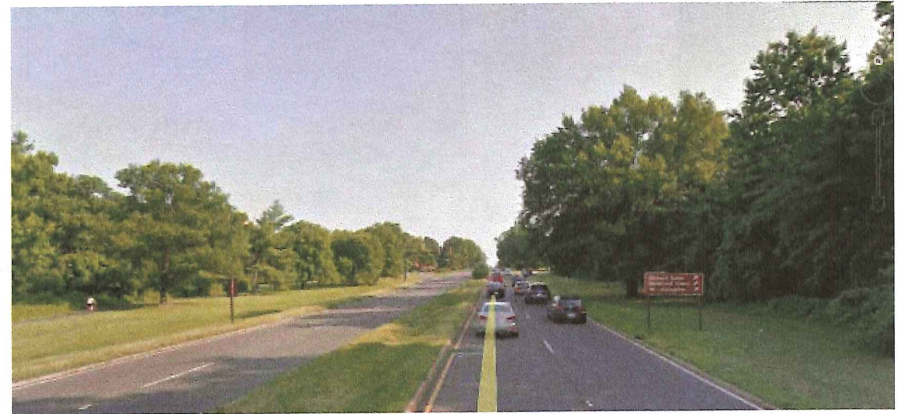
AADT: Approx. 33,000+

Posted Speed: 25 mph

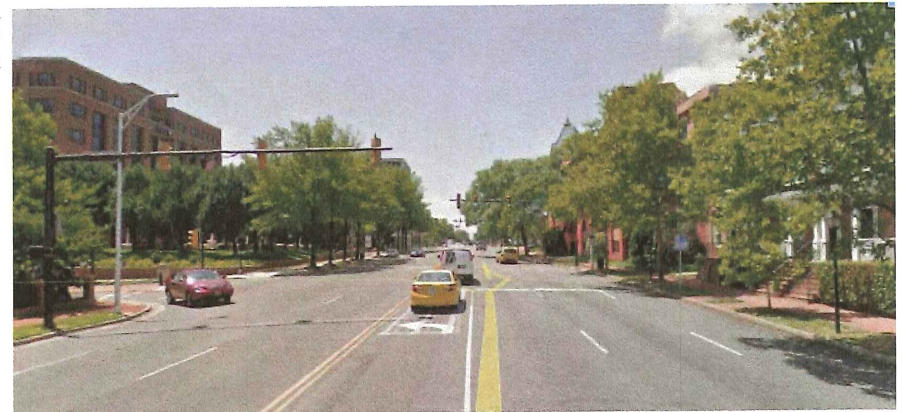Lanes: 4* (parking lane used during rush hours)
Parking: Yes* (limited during rush hours)

