

Good afternoon, My name is Beth Wolff. I am the Clarksburg Elementary PTA President and a resident of Clarksburg, Maryland since 2016.

Clarksburg was supposed to be a dream community with a master plan to lure businesses, builders, and buyers. But instead, Clarksburg has become a sprawl of thousands of brick and mortar houses that lack the infrastructure necessary for them to become homes. We lack sidewalks, roads to handle even local traffic, community and placemaking spaces, and schools to fit the number of children that live in our community.

We were promised a library, a firehouse, a town center, local and regional transit roads, and enough elementary schools, among other things. Despite paying an impact tax for the future development that was needed, all we have seen is more and more housing developments being approved without the proper infrastructure to support the growth. I understand the housing shortage that currently exists in Montgomery County, but the council needs to take responsibility for the lack of balanced development in Clarksburg.

As an outsider, Clarksburg may look shiny and new right now, but if the development of spaces that cultivate community, identity, education, and belonging continue to be neglected, the soil beneath us will erode, and with it, our town.

Take for example Clarksburg Elementary School. In 2008, the County Council approved the building of 1,886 new houses and an apartment complex in Cabin Branch, but the council did not fund building Clarksburg #9, the supporting elementary school. As a result, Clarksburg Elementary's enrollment, which was built for 311 students, swelled to 120% utilization. This would normally call for a building moratorium on housing developments, but did not.

A few years later as Cabin Branch continued to be developed, 180 additional houses, apart of Dowden's Station and Tapestry were approved, but not the building of a supporting elementary school.

As a result this past year, Clarksburg Elementary's enrollment grew to 250% over-utilization. That's 775 children attending a school that is built for 311—during a pandemic!

Children in 15 portables use a portapotty to go to the bathroom. Parents are not supposed to volunteer at the school due to the lack of parking and available space... some parents have never even been to their child's school building... How are we supposed to create community identity with those dynamics?

As if oblivious to the situation, the County Council approved the building of another 974 houses in the Clarksburg Elementary School boundary, without making sure that there would be adequate schooling opportunities for the children that would live there.

Yes, Clarksburg #9 has now been approved. Yet, it will not be ready before Clarksburg Elementary's enrollment will reach 900 children— that's a 300% overutilization! Whose poor planning was this?

The Clarksburg Elementary PTA has been working with MCPS to try to figure out a solution for this overcrowding since September. All we have been given is weak solutions that might mitigate the overcrowding for 20 children whose parents have the ability to drive them outside of the Clarksburg area.

We have suggested many more options— especially considering that there are 400 empty seats available at neighboring schools. But utilizing those seats is “against MCPS policy.” Yet, I don't understand how cramming 900 students into a school built for 300, or forcing teachers to park on grassy medians, or taking away children's play space to fit more portables is **not** against MCPS policy.

We have requested many meetings with different entities to address this issue. Best case scenario- they have passed the buck to another person to talk to. Worst case scenario, they have ignored our request completely, including Councilman Chris Rice.

On behalf of Clarksburg residents, and the 900 children at Clarksburg Elementary who need to use a portapotty to go to the bathroom while at a Montgomery County school, **please do everything in your power to ensure that Clarksburg #9 is built on time and that infrastructure needed to make Clarksburg houses into homes will no longer be ignored or delayed.**