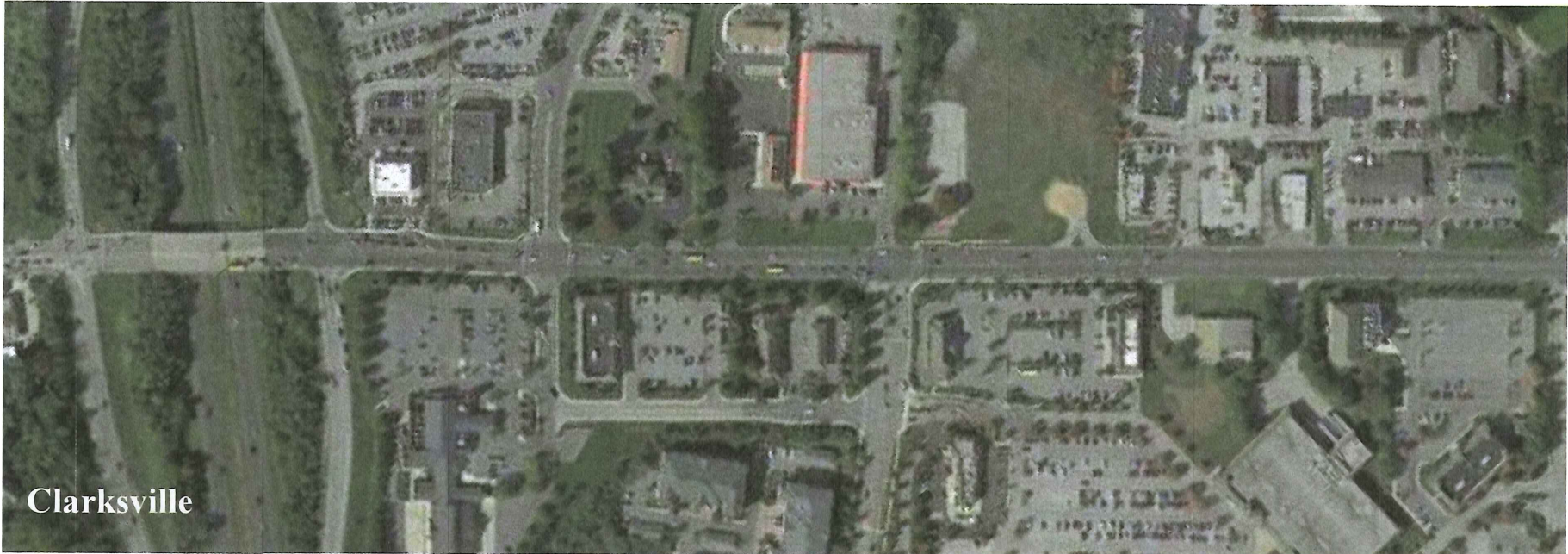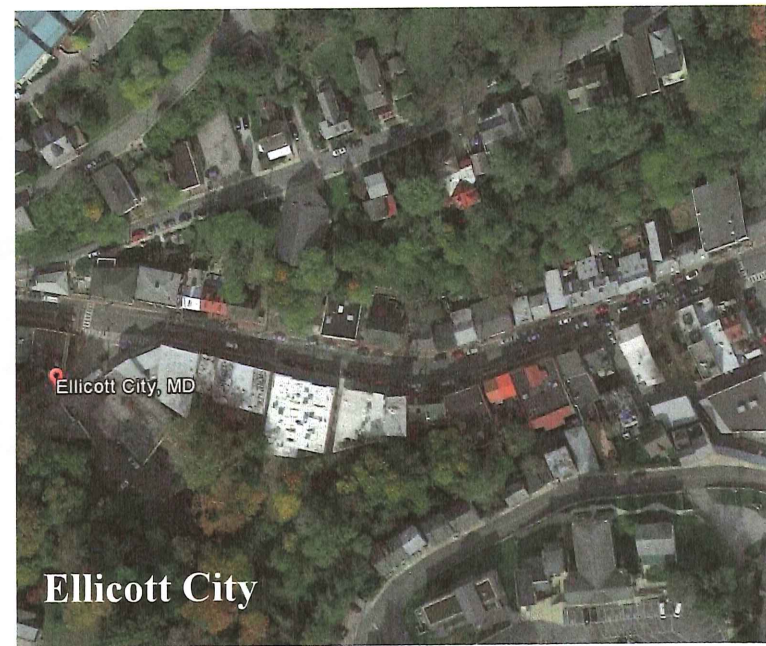

Outside Town

Entering Town

In Town

Clarksville

Great Barrington

Alexandria, VA

Alexandria

Annapolis

Ellicott City, MD

Ellicott City

COMMENTS REGARDING THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE CLARKSVILLE PIKE STREETSCAPE PLAN AND DESIGN GUIDELINES
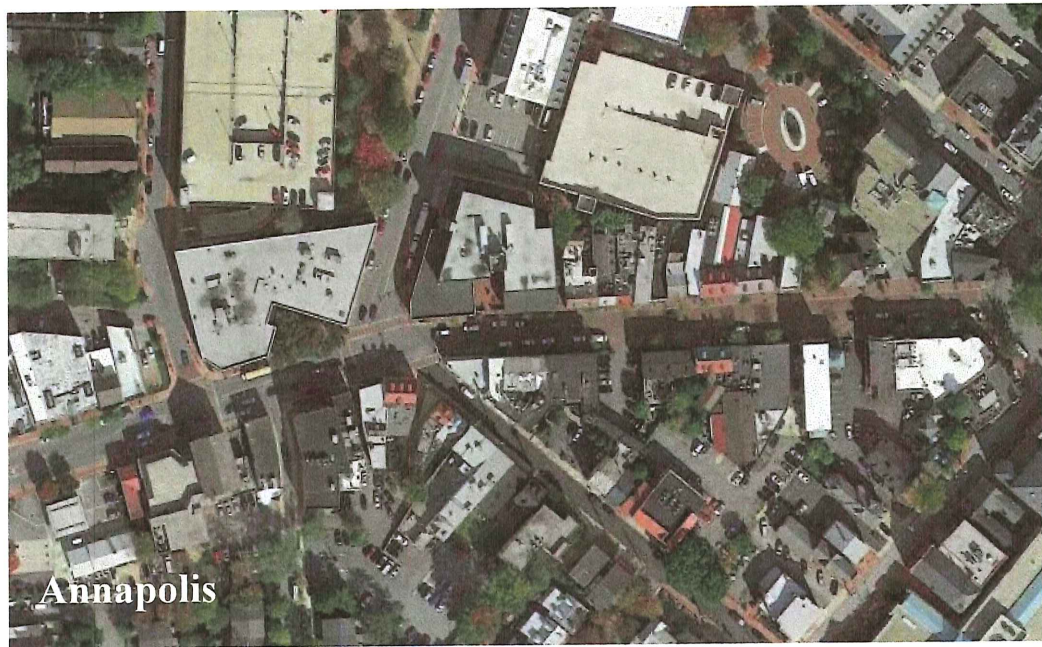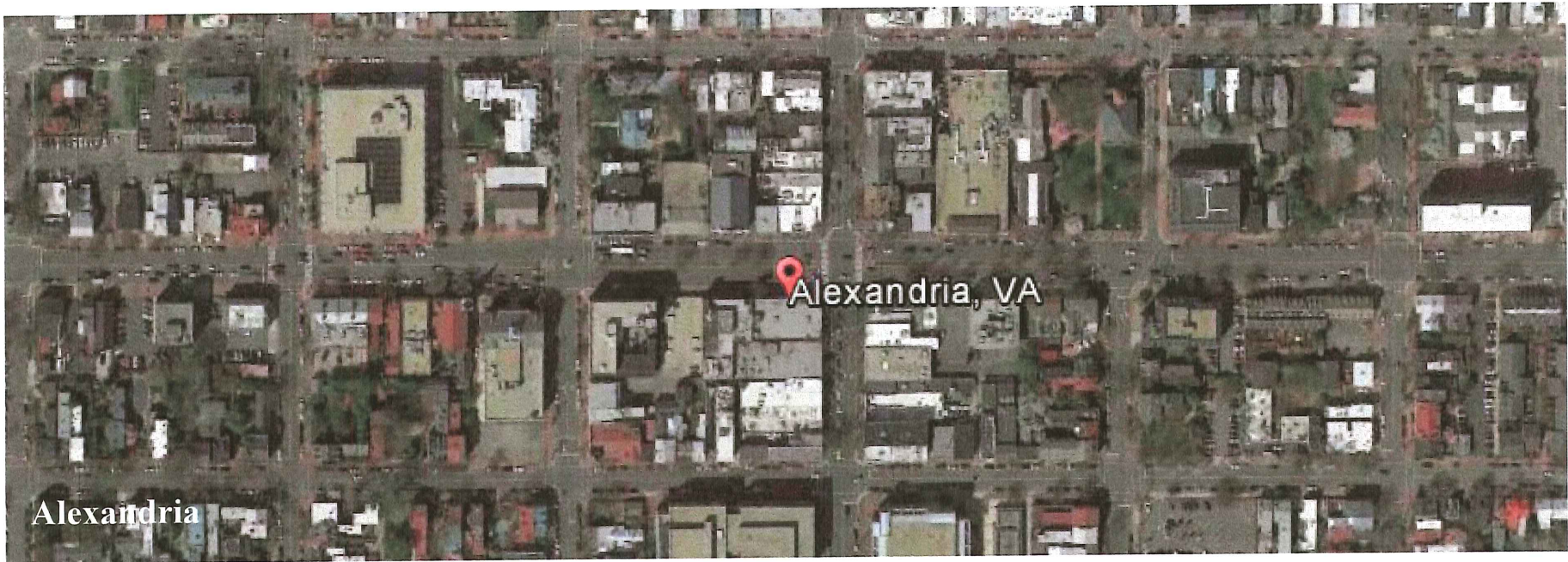
Precedents and Examples

- ***Main Street, Ellicott City, MD.***
  Our best local example, with similar ADT, less lanes, slower speeds, more pedestrians.

- ***West Street, Annapolis, MD.***
  Similar, but slightly less ADT, slower speeds, less lanes, excellent pedestrian realm.

- ***Main Street, Great Barrington, MA.***
  Similar ADT, similar regional road configuration, same lanes, more pedestrian.

- ***Washington Avenue, Alexandria, VA.***
  More ADT, slower speeds, similar lanes, use of parking lanes during rush hour, more pedestrian, better regional network of streets.

What do all of these examples have in common?

- They all change in character and nature of the road as one enters 'town'. They are more civilized.

- Speeds are purposely slower, and there is a real respect for other modes of travel.

- Pedestrian-orientation is real, not artificial.

- There is an equilibrium between the needs and safety of the motorist and that of the pedestrian.

- Yet these roads all function as regional arterials.

Working with SHA

Some have said: "But we have to deal with the state highway administration..."

That isn't a problem.

SHA has a process in place, documented in their publication:
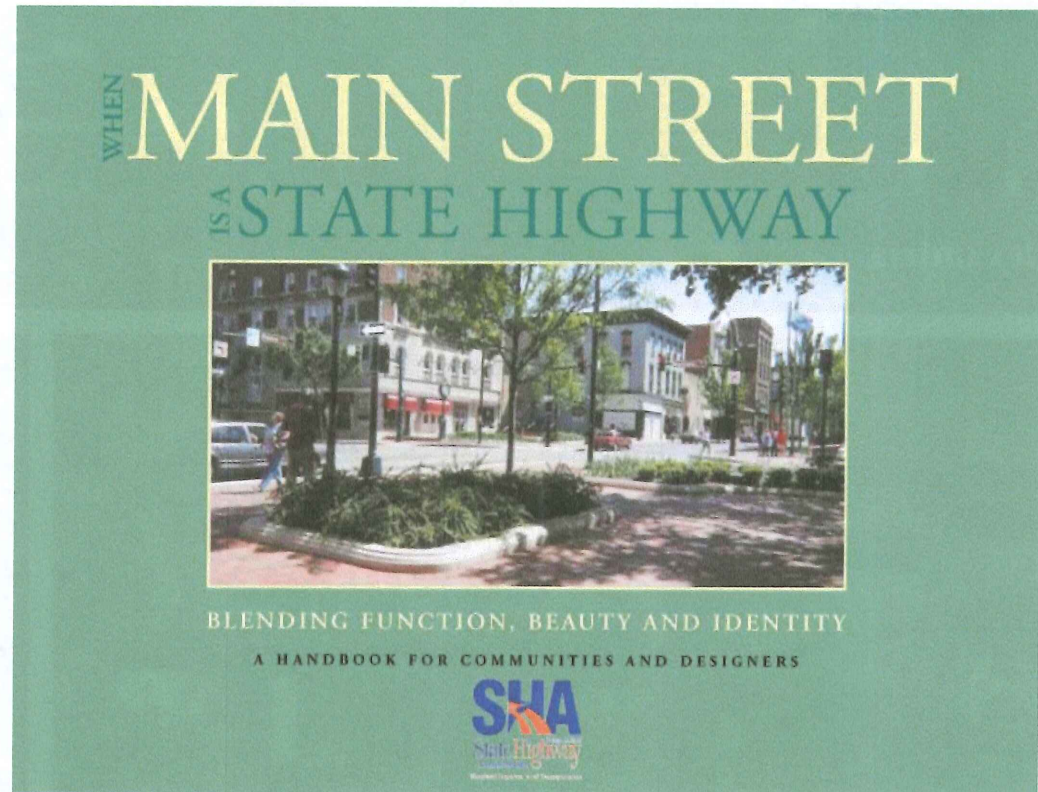
When Main Street is a State Highway, Blending Function, Beauty and Identity.

Suggested Solutions

1. Make Clarksville a 'Highway-less Town'.

Tame the Pike. Calm traffic and reduce speeds. Make it a true 'Main Street'. This includes the area 'between' the curbs as well as the area outside the curbs.

2. Create a Complete (Pedestrian-Oriented Main) Street.

Truly follow the complete street policy. Create a détente that balances mobility, access and modal options. In other words, create a true 'Complete Street'. This must include and require speed control through design and detailing, making the street a safe place for pedestrians and others utilizing non-auto modes of transportation.

3. Create a support structure.

Create a support structure to the Pike that includes a secondary pattern of interconnections and routes (public and/or private) that take pressure off of the Pike and offer alternative routes between destinations. Organize and aggregate existing entrances (and future entrances) to enhance safety, functionality and beauty.

Clarksville, a Great Place

A town's civic identity is typically its Main Street.

By solving the deficiencies mentioned above, you will set the foundation for Clarksville's civic identity and move it toward being a great 'place'.

If you approve these plans now and without edits, time will pass, money will be spent, and at the end of the day we will wonder why this project, and Clarksville never lived up to the stated vision.

I have attached various lists of several 'great places' from multiple publications. The majority of these places have a fully functioning, pedestrian-oriented, and high quality main street that is the 'heart of the community'.

These publications recognize the obvious.

Let's do no less for Clarksville.

Thank you for opportunity to offer these comments and suggestions.

Great Small City and Town List
Money Magazine 2015 50 Top Places
http://time.com/money/collection/best-places-to-live-2015/
1. Apex, NC
2. Papillion, NE
3. Sharon, MA
4. Louisville, CO
5. Snoqualmie, WA
6. Sherwood, OR
7. Chanhassen, MN
8. Coppell, TX
9. Simsbury, CT
10. Solon, OH
11. Acton, MA
12. Rosemount, MN
13. Erie, CO
14. Westborough, MA
15. Edina, MN
16. Johnston, IA
17. Mason, OH
18. Draper, UT
19. Woodbury, NY
20. Hewitt, TX
21. Bedford, NH
22. Twinsburg, OH
23. North Laurel, MD
24. West Goshen, PA
25. Wylie, TX
26. Dr. Philips, FL
27. Nether ProvidencePA
28. Berkley, MI
29. Sahuarita, AZ
30. Hillsborough, NJ
31. Damascus, MD
32. Menomonee Falls WI
33. Maryland Hts., MO
34. Tolland, CT
35. Urbana, MD
36. Springville, UT
37. Germantown, WI
38. West Linn, OR
39. McCandless, PA
40. Colchester, VT
41. Harrisburg, NC
42. Waukee, IA
43. La Palma, CA
44. Heber, UT
45. Cheshire, CT
46. Stallings, NC
47. Mukilteo, WA
48. Vienna, VA
49. Walnut, CA
50. Woodstock, GA

Destination Tips; Feb. 2014
12 Classic American Small Towns You Should Visit: http://www.destinationtips.com/destinations/12-classic-american-small-towns-you-should-visit/12/
1. Stockbridge, MA
2. Beaufort, SC
3. Port Townsend, MA
4. Cooperstown, NY
5. Cambridge, MD
6. Brookings, SD
7. Boonton, NJ
8. Sedona, AZ
9. Hood River, OR
10. Williamsburg, VA
11. Aspen, CO
12. Traverse City, MI

Best Choice Reviews; Jan. 2015
50 Best Small Town Downtowns in America (<15,000) http://www.bestchoicereviews.org/50-best-small-town-downtowns-in-america/
1. Montpelier, VT
2. Healdsburg, CA
3. Traverse City, MI
4. Silver City, NM
5. Heber City, UT
6. Littleton, NH
7. Hailey, ID
8. Huntington Woods, MI
9. Excelsior, MN
10. Woodstock, VT
11. Havre de Grace, MD
12. Nevada City, CA
13. Lahaina, HI
14. Spring Green, WI
15. Beaufort, SC
16. Travelers Rest, SC
17. Berlin, MD
18. Estes Park, CO
19. Rockport, TX
20. Steamboat Springs, CO
21. Cazenovia, NY
22. Kelley's Island, OH
23. Columbia, PA
24. Nebraska City, NE
25. Mount Dora, FL
26. Pahoa, HI
27. Galena, IL
28. Placerville, CA
29. Bath, ME
30. Decorah, IA

31. Red Lodge, Montana
32. Sedona, AZ
33. Port Townsend, WA,
34. Glenwood Springs, CO
35. Nantucket, MA
36. Woods Hole, MA
37. Ketchum, ID
38. Wallace, ID
39. Everglades City, FL
40. Elkin, NC
41. Harrodsburg, KY
42. Buckhannon, WV
43. Marietta, OH
44. Lanesboro, MN
45. Eureka Springs, AR
46. Rockland, ME
47. Spearfish, SD
48. Corinth, MS
49. Deadwood, SD
50. Mathews, VA

2015 Smithsonian 20 Best Small Towns to Visit (<20,000) http://www.smithsonianmag. com/travel/best-small-towns-2015-180954993/

1. Estes Park, CO
2. Nantucket, MA
3. Stuart, FL
4. Traverse City, MI
5. Cooperstown, NY
6. Port Townsend, WA
7. Calistoga, CA
8. Sevierville, TN
9. Boonville, Missouri
10. Saint Simons Island, GA
11. Edenton, NC
12. Bayfield, WI

13. Nashville, IN
14. Put-In-Bay, OH
15. Whitefish, MT
16. Thibodaux, LA
17. Custer, SD
18. Stowe, VT
19. Homer, AK
20. Vernal, UT

2014 Smithsonian 20 Best Small Towns to Visit (<20,000) http://www.smithsonianmag. com/travel/20-best-small-towns-to-visit-in-2014-180950173/?no-ist

1. Chautauqua, NY
2. Healdsburg, CA
3. Williamsburg, VA
4. Steamboat Springs, CO
5. Woods Hole, MA
6. Marietta, OH
7. Beaufort, SC
8. Sedona, AZ
9. Nebraska City, NE
10. Lanesboro, MN
11. Spring Green, WI
12. Havre de Grace, MD
13. Columbia, PA
14. Mount Dora, FL
15. Ketchum, ID
16. Montpelier, VT
17. Harrodsburg, KY
18. Silver City, NM
19. Decorah, IA
20. The Dalles, OR

20 Best Places to Live in America by Business Insider (2015 Livability List)

http://www.businessinsider.com/best-place-to-live-2014-9
1. Madison, WI
2. Rochester, MN
3. Arlington, VA
4. Boulder, CO
5. Palo Alto, CA
6. Berkeley, CA
7. Santa Clara, CA
8. Missoula, MT
9. Boise, ID
10. Iowa City, IA
11. Bozeman, MT
12. Asheville, NC
13. Ann Arbor, MI
14. Bellevue, WA
15. San Mateo, CA
16. Santa Barbara, CA
17. Overland Park, KS
18. Salt Lake City, UT
19. Rockville, MD
20. Eugene, OR

Business Insider 10 Best Small Towns in America http://www.businessinsider.com/best-small-towns-to-live-in-2014-9

1. Los Alamos, NM
2. Northfield, MN
3. Lebanon, NH
4. Hood River, OR
5. Port Angeles, WA
6. Glenwood Springs, CO
7. Spearfish, SD
8. Heber City, UT
9. Traverse City, MI
10. Hailey, ID